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Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing

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*Organizations are currently facing the retirement of many older workers and the challenge of recruiting and retaining young talent. However, few studies have empirically substantiated generational differences in work values. This study examines the work values of a nationally representative sample of U.S. high school seniors in 1976, 1991, and 2006 (*N *= 16,507) representing Baby Boomers, Generation X (GenX), and Generation Me (GenMe, also known as GenY, or Millennials). With data collected across time, these analyses isolate generational differences from age differences, unlike one-time studies, which cannot separate the two. Leisure values increased steadily over the generations (*d *comparing Boomers and GenMe = .57), and work centrality declined. Extrinsic values (e.g., status, money) peaked with GenX but were still higher among GenMe than among Boomers (*d *= .26). Contrary to popular press reports, GenMe does not favor altruistic work values (e.g., helping, societal worth) more than previous generations. Social values (e.g., making friends) and intrinsic values (e.g., an interesting, results-oriented job) were rated lower by GenMe than by Boomers. These findings have practical implications for the recruitment and management of the emerging workforce.*

Keywords: *work values; generational differences; work reward preferences*

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One of the biggest challenges for organizations in the coming years will be the retirement of more than 75 million older workers and their replacement by a comparable number of young people entering the workforce. To most effectively attract and manage this new cohort of employees, organizations need a clear understanding of the work values of the new generation and how they may differ from the values of previous generations.

Today's workforce consists of individuals from four generations: the Silent Generation (born 1925-1945), the Baby Boomers (Boomers; born 1946-1964), Generation X (GenX; born 1965-1981), and Generation Me (GenMe, also known as GenY, Millennials, nGen, and iGen; born 1982-1999). Research has found many generational differences in personality traits, attitudes, mental health, and behaviors (e.g., Kessler et al., 2005; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001; Twenge, Zhang, & Im, 2004; Wells & Twenge, 2005; for a review of how these differences might affect the workplace, see Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Overall, GenX and especially GenMe are more individualistic and self-focused (e.g., Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007; Sirias, Karp, & Brotherton, 2007; Twenge & Campbell, 2001, 2009; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), inspiring the label *Generation Me* (Twenge, 2006).

Extensive popular press coverage in publications such as *Business Week*, *Fortune*, and the *Wall Street Journal* has noted how organizational practices are changing to adapt to the work values of GenMe (e.g., Alsop, 2008; Gloeckler, 2008). Leading companies have added amenities focusing on work–life balance, relaxation, and leisure activities. SAS has an in-house gym; Google offers onsite laundry and massages; eBay set aside two rooms for meditation; and KPMG now offers workers 5 weeks of paid time off during their 1st year (100 Best, 2008). Other companies have tried to attract the young generation with programs that allow employees to volunteer to help others during work hours or that emphasize the social good behind their products or mission (Needleman, 2008).

Despite the emergence of this mini-industry built on the assumption of a changing workforce, empirical evidence for generational differences in work values is scant. Much of the existing literature employs nonempirical sources such as anecdotal accounts or extrapolations based on different generations' life experience; at best, this literature relies on qualitative interviews (e.g., Chester, *Employing Generation Why*, 2002; Lancaster & Stillman, *When Generations Collide*, 2003; Tulgan, *Managing Generation X*, 2003, and *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy*, 2009; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, *Generations at Work*, 1999). The few systematic studies on generational differences in the workplace (e.g., Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Davis, Pawlowski, & Houston, 2006; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008; for a review, see Twenge, in press) used measurements taken only at one point in time, a design that cannot distinguish between age or career stage differences and generational differences (Schaie, 1965). For example, two cross-sectional studies found that GenMe places more importance on gaining status and striving for achievement, but both sets of authors acknowledged that this was probably because of career stage rather than generation (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Wong et al., 2008). Because of the practical limitations in conducting cross-generational research, existing knowledge about differences in work values across generations is unsatisfactory. In contrast, the time-lag method we employ

compares people of the same age at different points in time, so any differences must be caused by generation (or perhaps time period) rather than age. Using this method enables us to inform managers whether young workers now differ from young workers in the past and whether leaders need to adapt their management strategies for a new generation. If the differences in the previous one-time studies are due to age or career stage rather than generation, then managers can use the same techniques they have always used to recruit, retain, and supervise young workers. However, if there are true generational differences, then managers may need to deal with young workers differently than they dealt with workers in the past.

The ideal design for a study of generational differences is a sequential cohort design (Schaie, 1965), which begins data collection at a young age and follows several generations longitudinally as they move through their working lives. To our knowledge, such an ideal data set measuring work values does not exist. The data set we draw on surveyed a nationally representative random sample of graduating high school seniors in the United States between 1976 and 2006. Unlike a cross-sectional study done at one time, it does not confound age and generation. If differences in work values are found in this design, it would demonstrate generational, and not age, differences in work values. Accordingly, a primary contribution of this study is the use of a time-lag design to isolate generational differences in the work values of three generations of U.S. workers (Boomers, GenX, and GenMe) at the beginning of their working lives. As Grant (2009) pointed out, over-time designs are desperately needed to identify generational differences in important workplace variables.

We know of only a few studies that have attempted to examine generational differences in work values over time. Smola and Sutton (2002) sought to determine whether generation or age contributed more to differences in work values by comparing their 1999 data with data from a 1974 study conducted by a different author. Smola and Sutton found that work values are influenced more by generation than by maturity or age, but these data had serious limitations. Means for scales were not available from the 1974 data, preventing any statistical analyses of scales, and although means for individual items in 1974 were provided, the standard deviations were not available, making comparisons across time difficult. In addition, the response rate for the 1999 survey was only 8%. Finally, the invariance of the scales to the generation of the respondent was not investigated, making substantive interpretation of any observed generational differences tentative. Thus, although prior research in this regard has taken an important first step in investigating generational changes in work values, additional work is needed.

In addition, most past research on generational differences has focused on comparing Boomers and GenX (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Davis et al., 2006; Smola & Sutton, 2002). GenMe, the youngest and fastest growing generation in today's workforce, has received little, if any, empirical examination. For example, Smola and Sutton (2002) conducted their analyses in 1999 and were forced to drop GenMe from any analysis because of extremely small sample size ($n = 2$; this occurred because most of this generation was too young to be in the workforce in 1999). In the 10 years since, GenMe has become the majority of employees in their 20s (the oldest members of this generation turn 28 in 2010).

Given that GenMe is the largest pool of young people in the job market today, the recruitment of this generation is a constant theme in the popular press and a top priority for human resource departments at many of the United States' leading organizations (Erickson, 2008; Mitra, 2008; Tapscott, 1998; Yeaton, 2008). But despite the interest in understanding this generation, there is less empirical evidence about GenMe than about any other generation. Accordingly, the current study contributes to the literature by using a time-lag method to examine generational differences in work values among Boomers, GenX, and GenMe. These data will help identify the strategies that will best prepare organizations to deal with the impending "changing of the guard" among workers.

