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Reshaping the Federal System for a Postmodern Workforce

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Reshaping the Federal System for a Postmodern Workforce

Daryl D. Green^{1*}, Gary E. Roberts², Richard D. Rudebock¹

¹Oklahoma Baptist University, P.O. Box 61737, 500 W University Dr., Shawnee, OK 74804, USA.

²Regent University, 1000 Regent University Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23464, USA.

*Correspondence: daryl.green@okbu.edu

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Abstract

The federal government faces a human capital crisis over the next several years due to driving environmental forces, which include the reduction in the replacement labor force cohorts and the image problem of public service. One of the great challenges facing the federal service is the need to address the negative perceptions of the quality of work life experienced in the federal service, especially for younger employees. Consequently, governmental organizations must cope with increasing aging of their labor forces and elevated retirement levels exacerbating succession planning and knowledge transfer practices. This paper examines the current environment of the federal system and explores how it must adapt to postmodern influences that are embraced by Millennial and Generation X employees. While today's federal system is rigid in many of its key leadership, performance management, and support service delivery systems, the postmodern workforce thrives on flexibility, involvement, and excitement. This paper further examines what leadership concepts and competencies can assist in the positive transformation of the federal government.

Keywords: Leadership; Public sector; Federal government; Postmodern; Postmodernism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The federal government faces a "perfect storm" human capital crisis due to the following: graying of the labor force and the associated retirement levels, the reduction in the replacement labor force cohorts, the image problem of public service, and increased competition from private and nonprofit sectors. One of the great challenges facing the federal service is the need to address the negative perceptions of the quality of work life experienced in the federal service, especially for younger employees. A study by the National Partnership for Public Service (2014) analyzed the 2013 National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Student Survey and found that only 5.7% of the students selected the federal government as the sector for their ideal career. The level for state and local government is even lower at 4.8%. This reflects a troubling and sustained decline with only 5.4% of the surveyed students planning to enter government at any level compared to 10.2% in 2009 (National Partnership for Public Service, 2014). This low level of interest is troubling given the advanced age of the federal labor force with 56.4% of federal employees within the 45–64 age group in conjunction with the accelerating pace of retirements manifesting a 10.9% increase from 2005 to 2014 (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2015). Only about 7.1% of the federal labor force is under the age of 30, hence the foundation for an extended human capital challenge (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2015). This human capital issue has received ongoing attention for many years as exemplified by a 2001 General Accounting Office (GAO) report that "placed human capital issues on its high-risk priority list deeming it one of the government's greatest management challenges" (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001, p. 7). However, many critics would argue that this alarm is premature for the following reasons. First, due to the current economic conditions and cultural changes that emphasize current consumption over savings, many Baby Boomers have failed to save adequately for retirement. Baby Boomers refer to those individuals who were born during 1946–1964 and are in the 45–63 age range as of 2009 (Williams *et al.*, 2010). Second, Baby Boomers view work as a major component of personal identity and have looked to their careers as a source of self-worth and transcendence. Unlike their parents, Baby Boomers choose individualism over community during their informative years (Williams *et al.*, 2010). Last, businesses are creating large retention incentives, and government officials are rewriting legislation to motivate these

seasoned veterans to stay. In the presence of these countervailing trends, some organizations may become complacent and fail to grasp the necessity of planning for this impending shift, placing their future succession planning efforts at risk.

Yet, many organizations are finding the threat of massive retirements credible. Recognizing this organizational threat, several organizations, such as public and private sectors, have already begun to develop a research-based model to assist them with this potential brain drain (Ballenstedt and Rosenberg, 2008). Other organizations are taking a more direct approach. For example, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has provided guidance to all agencies and departments on outreach and recruitment strategies, including “strategic partnerships with a diverse range of colleges and universities, trade schools, apprentice programs, and affinity organizations from across the country” (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2011, p. 4). Clearly, government executives are taking notice of this potential disruption. With high ongoing retirement levels, companies like Accenture are building their human capital resources so that they can be positioned to contract for these unfilled government slots (Eamon, 2007). Given the fact that Baby Boomer retirements will create a corporate knowledge drain, today’s federal executives need novel solutions to these human capital deficiencies. This paper examines the current environment of the federal system and explores how human resource management must adapt contemporary leadership concepts in the postmodern period.

