A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Xavier University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Whitney Ohmer

December 16th, 2014
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Generational Differences in the Workplace:

How Does Dissimilarity Affect the Different Generations in Relation to Work Teams?
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Mark Nagy, Ph.D.</td>
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Abstract

This study investigated the different generations and the effects of perceived value dissimilarity on task and relationship conflict in work teams. Previous research suggests that each generation has its own set of values (Glass, 2007) and that may lead to perceived value dissimilarity (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003). Furthermore, work teams have become increasingly popular organizational structures used to improve quality, increase efficiency, and ensure organizational sustainability (Tomlinson, 2005; Vangen & Huxhan, 2003). However, the examination of generational differences among employees is a critical and underdeveloped area in management research and can be a significant source of conflict in organizations (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

Therefore, this study aims to further our understanding on deep-level dissimilarity by focusing on value dissimilarities in relation to generations and work teams. This study surveyed 192 people from three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Results showed there was not a significant relationship between the different generations and perceived value dissimilarity, suggesting that values may not actually be perceived as differently among each generation as previous literature might imply or, perceived value dissimilarity among generations may not cause members to view themselves differently from members in a different generation. In addition, results from the current study found a positive, significant relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and both task and relationship conflict. These findings imply that perceived value dissimilarity among team members is likely to lead to conflict, and therefore, is something for organizations to avoid in the workplace.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Because people are living and working longer than before, there are now four generations in the workplace (Lancaster & Cox, 2004). Employees who grew up in different time periods have different world views as well as expectations and values, which leads to each generation having its own preference of communicating and interacting with one another (Glass, 2007). In turn, employees from different generations are likely to have dissimilar perceptions of an organization, coworkers, and supervisors. This dissimilarity can lead to differences in work style, relation to authority, and management style. Although generational diversity brings a variety of experiences and perspectives to the workplace which can be positive for an organization, it is important to address the differing needs, values, and approaches of each generation in order for an organization to be successful and high performing (Hannay & Fretwell, 2011). Consequently, organizations are faced with the challenge of integrating different generations in the workplace as well as the complexity of creating environments that not only attract, but also satisfy workers in each generation (Hansen & Leuty, 2011).

Oftentimes, different generations collaborate in the workplace, so it is important that the organization understands the diversity that exists between each generation. More specifically, in work teams, employees are expected to work together and communicate with one another in a productive manner even though members often have different
backgrounds, work styles, and preferences for communication. Although diversity in an organization can have a detrimental effect on team functioning, there is little understanding as to why because research tends to overlook the underlying issues (Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2007). Indeed, it is likely that these dissimilarities could lead to a source of conflict within an organization. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how perceived dissimilarity among generations in the United States affects work team dynamics in organizations.

Generations

A generation can be defined as an identifiable group that shares years of birth, and hence, significant life events at critical stages of development (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Each generation shares common historical events and social life experiences (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). The social context in which a generation develops tends to impact personality as well as feelings towards authority, organizations, goals, and aspirations for work life (Wong et al., 2008).

Although there are some discrepancies in the literature about the names and birth years of each generation, there is a general consensus that the four generational groups that make up the majority of the current workplace in the United States are Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Traditionalists are the oldest generation in the workplace and consist of persons born before 1946. The largest generation is the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964. People considered to be Generation X were born between 1965 and 1981, whereas those born between 1982 and 2000 are considered to be part of Generation Y (Lancaster & Cox, 2004).
The social, historical, and life events that have occurred throughout each generation influence that generation’s feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. Traditionalists were raised during the Great Depression and WWII, resulting in members growing up during hard economic times. They typically value earning and saving money and view work as a duty and obligation (Hansen & Leuty, 2011). In relation to experiences and perspectives in the workplace, Traditionalists tend to have a great respect for authority. They are typically inclined to follow the rules and they respect the value of working for one organization throughout their life (Lieber, 2010). Although Traditionalists have played an important role in the workplace, they will not be included in the present study due to the fact that this population currently makes up only 5% of the workforce (Reynolds, 2005).

Baby Boomers grew up during an era that included the Kennedy assassination, landing on the moon, the Vietnam War, and the 1960s social revolution. This group tends to be competitive because there are so many of them wanting the same opportunities and resources (Lancaster, 2004). They typically value striving to get ahead and material success (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Overall, they are optimistic and are responsible for many social movements in American history. However, they tend to be workaholics and find value in their careers and seek meaningfulness in life from their work (Hansen & Leuty, 2011). Baby Boomers are considered rebels who were forced to conform. Their role in the workplace tends to challenge the rules and value personal satisfaction, pursue high achievements, and desire external recognition (Lieber, 2010). Baby Boomers are known to show loyalty to their team rather than the organization as a whole, and they tend to challenge authority (Lieber, 2010).
In contrast, Generation X is viewed as more cynical and skeptical (Lancaster, 2004), likely due to the fact they were raised during the Persian Gulf War, as well as when there was an increase in crime and divorce and a high rate of the spread in AIDS (Losyk, 1997). Television and media influenced this generation causing them to have more exposure to life events and pop culture than generations before them (Lancaster, 2004). Typically, both parents of Generation X children worked outside the home so members of this generation are known as “latch-key kids” in that they took care of themselves after school. This is likely the reason they are such an independent and adaptable group (Hansen & Leuty, 2011). Persons in Generation X typically change the rules entirely rather than follow or merely challenge them. Unlike Traditionalists, persons in Generation X are not likely to be loyal to one company throughout their lives; members of this generation usually change jobs frequently (Lieber, 2010). This generation is known to conflict with managers and organizations that operate in rigid, hierarchal structures. Those in Generation X value loyalty to their supervisors, as this generation places focus on their own personal career goals (Lieber, 2010). Generation X members are known for being loyal to their peers and seek to treat everyone as equals (Lieber, 2010). Persons in Generation X typically value extrinsic rewards more than the other generations (Schullery, 2013).

Finally, those in Generation Y grew up during a time in which the world was no longer considered safe and reliable due to events such as school shootings, the Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11, terrorists’ activities, and the Iraq War (Barnes, 2009). They were the first generation to grow up having an easily accessible global view at all times. They are known for having busy schedules as well as having things handed to them, which could
be a reason for their need for immediate feedback (Barnes, 2009). They are usually up for any challenge, have an astonishing amount of expertise in technology, and tend to multitask regularly (Sujansky, 2002). Because members of Generation Y typically have a strong bond with their parents, they can often be viewed as sheltered from consequences, possessing weak problem-solving skills, and feeling entitled (Barnes, 2009). However, they are typically known for striving to make the world a better place and they usually have a positive, confident outlook and a passion for learning (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008). Those in Generation Y base effective leadership on trust and they value the opportunity to produce good and quality ideas and results (Barnes, 2009). Members of this generation prefer to create rules for themselves and are known for being over confident (Lieber, 2010). Those in Generation Y are more inclined than other generations to leave an organization if they are dissatisfied (Earle, 2003).

**Dissimilarity Across Generations**

Because each generation grew up during a different time period, they each hold their own values, which may result in dissimilarity across cohorts. Failure for organizations to understand generational differences can result in misunderstandings, miscommunications, and mixed signals. In turn, these discrepancies may affect employee productivity and innovation. The examination of generational differences among employees is a critical and underdeveloped area in management research and can be a significant source of conflict in organizations (Westerman et al., 2007). In fact, a study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 58% of human resource professionals reported observing conflict among employees as a result of generational differences (Westerman et al., 2007).
When investigating potential conflicts among generations, it is important to understand the different aspects of dissimilarity. There are three main types of dissimilarity: informational, visible, and value. *Informational dissimilarity* occurs when a group member is different from other group members on characteristics such as profession, tenure, and work experience. People with different professional backgrounds and experiences are likely to have different skills, knowledge bases, abilities, talents, perspectives, and interests (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2003). *Visible dissimilarity* refers to differing on visible attributes such as age, gender, and ethnicity (Hobman et al., 2003). Visible dissimilarity is likely to be the most obvious form of dissimilarity because it may be noticed simply by looking at a person. *Value dissimilarity* is the difference in work ethic, work values, and motivations when approaching tasks. Differing values may lead to differences in employees’ goals and opinions about what and how things should be done (Hobman et al., 2003).

