

GENERATION X OR NEXT: AN EXAMINATION OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES  
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR WORKFORCE

by

MADINAH FATIMAH HAMIDULLAH

(Under the Direction of Barry Bozeman)

ABSTRACT

The problems presented by an aging workforce have lead to increased attention to managing generations in the workforce, partly as a means of effecting smooth transitions of responsibility from older and retiring workers to younger less experienced workers. Observers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000) of popular culture contend that individuals belonging to different generational cohorts will approach work differently based on the social and historical conditions that are associated with their development. This dissertation seeks to explore these classifications to see if popular cultural explanations are valid and useful tools for public managers to incorporate into human resource management policies.

In the area of workers interest to serve the public, results indicate that few differences exist between the generations. When examining job duration and generational differences there appears to be an age affect rather than a generational affect related to the duration individuals spend on their jobs. There are no significant differences between the generations and job durations. The stigma of younger individuals job-hopping seems like it might be normal behavior for individuals early in their careers. The results of organizational commitment and

generational differences provided the most significant generational findings. Overall it was found that organizational type was a very important indicator in the likelihood of respondents having job histories with just one organization. Generation X members were found to be less likely to have a reported career history that includes only one organization when compared to Baby Boomers. When analyzing the motivations for respondent's most recent job movement, the need and opportunity for advancement increased the likelihood that respondents would change jobs within their organization. The desire for responsibility and salary decreased the likelihood of an internal job movement regardless of generational affiliation.

**INDEX WORDS:** generational differences, workforce planning, management, work values/behaviors

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MADINAH FATIMAH HAMIDULLAH

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M.P.A., UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE, 2005

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MADINAH FATIMAH HAMIDULLAH

Major Professor: Barry Bozeman

Committee: Kenneth Meier  
Jeffrey Wenger  
Vicky Wilkins

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2009

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents whose love and support has been endless during my many years of school. Dad, I know you said I wasn't getting a graduation present but everything you and mom have given me over the years has been more than any one daughter could ever ask for. I LOVE YOU!

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## **Chapter 1: The Importance of Generational Research**

The problems presented by an aging workforce have led to increased attention to managing generations in the workforce, partly as a means of effecting smooth transitions of responsibility from older and retiring workers to younger less experienced workers. The public sector will be especially hit hard by aging and possible personnel shortages (Scott, 2004), resulting in intense competition for talented employees. Managing generations in the workforce is becoming an important conversation to have in contemporary the contemporary public workforce, due to the rapidly changing and diverse make-up of its employees. Policy relevant types of diversity include race, gender, sexual orientation and religion. Lately, individuals have been working longer, and the presence of multiple generations is easily observable in the current workforce. Due to the increased attention paid to these generational differences and the observations that have been made regarding the attitudes of younger generation, public personnel managers need to know if there are substantive differences in how particular generations approach work.

Observers of popular culture (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000) contend that individuals belonging to different generational cohorts will approach work differently based on the social and historical conditions associated with their development. Some differences proposed by various human resource consultants suggest that younger generations are more likely to challenge authority, less loyal to their organizations, and are looking for promotions based on performance rather than agreeing with promotions based on longevity (Smith, 2007; Shelton & Shelton, 2005). Additionally, researchers who focus on the public sector (e.g., Perry & Wise, 1990; Perry, 1996, 1997) have found that some individuals will have a predisposition to

serve the public and therefore will be attracted to public sector work. What is rarely looked at in empirical work is if social and historical factors may influence an individual's desire to work for the public. As individuals grow and mature they may develop different patterns toward work, which may influence the type of work they do and the kind of organization they choose to work for.

Government agencies are seeing their workforce grow older and retire, while at the same time, fewer people are going into the public service (Leibowitz, 2004). The impending demands for suitable replacements for retiring public employees accentuates the need for better understanding of the motives of younger workers. Younger workers will be the future of the workforce and understanding their values and motives will give managers the necessary information needed for managing them.

Workforce planning has allowed many public agencies to begin preparing for managing an aging workforce (Scott, 2004; Sullivan, 2002). A combination of the hiring boom in the 1960s and the 1970s coupled with downsizing efforts in the 1980s and the 1990s have left fewer younger employees in state government ranks to fill positions of those that are preparing to retire (Scott, 2004). Due to this deficiency of employees, many state governments have created plans which include more flexibility in the hiring and pay practices to ensure the retention of younger employees. In addition to flexible hiring and pay practices, governments are also assessing at-risk leadership qualities (those that older employees possess) and civil service reform are among the top initiatives that states are engaging in. For example, Henrico County, VA performs Semi-Annual Succession Management Evaluation Plan to ensure that the knowledge, skills and abilities of older workers are properly being managed and passed down to younger employees (Center for Organizational Research, 2003). According to Scott (2004), this kind of flexible

planning allows governments to have a more competitive edge when recruiting special and talented individuals and showing them there is a future with their organization.

As different states are trying to present themselves as an employer of choice by improving their image (Scott, 2004; Sullivan, 2002), agencies are also trying to increase their competitive strategies by improving pay and benefits, increasing internal flexibility, and most importantly, maintain the organization's prestige as a desirable place to work (Nigro & Nigro, 2000).

Money constraints are often suggested as a major reason for government's lack of ability to attract and retain qualified personnel, because the status of government employment is equally important as the pay that should accompany it. The image created by politicians, civic leaders, voters and clientele groups all effect the position of government as a competitive employer (Nigro & Nigro, 2000), so Civil Service Reform has tried to address the issue of image as a barrier to recruit talented and qualified individuals into the public sector workforce. One example of such reform has taken place in Georgia with the implementation of "GeorgiaGain". By removing traditional civil service protections Georgia hoped to reward employees with a pay-for-performance system designed to motive, reward and retain high-quality public employees (Sanders, 2004).

Because of the constraints stated above with recruitment and retention as high priorities for public organizations, one way to address the issue could be to examine the characteristics of individuals based on age, generational affiliation, and time with the organization, so that the data could help assess where managers spend their resources. Managers have the daunting task of organizing a large number of employees in an ever-changing workforce, so understanding how those individuals' age and life experiences affect their life and work could be very beneficial in

the larger process. As mentioned earlier, job behaviors that result from individual maturation must be separated from those that are a result of the social and historical impacts that make up generational differences (if such differences exist), and plans that are being adopted to help offset the more traditional workforce trends in the public sector should be clear as to what problems they are addressing. Moreover, the need for these aggressive plans in response to these alarming trends that public employers are beginning to facing can be improved greatly by looking deeper into the differences between generations and further, how those differences can be incorporated.

Take for instance the Baby Boom generation. This generation is a compellation of individuals who are born from 1946-1964 and make up approximately 30 percent of the state government workforces who were eligible to retire in (Scott, 2004). The federal government faces a similar crisis, in 2004, 53 percent of federal civil servants and 71 percent of federal senior executives were eligible to retire (Leibowitz, 2004). In 1999, 42 percent of state and local government employees were between the ages of 45 and 64 years old (Pynes, 2003). As the workforce continues to age, agencies need to be aware of the irreplaceable knowledge, experience, and wisdom that will be lost when certain individuals leave the organization (Boath & Smith, 2004).

By learning from those older generations who will be leaving the workforce, agencies can create plans that collect the knowledge needed in order to maintain and then redistribute what works and what does not, to managers and coworkers alike. A way for organizations to do such maintenance is to identify the knowledge that is most at risk and institutionalize it within career-development processes (Boath & Smith, 2004). Additionally, organizations must build knowledge communities that capture expert as well as informal information and insights into

how business is done and how that information is transferred from one employee to the next. If agencies do not conduct these knowledge plans, organizational knowledge loss or “brain drain” can become a problem within the entire employment life cycle, including recruiting, hiring, performance, retention, and retirement (Boath & Smith, 2004).

### **Purpose of Dissertation**

Generations are considered to have different personalities that would explain their behavior in the workplace (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000). Not only are some groups more concerned with personal achievement, they may be more career-committed versus organization-committed. This study seeks to use generational profiles as a typology. Popular and more academic based typologies have often been used to describe individuals within organizations. For example, Downs (1967) suggested that the bureaucracy can be made up of zealots, advocates, statesmen, and climbers. Whereas, Weber (1947) developed archetypes of leadership into phenotypes like: the hero ('heroic charisma'), the father ('paternalistic charisma'), the savior ('missionary charisma') and the king ('majestic charisma'). Bureaucrats, as referred to here, can take on many different personalities and generational research suggests that each cohort may have distinguishing characteristics.

Depending on the individuals that make up a specific generation, different groups of generations may have different behaviors in the length in which they stay in particular jobs based on their need for prestige. For instance, older generations may have longer durations in particular jobs as a function of the generational personality, because the generational perception is that job hopping is a negative quality. Yet, younger generations may see job hopping as a necessary condition to achieve particular status within their career.



Though within each generation, differences are often considered harsh stereotypes of cohorts of individuals (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000). While exploring these differences, however, it is important to note that the popular distinctions may or may not be useful tools to inform management practices. In order to learn about the distinctions that can benefit management teams and workforce agencies, this dissertation seeks to explore the classifications of generational personalities to see if popular cultural explanations are valid and useful.

Because public organizations at all levels of government have begun to plan human resource policies which take into account the differences that generations will bring with them to the workforce (Center for Organizational Research, 2003), this dissertation contributes to the body of public administration research and public management by specifically evaluating the behavior of those generations in the workforce today. Exploring the question as to whether or not generations differ in the ways they approach work, their interest in serving the public, and their time spent in jobs as well as organizations, this study will examine generational characteristics and their possible influence on individual's career histories.

This dissertation addresses a gap in the literature in number of ways. Government has claimed a worker shortage just based on the number of eligible employees for retirement (Boath & Smith, 2004, Leibowitz, 2004, Pynes, 2004). At the same time many government organizations have followed the private sector and began to put considerable resources and manpower into coming up with innovative ways of dealing with generational cohorts in the workforce. The missing link here is any empirical support showing that there are differences in how generations are approaching work. Simply put, are there social and historical influences that can change how different individuals will approach work?

Due to generational literature suggesting that social and historical events may change a cohort's perceptions toward particular organizations, one of the primary goals of this dissertation is to explore the idea of younger cohorts not perceiving government work as the trailblazing place of employment like older generations. Additionally, drawing on Public Service Motivation (Perry & Wise, 1990; Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Brewer, Selden & Facer, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1996, 1997) the dissertation asks if older generational cohorts are more attracted to public sector work. If younger groups are not as attracted to public service work like their predecessors might be, the results could exacerbate the current trend of fewer younger workers choosing the public service as their premier place of employment. Next, this dissertation examines some common stereotypes of generational cohorts, such as younger generations often being perceived as less dedicated and less committed to their positions (Singer Group, 1999). Individual job durations are reviewed to determine if they vary based on generational cohort affiliation. Finally, moving beyond the duration different generations spend in their jobs this dissertation will explore the likelihood of generations varying in their employment history. Literature suggests that younger generations will be less likely to have lifetime careers with one organization (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Singer Group, 1999).

### **Outline of the Dissertation**

The next the chapter provides information on the generational cohorts that are present in the current workforce that will be utilized throughout the dissertation. The following chapter will include an overview of the data that will be used throughout the dissertation. Each empirical chapter that follows will explore a specific research question and will describe all necessary variables used, and the accompanying methodology. Chapter 4 begins the empirical analysis of generational differences and Public Service Motivation, where an overview of Public Service

Motivation literature is briefly described illustrating how generations may be affected in the public sector. Chapter 5 addresses generational differences and job durations of each generation, as well as the changing dynamics in job behaviors in the workplace, which are explored and applied to generational cohorts. Within this explanation, the assumptions that younger workers and their approach to the workplace, in contrast to the work habits of older generations will be discussed. Chapter 6 then explores generational differences in organizational movement, describing the variation of groups who remain with an organization an entire career, as well as those who work for multiple organizations throughout their lifetime. The dissertation concludes in Chapter 7 by providing an overall summary of the results from Chapter 4-6, implications for the field, and directions for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Generations and Current Generational Policies**

This dissertation takes a critical look at some of the common assumptions and stereotypes associated with generational research. There will be individuals that buy-in to generational differences having an important influence on the daily work lives of employees. This type of influence should be approached with skepticism because there is very little empirical evidence that generational differences really exist. Much of the generational information that is available is anecdotal and the product of consultants who are making prescriptions for the next generation of workers. This chapter will highlight some of the current issues that are present in generational research as well as what public and private organizations are doing to prepare for an expanding generational workforce.

Generations are defined as recognizable groups of individuals that share a common history and significant life events at critical developmental stages (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generations also form personalities that influence their feelings toward authority and organizations, what work means to them, and how they attempt to satisfy specific desires (Kupperschmidt, 2000). The most prevalent generations in today's workforce are the Baby Boomers (Boomers) and Generation X (Gen Xers), followed by Traditionalists and Millennials (Gen Yers) (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, Mitchell, 2000).

The term Baby Boomers comes from the boom in births from 1946 to 1964. As a generation affected by the Vietnam War, civil rights, Kennedy and King assassinations and Watergate, it seems only fitting that they would have a lack of respect for and loyalty to authority and social institutions (Bradford, 1993; Adams, 2000; Kupperschmidt, 2000).

While Boomers are currently feeling the crunch of caring for aging parents and their own children, many are simultaneously working in positions of power in the workplace and carry the modest values of material success and traditional values with them to the workplace (Minitzer, 1997; O'Bannon, 2001).

While the Boomer generation is well known for its loyalty to collectivism, Gen X-ers are often considered a product of financial, family and societal insecurity (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998), leading to a generation that has a sense of individualism rather than collectivism. Based on its great diversity and a lack of solid traditions (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998), often due to witnessing their parents being laid off, Generation X-ers are sometimes considered to be cynical and untrusting (Kupperschmidt, 2000). As a generation that relies on team support, craves mentors, and values stable families, Gen X-ers bring with them to the workplace practical approaches to problem solving (Karp et al., 1999; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998; Kupperschmidt, 2000; O'Bannon, 2001). As a technically competent group that is most comfortable with diversity, change and multitasking they push for similarities to be emphasized over differences (Kupperschmidt 2000; O'Bannon 2001). Gen X-ers are often thought to ask 'WIFM, What's in it for me?' (Karp et al., 1999). Gen X-ers are expected to bring various values and attitudes to the traditional workplace, including a different approach to benefits and compensation, along with diverse ideas about work loyalty and commitment (The Singer Group, 1999).

