THE IMPACT OF FOUR GENERATIONS ON THE LEISURE ORGANIZATION WORKPLACE

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Abstract

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Extensive literature suggested that four generations are fully entrenched in the workplace and the community, and recreation and leisure organizations are no exception. Members of each generation possess inherent characteristics and traits that create workplace preferences for communication and use of technology. The study of communication theories provided the theoretical framework for which to study generational communication within leisure organizations. Research suggested that generational differences in communication and technology preferences indeed exist and there will always be differences in interpersonal communication based on these generational preferences. The purpose of this research study was to examine the communication styles and use of technology of each of the four 20th century generations. Open-ended questions were administered to focus groups to gather qualitative data. The study was restricted to one urban recreation department in a mid-sized city in the Western United States.

Based on analysis of the data, one theme emerged to capture how study respondents communicate and use technology across generations: people adapt and accommodate in order to successfully communicate with one another. Adaptation refers to the ways in which respondents adjusted what they communicated and how they
communicated with colleagues of various rank. Accommodation refers to the ways in which they combined conventional forms of communication, e.g., written memos or telephone calls with newer technologies and their messaging applications, e.g., e-mail and phone texts.

This research study revealed that in the agency studied, leisure service employees across the four generations adapted their communication styles to accommodate the technology preferences of their colleagues. In addition, this study confirmed that there is a generational filter through which all communication flows and the results of this research study that may help the leisure practitioner navigate through generational differences and preferences, and can help predict the communication behavior of each staff member regardless of their generation. As workplaces shift and the four generations work together longer, it will be more important than ever before for leisure organization workers to adapt to and accommodate the communication styles and technology preferences of each generation.

_________________________________________, Committee Chair
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Structurally, the leisure organization workplace is like any other workplace; it may be a neighborhood community center, a downtown government office with sterile cubicles and metal desks, a state-of-the-art cruise ship, or a small, isolated wooden building nestled in a forest. However, inside these workplaces are people who need to be able to successfully communicate with each other, and therein lies the problem. In addition to the need to communicate, there are also differences among and between people due to age and generation. No matter the age of workers, or the so-called “generation gap,” the ability to communicate in the workplace is vital. For decades, sociologists, psychologists and communication experts have proposed and introduced a variety of communication theories, models and styles. As such, labeling and seeking to understand and apply these theories, models and styles to the workplace may result in harmony, increased productivity and efficiency, and positive interactions among people.

Generations

The study of generations, and more specifically the issues surrounding this dynamic topic, has sparked interest in both academia and mass media. A heightened interest in the study of generations emerged with the publication of the book, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* by Strauss and Howe (1991). Since then, many books, publications and websites have been dedicated to the discussion about the four contemporary generations: the “Traditionalist” generation, the
“Baby Boomers,” “Generation X,” and the “Millennials.” People of these four generations were born in the 20th century and are currently working and interacting in the 21st century workplace. Because people are living longer, these four generations interact daily in the recreation and leisure workplace, whether as employees or volunteers in leisure settings and programs.

Need for the Study

The literature identifies the four generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, and describes their particular communication styles and technology preferences. Research suggests that four generations are fully entrenched in the workplace and the community, and recreation and leisure organizations are no exception. Recreation professionals must communicate and work closely with superiors, subordinates, colleagues, and volunteers who belong to one of the four generations which may lead to differences, confusion and age-related exclusion. Since people live longer and lead more active lifestyles, recreation and leisure professionals now find themselves working closely with four generations of employees and volunteers. As will be demonstrated in the literature, many studies have described how each generation may or may not work together well in the generalized workplace (Bourne, 2009; Buckley, Beu, Novicevic, & Sigerstad, 2001; Smola & Sutton, 2002). There appears to be little descriptive research that demonstrates communication styles and technology preferences within leisure organization workplaces.
With the knowledge that each generation brings unique and valuable assets to the workplace, Hughes (2009) reported that public agencies must adapt to the changing workplace and alter potentially long-held beliefs and attitudes about generational differences in the workplace. Armed with the knowledge of each generation’s tendencies toward communication and technology preferences, all four generations can meet in the middle to overcome stereotypes and embrace generational diversity. Williams and Nussbaum (2001) suggested “…communication between people who are of very different ages…and who have experienced quite different life events in unique historical contexts” is worth studying and provides an interactive challenge (p. 7). Having the knowledge of each generation’s attributes and communication and technology preferences may assist the leisure professional as well as enhance the leisure organization’s workplace environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the communication styles and use of technology of each of the four 20th century generations within one urban recreation department in a mid-sized city in the western United States.

Research Questions

The two questions that guided this exploratory research study are:
1. What are the communication styles within a public leisure organization and how do these communication styles manifest across each generation?

2. What are the technology preferences of the different generations and how do they use technology?

Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study. These definitions are meant as an introduction to the concepts and as an initial guide for the reader. They are presented here in a simplified and rudimentary fashion and will be explained in greater depth through the literature review and the presentation of findings. Interpretive research allows for a multiplicity of meanings to be attached to these terms and the behaviors related to the terms. It is up to the researcher to present the study in enough richness, depth and clarity to allow the reader to develop her/his own conceptual understandings.

Communication: The basic definition of communication is the exchange of information between people, e.g. by means of speaking, writing, or using a common system of signs or behavior (Kreps, 1986).

Technology: For the purposes of this study, the term “technology” will be synonymous with information and communication technologies (ICTs) as described by Stephens and Davis (2009). ICTs are to the tools used to communicate and by which to enhance the communication process.

Generation: Kupperschmidt, as cited in Smola and Sutton (2002), defined a generation as an identifiable group that shares birth years, age location, and significant life events at
critical developmental stages, divided by five to seven years into the first wave, core
group, and last wave.

Cohort: Smola and Sutton (2002), described a generational group, often referred to as a
cohort, as those who share historical or social life experiences, the effects of which are
relatively stable over the course of their lives. Moreover, these life experiences tend to
distinguish one generation from another. A cohort develops a personality that influences
a person’s feelings toward authority and organizations, what they desire from work, and
how they plan to satisfy those desires (Kupperschmidt, as cited in Smola & Sutton 2002).

Traditionalists, now older adults, who were born before 1946, are still in the workplace in
their late 60s and are retiring or retired. “Traditionalist” is a combination of two earlier
generations known as “Veterans,” “WWII generation” and “Silent” (Sherman, 2006).
Traditionalists in this paper may also be referred to as “Seniors” or “Senior Citizens.”

Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964. Members of this generation valued
their individualism and creativity, but could be described as egocentric, and spent their
lives rewriting the rules (Zemke, et al. as cited in Sherman, 2006). Baby Boomers, who
will also be referred to as “Boomers” throughout this paper, were named as such because
of the boom in their births. Generation X members were born between 1965 and 1981,
Wiant (1999) described the childhood of Generation X as stressful due to rising
unemployment and divorce rate, which left members of this generation distrustful of
institutions and authority and reliant only upon themselves. Generation X will also be
referred throughout this paper as “Gen-Xers” and “X-ers.” Millennials were born
between 1982 and 2000, and named as such because of its location to the beginning of the new millennium. Millennials were often over-protected and over-scheduled by their Baby Boomer and older Gen-Xer parents. This generation has also been called “Generation Y” to follow the pattern of the title “Generation X” (Chester, 2006).

The next chapter will include a thorough literature review and provide the theoretical framework for the basis of this research study.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to conduct a thorough review of the literature related to the four 20th century generations, which will outline and describe each of the four generations’ traits, characteristics and preferences for communication and use of technology. Although an abundance of generational information was available within popular media sources, the review of the literature for this study focused mostly upon research articles and books. Also reviewed are organizational communication theories and how these build a theoretical framework for the discussion of generational communication.

The literature is extensive in generational studies and its implications for the workplace. Most of the literature reviewed for this study included corporate work settings (Dennis & Thomas, 2007; Galinsky, 2007; Hughes, 2009; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Nyce, 2007; Pitt-Catsouphes, 2007; Raines, 2003; and Smola & Sutton, 2002); college and university workplaces (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007); the counseling and nursing workplace (Carver & Candela, 2008; Leitner, Jackson & Shaughnessy, 2009; Swenson, 2008; Sherman, 2006; Reith, 2005); service-oriented workplaces such as libraries (Lancaster, 2003); and the parks and recreation field (Ward, Farley & Bluman, 1986; Copper, 1985; Ewart & Voight, 1983, 1985; Star, 1985; Black & O’Leary, 1986). Generational diversity seemed to be a “hot topic” in the late 2000s, and
sources included books, research articles, websites, and e-newsletters devoted to this topic.

The next section introduces a variety of communication theories, especially theories related to organizational communication, which will provide a theoretical framework for which to study generational communication and technology preferences within leisure organizations.

Communication Theories

This section introduces theories of interpersonal, intergenerational and organizational communication. This section also introduces and outlines popular communication styles and models to assist in the understanding of generational communication styles and technology preferences that may be found in the leisure organization workplace. Communication theories comprise as broad an area as the study of leisure. Just as leisure has its myriad definitions and sub-categories (e.g. community recreation, outdoor, and tourism) so, too, does communication include ubiquitous definitions and sub-categories (e.g. organizational, interpersonal, and marketing).