Background

Generation Cohorts

Generational cohorts include individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical developmental periods (e.g., Schaie, 1965). Each generation is influenced by broad forces (i.e., parents, peers, media, critical economic and social events, and popular culture) that create common value systems distinguishing them from people who grew up at different times. These forces are strongest during an individual's childhood and adolescence; for example, work values remain relatively stable from early adolescence to young adulthood (Lubinski, Schmidt, & Benbow, 1996; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). According to Scott (2000, p. 356), this value system or view of the world "stays with the individual throughout their lives and is the anchor against which later experiences are interpreted. People are thus fixed in qualitatively different subjective areas." Our society has labeled each generation differently to separate the cohorts from each other, although most research suggests that cohort effects are linear rather than categorical, with steady change over time rather than sudden shifts at birth year cutoffs (e.g., Twenge et al., 2004, 2008).

Individuals born between 1946 and 1964 are labeled *Boomers*. Growing up, Boomers were affected by the civil rights and Women's movements, the Vietnam War, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and Watergate. In a recent survey, human resource professionals indicated that they believed Baby Boomers were "results driven," "plan to stay for long term," and "give maximum effort" (Society of Human Resource Management, 2004).

Those born between 1965 and 1981, GenX, experienced the AIDS epidemic, economic uncertainty, and the fall of the Soviet Union. They had a substantially higher probability of witnessing their parents' divorce or job loss due to downsizing than had any prior generation. As a result of these experiences, members of this cohort are purported to be independent and less committed to their employing organization and likely to job hop to increase marketability and to see work–life balance as extremely important (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Glass, 2007). The workplace traits most associated with GenX were "tech savvy," "learn quickly," "seek work/life balance," "embrace diversity," and "like informality" (Society of Human Research Management, 2004).

The youngest generation in today's workforce, GenMe, born between 1982 and 1999, watched several iconic companies (e.g., Enron, TYCO, Arthur Andersen) collapse due to unethical leadership. Members of this generation have been "wired" since they were very young;

growing up with the Internet has made them accustomed to getting access to information quickly. Similar to GenX, GenMe (referred to as *Generation Y* in the Society of Human Research Management survey) was described as "tech savvy," "like informality," "learn quickly," and "embrace diversity." It is interesting that "need supervision" was also attributed to GenMe (Society of Human Research Management, 2004).

Work Values

Values are useful indicators of an individual's decisions and actions (Rokeach, 1973); they are enduring and are relatively resistant to change (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998; Ravlin & Meglino, 1987, 1989; Rokeach, 1973). The values approach to motivation assumes that people will be motivated by activities and outcomes that they value (Maslow, 1943; Pinder, 1997). Although there has been some disagreement over the distinction between general values and work values, work values have been defined as the outcomes people desire and feel they should attain through work (Brief, 1998; Cherrington, 1980; Frieze, Olson, & Murrell, 2006; Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1988). Work values shape employees' perceptions of preferences in the workplace, exerting a direct influence on employee attitudes and behaviors (Dose, 1997), job decisions (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Lofquist & Dawis, 1971), and perceptions and problem solving (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987).

One persistent distinction in work values is between *extrinsic* and *intrinsic values* (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Porter & Lawler, 1968; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic work values focus on the consequences or outcomes of work—the tangible rewards external to the individual, such as income, advancement opportunities, and status. In contrast, intrinsic work values focus on the process of work—the intangible rewards that reflect the inherent interest in the work, the learning potential, and the opportunity to be creative (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Other work values include influence or autonomy in decision making; job stability or security; altruistic rewards such as helping others or contributing to society; social rewards related to interpersonal relationships at work; and leisure, which refers to the opportunity for free time, vacation, and freedom from supervision (Herzog, 1982; Johnson, 2002; Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002).

The fundamentally different experiences and events faced by different generations during their developing years may produce different expectations and preferences about work as they progress through school and begin to make major decisions about their future careers. Many will experience the beginning stages of career development, which include self-assessment and career exploration (Erikson, 1963; Super, 1980). During these early developmental stages, young individuals begin to define their adult identities through the choices they make, including decisions about college, majors, and first jobs. They start to ask questions such as, What am I looking for in a career? In what type of work environment would I be happy? These career stages can be described as "information gathering," and they set the stage for future career directions.

A recent meta-analysis (Low, Yoon, Roberts, & Rounds, 2005) has shown that work attitudes are fairly stable from early adolescence to early adulthood; as the authors stated, "This implies that, similar to personality traits and abilities, vocational interests are likely to have

effects on the paths people follow over the life course" (p. 727). In addition, Hansen and Dik (2005) found that the work interests of high school seniors remained predictive of occupational membership as far as 12 years after graduation from high school. Thus it is possible to draw conclusions about generational differences in the workplace on the basis of samples of high school seniors. Many of these students will enter the workforce immediately after high school graduation, and others will begin their careers within 5 years.

Understanding the work values of these young individuals helps organizations appreciate how to structure jobs, working conditions, compensation packages, and human resource policies to attract GenMe. What a Boomer or GenXer valued or expected from work when he or she was young may be very different from what a member of GenMe values coming into the workplace. Thus, the management techniques that were effective for young workers 20 years ago may not work now. In addition, the same old recruiting techniques outlining the same old jobs may not be effective for each new generation as it enters the workforce. For example, many companies recognize they should have a stronger presence on Internet sites such as Facebook. But what should those advertisements and company descriptions emphasize—what will be most likely to attract GenMe? What motivates GenMe to work, and what do its members want out of a job? The answers to these questions should drive the recruiting and retention techniques used by companies. Thus empirical research conducted on generational work values of GenMe is needed.

The limited research on generational differences in work values has often relied on nonempirical data (anecdotes, interviews) or problematic methods (cross-sectional studies, which cannot separate the effects of age and generation). Thus many of the recruiting techniques used recently for GenMe are on shaky empirical ground. Grant (2009), for example, has called for additional cross-temporal analyses to determine whether variables such as work values have changed over time. By using a time-lag method on a nationally representative sample, we have attempted to determine generational differences in work values. Empirically substantiating—or refuting—assumed generational differences is crucial to effectively recruiting, managing, and maintaining the generations of today's workplace.

Research Questions of This Study

This study provides a unique look at the attitudes of three generations of high school seniors as they prepared to make major decisions regarding their employment future at three different times (1976, 1991, and 2006; these cohorts were primarily born in 1958-1959, 1973-1974, and 1988-1989, respectively). In the next sections, we detail the work value constructs measured in this study and the research question related to each.

Leisure

According to popular conceptions, GenX and GenMe are said to "work to live," whereas Boomers "live to work" (e.g., Lancaster & Stillman, 2003). Consistent with this anecdotal evidence, a 2004 survey of managers described younger workers as a group that "seeks work/life balance" and "likes informality" (Society of Human Resource Management, 2004).