2. KNOWLEDGE EROSION

As companies are forced to deal with global forces and financial crisis, more organizations recognize the need for knowledge management (KM) systems. Historically, KM systems have been an informal process where employees share pertinent job information with each other (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2015). Knowledge management focuses on the business’s ability to systematically store, transform, and transport knowledge throughout an organization (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2015). Grubic-Nesic *et al.* (2014) explained that knowledge sharing done correctly allows KM to enable employees to fully utilize all the tools available to them. Bharadwaj *et al.* (2015) determined the success or failure of KM systems depended on the identification and assessment of capabilities. Bharadwaj *et al.* (2015) further maintained that organizations must leverage their existing knowledge and create new knowledge that will better position them in the marketplace in order to compete effectively.

Thus, knowledge sharing becomes a strategic process where personal, internal (tacit) knowledge converts to corporate knowledge for the benefit of others. Furthermore, Mir *et al.* (2015) suggested that KM has the potential to radically change organizational thinking by creating a more complex construct of knowledge. Yet, implementing an effective KM system in the public sector is not easily achieved. In fact, any knowledge sharing process will fail without commitment from senior leadership and encouragement to transform the organizational culture so that it is supportive of KM systems. Lawrence (2016) argued that organizational culture that brings out the best of every employee will be a challenge for most organizations. With a great crisis ahead of the massive potential of federal retirements, federal executives need to explore strategic thinking for better solutions (Green, 2007). Cong and Pandya (2003) presented the merit of tacit knowledge; it involves unwritten and unspoken wisdom in organizations. Yet, tacit knowledge is difficult because this knowledge is not as concrete and is more difficult to monitor in KM systems (Cong and Pandya, 2003). Potential Baby Boomer retirees are knowledge workers with significant corporate experience; they create and capture corporate information for the organization. However, knowledge workers are motivated differently than traditional workers. Yet, today’s executives cannot manage knowledge workers in the same manner as in the past; they must apply innovative approaches to lead today’s knowledge workers.

Furthermore, organizational leaders do not understand the fact that knowledge workers are different than past workers who had limited knowledge and information available to them. In the private sector, the traditional corporate value system promotes the importance of profit making while subordinating human resource needs. Sadly, many employees embrace this instrumental value system and sacrifice their mental and physical well-being for their organizations. On the contrary, these organizations do not share in the same social contract with their employees. In certain scenarios, managers are viewed as leaders who dominate others and utilize power to achieve their own career goals (Northouse, 2013). Managers are considered wiser. Yet, advanced communication technologies and vast decentralized Internet access make this thinking by organizational managers outdated. Thus, a new paradigm is needed for knowledge workers in most 21st century organizations.

3. VALUE-BASED ISSUES

Today's organizations are changing with the enormous demographic shifts that have created an assortment of value-based issues. Paarlberg and Perry (2007) suggested that a strong value system in organizations is achieved when members align themselves with key shared values. Yet, today's workers operate in a very heterogeneous climate. In the current work environment, organizations contain four generations co-existing together in the workplace (see Table 1). According to business director Greg Hammill (2005), "individuals communicate based on their generational background. Each generation has distinct attributes such as behaviors, expectations, and habits" (para. 4). Williams (2005) further insisted that all generations have their own communication preferences that they trust among other sources. All generations possess distinct value differences. For example, members of the Millennial Generation (1981–2000) are value-oriented in their decision making. This generation is the most diverse generation in history and is very confident in its abilities (Green, 2007). Winograd and Hais (2008) maintained that Millennials have the opportunity to become a major force in politics and other societal areas of life. Given the varying characteristics of these generations, today's leaders face a difficult task with human capital matters, including hiring, leadership development, and team building.

Table 1. Multigeneration Characteristics Matrix.

Generation	Characteristics
Generation Xers (1965–1976)	<p><u>As a follower</u>—Does not thrive under authority leadership style</p> <p><u>As a leader</u>—Leads others by being adaptable to change, fair, competent, participatory, and diversity-sensitive</p> <p>More Specific Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebels and mavericks • Focus on family and balanced • Independent • Cynical of authority
Millennials (1977–present)	<p><u>As a follower</u>—Does not thrive under authority leadership style</p> <p><u>As a leader</u>—Leads with a tolerance of others, value-centered, rule-oriented, and culturally sensitive.</p> <p>More Specific Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A value-based lifestyle • Technology savvy, diverse, and gender neutral • Strong self-confidence • Responsive to participatory leadership

Sources: *Leadership: A Communication Perspective* by Hackman and Johnson (2013). "Using Multi-Generational Marketing to Target Donors," by Williams (2005).