To gain a better understanding of communication overall, especially as it relates to this study, the ability to recognize levels of communication in organizations is important. There are four broad methods of communication: speaking, reading, listening and writing, and all communication is based in these methods. For the parameters of this research study, organizational communication theories and models will not include such nuances as non-verbal communication such as eye-contact, body language, posture, and
facial expressions, and therefore will focus on the spoken and written word including the use of technology for delivering messages through mobile phone texting and e-mail.

Kreps (1986) identified several levels of communication which include intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group, multi-group, public and mass communication. *Intrapersonal* communication is the most basic level and is used to interpret messages and send messages to others. Communication between two people is recognized as *interpersonal* communication and Kreps (1986) stated that this level utilizes communication that is face-to-face or via telephone. Hanke (2009) stated that everyone has preferences, certain skills and behaviors that define us and that recognizing these styles in ourselves and others can lead to better communication. An important outcome of interpersonal communication is the development of human relationships (Kreps, 1986), which fosters cooperation and coordination in an organizational culture.

As relationships are built within an organization, small group communication is necessary for collaboration, and occurs among three or more people, again, in face-to-face contexts and by the use of communication media (Kreps, 1986). Calabrese (2000) suggested that professional behavior, when exhibited in similar attitudes and values, is developed when groups of members work in the same profession because of shared, common work goals. Kreps (1986) further stated that small group communication becomes more complex as subgroups are formed. Multi-group communication exists through the combination of the previously mentioned levels in coordinating large numbers of people in the shared accomplishment of complex goals (Kreps, 1986). In an
organization, formal channels of communication must exist and be cultivated among the different members to cope with this complexity. Kreps (1986) stated that organizational communication is composed of succeedingly more complex and encompassing hierarchical levels of intrapersonal, interpersonal, small-group, and multi-group communication (p. 61). Public and mass communication each utilize the previous four levels of communication, but are differentiated by the sender/speaker sending a message to a large audience through a variety of methods and use of technology.

Organizational communication theories may illuminate how people communicate in the workplace. Kreps (1986) and Littlejohn (1983) described three main theories of organization: classical theory, human-relations perspective, and social-systems theory. These three theories have had mixed influences on organizational communication in the 20th century and are discussed next.

Classical theory was developed in the early 1900s and concentrated on identifying the most efficient and ordered methods for accomplishing organizational tasks. Communication is central to the existence of the organization. Littlejohn (1983) explained Classical theory assumes that organizational members are instruments of management and embrace bureaucracy, and ultimately focused on job functions, levels of authority and control, and predictability of behavior. Littlejohn (1983) described that classical theories were modeled after the military and the Catholic Church and mirrored the metaphor of the machine. Of the many classical theories, Max Weber’s Theory of Bureaucracy focused on organizational structure, strict order of hierarchy, and existence
of written rules. Classical theory attempted to enhance management’s ability to predict and control the behavior of their workers (Kreps, 1986; Littlejohn, 1983).

Theorists like McGregor and Likert popularized Human-relations theory in the 1930s and 1940s as a reaction to the strict regulations, rigid structure and controls of Classical theory. Human-relations theory emphasized the individual and social relations in organizational life and sought to improve organizations by increasing employee satisfaction and recognizing human potential (Kreps, 1986, p. 63-64). Littlejohn (1983) described that social relationships are at the heart of organizational behavior; worker productivity and effectiveness is contingent on the social well-being of workers. By the time the older Baby Boomers entered the workforce in the 1960s and emerged as leaders in the 1970s, they had embraced the tenets of two-way, face-to-face communication and social relationships, and well-being in the workplace.

The social-systems theory sought to blend the structure of classical theory with the human needs of the human-relations theory (Littlejohn, 1983). This provided a philosophical viewpoint of a person with their social environment and claimed to provide the best theoretical basis for the study of human communication. Kreps (1986) stated a social system is composed of persons or groups of people who interact and mutually influence each other’s behavior. Carl Weick’s social-systems theory was a process-oriented model stressing human interaction as the central phenomenon of organizing (Littlejohn, 1983). Weick’s model viewed organizations as activities, rather than structures or entities, therefore, communication is the crucial process performed by
organization members to enable ongoing organization (Kreps, 1986). Littlejohn (1983) described Structural Functionalism, developed in the late 1970s, as using an eclectic system approach that relies on information as a significant resource in organizations. Littlejohn (1983) further described this model as being significant in the communication field because it was one of the truly organizational communication theories.

These three main organizational communication theories formulated a foundation for studying generational communication in the leisure organization workplace. Another theory to consider is the life-span developmental perspective used to frame and orient intergenerational communication (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). The researchers postulated that the potential for development extends throughout the lifespan, is a life-long process, is multidirectional, is a process of continuous growth and decline, is affected by intra- and interindividual diversity, and is interdependent on transactional relationships (p. 6-7). As the world population ages, issues of ageism and perceptions of social norms related to aging must be studied. All of these theories sought to describe organizational bureaucracy and communication.

Black and O’Leary (1986) discussed leadership and management theories as they related to organizational communication in the context of the leisure organization workplace. Many of these models outlined key functions such as organization, planning, directing, and communicating. Within recognized models that outline traits and behaviors of leaders, listed among the top ten cited characteristics were the traits of fluency and expressiveness, as well as behaviors relating to disseminating information and
clarification of roles, all of which point to communications skills necessary for leadership (Black & O’Leary, 1986). Ward, et al. (1986) suggested that communication is a critical process within an organization and as such, is especially important within leisure service agencies because most agencies are dispersed throughout the service area, and may provide services requiring specialized and diverse personnel with differing information needs. “Communication (or failure to communicate) creates the greatest problem for leisure service agencies” (Ward, et al. 1986, p. 2). Ewart and Voight (1985) agreed that effective communication is “often the hardest process in department operations to achieve” (p.83).

The next section focuses on specific communication styles and models that have roots in the organizational communication theories previously discussed.

Communication Styles and Models

Many communication styles can be found in popular media. Most of these styles can be traced back to Hippocrates in 400 B.C., which emphasizes a four-factor theory of temperament and personality. Merenda (1987) described the Hippocratic model that stated “humans could be classified into one of four types of temperaments according to body ‘humors’ of blood, black bile, yellow bile and phlegm” (p. 367). These humors correspond to the following temperaments: sanguine—optimistic and hopeful (blood); melancholic—sad and depressed (black bile); choleric—irascible (yellow bile); and phlegmatic—apathetic (phlegm). Galen, a Greek physician in the 2nd century A.D., also
outlined the four temperaments of humans in his writings, which were eventually translated by German philosopher Kant in the 18th century (Merenda, 1987).

The Hippocratic model spawned many communication styles and models and most can be based on a variety of personality and temperament assessments. Communication styles come in all shapes and sizes. Most focus on a quadrant of styles: Aggressive, Passive, Assertive, and Passive Aggressive; others are based on Carl Jung’s theory which compared tendencies of task-orientation to people-orientation: Controllers, Collaborators, Analyzers, and Socializers (Hanke, 2009). Some identify temperament types with colors or animals. Still others compare communication styles with leadership styles which can be broken into a variety of styles: Leaders who are visionary, affiliative, coaching, democratic, pacesetter and commanding. Hackman and Johnson, as cited in Ruddick (2009), described Path-Goal Theory in a quadrant of communication styles as Directive, Supportive, Participative and Achievement-oriented. Popular literature often described different generations as fitting into a particular communication and leadership style (Lancaster, 2003; Wen, Starrett & Kilburn, 2007; and Reynolds, Bush, & Geist, 2008).

Personality and temperament assessments work in conjunction with communication styles. The Kiersey Temperament Sorter and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are two well-known assessments that test for preferences in communication and identify the style to assist individuals both personally and at work. Jourdain (2004) suggested that the value in self-assessments help determine personality style, learning
styles and communication styles, or other aspects of individuals, and help depersonalize conflict in interpersonal relationships (p. 1). When used appropriately, the utilization of personality and temperament assessments may help workers better understand their communication styles as well as the people with whom they work. This backdrop of communication theories and styles is revisited in Chapter 5 as these relate to generational preferences in the leisure organization workplace.

Directly on the heels of effective communication are the tools for communication themselves. The next section introduces the tools of communication within the context of the workplace.

Tools of Communication

Ewart and Voight (1985) described hierarchal communication within parks and recreation departments, the tools and methods used in the field consisted of typewritten, hardcopy memorandums dispersed from upper management down to subordinates in a variety of ways (U.S. mail, interoffice/couriered mail). Other technological tools used were telephones and two-way radios to disseminate information into the operational field. Even a small leisure service organization would receive information slowly when utilizing the above-mentioned tools. This discussion holds key relevance considering that this was written in the mid-1980s before many leisure service organizations utilized computers on a regular basis. Traditionalist and Baby Boomer leisure practitioners will likely remember this era when computers were introduced into their leisure service agencies.
Of course, in the 20th- and beginning of the 21st centuries, the tools for communication evolved rapidly to the current use of personal computers, mobile phones, and the Internet, forever changing the way work gets done. Despite advances in technology devices and their availability, many leisure organizations may still be “behind the times” when it comes to linking communication with technology, and still conducting business as described in the previous paragraph.

The previous section described the theoretical framework for this research study, outlined communication styles and models, and introduced the tools of communication. The next section describes the four generations and discusses their communication styles and technology preferences; along with the impact technology has had on communication in the workplace.

