
Generational Wants vs. Needs: The Impact on Canadian Police Service Employees' Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

Human resource management in policing is facing a new generation of employees and the challenges of both recruitment and retention. Using a quantitative research approach, this paper compares what key workplace factors are most important to three different generations in policing and how those factors are rated in term of performance. In addition the study of 601 Canadian police service employees shows the correlation between such workplace factors as fairness, communications, accountability, and respect and the job satisfaction of Generations Y, X, and Baby Boomers. The results offer new insights into the managing of employee expectations within different generational groups.

Key words: job satisfaction, policing, fairness, Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers

Biographical sketch

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Employee job satisfaction is increasingly seen as an important correlate to workplace wellness, trust levels, productivity, and overall employee engagement (Dantzker, 1997; Baron & Byrne, 1991; Mardanov, Heischmidt, & Henson, 2008; Wright & Kim, 2004) as well as being a contributing factor to the delivery of highly-rated customer and client service (Cooil, Aksoy, Keiningham, & Maryott, 2009; Hawkins, Matheson, & Burley, 2009).

Job satisfaction within generational cohorts has also captured the attention of many researchers as younger employees classified as Generation Y (born between 1982-2010) enter the workplace in greater numbers, middle-aged Generation X employees (born between 1961-1981) take on managerial and leadership roles, and older Baby Boomer employees (born between 1943-1960) face retirement or continued employment (Kunreuther, 2003; Rodriguez, Green, & Ree, 2003; Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). As new employees enter the workplace, human resource professionals must address challenges of both recruitment and retention, evolving definitions of workplace competencies and behaviors, and what may be differences in employee expectations and even a sense of entitlement.

One profession where the above challenges are especially acute is that of policing, work that is described as “among the most demanding and dangerous occupations in modern civil society” (Manzoni & Eisner, 2006). To date there are far fewer studies related to the attitudes and opinions of police officers than there are for many other professions and occupations. This research study involving the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and its service to the province of Saskatchewan therefore constitutes an important addition to the existing body of employee research related to policing.

The research specifically explores how three major generational cohorts (Generation Y, Generation X, and Baby Boomers) rate both the importance and performance of key workplace factors and how those measures correlate to employee job satisfaction. The results offer new insights for those attempting to reduce officer stress and the negatively associated impacts, to improve the quality of managers and leaders, and to improve police service to the public.

JOB SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction is a long-studied and widely-researched topic. The more foundational work is linked to Herzberg's duality theory (1959) wherein he posited that intrinsic motivators to job satisfaction included achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and growth while extrinsic, or what he termed hygiene factors linked to job *dissatisfaction* included company policy and administration, supervision, relationships with a supervisor, work conditions, salary, relationship with peers, personal life, relationships with subordinates, status and security. Hackman and Oldham (1976) expanded on Herzberg's work through their focus on the meaningfulness of work wherein they linked job satisfaction to employee autonomy and responsibility as well as to receiving feedback on work performed.

Further to the above is the work by Ebby, Freeman, Rush, & Lance (1999); Pierce, Rubenfeld, & Morgan (1991); and Thomas & Velthouse (1990) who stated that heightened levels of employee empowerment and a sense of fair treatment contributed to job satisfaction. Fairness in the workplace has been identified by several researchers including Kim & Mauborgne (2003) who argued that a "fair process profoundly influences attitudes and behaviors critical to high performance. It builds trust and unlocks ideas" (p. 26). Barsky, Kaplan, & Beal (2010) found inequity, or a lack of fairness, can result in strong emotional reactions including anger, distress,

and moral outrage in a workplace while De Schrijver et al. (2010) in citing Trevino & Weaver, 2001, noted that fairness is related to organizational justice and a “social expectation that motivates behavior” (p.652). A related area of exploration for this paper is how different generations value the importance of being respected in the workplace, how they rate performance on the measure, and the correlation to job satisfaction. A sense of respect is considered an important variable to test because of the relationship to an employee’s sense of belonging, feeling valued, and being included (Tyler & Blader, 2002).

Job satisfaction is also associated with employee empowerment and participative decision making (Grissom, 2011). An extensive body of empirical research has concluded that having employees involved in organizational and workplace decisions, having mechanisms for employee feedback, giving employees a say in the setting of goals and generally asking employees their opinion creates higher levels of job satisfaction and a sense of personal empowerment (Kim, 2002; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997; Wright & Kim, 2004).