Knowing very little about Gen X-ers followers, the Millennials (those born 1981-present), due to the fact that they are just beginning to enter the workforce, research suggests that if Millennials follow the lead of Gen X-ers they too will want higher salaries, more financial leverage, and flexible work arrangements (Jennings, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Millennials

are connected to the world 24 hours a day, distrust institutions and voice their opinions (Ryan, 2000; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Due to the connected nature of this generation, made possible by technology, it is expected that they will be the first generation to be socially active since the 60s and will have an abundant appetite for work.

Due to the variance of the generations represented in the modern workforce, with oldest to youngest having extremely diverse work ethics and expectations for themselves and the companies for which they work, there is much confusion as to how the public sector will be affected after the large number of employees who are from the older generations approach retirement. Because several jurisdictions around the country have begun creating plans to manage the upcoming generations in the workforce, this next section examines some of those current solutions in order to test some of the common stereotypes associated with each generational cohort. It could be the case that there are few substantive differences in the generations. Currently organizations are able to observe some generations in the workplace for longer amounts of time, which may explain the current obsession with generations in the workplace. Below is a preview of the current initiatives taken by agencies to manage generations in the workplace.

Government will be one of the first sectors to experience the consequences of an aging national workforce (Scott, 2004). Some of the reasons for this phenomenon include the declining appeal of public service, competition with the private sector for talent, and lower retirement eligibility (Young, 2003). While this crisis may be mediated by the economic downturn, eligible employees delaying retirement and a renewed interest in public service after September 11<sup>th</sup> public organizations are preparing themselves for managing an aging and retiring

workforce. Public agencies have been urged to find strategic trouble spots by collecting necessary data to forecast for the changing workforce.

While government currently faces several fiscal challenges, it is still important to prepare organizations for the changing composition of government. The Center for Organizational Research (2003) has encouraged public employers not to treat retirement as a “don’t-ask-don’t-tell” issue. Employees and employers should be able to discuss the retirement plans so agencies can assess where they may need to focus recruitment and retention. Recruitment and retention is of the utmost of importance in keeping and screening for the best and the brightest employees. Planning for retirement is directly related to current generation research due to the Baby Boomer generation approaching retirement age.

Develop relationship skills

Create mentoring opportunities: due to stereotypes of Generation X by older generations, mentoring can help new and old leaders reach a place of commonality (Houlihan, 2008).

Broaden job responsibilities

Offer flextime and telecommuting: Generation X members may not respond to traditional work schedules because they will tend to value results rather than hours (Houlihan, 2008).

Provide on-site childcare

Introduce job sharing

Consider a sabbatical program

Design career “on ramps”

*Figure 2.1: Suggestions for dealing with the new generations of workers (Shelton & Shelton, 2005)*

<b>Framework or Tool</b>	<b>Source</b>
Force-field Analysis for Meeting the Challenges of an Aging and Retiring Workforce	Adapted by Dr. Mary Young, the Center for Organizational Research
Workforce Planning Process	CPS Human Resource Services
Workforce Needs Analysis Process and Workbook	Los Angeles County
Workforce Data Reports	Los Angeles County
Retirement Calculator	Iowa
Succession Planning Process	Henrico County, VA
Succession Management Plan	Henrico County, VA

Semi-Annual Succession Management Evaluation Plan	Henrico County, VA
Metrics for Evaluating Progress against Strategic Human Resources Plan	Air Force Materiel Command
Risk Analysis for Managing Knowledge Lost through Attrition	Tennessee Valle Authority

*Figure 2.2: Recent Tools used by current organizations include (adopted from the Center for Organizational Research, 2003)*

<b>Traditional Workplace</b>	<b>New Generation Workplace</b>
Security from the institution	Security from within
Promotions based on longevity	Promotions based on performance
Loyalty to the organization	Loyalty to the team
Wait to be told what to do	Challenge authority
Respect based on position/title	You must earn respect

*Figure 2.3: Differences in the Current Workforce (adapted by Smith, 2007)*

### **Generational Differences and Work Values**

Recent work on generational differences has generally reported that work values differ among generations and work values change as workers age (Smola & Sutton, 2002). By surveying 350 individuals across the country Smola and Sutton compared 1999 survey results to results taken in 1974 to answer the question: ‘Are an individual’s work values influenced more by generational experiences or do they change over time with age and maturity?’ Regardless of generational affiliation it was found that American workers are trying harder to balance work and personal goals (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

The Singer Group is an organizational consultant firm that gives a popular description of current generations in the workforce to help businesses manage people and their organizations. The term ‘free-agents’ often categorizes the retention of Gen X-ers. Flexible work schedules along with flex time, consulting work and temporary work are often valued by this younger generation (The Singer Group, 1999). When getting compensated Gen X-ers are often ‘Independent Contractors’ with a need for rapid results and broader roles rather than specialized



jobs (The Singer Group, 1999). Attitudes toward retirement include pay me now and I'll take care of myself, and X-ers often don't see Social Security as anything that they will receive (The Singer Group, 1999). Overall workplace policies for Gen X-ers include work flexibility and will not sacrifice personal or family-related goals for their careers (Gerkovich, 2005).

The Catalyst Organization (2005) felt it was necessary to explore some of the assumptions about Generation X-ers. Since this generation was one of the first to see both parents work long hours, corporate downsizing and the collapse of several corporations it is expected that they might approach their work and careers differently. With a large national survey they found that Gen X-ers did not have low levels of work commitment. Of the Gen X-ers surveyed 85% of them said they really care about the fate of their employers (Catalyst, 2005). Gen X-ers value career development and advancement.

Men and women were found to have very similar views and attitudes toward work. As far as attitudes towards diversity they were found to have more differences. Women felt they had to outperform men to get paid for comparable work. Women felt they were more likely to cite a lack of mentoring opportunities and low amounts of management experience (Catalyst, 2005). It is important that Generation X employees feel valued. If turnover is too high among Baby Boomers, Traditionalist or Generation X members, knowledge will be lost on all levels.

Most of the debate about generations in the workplace centers on the difference in generations and life stage development. The Protestant work ethic dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is described as a belief that hard work, dedication, frugality and perseverance are both pleasing to God and necessary for salvation (Steiner & Steiner, 2000). While similar work values are prevalent in other cultures there is no surprise that a common definition of work values is hard to come across. As with any value, work values help individuals define what

people believe is right and wrong (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Since the workplace is no longer a place that can easily be separated into right and wrong it is important that current work values fit with current work conditions. Modern work environments require decision-making, problem solving, troubleshooting and often the managing of difficult situations. Due to this work values could be defined as a structural framework that reflects the central elements of the construct and reduces confusion over its conceptual boundaries (Dose, 1997). More recently Smola & Sutton (2002) use the following definition: 'Work values are the evaluative standards relating to work or the environment by which individuals discern what is right or assess the importance of preferences'. To really explore generational differences attention must be paid to the changing nature of work along with individuals.

When trying to separate the connection between how individuals age and mature from how history effects growth is not something that is easily done. The causal link between how history affects an individual and how maturation affects an individual can often be unclear and at times interdependent. Separating the casual connection and causal explanation is often difficult and presents a challenge for research dealing with history and maturation (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Cook, 1993). The causal connection gives a response between two related items and describes the nature of the link. When a causal connection is present, if one item varies, the other must as well. The causal explanation helps pinpoint the how and why the causal connection occurs (Cook, 1993). The direct cause and effect of generational differences being responsible for work differences among generational cohorts is challenging to link due to maturation effects of each group. There are two causes: historical and social effects and maturation that are in play and will have an effect on each generational cohort. Knowing that

this is a challenge, this dissertation hopes through statistical techniques this relationship can begin to be explored in an empirical way.

There have been various attempts to separate individuals changing work values as a result of aging from those that can be associated with generational experiences. It could be expected that as individuals age and mature their relationship and understanding with work will change. Generational scholars believe that this relationship with work will also have unique periods due to ones generational affiliation. Student values have been found to change from middle school, to high school, to college, and to the workforce (Walsh, Vach-Haase, & Kapes, 1996). Singer and Abramsom (1973) found no change in worker values over a 12-year period while Rhodes (1983) found that work attitudes, values and satisfaction change when workers pass through particular career stages.

Popular culture has done a good job talking about generational differences in every aspect of society. Generational categories are neat, generalizable ways to look at individuals. While that is fine for popular culture they should be approached with caution when managers try to incorporate them into policy design. This dissertation will look at some of the popular stereotypes of generational cohorts to see if they are worth the time and consideration they are getting.

## **Chapter 3: Data Overview**

### **National Administrative Studies Project III (NASP)<sup>1</sup>**

Data for this dissertation is taken from the third installment of The National Administrative Studies Project (NASP). The National Administrative Studies Project survey is intended to help extend the knowledge of public administration and management. NASP-III is an extended the first two NASP surveys by surveying managers in both Illinois and Georgia and managers are from the public and nonprofit sector. Previous NASP surveys have only included one agency (health and human services NASP-II) and included only one state. One limitation of this survey is that it does not have a national focus.

#### **Survey Execution**

The survey administration included a pre-contact letter, Wave I survey with letter, follow-up postcard mailing, Wave II mailing, follow-up contacts by phone call and email, and a final Wave III mailing. The survey was closed January 1, 2006. The survey was sent to a random sample of 1853 Georgia and Illinois state-level public managers, upper level professionals, and technicians. Five hundred and forty nine responses were received in Wave I, 135 in Wave II, and 111 in Wave III. This dissertation uses 984 of the 1220 responses, with 440 managers from Georgia and 544 from Illinois.

#### ***NASP-III Study Approach***

The Georgia Department of Audits (DOA) provided the population of managers in Georgia. The comprehensive list of state employees who were on the state agency payrolls

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<sup>1</sup> The information for this chapter is taken from various articles that included detailed summaries of the NASP-III dataset (NASP-III, 2006; Bozeman & Feeney, 2008; Bozeman & Ponomariov, 2009).

during the 2003-2004 fiscal year were included in this survey. However, employees at technical colleges, commissions, authorities, the office of the governor, and institutions from judicial and legislative branch were removed. The last group that was removed from the sample population were any employees at institutions with less than 20 employees. Managers were considered any employees with job titles coded as “director” “coordinator” “official or manager” and “professionals” under the pay grade of 017 and all individuals with a pay grade of 017 or higher. Six thousand, one-hundred and sixty four (6,164) Georgia managers make up the final population.

Through a Freedom of Information Act request the population of Illinois managers was developed. The request was for a list of all state employees designated as either “senior public service administrators” or “public service administrators”. The list provided included the name, agency, and county, of 5,461 state employees.

The survey also included information on nonprofit managers. The list of managers was purchased from Infocus Marketing. Job titles that were relevant to the scope of the survey were pulled from members of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). The survey administrators acknowledged that purchasing the list form ASAE provides a population of self-selected individuals but at this time it would be the best method for collecting information on a large number of nonprofit managers.

### **Survey Sections**

Each of the hypotheses in the dissertation was operationalized with variables developed from the NASP-III questionnaire. The survey provides demographic, attitudinal, and motivational questions. In addition to these sections the NASP-III survey gathers information on the respondents’ career histories (last four jobs, including the current one). The career

information is very important to the purpose of this dissertation. It would be ideal to have the respondents' full employment history but in survey format it would be very challenging. Collecting the respondent's most recent career histories does provide a limitation to the study however, 303 respondents' (about 39 percent) entire career histories are covered by the information on their current job plus three prior jobs. The information on past jobs includes start and end dates, number of employees supervised, type of job (managerial, professional, or technical), and type of organization (public sector, private sector, nonprofit sector).

One difficulty is that people switch jobs at different times. And as acknowledged it is often difficult to gather entire work histories. The Canadian federal service study (Pendakur et al. 2000) found that almost 65% (156,000) people experienced at least one job move, and most of them experienced less than four job moves. Nearly 7% of the population had more than four job moves. The NASP-III surveyed up to four job moves for the respondents, which means some work histories were truncated and this will need to be accounted for statistically.

Out of 984 respondents total, 314 (31.91%) reported complete career histories that included work only in the public sector. While making large generalizations from this study may be difficult it is important to note that this sample includes individuals with diverse professional backgrounds. 15.55 percent (153) of respondents had reported career histories that included one organization. 20.53 (202) percent of respondents had career histories that had jobs with different organizations only. Furthermore while this study focuses on public sector employees, it is important to note that many public sector employees also have private sector and nonprofit experience.

Overall, this sample includes 984 respondents that have an average age of 49. Nearly 46 percent (453) of the respondents are women and 13.6 percent (134) self identify as non-white.

35 percent (344) of the respondents had parents who worked in the public sector and 80 percent of the respondents were married. Eight and a half (8.5) percent of respondents are in the Traditionalist cohort, 18.9 percent (186) are Generation X members, and 72.6 percent (714) are in the Baby Boomer cohort. Since this is a group of managers there are not any members of the Generation Y cohort since they are just entering the workforce.

The education variable originally asked: What is your highest level of formal education? Respondents were given the options of: attended high school, but did not graduate; high school graduate; attended college, but did not graduate from a 4-year college; graduated from a 4-year college; attended graduate or professional school, but did not graduate; graduated from graduate or professional school (e.g. MBA, MPA, JD, MD). Originally coded on a scale of 1-6, this variable has been collapsed into three categories. There are no respondents that have not graduated from high school. 13.72 percent (135) of respondents are high school graduates and attended some college. 41.67 percent (410) of respondents graduated from a 4-year college and attended some professional school. 44.61 percent (439) of respondents graduated from graduate or professional school.

## **Important Sections for Dissertation**

### *Feelings toward current job*

NASP-III gave respondents the following directive: We are interested in the factors that motivated you to accept a job at your current organization. Please indicate the extent to which the factors below (some personal, some family, some professional) were important in making your decision to take a job at your current organization: (1) Opportunity for advancement within the organization's hierarchy; (2) Opportunity for training and career development; (3) Job security; (4) The organization's reputation for opportunities for women and minorities; (5)

Overall quality and reputation of this organization; (6) The organization's pension or retirement plan; (7) Desire for less bureaucratic red tape; (8) Desire for low conflict work environment; (9) Desire for increased responsibility; (10) Benefits (medical, insurance); (11) "Family friendly" policies (e.g. flexible work hours, parental leave); (12) Salary; (13) Ability to serve the public and the public interest; (14) Few, if any, alternative job offers; (15) Relatively low cost of living in the region; and (16) Employment opportunities for spouse or partner. Likert response categories for these variables include: strongly agree; somewhat agree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree.