The Four 20th Century Generations

The previous section of this chapter presented a theoretical framework by which to study generational characteristics and explore communication and technology preferences of each generation in the leisure organization workplace. Smola and Sutton (2002) suggested as another generation of workers enters the work force, managers must be ready to deal with the generational differences that appear to exist among workers. The end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries have seen a rare historical event in the workplace where four of the 20th century generations have the opportunity to work together. This phenomenon is a result of societal and health shifts, where people of each generation are living longer, and thus, staying in the workplace longer (Nyce, 2007).
Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000) have written books on the study of generations, particularly how these generations are depicted in American history. Their research and predictions may change how human history is viewed and what the future holds. Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000) described in detail each American generation over a 400 year span, which ranges from the Puritans who first came to America, to the Millennials who came of age in the year 2000, and are graduating college and entering the workforce.

The four 20th century generations include: 1. “Traditionalists,” now older adults who were born before 1946, are still in the workplace in their late 60s and are retiring. According to Yost (2008), Traditionalists represent just five percent of the workforce. 2. The “Baby Boomers” named as such because of the boom in their births between 1946 and 1964 (Smola & Sutton, 2002); now make up 45 percent of the workforce (Yost, 2008). 3. “Generation X,” now young and middle adults who were born between 1965 and 1981, account for nearly 30 percent of the workplace. 4. Last but not least are the “Millennials,” who were born between 1982 and 2000, and rival the Baby Boomers in sheer numbers, but currently only make up 20 percent of the workplace (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

In their generational research, Strauss and Howe (1991) described each generational type as part of a recurring cycle determined by age location relative to social moments. According to Strauss and Howe (1991), each generation has its own biography, which tells the story of how the personality of the generation is shaped and how that personality subsequently shapes other generations. In their model, generations are defined
as “a cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality” (p. 60). In terms of the length of a generation, there is no absolute beginning or end to generational groups, and they typically span 15 to 20 years (Sherman, 2006). Lancaster and Stillman (2002), Raines (2003), and Coomes and DeBard (2004) also described in detail the extent to which the four generations impact work places, although these sources may agree to disagree on the exact years and titles of the four main generations” (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The Traditionalist generation, currently senior citizens, is a combination of ages of older adults born before 1946 and is also known in the literature as the “Silent” generation, the “GI Generation,” “WWII,” “Veterans,” or “Matures.” The Traditionalist generation was influenced by the economics of the Great Depression and the New Deal, as well as the political bombshells of World War II, Pearl Harbor, and the Cold War (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Sherman (2006) described Traditionalists as growing up in difficult times that included World War II and that their experience with economic and political uncertainty led them to be hardworking, financially conservative and cautious. Because of these traits, this cohort is healthier, wealthier and more active than previous generations. Traditionalists believe in organizational loyalty and those in the workplace grew up within the constructs of classical communication theory. Seniority at work is important to advance one’s career (Sherman, 2006) while their tendencies include respect for authority, support for hierarchy and disciplined in traditional work habits. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2002), traits shared among the Traditionalist generation are
patriotism, loyalty, and the desire to leave a legacy, while being fiscally conservative and having faith in institutions. This generation values the lessons of history and often looks to the past to determine what situations have or have not worked. As a group, many Traditionalists have begun to retire, but still others are at work in all levels of leisure organizations. Many of these retirees may be active as volunteers and play an important role in the leisure workplace.

Baby Boomers, now middle adults, born between 1946 and 1964, have attracted much attention in the media, politics and popular culture, especially in terms of marketing. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) stated Baby Boomers were profoundly affected by events such as the Vietnam War, the civil rights riots, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Watergate and Woodstock. They grew up in a prosperous, post-war economy and were encouraged by their Traditionalist parents to value individualism and creativity. One of the wealthiest and most populous generations in American history, the Boomers have influenced culture like no other. Boomers are known for their strong work ethic and work has been the defining part of their self-worth and their evaluation of others (Sherman, 2006). Despite Boomers’ loyalty to organizations, Lancaster and Stillman (2002) also described Baby Boomers as the most egocentric generation, and members have rewritten cultural and workplace rules. In the workplace, Boomers hold most positions of power and occupy all levels of management and supervision. Scheef and Thielfoldt (2004) reported that some researchers divide the Baby Boomers into two groups: those born between 1946 and 1954 (the “Woodstock” group, known for their
idealistic endeavors and social conscience) and those born between 1955 and 1964 (the “Zoomer” group, known for their preoccupation with *self*. Also known as the “Me Generation” Baby Boomers refuse to grow old and will take steps to slow the aging process with exercise and plastic surgery. Ziegler (2002) described Boomers as having an influence on the leisure profession with their devotion to exercise and fitness, and their fixation with all things youthful. According to Smola and Sutton (2002), this cohort witnessed the mistakes made by political, religious, and business leaders that resulted in a lack of respect for authority and social institutions. As a result, Boomers tend to be competitive, better educated, and optimistic.

The generation known as “X,” grew up with financial, family, and societal insecurity, according to Smola and Sutton (2002). Strauss and Howe (1991) labeled Generation X as “thirteeners” before the current moniker of the title became popular; marking them the thirteenth generation since the Puritans came to America. Generation X-ers were influenced by popular media and its over-arching description of the generation. Faber (2001) reported that, “media, cultural critics, and popular writers both celebrate and condemn this generation for being indecisive, unambitious, and skeptical” (p. 296). Oake (2004) suggested Generation X subculture is thoroughly dependent on mainstream media for its identity. Oake continued his description of this generation adding the term borrowed from Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel *Generation X*, which began to operate in public culture “as a catch-all label for a particular formation of problematic youth” (p.84). Enduring images portraying X-ers as “slackers, angst-ridden
and depressed” (Oake, 2004), continue to plague this generation. Delvaux (1999) argued Generation X is a “marginalized generation that is symptomatic of what characterizes children of divorce, computer kids and babies of mediated interaction” (p. 184). Faber (2001) further described Generation Xers, having entered the workforce during corporate downsizing and government staffing reductions, are suspicious of authority and do not respect hierarchy, which has left them skeptical and disloyal toward organizations and institutions. Other influences include Sesame Street, MTV, AIDS, crack cocaine, missing children on milk cartons, Watergate, and worldwide competition (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002), as well as the influences of workaholic parents and corporate downsizing (Faber, 2001). Because X-ers grew up in divorced homes and perhaps spent time as latch-key children, they value leisure time, family and friends over work, prefer independence, and are avid users of technology. This eclectic generation looks for leisure that incorporates technology, like gaming and Nintendo Wii. Faber (2001) stated Gen-Xers have emerged as autonomous, independent people who prefer to be seen as individuals rather than as members of a group.

The fourth generation is the Millennial generation, sometimes known as Generation Y, Why, or Generation Next. Howe and Strauss (2000) described this generation as inhabiting an era of numerous trend reversals from the Boomer child years. For example, Millennials are more civic-minded and have diverse interests, yet are unable to function without technology (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Millennials have been influenced by September 11th (2001) and terrorism, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the
media and the worldwide web. They have also witnessed a world immersed in war, violence, drugs and gangs. Smola and Sutton (2002) suggested Millennials are expected to be the first generation to be socially active since the 1960s. Coombs and DeBard (2004) also suggested a similar notion that so much attention is being paid to this generation because of the potential for its greatness. As a group, Millennials are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse (Howe & Strauss, 2000) than their 20th century generation neighbors. Millennials expect collaborative work environments and are a technologically fluent generation (Ware, Craft & Kerschenbaum, 2007). Despite the glowing picture research seems to paint about the Millennial generation, other research suggested Millennials have been the most protected generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This overprotection, likely lavished on them by Boomer or older X-er parents, has raised issues of parental involvement in Millennials’ lives, even into college years. Alsop (2007) and Chester (2005) mentioned it is not uncommon for parents to accompany their Millennial children to college admission orientations and job interviews.

Table 1 shows a compilation of each generation’s characteristics, attributes and work outlook and includes their generational cycle.

Table 1. Generation classification, description and comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Birthdates</th>
<th>Population Size</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditionalists</td>
<td>1900–1945</td>
<td>75 million</td>
<td>Greatest generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1946–1964</td>
<td>80 million</td>
<td>Me generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>1965–1981</td>
<td>46 million</td>
<td>Latchkey generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>1982–2000</td>
<td>76 million</td>
<td>Global generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generational Cycle</td>
<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Idealistic</td>
<td>Reactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Patriotic, loyal, fiscally conservative, faithful to institutions</td>
<td>Idealistic, competitive, question authority, influence culture</td>
<td>Eclectic, resourceful, self-reliant, adaptive to change &amp; technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes</td>
<td>Command &amp; control</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td>Respect for Authority Family Community involvement</td>
<td>Responsibility Can-do attitude</td>
<td>Freedom Multitasking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes</td>
<td>Waste Technology</td>
<td>Laziness Turning 50</td>
<td>Red tape Hype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Organizations</td>
<td>Organizations deserve loyalty</td>
<td>Organizations can be changed, remain loyal</td>
<td>Disloyal to organizations &amp; distrustful of institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Outlook</td>
<td>Lifetime career; Gain satisfaction from doing work; Self-sacrificing</td>
<td>Climbing the corporate ladder; Workaholic/Work ethic; live to work</td>
<td>Work-life balance; work to live; Multiple careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
Lancaster, 2003; Stapleton, Wen, Starrett, and Kilburn, 2007; Arnold and Williams, 2008; Strauss and Howe, 1991

This section introduced and described the four generations and the life influences that shaped their characteristics and preferences. The next section focuses on each generation’s communication styles and preferences.
Communication Styles among Generations

The brief overview of the four generations clearly outlined qualities by which members of each generation are characterized. Reith (2005) suggested that generational culture is one very important aspect in developing personality and communication preferences. Communication styles and methods vary among the generations and use of technology plays a large role.