Another contributing factor to job satisfaction of interest to this paper is that of workplace accountability. Hall et al. (2003) have reported that accountability is correlated to both job satisfaction and performance. In further work, Hall, Zinko, Perryman, & Ferris (2009) also noted that the construct of accountability is a complex one and can include what Frink & Klimoski (1998) termed *felt accountability*, meaning not only the stipulations of a formal job description but elements such as adherence to informal workplace norms.

METHOD

Participants in the research study were employees of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) within the province of Saskatchewan, also known administratively to the police force as F-Division. Within Saskatchewan the RCMP polices both rural areas and several municipalities with a total provincial population of 1,053,960 (Bureau of Statistics, Government of Saskatchewan, April 2011). With national headquarters in Canada's capital Ottawa, the RCMP is Canada's national police force, providing rural and municipal policing services through contracted arrangements with local and provincial government clients as well as providing a parallel level of policing throughout Canada related to federal and international crimes. The RCMP also provides international policing through its presence in embassies and through its training programs to local authorities in several foreign countries including Afghanistan, Mexico, and other locations.

In terms of policing, the RCMP presents a unique and highly complex organizational structure. For example, compared to United States law enforcement, the RCMP can be best described as a combination of city police, the County Sheriff structure, the state Highway Patrol, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the US Secret Service, the department of Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco, the US Border Patrol, the US Drug Enforcement Agency, the US Marshall's department and all other domestic law enforcement agencies all rolled into one hierarchical, centralized, and very diversified police service.

An invitation to participate in an on-line survey was sent by the Commanding Officer of F-Division to all 1,853 employees. The employees were invited to link to an internet-based survey where final results could only be accessed through use of a password by the researcher.

Employees were advised in advance that their individual responses were anonymous but that the overall results of the survey would be shared with all employees.

The survey instrument used a five-point Likert scale to rate two identical sets of nine questions. The first set of questions asked employees to rate the *importance* of nine workplace measures while the second set of questions asked employees to rate the *performance* of the nine measures. The five-point Likert scales offered a range of from *not very important* to *very important* for the importance ratings and from *very poor* to *very good* for the performance ratings. Measuring importance and performance, rather than only performance as is commonly practiced in employee surveys, allowed for the calculation of importance/performance gaps showing the level of congruity between what employees valued the most in their workplace and their rating of the actual performance on those measures.

This approach also served to meet Wright & Kim's (2004) definition of job satisfaction as *representing an interaction between employees and their work environment by gauging the congruence between what employees want from their jobs and what employees feel they receive*. The resultant importance/performance gaps also provided an additional analytic benefit when the employee survey results were correlated against employee job satisfaction. The question answered in such an analysis was how well the workplace was performing on those measures identified by the various age groupings as having the strongest correlations to job satisfaction.

The nine workplace performance questions in the survey were designed following a review of several commonly used job satisfaction and employee engagement instruments recognized as having both high reliability and validity. The job satisfaction surveys reviewed included the Job in General Scale, the Job Satisfaction Survey, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, and the Job Satisfaction Inventory. A further review of employee engagement surveys included a wide

range of instruments used both in academia and with various consulting and research organizations (Vance, 2006; Conference Board, 2006; Gallup, 2007; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Schmidt & Marson, 2007; BlessingWhite, 2008).

Policing is a profession with many unique characteristics. The final set of questions used in the survey reflect both the author’s long and direct experience with policing and the unique culture and climate of the profession. Creation of a customized survey instrument for police personnel has been recognized by other researchers as necessary to capture the unique nature of the profession (Dantzker, 1997). The questions ultimately used in the survey to measure both importance and performance ratings included the following, with associated measures of internal consistency:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Job Satisfaction Scales (N=601, α =.91)

<i>Q1: As an employee, how important to you personally are the following workplace measures?</i>	
<i>Q2: When it comes to actual practice, how do you rate the performance on each of the following?</i>	
<i>Scale name</i>	
Being treated fairly	.79
Having all employees accountable regardless of their job or position	.66
Being treated with respect	.74
Having workplace conflicts quickly resolved	.68
Having important information quickly shared with you	.68
Getting help and support when you need it	.69
Knowing exactly what is expected of you	.65
Having workplace decisions made quickly	.69
Being asked for your opinion about how to improve the workplace	.71

The nine questions attained an acceptable level of internal consistency with reliability measures ranging from .65 to .79 and an overall alpha of .91 (Cronbach’s Alpha). The analysis of bivariate relations including relationship to job satisfaction were all found to be statistically significant at $p < .01$ (Pearson’s Product-Movement Correlation). In addition to the two sets of

nine workplace questions, the following demographic items were included: gender, age, years of service, category of employee, and rank.