### *Job History*

The following four boxes ask about your recent job history. Each box represents a single job. Please work backward, starting with your current job. If you have changed jobs within the same organization, please use separate boxes for each job. If you have not held five positions, simply leave the extra boxes blank and continue to the next section. (Here we omit three job records due to the same questions asked in the survey instrument).

### Your current job

#### Organization type:

- Public (government)
- Private company
- Non-profit organization
- Different job but same organization as current one

#### Main responsibility

- Managerial
- Professional (e.g. legal counting)
- Technical
- Other



This job was

A promotion to a higher position from within the same organization

A lateral move within the same organization

A lateral move from a different organization

An upwards move from a different organization

Your first job

Agency or company:

No. of employees supervised, if any

Formal job title

Years started

### *Civic Participation*

The variable Total Civic is an additive index comprised of responses to a series of dummy variables listing organizations or groups to which the respondent might belong. The variable, the sum of all memberships, is a rough index of the respondent's external social capital. Respondents were asked to list if they were members of: church, synagogue, mosque, or religious organization; political club or political party committees; professional societies, trade or business association, or labor union; service organizations such as Rotary or Lions; youth support groups (e.g. Girl's & Boy's Club, Little League Parents Association); neighborhood or homeowners associations; PTA, PTO, or school support groups; groups sports team or club (e.g. softball team, bowling league); other. Respondents averaged 2.71 civic and political affiliations.

### **State Differences**

This will be a section about state differences and what government agencies are currently doing to prepare for new generations entering the workplace. Many states are preparing for changing dynamics in its workforce. This dissertation has attempted to test some of the common assumptions of future workers and managers in the work place. It should be expected that due to the explosion of technology younger workers will possess new skill sets and may have varying expectations of work (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Whether or not the common assumptions about generations are true, all sectors of work have begun to take steps to manage generations. It

is important that these preparations are explored along with the differences between the two states participating in the survey. Georgia and Illinois have drastically different civil service systems and it might be expected the differences could influence how individuals in those states approach work especially in the public sector.

The NASP-III data set comes from a sample of managers from Georgia and Illinois. Given that Georgia has had one of the largest dissolutions of their civil service system and Illinois has a long history of centralized human resource management and unions the two states should provide a nice comparison.

Concerns with reforming civil service systems include the sacrifice of traditional public service values of employee rights, fairness and equity. In the case of Georgia, the reform was supposed to create a new performance oriented culture that would emphasize customer service. These reforms are supposed to liberate public employees and allow them to use their common sense and give personal accountability back to public servants. However, surveys of employees after this reform suggested that the reform was not overwhelmingly successful and only produced marginal results.

Illinois has operated within a system of tightly monitored position classification however, recently the state has looked into which employees should be exempt and which positions should still be protected. Since this is survey of managers it is important to point out that all positions of directors, assistant directors, board, and commission level positions are exempt under the state Personnel Code. In 2006, less than one percent of the state of Illinois employees were exempt (742/52,900). As with most traditional civil service systems employees are granted certain protections including right to a hearing and appeals of discharge. It is important to note these

state differences as we begin to examine the motivations of individuals accepting jobs and use traditional civil service values as a protection.

NASP-III studies have focused on many public sector employment issues including mentoring, sector switching, and the influences of private sector work experience on public sector managers. Bozeman and Feeney (2008) explore mentoring relationships using the NASP-III study and find that mentoring relationships are generally successful for a protégé when the relationship has a social capital focus and a determinant of career advancement is often a factor of the duration of the mentoring relationship. Boardman, Bozeman, Ponomariov (2009), examine public managers who have had full time work experience and find that they report different attitudes towards public sector work when compared to individuals that have spent their entire careers in the public sector. These researchers find that private sector work experience correlates negatively with job satisfaction, and as individual's careers advance, the public sector is left with individuals that have private sector work experience and are intrinsically motivated and "involved" in their jobs. Bozeman and Boardman (2009) find that having private sector experience increases the career outcomes for public sector managers. Managers with private sector experience are more likely to have been promoted, when compared to their peers without such experience. Exploring how generations differ in the work place can provide insight into how mentoring relationships can be influenced by the age of individuals. This dissertation seeks to contribute to the already established body of literature that has successfully used the NASP-III data. Work patterns of sector switching and mentoring are complementary to the work on generational differences that will be explored throughout this dissertation.

## **Chapter 4: Interest to Serve the Public and Generational Differences**

### **Introduction**

This chapter begins the empirical analysis of generational differences present in the NASP-III dataset. The first empirical test will look at individual's motivation for taking their current job (specifically their interest to serve the public interest). Seeing if this motivation varies by age may help address some of the common stereotypes placed on younger generations that were discussed in previous chapters and revisited in this chapter.

The ever-changing look of the public sector workforce presents many challenges for public managers and organizations. Many sectors of employment (public, private and non-profit) are facing large numbers of expected retirements from the Baby Boomer generation. This poses many institutional pressures from agencies to be able to recruit and retain a skilled and diverse workforce to address problems and issues of the future. This diverse workforce will present management challenges in issues pertaining to: gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and family-friendly policies.

Age will come to the forefront of management issues because of retirement possibilities and challenges in recruitment and retention. Along with age will come the popularly presented idea that generations approach work differently and this will pose yet another management issue. In the public sector it is expected that certain individuals will have a higher likelihood or willingness to serve the public. This paper seeks to address how an individual's interest to serve the public could be related to the social and institutional climate that they grew up in. Basically, are there generational differences in an individual's interest to serve the public being a motivator for job acceptance?

The public sector should be an interesting place to look at such differences. The idea of Public Service Motivation (PSM) proposes that individual's will have a predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations (Perry & Wise, 1990). Many studies have further developed the work on the concept and theoretical grounding of public service motivation (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Brewer, Selden & Facer, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1996, 1997). Although all of these studies are important they rarely look at the possibility the PSM may shift over time due to historical events or conditions.

The public sector also faces many potential challenges with large numbers of employees being of retirement age. The U.S. Merit Systems Protections Board (MSPB) has explored what techniques need to be used to attract younger generations to the federal government (2008). It seems like this topic is on the mind of many in the public sector but little empirical research has been done to test whether generations actually have different attitudes toward public sector work.

The analysis provided here investigates variation among state managers in Illinois and Georgia. This analysis furthers the understanding of an individual's attraction to public sector work by investigating the relationship between job choice motivations, generational affiliation and age. More than ever, an innate interest to serve the public will play a critical role in attracting and retaining qualified and skilled individuals to public sector work (Partnership for Public Service, 2005). The findings are applicable to the focus, both present and future, of the challenges of attracting the next generation of workers to the public sector.

Next, with the support of relevant literature, a hypothesis about the relationship between generational affiliation and an individual's interest to serve the public is presented. Then the data and model for testing this relationship is introduced. A conclusion along with a discussion

of the results and their relevance to public administration research is offered at the end of this chapter.

### **Literature on Generational Profiles and Interest to Serve the Public**

In 1997, a company called the Bridgeworks Corporation formed to help bridge the gap between generations by helping people look beyond their own perspective to understand the events, conditions, values, and behaviors that make each generation unique. In 2000 and 2001 this company conducted a nationwide survey with over four hundred respondents to help bring merit to the idea that different generations may have different values and attitudes toward life that may reflect in the workforce. By ignoring such differences they believed that the workplace will have a clash of the generations due to misunderstandings.

### **Background on Generational Research**

It has always been thought that generations collided in certain ways but currently more generations are in the work place due to longer life expectancies and prolonged retirements (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). This will be the first time in history that four generations have been in the work place at the same time. The problem or the challenge is that each generation brings its own set of values, beliefs, life experiences, and attitudes to the workplace. The following profiles are very broad, but were developed from survey research by the Bridgeworks Corporation (1997 & 2001). Each of the four generational cohorts is a typology that explains a group that shares common history (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). These shared events and conditions determine who they are and how they see the world.

*Traditionalists* (born between the turn of the last century and the end of WWII 1900-1945) are considered to have preferences for longtime careers with one company and have strong beliefs in hard work and respect for leaders. The generational personality for this cohort is loyal

which should suggest longer durations in each job since job changing carries a stigma for this cohort.

*Baby Boomers* (1946-1964) are considered the most competitive cohort as a result of sheer size, almost eight million peers. This cohort is very motivated to make a change in the world and values money, title and recognition. The generational personality for this group is optimistic. Baby Boomers are least likely to report work as being their most important activity (Mitchell, 2000).

*Generation X* (1965-1980) is the generation of skepticism. Job changing is seen as a necessary condition because faith in institutions was lost as a result of seeing lots of businesses downsize and merge. Individuals in this cohort look for career security versus job security suggesting a greater likelihood to have more jobs across a particular work history.

*Generation Y* (1981-1999) are the most recent additions to the workplace. This realistic generation is classified as seeing job changing as a part of the daily work routines. Younger generations are more likely to have a “work to live” attitude versus the “live to work” attitude of their predecessors. This however does not mean they do not value work, it is just more likely that they will seek out employment that will allow them to have the best work-life balance (Mitchell, 2000).

Although this research was conducted based on survey data it should be noted that Bridgeworks is consulting firm that needs a product to sell. However, their client lists include several public, private and professional organizations. Whether or not individuals buy into this idea of generational differences organizations like the American Management Association, International City/County Management Association (ICMA), International Public Management

Association (IPMA-HR), Internal Revenue Service, and several universities have had presentations on how to manage generations in their workforce.

The technology revolution has exacerbated the possible clash between the generations. The challenge in the workplace will be to figure out how to manage each generation appropriately. The costliness at the institutional level is a place for concern. Companies have set cultures and policies that may not fit with new employees entering the work world. Generational collisions at work can result in loss of valuable employees, reduced profitability, poor customer service, derailed careers, wasted human potential and even health problems caused by stress (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

When these characteristics are applied to the development of civil service systems there could be disconnects when following generations try to fit into the established system. The general idea is that there is a system, set up by Traditionalists, that may not fit into the ideas and values of more recent generations. Traditionalists generally do not see “job hopping” as a desirable trait in employees. Many Generation X and Y members may see having multiple jobs necessary to achieve desired salary and goals. Rules that were set up and seen as important safeguards at one time may be seen as hindrances to efficient work flow processes by another generation. Generation X members are considered to have more focus on achieving a better work-life balance, where Generation Y members are simply more focused on self gratification (Bowen, 2000). It should be interesting to see how ones interest to serve the public is balanced for all workers regardless of generational experiences and beliefs.

### **Interest to Serve the Public**

This paper does not seek to define or test the idea of Public Service Motivation in its entirety. However work on PSM does inform much of the literature in understanding an



individual's interest to serve the public. Individual motivators for accepting jobs will be used to identify an individual's interest to serve the public. Literature on Public Service Motivation addresses the attitudes and beliefs that individuals in the public sector share or load heavily on when compared to the private sector. Theory on public sector values and rules has stemmed from work on PSM. Much of the work on PSM has been used to prove that it is something that really exists (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007).

In recent years theoretical development and empirical work has been used to operationalize what public interest means for employees, why they develop a strong sense of public service and how it influences their behavior (e.g., Alonso & Lewis, 2001; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Brewer, Selden & Facer, 2000; Crewson, 1997; Houston, 2000; Perry, 1996, 1997). Brewer, Selden and Facer (2000) noted PSM is important not just to motivation, but also to productivity, improved management practices, accountability, and trust in government, making it one of the major current topics of investigation in public administration. The appearance of PSM is not limited to the public sector. While PSM tends to be particularly high for government employees those in the private and non-profit sectors also exhibit PSM to varying degrees (Wittmer, 1991).

Perry (2000) asserts the importance of PSM as an alternative to rational and self-interested theories of motivation that tend to focus on pecuniary rewards. PSM can also explain the shape of beliefs and behavioral outcomes. The theory argues that individual behavior is not just the product of rational self-interested choices, but is rooted in normative and affective motives as well. If we only study motivation from a rational incentive-driven perspective we will only have a partial understanding of motivation. To fully grasp the concept we must study social

processes that shape an individual's normative beliefs and emotional understandings of the world. This should be an interesting place to include the idea of generational cohorts.

Brewer (2002) stated that public administration researchers have long believed that some individuals have a strong public service ethic that attracts them to government employment and promotes work-related attitudes and behaviors that advance the public interest. Social factors have not been completely ignored in the exploration of PSM. It has been proposed that PSM depends on how individuals are socialized via sociohistorical institutions, primary parental relations, religion, observational learning and modeling during the course of their life events, education and professional training (Perry, 2000). This could also be expanded to include the common history that generations may have experienced. Memories of downsizing may be familiar to those in the Baby Boomer generational cohort. Generation X and Generation Y may have witnessed the dislocation of parents and relatives, which could make the idea of being loyal to a particular firm foreign and less appealing (Bowen, 2000). Knowing the timelines in which each cohort grew up it is proposed that they will share some similar reference points and attitudes when applied to work.

Life course research is a theory that can readily be applied to the study of those that work in the public sector. Research on work experience has extensively dealt with intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Johnson, 2001). The life cycle approach to understanding aging suggests that individuals will have different values and experiences throughout the aging process; consequently, young adults could be considered to have less stable values when compared to older adults (Johnson, 2001).

The idea of public service motivation has been explored in a number of ways. Scholars have suggested that individuals will go through life stages in moral development (Erikson, 1980). In

this context it could be expected that younger individuals will not have had time to develop the same levels of societal and moral commitment of older people. It would be expected that looking simply at age would make youth be negatively related to high levels of public service motivation. It could also be expected that public service motivation would have a cyclical relationship with age. Individuals could enter the public service with high levels of public service motivation and as they become more ingrained in the bureaucratic society levels of public service motivation may wane (Buchanan, 1974, 1975).

Research on life stages and bureaucratic burnout has set up a nice foundation for the application of generational cohorts to public service motivation. This baseline hypothesis suggests that younger generations will have lower levels of interest to serve the public. When looking at the generational profiles Baby Boomers (1946-1964) are described as not being big on job changing as a way to increase status and recognition. It would appear that these individuals might take more time and care when they look for jobs and really align themselves with organizations that they feel they could stick with over longer periods of time. Baby Boomers with high levels of public service motivation would therefore choose the public sector and see it as a place where they could make a difference and influence society.