In the workplace, some Traditionalists still hold positions of leadership and expect communication that follows more formal and traditional lines, like communicating in person or in writing. In terms of communication with Traditionalists, Raines (2003) recommended that to be effective, people should be more traditional and formal in their approach, be friendly, but show old-fashioned respect and use terms like “Mr.” and “Ma’am.” Traditionalists expect the top-down, boot-camp style of communication that makes sense to a generation of veterans who value authority, hierarchy and discipline (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Baby Boomers, as a generational cohort, took the art of communication in the workplace to the next level. Raines (2003) suggested Baby Boomers reinvented the hierarchical, rigid and structured workplace into the flatter, inclusive, and more diverse workplace characterizing most companies and organizations today. Boomers identified and reinvented communication styles, assessments and practices to assist employees with accomplishing visions and goals that have become hallmarks of most private and public organizations (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). To accomplish these changes, Baby
Boomers instituted the once-a-year performance appraisal, according to Lancaster and Stillman (2002), and made use of personality assessments which influenced communication and team-building. Most Baby Boomers welcome a variety of information and communication technologies in order to keep pace with the information needed to keep their companies and organizations competitive (Alboher, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

As a cohort, members of Generation X are portrayed in popular media as despondent, apathetic and “whiny” (Delvaux 1999). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) suggested the communication styles of X-ers represent a lack of social engagement, as well as a penchant for self-reliance, in terms of their preferences for efficiency and brevity, facts and figures, and use of technology. Because of their independence and self-confidence, X-ers often appear arrogant to other colleagues (Faber, 2001). As Gen X-ers rise into middle adulthood and fill workplace supervisory and managerial roles, Millennials, Boomers and Traditionalists alike will have to reckon with what may be perceived as a dismissive communication style exhibited by Generation X.

Millennials, as young adults, may be more likely to reach out to others as indicative of a civic-minded generation, and may exhibit an ability to blend their communication styles to collaborate with those of their previous generations. Millennials prefer positive, open communication styles and wish to be treated as competent. Raines (2003) stated Millennials seek authenticity and respect for their achievements, yet rely on sophisticated media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to get work
Members of this generation respond well to communication that is fun, positive and provides clear, future-oriented goals.

A central part of communication in the workplace is the performance review. Each generation has particular preferences for giving and receiving feedback, some formal, some casual and even instantaneous. Reith (2005) suggested generational culture is an important aspect in developing personality and communication preferences.

Of the two older generations, Traditionalists value authority and discipline and believe that “no news is good news” when it comes to performance reviews (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). As a group this resulted in a practical and formal communication style (Reith, 2005). When Baby Boomers entered the workplace and brought their pop psychology of opening up and getting in touch with one’s feelings, the performance appraisal became formal and more regular. Since Boomers like “face-time,” sitting down with employees is Boomer heaven. Reith (2005) suggested that Boomers’ communication style focuses on personal growth, achievement and political correctness. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) described the motivation for this practice as stemming from the Boomer cohort of 80 million people with the competitive obsession with knowing how they were doing.

The younger generations were brought up with expectations that feedback was much more informal and candid. Generation X employees were raised on instant meals from the microwave and instant cash from automated teller machines and expect a quick answer from their supervisors. Since Gen-xers were skeptical and unimpressed with
authority, they are adaptive and most comfortable with casual communication (Reith, 2005). Lancaster and Stillman (2002) pointed out that Boomer parents instilled the “I’m okay, you’re okay” style of communication into their Millennial children which taught them to expect a lot of praise all the time. Millennials were immersed in technology from birth and their communication and learning styles were affected accordingly (Reith, 2005). Providing informal feedback to these generations by way of e-mail, telephone, or acknowledgement at meetings, will go a long way toward generational appreciation.

The next two sections take a closer look at the introduction of technology into the workplace and how members of each generation integrate technology into communication.

The Communication and Technology Nexus

With the introduction of the personal computer into the workplace in the 1980s and into homes in the 90s, written communication evolved to a new level. Beyond computer technology in the business workplace, other entities such as universities, libraries, and leisure organizations embraced this technology as it grew more cost effective. Computerized systems gradually replaced “paper” systems. For example, university libraries currently use computers in place of the old card catalogs and parks and recreation agencies use computer technology for reserving facilities and organizing community events. When the Internet became available to anyone and society embraced the Worldwide Web, technology and the ways business and communication operated were forever changed. Coleman and McCombs (2007) suggested that media use is a
pronounced generational difference. Despite initial resistance to computer technology in
the mid-1980s by leisure practitioners (Ewart & Voight, 1983), technological advances
have changed and improved the way people communicate (e.g. wireless technology and
mobile phones), which has impacted the ability to communicate.

Technology Preferences

Closely related to communication preferences is the use of technology. Each of
the generations exhibit profound differences in the use of technology for personal and
professional use. Carrier, Cheever, Rosen, Benitez, and Chang (2008) postulated that
technological changes are central to differences between generations. For example,
Leitner, Jackson, and Shaughnessy (2009) described how Generation X grew up in the
presence of computers and are very adept with technology in the ability to synthesize
diverse information to gain knowledge and understanding. When comparing Baby
Boomers to Gen-Xers, Leitner, et al., (2009) contrasted their differences with regard to
their familiarity with informational technology and their educational history. Boomers,
although they can adapt to technology, did not grow up with computers readily available
to them until adulthood. The decade of the 1980s saw most Traditionalists and older
Baby Boomers in supervisory and management roles in leisure service organizations.
Alboher (2008) suggested a newer trend among Traditionalists and older Boomers is the
choice to pursue second careers after “retirement.” This trend may require Traditionalists
to aggressively learn to use technology to be competitive in a consulting marketplace
where as many as three generations could compete.
Not until the mid-1980s did personal computers begin to play a role in (parks and recreation) departments’ growth and evolution (Copper, 1985). Gen-Xers, on the other hand, view technology as a fact of life and demand their work environments to be technically up-to-date (Leitner, et al., 2009). Similarly, Boomer parents frequently described their Millennial teenagers as being able to multitask homework while listening to music on a portable digital music player, sending text messages to friends, or checking their favorite social networking website (Carrier, et al. 2008). Because Millennials grew up immersed in technology, their communication and learning styles are affected accordingly. They process information differently, approach academic research differently, engage in cyber-relationships, and spend a lot of time online (Reith, 2005), “…in fact, 13- to 18-year olds spend an average of six hours per day in front of a screen including television, movies and computers” (Reith, 2005, p. 323). Sources suggested that there may be long-term effects on the development of interpersonal communications skills of this generation. Using mobile phones for communicating by text messaging is prevalent among Millennials and has slowly gained popularity with the members of Generation X and Baby Boomers.

Table 2 shows the relationships and preferences each generation has for communication style and technology usage.

Table 2. Generational Preferences in Communication and Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication Styles</td>
<td>Face-to-face; Formal language;</td>
<td>Face-to-face; Electronic; Open &amp;</td>
<td>Email; Straight-forward &amp;</td>
<td>Any form of technology to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Content</td>
<td>Straight-to-the-point</td>
<td>direct speech</td>
<td>informal speech</td>
<td>communicate; Respectful language; Want to give/receive feedback &amp; input</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Tactics; Preferences for Receive Daily News</td>
<td>Detail; prose-style writing, handwritten</td>
<td>Chunk it down, but provide everything</td>
<td>Get to the point—what needs to be known</td>
<td>If &amp; when needed, can be found online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Preferences</td>
<td>Print; conventional mail; face-to-face dialogue or by phone; some Internet information &amp; interaction</td>
<td>Print; conventional mail; face-to-face dialogue; broadcast media, Internet tools &amp; resources</td>
<td>Internet; some face-to-face meetings (if needed); games; technological interaction</td>
<td>Internet; wired; seamlessly connected through technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Attainable within reasonable time frame</td>
<td>Available; handy</td>
<td>Immediate; when need it</td>
<td>Five minutes ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>In digestible amounts</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Whenever</td>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Strategies</td>
<td>• Use formal titles. • Schedule a meeting rather than drop in. • Acknowledge experience &amp; expertise. • Respect historical perspectives. • Discuss how their contributions affect the organization. • Provide opportunities to mentor younger employees. • Focus on the personal touch and one-on-one communication.</td>
<td>• Give respect. • Include them in meetings. • Provide public recognition and perks for performance. • Address career advancement. • Support this Sandwich Generation with their diverse family responsibilities. • Phone &amp; one-on-one communication best suits this generation.</td>
<td>• Do not micromanage. • Avoid unnecessary meetings. • Give candid, frequent feedback. • Encourage informal, open communication. • Provide short learning activities. • Address work/life balance. • Consider coaches or mentors.</td>
<td>• Provide good supervision &amp; structure. • Communicate clear objectives &amp; expectations. • Provide short meetings with online training opportunities. • Assign work that is interesting, meaningful, &amp; important. • Let them ask questions. • Facilitate interactive sessions for collaboration with teams.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Reynolds, Bush, & Geist (2008); Ruddick, (2009)
Most communication has been impacted by technology. Technology in communication has changed the number of hours people work, as well as working conditions, stated Galinsky (2007), as it relates to employers’ expectations. With many employees having access to Blackberry™ and Smartphone™ devices with which to communicate, there is a perception that people are available around the clock rather than during traditional nine-to-five work hours. Younger workers grew up with instant messaging, texting, and e-mail. Older workers, even Baby Boomers who have embraced technology, still prefer face-to-face meetings and some even find messages sent by e-mail to be rude or inconsiderate. Sullivan (1995) stated “face-to-face communication provides the ‘richest’ form of communication” (p. 49). Stephens and Davis (2009) described meetings as “three or more people gathered to consider issues related to the functioning of the group” (p. 64). According to Stephens and Davis (2009), more face-to-face meetings occur in organizations than before but are viewed as inefficient.