Ostensibly, Boomers put a high priority on their careers when they were young, but today's youngest workers are more interested in making their jobs accommodate their family and personal lives. According to popular thought, they want jobs with flexibility, telecommuting options, and the ability to go part-time or leave the workforce temporarily to have children (or to travel or spend time with friends). Some have argued that the idea of having a balanced life is a fundamental value in GenX and GenMe (Chao, 2005). In addition, Smola and Sutton (2002) found a decline in work centrality and work ethic between 1974 and 1999, consistent with a rise in leisure values over the generations.

On the other hand, the rise in individualistic traits with the generations (e.g., Twenge, 1997, 2001a; Twenge et al., 2008) suggests that GenX and especially GenMe should be more focused on work, as work is largely an individualistic goal. In addition, GenX and particularly GenMe faced increased competition in college admissions and are constantly reminded of the global competition for jobs. Thus it is also possible that GenMe will not value leisure as much as previous generations. Because of the limited scholarly work in this area, specific hypotheses could not be made.

Research Question 1: When seniors in high school, which generation most valued jobs providing leisure and viewed work as less central to their lives?

Extrinsic Rewards

The notion that extrinsic rewards such as pay, material possessions, and prestige are the primary factors that motivate humans to work is as old as the scientific study of work itself (Thorndike, 1911). Although modern organizational theory places less emphasis on extrinsic rewards (Brett & Stroh, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000), they still play an important role in the employment process. The disparate life experiences encountered by different generations may affect each generation's value for extrinsic rewards. For instance, generations suffering economic hardships may place a greater emphasis on compensation. In addition, more recent generations have more individualistic and materialistic value orientations than past generations (e.g., Dey, Astin, & Korn, 1992). For example, England (1991) compared a sample of workers in 1982 with a sample in 1989. During this 7-year period, economic goals took on greater importance and comfort goals declined, suggesting that extrinsic rewards are more important to later generations.

On the other hand, Boomers might have been just as materialistic and externally focused. In the 1980s, the Boomers gained a reputation as status-conscious young urban professionals, or "yuppies," because they were unapologetically materialistic and focused on careers (Adler, 1984). There is also a popular belief that GenXers focused on extrinsic rewards from their work to survive in a time with a rapidly depleting social security system and rapid inflation of living expenses. Indeed, the transition from Boomers to GenXers in college in the mid-1980s featured 40% of the graduating class of Yale applying to a single New York investment bank (Howe & Strauss, 2000). In contrast, anecdotal accounts and emerging organizational practices suggest that today's young generation is more motivated by interesting work than by money (e.g., Lancaster & Stillman, 2003). Given that they saw their

parents work too hard and spend less time at home, and that they are more likely to be laid off themselves, GenMe members may believe that there is more to life than a big salary, resulting in a lower value for the extrinsic rewards by GenMe. At the same time, more recent generations are entering the workforce with an increased demand for higher education (International Labor Organization, 2007), an increasing cost of completing higher education (College Board, 2005), the associated higher debt load (Scherschel, & Behmyer, 1997), and a recognition of the need for a dual-income household. Given these economic trends, more recent workers might place an increased emphasis on work providing extrinsic rewards. Despite these propositions, prior research has not directly compared the value for extrinsic rewards across generations; accordingly, any hypotheses would be speculative.

Research Question 2: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides extrinsic rewards?

Intrinsic Rewards

Intrinsic rewards entail being motivated to work for work's own sake rather than to obtain material or extrinsic rewards. A job that is interesting, provides variety and responsibility, offers a challenge, enables the employee to see the results of what he or she does, and has a significant impact on others is characterized as intrinsically motivating (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Several anecdotal reports have suggested that GenX and GenMe value meaning in work (Arnett, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003; Tulgan, 2003, 2009), and organizations appear to agree. Recruitment, selection, and training are now often structured to highlight employees' career potential and growth. For example, organizations no longer provide training just to meet the minimum job requirements of the current job; training is designed to help employees reach their full potential. Other now-popular policies connected to intrinsic values include those designed to empower employees, increase autonomy, and facilitate participatory decision making. Despite these numerous adaptations, little if any empirical work has explicitly compared the emphasis placed on intrinsic rewards by different generations. The rise in individualistic traits and positive self-views (e.g., Twenge, 2006) suggests that GenMe members might seek jobs that interest them and provide more personal meaning. Given the extremely limited scholarly work on this topic, however, any hypotheses would be purely speculative.

Research Question 3: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides intrinsic rewards?

Altruistic Rewards

Altruistic work rewards include the motivation to help others and society through work. The shifts in personality traits toward increased individualism and even narcissism over the generations (Twenge et al., 2008) suggest that GenX and especially GenMe will have less interest in altruistic work rewards. In seeming contrast, GenMe members are more likely to volunteer their

time during high school than previous generations were (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 2006); however, volunteering has increasingly become required for high school graduation (Howe & Strauss, 2000), making it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about generational shifts in altruistic values. Nevertheless, based on the belief that GenMe cares more about volunteerism and social issues, a number of companies, as a way to attract younger employees, have introduced extensive volunteer programs that allow employees to do volunteer work on the company's time (Needleman, 2008). However, whether GenMe actually values altruism more than its predecessors did has not been empirically substantiated.

Research Question 4: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides altruistic rewards?

Social Rewards

The need to belong or to be connected is also a component of intrinsic motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and is included in most need theories (McClelland, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Personality data show that GenX is more extraverted and outgoing (Twenge, 2001b) but places less importance on social approval than Boomers did (Twenge & Im, 2007). Although the emergence of social networking sites creates the impression that GenMe feels a constant need for connection, empirical research has documented a breakdown in social relationships over the past few decades. For example, compared with U.S. adults in 1985, those in 2004 were much less likely to say they had a friend in whom they could confide (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006). Thus while some evidence suggests that GenMe members should value social rewards at work more, other evidence suggests they should value them less.

Research Question 5: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides social rewards?

Method

Data for this study were gathered from a larger data collection effort, Monitoring the Future (Johnston et al., 2006), which has surveyed a nationally representative sample of high school seniors every year since 1976. Monitoring the Future samples high schools from across the United States that are chosen to represent a cross section of the U.S. population on variables such as region, race, gender, and socioeconomic status (see www.monitoringthefuture.org). Numerous analyses have been based on this data set, though none have examined generational changes in work values. The survey uses a multistage random sampling procedure to select high schools and then students to complete the survey. The participation rate of schools is between 66% and 80%, and the student participation rate is between 79% and 83% (Johnston et al., 2006). Schools that decline to participate are replaced by schools with similar demographic characteristics. About 15,000 high school seniors are sampled each year in the spring. Most respondents are 17 or 18 years old. The sample is divided into subsamples of about 2,500 people, and each is asked a different set

of questions, called a form. Our study incorporates items from Forms 3 and 4. Form 3 asks five questions about work centrality and a single question about job stability (for the items, see Table 1). The section begins, "In the following list you will find some statements about leisure time and work. Please show whether you agree or disagree with each statement." Most questions are answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*; the question on whether a respondent would work if he or she had enough money was answered with *yes* or *no*. Form 4 asks respondents to rate the importance of 23 different job characteristics: "Different people may look for different things in their work. Below is a list of some of these things. Please read each one, then indicate how important this thing is for you." These items are listed in Table 1. They are answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not important* to *very important*.