Furthermore, dissimilarity can also be divided into group and individual dissimilarity. *Group dissimilarity* refers to the amount of heterogeneity within a group or unit on certain characteristics such as informational, visible, or value differences. *Individual dissimilarity* refers to the amount of relative difference between an individual and other team members on the same informational, visible, or value characteristics (Hobman et al., 2003).

In addition to dissimilarity being divided by types, it can be studied in terms of actual and perceived dissimilarity. *Actual dissimilarity* is an objective measurement of the degree to which an individual differs from other team members on demographic characteristics, whereas *perceived dissimilarity* is a subjective measure of how
individuals perceive themselves to be different from other team members (Hobman et al., 2003). If an objective measure of dissimilarity is pursued, it is assumed that differences are recognized by team members and that these objective differences become salient during team processes. However, because objective assessments of dissimilarity can fail to incorporate all components of differences and that certain characteristics may be more or less prominent to an individual, using a subjective measure of dissimilarity ensures that all recognizable differences are included (Hobman et al., 2003). Furthermore, the effects of perceived dissimilarity are stronger than the effects of objective dissimilarity in relation to dissimilarity in groups and teams (Hobman et al., 2003).

**Dissimilarity and work teams.** Work teams have become increasingly popular organizational structures used to improve quality, increase efficiency, and ensure organizational sustainability (Tomlinson, 2005; Vangen & Huxhan, 2003). In an effort to attain innovation, organizations often resort to collaborative work arrangements, particularly work teams (Desivilya, Somech, & Lidgoster, 2010).

In work teams, employees are expected to work together and communicate with one another in a productive manner even though members often have different backgrounds, work styles, and preferences for communication. On occasion, dissimilarity among team members in an organization can have a detrimental effect on team functioning (Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2007).

Work team dissimilarity is at an all time high due to globalization of businesses, increased presence of women and minorities in the workplace, and the increased use of teamwork (Hobman et al., 2003). Because the reliance on teams to perform organizational tasks is growing, it is important to understand how diverse team
composition influences individual team members (Cooper, 2013). Being dissimilar from team members may deprive employees of some positive outcomes when working in teams, such as lower commitment, decreased sense of well being, and lower self esteem (Cooper, 2013).

An important consideration in work teams is work group involvement. Work group involvement relates to an individual’s involvement in task-related processes, such as information exchange and collaborative decision making, as well as how much individuals feel respected and listened to. In short, work group involvement is the perception of inclusion with regard to employee interaction or involvement within teams (Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois, 2004). Work team dissimilarity is likely to be negatively related to work group involvement because those who are dissimilar are often excluded from information and opportunities within a work team (Hobman et al., 2004). People are typically grouped and identified by processes that involve informational, visible, and value dissimilarity categories such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, tenure, and professional background. Then, based on these categories, employees will perceive themselves as members of an “in-group” (similar to others) or members or an “out-group” (dissimilar to others; Hobman et al., 2004).

Hobman et al. (2004) found that the more obvious, visible, and incapable of change the attributes are, the more likely that attribute promotes categorization. Individuals who have a different demographic profile (e.g., age, gender, race, experience, tenure) are less socially attractive to other members and may experience negative social interactions, such as being excluded from interactions and discussions (Hobman et al., 2004).
As the workplace has grown more diverse and the use of work teams has grown increasingly common, the effects of team dissimilarity on team process and performance have been investigated. However, the findings in these studies have been fairly inconsistent and the effects of team dissimilarity on team outcomes vary considerably from study to study (Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim, & Saltz, 2010).

Conflict and Work Teams

Because work teams are composed of diverse members (sex, age, race, background, education), it is likely there will be differing views on team matters which could develop into conflict (Gamero, Gonzalez-Roma, & Peiro, 2008). Conflict is a construct that is present in organizational life and it is central to understanding relationships in work teams (Gamero et al., 2008; Tjosvold, 1998). Furthermore, conflict constitutes one of the central processes associated with the teams’ internal dynamics as well as constitutes an inevitable and commonplace element in the dynamics of organizational work teams (Tjosvold, 1998). Conflict originates in a variety of ways and contexts and can occur when work team members show disagreement about preferences and positions (Gamero et al., 2008). There are two main types of conflict: relationship conflict and task conflict. They differ with regard to the object of disagreement.

*Relationship conflict* is the perception of personal animosities and incompatibility (Barsade, Ward, Turner, & Sonnenfeld, 2000; Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, & Bourgeois, 1997; Jehn, 1994). Relationship conflict can be described as emotionally driven (Desivilya et al., 2010). Furthermore, relationship conflict refers to an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities, reflecting interpersonal frictions; tensions; clash of personalities; and disagreements about personal values, taste, and interpersonal styles (Jehn, 1997).
Relationship conflict is associated with the emotional aspects of interpersonal relations in work teams. Studies show that relationship conflict is negatively associated with work team satisfaction and commitment (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Gladstein, 1984; Janssen, Van de Vliert, & Veenstra, 1999; Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Chatman, 2000), employees’ psychological well-being (Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martinez, & Guerra, 2005), and acceptance of group decisions (Simons & Peterson, 2000). In addition, relationship conflict has been shown to increase team members’ stress and anxiety (Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981) as well as job tension (Medina et al., 2005).

Task conflict is the perception of disagreements among members about the content of their decisions. Task conflict pertains to an awareness in differences in opinions and perspectives with respect to the work team’s tasks, entailing divergent perceptions concerning distribution of resources, work procedures, and policies (Jehn, 1997). In contrast with relationship conflict and its emotional disposition, task conflict is embedded in the substantive elements of teams’ responsibilities, such as projects or assignments (Desivilya et al., 2010). Studies show there is some evidence of a negative relationship between task conflict and both satisfaction and commitment (Gamero et al., 2008). Gamero et al. (2008) found that task conflict is essentially unavoidable in work teams.

Relationship conflict has been shown to have a stronger association with team member satisfaction in a work team than task conflict. Although both types of conflict appear to decrease satisfaction in the workplace, relationship conflict seems to have a more negative effect than task conflict (Gamero et al., 2008).
There is discrepancy in the current literature as to whether task and relationship conflict should be studied as independent constructs or if the two constructs have more of a dynamic relationship in which one type of conflict can act as a catalyst for the other. As teams engage in task conflict, they may inadvertently trigger relationship conflict (Gamero et al., 2008). Medina et al. (2005) found that relationship conflict fully mediated the relationship between task conflict and both job satisfaction and employee wellbeing. In addition, it partially mediated the relationship between task conflict and employee tension.