With the perception that meetings take up valuable time, it is not unusual to see staff using their Blackberry™ devices to read and send e-mail messages or cell phones to text while sitting in meetings. The phenomenon of multitasking has changed how meetings are conducted. Stephens and Davis (2009) described multitasking as performing two or more tasks at the same time. From this has arisen the term “multicommunicating.” “Multicommunicating is a very common practice at work and is defined as engaging in at least two overlapping, simultaneous conversations with different partners” (Stephens &
David, 2009, p. 66). As such, multitasking has received bad press in popular media as having a negative impact on both work and personal lives (Stephens & Davis, 2009).

Since Baby Boomers currently make up a larger percentage of the workforce and hold more positions of authority, conducting face-to-face meetings is the preferred communication method employed. Conversely, Hanke (2009) suggested that when people get more used to communicating with technology, people may become more out of practice when it comes to face-to-face communication. In a knowledge and service economy, such as a parks and recreation agency, everyone must be prepared to continuously learn new skills and be able to utilize technology to the fullest extent.

Reith (2005) described another phenomenon that occurs with some frequency in the workplace now that Millennials have come to work; that of role-reversal. Millennials often assist older workers with technology, reversing traditional roles at work (at home or school) in a completely unprecedented way. Reith (2005) further suggested that this role-reversal could erode the sense of respect for authority.

Employers can develop more effective policies and practices by exploring factors and characteristics that shape a generation’s peer personality, according to Coomes and DeBard (2004). Leisure organizations have a unique opportunity to utilize all four generations in the workplace in both paid and volunteer positions. Leisure professionals who are accustomed to working under a variety of circumstances should be able to recognize and work with the best approaches in understanding and motivating employees and volunteers. Yost (2008) summed up using generational studies as a broad guideline,
being mindful of each cohort’s global characteristics, while understanding that today’s workforce behaviors are diverse and constantly evolving, will facilitate success for leisure organizations.

In the context of the theoretical framework of organizational communication theories, this research study seeks to determine if the four generations can adapt to each other’s communication and technology preferences in the leisure organization workplace. As Millennials interact more often with Traditionalists, for example, do their differences in use of technology affect communication in the workplace?

In the next chapter, the methods used for this study will be reviewed.
Chapter 3

METHODS

This chapter will discuss the methods used for this study which examined the communication styles and use of technology of each of the four 20th century generations within a recreation department in a mid-sized urban area in the Western United States. The specific research questions for this study included:

1. What are the communication styles within a public leisure organization and how do these communication styles manifest across each generation?

2. What are the technology preferences of the different generations and how do they use technology?

Research Design

An interview guide was used with open-ended questions and was administered to collect qualitative data through conducting three focus groups. (See Appendix A).

Sample

Three sampling strategies were implemented. The participant sample in this exploratory study was convenience, purposive, and criterion-based. Patton (1990) described convenience sampling as useful in getting general ideas about the phenomenon of interest but is a poor way to get samples. In this study, participants were first selected based on where they were housed in the Recreation Division. Due to limited resources and relative proximity to the researcher, a convenience sample of employees who worked at a community center was considered. The participants yielded representation of each of
the four generations which provided a purposive sample based on age (Patton, 1990).

Thirty-nine potential participants selected by age and availability were invited to the focus groups. The participants for this study were a mix the following types of staff: current employees, a former, retired employee and a former volunteer whom had worked in the department of parks and recreation housed at a community center used in the study. Housed within the community center offices were staff of a variety of age groups, mostly Baby Boomers and Generation X-ers, which is representative of the workplace (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Because many Traditionalists (in 2009) were of retirement age and not currently working, there were fewer of them available for the study. A total of four Traditionalists were invited; three responded, but only two attended. Millennials were plentiful and held positions mostly in seasonal part-time workplaces, such as parks, community centers and aquatics facilities. Millennials that were interviewed were 18 years and over. Three potential employees were not selected based on their direct subordinate relationship with the researcher. A criterion-based sample, according to Patton (1990), can be defined as criteria previously set as it relates to the data needed, e.g. all women with blond hair. Since this is an age-related study, the criterion was based on the age of the focus group participants, where an ideal sample of three members from each generation was needed. These characteristics, including location, participants’ ages, and resources, form the basis of criterion-based sampling used in qualitative research (Patton, 1990).
The initial invitation was framed to query whether recreation staff would participate in the study and to which age group they belonged. Nothing was said about which generation these age groups would represent. An e-mail message was sent to employees who had an internal e-mail address or an outside e-mail address (see Appendix B). Potential participants who did not have an e-mail address were contacted by telephone. The study was conducted using three focus groups during mid-November 2009. This invitation was e-mailed and/or hand-delivered to a select group of staff housed within the Recreation Division and described the study as “Communication in the Leisure Workplace.” The research was explained to each participant, including its value and the need for their participation in the focus groups. All data was kept confidential and only the researcher associated with this study had access.

The focus group approach to data collection was chosen in order to explore communication styles and technology preferences of each generation within the groups in some depth. Krueger and Casey (2000) described focus groups as “creating a permissive environment that encourages participants to share perceptions and points of view without pressuring participants to vote or reach consensus” (p. 4). A focus group consists of six to eight people and is conducted two or more times so the researcher can identify trends and patterns.

For the purpose of this study 11 participants were recruited and three focus groups were conducted in which all four generations were included (see Appendix C). In the first focus group there was one Traditionalist, one Baby Boomer, one Generation Xer and
two Millennials. The second focus group consisted on two Baby Boomers due to scheduling problems, while the third group included one Traditionalist, two Generation Xers and one Millennial. The focus group interview questions allowed participants to answer in their own words and not be restricted by usage or phrases supplied by the interviewer (Krueger & Casey, 2000). All interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed. Interview questions were formulated prior to interaction with the participants. As the interviews progressed, more questions were added depending upon the flow of the questions and answers given by each age group which resulted in themes that emerged. Each focus group lasted two hours and was conducted at the community center at which staff was housed.

Data Analysis

The data from the focus groups was transcribed and coded by both axial and open methods. Open coding allowed for data to be broken down, examined, conceptualized and categorized (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). From this method, themes were identified. Open coding broke down the data which allowed the researcher to identify some categories, their properties and dimensions. Additionally, the axial coding method was used which put the data back together in new ways by making connections between the categories and exploring resulting relationships among the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Delimitations and Limitations

The following delimitations were applied to restrict the scope of the study. The study was restricted to one area; an urban recreation department in a mid-sized city in the
Western United States. Participants were restricted to employees who were full-time career; and seasonal, part-time non-career; as well as volunteers who worked in the Recreation Division during the study. Participants were restricted to those who volunteered to be a part of the study. The sample size was small with 11 people participating, which cannot be generalized to the larger population. The limitations that have presented themselves so far include the lack of generalizability of this study, a possible bias on the part of the researcher, the limited resources of the researcher, and the limited number of participants within the parks and recreation department, however diverse the ages.

This research was done with the employees of the Recreation and Community Services Division housed at a public community center. Seasonal aquatics staff have already been exposed to concepts of the generational research at a variety of summer staff trainings for seasonal swimming pool staff in the context of customer service training. As their indirect supervisor, the researcher may have had some influence over a small number of staff. The use of the focus group technique enabled a collaborative team approach to participating in the research process fitting nicely with preferences of both the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations (Lancaster, 2003).

Chapter Four includes the results of the qualitative data analysis based on the methods discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 4
ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the communication styles and use of technology of each of the four 20th century generations within one urban recreation department in a mid-size city in the Western United States. While the previous chapters addressed the research literature about the communication and technology preferences among Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials, this chapter will focus on presenting the findings from the three focus groups.

The participants in the focus groups were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Traditionalist participants were Mary and Adam. The Baby Boomers were John, Kevin, and Ron, while Generation X participants were named Kent, Daniel, and Morgan. The three Millennials were named Cindy, Cara, and Cecily. These pseudonyms are referred to throughout the rest of this study.

Historically, workplaces are sites for cross-generational relationships, but what makes today's workplace unique is the role of technology in terms of shaping relationships and power dynamics among and between the four generations. Throughout the 20th century, the workplace was a fairly hierarchical and rigid structure and communication flowed from the top down. While Traditionalists grew up in this setting, Baby Boomers have had to learn this work culture and they have also had to adapt to the barrage of technological advances which have changed the workplace. Generation Xers and Millennials are now being socialized into workplaces that are less hierarchical and
more flexible as technology has allowed for easier access to information and has provided workers with more flexibility in terms of how they communicate with one another. Access to information has allowed for the shifting of power as younger generations demonstrate their expertise in the use of smart phones and social media such as Facebook™, Twitter™, etc. Such shifts have manifested in the ways in which the study respondents adapt and accommodate how they communicate to ensure success in the workplace.