Three data collection years 15 years apart were used: the earliest (1976, n = 3,284 and 3,296 for Forms 3 and 4, respectively), the most recent available when the analyses were performed (2006, n = 2,432 and 2,406), and the middle (1991, n = 2,563 and 2,526). These represent three generations: the high school graduating classes of 1976 (primarily born in 1958-1959: Boomers), 1991 (primarily born in 1973-1974: GenX), and 2006 (primarily born in 1988-1989: GenMe). Total sample size across all three generations and the two forms was 16,507.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

We first examined the factor structure of the Form 3 and Form 4 Monitoring the Future items using confirmatory factor analysis with LISREL 8.7 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004). For Form 3, we specified the five work centrality items to load on work centrality factor, and we parameterized the single stability of work item as a single manifest indicator by specifying the factor loading to unity and the error term to zero. As shown in Table 2, the work centrality items did not provide an adequate fit with the data in any of the 3 years of data administration. We include the results for the single items in Table 1 to provide a comprehensive picture of the data set, but we do not analyze these items as a total scale because of poor model fit indices and low internal consistency reliability.

Next, consistent with prior work examining the psychometric properties of the 23 Form 4 items on job characteristics (e.g., Johnson, 2000), we specified seven work values factors. The factors included seven values: extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic, social, leisure, security, and influence. As presented in Table 2, the seven-factor model provided an adequate fit to the data for all 3 years of data administration. However, subsequent reliability analyses revealed that the security and influence scales had poor levels of internal consistency reliability for each of the 3 years of data administration (none of the coefficients' alpha reliability exceeded .50). Accordingly, we omitted these items and conducted an additional confirmatory factor analysis with the remaining 19 items. Model fit indices supported the appropriateness of the five-factor solution based on the remaining 19 items across each of the 3 years of data administration. Accordingly, we adopted the five-factor model for subsequent analyses. Reliability estimates for the remaining scales are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Generational Differences in Work Values and Attitudes

Work values	1976 *M*	1991 *M*	2006 *M*	1976 % v. imp.	1991 % v. imp.	2006 % v. imp.	1976 vs. 1991 *t* or *d*	1991 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*	1976 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*
Leisure rewards	2.36	2.60	2.76	2.33-2.39	2.56-2.64	2.72-2.80	.35	.22	.57
	(.67)	(.70)	(.73)	(.017)	(.019)	(.020)			
A job where you have more than 2 weeks' vacation	2.35	2.60	2.77	17.3	25.3	31.3	9.10***	6.04***	15.53***
	(1.02)	(1.04)	(1.02)						
A job that leaves a lot of time for other things in your life[a]	3.14	3.18	3.25	38.3	40.4	44.6	2.09*	2.94**	5.16***
	(.82)	(.80)	(.79)						
A job with an easy pace that lets you work slowly	2.12	2.27	2.34	8.9	12.6	14.9	5.94***	2.48*	8.51***
	(.93)	(.97)	(.98)						
A job that leaves you mostly free of supervision by others[a]	2.73	2.91	2.79	23.3	30.5	25.7	6.98***	−4.29***	2.36*
	(.94)	(.93)	(.92)						
Intrinsic rewards	3.85	3.83	3.76	3.82-3.88	3.80-3.86	3.73-3.79	−.05	−.16	−.20
	(.41)	(.42)	(.48)	(.013)	(.014)	(.015)			
A job that is interesting to do	3.85	3.82	3.77	87.8	85.4	81.6	−2.11*	−3.68***	−6.01***
	(.45)	(.47)	(.53)						
A job where you can learn new things, learn new skills	3.32	3.28	3.21	46.5	44.6	41.6	−1.93	−2.87**	−4.99***
	(.74)	(.76)	(.78)						
A job where the skills you learn will not go out of date	3.34	3.31	3.21	53.9	53.2	45.3	−1.23	−4.28***	−5.82***
	(.84)	(.86)	(.86)						
A job where you can see the results of what you do	3.47	3.44	3.31	57.7	54.4	46.0	−1.78	−6.35***	−8.47***
	(.70)	(.70)	(.75)						
A job that uses your skills and abilities—lets you do the things you can do best	3.66	3.67	3.61	70.9	71.9	68.2	.48	−3.67***	−3.48***
	(.57)	(.57)	(.64)						
A job where you do not have to pretend to be a type of person that you are not	3.59	3.58	3.49	72.7	72.3	67.4	−.47	−3.61***	−4.33***
	(.78)	(.79)	(.85)						
A job where you have the chance to be creative[a]	3.00	3.09	3.09	36.2	38.3	41.4	4.02***	.00	3.88***
	(.93)	(.87)	(.92)						

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	1976 *M*	1991 *M*	2006 *M*	1976 % v. imp.	1991 % v. imp.	2006 % v. imp.	1976 vs. 1991 *t* or *d*	1991 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*	1976 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*
Altruistic rewards	3.30 (.71)	3.27 (.72)	3.23 (.74)	3.27-3.33 (.016)	3.23-3.31 (.018)	3.19-3.27 (.016)	−.04	−.06	−.10
A job that gives you an opportunity to be directly helpful to others[a]	3.32 (.80)	3.26 (.81)	3.21 (.84)	50.2	46.4	44.3	−2.62**	−2.15*	−4.85***
A job that is worthwhile to society	3.20 (.84)	3.22 (.85)	3.19 (.86)	43.7	44.9	43.9	.61	−.99	−.46
Social rewards	3.35 (.70)	3.28 (.70)	3.16 (.67)	3.32-3.38 (.016)	3.24-3.32 (.018)	3.12- 3.20 (.019)	−.10	−.18	−.28
A job that gives you a chance to make friends	3.38 (.79)	3.28 (.82)	3.12 (.89)	54.0	47.9	40.7	−4.79***	−6.48***	−11.63***
A job that permits contact with a lot of people	2.95 (.94)	2.93 (.95)	2.85 (.96)	33.5	33.5	30.2	−.73	−2.90**	−3.82***
Extrinsic rewards	2.63 (.68)	2.90 (.71)	2.81 (.70)	2.60-2.66 (.016)	2.86-2.94 (.019)	2.77-2.85 (.017)	.39	−.13	.26
A job that has high status and prestige	2.63 (.96)	2.92 (.94)	2.79 (.94)	20.4	32.3	26.0	11.55***	−5.10***	6.04***
A job that most people look up to and respect	2.98 (.93)	3.16 (.89)	3.16 (.89)	33.9	42.9	43.2	7.46***	.27	7.63***
A job that provides you with a chance to earn a good deal of money[a]	3.30 (.76)	3.44 (.77)	3.39 (.78)	46.8	58.2	54.9	6.72***	−2.37***	4.04***
A job where the chances for advancement and promotion are good[a]	3.43 (.75)	3.51 (.71)	3.42 (.75)	57.3	61.6	56.0	3.68***	−4.24***	−.83
Omitted items									
To me, work is nothing more than making a living.	2.21 (1.40)	2.41 (1.42)	2.74 (1.40)	23.1	27.4	33.9	5.32***	8.21***	14.02***
I expect my work to be a very central part of my life.	3.94 (1.16)	3.80 (1.16)	3.64 (1.10)	74.0	68.4	62.5	−4.52***	−4.94***	−9.74***
I want to do my best in my job, even if this sometimes means working overtime.	4.40 (.87)	4.36 (.87)	4.20 (.94)	89.8	89.1	83.9	−1.53	−6.10***	−7.94***