**Values and Work Teams**

When generations are combined in a work team, they will likely experience all three forms of dissimilarity: informational, visible, and value. However, because informational dissimilarity is primarily associated with task conflict and visible dissimilarity with relationship conflict, whereas value dissimilarity has been shown to relate to both task and relationship conflict (Jehn et al., 1997), the focus of this study was only on value dissimilarity between generations in work teams. Furthermore, Hobman et al. (2003) found that value dissimilarity has a stronger influence on conflict than other differences (i.e., informational and visible dissimilarity). The primary consequences of team value dissimilarity are likely to be negative (Klein et al., 2010) and team value dissimilarity has been positively related to tension and conflict, and thus poor coordination, within a team (Jehn, Chadwick, & Thatcher, 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Since each generation was introduced to work at differing points in time, work value differences may exist across the generations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), which could result in team value dissimilarity.
Values are foundational for human behavior and identity (Dose, 1999). Values are “generalized, enduring, beliefs about the personal and social desirability of modes of conduct or ‘end-states’ of existence” (Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995, p. 1076). Values guide individuals in deciding how they should or ought to behave and convey what is important to us in our lives (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

There are several theories that lead to the belief that value dissimilarity is positively related to team conflict. First, the Similarity-Attraction Theory states that team members who have similar values are likely to find it easy to collaborate with one another (Byrne, 1971; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). People feel pleasure when they interact with others who hold similar values, opinions, and beliefs. In contrast, people find it unpleasant to interact with those who hold different values (Klein et al., 2010). Also, Social Categorization and Social Identity Theories state that people use cognitive categories to distinguish themselves and similar others (in-group) from dissimilar others (out-group; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). If there are deeply divided values in a work team, members may fail to develop a shared team identity and sense of belonging (Klein et al., 2010). Finally, Cognitive Information Processing Theory states that people whose values are similar interpret events similarly (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). It is believed that shared interpretations and priorities enhance people’s ability to understand and anticipate one another’s behavior, reducing uncertainty and cognitive strain. Therefore, interactions between team members whose work related values differ substantially may thus be confusing, stressful, and disjointed (Klein et al., 2010).

Although there are theoretical arguments involving the relationship between value dissimilarity and work conflict, studies of the effects of value dissimilarity have yielded
inconsistent conclusions. Although studies have shown that value dissimilarity can be positively related to team conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001), other studies have found no relationship (Harrison, Price, Gavin, & Florey, 2002). Therefore, further research of the effects of value dissimilarity is warranted (Klein et al., 2010; van Knipperberg & Schippers, 2007).

Team members whose values differ may also hold different assumptions and expectations about one another’s behavior, making it difficult to achieve consensus and to collaborate and coordinate with one another (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Williams et al. (2007) found that consideration of dissimilarity effects should go beyond surface level effects (visible dissimilarity) and consider the effects of deep-level dissimilarity (value dissimilarity). In their study, they define *surface-level dissimilarity* as visible and/or any easily identifiable demographic characteristics. *Deep-level dissimilarity*, on the other hand, is dissimilarity involving any underlying attributes such as attitudes, values, and beliefs (Williams et al., 2007). The authors stated that previous studies may have placed too much emphasis on surface-level dissimilarity (visible dissimilarity) rather than on deep-level dissimilarity (value dissimilarity). Hence, even though values play an important role across many facets of individuals’ lives, few researchers have investigated the effects of value diversity on team effectiveness and the team-level process that may mediate such effects (Klein et al., 2010). Therefore, the current study aims to further our understanding on deep-level dissimilarity by focusing on value dissimilarities in relation to generations and work teams.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

As previously noted, there are currently four generations in the United States workforce. However, because Traditionalists make up only 5% of the workforce in the United States, the majority of the workplace consists of three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. These three generations grew up during different times, and therefore, have different life experiences. As a result, these differences may cause each generation to have its own set of deeply held values (Glass, 2007). Because each generation has differing values, the following were hypothesized:

**H1a:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Baby Boomers and Generation X in the workplace.

**H1b:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Baby Boomers and Generation Y in the workplace.

**H1c:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Generation X and Generation Y in the workplace.

Value dissimilarity across generations can be problematic when individuals are required to work together in a productive manner, such as in a work team setting in an organization. Conflict can be detrimental to a work team in terms of employee satisfaction and commitment, employee well being, and employee interactions (Gamero et al., 2008; Jehn, 1995; Medina et al., 2005). Perceived value dissimilarity is likely to
lead to conflict in a work team because members with differing values may have different views on how to interact with one another as well as the best way to accomplish a task (Jehn et al., 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Therefore, the following were hypothesized:

**H2a:** There will be a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task conflict.

**H2b:** There will be a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and relationship conflict.

Finally, because work teams are common in organizations (Tomlinson, 2005; Vangen & Huxhan, 2003), it is likely that the different generations will be expected to work together in a team setting. Therefore, it is important to examine how generational differences affect a work team's dynamic. Because generations tend to hold differing values, they may experience value dissimilarity, and because value dissimilarity can lead to conflict in work teams, it was hypothesized that when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, there will be no differences between the different generations and work team conflict. Hence, it was predicted that different generations in the workplace would experience perceived value dissimilarity that could lead to both task and relationship conflict within work teams.

**H3a.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H3b.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H3c.** There will be no differences between Generation X and Generation Y on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.
**H4a.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H4b.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H4c.** There will be no differences between Generation X and Generation Y on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is an online marketplace where people are compensated for completing human intelligence tasks (HITs). Participants were required to be at least 18 years old, live in the United States, have a HIT approval rate of at least 95%, and have a minimum of 50 HITs completed to be eligible to participate. Participants who completed all the required items and passed the quality checks were paid $0.25 for participating.

A brief description of the survey was listed for the participants, followed by a questionnaire. Members from each of the three generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) were recruited. To ensure there was an equal number of participants for each generation, three separate HITs were posted on MTurk. Only those who qualified as Baby Boomers in terms of birth year and age were able to take the survey for that group. Likewise, only those who qualified as Generation X and Generation Y in terms of birth year and age were able to take the survey for those two groups, respectively. Based on Cohen’s (1992) power tables, 64 usable participants were needed for each of the three groups to detect a medium effect with an alpha of .05 to achieve power of .80. Once a group reached this number, no one else was able to take the questionnaire for that group. The total number of participants collected was 274,
however, two participants failed the quality checks and 53 participants were disqualified for taking the survey in the wrong age group. Consequently, the total sample size of this study was 192. The age of usable participants ranged from 19 to 65 years old. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for the key demographic variables collected in this study.

**Measures**

**Generations.** The three different generations assessed were Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Consistent with Lancaster and Cox (2004), Baby Boomers were classified as anyone born between 1946 and 1964. Generation X consisted of those born between 1965 and 1981 and Generation Y was anyone born between 1982 and 2000. Therefore, participants between the ages of 50 and 68 were considered Baby Boomers. Generation X consisted of participants between the ages 33 and 49. Finally, participants between the ages of 14 and 32 were classified as Generation Y. However, in order to protect the rights of minors, participants under the age of 18 were not used in this study. Therefore, only participants between the ages of 18 and 68 were used in collecting data.

**Perceived value dissimilarity.** Perceived value dissimilarity was assessed using a scale developed by Hobman et al. (2003). The original scale contained six items and measured perceived visible, informational, and value dissimilarity. Cronbach’s alphas were .79 for visible dissimilarity, .80 for informational dissimilarity, and .87 for value dissimilarity. However, because the current study was only investigating value dissimilarity, Cooper’s (2013) adaptation of the Hobman et al. (2003) scale was used to measure perceived value dissimilarity. This adaptation was used in Cooper’s (2013) study.
Table 1

*Key Demographic Variables and Statistics of Participants*

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<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Participants (N=192)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Respond</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>15 (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>21 (10.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>141 (73.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>9 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaska Native</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Multi-Racial</td>
<td>3 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer Not to Respond</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
<td>154 (80.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed for wages</td>
<td>12 (6.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>8 (4.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of work &gt; 1 year</td>
<td>2 (1.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of work &lt; 1 year</td>
<td>6 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>6 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A – Unemployed/Retired/Homemaker</td>
<td>3 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to respond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Education</strong></td>
<td>2 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th grade or less</td>
<td>20 (10.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduated high school or equivalent</td>
<td>53 (28.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>31 (16.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>57 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors degree</td>
<td>24 (12.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-graduate degree</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to respond</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
because the original scale contained only two items that measured perceived value
dissimilarity. Cooper added an additional item from Jehn et al. (1999), but changed the
wording of the item from team level value dissimilarity to individual level
value dissimilarity in a team. The Hobman et al. (2003) items were measured on a 5-point
scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) whereas the Cooper item was measured on
a 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). Cooper reported Cronbach’s
alpha for the three items as .76. Additionally, Cronbach’s alpha for data used in the
current study was .75. Because Hobman et al.’s original items were measured on a 5-
point Likert scale and Cooper did not give an explanation as to why the adapted scale was
converted to a 7-point scale, the current study used all of Cooper’s items on a 5-point
scale to measure perceived value dissimilarity (see Appendix A).