Based on analysis of the data, one theme emerged to capture how respondents communicate and use technology across generations: Respondents adapt and accommodate in order to successfully communicate with one another. Adaptation refers to the ways in which respondents adjusted what they communicated and how they communicated with colleagues of various rank. Accommodation refers to the ways in which they combined conventional forms of communication, e.g., written memos or telephone calls with newer technologies and their messaging applications, e.g., e-mail and phone texts.

Since most people communicate in a variety of ways, the ability to adapt one's style to facilitate one-way, two-way, small group or large group communication effectively in the workplace is important for work to get done. Leisure service professionals, in particular, must be willing to change or adjust their communication styles to deal with different employees. In addition to the ability to adapt, respondents also noted that attributes such as humor, honesty and teamwork, along with listening and
verbal communication skills were important traits for supervisors to possess and that other levels of staff should cultivate and master.

Adaptation

Each generation has preferences for communicating in the workplace and these preferences influence the extent to which people choose to adapt. Traditionalists spent their years in a more formal work environment and depended upon written and verbal communication following traditional and respectful styles. Although Traditionalists are leaving their leadership roles in the workplace for retirement, their legacy of conventional forms of communication (e.g., written memos and face-to-face interactions) in a structured, hierarchical workplace lives on to some degree. As each generation demonstrated differing communication styles, it often fell upon the workplace leaders, now the Baby Boomers, to be the first ones to adapt their own styles to successfully interact with the other generations. For Generation Xers and Millennials, the transition to more flexible and adaptable workplaces has been easier since they have grown up with computers and mobile phones.

Often referred to as the "Sandwich Generation" because they are in the position of taking care of children, teens and aging parents, Baby Boomers are similarly situated in the workplace because they are "sandwiched" between older workers and younger workers and must adapt constantly to be successful. In this study, Baby Boomers were the most vocal and made numerous comments about having to adapt to their supervisors' communication styles and to their subordinates' communication preferences.
Baby Boomer John stated, "The key to my job is listening and communicating...you must modify your style, talk to people. Be direct and polite. I also get to know people and find common ground." Ron, another Baby Boomer, said:

I talk with them, not at them. I listen a lot more. My workers are older and I have to use a different approach and find what motivates an older worker, what gets him to excel in what he does. I adjust my style to fit their needs.

In addition to their ability to adapt, Baby Boomers also focus attention on "reading" what a colleague is trying to say. Baby Boomer John explained that you have to "...gauge your supervisor. I learned how my supervisor wants to be informed on subjects."

While most Boomers acknowledged the ways in which they adapted their styles, one Boomer, Kevin, stated that he did not change his style of communication as much as he incorporated different strategies in terms of how he communicated. "I do not change my style with communication whether it's with the director or one of my custodians. I use humor in e-mails and on the phone but I'm not going to change my style."

Adaptation is also an integral part of the Millennials' communication style. Millennial Cecily said, "I didn't think about generational differences until now. I have contact with diverse people. Sometimes I would e-mail, then get a phone call back. I have to communicate with people who do construction in the parks." Fellow Millennial Cindy stated, "I use humor and base my method of communication on my position." Cecily mentioned, "Your work team is a family. On an external project, you have to take the time to learn each others' styles and get the task done."
Respondents also acknowledged that adaptation often involves combining conventional forms of communication, e.g., face-to-face meetings with newer strategies such as e-mail. Indeed, participants from each generation agreed that while face-to-face conversations were important, they also indicated the need to incorporate technology into subsequent communication. Cara, a Millennial, shared,

I want to be very 'in-person' when I talk to my supervisor. I would use face-to-face communication for sensitive subjects. You can e-mail your supervisor but I enjoy the personal contact, like when they come to visit me at the pool.

Kevin, a boomer, said, "I like to talk face-to-face, keep it personal, and see their facial expressions. I don't get the feel of people unless I see them in person." Traditionalist Adam explained: "I had face-to-face meetings with my direct supervisor almost exclusively. Then we would follow up with the phone and e-mail."

Participants from each generation agreed that face-to-face conversations were critical for team-based work, but that once the goal had been established then the follow-up could be through e-mails or phone calls. Cindy, a Millennial, explained, "We had a brainstorming session at work and face-to-face was the best for that. Face-to-face is much more fun." Baby Boomer John noted that, "Depending on the goal, we meet and discuss face-to-face. . ." Daniel, a Generation Xer, explained, "Everyone meets initially face-to-face. Then we e-mail and now use 'E-Room' and online file-sharing collaboration. We meet monthly face-to-face." Millennial Cecily commented:
As recreational professionals, despite technology we still appreciate
communication and teambuilding, and this will never change for the types of
people that come into these fields. . . We will still be the last ones having face-to-
face meetings.

Respondents in this study representing each generation acknowledged that
adaptation was necessary to communicate clearly in the workplace. These adaptations
have also resulted in employees having to accommodate one another's individual
preferences for technology. The rapid pace of change within the realm of communication
technology has meant that employees have to constantly keep up with the latest smart
phone or the newest piece of equipment used to communicate. The next section discusses
the accommodations respondents made in their workplaces.

Accommodation

Accommodation refers to the ways in which respondents in this study combined
conventional forms of communication with newer technologies in order to better
communicate with their colleagues. While Traditionalists and Baby Boomers expressed
their willingness to adapt to differing communication styles, they have expressed some
concerns about being able to accommodate their colleagues’ preferences for some of the
newer technologies. Traditionalist Adam explained, “I didn’t grow up with a PC and a lot
of technology. I still don’t know what a blog or Facebook™ is.” Baby Boomer Kevin
spoke about feeling a bit overwhelmed by all of the new technologies. He said, “When I
head for work, I ask myself, ‘where’s my work cell phone, where’s my personal cell
phone? I need to check my e-mail’. Then I run into the office to turn the damn computer on!’ Respondents among the older generations indicated that they did use technology at work with some reluctance but felt less fear in doing so. Seeming a bit resigned to the fact that they need to keep up with the new technology, Adam explained, ‘I finally just opened an online checking account and I am not as likely to avoid some technology now.’ Mary, a Traditionalist, also proudly shared that when her volunteer job as a program coordinator ended she ‘began volunteering for a community cable organization and learned how to run cameras and burn CDs.’ John, a Baby Boomer, explained that given the importance of communicating with his colleagues, he keeps close tabs on his cell phone. He said, ‘I am more worried about losing my phone than my wallet. I panicked when I lost my phone. I drove all the way back to work and found the phone in my work truck.’

Respondents in this study shared comments about how they managed the use of the various technology tools in order to accommodate their colleagues’ technology preferences. The Traditionalist generation seemed perplexed with communicating with new technology, but managed to use some tools to accommodate their colleagues. Adam, a Traditionalist, described the evolution of technology over the years in the workplace: ‘I have witnessed the explosion of technology from mimeograph ditto machine to IBM electric typewriter to current technology in my time with parks and recreation,’ alluding to the fact that he made accommodations to these technologies as they became available in his workplace. Cecily, a Millennial, used her mobile phone for texting and calls, but
preferred a hand-planner for calendaring appointments. An accommodation would have
to be made on her part to take appointments from her e-mail account and transfer them to
the planner, which could possibly cause double bookings. These accommodations involve
using desktop computers and Smart Phones™ for both written and electronic
communication in order to accommodate their colleagues’ technology preferences.

Not only do workplace colleagues seem to be more mindful of the type of
technology that they are using, they also are becoming more cognizant of the ways in
which technology is quickening the process of communication. This accommodation
means that people expect instant responses and some of the Baby Boomers and
Traditionalists are a bit resistant to this expectation. Ron, a Baby Boomer commented,
“Technology makes us respond too quickly,” and John added: “…cell phones make you
available 24/7 [in the] workplace.”

The younger generations also expressed their concerns about having to respond to
the perceived speed of technology. Daniel, a Gen-Xer, said, “The things like e-mail,
technology and communication are so much faster. We … do more things more rapidly.”
Another Generation Xer, Kent, agreed, “Back in the day, we didn’t have the expectations
to do these things immediately; now everyone expects it because it is so prevalent.
Millennials, who essentially grew up with technology, shared their beliefs about how
technology has sped up the expectation for fast communication. Cindy, a Millennial,
explained, “Texting…everyone is impatient. The expectation is an instantaneous answer
within minutes. It would be nice if communication could be slowed down again.” Cara, another Millennial, said,

Our generation is very impatient when it comes to communication. When I sent an e-mail to the office, I expected to see the e-mail right away when I checked … and it’s just because I am so used to fast responses. I mean, it’s all I have really known.

Technology has become more user-friendly to members of each generation and even Baby Boomers have begun to expect technology to be used to respond quickly. As technology becomes more integrated into the workplace and as each generation learns to accommodate various technologies, expectations may change workplaces to where employees at all levels can expect instant communication. Kent, in his job as an IT, stated, “They (supervisors) have the expectation that you are tied to that device (mobile phone). The IT team is expected to respond quickly so that work gets done and people can do business with the City.”