However, the actual influence of generational differences on work-related attitudes and behaviors is unclear. Most of the studies that assess generational differences in attitudes and behaviors are correlational and lack longitudinal research designs. In addition, there is an absence of well-developed theoretical and conceptual framework to anchor sound research designs (Cadiz *et al.*, 2015; Lyons *et al.*, 2015). A recent meta-analysis of generational differences and several other studies have concluded that generational differences are significantly overestimated given poor study designs and are effectively close to zero (Wong *et al.*, 2008; Kowske *et al.*, 2010; Costanza *et al.*, 2012). The overestimation effect is further illustrated by a study that perceived generational differences are much greater than actual generational differences, leading to generational misconceptions and stereotypes (Lester *et al.*, 2012). However, studies demonstrate that turn-over intention is higher among Millennial employees (Ertas, 2015), leading to higher mobility rates (Lyons *et al.*, 2015).

Currently, practitioners and academics debate the role of leadership and its influence on organizational performance. In fact, Harding (2000) maintained a new breed of workers will create significant human capital challenges. Schultz (1992) further noted that this postmodern society would defy the status quo in traditional institutions. In fact, postmodernism is a philosophical term with a cultural context. Grad and Frunza (2016) broke down postmodernism into two categories, conservative and critical. Conservative postmodernism focuses on an “anything goes” attitude where individuals are allowed to indulge in a nihilistic relativism, whereas, critical postmodernism promotes limits and failures through a skeptical questioning of the certainties and absolutisms of modernists’ thinking.

Green and Robert (2011) further identified the transformational effects of postmodern thinking on culture. The following characteristics of a postmodern society were observed:

- a. Pluralism focuses on more than one truth or the denial of any one universal truth; (b) nonobjectivism argues that all information is not hard truths; (c) deconstruction maintains that the meaning of an event or situation is only from the framework or the interpreter rather than reality; (d) cynicism/pessimism advocates the absence of absolute truth or universal purpose in life; and (e) community suggests meaning and understanding is determined from a community viewpoint rather than an individual one (pp. 25–26).

Consequently, postmodernism attacks the philosophical level of traditional organizations. Register (2007) suggested that the concept of postmodernism creates a chaotic and complex world where “truth” varies from person to person. Thus, postmodernism provides an avenue for organizational conflict to exist between workers (i.e., young and older). As a result, conflict will be looming in the federal sector where the current senior manager cohort consists largely of Baby Boomers. As the research demonstrated, different generations have a different outlook on culture. In fact, the postmodern thinking of Generation X and Millennial workers are divergent from those leaders (primarily Baby Boomers) who are currently in power of most organizations. This divergent way of thinking among leaders will encourage some workers while disenfranchising other individuals. The federal system finds itself in an enormous transformation due to major retirements and postmodern thinking of younger employees. Yet, Salopek (2006) suggested that this multigenerational environment can stimulate novel ideas and greater performance in the workplace. Nevertheless, government executives will need to think strategically in addressing postmodern workplaces to fully take advantage of these multigenerational workforce.

4. GLOBALIZATION

Demographic shifts across the world are forcing organizations to focus more on building meaningful relationships beyond nationality, race, and borders. Globalization demands more decisive relationship building across the world with peculiar international relationships. Jreisat (2004) suggested globalization stimulates worldwide interconnectedness in society, representing the aspects of society, including legal, social, environmental, economical, and spiritual elements. In fact, global trends are impacting the political, social, economic, and technological outlooks of most countries. The ever-changing demographics of the world are remodeling a new global perspective. According to U.S. Census Bureau, by 2044, the world population will be nine billion (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Between 1993 and 2025, around 95% of global population growth will be from developing countries (Bongaarts, 2001). These sweeping changes make global awareness skills critical. In the United States, demographic changes continue to impact all walks of life. By 2022, the labor force will increase from 154,975,000 in 2012 to 163,450,000, a rise of 8,470,000 or 5.5% (Toossi, 2013). Approximately 60% of the increase in the labor force consists of minorities (Toossi, 2013).