**Work team conflict.** Task and relationship conflict were measured via the refined
version of the Intragroup Conflict Scale (ICS). The original ICS was created by Jehn
(1992, 1994) and consisted of nine items. However, Pearson et al. (2002) tested the
validity of the scale and found that an adapted six-item scale better measured task and
relationship conflict. Two dimensions are assessed in this instrument: relationship
(affective) conflict, and task (cognitive) conflict (see Appendices B and C). Relationship
conflict was measured by three items (anger, personal friction, and tension). An example
item was: “How much anger was there among the members of the group?” In addition,
task conflict was measured by three items (disagreements about ideas, content of
decisions, and differences of opinion.). An example item was: “How many disagreements
over different ideas were there?” Items were rated on a 5-point scale based on frequency
of each type of conflict in the respondents’ work team (1=none, 5=a great deal).
Cronbach’s alpha was shown to be .75 and .80 for task and relationship conflict, respectively (Pearson et al., 2002). Additionally, Cronbach’s alpha for the data collected in the current study was reported at .84 for task conflict and .89 for relationship conflict.

**Demographics.** The demographics measured were age, gender, race/ethnicity, country currently living in, nationality, level of education, work team dynamics, employment status, overall work experience, title of job position, work industry, and MTurk ID. The only two required demographics were age and MTurk ID (see Table 1 and Appendix D).

**Quality checks.** Participants were asked to respond to two quality checks to ensure that they were paying attention to the questions being asked. For each quality check, participants were asked to either select “Agree” or “Disagree.” Only participants who passed both quality checks were compensated for participating.

**Procedure**

Approval to conduct this study was sought from Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approval was obtained, data were collected from a crowdsourcing website called MTurk, where the link to the survey was provided on the MTurk interface (see Appendix E). Data were collected using SurveyGizmo. The title of the survey was posted on MTurk, along with the age requirement for each separate HIT group. Attached to each HIT group was the link to the survey with instructions for participants to click the link if they fell within the age requirement for the HIT group. Once participants clicked on the survey link, they were first given the informed consent form to read (see Appendix F). If participants agreed to the terms of the study (i.e. within the required age group, able to pass both quality checks, and answered the age
demographic question in order to be compensated) they proceeded to the actual survey
questions by clicking “I Agree.” If the participant did not to agree with these terms, or
they needed to take the survey under a different age group, they could simply close out of
the survey on this first page and then go back into MTurk to retake the survey, if desired.
The next part of the survey was a questionnaire consisting of nine questions. Three of the
questions were used to measure perceived value dissimilarity and six of the questions
measured relationship and task conflict in work teams. When answering the
questionnaire, participants were instructed to reflect on the past year they have worked in
an organization. Participants were asked to complete the measures of the study and the
quality checks. Participants were compensated $0.25 for completing the survey. There
was a demographics section at the end of the questionnaire and the only required question
in this section was the participant’s age. As long as the participant answered his or her
age (and the age fell within the age requirement of that HIT group), passed both quality
checks, and completed the survey, he or she was compensated $0.25. When participants
submitted their responses, they were given a debriefing form to read (see Appendix G).
Participants’ responses remained anonymous, as no identifying information was
collected. Moreover, the survey was set to an “anonymous” setting option to ensure that
no IP addresses were obtained.
Chapter IV

Results

A one-way between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were significant differences in perceived value dissimilarity among Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y in the workplace. Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c proposed that there would be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between each generation. The analysis revealed nonsignificant results, $F(2,189) = 1.80, p = 1.69 (M = 2.60, SD = .802)$. There were no significant differences in value dissimilarity among the different generations, failing to support Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c. Because the overall $F$ test was nonsignificant, no follow-up tests were conducted.

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine if there was a significant relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict. Results indicated that there was a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task conflict, $r(190) = .51, p < .001$. Results also indicated that there was a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and relationship conflict, $r(190) = .58, p < .001$. In general, the results indicate there is a positive association between perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict. These significant results support Hypotheses 2a and 2b.

Because Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were not significant, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were not supported. Still, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine if the obtained results would be different when controlling for type of conflict (task and
relationship). The ANCOVA indicated nonsignificant differences between the different generations and task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, \( F(2, 188) = 1.18, p = .309 \) \((M = 2.61, SD = .794)\). Similarly, the ANCOVA produced nonsignificant results between each generation and relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity \( F(2, 188) = .74, p = .476 \) \((M = 2.13, SD = .866)\).

Although these findings indicate that there are no differences between generations when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, the Hypotheses 3 and 4 are not supported because there were no significant differences among generations without controlling for perceived value dissimilarity. Thus, there was no support of perceived value dissimilarity mediating the relationship between each generation (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) and each type of conflict (task or relationship).

**Supplemental Analysis**

Supplemental analyses were conducted in order to explore the impact of age diversity within the data set. First, those who had worked in teams that included members more than five years of an age difference from themselves were distinguished from those who had not worked in teams that included members more than five years of an age difference from themselves. Then, independent \( t \)-tests were conducted to exam the relationship between those variables and perceived value dissimilarity as well task and relationship conflict. In relation to perceived value dissimilarity, there were no significant differences between those who worked with other team members that were more than five years of age from themselves and those that were not, \( t(190) = -.50, p = .63 \). In relation to task conflict, there were also no significant differences \( t(190) = -.81, p = .48 \).
Finally, in relation to relationship conflict, there were no significant differences as well
\( t(190) = .23, p = .52. \)

In addition, analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between those who did work in teams with more than five years of an age differences from themselves and each of the continuous variables (i.e., perceived value dissimilarity, task conflict, and relationship conflict). In relation to perceived value dissimilarity, there was no relationship between those who did work in teams with more than five years of an age difference from themselves and perceived value dissimilarity \( r(173) = .003, p = .97. \) In addition, there was no significant relationships between those working in teams with more than five years of an age difference on either task conflict \( r(173) = -.046, p = .55 \) or relationship conflict \( r(173) = -.016, p = .83. \)
Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how perceived value dissimilarity affected both task and relationship conflict in relation to the different generations and work teams. Results from the current study indicate that there were no differences among the different generations and perceived value dissimilarity. Although previous literature suggests that each generation has its own deeply held values and those differences in values may lead to perceived value dissimilarity (Hobman et al., 2003; Glass, 2007), this study failed to find evidence to support the existence of perceived value dissimilarity among the generations. Lack of supporting evidence could suggest that values may not actually be perceived as differently among each generation as previous literature might imply. In fact, it is possible that what are thought to be deeply held values within each generation are not actually all that strongly held. It could be that values are more enduring and change little over time and generations. It is possible that the measure used to examine perceived value dissimilarity in this study only evaluated enduring values, and therefore, a relationship between the different generations and value dissimilarity was not found.

It is also possible that these deeply held values among generations do differ, but it may not necessarily cause members to perceive themselves differently among members in a different generation. Perhaps these deeply held values among generations become
less important when members are expected to work together in a group setting. It could be that members from different generations seek out common interests or similarities when working together in order to feel a sense of collaboration among the group. Even if members do not hold the same values, they may still perceive themselves more similar than different among members of other generations because what they do have in common (working in the same group and towards the same goal) allows them to perceive themselves as more similar than dissimilar in regards to other group members. Furthermore, the fact that these work team members are working for the same organization implies that these employees may have similar work values. Working for the same organization could imply each member has similar values in terms of what they want out of a job or the company for which they work. These common work values may be more salient than value dissimilarity that is due to being a part of a different generation.