The expectation for the quickened pace of communication can be a double-edged sword for every employee. In a positive sense, everyday business can move faster. On the downside, the constant reliance on technology for quick communication can also become a problem if only a few employees are making these accommodations. This expectation of quickened communication may be unrealistic in many leisure service organizations due to the lack of technology tools available to all personnel, especially those in the field. In terms of accommodation, there are challenges because in leisure services
organizations, many employees work in the field and most government agencies cannot afford to provide them with data-accessible mobile phones or wireless laptops. Many employees may not be able to afford to purchase these items for work, or may choose not to use them. Kevin, a Baby Boomer, shared,

I use technology, giving information to employees, getting information from my superintendent, and then I have to digest it and pass it on. I have to deal with the information twice which makes my job harder. My community center custodians have no access to computers and e-mail so I have to explain everything verbally. This practice takes a lot of my time.

Similarly, there is a preference by many older personnel not to use mobile phones or personal computers. Ron, a Baby Boomer, responded, “I use electronics as a secondary method. Most of my employees who work in the field (senior citizen school crossing guards) choose not to partake in technology.” For example, Mary, a Traditionalist, explained that while she has a cell phone, she keeps it turned off most of the time. She said, “If somebody calls me and I am busy I don’t have to take that call.” These responses demonstrate that there may sometimes be a resistance to accommodate some of the technology preferences of colleagues. One reason for this resistance is that members of the older generations may not be comfortable with technology in the workplace and either choose not to use technological devices at all or use them on a limited basis. Another reason employees may resist accommodation is based on the lack of access to varying technological devices (e.g. work-provided wireless laptops and mobile phones).
Leisure service organizations may choose not to provide these devices to certain classifications of employees (e.g. personnel who are seasonal or part-time, and those who are full-time but work in the field) due to budget constraints or other reasons. Supervisors of these employees must therefore accommodate to these preferences and be able to communicate with minimal technology.

Baby Boomer Kevin summarized, “There is a huge technological divide. The ‘blue collar’ worker communicates differently regardless of age. The Department of Parks and Recreation has a lot of technology but leaves out field and maintenance workers.”

This technological or digital divide is less the result of issues of adaptation and accommodation across generations and due more to the division of work within leisure services organizations. Typically, agencies are divided between recreation and administrative personnel and personnel who work in the areas of parks, facilities and maintenance. The resulting expectation is that supervisors and managers, who likely have multiple technology tools at their disposal, still expect departmental information to roll down the chain-of-command to employees in the field in a timely manner. Sometimes, this expectation requires extra time and effort by supervisory employees as described earlier by Kevin, which leads to frustration and the possibility of the message not being communicated. The next section suggests how adaptation and accommodation work together to explain how the different generations communicate with one another.
Adapting is defined as the process or state of changing to fit a new environment or different conditions. In this study, adaptation refers to ways respondents adjusted their communication styles with their colleagues. Accommodation is defined as modification of actions in response to something and refers to ways respondents combined and used the applications of various technologies for communication. Respondents in this study demonstrated how they both adapted and accommodated one another in the workplace in order to communicate effectively. One example shared by Baby Boomer Ron demonstrated how he adapts to his crossing guard staff by adjusting to their needs while accommodating to their preferences of using minimal technology to communicate. Another example illustrated how Millennial Cara would meet face-to-face with her pool staff or supervisor to deal with sensitive subjects, but then use e-mail for other types of information.

In terms of adaptation and accommodation, this research study suggested that the way in which respondents communicate in the workplace in terms of sending and receiving messages may be influenced by their generational identity. In other words, respondents filter what they hear and how they communicate based on their role as a Traditionalist, a Baby Boomer, a Generation X-er, and/or as a Millennial. This generational filter is also used to synthesize and interpret data and may influence and even predict the types of technologies and communication styles with which each generation will use in the workplace. The sender’s message must pass through the generational filter that exists within members of each generation. From there the message
is filtered and received based upon that person’s generational preferences for receiving communication and their comfort level for using technology to do so. In this study, for example, if the sender, a Baby Boomer supervisor sends the message to a Traditionalist in the form of a type-written letter asking for a specific task to be done, that Traditionalist will likely understand that message and successfully carry out the assignment. Similarly, a Generation X supervisor may seek information from a Millennial subordinate by sending an e-mail, which will likely be sent back electronically thereby acknowledging the message. These examples illustrate how workplace employees adapt and communicate. In contrast, however, are instances where the message does not get through the generational filter. Based on technology preferences in this example, if a Millennial attempts to send a text message to a Traditionalist, that Millennial will probably never receive a response because either the Traditionalist may not know how to receive or send a text message, or even have their phone turned on.

In this particular study, there are assumptions that employees of each generation have the motivation and the ability to adapt, along with the same motivation to accommodate their colleagues’ preferences using technology. Respondents in this study demonstrated their ability to adapt and used a variety of communication strategies to accommodate their colleagues depending on their own generation and the generations with which they were communicating.
Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore responses about the communication and technology preferences that were found in the four 20th century generations in the leisure organization workplace. Respondents in this study shared how they adapted and accommodated work colleagues to ensure successful communication in the workplace. The study used three focus groups with 11 participants representing the four generations, which provided rich, contextual information in response to the research questions. The data revealed one overarching theme with two sub-themes. The next chapter will include discussion of the data, recommendations for leisure service organizations and for future research, and conclusions.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research study was to explore the communication and technology preferences among the four 20th Century generations: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, who are currently working together in leisure organizations. This chapter will focus on discussing the results of the study, include a discussion of the relevance of the study to leisure service professionals, make recommendations for future research, and draw conclusions.

While the literature is extensive in generational studies and its implications for the workplace, there is not much literature describing generational communication in the leisure organization workplace. Recreation professionals communicate and work closely with superiors, subordinates, and volunteers who belong to one of the four generations and this may lead to differences in communication and technology preferences at workplaces.

Although research on communication in the workplace has examined how each generation may or may not work well together in the workplace (Coomes and DeBard, 2004; Raines, 2003; Smola and Sutton, 2002), there does not appear to be much descriptive research that demonstrated communication and technology preferences in the leisure organization workplace. Because the leisure organization workplace has traditionally been spread among service areas in the community, many of its employees
work in field offices or park settings away from where departmental communication may originate, and may not have access to workplace-provided technology tools with which to communicate. In addition, personnel and volunteers in leisure service organizations are a mix of full-time and part-time seasonal classifications, which affects the ability to communicate and use technology. Having the knowledge of each generation’s attributes and communication preferences may assist the leisure professional as well as enhance the leisure organization’s workplace environment. While each generation has preferences for communicating and using technology in the workplace, this study revealed that people adapt and accommodate in order to successfully communicate with one another. This was the overarching theme of the study.

In order for respondents to adapt and accommodate, they used a filter that reflected their generational identity – their attitudes, beliefs, experiences and values. This filter was used to synthesize and interpret data which may influence and predict the types of technologies and communication styles with which each generation will use to communicate with one another in the workplace. The generational filter may also help predict the communication styles that each generation will use in the workplace. The generational traits and characteristics that make up this filter allow people to not only see differences in themselves and others, but also to recognize ways to adapt to and accommodate their colleagues’ communication and technology preferences. These findings are consistent with research on organizational communication theories which describe and explain how people of all ages communicate with each other.
Organizational communication theories describe and explain how people of all ages communicate in the workplace. According to Coughlan, Macredie, and Patel, (2007), “The primary failure in communication occurs when the person has not accurately received the content of the message being sent to him or her” (p. 4). As the literature suggested, organizational communication theories seemed to correlate to generational communication preferences. Communication theorists (Kreps, 1986; Hanke, 2009) agreed that everyone has preferences and behaviors that define us and recognizing these styles in workers leads to improved communication.

Several of these theories helped to explain each of the four generation’s communication styles and preferences. Littlejohn (1983) explained how Classical theory followed structured, hierarchical chains of command designed to predict and control worker behavior. Classical theory as a management and communication style was popular during the 1920s through 1940s when Traditionalists were leaders and employees in the workplace and helped mold them as a generation. On the cusp of retirement from the workplace, current Traditionalists have had to learn to adapt to newer expectations for communicating after more than 30 years of operating within rigid communication structures, as demonstrated in the findings. And while respondents in this study did speak about accommodation, they revealed how they were willing and sometimes unwilling to accommodate their colleagues’ technology preferences.

A newer, informal style of organizational communication popularized in Human-relations theory involved employee cooperation and satisfaction in communication
As Baby Boomers moved into managerial roles, they brought a more casual communication style to the workplace as well as their ability to adapt to the variety of styles popular in workplaces of the 1970s and 80s. Such traits characterized and helped shape Boomers’ generational preferences and reflected flattened, hierarchical communication structures within the workplace. As a generation, Boomers have consistently adapted to changing communication and accommodated workplace technology preferences, as both the literature and findings of the study have demonstrated.

Reflecting the aspects of the Social-systems models of communication, members of Generation X exhibit traits that fit within this theory, including characteristics of problem-solving, resourcefulness, and their need for information. Consistent with the literature, Generation Xers have also adapted to communication preferences and confirmed their shared preferences with Baby Boomers for casual communication. Consequently, this has led to more informal workplaces where younger generations may not observe formal, traditional lines of communication.