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

	1976 *M*	1991 *M*	2006 *M*	1976 % v. imp.	1991 % v. imp.	2006 % v. imp.	1976 vs. 1991 *t* or *d*	1991 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*	1976 vs. 2006 *t* or *d*
I like the kind of work you can forget about after the work day is over.	3.37 (1.49)	3.47 (1.41)	3.44 (1.33)	54.6	56.3	52.7	2.45*	.54	−1.92
If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you'd like for the rest of your life, would you want to work?	1.23 (.42)	1.27 (.44)	1.30 (.46)	77.3	73.0	70.3	−3.81***	−2.04*	−5.92***
A job where most problems are difficult and challenging	2.40 (.95)	2.47 (.91)	2.28 (.94)	13.5	13.6	11.1	2.90**	−7.20***	−4.67***
A job where you get a chance to participate in decision making	2.89 (.87)	3.14 (.80)	3.07 (.83)	26.3	36.8	34.0	11.62***	−3.31***	7.91***
A job that offers a reasonably predictable, secure future	3.52 (.68)	3.55 (.68)	3.39 (.75)	61.3	64.0	53.5	1.44	−7.59***	−6.78***
A job that allows you to establish roots in a community and not have to move from place to place	3.00 (1.02)	3.04 (.97)	3.02 (.97)	40.5	39.4	38.9	1.34	−.40	.91
I would like to stay in the same job for most of my adult life.	3.43 (1.42)	3.62 (1.40)	3.60 (1.30)	55.8	61.9	60.4	4.98***	−.61	4.41***

Notes: % v. imp. = percentage of respondents saying the item is "very important" or they "mostly agree" or "agree" with the statement. In the rows reporting scale mean (e.g., "**Leisure rewards**"), the latent means are reported in the columns for means, the 95% confidence intervals and standard errors are reported in the columns labeled "% v. imp.," and the *d* for the year comparisons are reported in the columns labeled, e.g., "1976 vs. 2006 *t*." Standard deviations are in parentheses. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

[a]Denotes an item that was left unconstrained in the partial scalar invariance analyses.

Table 2
Model Fit Statistics for Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Invariance Analyses

Factor	*df*	χ^2	RMSEA	SRMSR	TLI	CFI
1976 administration						
Form 3: 2 factor	9	231.29	.09	.05	.77	.8600
Form 4: 7 factor	209	2386.19	.06	.05	.91	.9300
Form 4: 5 factor	142	1655.87	.06	.05	.92	.9300
1991 administration						
Form 3: 2 factor	9	325.26	.12	.06	.67	.8000
Form 4: 7 factor	209	2123.45	.06	.06	.91	.9300
Form 4: 5 factor	142	1419.08	.06	.05	.92	.9300
2006 administration						
Form 3: 2 factor	9	393.72	.14	.08	.51	.7100
Form 4: 7 factor	209	2053.13	.06	.05	.94	.9500
Form 4: 5 factor	142	1451.73	.06	.05	.94	.9500
Multigroup invariance						
Model 1: configural inv	375	4110.93	.06	.05	.93	.9391
Model 2: metric invariance	401	4150.52	.06	.06	.93	.9389
Delta Model 1 vs. Model 2	26	39.58				.0002
Model 3: scalar invariance	427	4539.10	.06	.06	.93	.9330
Delta Model 2 vs. Model 3	26	388.59**				.0060
Model 4: partial scalar	417	4241.86	.06	.06	.93	.9377
Delta Model 2 vs. Model 4	16	91.34*				.0012
Model 5: mean invariance	427	4760.09	.06	.06	.92	.9294
Delta Model 4 vs. Model 5	10	518.24**				.0080

Notes: *df* = degrees of freedom; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMSR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index; CFI = comparative fit index. * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Primary Analyses

To make meaningful cross-group inferences, it is crucial to first demonstrate that the measurement scale is invariant to group membership. Using the steps suggested by Vandenberg and Lance (2000), we conducted a multigroup measurement invariance analysis of the previously supported five-factor structure serving as the baseline model and each generation serving as a group. This set of analyses would show whether the respondents in each generation are interpreting the items in the same way and would ascertain whether the measures assess the same constructs in 1976, 1991, and 2006. In such analyses, the first step is to ensure that the factor structure is consistent across samples (configural invariance). Next, the loadings of each item on their respective latent factor are set to equivalence for each of the three groups (metric invariance). Invariance of item intercepts (scalar invariance) was then examined. According to Vandenberg and Lance, at least partial scalar invariance must be demonstrated before meaningful group comparisons can be made. The final step of invariance analyses, invariance of latent means, was used to address the primary questions of differences in work values across generations. Each of

these steps proceeds in a parameter nested sequence, such that each model is nested in the previous model. In such analyses, the least restricted model with the smallest decrement in model fit is supported. Although the difference in the χ^2 test is useful in comparing nested models, this statistic is heavily influenced by sample size, and as a result, very minor differences in models are significant with large sample sizes, as was the case here. Accordingly, in addition to the difference in χ^2 test, we relied on the difference in comparative fit index (CFI) approach recommended by Meade, Johnson, and Braddy (2008) to compare models. According to Meade et al., a ΔCFI > .002 across successive models suggests a lack of invariance, while a ΔCFI < .002 supports across-group invariance.