The current study found evidence to support a significant relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and both task and relationship conflict. Consistent with the previous literature (Gamero et. al, 2008), the data from the current study show that as perceived value dissimilarity increases among work team members, task and relationship conflict increases. Because this relationship was found across all generations, this finding may imply that the relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict is robust. This indicates that perceived value dissimilarity among team members is likely to lead to conflict, and therefore, is something for organizations to avoid in the workplace. Perceived value dissimilarity among group members may lead to conflict which could, in turn, lead to loss of productivity (Klein et al; 2010). Because it
is not likely that a work team will exist without perceived value dissimilarity among members, it is important that supervisors know how to manage perceived value dissimilarity. Managing dissimilarity among members in a work team could help reduce loss of productivity in the work team that is due to individual differences. Effective managing may mean acknowledging that there is dissimilarity among members, but emphasizing that each member is working towards the same goal. In addition, in order to effectively manage dissimilarity in a work team, managers may want to focus on the similarities of members rather than focus on their differences. Placing an emphasis on similarities and common goals within the work team may reduce the risk of having perceived value dissimilarity lead to conflict in the work team. It may be important for a supervisor to acknowledge rather than ignore the value dissimilarity that is likely to exist among members; however, it may be beneficial to help work team members realize the values they do have in common. This could be achieved by pointing out the values and mission statements of the organization as well as establishing and emphasizing what values and goals the work team itself has in common.

Finally, the current study did not find support for perceived value dissimilarly mediating the relationship between generational differences and task and relationship conflict. This could imply that there are little differences among the generations, and any difference there actually is, may not have much of an effect on task or relationship conflict. In fact, it may be that previous literature has exaggerated these age differences, and that they have become less meaningful. According to Costanza (2012), there may not be excessive differences between generations. Previous literature may have exaggerated these age differences, making them not meaningful. Previous literature that claims there
are indeed substantial differences among generations may simply be misinterpretations of these age differences.

It is important to mention that much of the previous literature describing generations appears to be based on stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes are that members of Traditionalists are typically inclined to follow the rules (Lieber, 2010), Baby Boomers tend to strive to get ahead and value material success (Kupperschmidt, 2000), members from Generation X are independent and adaptable (Hansen & Leuty, 2011) and members from Generation Y typically have busy schedules and things handed to them (Barnes, 2009). Describing generations based on stereotypes can be problematic because these stereotypes may lead to overly generalized assumptions about members in each generation. It is important to acknowledge that there are many individual differences among members of each generation.

In addition, these stereotypes or generalized assumptions could help explain why there was no relationship between each generation and perceived value dissimilarity. It could be that members of each generation cannot be grouped together as easily as we often like to think they can, and it is likely that members hold similar values between different generations. The previous literature findings on generations’ values and work ethics, such as Traditionalists value earning and saving money and view work as a duty and obligation (Hansen & Leuty, 2011), Baby Boomers tend to be workaholics and find value in their careers and seek meaningfulness in life from their work (Hansen & Leuty, 2011), Generation X members value loyalty to their supervisors and place a focus on their own personal career goals (Lieber, 2010), and members of Generation Y value the opportunity to produce good and quality ideas and results (Barnes, 2009) may be better
used as guidelines rather than assumptions on how group members tend to act in the workplace. It is important to emphasize that with any general assumption or stereotype there will always be individual differences among members. Members cannot be predicted to act or feel a certain way in any given situation based on how they are classified or categorized. This is important to remember when making decisions in the workplace, such as administering training and development programs or making administrative and promotional decisions.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study has some potential limitations. First, even though participants were required to provide their age in the demographics section in order to ensure accurate data, it is possible that participants may have misrepresented their age on the survey in order to participate. Because the age requirement was listed before the participants took the survey, the participants may have agreed to the age requirement in order to still be eligible to take the survey and receive compensation. In addition, participants may have misrepresented themselves in the demographics section in order to be eligible for the age requirement and still be compensated. The compensation was set at $0.25 in hopes to obtain higher quality data than if it were set at a lower rate. The average time it took for Baby Boomers to complete the survey was four minutes and 59 seconds. The average time for Generation X was four minutes and 30 seconds, and for Generation Y the average time was five minutes and 32 seconds. It was the researcher’s belief that setting a comparable compensation rate would produce higher quality data; however, it is possible that because the compensation rate was comparable, participants may have misrepresented their age in order to meet age requirements and receive the compensation.
Furthermore, age can be a sensitive subject and it is something many people often misrepresent. Even though the researcher assured confidentiality, it is possible participants still misrepresented their age due to the fact that age is a sensitive subject.

Another limitation is that, according to the previous literature, Generation Y should have included people between the ages of 14 to 32. However, in order to protect the rights of minors, participants needed to be at least 18 years or older in order to participate in the survey. This is a limitation because it made the age range for Generation Y unequal compared to Baby Boomers and Generation X. In addition, excluding those who were ages 14 to 17 may not have given as much of a representative sample of Generation X compared to if those ages 14 to 17 had been included. Also, because there are few Traditionalists in the workplace today, they were not included in this study.

An additional limitation is lack of age diversity among team members in the study. Although there was diversity in age within teams, nearly 80% of the teams were within five years of the age of the participant. This limitation may explain the lack of significant results due to the fact that many of the participants may not have been working with team members who were in a different generation. Because of this lack of age diversity within teams, participants may not have experienced much perceived value dissimilarity within their work team.

This study suggests areas for future research. First, this study focused on the effects of perceived value dissimilarity on generations and work teams. An area for future research would be measuring actual rather than perceived value dissimilarity and its effects on generations and work teams. This could be measured using an actual value dissimilarity scale rather than a perceived value dissimilarity scale. Although it may be
difficult and unpractical to measure actual value dissimilarity, it is something to consider for future research because diversity measured in terms of objective measures (actual dissimilarity) is not identical to what is perceived by group members (perceived dissimilarity; Randel, 2000).

Also, this study focused solely on perceived values among work team members. Another area for future research would be to examine actual deeply held values among members and see if those values do in fact differ among generations. Because this study did not find support for perceived values differing among generations, future research should examine the effects of measuring actual deeply held values and how this affects conflict in work teams.

In addition, the current study focused solely on value dissimilarity. Another area for future research could be examining visible and informational dissimilarity among generations. It is likely that visible and informational dissimilarity exists among each generation, and it is important to know the effects those types of dissimilarity have on work team conflict as well. It may be that both visible and informational dissimilarity are more salient than value dissimilarity. Oftentimes, a person’s values are unknown unless you truly get to know that individual. On the other hand, visible dissimilarity is the most salient because it is revealed just by looking at a person. In a work place setting, informational dissimilarity is likely to be obvious because it relates to a person’s experience, professionalism, and tenure. Therefore, value dissimilarity may be less obvious than both visible and informational dissimilarity and these areas should be further researched.
Finally, although age was used to screen people in order to have an equal number of participants in each of the three generations, diversity of age within teams was not a requirement to participate. The current study conducted supplemental analyses in order to examine age diversity among work teams. The analyses examined the relationship between those who had or had not worked in teams that included members more than five years of an age difference from themselves and variables such as perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict. The analyses produced non-significant findings. Additional supplemental analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between those who did work in teams with more than five years of an age difference from themselves and variables such as perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict. These analyses also did not produce significant results. Therefore, requiring diversity of age within teams is something that future research should consider. This would ensure that each group has diverse members in terms of age, which may result in greater perceived value dissimilarity in work teams, as opposed to members being relatively close in age. In addition, having diversity of age within teams as a requirement would allow the researcher to examine how much of an actual impact age differences has on perceived value dissimilarity and work teams.