As communication and technology have evolved in the 21st century, where Millennials have joined the other three generations in the workplace, perhaps another communication model can better describe this generation’s preferences for communication and collaboration. The life-span developmental perspective as described by Williams and Nussbaum (2001), seeks to frame and orient intergenerational communication as occurring during the entire lifespan of human development. When
collaborative Millennials in the workplace assist their supervisors and other older employees with technological tools, this can create a possible role-reversal of supervisor/subordinate, and leads to a shift in the power dynamic of the workplace and may result in a less formal and hierarchical structure. These actions demonstrated both the adaptation to communication and the accommodation to technology by members of all four generations. The life-span developmental perspective implies that the older generations continue to have the capacity to learn and that people will continue to adapt and accommodate to respond to new technology.

This theoretical perspective cuts across all of the generations and influenced all of them in terms of adaptation and accommodation. The research literature described how younger workers have grown up communicating in their personal lives relying on technology for instantaneous communication, and they eventually bring those expectations to the workplace. In contrast, older people have used and preferred face-to-face communication, so when they are given orders or news by e-mail, it can be seen as inconsiderate or even confusing. These preferences affect work culture when adaptation and accommodation fail to happen. Younger workers need to get up from behind their desks and spend some time talking face-to-face with co-workers of all ages. The older workers must realize that e-mail may be the favored form of communication in their workplace and therefore getting direct face-to-face information from the boss may not always happen. Ultimately, all generations must compromise and adapt and it is up to
workplace leaders to nurture a work culture that allows for the availability of learning opportunities.

The need for this study indicated there was very little research done specifically within leisure organization workplaces to determine generational differences in communication and technology preferences. While much of the literature suggested that generational differences lead to workplace communication issues and tension (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Reith, 2005; Leitner, et al., 2009), respondents in this study demonstrated that they were indeed adapting to one another’s communication preferences and could therefore accommodate to the technology preferences of their colleagues. This particular leisure organization allowed respondents to adapt and accommodate and allowed for a more collaborative communication style. Research suggests that parks and recreation agencies foster creative and informal environments for constituents in their communities, which in turn may cultivate a workplace environment which encourages cooperation and respect for its leisure services personnel (Black & O’Leary, 1986; Yost, 2008). There were several instances where study respondents commented on teambuilding and that face-to-face relationships were still valued. Leisure organizations, regardless of their size, tend to encourage a collaborative work environment, and relationships are perhaps easier developed among all levels of leisure personnel. Yost (2008) suggested that successful leisure organizations should use generational studies as a guideline and leisure staff should understand that today’s workplace behaviors are diverse and evolving. These relationships, coupled with a collaborative workplace, may
encourage the motivation for leisure employees to adapt and accommodate to each other’s communication and technology preferences.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this research study, respondents adapted and accommodated to their colleagues’ communication and technology preferences, but this may not be true across other leisure services organizations. This was the first step in terms of examining communication styles across the four generations in the leisure organization workplace. The expected generational differences as outlined in the research literature were indeed apparent as these differences relate to how we communicate in the workplace. However, this study did not address issues of leadership related to generational preferences. Thus, future research could examine the relationship between how employees of various generations respond to various leadership styles. For example, studies might include a look at specific leadership theories to determine if generational preferences correlate to particular leadership styles. Another study might examine the extent to which the continuing legacy of traditional, hierarchical communication styles left by retiring Traditionalists affects how business gets done in 21st century leisure services workplaces.

In terms of communication and training strategies, researchers might pursue studies that focus on how employees across generations might communicate more effectively, while other studies focus on identifying what trainings or strategies might be helpful for employees to better understand one another in the workplaces. Researchers could also
focus more attention on some of the newer technologies such as text messaging and social media to determine how this might further change the workplace culture.

Implications to Leisure Organizations

The findings of this study confirmed that the way this leisure organization workplace is structured is different from other workplaces and this may influence levels of adaptation and accommodation. Although leisure organizations have used computer technology for more than 30 years, this research study found that technology is not always accessible to everyone in the workplace. Some employees may not be willing to use it or do not have work-sponsored technological tools. This may cause communication problems, especially since many leisure service personnel may not be centrally housed together or may work in the field. Still, there are some employees who choose not to use given technologies and these preferences must be addressed by providing staff training and education.

Leisure organizations are encompassing all four generations in the workplace in both paid and volunteer positions. Recreation agencies employ all four generations in full-time capacities, and they also hire seasonal part-time staff to fill program positions, many of whom are Millennials. Many leisure service providers also utilize volunteers who work in a variety of program areas. At the time of this research study, Traditionalists make up a larger percentage of these volunteers, but within leisure organizations, volunteers can be of any age. Whether paid employee or volunteer, members of each generation must be able to adapt to communication preferences and accommodate their
colleagues’ technology preferences in the leisure services workplace. Leisure professionals who are accustomed to working under a variety of circumstances should be able to recognize generational preferences and work with the best approaches in understanding and communicating with employees and volunteers.

To help employees understand these generational preferences, staff trainings are needed. This can be accomplished by using in-house staff who have a generational communication training background, sending leisure services staff to other organizations that offer this type of training such as conferences or one-day seminars, or by hiring consultants who can share this information. Recognizing that there is a generational filter through which communication flows can assist leisure services personnel in adapting and accommodating to communication and technology preferences. Generational communication training can be as simple as someone introducing the characteristics and traits of each generation by providing books, newsletters, or websites on the subject. Another part of training can include using personality and temperament assessments based on communication theories which can help identify and categorize generational communication preferences. Additional training can focus on uses of technological devices and gradually introduce older generations to their uses and applications when appropriate.

Conclusion

Research suggested that generational differences in communication and technology preferences indeed exist and there will always be differences in interpersonal
communication based on these generational preferences. This research study revealed that in the agency studied, leisure service employees across the four generations adapted their communication styles to accommodate the technology preferences of their colleagues. In addition, this study confirmed that there is a generational filter through which all communication flows that may help the leisure practitioner navigate through generational differences and preferences, and can help predict the communication behavior of each staff member regardless of their generation. Understanding this filter can also aid in providing information needed to help leisure services personnel learn to accommodate other colleagues’ technology preferences and therefore enhance communication. Leisure organization workplaces are rich in communication opportunities, whether one-on-one with employees, or mass-marketing to customers using print media. Add technology into this equation and the opportunities for styles and methods of communication can become complicated and confusing. By sending messages through the generational filter, does technology use get in the way of communication or does it help strengthen the message? For example, will a message in the form of a mobile phone text from a Millennial pool manager to a Traditionalist water aerobics instructor be effective, or even possible? Should the Generation X program coordinator have to wait to make an appointment with her Baby Boomer supervisor for feedback on a project when a simple e-mail message will do? Leaders in leisure service organizations will need to be aware of and understand characteristics and perceptions of members of the four generations and find ways to address these perceptions when
working with multigenerational teams (Bourne, 2009). Raines (2003) predicted the new company or organization of the coming decades will embrace and encourage all four generations in the workplace. As workplaces shift and the four generations work together longer, it will be more important than ever before for leisure organization workers to recognize, tolerate, and ultimately adapt to varying communication styles and accommodate their colleagues’ technology preferences.
APPENDIX A

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself—what is your favorite leisure activity?

2. As you know, the purpose of this project is to better understand communication, so I am wondering if you can tell me a little bit about how you communicate with others in the workplace.

3. Can you describe how you communicate with colleagues?

4. Can you describe how you communicate with those whom you supervise?

5. And, can you describe how you communicate with those who supervise you?

6. Can you discuss and describe how you work with others on a team project?

7. What is your preferred use of technology when communicating in the workplace?

8. What prompts you to engage in communication at work?

9. Can you talk about your technology preferences in terms of communication? Do those preferences vary depending with whom you are speaking? How do you think others would describe your communication style?

10. Any more thoughts or comments about issues of communication and technology in the workplace?

11. How do you prefer to get your local or world news each day?
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Study Invitation

You have been invited to participate in a focus group study conducted by me for my master’s thesis. I need a total of 12 participants on either Wednesday, November 18 or Thursday, November 19, 2009, from 6-7:30pm at Coloma Community Center. Pizza, dessert and beverages will be provided. The focus of the study is “Communication in the Leisure Services Workplace.”

Because this is an age-related study I need to know what span of years to which you were born. Please reply by email or phone your availability and to which age group you belong. This should be fun and interesting. Findings will be published in my thesis and will have practical applications for our work place within the Recreation Division. All names and information will be kept confidential. If you are available for this focus group, I will need your yes or no RSVP no later than November 10 to irritate59@yahoo.com. Focus group participant selections will be made and you will be notified shortly thereafter.

Please cut and paste this into your reply or just indicate your birth year:

Born before 1946

Born between 1946 – 1964

Born between 1965 – 1981

Born between 1982 – 2000

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you!
If you have any questions, please reply or call me at (916) 808-6050 or (916) 203-3718

Sincerely,
Terri Matal
APPENDIX C
Focus Group Pseudonym Chart

This chart shows each focus group participant by pseudonym, generational cohort, current or former position and gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Generational Cohort</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Park Ranger</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>Pool Manager/Student</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>Asst Pool Manager/Student</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>IT Supervisor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Custodial Supervisor</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ron</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Program Coordinator</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecily</td>
<td>Millennial</td>
<td>Special Program Leader</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Special Program Leader</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>Traditionalist</td>
<td>Retired Operations Manager</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>IT System Engineer</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


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