Members of Generation X (1965-1980) are described as not being as attached to the employer-employee contract and have a higher need for recruitment and rewards. Members of this generation may not be as socially developed as older generations but are more concerned with making money, and looking for career security rather than job security. The experiences of this generation would not align cohort members with traditional values included in Public Service Motivation. As described by Lancaster and Stillman (2000), this generation will look to put faith in themselves versus institutions. As a cohort it seems that Generations X members will

be more concerned with self-survival versus a sense of public commitment and involvement thereby having lower levels of public service motivation.

The 1998 General Social Survey reported that only nineteen percent of individuals surveyed personally chose working for the government or civil service over working in a private business (Mitchell, 2000). When this statistic is broken down by generation, Traditionalists have the highest percentage with twenty-two percent of individuals choosing to work for government and the lowest percentage is with the youngest generation at sixteen percent. Social psychology has informed much of the research on job values and the aging process which suggests that job values and the rewards obtained on a job grow more important over time (Mortimer & Lorence, 1979; Lindsay & Knox, 1984; Kohn & Schooler, 1983). Younger generations are described as being attracted to more individualistic and autonomous work environments, which should be interesting in public organizations and are notoriously associated with red tape and other barriers to day-to-day work freedoms.

### **Research Design**

In order to examine how generational affiliation influences various aspects of public sector work, this analysis uses survey data from the National Administrative Studies Project III (2006). This study was designed to help better understand career trajectories of administrators that work in state agencies, and private and nonprofit organizations (NASP III Survey, 2006). The survey had a total of 1220 respondents (of those respondents this dissertation will use 984 due to missing data). The NASP III data is a random sample of managers from Georgia and Illinois from various agencies and departments in state government.

The dependent variable is an individual's motivation for accepting their present job. On the survey the respondent is asked to select how important 'the ability to serve the public and the

public interest' is in their decision to take their current job. The choices for selection are: very important, somewhat important, somewhat unimportant and not important. These responses are coded 1-4 with 1 being not important. This study does not attempt to test what the literature commonly identifies as public service motivation. This will be tested using ordinal probit regression due to the ordinal level responses of the dependent variable.

This will not be the only study that measures a respondents' interest to serve the public in an alternative fashion. Perry and Wise (1990) conceptualized and operationalized Public Service Motivation but not all measures have been validated. Many studies have only used a few dimensions of the scale in research analysis. Common studies have used measures of reward or need preferences as Public Service Motivation (Frank & Lewis, 2004; Rainey, 1982; Brewer & Selden, 2000; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Studies have also measured public service motivation indirectly from inferences based on employee behavior (Brewer, 2003; Brewer & Selden, 1998; Houston, 2006).

### **Independent Variables**

Generational cohorts are measured by the years described in Figure 4.1. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are included in this study. In order to truly estimate the cohort effect while still controlling for the effect on age, a dummy variable is included for each generation cohort. Baby Boomers are omitted from the ordinal probit regression estimation, so the results report how Traditionalists and Generation Xers interest to serve the public differs as compared to Baby Boomers. Members of the Generation Y cohort are just getting into the work force so they are not represented in this study that primarily consists of managers. There are 186 (19%) respondents in the Generation X cohort, 714 (73%) respondents in the Baby Boomer Generation and 84 (8%) respondents in the Traditionalist cohort. To examine the age effect that

social psychology suggests will influence an individual's interest to serve the public the age in which an individual starts their current job is included in the model. This specification should highlight if these generational groups are performing differently while controlling for age.

Attraction to public sector work and age has been studied. Younger people have been found to be less likely to prefer and have government jobs (Frank & Lewis, 2004). Other studies have reported in individuals between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four, 26% would consider working for the federal government and 19% would consider working for local government (Partnership for Public Service, 2005).

*Hypothesis 1: When compared to younger generations, older generations will have a greater interest to serve the public as a motivator for accepting their current position.*

### **Control Variables**

The main control variables will be political and civic involvement, gender, race, educational level, number of jobs, marital status, number of children, number of public sector jobs, type of job (managerial, professional, technical or other), parent's participation in public sector work, state employed (Georgia or Illinois), and year the individual started their current job. Although they are not the central focus of this research, individual background characteristics are included because personal characteristics might influence one's interest in serving the public.

Many of these variables would be associated with any decision to accept a job in the public sector. Individuals who have parents that work in the public sector are more likely to work for government (Frank & Lewis, 2004). To control for this, the parent's occupation is included in the model, which is coded as 1 if the respondent has had at least one of their parents spend most of his or her working career in the public sector. Another variable that might influence an

individual's interest in serving the public is their involvement in political and civic activities.

This study includes an individual's participation in religious, political and professional organizations as controls. Individual may be more likely to have an interest in serving the public if they are highly involved in their community and profession. Respondents are coded as 1 for each religious or civic activity that they participate in. A respondent that was active in each activity that was available would be given a score of 10.

Being married and number of children are included in this analysis as a type of dependence variable. Family structures have been found to influence career advancement, but there does not appear to be much work on the influence of family on career selection. When compared to more traditional family structures, career advancement is lower for childless single men and women and single fathers (Tharenou 1999). Marriage and number of children could have a significant impact on an individual's reason for selecting a particular job.

Educational attainment and race are included as constraint variables. Frank and Lewis (2004) found that college graduates were more likely to work for government when compared to less educated workers. In the original survey education is coded as 1 if the individual attended high school but did not graduate and 6 if the individual graduated from a graduate or professional school (e.g. MBA, MPA, JD, MD). This has been recoded for the purposes of this analysis. Since this is a study of managers there are no respondents that do not have at least a high school degree. A set of dummy variables were created to denote if the respondent was either a high school graduate, college graduate, or has a graduate/professional degree. Gender is also included as a control, it is a dichotomous variable with female being coded as 1 and male is coded as 0. Frank and Lewis (2004) find that when compared to men, women are more likely to work in the public sector. Over forty-five percent of the respondents are women. In this analysis women are

well represented in this survey of managers however only thirteen percent of the respondents are classified as non-white. Non-white is a dichotomous variable with white coded as 0 and non-white coded as 1.

Number of public sector jobs is included in the analysis to control for career differences. It would be expected that older generations would have more jobs than those in younger cohorts. Age of respondents range from twenty-one to seventy therefore the four job histories may not be equal for all respondents. The number of public sector jobs an individual has had controls for an individual's history of public service and likelihood of public service burnout (Buchanan 1974, 1975). To control for state and civil service differences there is a dummy variable for the state in which the respondent works. Working in Georgia is coded as 1 and working in Illinois is coded as 0. Although this is a study of managers so individuals work in various types of jobs (managerial, professional, technical and other), these job types are coded as 1 if the individual serves in a particular capacity and 0 if they do not. Finally, to control for societal differences and changes to civil service systems the year in which an individual started their jobs is included in the model.

## **Findings**

The results from modeling ones interest to serve the public are reported in Table 4.2. It is not surprising that the model has little explanatory power (Pseudo  $R^2=0.034$  and Adjusted Count  $R^2=0.083$ ). Any decision to accept a job involves a multitude of factors that cannot simply be captured by the data. This point suggests that it should be more difficult to find statistical significance with the current specification. There were no statistical differences between any of the generational categories. However, the age at which an individual started their job was statistically significant at the .05 level. Holding all else constant as age increases the probability



of a stronger interest to serve being a motivator for job acceptance increases by 1.76%. This means that the younger individuals are less likely to cite the ability to serve the public as a very important reason for accepting their current job.

Of the control measures included in the model membership in civic, professional and religious; number of public sector jobs; gender; college education; year job start and state of employment were all statistically significant. Holding all else constant as the number of public sector jobs increases the probability of a stronger interest to serve the public increases by 13.38%. The probability of a person working in Georgia having of a stronger interest to serve the public is 18.81% higher than those working in Illinois, all else held constant. Women have a 19.58% higher probability than men to have a stronger interest to serve the public holding all else constant. A college education decreases the probability of having a stronger interest in serving the public by 1.54% all else held constant when compared to those with graduate or professional degrees.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

This study tests the hypothesis that generational cohorts will have different levels of interests in serving the public as a motivator for accepting a job due to societal and historical factors. The results suggest that statistically generations do not have significant differences in this area. Age is found to have a positive effect on an individual's interest to serve the public being a motivator for accepting a job. This finding provides support for the life cycle of development hypothesis when age increases individuals are more likely to have stronger interest in serving the public. It seems like there is an age effect and very little support for generational differences in the approach to finding ways to attract individuals to public sector work.

Expectations were met on numerous controls including those for education being related to an individual's interest to serve the public. Women were more likely to report interest to serve the public as a motivator for selecting their current job. The state finding suggests that Georgia employees are more likely to have higher interest in the ability to serve being a motivator for accepting their current position. The mean start date of individuals in this survey was 1998. This is an interesting finding since Georgia has been a state to recently reform its civil service system. Public administration scholars have begun to question how changes to personnel systems will influence the type of individuals that are attracted to public service and the consequences of reform.

This chapter contributes to the literature on generations in the work place and interest in public sector work. First, there are many public organizations adopting plans and investing resources to deal with generational differences in the workplace with very little empirical evidence that these differences really exist and produce conflict in the work environment. Work in this area should address what appears to be a conflict of the generations could be the natural expectations of individuals at particular stages in the life cycle. For the first time in history there are four generations in the workplace at the same time. People are working longer and may not retire when they first become eligible. What may appear to be generational differences may be life stage differences that have not had to be dealt with in the past.

Second, although this chapter deals with interest to serve the public it could easily be extended to other motivations for job acceptance (e.g., salary, opportunities for advancement and job security). It is hard to find ways to separate a cohort effect from an age effect. Many public management researchers work with survey cross-sectional responses to understand public

employees this chapter hopefully presents a preliminary way to test for both cohort and age effect.

Finally, since the public sector is at a time where recruitment and retention is of the utmost importance, public managers must understand the needs of the individuals they wish to employ. As public agencies try to develop new methods of recruitment and retention, it may be the case that younger generations will prefer different items in a benefits package. Younger generations are described as trying to find better work-life balance so compressed work schedules, job sharing, and telecommuting may be items public agencies may adopt in response to employee demand. It is also expected that Baby Boomers will approach retirement in a different way than the generations before them (The Singer Group, 1999). Not only are Baby Boomers working longer, they may favor different retirement options like phased retirement or part time work. It may not be the case that Generation X is different than those that came before them based on shared experiences but the current life stage that those individuals are in may make some jobs more attractive than others.

The limitations of the dataset suggest some necessary caveats. Clearly, there are numerous factors that can influence an individual's likelihood of accepting a job. While many of these factors are controlled for in this analysis, it must be acknowledged that these types of models are typically underspecified. Most importantly in this study cohort and age are only observed at one time in the respondents' life. To truly study the differences in generation, one would be able to separate from an individual's age; longitudinal data would be better suited.

In conclusion, several future research avenues can be developed from this chapter. While there is little support that generational cohorts may differ in certain areas of work attraction it would of interest to see how these motivations change over time. Empirically exploring the

same individuals throughout their life at different stages would add to this type of research. The current data would allow for further exploration of time spent in jobs and types of job moves (e.g., lateral, promotion, inside or outside the organization).

Generation	Dates	Work Characteristics	Events and Distinguishing Characteristics	Generational Personality
Traditionalist	1900-1945	Strong beliefs in patriotism, hard work, respect for leaders	Great Depression World War II Korea Cold War	Loyal
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Convinced they could make the world a better place Career minded, value moving up the salary and power ladder  View Education as the Doorway to Equal Opportunity	Vietnam Civil Rights War on Poverty Space Travel Assassinations Impeachment  Money is for the enjoyment of children	Optimistic
Generation X	1965-1980	Need for recruitment and rewards, Seek meaningful work and interesting career and work-life balance  Education is a source of great expectation  Money buys freedom	Events AIDS Downsizing Fall of Berlin Wall The Web Working Mothers Divorced Parents Technology	Skepticism
Generation Y	1981-1999	Very concerned with personal safety, generally feel empowered to take positive action	9/11 Economic Crisis	Realistic

Figure 4.1: Generational Profile Description  
*Generational Profiles (adopted from Lancaster & Stillman, 2002)*

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum and Maximum</b>
Interest to Serve the Public	984	3.20	0.89	1= not important; 4= very important
Traditionalist	984	0.085	0.280	1=traditionalist, 0=other
Baby Boomers	984	0.726	0.446	1=Baby Boomer; 0=Other
Generation X	984	0.189	0.392	1= Generation X; 0=other
Age Job Start	984	42.59	8.72	21years old to 70 years old
Civic Total	984	2.710	1.459	0 to 8 number of civic and political group affiliations
Graduate School	984	0.446	0.497	1=graduate school degree; 0=other
College	984	0.417	0.493	1=college graduate; 0=other
Parents Public Sector Work	984	0.355	0.479	1= parent has public sector work; 0= no parent public sector work
Number of Public Jobs	984	1.418	1.269	0 to 3 jobs
Gender	984	0.458	0.499	1= female; 0= male
High School	984	0.137	0.344	1= high school graduate; 0= other
Race	984	0.136	0.343	1= non-white; 0= white
Marital Status	984	0.792	0.406	1= married; 0= non married
Number of Children	984	0.951	1.116	0 to 6 children
Year Job Start	984	1998.62	6.229	1968-2006
Manager	984	0.736	0.441	1=manager; 0= non-manager
Professional	984	0.186	0.389	1=professional; 0=non-professional
Technical	984	0.028	0.166	1=technical; 0=non-technical
Other	984	0.028	0.166	1=other classification
Georgia	984	0.447	0.497	1=Georgia employee; 0=Illinois employee

Table 4.2: Number and Percentages for Categorical Variables

	n	Percent
<b>Generation</b>		
Traditionalist	84	8.0
Baby Boom	714	73.0
Generation X	186	19.0
Total	984	100.00
<b>Education</b>		
High School Graduate	135	13.72
College Graduate	410	41.67
Professional or Graduate Degree	439	44.61
Total	984	100.00

Table 4.3: Ordered Probit Model Interest to Serve the Public and Generational Affiliation  
Ability to Serve the Public and Public Interest

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>dx/dy</u>	<u>Standard Errors</u>	<u>z</u>	<u>p(z)</u>
Traditionalist	-0.21	0.164	1.31	0.190
Generation X	0.141	0.147	0.96	0.339
Age Job Start	0.018*	0.008	2.17	0.030
Civic	0.112**	0.027	4.22	0.000
Number Public	0.134**	0.029	4.50	0.000
Female	0.196*	0.079	2.46	0.014
High School	-0.166	0.113	1.48	0.139
College	-0.154	0.079	1.94	0.052
Nonwhite	0.191	0.110	1.73	0.083
Married	-0.049	0.096	0.51	0.609
Children	-0.032	0.037	0.85	0.396
Parents Public	-0.027	0.082	0.33	0.739
Year Start Job	-0.018	0.009	1.95	0.051
Manager	0.328	0.178	1.85	0.065
Professional	0.365	0.188	1.94	0.052
Technical	0.268	0.227	1.18	0.237
Georgia	0.188*	0.77	2.44	0.015
N	984			
Adjusted Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.083			

Notes: significant at 5% level; \*\* significant at 1% level, absolute value of z-score reported



## **Chapter 5: Generational Differences and Job Durations**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the stereotype of younger generations being characterized as having shorter work commitments compared to the idea of job duration being closely linked to an affect of life stage work development. Meta-analysis by Cotton & Tuttle (1986) found that: perception of job alternatives, presence of union, job satisfaction, pay, satisfaction with work itself, satisfaction with supervisor, organizational commitment, age, tenure, education, and the number of dependents are all related to turnover. By controlling for generational cohort affiliation and age in which an individual begins a particular job this chapter will examine the time in which an individual spends on their most recent job before accepting their current position.