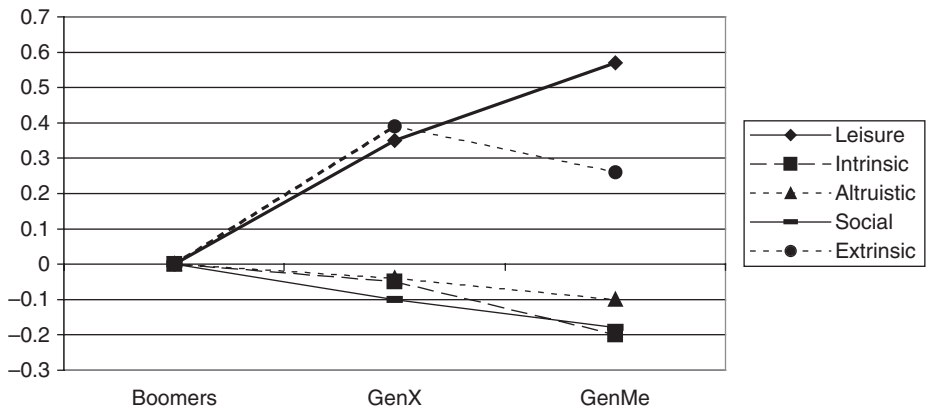
As evident in Table 2, the configural invariance model provided an adequate fit to the data, indicating that the same structure underlies the instrument across the three groups. Next, metric invariance was supported by a nonsignificant decrement in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 39.58$, *ns*) and a negligible ΔCFI (.0002) from the baseline configural model when metric invariance constraints were added. On the other hand, scalar invariance was not supported, as the change in model fit from the metric to scalar invariance model was significant ($\Delta\chi^2 = 388.59$, $p < .01$) and fell above Meade et al.'s (2008) recommended cutoff (ΔCFI = .006). According to Vandenberg and Lance (2000), meaningful across-group comparisons can be made if at least two of the manifest indicators per latent factor are constrained to equality, referred to as partial invariance. Although the addition of the partial scalar invariance constraints yielded a significant decrement in model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = 91.34$, $p < .05$) compared with the metric invariance model, the ΔCFI was below Meade et al.'s recommended cutoff (.0012) . The results of the invariance analyses reveal that the five constructs of interest were assessed equivalently across generations, lending confidence that any differences across generations are due to substantive issues and not changes in the measurement scale.

We then proceeded to interpret latent differences in work values. The first step in doing so was the specification of the invariant latent means model. This model simultaneously specifies that the latent mean for each of five constructs is equivalent across generations. The decrement in model fit observed when comparing this model with the partial scalar invariance model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 518.24$, $p < .05$; ΔCFI = .008) indicates that the latent means differed significantly across generations. To answer the primary questions, we proceeded by conducting a series of pairwise comparisons of differences in each value for each of the generations. The latent means for each work value and generation are presented in Table 1. We relied on effect sizes in interpreting our results; however, we also present the 95% confidence intervals based on the standard errors provided by LISREL for each work value for the three generations in Table 1.

Research Question 1: When seniors in high school, which generation most valued jobs providing leisure and viewed work as less central to their lives?

As seen in Table 1 and Figure 1, recent generations were progressively more likely to value leisure at work. Specifically, GenMe placed significantly greater emphasis on leisure time relative to both GenX ($d = .22$) and Boomers ($d = .57$). GenX also valued leisure significantly more than did Boomers ($d = .35$). Thus GenX and GenMe placed a greater emphasis on leisure time than did their Boomer counterparts. The difference between Boomers and GenMe on these items exceeds the $d = .50$ cutoff for a moderate effect (Cohen, 1977).

Figure 1
Change in Standard Deviations (*d*) on Scales of Work Values Across Boomers, GenX, and GenMe



Note: Boomers' values from 1976 are the zero baseline, with GenX (1991) and GenMe (2006) compared to them.

Almost twice as many young people in 2006 rated having a job with more than 2 weeks of vacation as "very important" than did in 1976, and almost twice as many wanted a job at which they could work slowly. In 2006 nearly half wanted a job "which leaves a lot of time for other things in your life." GenMe members were less likely to want to work overtime and more likely to say they would stop working if they had enough money. While only 23% of Boomers agreed that "work is just making a living," 34% of GenMe respondents agreed. Three fourths of Boomers said they expected work to be a central part of their lives, compared with 63% of GenMe respondents.

Research Question 2: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides extrinsic rewards?

GenX members were significantly more likely than Boomers to value extrinsic rewards in their work (d = .39). Between GenX and GenMe, however, this trend reversed, with GenMe less likely to desire these qualities than GenX (d = −.13). However, GenMe members were still significantly more likely than Boomers to value extrinsic rewards (d = .26). Together, both GenX and GenMe valued extrinsic rewards more than Boomers did; these results were particularly pronounced for the difference between Boomers and GenX respondents (see Figure 1).

Research Question 3: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides intrinsic rewards?

GenX members and Boomers did not differ significantly in their value for intrinsic rewards (d = .05), whereas GenMe was significantly less likely to value an intrinsically

rewarding job compared with GenX ($d = -.16$) and Boomers ($d = -.20$). Thus a work context that provides intrinsic rewards was somewhat less valued by GenMe than by the two prior generations.

Research Question 4: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides altruistic rewards?

There were no significant differences among GenMe, GenX, and Boomers on the value placed on a job that allows for altruistic behavior. Thus altruism appears to be a work value relatively consistent across the three generations studied here. GenMe placed slightly less emphasis on "a job that gives you an opportunity to be directly helpful to others" than Boomers did at the same age.

Research Question 5: When seniors in high school, which generation will most value a job that provides social rewards?

GenMe valued social interactions at work significantly less than did GenX ($d = -.18$) and Boomers ($d = -.28$). GenX and Boomers did not significantly differ in valuing work that allows for social interactions ($d = -.10$). Thus, the importance of working in an environment that fills the need for social interaction appears to be lower in GenMe respondents, relative to both GenX and Boomers.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature in three primary ways. First, the study uses a time-lagged, nationally representative sample of young people and measures their values at the same age at different points in time, thus avoiding the confound between age and generation found in most past research. Second, the results provide empirical evidence that there are small to moderate generational differences in work values among the three generations most prominently represented in the U.S. workforce. Compared with Boomers, GenX and especially GenMe hold stronger values for leisure time and place more value on work that provides extrinsic rewards. GenMe also values intrinsic and social rewards less than Boomers did. Thus young workers are now entering the workforce with different values, on average, from those of the young workers of 15 and 30 years ago, which may affect recruitment and management. Finally, this study contributes to the literature by providing the first systematic analysis, as far as we are aware, of the work values of GenMe, the youngest and fastest growing generation of U.S. workers.