Thus, diversity in the U.S. workforce will continue to increase. The percentage of the whole labor force that is white is projected to decrease from 79.1% in 2014 to 77.0% in 2024 with ongoing higher growth rates for minorities (Toossi, 2015). Additionally, the number of women in the workplace will continue to increase in the future, from 46.8% of the labor force in 2014 to a projected growth of 47.2% in 2024 (Toossi, 2015). In the realm of primary and secondary education, the increase in minorities is even more pronounced. A Pew Research Center Study projects that the percentage of white high school graduates will decrease from 57%

in 2012 to 51% in 2025 (Fry, 2015). In terms of college enrollments, the minority population increased from 2.4 million in 1993 to 5.3 million in 2012. The white student population percentage decreased from 72% in 1993 to 58% in 2012 (Krogstad and Fry, 2014), and given higher ongoing numbers of minority high school graduates, minority college attendance rates are likely to increase in the future.

Futurists view these cultural shifts as waves in an ocean. Some of the other emerging trends include: (a) shift in consciousness, (b) disenchantment with scientism, (c) inner sources of authority and power, (d) respiritualization of society, (e) decline of materialism, (f) political and economic democratization, and (g) beyond nationality (Daves, 1996). Clearly, these trends are challenging traditional Western cultural views. Furthermore, Maynard and Mehrtens (1996) contended that the world is moving toward interconnectedness. However, the Western world has been absorbed in its own paradigms with insufficient regard for the scope and impact of the global value shifts. Some individuals would suggest this integration may compromise the United States's standing as a superpower. In this scenario, developing countries gain more influence on a global basis and decrease the influence of more developed nations, such as the United States or Russia (Kennedy, 1993). Therefore, the federal government finds itself in the quagmire of a rapid and turbulent environment with uncertain future consequences.

5. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERS: FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINTS SURVEY AND GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

Today's organizations face major consequences of pressing postmodern influences in modern-day theories related to leadership. Register (2007) suggested that postmodern thinking challenges traditional values. In fact, applying leadership theories correctly in postmodern society is essential for current institutions.

Green and Roberts (2011) conveyed postmodern challenges for bureaucratic establishments:

Clearly, the assumptions maintained by bureaucratic leaders will create a value crisis for members in the postmodern workforce.... Some of these problems with bureaucracy include the impersonal rules, rigid authority channels, and the standardization of organizational processes. Therefore, organizational leaders need to analyze the ramifications of bringing these postmodern employees into a non-flexible bureaucracy. (p. 84)

Given the potential conflict between generations in the federal workplace, what does the available data indicate regarding the influence of age and attitudes toward leadership? The U.S. Office of Personnel Management conducts periodic attitude surveys of representative samples of federal employees. The 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoints Survey analyzed data on 84 items by 6 age cohorts (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014). For the 10 questions that addressed senior leadership issues and the 11 items addressing satisfaction with their direct supervisors, the results surprisingly indicate that younger employees possess more favorable perceptions of senior leadership and their immediate supervisors than do older employees. For example, employees under 30 indicate a higher level of respect for the organization's senior leaders, are more likely to agree that leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity, and that leaders support collaboration to achieve work objectives. As for their immediate supervisor, younger employees report higher levels of supervisor trust and confidence and that their supervisor is doing a good job (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2014). There are clearly many problems and issues identified in key quality of work life areas, but generational differences become muted in comparison with the other structural, employee support, and motivational issues. This finding does not rule out the issue of generational differences but does reinforce that the issue is more complex than many researchers posit.

6. TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

Government officials must rethink their strategy on leadership development and incorporate generational difference awareness elements. This often means changing operations, habits, traditional lines of authority, or other organizational parameters. Thus, a new long-term approach is needed instead of a short-term

perspective. The generational awareness strategy includes a series of traditional management development programs in conjunction with decentralization and empowerment approaches. Furthermore, this research addresses the traditional development elements and then discusses organizational structure and culture. Leadership development requires the clear cultivation of global competencies. Black *et al.* (2002) proposed four key leadership traits, which include inquisitiveness, perspective, character, and savviness.