The National Commission on the Public Service (2003) reported that the federal civil service was losing high-quality workers due to the declining relative pay and prestige of government service. This trend has trickled down to the state level. State governments are finding the recruitment and retention of qualified workers to be of the utmost importance. The time that individuals spend with an organization is generally a strong predictor of turnover. Generational researchers suggest younger generations are approaching work differently and the employee-employer bond is believed to be nonexistent with them (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). If time and tenure with an organization no longer translates into a sense of loyalty for younger workers it may result in higher levels of turnover. Younger generations are notoriously profiled as uncommitted to organizations and employers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The idea that individuals would be committed to a particular job is no longer common place in young workers' minds.

Young workers are considered more committed to their professions and careers rather than an agency (Mitchell, 2000). However, the public sector could be a place where we see organizational and job commitment based on the concept of public service motivation. In the previous chapter it was already found that generational affiliation has little affect on an individual's interest to serve the public. Lewis (1991) found in the federal service quit rates were higher among those that had been in the federal service between 10 to 20 years. The idea that younger workers enter the public service, obtain training and then exit was found not to be the case.

Past studies failed to separate the idea of age from tenure in a position. It is important that we see how age might be influential on ones decision to stay with a particular job. Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) suggested that age, experience, and geographical stability should be considered unrelated control variables. These variables can be key indicators of why some employees have reached a point in their life where they would be interested in maintaining the status quo rather than bringing change into their life.

Another reason that job-changing behavior should be explored in the public sector is that tremendous amounts of resources go into establishing human resource policies that focus on recruitment and retention. There are costs that are incurred every time an organization loses a qualified worker. Since turnover imposes costs to the organization with regards to training, institutional memory loss, and can be negatively related to performance (Meier & Hicklin, 2008), it seems that the needs of individuals is important for managers to know. Research that helps explain behavior of individuals based on their current life stage can help organizations cater to the particular needs of their employees.

The time in which individuals spend in a particular job will be explored. Factors of interest will be generational cohort affiliation and familiarity with the organization. The life cycle stability model suggests that as individuals get older they will get more comfortable in their jobs and therefore have longer job commitments.

Job duration is going to be based on three major determinants that stem from work in psychology, sociology and economics. Individual characteristics, work-related factors and the states of certain economic variables will all influence the duration an individual will spend in their job. This chapter will deal with variables related to individual characteristics and work related factors.

With current literature that focuses on reasons why individuals leave jobs job durations will be explored. Beyond applying traditional turnover literature to job duration the concept of generational differences will be included. Are there generational differences in the duration in which individuals stay in previous jobs? Are there generational differences in the duration in which individuals stay in previous jobs and reasons for accepting current positions?

Important terms of interest in this study include the concept of generational cohorts versus the life cycle of stability. The life cycle of stability concept suggests that generations really don't matter but rather each generation will act a certain way based on when they are observed. In the life cycle of stability model Traditionalists only appear to have preferences for long jobs because they are at a point in their life where job-hopping is not desirable. Because of these competing hypotheses it is important to examine if there is any reason to continue to give attention to this notion of generational differences in the workplace.

## Literature Review

While there is a wealth of literature that focuses on turnover in the private sector there is very little literature in the public sector. Work on public sector turnover has increasingly found mixed results (Lewis, 1991; Lewis & Park, 1989; Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001; Selden & Moynihan, 2000; Meier & Hicklin, 2008; Moynihan & Pandey 2008). A few research projects are focused directly on state government turnover (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008; Smith, 1979). While this chapter will not directly test the works that focus on the antecedents of turnover it will help understand specific personal characteristics that explain the amount of time individuals spend in particular jobs.

The supply and demand of labor will ultimately influence the institutional and cultural factors that determine: why jobs end? Individual qualities and firm needs must match up for the employment opportunity to take place. It is also important that cultural and institutional factors make conducive work environments for individuals. Studies have found the in the United States lifetime jobs (defined as lasting twenty years) are important features and male jobs last longer than female jobs (Hall, 1982; Ureta, 1992). From 1973-93 the presence of lifetime jobs in the United States did not fall however for less educated workers job stability did decline (Farber, 1998).

Life course research is an area that is rarely studied in the field of public administration. Sociology and psychology often pull from work based in this area. Glen Elder is a leading research in life course theory and his work emphasizes the value of linking life stages and examining transitions into research aging (1998). Life course research challenges researchers to look at aging as a continuing, lifelong process that can have turning points, start and end points, as well as a holistic impact on individual's development (Elder & Johnson, 2002).

The life cycle approach to understanding aging suggests that individuals will have different values and experiences throughout the aging process. Young adults could be considered to have less stable values when compared to older adults (Johnson 2001). Booth et. al (1999) used the British Household Panel Survey and found that men and women held an average of five jobs in the course of their work lives with half of these jobs occurring in the first ten years. Younger cohorts were found to have more separation hazards, which suggest they may have an increase of job instability. As the number of jobs an individual held increased the tenure in a particular job would lengthen (Booth et. al, 1999). In the United States the number of jobs held by men and women is nearly double that held by British men and women (Booth et al, 1999; Hall, 1982; Topel and Ward, 1992).

Social psychology has informed much of the research on job values and the aging process which suggests that job values and the rewards obtained on a job grow more important over time (Mortimer & Lorence, 1979; Lindsay & Knox, 1984; Kohn & Schooler, 1983). Job tenure and job mobility is topic that needs further exploration in public administration. In the case of US federal employees it was found that not only does tenure matter in the likelihood of quits but also an individual's dependence on the job (Black et. al, 1990). Based on work in this area it is expected that older generational cohorts will have longer job durations than younger cohorts.

By looking at some frequently hypothesized predictors of job changing this chapter seeks to contribute to the debate about work mobility and reasons for job change. This chapter also seeks to advance theory that surrounds turnover. The life cycle of stability hypothesis asserts that individuals who are older and have considerable experience with an organization will be reluctant to change jobs (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008). Traditional work on women and turnover suggests that women are more likely to suggest that they will quit but due to changing work

dynamics of women this may not be the case. Not only is there an overall new generation of individuals entering the workforce but also the changing pattern of gender in labor force should not be ignored. Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) find that it is not the case that women are more likely to report quitting; however, this could be due to the fact that in the public sector female employees may have certain advantages when compared to their private sector counterparts.

Turnover can generally be influenced by three streams: environmental/economic, individual and organizational (Mobley et. al, 1979; Selden & Moynihan 2000). By using a cross-sectional model with retrospective data in two particular states this chapter will examine individual characteristics and individual perceptions of work characteristics that should help inform individual job changing behavior. Several individual and job related characteristics will be explored to help set up a foundation as to why employees will decide to leave or stay with an organization.

When looking at why an individual would change their job, basic turnover literature provides a nice foundation. Researchers Porter & Steelers (1973) cited Weitz, 1956; Ross & Zander, 1957; and Katzell, 1968, in stating that when an employee's prior expectations are met on the job they are less likely to quit. Pay, participation in primary groups, communication and centralization are four major turnover determinants (Price, 1975). The ease of movement that an individual perceives is also another aspect that will influence job duration (March & Simon, 1958). Job satisfaction has historically been the most significant predictor of turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Mobley, 1977; Mor Barak, Nissly & Levin, 2001).

Work on turnover has ignored many aspects of job movement. The ease of movement in which individuals perceive from job to job can be a function of economic conditions. At times when jobs in particular sectors are limited it could be expected that there may be longer job

durations not because of high job satisfaction but more as a result of limited opportunities. Three economic variables that influence turnover included the state of the labor market, the sector of activity, and the geographical location of the organization (Pettman, 1975). Work on employee turnover has also historically looked at turnover as an endpoint (Price, 1976; 1977). This study tries to extend this debate by not only looking at job duration but what was the next step. Turnover has consequences for the individual, organization (social and economic), and the society (Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). This chapter will be able to see if individual job behaviors correspond with the reasons individuals accepted their current positions. This will be looked at in the context of generational differences to see how different cohorts may have changed their job behaviors over time.

It seems fitting that the literature on turnover would guide any study on job change behaviors. Many organizations experience inter-firm movement. Job switching may take place but within the current organization. It could be expected that individuals wanting particular types of benefits out of their current jobs will switch within their current firms rather than changing organizations.

### **Life Cycle of Stability**

Several individual characteristics can help explain the ease at which an individual would be able to change jobs and organizations: gender and minority status; familial constraints on job movement; primary household earner and household size; length and time in position; and education. When these individual characteristics are not analyzed separately but rather examined as intersecting human capital characteristics, the life style hypothesis is collectively proposed. Not only should theory look at the collective aspects of an individual's life but also external conditions that may help shape attitudes toward work. Generations share common history and

experiences that could influence how they will approach certain life cycles. Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) find support for the life cycle stability hypothesis, which they define as employees who have reached a certain measure of stability in their life, and who have pressing economic and familial concerns are less likely to seek the changes brought about by seeking a new job. Their finding is consistent with a human capital view that employees develop firm-specific capabilities that make it difficult for them to switch firms, but it is also consistent with a general reluctance to pursue change, as suggested by the significant results for the other life cycle stability variables.

Separate work characteristics like age and time spent with organizations generally produce individuals that are less likely to quit their jobs and change organizations (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Kellough & Osuna, 1995; Lazear, 1999; Lewis, 1991; Lewis & Park, 1989; Mor Barak et al., 2001). Age, generational affiliation, and previous affiliation will be included in this analysis of job duration and. It is important because age may not always be related to the time in which an individual has with their current organization. When looking at public organizations and job changing behavior, previous affiliation with the organization may be a key to individual's behavior regardless of age. Civil service practices may mediate traditional job changing behavior in the public sector.

Time of service with an organization can help explain the time an individual spends with their particular job because firms and employees invest jointly in firm-specific human capital (Becker, 1962). For both the firm and worker it should be harder for them to end their relationship the longer they are together. Many state governments offer pension penalties when individuals leave so length of employment could be negatively related to job changing (Ippolito, 1987). The state differences in pension system structures will be controlled for by a dummy



state variable. Generational and age differences could come into play when thinking about pension penalties. Younger workers being further away from retirement could not be as focused on such penalties and thus more likely to change jobs.

### **Women and Education (changes with time/generation)**

Much like controls for age and time with organization women and minority status have been included in most models of job change as necessary controls. Because of traditional constraints in the workforce for both groups they have been considered to be more likely to quit. Recent work has shown that both groups are either less likely to report the intention to quit their job or not statistically different from their counterparts (Kellough & Osuna, 1995; Bertelli, 2007; Lee & Whitford, 2008).

Moynihan and Landuyt (2008) find that women are significantly less likely to state an intention to quit (leave their current organization). This finding aligns nicely with generational work because it could be a reflection of the changing nature of women's work over time as well as a reflection of job opportunities provided to women in the public sector. Due to the changing nature of gender and labor force dynamics it should be expected that there might be a relationship between generational cohort affiliation and job duration. The original assumption that women would be more likely to leave is based on the idea of a single breadwinner household and a woman entering and exiting the workforce as they saw fit. Women are not only increasing their numbers in the labor force they are also more likely to have a larger share of household earnings. While women may be more likely to quit, this dissertation hypothesizes they will still have overall longer job durations. Women roles are changing in the workforce and society and this could be reflected in how younger generations view work. The idea that women were more

likely to quit could have not necessarily been a function of gender but rather wage earning role in the family.

Family constraints also can affect an individual's decision to change jobs. There are several risks that can be associated with finding a new job. Heads of households and employees from larger households are generally found to be less likely to leave a stable job (Blau & Khan, 1981). Although, Mor Barak et al. (2001) found this not always to be true it is still expected that individuals that are married and have children will have longer job durations.

Education is also an individual characteristic that should be acknowledged when looking at job durations. Education provides opportunities and should increase the ease of movement from job to job.

### **Organizational Commitment (in previous job with same organization)**

Organizational characteristics include job characteristics, Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, and work environment. When looking at job duration, job characteristics like: workload, job satisfaction, and status can determine if an individual is more or less likely to stay in a particular position. Individuals that are least likely to leave their current position are those that are more satisfied with their jobs (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Mobley, 1977; Mor Barak et. al, 2001). In the private sector there is literature that suggests that individuals that hold higher positions are more likely to leave (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). While this could be based on greater opportunity to move there is not much literature in the public sector to support this claim. Lewis (1991) finds that more senior federal employees are less likely to quit their job.

Certain HRM policies can mediate an individual's duration in particular positions. While the data does not allow testing of the direct effects of state level human resource policies, types of policies the respondent are looking for is included in the data. By looking at an individual's

motivation for accepting their current position, duration in previous jobs could be related to the lack of particular policies (training, family friendly policies, work life balance, etc). Many scholars believe that policies should be designed to reduce turnover (Arthur, 1994; Mobley, 1977; Selden & Moynihan, 2000). The data report how important certain policies are to individuals when accepting their current positions.

Moynihan and Pandey (2008) find that strong interorganizational networks characterized by good relations with staff and a sense of obligation toward other staff make it more likely for employees to stay with their organization. Furthermore they find that strong person-organization (P-O) fit with regards to value congruence is more likely to produce a long-term commitment with their organization. The public sector should provide a relational aspect due to a work environment that requires the giving of oneself and the emotional support from coworkers and other employees (Parker, 2002).