Six hundred and one employees responded to the survey ($N=601$) representing an overall response rate of 32%. Seventy-three percent (73%) of respondents were sworn police officers with the remaining individuals employed in various civilian capacities ranging from administrative to clerical functions. Seventy percent (70%) of participants were male and 30% female. The results were compared to the existing demographics of all employees of the RCMP in F-Division and found to be an accurate representation of the total workforce. The size of the usable sample ($N=601$) represents a margin of error of $\pm 3.3\%$ at the 95% confidence level allowing the results to be generalizable to the national RCMP employee population of approximately 29,000 employees.

While there can be minor overlaps in the years cited, there is general agreement in the literature (Joyner, 2000; Dohm, 2000; Purcell, 2000; Kunreuther, 2003; Rodrigues, Green, & Ree, 2003) that individuals born between 1982 and 2010 comprise the Generation Y or Millennial cohort, those born between 1965 and 1982 are in the Generation X cohort, and those born between 1946 and 1964 are in the Baby Boomer cohort. In the context of this study employees at RCMP F-Division who reported being between the ages of 19 and 30 were categorized as being part of Generation Y grouping, those between 31 and 45 years of age were categorized as part of Generation X, and those 46 to 60+ years of age were categorized as being Baby Boomers. Because of the small sample size results for respondents over the age of 60 ($N=6$), were not included in the calculations of age group sub-sets.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows that from a generational perspective, all three generations of employees rated the same variables as their top three most important measures. However the ratings given by Generation Y employees as to what was most important in the workplace was lower in all nine measures than the ratings made by Generation X employees and lower in eight out of nine measures than the ratings provided by Baby Boomers. One area was rated the same by Generation Y and Baby Boomers—having help and support available ($M = 4.65$). The conclusion to be drawn is that while all three generations agree on what is most important in the workplace, they disagree somewhat on the weight of importance.

The comparison of how different generation groups of RCMP employees rated the importance of the nine workplace measures (Table 2) presents an outcome contrary to some notions in the workplace that younger employees have higher expectations than older employees of key workplace measures related to job satisfaction and engagement. Indeed the results from this research show that Baby Boomers place a somewhat greater level of importance than Generation Y employees on eight of nine measures and a marginally greater rating of importance on six out of nine measures than Generation X.

It may be argued that the marginally higher importance rating by Baby Boomers is an indication that an older generation of employees takes work more seriously than younger employees. Conversely it can also be argued that younger employees may see their workplace as being important, but not as intensely important as older employees—that younger employees also value activities outside of their formal job in terms of having work-personal life balance. In short, it may not be so much a matter of Gen-Y employee *entitlement* in the workplace as it is

investment. Younger employees simply are not as invested in the workplace to the degree that Baby Boomers are.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of Importance of Workplace Measures by Generation

	Generation Y Age 19-30 (N=106)	Generation X Age 31-45 (N=323)	Baby Boomers Age 46-60+ (N=181)
Fairness	4.81	4.88	4.96
Accountability	4.77	4.86	4.92
Respect	4.73	4.80	4.83
Conflict resolution	4.61	4.72	4.79
Info sharing	4.66	4.69	4.74
Help/support	4.65	4.71	4.65
Know expectations	4.58	4.63	4.73
Quick decisions	4.28	4.47	4.45
Asked opinion	4.29	4.37	4.31

Rating the importance of workplace measures is one thing but rating how good a job is being done on the measures is another. While all three generations agree on what is most important in their workplace, do they also share agreement on how good a good is being done on the workplace measures tested in the research? Table 3 shows how each generational group rated the performance of the measures.

Table 3. Mean Ratings of Performance of Workplace Measures by Generation

	Generation Y Age 19-30 (N=106)	Generation X Age 31-45 (N=323)	Baby Boomers Age 46-60+ (N=156)
Fairness	3.39	3.39	3.22
Accountability	2.54	2.47	2.45
Respect	3.72	3.57	3.37
Conflict resolution	3.05	2.86	2.81
Info sharing	3.21	3.26	3.11
Help/support	3.56	3.42	3.23
Know expectations	3.51	3.52	3.48
Quick decisions	3.19	3.13	3.10
Asked opinion	2.90	3.02	3.06

The earlier results on the importance of the workplace measures showed that Generation Y employees rated all nine variables as marginally lower in importance than both Generation X and Baby Boomers. When it came to rating *performance* on the same measures, the results show Generation Y employees rated five out of nine variables as higher and three variables the same as other generations. The one exception was the measure of asking employees for their opinion where Generation Y employees rated the performance lower ($M=2.90$) than for Generation X ($M=3.02$) or for Baby Boomers ($M=3.06$).