Conclusions

This study focused on the effects of perceived value dissimilarity among the different generations in relation to conflict among work teams. Results from the current study indicate that there was no relationship between the different generations and perceived value dissimilarity. Lack of supporting evidence could suggest that perceived value dissimilarity among the different generations may not differ as much as previous
literature may imply and growing up in different time periods does not actually have much impact on how members from different generations perceive differences in values. These values may be more constant than previous literature suggests (Glass, 2007).

In addition, results from the current study showed support for the relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and both task and relationship conflict. Data from the current study show that as perceived value dissimilarity increases among work team members, task and relationship conflict in work teams increases as well. This relationship was found across all generations, which may imply a rather robust relationship between value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict. This indicates that perceived value dissimilarity among team members is likely to lead to conflict, and therefore, is something to caution in the workplace. In order to prevent this conflict from occurring, it is important the work team supervisors know how to manage this dissimilarity. Finally, the current study did not find support for perceived value dissimilarly mediating the relationship between each generation and task and relationship conflict. This could imply there are little differences among the generations, and any difference there actually is, may not have much of an effect on task or relationship conflict.

There are many opportunities for further research in relation to this study. Further research should investigate measuring actual rather than perceived value dissimilarity and its effects on generations and work team. Further research should also examine the effects of actual deeply held values among generations. Another area for future research would be examining visible and informational dissimilarity among generations rather than focusing solely on value dissimilarity. Finally, although age was used to screen people in order to have an equal number of participants in each of the three generations, diversity
of age within teams was not a requirement to participate. Requiring diversity of age within work teams is something that future research should consider.
Chapter VI

Summary

Employees who grew up in different generations have different world views, as well as expectations and values, which may lead to each generation having its own preference of communicating and interacting with one another (Glass, 2007). In turn, employees from different generations are likely to have dissimilar perceptions of an organization, coworkers, and supervisors. Consequently, organizations are faced with the challenge of integrating different generations in the workplace as well as the complexity of creating environments that not only attract, but also satisfy workers in each generation (Hansen & Leuty, 2011).

In work teams, employees are expected to work together and communicate with one another in a productive manner even though members often have different backgrounds, work styles, and preferences for communication. Although diversity in an organization can have a detrimental effect on team functioning, there is little understanding as to why because research tends to overlook the underlying issues (Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2007). Indeed, it is likely that these dissimilarities could lead to a source of conflict within an organization. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how dissimilarity among generations affects work team dynamics in organizations.
Generations

A generation can be defined as an identifiable group that shares years of birth and hence, significant life events, common historical events, and social life experiences at critical stages of development (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). The social context in which a generation develops tends to impact personality as well as feelings towards authority, organizations, goals, and aspirations for work life (Wong et al., 2008).

There is a general consensus that the four generational groups that make up the majority of the current workplace in the United States are Traditionalists (persons born before 1946), Baby Boomers (persons born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (persons born between 1965 and 1981), and Generation Y (persons born between 1982 and 2000; Lancaster & Cox, 2004).

Dissimilarity Across Generations

Because each generation grew up during a different time period, they each hold their own values, which may result in dissimilarity across cohorts. The examination of generational differences among employees is a critical and underdeveloped area in management research and can be a significant source of conflict in organizations (Westerman et al., 2007). The current study focused on perceived value dissimilarity in regards to generations. Value dissimilarity is the difference in work ethic, work values, and motivations when approaching tasks. Differing values may lead to differences in employees’ goals and opinions about what and how things should be done (Hobman et al., 2003).
Dissimilarity and work teams.

As the workplace has grown more diverse and the use of work teams has grown increasingly common, the effects of team dissimilarity on team process and performance have been investigated. However, the findings in these studies have been fairly inconsistent and the effects of team dissimilarity on team outcomes vary considerably from study to study (Klein, Knight, Ziegert, Lim, & Saltz, 2010), warranting further research. In relation to value dissimilarity and work groups, Hobman et al. (2003) found that the greater the individual’s dissimilarity in values, the more involved he or she was with task and relationship conflict, and the less involved the person was in the group.

Conflict and Work Teams

Because work teams are composed of diverse members, it is likely there will be differing views on team matters which could develop into conflict (Gamero, Gonzalez-Roma, & Peiro, 2008). The two main types of conflict are relationship conflict and task conflict. Relationship conflict is emotionally driven (Desivilya et al., 2010) and is associated with the emotional aspects of interpersonal relations in work teams. Task conflict is the perception of disagreements among members about the content of their decisions and is embedded in the substantive elements of teams’ responsibilities, such as projects or assignments (Desivilya et al., 2010).

Values and Work Teams

Value dissimilarity has been shown to relate to both task and relationship conflict (Jehn et al., 1997). Since each generation was introduced to work at differing points in time, work value differences may exist across the generations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), which could result in team value dissimilarity. Few researchers have investigated
the effects of value diversity on team effectiveness and process that may mediate such effects (Klein et al., 2010; Williams et al. 2007). Therefore, the current study aims to further our understanding on dissimilarity by focusing on value dissimilarities in relation to generations and work teams.

**Rationale and Hypotheses**

There are currently four generations in the United States workforce, however, because there are few Traditionalists in the workplace today, this study only focuses on Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. These three generations grew up during different times, and as a result, these differences may cause each generation to have its own set of deeply held values (Glass, 2007). Because each generation has differing values, the following is hypothesized:

**H1a:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Baby Boomers and Generation X in the workplace.

**H1b:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Baby Boomers and Generation Y in the workplace.

**H1c:** There will be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between Generation X and Generation Y in the workplace.

Perceived value dissimilarity is likely to lead to conflict in a work team because members with differing values may have different views on how to interact with one another as well as the best way to accomplish a task (Jehn et al., 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

**H2a:** There will be a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task conflict.
**H2b.** There will be a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and relationship conflict.

Finally, because work teams are common in organizations (Tomlinson, 2005; Vangen & Huxhan, 2003), it is likely that the different generations will be expected to work together in a team setting. Because generations tend to hold differing values, they may experience value dissimilarity, and because value dissimilarity can lead to conflict in work teams, it was hypothesized that when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, there will be no differences between the different generations and work team conflict. It was predicted that different generations in the workplace will experience perceived value dissimilarity that could lead to both task and relationship conflict within work teams.

**H3a.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H3b.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H3c.** There will be no differences between Generation X and Generation Y on task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H4a.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H4b.** There will be no differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.

**H4c.** There will be no differences between Generation X and Generation Y on relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity.
Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk), which is an online marketplace where people are compensated for completing human intelligence tasks (HITs). Participants were required to be at least 18 years old, live in the United States, have a HIT approval rate of at least 95%, and have a minimum of 50 HITs completed to be eligible to participate. Participants who completed all the required items and passed the quality checks were paid $0.25 for participating.

A brief description of the survey was listed for the participants, followed by a survey. Members from each of the three generations were recruited. To ensure there were an equal number of participants for each generation, three separate HITS were posted on MTurk. Only those who qualified as Baby Boomers in terms of birth year and age were able to take the survey for that group. Likewise, only those who qualified as Generation X and Generation Y in terms of birth year and age were able to take the survey for those two groups, respectively. Based on Cohen’s (1992) power tables, 64 usable participants were needed for each of the three groups and once a group reached this number, no one else was able to take the questionnaire for that group.

Measures

Generations. The three different generations assessed were Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Consistent with Lancaster and Cox (2004), Baby Boomers are classified as anyone born between 1946 and 1964, and therefore participants were between the ages of 50 and 58. Generation X consisted of those born between 1965 and 1981, and therefore participants were between the ages of 33 and 49. Finally,
Generation Y was anyone born between 1982 and 2000 and therefore, participants were between the ages of 14 and 32. However, in order to adhere to the informed consent regulations, participants under the age of 18 were not used in this study. Therefore, only participants between the ages of 18 and 68 were used in collecting data.