Main Findings

The largest change in work values is the increase in the value placed on leisure. This mirrors what has often been described as GenX and GenMe members' desire for work–life balance. These data provide among the first quantitative evidence of a generational shift in work values and support the popular notion that leisure is a particularly salient work value for GenMe relative to GenX and Boomers and for GenX relative to Boomers. These data are also consistent with the

only other time-lag study in the literature; Smola and Sutton (2002) also found decreases in work centrality and work ethic in their limited comparison of samples from 1974 and 1999. This shift toward leisure may reflect the realities of the current work environment. Work hours have increased significantly in the United States during the past 30 years, in contrast to the consistent decreases in work hours in many other industrialized nations. In fact, U.S. workers work more hours a year than do workers in any other industrialized nation and more hours than do workers in all but two developing nations (International Labor Organization, 2007). Given that GenX and especially GenMe grew up witnessing these social and labor trends and enter the workforce with the expectation of increasing work hours, the need for a dual-income household, and limited vacation time, it makes sense that the value of additional leisure time is particularly strong among these cohorts.

However, given that GenMe values extrinsic rewards more than Boomers did, the combination of not wanting to work hard but still wanting more money and status verifies the sense of entitlement many have identified among GenMe (e.g., Aslop, 2008; Tulgan, 2009; Twenge et al., 2008). One study found that GenMe's expectations for educational attainment and prestigious jobs far outstripped the number who would actually attain these degrees and jobs (Reynolds, Stewart, MacDonald, & Sischo, 2006). Valuing leisure (e.g., not wanting to work overtime) while still expecting more status and compensation demonstrates a similar disconnect between expectations and reality, one typical of the overconfidence—not just confidence—apparent in this generation. For example, narcissistic traits have risen over the generations, and narcissism is strongly linked to overconfidence and unrealistic risk taking (for a review, see Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Despite the new programs designed to attract young workers through opportunities to volunteer and help others (e.g., Needleman, 2008), there were no significant generational differences in altruistic values. GenMe was no more likely than GenX or Boomers to value work that helps others or is worthwhile to society. Thus programs focusing on helping may attract some members of GenMe, but these programs will be no more effective for this group than they were for young GenXers 15 years ago or young Boomers 30 years ago.

In addition, the importance of intrinsic values declined slightly over the generations, suggesting that younger generations are not necessarily searching for meaning at work, as some have theorized (e.g., Arnett, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003). This is consistent with previous research showing that high school students in 2002 (vs. 1990) were less likely to value intrinsic rewards in school (such as finding classes interesting and deriving satisfaction from work done in class; Dumais, 2009). It is also consistent with Smola and Sutton (2002), who found that more recent generations are less likely to agree that "work should be one of the most important parts of a person's life" and more likely to agree that "I would quit my job if I inherited a lot of money." However, intrinsic values are still among the job characteristics rated most highly by GenMe.

Of the five values examined here, extrinsic rewards were the only area that did not display a linear trend (a consistent increase or decrease across the three generations), with GenX highest in extrinsic values, though GenMe was still higher than Boomers. Economic forces could explain this effect; for example, GenX and GenMe have seen a consistent increase in the demand for and cost of higher education and the necessity of dual-income households, while simultaneously being required to work more hours. Thus, the increased desire for extrinsic rewards and more leisure time could be in part a reflection of the increased financial demands and the decrease in leisure time characterizing the U.S. workplace.

The importance of social rewards did not differ significantly between Boomers and GenX and was lower for GenMe relative to Boomers and GenX. This may be because of GenMe's emphasis on the individual rather than the group (Twenge, 2006). Narcissistic traits in particular are associated with problems in close relationships (Campbell, 1999), suggesting that GenMe may be less likely to seek out friendships. It is also possible that GenMe members do not rely on jobs to provide them with the opportunity to make friends because technology allows them to constantly maintain connections with friends and family outside work. The decreased need to obtain social rewards from work is also consistent with an increase in the desire for leisure time. When working long hours with the same group of people, GenMe workers may prefer to devote their leisure time to social activities outside work relationships.

Although not a primary purpose of this study, our examination of the measurement invariance of the work values across three generations of U.S. workers represents an important contribution to the literature. Specifically, prior research is unclear about whether work value measures are tapping the same underlying construct across generations. For instance, the work value measures might lack configural invariance such that the item asking about the value of a job that is free from supervision is conceptualized as a component of leisure time to Boomers but a component of intrinsic motivation to GenMe respondents. This pattern of results would point to important shifts in the way young U.S. workers view their work; at the very least, such a pattern of results would make any comparison in work values across generations inappropriate. However, we found consistency in the interpretation of the work value items across generations. By supporting the equivalence of these items across time, our study suggests that respondents conceptualize work values much the same way today as in the 1970s and, accordingly, that responses across time are comparable. In any event, investigating the cross-generational invariance of measures of focal constructs is crucial to the ability to make meaningful cross-generational comparisons.

Implications

Values have long been recognized as important determinants of behavior (Maslow, 1943; Rokeach, 1973), and of particular interest to organizational researchers are values that influence work attitudes (Aldag & Brief, 1975; Cherrington, 1980). These findings suggest several implications for managers, particularly for managing the rising generation of GenMe workers.

First, by providing evidence that GenX and GenMe value leisure more than Boomers did when they were young, our results provide support for the emergence of workplace interventions designed to attract and retain GenX and GenMe workers by enhancing their leisure time. Most of the existing interventions do not reduce the number of hours employees work but reconfigure leisure time around work (Lee, McCann, & Messenger, 2007). For example, compressed work weeks offer employees the opportunity to complete their 40 hours of work in 4 days or fewer per week, and flextime provides employees with the choice of when to start and stop work. Although these alternative work schedules have a positive impact on employee motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Angle & Perry, 1983; Ng, Sorenson, & Eby, 2006; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), such interventions are often geared to and used by employees who have families and are looking to achieve a better work–family balance. Our results indicate that the desire for leisure and a better work–life balance starts long before

young workers have families, so policies should go beyond those aimed at parents needing time to share child care duties and Boomers looking to gradually enter retirement; these policies should extend to younger people who want leisure time to travel or spend with friends. In addition, managers might consider incorporating increased leisure time (e.g., vacation time or days off) into reward systems in order to motivate GenMe workers. During recessionary periods, organizations may find that additional time off is a feasible and valued reward for younger employees.

Some companies have tried other creative interventions to increase leisure time for employees. For example, companies such as Google (consistently rated as the company GenMe most wants to work for) offer their young workers "balance enhancers," flexible hours, and a host of other perks, such as the free use of laundry machines, dog-friendly offices, and an on-site doctor (100 Best, 2008). If you can get your laundry done and see the doctor while you are "at work," then it is assumed that you will have more free time and opportunities for leisure when you are not at work.

Offering workers the opportunity for increased leisure may have additional indirect benefits to organizations. Although the U.S. labor force is the most productive in the world because of long hours worked (Leete & Schor, 2008), other labor forces are far more efficient (as assessed by the input to output ratio). According to the UN International Labor Organization's *Key Indicators of the Labor Market 2001-2002*, U.S. workers put in an average of 40 hours more per year than their counterparts did in 1990 (International Labor Organization, 2007). The impact of working long hours on burnout, psychological health, and physical health is well documented (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), as are the accompanying losses due to increases in absenteeism, higher insurance costs, and ultimately reduction in productivity. Thus, by offering workers additional leisure time, it is possible that U.S. firms will actually increase their efficiency and ultimate profitability as well.