What can be concluded from the results is that Generation Y employees not only had the lowest overall ratings of importance related to the workplace measures—and therefore likely had lower expectations of needs-fulfillment—but they also felt the most satisfied of all generation groups with regard to their needs being met. One way to fine tune this conclusion is by providing a generational importance-performance gap for each workplace factor.

Table 4 shows that one generation in particular—Baby Boomers—had both the greatest number of, and the widest, gaps in their rating of what was important in the workplace compared to how good a job was being done. In eight out of nine measures Baby Boomer employees reported the widest importance-performance gaps of all three generational categories. The one measure that, while still achieving a negative performance rating, was nonetheless a smaller gap, related to employees having their opinion asked about workplace issue. While there is general commentary in some workplaces about a sense of entitlement by Generation Y employees and their propensity to complain about workplace conditions more than employees in the past, this study shows that it is in fact Baby Boomer employees who by far rate their workplaces the most negatively when comparing what they believe is important to the actual performance delivered. A conclusion that can be drawn is that the older employees not only had higher expectations of

what they wanted delivered in terms of workplace behaviors and actions, they were also the most disappointed.

Table 4. Important / Performance Gap of Workplace Measures by Generation

	Generation Y Age 19-30 (N=106)	Generation X Age 31-45 (N=323)	Baby Boomers Age 46-60+ (N=181)
Fairness	-1.42	-1.49	-1.73
Accountability	-2.23	-2.39	-2.47
Respect	-1.01	-1.23	-1.45
Conflict resolution	-1.56	-1.86	-1.98
Info sharing	-1.45	-1.43	-1.62
Help/support	-1.09	-1.29	-1.41
Know expectations	-1.07	-1.11	-1.24
Quick decisions	-1.06	-1.34	-1.39
Asked opinion	-1.39	-1.35	-1.28

The correlation of workplace measures to generational job satisfaction

The research related to workplace importance-performance ratings by generations of employees showed noticeable differences between the major generational groupings. Additional analysis of the data explored the strength of correlations between the nine variables in the study and employee job satisfaction using Pearson's Product-Movement Correlation Coefficient. An analysis of bivariate relationships found that correlations between the measures used in the study were all statistically significant at $\rho < .01$.

The survey of employees at RCMP F-Division asked participants to rate their current level of job satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranged from very poor, somewhat poor, average, somewhat good, to very good. The results showed Generation Y employees ($N=108$) rated their job satisfaction as 8% somewhat/very poor, 25% average, and 67% somewhat/very good. Generation X employees ($N=323$) rated their job satisfaction as 16% somewhat/very poor,

24% average, and 60% somewhat/very good while Baby Boomers ($N=181$) rated their job satisfaction as 17% somewhat/very poor, 18% average, and 65% somewhat/very good.

The overall research results at the provincial police service showed job satisfaction levels far above the 45% average reported for employees in general throughout North America (Conference Board, 2009). The results also showed that Generation Y employees had job satisfaction levels notably higher than Generation X employees and marginally higher than for Baby Boomers. One observation from the data is that although Baby Boomers overall rated the performance of workplace measures lower than other generations the impact on their job satisfaction appeared not to suffer. This suggests that other extrinsic and intrinsic measures beyond those rated in the survey may have an impact on job satisfaction. One such factor may be the very high level of commitment and pride in being an employee with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. A 2009 national employee survey by the police service showed that throughout Canada, 92% of all employees indicated they were “strongly committed to the RCMP’s success” while 85% agreed that they “were proud to be an RCMP employee” (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009).

Tables 5, 6, and 7 provide the correlation between the workplace measures and the three generations of employees. As Table 3 provided earlier, all three generations of employees (Y, X, and Baby Boomers) rated, in order, the following measures as being most important to them personally in the workplace—being treated fairly, having all employee held accountable, and feeling respected as an employee. However the correlations to job satisfaction showed that what various generations rated as most important in their workplace were not the exact same measures which strongly correlated to job satisfaction.