**Perceived value dissimilarity.** Perceived value dissimilarity was assessed using a Cooper’s (2013) adaptation of the Hobman et al. (2003) scale. The original scale contained six items and measured perceived visible, informational, and value dissimilarity. However, because the current study was only investigating value dissimilarity, Cooper’s (2013) adaptation of the Hobman et al. (2003) scale was used to measure perceived value dissimilarity. The current study used all of Cooper’s (2013) items on a 5-point scale to measure perceived value dissimilarity (see Appendix A). Cronbach’s alpha was calculated for the current study and was reported at .75.

**Work team conflict.** Task and relationship conflict were measured via the refined version of the Intrigroup Conflict Scale (ICS). The original ICS was created by Jehn (1992, 1994) and consisted of nine items. However, Pearson et al. (2002) tested the validity of the scale and found that an adapted six-item scale better measured task and relationship conflict. Two dimensions are assessed in this instrument: relationship conflict and task conflict (see Appendices B and C). Relationship and task conflict are each measured with three items. Items are rated on a 5-point scale based on frequency of each type of conflict in the respondents’ work team (1=none, 5=a great deal). Cronbach’s alpha for the current study was shown to be .84 and .89 for task and relationship conflict, respectively.
**Demographics.** The demographics measured were age, gender, race/ethnicity, country currently living in, nationality, level of education, work team dynamics, employment status, overall work experience, title of job position, and work industry, (see Appendix D).

**Quality checks.** Participants were asked to respond to two quality checks to ensure that they were paying attention to the questions being asked. For each quality check, participants were asked to either select “Agree” or “Disagree.” Only participants who pass both quality checks were compensated for participating.

**Procedure**

Approval to conduct this study was sought from Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approval was obtained, data was collected from a crowdsourcing website called MTurk, where the link to the survey was provided on the MTurk interface (see Appendix E). Data was collected using SurveyGizmo. The title of the survey and the age requirement for each HIT group were posted on MTurk. Attached to each HIT group was the link to the survey with instructions for participants to click the link if they fell within the age requirement for the HIT group. Once participants clicked on the survey link, they were first given the informed consent to read (see Appendix F). If participants agreed to the terms of the study they proceeded to the actual survey questions by clicking “I Agree.” If the participant did not to agree with these terms, or they needed to take the survey under a different age group, they could simply close out of the survey on the first page and go back into MTurk to take the survey, if desired. The next part of the survey was a questionnaire consisting of nine questions. As long as the participant answered what his or her age is in the demographics section (and the age fell within the
age requirement of that HIT group), passed both quality checks, and completed the
survey, he or she was compensated $0.25. When participants submitted their responses,
they were given a debriefing form to read (see Appendix G). Participants' responses
remained anonymous, as no identifying information was collected.

Results

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were
significant differences in perceived value dissimilarity between Baby Boomers,
Generation X, and Generation Y in the workplace. Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c proposed
that there would be a significant difference in perceived value dissimilarity between each
generation. The analysis revealed nonsignificant results $F(2,189) = 1.80, p = .169$. There
were no significant differences between value dissimilarity and generations, failing to
support hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c.

A Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine if there was a
significant relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship
conflict. Results indicated that there was a positive relationship between perceived value
dissimilarity and task conflict, $r(190) = .51, p < .01$. Results also indicated that there was
a positive relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and relationship conflict,
$r(190) = .58, p < .01$. In general, the results indicate there is a positive association
between perceived value dissimilarity and task and relationship conflict, supporting
hypotheses 2a and 2b.

Because hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were not significant, hypotheses 3 and 4 were
not supported. Still, an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine
if the obtained results would be different when controlling for type of conflict. The
ANCova indicated nonsignificant results between each generation and task conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, \( F(2, 188) = 1.18, p = .309 \). Similarly, the ANCOVA produced nonsignificant results between each generation and relationship conflict when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity \( F(2, 188) = .74, p = .476 \).

Although these findings indicate that there are no differences between generations when controlling for perceived value dissimilarity, the hypotheses are not supported because there were no significant differences between generations without controlling for perceived value dissimilarity. Thus, there was no support of perceived value dissimilarity mediating the relationship between each generation and each type of conflict.

**Supplemental Analysis**

Supplemental analyses were conducted in order to explore the impact of age diversity within the data set. First, those who had worked in teams that included members more than five years of an age difference from themselves were distinguished from those who had not worked in teams that included members more than five years of an age difference from themselves. Then, independent t-tests were ran examining the relationship between those variables and perceived value dissimilarity as well task and relationship conflict. In relation to perceived value dissimilarity, there were no significant differences \( t(190) = -.50, p = .63 \). In relation to task conflict, there were also no significant differences \( t(190) = -.81, p = .48 \). Finally, in relation to relationship conflict, there were no significant differences as well \( t(190) = .23, p = .52 \).

In addition, more analyses were run to determine the relationship between those who did work in teams with more than five years of an age differences from themselves and each continuous variable (perceived value dissimilarity, task conflict, and
relationship conflict). In relation to perceived value dissimilarity, there was no relationship \( r(173) = .003, p = .97 \). In addition, there was not a significant relationship between either task conflict \( r(173) = -.046, p = .55 \) or relationship conflict \( r(173) = -.016, p = .83 \).

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to evaluate how perceived value dissimilarity affected both task and relationship conflict in relation to the different generations and work teams. Results from the current study indicate that there was no relationship between the different generations and perceived value dissimilarity. Lack of supporting evidence could suggest that perceived value dissimilarity among the different generations may not differ as much as previous literature might imply.

It is also possible that these deeply held values among generations do differ, but it may not necessarily cause members to perceive themselves differently among members in a different generation. Perhaps these deeply held values among generations become less important when members are expected to work together in a group setting and that members from different generations seek out common interests or similarities when working together.

Also, this study focused solely on perceived values among work team members. Another area for further research would be to examine actual deeply held values among members and see if those values do in fact differ among generations. Because this study did not find support for perceived values differing among generations, future research should examine the effects of measuring actual deeply held values and how this affects conflict in work teams.
The current study found evidence to support a significant relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and both task and relationship conflict. Consistent with the previous literature (Gamero et.al, 2008), the data from the current study show that as perceived value dissimilarity increases among work team members, task and relationship conflict in work teams increases as well. This indicates that perceived value dissimilarity among team members is likely to lead to conflict, and therefore, is something to caution in the workplace. Furthermore, it is important that supervisors know how to manage perceived value dissimilarity.

Finally, the current study did not find support for perceived value dissimilarly mediating the relationship between each generation and task and relationship conflict. This could imply that looking at each generation may not necessarily be important. There could be little difference among the generations, and any difference there actually is, may not have much of an effect on task or relationship conflict.

It is important to mention that much of the previous literature describing generations appears to be based on stereotypes. Describing generations based on stereotypes can be problematic because these stereotypes may lead to overly generalized assumptions about members in each generation. It is important to acknowledge that there are many individual differences among members of each generation.

In addition, these stereotypes could help explain why there was no relationship between each generation and perceived value dissimilarity. The previous literature findings on generations' values and work ethics may be better used as guidelines rather than assumptions on how group members tend to act in the workplace. It is important to
emphasize that group members cannot be predicted to act or feel a certain way in any given situation based on how they are classified or categorized.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study has some potential limitations. First, even though the participants’ age was asked in the demographics section in order to ensure accurate data, it is possible that participants may have misrepresented their age on the survey in order to participate. The participants may have agreed to the age requirement in order to still be eligible to take the survey and receive compensation. Furthermore, age can be a sensitive subject and it is something many people often misrepresent, so it is possible participants misrepresented their age in the current study.