Characteristics of the organization are also important reasons why individuals may change jobs. Along with HRM policies better benefits and promotion and advancement opportunities lower the likelihood of an employee's turnover intention (Kellough & Osuna, 1995; Lazear, 1999; Lee & Whitford, 2008; Selden & Moynihan, 2000). Policies that are deemed family-friendly are found to reduce turnover intentions (Durst, 1999; Selden & Moynihan, 2000). Finally training and development appear to have varying effects on individual's turnover intention. While training and development can encourage retention, it also makes employees more marketable (Ito, 2003; Kim, 2005).

A meta-analysis conducted by Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin (2001) found that turnover and intention to leave among child welfare, social workers and other human service employees is related to burnout, job dissatisfaction, availability of employment opportunities, low

organizational and professional commitment, stress and lack of social of support. They suggest that these variables are weakly related to the balance between work and family, but organizational and job based. This seems to be a false conclusion because availability of employment opportunities would likely be related to an individual's human capital. Also, ones commitment to their profession could be related to personal characteristics. While the main antecedents to individual changing jobs could be at the organizational level, many of those organizational connections are based on aspects that would personally be related to the employee. Organizations can play a large role in promoting retention of employees but individual characteristics should not be ignored.

This study will move beyond looking at job change (turnover) as an endpoint. Not only will it explore the duration that an individual spends on the previous jobs but also look at how those behaviors can be related to the individual's current jobs. By including the aspect of generational cohort affiliation it will be seen if there are behavior patterns that match the current assumptions of generation researchers.

### **Research Design**

In order to examine how generational affiliation influences various aspects of job durations, this analysis uses survey data from the National Administrative Studies Project III 2006. This study was designed to help better understand career trajectories of administrators that work in state agencies, and private and nonprofit organizations (NASP- III Survey 2006). This study will use 984 of the respondents. The NASP-III data is a random sample of managers from Georgia and Illinois from various agencies and departments in state government, nonprofit and private organizations.

Using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression, the duration of individuals jobs based on turnover variables is explored. The NASP III dataset has career history data for managers in the states of Illinois and Georgia. Respondents are asked to give the year they started and ended the three positions prior to their previous position. From this information the dependent variable of job duration on previous job (measured in jobs) was generated.

Traditionalists, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are included in this study. In order to best estimate a cohort effect while still controlling for the effect on age a dummy variable has been made for each generation cohort. Baby Boomers are omitted from the OLS regression estimation, so the results report how Traditionalists and Generation Xers job duration differs as compared to Baby Boomers. Members of the Generation Y cohort are just getting into the work force so they are not represented in this study that primarily consists of managers. There are 186 (19%) respondents in the Generation X cohort, 714 (72.6%) respondents in the Baby Boomer Generation and 84 (8.5%) respondents in the Traditionalist cohort. To examine the age effect that the literature suggests will influence an individual's duration in a job the age in which an individual starts their current job is included. A squared term for age is also included in the model. This specification should provide estimates that best show how these generational groups are performing differently while controlling for age.

The independent variables are separated into three main categories. The first category includes those variables that would generally be associated with the life cycle of stability literature. Tenure generally has an inverse relationship with turnover (Bloom, Alexander, & Nichols, 1992; Gray & Phillips, 1994; Somers, 1996). Those that have shorter lengths of service are more likely to leave. This finding could be a function of incomplete information when turnover is modeled by cross-sectional studies. To look at tenure with the organization there is a

control for the respondent's prior organizational affiliation. It is expected that individuals with all of their previous jobs associated with their current organization would have longer job durations. Fifteen percent of the respondents have spent their entire reported career with their current organization.

The age that the individual started their current job, marital status, number of children, race, education, and gender are also included in this model. These are some of the most researched items in turnover literature. Generational research suggests that younger generations will have shorter job durations because on the employer-employee bond being broken as a result of historical experiences. Controlling for the age in which an individual started their current job it is expected that younger generations will have shorter job durations. The average age in which an individual started their job is 42.6.

Being married and number of children are included in this analysis as a type of dependence variable. Family structures have been found to influence career advancement, but there does not appear much work on the influence of family on career selection. When compared to more traditional family structures, career advancement is lower for childless single men and women and single fathers (Tharenou, 1999). Marriage and number of children could have a significant impact on an individual's reason for selecting a particular job or staying in a particular position.

Educational attainment, gender, and race are included in the model. Education is a series of dummy variables coded as 1 if the respondent has either a high school diploma, college degree or graduated from a graduate or professional school (e.g. MBA, MPA, JD, MD). Gender is also included as a control, it is a dichotomous variable with female being coded as 1 and male is coded as 0. Over forty-five percent of the respondents are women. In this analysis women are

well represented in this survey of managers; however only fourteen percent of the respondents are classified as non-white. Non-white is a dichotomous variable with white coded as 0 and non-white coded as 1.

The second category is organizational commitment and other work related factors are also looked at in turnover literature. To control for these aspects individual motivations for accepting their current jobs are included in the model. Respondents are asked: to what extents are certain factors (personal, professional) were important in making your decision to take their current job. The factors are measured in a four-point scale from very important (4), somewhat important (3), somewhat unimportant (2), to not important (1). Work related variables that are included in this analysis are: opportunity for advancement within the organization's hierarchy, benefits (medical, insurance), ability to serve the public and the public interest, need for increased responsibility, and few if any, alternative job offers. It should be expected that an employee that was in need of more advancement would have a shorter duration with any one particular job. Few if any other job offers might make an individual more likely to stay in a position for a longer period of time. Another way to look at individual commitment to their job is if they are members of professional societies, trade or business association, or labor unions. Sometimes these types of organizations have codes of conduct and other governing items that might influence the time or length of commitment a member would have to any organization.

The final category is made up of those factors that are external to the job and personal characteristics. These include cost of living in the area, state (Illinois or Georgia) and the year in which the individual began their current job. External factors could influence the availability of alternative job opportunities. The year the respondent began working is an important addition to the model because economic conditions have been found to have an impact on the long-term

employment relationship (Mishel, Bernstein, & Schmitt, 2001). Job stability was found to be linked with worsening economic conditions and employment instability was found to be higher in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s and earlier periods. Since many of these managers work in the public sector certain civil service rules may interfere with movement from one position to another. The state control variable should help test for any such an effect.

*Hypothesis 2: Duration in previous jobs will be longer for members of older generational cohorts, all else equal.*

*Hypothesis 3: Work attributes will have an effect on an individual's duration in their previous job. Durations will be longer for those with particular types of needs out of their current jobs (cost of living, interest to serve the public, opportunities for advancement, benefits, alternative job offers, and responsibility).*

## **Findings**

After running the initial model it was found that Georgia and Illinois differ in significant ways and should be modeled separately. A Chow Test produced an F statistic of 2.82 and with degrees of freedom (19, 964) the critical value is only about 1.5705. Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected: coefficients are not the same for respondents in both Georgia and Illinois. Previous work with the NASP-III dataset has often used the state variable as a control but it may be wise to look at the distinguishable differences that may warrant looking at the employees in the corresponding states separately. Table 5.2 displays the results of OLS regression with Georgia and Illinois separated and a model when all respondents are run together.

The model with Georgia residents has 440 respondents with an  $R^2$  of 0.18. The model with Illinois respondents has 544 observations and an  $R^2$  of 0.14. The combined model has 984 respondents with an  $R^2$  of 0.13. When looking at generational differences in the duration of the respondents previous job there were no statistically significant differences between Traditionalists and Generation Xers when compared to the Baby Boomer generation in any of the



models. The age at which an individual started their job is positive and statistically significant in both Illinois and the combined model ( $\beta = 0.668$ ,  $p > 0.00$  and  $\beta = 0.523$ ,  $p > 0.00$  respectively). At the .05 level the squared term of the age at which the individual started their current job is negative and statistically significant in the Illinois and combined model ( $\beta = -0.006$ ,  $\beta = 0.004$  respectively).

Being an internal candidate extends the duration of a respondent in Illinois by almost a year and a half ( $\beta = 1.40$ ,  $p > 0.00$ ). This variable did not reach any acceptable level of statistical significance in any of the other models. The opportunity for advancement within the organizations hierarchy was negative and statistically significant in the Illinois and combined model ( $\beta = -0.668$ ,  $p > 0.00$  and  $\beta = -0.529$ ,  $p > 0.00$  respectively). As the need opportunity for advancement within an organization becomes more important job duration decreases. Benefits were positive and statistically related to job duration in Georgia ( $\beta = 0.667$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The importance of few if any alternative job offers was negatively related to job duration in Georgia ( $\beta = -0.586$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

Generation affiliation was not found to have any relationship with the duration of an individual's jobs. Many of the controls that have previously been found to have an impact on job duration or employee turnover were not found to have any relationship in this study. Marriage, number of children, race and gender did not produce any statistically relationship in either model. Another finding is that job duration does not seem to be longer for those individuals that spend their previous job with the same organizations in Georgia. It could be possible that those individuals that are changing jobs within the same organization are able to move easier from job to job.

## **Conclusion**

There should definitely be caution when adapting policies and procedures geared toward generational differences. It seems that there is an age affect rather than a generational affect. There are no significant differences between the generations and job durations. The stigma in of younger individuals job-hopping seems like it might be normal behavior for individuals early in their careers.

Previous studies have found that less experienced workers and those that feel poorly compensated for their jobs are more likely to leave (Mor Barak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001). Organizations that invest in training and job-related education may help lessen the likelihood of individuals leaving their organization. The finding in the human services field suggests that individuals are not leaving their jobs for personal reasons but more because they are not satisfied with their jobs, feel excessive burnout and feel they are not supported by their supervisors.

It may be job characteristics that influence most job turnover. The idea that younger generations are less committed to organizations does not appear to be the case. There seems to be support for the life cycle of stability due to positive relationship between age and job duration. The age affect once again appears to be the driving factor behind work behaviors. Education also had a negative relationship with job duration. The opportunities that for movement provided with education should not be ignored. Interaction effects between generation and education should be explored. Another empirical extension should be that of interaction between generation and gender.

The data in this particular study do not provide exploration into the changing variables over the respondents work history. This data set is cross sectional data with retrospective job history reporting. It is unknown how the personal characteristics of the respondents changed

over respondent's lifetime. This provides a limitation to analysis. While this study looks at the time that an individual spent on a particular job it is being treated as a form of turnover. Since the current motivators for the respondent accepting their current position it should be possible to see if generational affiliation and need for particular human resource management practices might influence the time in which an individual spends in a particular job.

Another challenge is that all individuals in the sample have not been in the workforce for the same amount of time. Younger generations are just entering the workforce so it is necessary to make sure that older generations and younger generations are being compared at the same point in their lifetime. When looking at job histories, certain individuals have different opportunities to and exposure to the workforce just based on their age.

This study is also limited because it only looks at the states of Georgia and Illinois. In trying to contribute to public sector literature these states should provide a nice contrast due to civil service differences. Unionization and other public civil service protections are often considered when looking at job changing behaviors of the workforce. In 1997 Georgia had a turnover rate of 11.90 while Illinois had a rate of 5.24 (Government Performance Project, 1998).

Another limitation of this study is the fact, that in assessing individual's job changing behavior it is unknown if these are voluntary or involuntary job changes. Since this is a study of managers and their career histories it could be possible to assume that a lateral move or promotion from one organization to another was done willingly on the part of the employee. Furthermore many of the job changes in this data set are within the same organization so the bias of not knowing whether or not these moves are voluntary or involuntary turnovers should be lessened.

Once again it appears controlling for age that individuals begin work, rather than generation has an impact on the behaviors of respondents. For the first time in history there are four generations in the work place. This event could have allowed people to observe work behaviors over a longer period of time. Since it is possible to see how people in their 20s work side by side people in their 60s and up might have made differences in work behaviors more clear. What is being chalked up to generational differences could simply be the observation of more individuals in workforce at varying ages.

The main intention of this chapter was to expand turnover literature by looking at job durations of managers. The idea of life cycle of stability, personal characteristics, organizational aspects and generational cohorts are all important when trying to see what might influence ones decision to change their job.

This research extends turnover literature by looking at what employees are looking for. Opportunity for advancement with the current organization seems to be negatively associated with longer job durations. As the public sector is seeing individuals working longer it may be the case that younger workers are more likely to have shorter job durations when they don't see opportunities for promotion and advancement. This could be an area that human resource managers can monitor in order to manage an aging workforce.

Table 5.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum and Maximum
Interest to Serve the Public	984	3.20	0.89	1= not important; 4= very important
Traditionalists	984	0.085	0.280	1=traditionalist, 0=other
Baby Boomers	984	0.726	0.446	1=Baby Boomer; 0=Other
Generation Xers	984	0.189	0.392	1= Generation X; 0=other
Age Job Start	984	42.59	8.72	21years old to 70 years old
Civic Total	984	2.710	1.459	0 to 8 number of civic and political group affiliations
Graduate School	984	0.446	0.497	1=graduate school degree; 0=other
College	984	0.417	0.493	1=college graduate; 0=other
Duration in Previous Job	984	5.368	4.706	0 to 29 years
Age Job Start Sq	984	1890.273	747.096	441 to 4900 years old
Gender	984	0.458	0.499	1= female; 0= male
High School	984	0.137	0.344	1= high school graduate; 0= other
Race	984	0.136	0.343	1= non-white; 0= white
Marital Status	984	0.792	0.406	1= married; 0= non married
Number of Children	984	0.951	1.116	0 to 6 children
Year Job Start	984	1998.62	6.229	1968-2006
Few Alternatives	984	1.971	1.030	1= not important; 4= very important
Cost of Living	984	1.855	0.957	1= not important; 4= very important
Benefits	984	3.274	0.875	1= not important; 4= very important
Advancement	984	2.912	1.003	1= not important; 4= very important
Responsibility	984	3.206	0.837	1= not important; 4= very important
Internal	984	0.622	0.485	1= previous job with current organization; 0= if job with different organization
Georgia	984	0.447	0.497	1=Georgia employee; 0=Illinois employee

Table 5.2: OLS Regression Duration in Previous Job and Generational Cohort

	<u>Georgia</u>		<u>Illinois</u>		<u>All</u>	
	Coef	t-stat	Coef	t-stat	Coef	t-stat
Traditionalist	2.008	1.95	0.153	0.17	1.054	1.58
Generation X	0.613	0.66	0.110	0.14	0.166	0.27
Age Job Start	0.414	1.62	0.668**	3.29	0.523**	3.31
Age Job Start2	-0.003	0.89	-0.006*	2.58	-0.004*	2.34
Internal	-0.829	1.64	1.408**	3.37	0.334	1.04
Civic	-0.234	1.38	-0.096	0.70	-0.189	1.78
Female	-0.690	1.41	-0.118	0.29	-0.354	1.14
High School	0.206	0.30	0.836	1.41	0.604	1.34
College	0.541	1.08	0.690	1.70	0.664	2.11
Non-white	.019	0.03	-0.579	0.93	-0.230	0.53
Married	-0.443	0.71	0.498	1.04	0.165	0.43
Children	0.175	0.74	0.172	0.91	0.149	1.01
Responsibility	-0.140	0.49	-0.030	0.13	-0.143	0.79
Advancement	-0.436	1.75	-0.666**	3.23	-0.529**	3.18
Benefits	0.667*	2.37	0.228	1.00	0.407*	2.30
Few Alternatives	-0.586*	2.38	-0.110	0.55	-0.296	1.92
Serve Public	-0.065	0.23	0.234	1.15	0.133	0.80
Cost of Living	0.462	1.75	0.160	0.74	0.310	1.85
Year Job Start	-0.155*	2.57	-0.112*	2.42	-0.131*	3.56
Georgia	---	---	---	---	0.056	0.19
Constant	302.849*	2.57	212.000*	2.33	252.195**	3.50
Observations		400		544		984
R-Squared		0.18		0.14		0.13

\* significant at 5% level, \*\* significant at 1% level

## **Chapter 6: Generational Differences and Organizational Movement**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is focused on organizational commitment and explores why individuals stay with organizations. Generational profiles suggest that older generations see job hopping negatively so their promotions and job changes will be more likely to take place within their organization (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000). Younger cohorts however see job changing and changing organizations as a necessary condition to achieve particular salary and career goals (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Mitchell, 2000). It is expected that time spent on ones previous jobs will be longer for those individuals that come from within the organization. Individuals that are highly mobile may possess certain qualities that place them in high demand and therefore have shorter job durations.