Several sources have theorized that GenX and GenMe expect fulfillment in their work and want it to be interesting and challenging (e.g., Arnett, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003), and organizations have tried to entice the incoming workforce with intrinsic rewards such as a meaningful job, career growth, and the opportunity to make a difference. However, these strategies may not be successful because GenMe actually values intrinsic work rewards slightly less than Boomers did at the same age. Accordingly, organizational policies directed at increasing (or emphasizing) the intrinsic value of work (such as highlighting the opportunity to learn new skills or emphasizing the company's commitment to the environment) may not be any more effective at recruiting and retaining GenMe workers than it was with their GenX and Boomer counterparts. Still, across all three generations, workers valued intrinsic rewards more than all other rewards, suggesting that U.S. workers of the past three generations have all valued intrinsically motivating work.

In contrast to popular media reports (e.g., Needleman, 2008), GenMe does not value altruistic rewards at work more than Boomers or GenX did. Thus, although a growing number of companies are offering to pay young employees to volunteer, this appears to be a facet of work that has always been valued by U.S. workers across generations and should be seen as a useful motivator for younger and older workers alike. The same is true for emphasizing how the company benefits society; GenMe is no more or less likely to be interested in the social good than previous generations were.

The lower importance of social rewards for GenMe suggests that structuring work and organizational culture around teams in an effort to recruit and retain younger workers may not be fruitful (see also Sessa et al., 2007; Sirias et al., 2007). At the same time, the decreased importance of social rewards may be traced to the more general decrease in organizational commitment and team cohesion brought on by the age of layoffs, instability, and globalization. The downsizing and layoffs that started in the 1980s and 1990s signaled the end of an era in which loyalty to an organization paid off in a lifetime of job security. Today's employees are said to have "boundaryless careers" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and to move frequently from one organization to the next, limiting the close, stable relationships that can be gained from long-term employment at one organization. Technology and the emergence of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace have provided an entirely new vehicle for individuals to be connected, decreasing the need for the social outlet that work environments can provide. Additional research on the impact of the decreased use of work as a social network on organizational outcomes would be informative.

Generational differences in work values can also affect the perceived fit of employees with the organization. Organizational climates often reflect the values and goals of founding members or organizational leaders (Schneider, 1987); at the moment, these leaders are primarily Boomers. If entering employees hold values that are different from those of the leaders of the company, GenMe employees may experience person–organization misfit (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), which could yield more negative attitudes toward work, decreased performance, and greater likelihood of turnover (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Schneider, Kristof, Goldstein, & Smith, 1997; Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1990). Research investigating strategies for assimilating GenMe workers could help inform practice and yield insights on ways to reduce the negative consequences of initial levels of person–organization misfit.

Interesting parallels exist between research on generational differences and that on age differences. Past research in both areas has been hampered by the use of cross-sectional designs that confound age and cohort effects. As highlighted in a recent review of age stereotypes and effects by Posthuma and Campion (2009), the solution for finding age differences is longitudinal studies that follow workers as they age; as we note here, time-lag designs are the best solution for isolating generational effects. Posthuma and Campion also found that many stereotypes of workers based on age (e.g., older workers do not perform as well) are untrue, just as some stereotypes of the younger generation (e.g., they are more motivated by altruistic concerns and meaning at work than previous generations were) are also not confirmed by empirical evidence. Posthuma and Campion also pointed out that "there are much greater differences in job performance within age groups than between age groups," and the same is true of the generations: There are average differences but still plenty of variation within each generation.

Limitations and Future Research

Data sampled across time are powerful and rare (Grant, 2009). Nevertheless, this analysis does have limitations. First, the data for Boomers and GenX were collected many years ago; thus, these generations' work values may have changed as a result of individual maturation

or additional training and socialization they received as they moved through their careers. However, most research finds that values and related constructs are formed at an early age and are relatively stable at least until early adulthood (Cherrington, 1980; Low et al., 2005; Lubinski et al., 1996; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Bolstering these claims, prior research also substantiates the impact of work values and interests measured in high school on important later life career outcomes (Hansen & Dik, 2005). Collectively, this stream of research reaffirms the conceptualization of values as stable constructs tending to form early in life and substantiates the appropriateness of relying on values assessed in high school (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Still, even if work values evolve somewhat with age and organizational experience, data on a generation's initial work values provide a useful baseline for their work values. In any case, for organizations competing for young talent, these data provide key insight into the values of GenMe workers and thus have a variety of important practical implications for recruitment and retention strategies.

Most important, these data provide the only meaningful comparison of Boomers and GenXers with the current young generation (GenMe) at the same stage of development. The time-lag method we employ is the only method that can establish whether GenMe members' values are due to their age or their generation. It is more difficult to say whether GenX and Boomer work values have stayed the same, but the data on these two groups provide a same-age comparison with GenMe that illustrates generational differences. The results suggest that managers should consider using different techniques with GenMe than they did with GenX and Boomers 15 or 30 years ago; young workers now are different, on average, from young workers then, especially in the value they place on leisure.

Although not a limitation per se, we caution that this research should not be interpreted as descriptive of every worker from a given generation. Like almost all research, these results report averages. Clearly, not every member of GenMe values leisure more and social rewards less than their GenX and Boomer counterparts. The effect sizes revealed here are best characterized as small to moderate; in other words, generational differences exist, but the differences are not overwhelming. Thus, although generation plays a role in work values, it does not appear to be the most important antecedent of work values. On the other hand, when considered at the aggregate level of an entire generation, even modest effects likely have very real practical importance. These differences may also have a larger impact at the extremes of the distribution. In normally distributed data, even a small increase at the average multiplies into large changes at the high end, with 2 or 3 times as many people scoring several standard deviations above the mean. The moderate shift in leisure attitudes may become very noticeable to managers if 3 times as many young employees place a very high value on leisure, even if these employees are in the minority. Even the small decrease in intrinsic values could mean noticeably fewer employees motivated by results or interesting work.

Empirical research on generational differences is still a relatively new undertaking. Previous studies were able to compare only a few questions across time in low-response-rate samples (Smola & Sutton, 2002), and other studies collected data at only one time, confounding age and generation (e.g., Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Davis et al., 2006). Because of the small amount of research in this area, our research questions were somewhat exploratory. Now that there is evidence that generations differ in their work values, further research should build on these findings, exploring the causes and consequences of these differences. Our results underscore the

importance of systematically considering the changing nature of the U.S. workforce. Perhaps most important, management research should consider the most effective strategies for attracting, assimilating, and ultimately retaining the incoming generation of workers.

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