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Stream 2

New Diversity: Four generations of workforce

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Generational issues has attracted a lot of attention, as today the workplace is populated by multiple generations (i.e., Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Y'ers or Millennials, and recently Gen Z, who is entering the workplace (Ng & Parry, 2016)). Especially Gen Y or the Millennials have been studied, however Gen Z, the new workforce entrants are under-studied.

Although there is extant literature on generational differences in work values, work attitudes, individual differences and career, the least we can say that findings concerning intergenerational differences are fractured and often contradicting (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Ng & Parry, 2016; Parry, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011). Nevertheless, generational differences appear to be a real phenomenon, if only in the perceptions of employees and managers (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Foster, 2013; Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Urick, 2014), and hence merit further attention.

This stream solicits articles about current generational issues. Beside theoretical and methodological contributions in the generational research field, below are some possible themes that we would welcome for this stream (NB: this list is not exhaustive).

Generational research is confronted with some shortcomings such as the confound of the cohort in which the individual is located, the individual's age/life course, and the influence of particular historical events giving rise to problems in identifying their separate effects (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Ng & Parry, 2016; Parry, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011), and the fact that generations are often demarcated as groupings of birth cohorts implying that generations have specific boundaries corresponding to a set of birth years that seems arbitrary (Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Urwin, Buscha, & Parry, 2014). The latter shortcoming got somehow a solution by introducing the concept of generational identity (Foster, 2013; Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Urick, 2012; Urick & Hollensbe, 2014). However, a stronger theoretical grounding for the generation construct is still needed (Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Urwin et al., 2014) and the idea of considering generations from a lifespan perspective (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017) may offer new ways for looking at the generation construct.

Also, methodological issues have arisen in generational research such as the bulk of cross-sectional studies making the disentanglement of age- and generational effects impossible. Hence a call for more time lag studies. In addition, various methods have been used such as surveys and more qualitative studies (such as retrospective accounts, discourse analysis, in-depth interviews and Repertory Grid technique) (Van Rossem, 2019c). Employing other methods would be useful.

Van Rossem (2019b) drawing on a social identity perspective (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1985), demonstrated how perceptions of their own and other generations can direct social categorization and generational stereotypes of the in-group and outgroup(s). Only a few studies have investigated intergenerational perceptions (Chi, Maier, & Gursoy, 2013; Foster, 2013; Lester et al., 2012; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Roberto & Biggan, 2014; Urick, Hollensbe, Masterson, & Lyons, 2016; Van Rossem, 2019a; Zopiatis, Krambia-Kapardis, & Varnavas, 2012). More research about intergenerational perceptions, including research investigating how intergenerational perceptions may influence the workplace and individual-, team-, and organizational performance is needed (De Vos, 2014). In addition, a deeper study of age-based versus generational-based stereotypes is desirable since recent research claimed that these are not necessarily the same (Van Rossem, 2019b).

Another under-researched area is generational differences (if any) in leadership preferences (Arsenault, 2004; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007), leadership styles and the changing leadership context (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). Few studies focused on gender and generations (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007) which is another topic that deserves more attention (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Also generations and ethical and social responsibility issues (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Salminen, Lähdesmäki, & Ikola-Norrbacka, 2012; Weber & Urick, 2017) deserve further attention.

Nonetheless the globalization trend (Edmunds & Turner, 2005), generational differences between Western and non-Western contexts, and differences between countries in the Western world such as the US and Europe and countries/regions within Europe is an under-researched topic as well.

Also, more practical implications for managers who are confronted with different generations are welcome. For example, what are the pro's and con's of distinctive treatment of different generations? What are best practices?

Generational stereotypes are but one side of the coin. Meta-stereotypes or what individuals believe other generational groups think about their own generation is a critical aspect as well of intergenerational perception influencing generational interactions (Van Rossem, 2019a).

Below some possible themes are listed that we would welcome for this stream (NB: this list is not exhaustive).

1. Generation Z, the “new guys in town”. What are their expectations of work life? What are their values, leadership styles they aspire? Is this really “the” entrepreneurial generation? How

does this generation perceive their older generational colleagues? What are their meta-stereotypes and how do these influence coping behaviors and their views on entering the work force? What about their so-said green behavior? Has this generation other motivational needs and leadership preferences? Implications for managing.

2. Theoretical perspectives? Moving away from the sociological viewpoint on generations.
3. Measuring social identities
4. New methodologies for researching generations
5. Age/cohort/time period confound: how to tackle this issue?
6. Intergenerational perceptions and consequences
7. Age- vs. generational (meta)stereotypes
8. Sectors
9. Blue collar workers
10. Western vs. Non-Western contexts
11. Differences between US and Europe? Differences within Europe.
12. Generations and leadership preferences
13. Generations and ethical and socially responsibility issues
14. Practical Implications for managing: distinctive treatment of different generations? Best practices

Submissions to the stream can be in the form of long abstracts (up to 1500 words), developmental papers (3000-5000 words, including references) or full papers (no length restrictions) by the deadline of 1 March 2021. Please process your registration and paper submission online via www.edi-conference.org.

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