Generational literature suggests that younger generations will not be as loyal to any particular organization as older workers have been (Bradford, 1993; Adams, 2000; Kupperschmidt, 2000). It is important to note that this section is looking at time spent with an organization and not simply on a particular job. Tenure with an organization is usually a good predictor of turnover; however, this is based on a notion of loyalty from both the employee and employer. If the traditional employment bond is broken between generations, tenure may not predict such an outcome.

Another common myth or stereotype of young generations is their lack of commitment to organizations (Minitier, 1997; O'Bannon, 2001). Moving beyond the duration that individuals spend in particular jobs, this chapter will look at how generations differ in the type of job

changes they make. More specifically this chapter will address the likelihood that one's job history will only have one organization or multiple organizations based on generational affiliation. If the employee-employer bond is truly broken with younger generations, tenure within an organization will not be a strong predictor of an individual taking their next job with their previous organization. Tenure is used in industrial and organizational literature to define the number of years that someone has formally been with an organization (Trimble, 2006). The relationship between tenure and organizational commitment may vary from generation to generation.

Changing work values may affect organizational values and as one generation transitions into leadership positions an organization will be influenced by that generation's culture (Smola & Sutton, 2002). The success of human resource initiatives (Jurkiewicz, 2000), corporate culture (Judge & Bretz, 1994) and ethical issues (Dose, 1997) can all be influenced by generations entering and leaving the workplace. The need for recruitment and retention is very important to all organizations. Managers of younger generations are encouraged to pay attention to the needs and wants of that particular cohort. For younger generations it is expected that they will increasingly search to have a better work-life balance (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

### **Review of Literature**

Workers leave and change organizations for a variety of reasons. Some generation researchers has found that when comparing Generation Xers to Baby Boomers, Generation X members reported having a stronger desire to be prompted more quickly than their older counterparts (Somla & Sutton, 2002). Comparing workers in 1974 to workers in 1999, Somla & Sutton report that Generations Xers are much more a "me" oriented generation when compared to Baby Boomers. The younger generations are found to be less loyal to the company, want to



be promoted quicker, and are less likely to feel that work should be an important part of one's life. On the opposite side of these findings Generation X members surprisingly reported that they felt they should work hard even if their supervisor is not around and believe that hard work is an indication of one's worth (Somla & Sutton, 2002).

Young workers entering the workforce has produced both excitement and worry for organizations. Young workers bring energy and vigor, while at the same time younger generations have been labeled as having different values and motives than previous generations (Trimble, 2006). It is important for researchers not to attribute generational differences to attitudes and behaviors that might be a byproduct of less job experience and fewer years of job tenure.

Some theories about Generation X members in the workforce suggest that job security to them will come from options rather than commitment (Mitchell, 2000). Experience and seniority are not the keys to progression but the ability to add value should matter, and mobility versus stability (Singer Group, 1999). Younger generations will be most valued if they have multiple job offers, and will in essence consider themselves "free agents" with very few long term commitments to any one employer (Singer Group, 1999). In order to retain younger workers it was suggested that results should be reported rapidly and there will be a need for broader roles rather than specializing in a particular job (Singer Group, 1999). This seems like a good way for younger generations to maximize their skills, which can also make them more marketable. Tenure helps predict job satisfaction in two ways, dissatisfied workers leave organizations and job satisfaction and organizational commitment relate to one's identity (Trimble, 2006).

Career stage has been found to be more important in explaining organizational commitment than generational status (Valenti, 2001). But when career stage was controlled for

Generation Xers, were not different than older generations in their affective commitment (emotional identification with and attachment to the organization) but had less continuance commitment (commitment to stay with the organization because alternatives are lacking) (Valenti, 2001).

Generational research has not only stayed in the public and private sector. Even jobs associated with religion have found that there is a need to explore the organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intention among the generations. A study of 468 missionaries found that tenure with the mission organization was a strong predictor of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intention than was age (as defined by Generation X vs. older generations) (Trimble, 2006). Trimble (2006) suggests that mission agencies give greater attention to tenure rather than age and not to ignore the role that job satisfaction plays in individual's commitment to an organization. In missionary work it has been found that Generation X members tend to be disillusioned about the future, reject spiritual absolutes, come from dysfunctional families and are more often driven by personal experience and emotional involvement (Trimble, 2006). Employees with less than ten years of service desired clear communication, verbal encouragement, respect for their opinions, inclusion in the decision making process, and mentoring from their supervisors.

The research on mission work however makes one flaw. In conducting generational research it is important to separate the societal and social affects that belonging to a generation from age. Trimble seems to use generation and age interchangeably. "The mission agency worried about generational differences (that is, the effect of age) in organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Trimble, 2006, pg 349)."

There appears to be varying beliefs in true generational differences. Smith (2007) reports that Generation Xers do not plan to stay with one job or company throughout their career. While it is clear to some that the work ethics differ across generations it could differ for good reasons. Generation X members have a broader appetite for technology and learning, which explains their need for change (Smith, 2007).

### **Movement within an Organization**

From an organizational and management perspective, individual movement within an organization is often moderated by the performance of an organization. Employment that provides workers with the best potential for sustained wage growth, benefits, and a feeling of employment security is generally related to “long-term” jobs or jobs lasting at least 10 years (Mishel, Bernstien, & Schmitt, 2001).

Organizational theory research offers several viewpoints on the subject of managerial succession. This is a study of managers at various levels of the management hierarchy it may help provide background as to why some managers stay with organizations while others leave. The inertial view argues that organizations, particularly large ones, tend to resist change and are likely to hire from the inside even when performance is poor (Goodstein & Boeker, 1991; Miller, 1991). Outside succession is more likely to upset the prevailing norms and strategies of the organization and be potentially threatening to incumbents in top management, because it involves greater amounts of change (Brady & Helmich, 1984).

A second view of managerial succession is the adaptive view. The adaptive view suggests that, organizations change or adapt in response to environmental challenges (Friedman & Singh, 1989). Managerial selection decisions represent an important adaptation opportunity. The adaptive view is the belief that when performance is poor, those doing the hiring will favor

outside candidates because outsiders are perceived as being more capable, than insiders, of implementing strategic change in the organization (Faith, Higgins, & Tollison, 1984; Grusky, 1961; Walsh & Seward, 1990). Given this, the adaptive view predicts that poor performing organizations will adapt and recruit from outside the organization. Furthermore, during periods of good performance, an insider will be preferred because they are viewed as less likely to disrupt the ongoing organizational processes (Carroll, 1984; Grusky, 1961).

The final view is the contingency view argues that the relationship between performance and selection decisions is not direct, but rather is moderated by numerous sociopolitical factors (Boeker & Goodstein, 1993; Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993). Cannella & Lubatkin, (1993) find that poor performance by itself does not trigger an outside selection. Both the presence of an heir apparent and the incumbent's ability to influence the selection process weaken the link between performance and outside selection. Similarly, Boeker & Goodstein (1993) conclude that performance influences successor selection; however board composition, firm ownership, and ownership concentration moderate that relationship.

There are many possibilities for movement with one organization. Organizational capacity for workers to move internally should have an influence on workers decisions to stay or leave particular organizations. Younger generations may or may not stick around to see what opportunities are available for them. If younger generational cohorts are more likely to hop between organizations rather than within current organizational methods of promotion may be affected.

*Hypothesis 4: Older generational cohorts will be more likely to have entire job histories with one organization than younger generations, all else held equal.*

*Hypothesis 5: Work attributes will have an effect on an individual's likelihood of staying with their current organization. Internal job movements will be higher for those with particular types of needs out of their current jobs (opportunities for advancement, few alternatives, increased need for responsibility).*

## **Research Methods**

Using probit regression this chapter examines the antecedents of what would make an individual stay with a particular organization. To study the movement throughout organizations over the respondent's career histories a new variable called organization commitment is created. This variable is dummy variable, coded as 1 if the respondent's observed job history is entirely with one organization and 0 if the respondent has moved changed organizations throughout their reported job history. Fifteen percent of respondents (153) have spent their entire career histories with one organization. The second dependent variable is the likelihood of the respondent's current job being an internal job movement. The variable is a dummy variable coded as 1 if the respondent came from within the organization and 0 if the respondent is from outside the organization during their most recent job movement. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 6.1.

The independent variables of interest for the first model are the age at which the individual started their first reported job. This is the best age measure to use because it can tell us something about the time frame that we are comparing individuals at. The age in which the respondent started their first reported job had 782 observations due to missing data. Using standard imputation techniques the missing data was imported to get the 984 full observations used in this dissertation. Generation X is the omitted generation so the coefficients on the

Traditionalists and Baby Boom generation variables will be interpreted in comparison to Generation X respondents.

Other general controls include: gender, education, year in which the respondent started their earliest reported job, number of public jobs, number of private sector jobs, number of jobs and the state in which the employee currently works. Gender and education should both either add constraints or increase the personal capital each respondent has. Education is divided into three categories of high school graduate, college graduate and graduate school. The results presented will be compared to the omitted education level of graduate or professional school. Public sector jobs have historically been long term jobs for individuals and it should be expected that the number of public sector jobs will be associated with an individual being associated with one public organization. The current state the individual works in is included in the model.

Other independent variables included in modeling the most recent job movement include current reasons for the individual accepting their currently position. These variables are all on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being not important and 4 being very important. The survey asks respondents to indicate the extent to which various factors were important in making their decision to accept their current job. Variables included are: opportunity for advancement within the organization's hierarchy, desire for increased responsibility, salary, and few if any other job offers. These motivation factors for accepting particular positions serve as proxy variables for the important job factors that are often associated with younger generations. If the need for increased responsibility, salary, and position are higher within younger generations it might be expected that they may have more external job movements and not wait for internal promotions or positions to open up.

## **Findings**

This chapter set out to test if younger generations were more likely to have jobs with multiple organizations. Are long term commitments to one firm a thing of the past with younger generations? If the employer-employee bond has been broken with younger workers it could be expected that they will be less likely to have a job history that includes work for only one organization.

### *Organizational Commitment*

Results of the marginal effects of the probit regression for a respondent having all jobs with one organization are presented in Table 6.2. Results show that when compared to Generation Xers, Baby Boomers are more likely to have a job history that includes work with just one organization. Holding all else equal Baby Boomers are 8 percent more likely to have a reported career history that only includes one organization. The age in which the individual started their first reported job is not found to be statistically significant in this model.

Education was positively related to having a career history with one organization but the likelihood decreases as education increases. Those with a high school diploma are eighteen percent more likely to have a career history with one organization, while those with a college degree are only around four percent more likely to be in the first movement category when compared to those with graduate and professional degrees. Education may provide more mobility for individuals and give them more job options within their organization. Another interesting finding in this model is the likelihoods associated with the number of public and number of private sector jobs. The number of public sector jobs increases the likelihood that one will have job histories with one organization and the number of private sector jobs decreases the likelihood that one's jobs will all be with one organization. Holding all else equal as the number

of private sector jobs increase the likelihood of having all jobs with one organization decreases by ten percent. Holding all else equal as the number of public sector jobs increase the likelihood of having all jobs with one organization increases by three percent. As the number of jobs the respondent has held increases the likelihood of having all jobs with one organization increases by 4.5 percent holding all else equal.

#### *Most Recent Job Movement (Table 6.3)*

When analyzing the respondent's most recent job movement none of the generational or age variables were found to be significant. This model however includes some of the respondent's motivations for accepting their current position and they revealed so results on preferences of individuals that stay with organizations. The opportunity for advancement within the organization's hierarchy, and few, if any, alternative job offers were all found to have a positive relationship with changing positions within an organization. Holding all else equal as the importance of opportunities within the organization's hierarchy increases the likelihood of the respondent accepting a position within the organization increases by nineteen percent. The importance of salary and desire for increased responsibility were negatively related with changing jobs within an organization. Holding all else equal as the importance of salary increases the likelihood of changing jobs within an organization decreases by six percent. The desire for increased responsibility decreases the likelihood of an internal job movement by seven percent holding all else equal.

#### **Conclusions and Implications**

Overall it was found that generations may differ slightly in the likelihood to have job histories with just one organization. It seems like this finding could be good and bad news for organizations. Public organizations appear to highly associated with individuals having only one



organization in their career histories. It appears that in this sample holding all else constant Generation X members are less likely to have a reported career history that includes only one organization. The generation profiles that are associated with Generation Xers appear to hold in this analysis. The employee-employer bond is believed to be broken with this generation and due to the social and historical conditions associated with this generation they are less likely to have loyalty to any particular organization. The problem with drawing this conclusion lies in the literature associated with life stage of develop. While it may appear that older individuals have more chances to change jobs at the time we are observing them in their career histories they may have already settled into their careers. Young generations may still be in the job searching phase of their work development.