Another shift in strategy is the need for more collaboration and teamwork among federal agencies. Many organizations are virtual, mobile, and physically disconnected. Decentralized, virtual organizations will need to promote more self-directed teams. Stagich (2001) made a case that leaders who have a collaborative spirit possess an advantage in improving performance and motivating individuals in a global community. "Current scholars suggest that an effective team leader may be the primary ingredient for team success" (Northouse, 2013, pp. 202–206). Daft (2014) argued that effective teams do not happen; they have to be developed. This process starts with a good leader who understand his/her team. Daft (2014) further expressed that highly cohesive teams are committed to the shared organization's goals. Effective teams have the following characteristics: trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and result orientation. Although many federal agencies are staffed with talented people on their teams, teamwork cannot exist unless there is trust (Yukl, 2002). Yet, establishing trust is invaluable for building effective teams that possess synergism and cohesiveness. Thus, federal system must be cognizant of developing organizational cultures, which encourages innovation and fosters collaboration among team members.

7. STRUCTURE

Federal organizations must meet the new structural demands of the postmodern period. According to Hornestay (2004), the 21st century calls for flatter, decentralized organizations that are more responsive to customers' demands. Klitgaard and Light (2005) argued for a major overhaul of the federal government, including significant changes in its structure and operations. They maintained the federal structure is outdated with duplicated services, conflicts, and delays in work. In order to restructure the government around its core mission, the following tasks must be initiated: (a) identify core missions, (b) divide current executive branch activities properly, (c) make midcourse adjustments where appropriate, (d) maintain the mission-based structure over time against political pressures, and (e) cover activities related to organizational boundary issues. Furthermore, Stagich (2001) insisted that structural changes in organizations are often superficial and do not address shifts in thinking and communications necessary to be successful across cultures and societies. Additionally, the current trend requires wider spans and flatter structures in a manner that enables managers to supervise a larger number of people (Galbraith, 2002). Given the complexity of international affairs, organizations are starting global teams. Global teams consist of individuals from different nationalities and exist across cultural barriers and beyond time zones (Committee for Economic Development, 2006). Furthermore, Hult *et al.* (2006) suggested that culture and structure are two key ingredients for organizational cohesiveness. In general, organizational strategists envision novel models for successful businesses where small entities execute with a core staff centered on their core competencies (Handy, 1997). In this situation, decentralization and relationships become key strategic tools. Clearly, this design goes against the premise of the current bureaucratic structure of the government and runs counter to making major decisions at the top (Klitgaard and Light, 2005).

8. CULTURE

Organizations that deal with postmodern workers must foster a different corporate culture. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argued that today's organizations must retool their value system in order to keep up with cultural changes. Sadly, many executives do not take the necessary time to explain their values to their employees. As a consequence, workers are left to guess at the value system of their senior leaders and organization. Today's agencies must foster an organizational culture that supports cross-cultural awareness and appreciation. Morgan (1997) asserted organizations function by shared meaning and shared understanding. In fact, Stagich (2001) purported that the fundamental values of a high collaborative organization

include mutual respect, appreciation of diverse contributions, reciprocal benefit, and a shared understanding of the underlining corporate values. At this point in history, traditional institutions face challenges with multigenerational organizations (Green, 2007). Today, many outsiders view the federal system as a collection of federal bureaucrats meshed into a web of red tape and inefficiencies. In most federal agencies and departments, Baby Boomer managers lead their organizations from their own perspective while standing in opposition to the current postmodern orientation of Millennials (Green and Roberts, 2011). For example, Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials have different career objectives. Traditionalists expect to build a lifetime career. Baby Boomers desire power and a stellar career. Generation Xers believe in building a repertoire of skills that are mobile. Millennials, with their high multitasking abilities, seek to secure more than one line of work simultaneously (Green, 2007).

Furthermore, Thorn (2002) suggested that leaders should create a more generous (caring) society. Therefore, organizational culture can be a stimulus for effective change. One area that provides clear lessons for the generational issue is cultural diversity and understanding from the international/global perspective. Developing systems that foster a healthy culture with contrasting views and backgrounds will challenge contemporary thinking in today's organizations. In fact, Herman (2006) further maintained that leaders need new strategies and tools to cope with change. One such area is multiculturalism. Rosen *et al.* (2000) insisted "that organizations must understand the multicultural world so that they can cross the invisible borders of national culture" (p. 21). They noted several key attributes. Personal literacy denotes an understanding of one's own personal abilities; social literacy focuses on engaging other people; business literacy focuses on the mobilization of an organization; cultural literacy represents leveraging cultural differences; and globalization creates new challenges for leaders and organizational theorists.