Table 5 shows that the strongest correlations (above $r = .40$) to job satisfaction for Generation Y employees were having all employees treated fairly ($r = .51$), being asked for opinions about the workplace ($r = .49$), and having important information shared with employees ($r = .43$). This generation of employees also rated the most important factors in their workplace as fairness, accountability, and being respected. The results show that in two out of three areas of workplace practice what Generation Y employees rated as being most important to them also turned out to be the factors most strongly correlated to their job satisfaction level of 67%.

However the results also showed that being asked for their opinion rated in the top three highest correlations to job satisfaction for Generation Y employees and yet the employees rated the measure as being near the least most important out of nine measures. In addition, while Generation Y employees rated *holding all employees accountable* as being the second highest important of all measures, the results showed a weak ($r = .26$) positive correlation to job satisfaction. While correlations are not causes, the weak correlation between job satisfaction and what employees rated as having very high importance to them—accountability—does pose the question of whether the current level of job satisfaction for Generation Y could be even higher if workplace accountability was better performed (the data showed a rated average importance-performance gap of $-.2.23$).

Table 5. Correlation of Workplace Measures With Generation Y Employees (N=106)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Fairness	--									
2. Accountability	.51**	--								
3. Respect	.71**	.42**	--							
4. Conflict resolution	.62**	.47**	.56**	--						
5. Info sharing	.48**	.47**	.33**	.31**	--					
6. Help and support	.58**	.46**	.49**	.52**	.63**	--				
7. Know expectations	.51**	.35**	.38**	.40**	.48**	.53**	--			
8. Quick decisions	.60**	.41**	.53**	.51**	.42**	.51**	.65**	--		
9. Asked opinion	.64**	.45**	.46**	.43**	.41**	.44**	.42**	.47**	--	
10. Job satisfaction	.51**	.26**	.43**	.27**	.24*	.39**	.28**	.29**	.49**	--

** $\rho < .01$

Table 6 shows the same pattern. The strongest correlations to job satisfaction for Generation X employees were fairness in the workplace ($r = .51$), being respected ($r = .48$), and having employees know what is expected of them ($r = .40$). As with all generations this group similarly rated fairness, accountability, and being respected as the most important factors in their workplace. As with Generation Y employees, the results for Generation X employees saw an alignment between what was rated as most important and the measures most strongly correlated to job satisfaction.

However as with Generation Y, the Generation X employees' identification of workplace accountability—while rated very high in importance—had a weak, positive correlation to job satisfaction ($r = .27$). The results also showed a rated average importance-performance gap of -2.39 for accountability. Again, a low performance rating for holding all employees accountable may be a contributing factor to the low correlation to job satisfaction as well as restricting existing job satisfaction levels from being higher.

Table 6. Correlation of Workplace Measures With Generation X Employees (N=323)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Fairness	--									
2. Accountability	.54**	--								
3. Respect	.75**	.49**	--							
4. Conflict resolution	.53**	.55**	.49**	--						
5. Info sharing	.51**	.51**	.50**	.52**	--					
6. Help and support	.58**	.41**	.57**	.45**	.57**	--				
7. Know expectations	.54**	.434**	.57**	.55**	.53**	.55**	--			
8. Quick decisions	.52**	.56**	.51**	.53**	.58**	.50**	.46**	--		
9. Asked opinion	.67**	.51**	.61**	.53**	.60**	.57**	.56**	.558**	--	
10. Job satisfaction	.51**	.27**	.48**	.33**	.26**	.37**	.40**	.33**	.35**	--

** $\rho < .01$

Table 7 shows that Baby Boomers, as with Generation Y and X, rated fairness, accountability, and being respected as the most important measures in their workplace. Baby Boomers also rated the importance of all three variables as significantly higher than the ratings given by Generation Y employees and in some cases Generation X employees. In terms of a correlation to job satisfaction, the most strongly correlated measures were feeling respected ($r = .54$), being treated fairly ($r = .54$), having help and support available ($r = .45$), and being asked for opinions ($r = .44$). While the measure of holding all employees accountable was rated as second most important to Baby Boomers the resultant analysis showed only a moderate ($r = .33$) correlation to job satisfaction. As with other generation groups, Baby Boomers rated the importance of holding all employees accountable as very high ($M = 4.92$). However they also rated performance for accountability as very low ($M = 2.45$) resulting in an importance-performance gap of -2.47.