Another limitation is that, according to the previous literature, Generation Y should have included people between the ages of 14 to 32. However, due to legal aspects and the informed consent, participants needed to be at least 18 years or older in order to participate in the survey. This made the age range for Generation X unequal compared to Baby Boomers and Generation Y and excluding those who were ages 14 to 17 may not have given as much of a representative sample of Generation X compared to if those ages 14 to 17 had been included. Also, Traditionalists were not included in this study. Although there are few Traditionalists in the work place today, it is important to note that excluding an entire generation may have produced less generalizable findings than if all the generations had been included.

This study also suggests areas for future research. First, this model focused on the effects of perceived value dissimilarity on generations and work teams. An area for future research would be measuring actual rather than perceived value dissimilarity and its
effects on generations and work team. In addition, the current study focused solely on value dissimilarity so another area for future research would be looking at visible and informational dissimilarity among generations. Finally, requiring diversity of age within teams is something that future research should consider.

**Conclusions**

This study focused on the effects of perceived value dissimilarity among the different generations in relation to conflict among work teams. Results from the current study indicate that there was no relationship between the different generations and perceived value dissimilarity. Lack of supporting evidence could suggest that perceived value dissimilarity among the different generations may not differ as much as previous literature might imply.

In addition, results from the current study showed support for the relationship between perceived value dissimilarity and both task and relationship conflict. Data from the current study show that as perceived value dissimilarity increases among work team members, task and relationship conflict in work teams increases as well. This indicates that perceived value dissimilarity among team members is likely to lead to conflict, and therefore, is something to caution in the workplace.

Finally, the current study did not find support for perceived value dissimilarly mediating the relationship between each generation and task and relationship conflict. This could imply that looking at each generation may not necessarily be important. There could be little difference among the generations, and any difference there actually is, may not have much of an effect on task or relationship conflict.
There are many opportunities for further research in relation to this study. Further research should investigate measuring actual rather than perceived value dissimilarity and its effects on generations and work team. Another area for future research would be looking at visible and informational dissimilarity among generations rather than focusing solely on value dissimilarity. Finally, requiring diversity of age within teams is something future research should consider.
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Appendix A

Perceived Value Dissimilarity

For the complete Perceived Value Dissimilarity scale, please refer to:

Appendix B

Work Team Conflict- Relationship Conflict

For the Work Team Conflict Scale relating to relationship conflict, please refer to:

Appendix C

Work Team Conflict - Task Conflict

For the Work Team Conflict Scale relating to task conflict, please refer to:

Appendix D

Demographic Items

*Age (required)*

*Gender*
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to respond

*Race/Ethnicity*
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native American/Alaska Native
- Other/Multi-Racial
- Prefer not to respond

*In what country are you currently living?*

*What is your nationality?*

*What is your level of Education*
- 12th grade or less
- Graduated high school or equivalent
- Some college, no degree
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor’s Degree
- Post-graduate degree
- Prefer not to respond

*How many people (not including yourself) were in your work team you were referring to when completing this survey?*

*How many of those people in your work team that you were referring to when completing this survey are close to your age (within 5 years)?*

*What is your employment status?*
- Employed for wages
• Self-employed
• Out of work for more than 1 year
• Out of work for less than 1 year
• Student
• N/A – Unemployed / Retired / Homemaker
• Prefer not to respond

In terms of months or years, what is your overall work experience? Please write the word “months” or “years” after the numeric value you provide. 

What is the title of your job position?

• Top Level Executive
• Senior Vice President
• Vice President
• Director
• Manager
• Professional
• Administrative/Support personnel
• N/A – Unemployed / Retired / Homemaker
• Other
• Prefer not to respond

In which industry do you work?

• Accounting / Finance / Banking
• Administration / Clerical / Reception
• Advertisement / PR
• Architecture / Design
• Arts / Leisure / Entertainment
• Beauty / Fashion
• Buying / Purchasing
• Construction
• Consulting
• Customer Service
• Distribution
• Education
• Health Care (Physical and Mental)
• Human Resource Management
• Management (Senior / Corporate)
• News / Information
• Operations / Logistics
• Planning (Meeting, Events, etc.)
• Production
• Real Estate
- Research
- Restaurant / Food Service
- Science / Technology / Programming
- Social Service
- Student
- Other
- N/A – Unemployed / Retired / Homemaker
- Prefer not to respond

MTurk Worker ID (required)______________
Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. You will be given a short survey and will be asked to answer questions based on your experience as a member of a work team in the workplace. In order to participate in the study, and be compensated for taking this survey, you must be between the ages of 18 to 32. By continuing with this survey, you are indicating that you agree to these terms and you meet the age requirement for this HIT group. In addition, you will be required to provide your age in the demographics section of the survey. If you do not provide your age in this section, and/or if your age does not fall in the HIT group age range you agreed to, you will not be compensated for taking this survey.

Make sure to leave this window open as you complete the survey. When you are finished, you will return to this page to paste the code into the box.

Please note that you will have to enter your unique ID TWICE, once HERE and once at the END of the survey in order to be compensated, if eligible.

Please click the following link in order to access the survey. After you complete the survey, click the “Submit” button below.

*Please note, this MTurk Interface is just one of three places where an age requirement was listed in order to take the survey.

**Also, please note that this MTurk Interface is just one of three example age requirements. The other two state “In order to participate in the study, and be compensated for taking this survey, you must be between the ages of 33 to 49” and “In order to participate in the study, and be compensated for taking this survey, you must be between the ages of 50 to 68.”
Appendix F

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Whitney Ohmer at Xavier University. The purpose of this study is to investigate differences in work teams in the workplace.

In this study, you will be given a short survey, and you will be asked to answer questions based on your experience as a member of a work team in the workplace. You will be asked to answer demographic items as well. The total time to complete this task will be approximately 15 minutes, but you will be given 1 hour to complete the entire survey.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from Xavier University. You will be paid $0.25 for participating in this study. However, please note that if you do not complete all required items, or if you do not pass the quality checks, you will not be eligible for compensation. In addition, you must fall in the age range described in the posting of this HIT to participate in this study.

Although you will be required to enter your MTurk unique worker ID at the end of the survey to receive compensation if eligible, the researchers will not be able to access any identifying information you provided to Amazon or MTurk. Moreover, the researchers will not release any of your survey responses to Amazon or MTurk, and only the researchers conducting this study will have access to your responses. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. Finally, no analyses of any kind will be conducted prior to the removal of all MTurk ID numbers from the data set.

If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Whitney Ohmer at ohmerw@xavier.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Mark Nagy at nagyms@xavier.edu. Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at 513-745-2870.

By clicking “I Agree,” you agree to the following statement: I have been given information about this research study and its risks and benefits and have had the opportunity to ask questions and to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I freely give my consent to participate in this research project.
August 22, 2014

Whitney Ohmer
3501 Section Road Apt. 209
Cincinnati, OH 45237

Re: Protocol #14-007, Generational Differences in the Workplace: How Does Dissimilarity Affect the Different Generations in Relation to Work Teams?

Dear Ms. Ohmer:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45CFR46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB. We appreciate your thorough treatment of the issues raised and your timely response.

If you wish to modify your study, including the addition of data collection sites, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Morrell E. Mullins, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Xavier University

MEM/ob
Appendix H

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in our research project. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of different generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) and value dissimilarity on work team conflict (Relationship and/or Task Conflict). Based on your age, you qualified as a member of one of three different generations. Please do not discuss the specifics of our study with anyone or distribute this form to any potential participants, as data collection is ongoing. If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to inquire about the results of this study, please contact the principal investigator, Whitney Ohmer at ohmerw@xavier.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Mark Nagy at nagyms@xavier.edu.