The results examining the most recent job movement of respondents does provide information for public managers. The findings associated with the need for advancement, salary, and desire for responsibility may give some credence to what people are observing with younger individuals in the workforce. Much of the literature suggests that job movement is often done by younger generations because they do not see opportunities (or are too impatient) for advancement within their current organization. With the importance of advancement being higher for those that stay with their organization managers can see that it is important for employees to see a future with their organization. The return for staying with one organization removes the uncertainty of starting new and proving yourself with a new organization. Employees might see this as a safe way to prove themselves to their organization. The challenge with this finding comes when opportunities for advancement do not come available. With the prolonged retirement of several from the Baby Boomer generation (the Traditionalists in these

models are all eligible for retirement) positions may not be as readily available for younger employees and this may cause an interesting retention issue for human resource managers.

The likelihood for individuals having all jobs with one organization however was supported. Baby Boomers are statically different from Generation X members because Baby Boomers are more likely to have jobs histories with just one organization. Those with more public jobs differed from those with more private sector jobs. Education also had the expected impact on time spent with an organization.

There is support for the hypothesis that younger generations would be more likely to have observed career histories with multiple employers. Factors others than those controlled for in my analysis that possibly influence the constant movement of respondents, include human capital qualities that are not easily captured by a survey. It is possible that respondents that move jobs constantly have other mediating factors that influence their job decisions. This would be an interesting outlet to pursue. Being able to explain the characteristics of constant organization movers would be something that might interest hiring managers.

There are several implications for hiring managers. It might be unwise to profile younger generations as chronic job hoppers. When managers make assumptions about younger workers based on their generation profiles they may lose out on valuable assets. It may be the case that younger employees are less likely to spend their entire careers with one organization but recruitment and retention efforts may help mediate their likelihood to switch organizations. Building on generational research it appears that employees may lack the loyalty to any particular organizations when their most basic job needs are not met. This conclusion should be taken with caution. This study may have this finding because we are still observing younger employees during their natural job switching part of life. It is necessary to study these younger

generations throughout their career histories to see if later in their careers they find organizations and stay with them. Much of the generational research appears to suffer from life stage problems. To stereotype young generations about how they expect to work in the future seems a bit unfair. It will be necessary not only observe young generations when they enter the work place but also as they near retirement age.

Table 6.1: Descriptive Statistics

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum and Maximum</b>
Organization Committed	984	0.155	0.362	1= all jobs inside; 0=other
Current Job Inside	984	0.622	0.485	1= current job inside; 0=other
Traditionalists	984	0.085	0.280	1=Traditionalist; 0=other
Baby Boomers	984	0.726	0.446	1=Baby Boomer; 0=Other
Generation Xers	984	0.189	0.392	1= Generation X; 0=other
Age Start First Job	984	30.382	6.470	14 to 57 years old
Age Job Start Current	984	42.595	8..721	21 to 70 years old
Gender	984	0.458	0.499	1= female; 0= male
High School	984	0.137	0.344	1= high school graduate; 0= other
College	984	0.417	0.493	1=college graduate; 0=other
Graduate School	984	0.446	0.497	1=graduate school degree; 0=other
Race	984	0.136	0.343	1= non-white; 0= white
Georgia	984	0.447	0.497	1=Georgia employee; 0=Illinois employee
Number Public	984	1.418	1.269	0 to 3 jobs
Number Private	984	0.576	0.895	0 to 3 jobs
Number of Jobs	984	2.812	0.515	0 to 3 jobs
Responsibility	984	3.206	0.837	1= not important; 4= very important
Advancement	984	2.912	1.003	1= not important; 4= very important
Few Alternatives	984	1.971	1.030	1= not important; 4= very important
Salary	984	3.290	0.709	1= not important; 4= very important
Year Started First Job	984	1985.907	7.703	1949 to 2002
Year Job Start Current	984	1998.622	6.223	1968 to 2006
Duration in Previous Job	984	5.368	4.706	0 to 29 years length

Table 6.2: Probit Regression of All Job Changes with One Organization<sup>2</sup>

Independent Variables	<u>Organizational Commitment</u>			
	dy/dx	Std Err	z	P> z
Traditionalist	0.192	0.107	1.80	0.072
Baby Boomers	0.081*	0.024	3.40	0.34
Age Start First Job	0.001	0.002	0.42	0.674
Female	-0.003	0.015	0.23	0.817
High School	0.187**	0.045	4.15	0.000
College	0.043*	0.018	2.46	0.014
Non-white	-0.020	0.018	1.12	0.265
Georgia	0.055**	0.021	2.65	0.008
Number of Private Jobs	-0.109**	0.018	5.97	0.000
Number of Public Jobs	0.034**	0.011	3.01	0.003
Number of Jobs	0.045**	0.017	2.60	0.009
Year Start Earliest Job	0.004**	0.002	2.39	0.001

N 984

Adjusted Count R<sup>2</sup> 0.137

\*significant at 5% level; \*\* significant at 1% level, absolute value of z-score reported

<sup>2</sup> A Poisson Regression was also modeled counting the number of organizational job changes made by the respondent. Results are presented in Appendix Table A.1.

Table 6.3: Probit Regression of Current Job Move Within Organization

<u>Current Job Inside Job Move Within Organization</u>				
<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>dy/dx</u>	<u>Std Err</u>	<u>z</u>	<u>P&gt; z </u>
Traditionalist	0.039	0.115	0.34	0.735
Baby Boomers	0.011	0.068	0.16	0.876
Female	0.014	0.035	0.39	0.694
High School	0.145**	0.047	3.08	0.002
College	0.102**	0.035	2.87	0.004
Non-white	0.027	0.051	0.54	0.592
Georgia	-0.070	0.036	1.91	0.056
Number of Private Jobs	-0.127**	0.022	5.88	0.000
Number of Public Jobs	0.0759**	0.016	4.76	0.000
Number of Jobs	-0.015	0.033	0.46	0.642
Responsibility	-0.067**	0.022	2.99	0.003
Advancement	0.190**	0.019	9.91	0.000
Alternatives	0.060**	0.018	3.34	0.001
Salary	-0.062*	0.027	2.32	0.020
Year Job Start	-0.002	0.004	0.45	0.653
Age Job Start	-0.001	0.004	0.31	0.757
Duration in Previous Job	0.005	0.004	1.37	0.172

N 984

Adjusted Count R<sup>2</sup> 0.083

\*significant at 5% level; \*\* significant at 1% level, absolute value of z-score reported

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

Generational differences and their possible impacts on public management and personnel policies have and will remain to be a hot topic of debate in both popular literature and human resource management. Ultimately, generational differences will remain to be discussed because the prevalence of multiple generations, will be visible in and outside the workplace for the indefinite future. This dissertation has sought to address how generational differences may have significant differences in their approach to various aspects of workplace behavior by addressing three aspects: interest to serve the public as a motivator for job acceptance, durations spent in jobs, and commitment to organizations over time. By no means are these the only indicators of workplace behavior but they are symbolic of the common stereotypes prevalent in popular culture surrounding particular generations.

If generations do indeed differ, managers living 25 years apart should have different work values and be attracted to different aspects of work. The argument that generational researchers are making suggests that work values will be influenced by life events and socialization more than by age and maturity. It seems common place for one generation to complain about the work ethic or behaviors of the generations that follow. The obvious questions are if each subsequent generation is in fact lazy or self centered or do individuals become more conscientious and less self centered with maturity (Smola & Sutton, 2002)? Do previous generations forget how they used to be when they were young and stereotype younger generations for going through a natural stage in development?

This dissertation sought to empirically explore the common stereotypes in order to inform public managers about engaging in generational specific policies and programs without fully

understanding if the differences are fact or fiction. Previous work in public administration simply controls for age and does not take into account the social and historical connections that generations might have that would affect the way in which they operate in the workplace. Since this is the first time four generations have been present in the workforce it seems like information on how these generations are approaching work might be a helpful addition to public management literature.

The analysis of generational differences and interest to serve the public presented in Chapter 4 tried to link public administration research to the existing popular generational research. Expectations were met on numerous controls including those for education being related to an individual's interest to serve the public. Women were more likely to report interest to serve the public as a motivator for selecting their current job. The state finding suggests that Georgia employees are more likely to have higher interest in the ability to serve being a motivator for accepting their current position. Public administration scholars have begun to question how changes to personnel systems will influence the type of individuals that are attracted to public service. It may be the case that this is an area where further analysis is needed.

Chapter 4 contributes to the literature on generations in the workplace and interest in public sector work. First, there are many public organizations adopting plans and investing resources to deal with generational differences in the workplace with very little empirical evidence that these differences really exist and produce conflict in the work environment. Work in this area should address what appears to be a conflict of the generations could be the natural expectations of individuals at particular stages in the life cycle. For the first time in history there are four generations in the workplace at the same time. People are working longer and may not



retire when they first become eligible. What may appear to be generational differences may be life stage differences that have not had to be dealt with in the past.

The results of job duration in Chapter 5 provide some insight into the level of job commitment respondents have. There should definitely be caution when adapting policies and procedures geared toward generational differences. It seems that there is an age affect rather than a generational affect related to the duration individuals spend on their jobs. There are no significant differences between the generations and job durations. The stigma of younger individuals job-hopping seems like it might be normal behavior for individuals early in their careers. It is only found to be the case in Illinois that younger individuals have shorter job durations. The job motivation of opportunity for advancement within the organization's hierarchy was found to be negatively related to job duration. It is seems that no matter what generational cohort individuals belong to the workers perception of advancement is related to the time an individual will spend in their position. This need for advancement is further explored in the final empirical chapter.

Although explanatory in nature, the results of organizational commitment and generational differences presented in Chapter 6 provide some insight into why individuals stay with organizations. Overall it was found that organizational type was a very important indicator in the likelihood of respondents having job histories with just one organization. It seems like this finding could be good and bad news for organizations. Public organizations appear to be highly associated with individuals having only one organization in their career histories. In this sample holding all else constant Generation X members are less likely to have a reported career history that includes only one organization. As mentioned earlier this could be a result of the life stage at which these respondents are being observed.

The model examining respondent's most recent organizational job movement was related to several motivations for taking positions within the organization. The need and opportunity for advancement increased the likelihood that respondents would change jobs within their organization. The desire for responsibility and salary decreased the likelihood of an internal job movement. Outsiders are often paid premiums and those that are changing outside the organization may also be using this as a way to increase their personal position and prestige.

### **Policy Implications**

The results of each analysis suggest some implications for public management and personnel policy. First, it might be unwise to profile younger generations as chronic job hoppers and less committed to organizations. When managers make assumptions about younger workers based on their generation profiles they may lose out on valuable assets. It may be the case that younger employees are less likely to spend their entire careers with one organization but recruitment and retention efforts may help mediate their likelihood to switch organizations.

Job characteristics were found to influence job and organizational turnover. The idea that younger generations are less committed to organizations does not appear to be the case. There seems to be support for the life cycle of stability due to positive relationship between age and job duration. The age effect once again appears to be the driving factor behind work behaviors. The opportunities that for movement associated with education should not be ignored. Interaction effects between generation and education should be explored. Younger generations (Generation Y and Millennials) are expected to meet or surpass the Baby Boomer generation who are the best educated generation so far (as measured by percent of people with bachelor's degree or more) (Mitchell, 2000).

This research extends turnover literature by looking at what employees are looking for out of their next job opportunity. Opportunity for advancement with the current organization seems to be negatively associated with longer job durations. As the public sector is seeing individuals working longer it may make younger workers more likely to have shorter job durations when they don't see opportunities for promotion and advancement.

### **Future Research**

There seems to be a general theme to the conclusions presented in the empirical chapters of this dissertation. An aging workforce is present in all sectors of work. Dealing with this may be a new and exciting challenge for public managers. The excitement and obsession with generational differences in the workforce seems to be a sideshow to the real understanding of how individuals age and mature and its affect on work behaviors. Some extensions of the models and concepts presented in this dissertation help set up a foundation for future research.

Chapter 4 deals with interest to serve the public it could easily be extended to other motivations for job acceptance (e.g., salary, opportunities for advancement and job security). It is hard to find ways to separate a cohort effect from an age effect. Since many public management researchers work with survey responses this chapter hopefully presents a preliminary way to test for cohort and age effects.

Looking at career stages could be a better way to get at examining workers differences in the work place. Career stages could be just as difficult and arbitrary as defining generations but these may give us a better understanding of workers behaviors. Having information that allows comparison of generations at different career levels may reveal some of the observations that are present in the current workforce.

It seems that the whole world is wrapped up in generational differences with very little information showing that generations differ in expected ways. Just observing individuals at particular life stages is not enough to label them with generational stereotypes without extended information. Since this is the first time there are four generations in the workforce the presence of aging individuals will be on managers and administrators minds.

Future research on generational differences may not be that productive due to limitations in the data available. However, there may be areas where the inclusion of age variables could help explain work behaviors and characteristics. Intersectionality is a theory that tries to explain the various ways socially and culturally constructed categories interact and possibly produce inequalities in society. Generally research in this area looks at race, gender, class and ethnicity as the major areas where society is able to influence and oppress people (women in particular) (Collins, 2000). The numerous findings of age differences in this dissertation might suggest the need for the inclusion of age in this type of research. The generation idea might not have as much of an impact as expected but there may be something to the way age interacts with many of the other variables included in this analysis and present in society.

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Appendix A

Table A.1: Poisson Regression of Number of Organizational Changes

Independent Variables	<u>Number of Organizational Job Changes</u>			
	dy/dx	Std Err	z	P> z
Traditionalist	0.093	0.148	0.63	0.528
Generation X	0.207	0.129	1.60	0.110
Female	0.085	0.072	1.18	0.237
High School	-0.517*	0.085	6.05	0.000
College	-0.265*	0.072	3.68	0.000
Non-white	0.024	0.108	0.22	0.825
Georgia	-0.083	0.074	1.13	0.258
Number of Private Jobs	0.277*	0.038	7.32	0.000
Number of Public Jobs	-0.239*	0.034	7.02	0.000
Number of Jobs	0.876*	0.107	8.20	0.000
Year Job Start	-0.009	0.007	1.25	0.212
Age Job Start	0.009	0.008	1.18	0.237

N 984

Adjusted Count R<sup>2</sup> 0.096

\*significant at 5% level; \*\* significant at 1% level, absolute value of z-score reported