Table 7. Correlation of Workplace Measures With Baby Boom Generation (N=156)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fairness	--									
Accountability	.59**	--								
Respect	.78**	.58**	--							
Conflict resolution	.59**	.60**	.61**	--						
Info sharing	.52**	.49**	.54**	.47**	--					
Help and support	.56**	.46**	.55**	.42**	.50**	--				
Know expectations	.54**	.45**	.56**	.44**	.52**	.49**	--			
Quick decisions	.53**	.47**	.48**	.56**	.46**	.47**	.40**	--		
Asked opinion	.64**	.47**	.64**	.53**	.49**	.53**	.52**	.46**	--	
Job satisfaction	.54**	.33**	.54**	.38**	.42**	.45**	.36**	.32**	.44**	--

** $\rho < .01$

DISCUSSION

The findings offer important new insights into the management of different generations of employees and challenge many conventional views of the needs and attitudes of Generation Y employees. The research also offers new findings in an area that is significantly under-researched in terms of employee attitudes and behaviors—that of policing. What the findings show is that there is no “one size fits all” when it comes to forming attitudes or human resource policies and processes related to generational labels such as “Generation Y,” “Generation X,” or “Baby Boomers.”

The findings also demonstrate that, to quote the Rolling Stones, “You can’t always get what you want but if you try sometimes, well you just might find, you get what you need” (Jagger & Richards, 1968). In the case of the research study, employees in all three generational categories agreed that three measures in particular were very important to them in their workplace—having all employees treated fairly, holding all employees accountable, and being treated with respect. One can assume that if employees rated a variable as very high in importance they also considered it as something they strongly wanted in terms of their job satisfaction. Therefore in

two cases (fairness and respect) all employees indeed *got what they need* as evidenced in the strong correlation to job satisfaction. However this was not the case for the accountability where what Generations Y and X wanted had only a weak correlation to job satisfaction ($r = .26$ and $r = .27$), and a moderate correlation for Baby Boomers ($r = .33$).

This study has also confirmed what many other researchers have found, and that is the strong positive correlation between job satisfaction and the importance of workplace fairness (De Schrijver, Delbeke, Maesschalck, & Pleysier, 2010; Kim & Mauborgne, 2003), interpersonal communications (Baird & Bradley, 1978; Madlock, 2008; Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009; Johlke & Duhan, 2000), employee involvement in decision-making (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999; Grissom, 2011), and the benefit of having a respectful workplace (Fuller, Hester, Barnett, Frey, Relyea, & Beu, 2006).

The analysis of the nine measures also showed that the workplace factors which employees rated as being very important to them also are had very interrelated performance ratings. For example there was a *very* strong correlation between employees feeling fairly treated and also feeling respected as individuals ($r = .71$ for Generation Y, $r = .75$ for Generation X, and $r = .78$ for Baby Boomers) and a strong correlation between fair treatment and all employees being held accountable ($r = .51$ for Generation Y, $r = .545$ for Generation X, and $r = .59$ for Baby Boomers).

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are several implications from this study for managers of police service personnel. The results show that the specific needs of employees do not deviate to a great extent between generations although there are important differences in the weightings of both importance and

performance. This suggests that initiatives to improve employee engagement should be equally targeted to all age groups and not to any one particular cohort. The results also show that Baby Boomers may in fact be a “needier” generation of employees than the younger Generation Y employees, contrary to popular opinion. Baby Boomers (over the age of 46) not only considered the engagement-related workplace measure more important than Generation Y employees (19 to 30 years of age), they also for the most part rated performance on the measures far lower than the youngest employees. Overall job satisfaction ratings for Baby Boomers were also marginally lower than for Generation Y employees suggesting that the importance-performance gap ratings may be directly contributing to greater workplace dissatisfaction among older employees.

The entry of younger employees into the workforce has spawned a growing body of research and popular press discussion about the needs, sense of entitlement, and associated human resource strategies targeted to Generation Y employee satisfaction and retention. However this research study suggests that the most likely source of employee disgruntlement and dissatisfaction lies with older—not younger employees.

LIMITATIONS

This study provides new ground in an area not known for extensive employee research—the profession of policing. In that respect it makes an important contribution to the literature. However because the research is in fact restricted to a provincial police service with the majority of participants being sworn police officers, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results to other professions or occupations—just as great caution should be exercised in extrapolating the results of employee research in other professions outside of policing onto a police service.

In addition, caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of this study onto other police services. The police service in the study is part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police whose strong culture, iconic role as a national symbol, and unique organizational structure presents an environment similar to, but also notably different from any other police service in the world.

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