Interestingly, current research indicates that the global cultural diversity of the federal government is limited. Part of the challenge relates to the governmental policy: Executive Order 11,935 mandates that only U.S. citizens be hired for competitive positions. The overall representation of immigrants at all levels of government is low, inhibiting workforce global diversity (Lewis *et al.*, 2014). Research clearly indicates that comprehensive diversity management programs are correlated with higher levels of organizational and work group performance and increased job satisfaction (Pitts, 2009; Choi and Rainey, 2010). However, women and minorities remain significantly underrepresented at the federal executive level (Ricucci, 2009), and women continue to report ongoing lower job opportunities (Wynen *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, the federal government remains a desirable employer for minorities given the relatively lower levels of employment discrimination when compared to other employment sectors (Doverspike *et al.*, 2011).

Many organizations depend on academic institutions to provide their employees with a broad base of experiences (Hughes, 2006). However, America needs greater global competency. Although 70% of students enroll in a foreign language course, only 2% of American high school students now "study the combined critical languages such as Arabic or Chinese" (Hughes, 2006, para. 17). Consequently, educators have major issues with global education (Hughes, 2006). Therefore, federal organizations need a new leadership paradigm for global markets. Given this backdrop of change and today's global environment, most people, including scholars and practitioners, agree that a different leadership style is needed in this postmodern culture.

9. NEW SUCCESSION PLANNING STRATEGIES

Succession planning must speak to this generation of workers. Today, most organizations are managed by Baby Boomers. In the past, succession planning focused on the top brass of organizations because most organizations govern with a top-down approach. Therefore, an organization's survival was dependent on the knowledge and abilities of top management executives. Succession planning involves strategizing for prospective workers to assume key leadership positions or backup positions, temporary or permanent.

Historically, the following six types of job movement outlined mobility for most employees: in (entry), out (termination), up (promotion), down (demotion), across (lateral transfer), or purpose in place (development in the current position). As the government scrambles to deal with recruitment concerns and shore up their current talent base, understanding generational issues will become a vital component to the success of any succession planning initiatives (Green and Roberts, 2011, p. 90).

Thus, traditional ways of thinking will not be productive with this postmodern workforce. Rothwell (2005) further noted several trends that have forced this new attention on succession planning; some of these trends include (a) the importance of intellectual capital and KM, (b) the critical importance of values and competencies, and (c) more global impacts and relationships. These new ways of thinking include job rotation, phased retirement, temporary hiring, job sharing, and retiree rehiring. During this period of rapid change, achieving succession planning success will prove difficult using the status-quo approach. Yet, the federal government is acutely aware of the challenges presented by succession planning (Datt and Rivera, 2013). One of the challenges in the federal government is the “stovepiped” organizational structure that inhibits overall talent management practices including staffing (recruitment, selection, retention), employee learning and development systems, the performance management system, overall succession planning, and the compensation process (Datt and Rivera, 2013). Web-based and “one stop” job application sites are key to federal government recruiting (Llorens and Kellough, 2007). Another key element is knowledge transfer programs to ensure continuity in organizational learning across the workplace generations (Stevens, 2010). Other central elements include cultivating work/life balance through the blended and virtual workplace (flexible work arrangements), which leads to lower turnover rates (Thompson and Mastracci, 2008; Wynen *et al.*, 2015; Montesi, 2014).

Postmodern society will usher in a different breed of leaders. Moarquardt and Berger (2000) identified eight new attributes for the 21st century leader: (a) a global mindset and competencies, (b) learning and teaching skills, (c) a servant-steward relationship to one’s organization, (d) systems thinking, (e) spirituality and a concern for ethics, (f) a willingness to embrace new technologies, (g) innovation and risk-taking, and (h) vision-building (pp. 18–32). Furthermore, succession planning has many benefits such as increasing promotable staff, identification of necessary training or skills development, and encouragement of a diverse labor pool. Given this scenario, organizational conflict is inevitable at the multigenerational level. As previously mentioned, senior Baby Boomer managers lead federal organizations that are chiefly multigenerational in make-up. Personal conflicts are inevitable with these different generational perspectives. Hoyle (1995) championed “a new leadership style characterized by (a) communication with followers, especially vision; (b) a capacity for caring and concern; and (c) a persistent attitude” (p. xi). In the future, postmodern influences will shift contemporary thinking on succession planning for the generation of knowledge workers.

10. POSTMODERN AND GENERATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES

Clearly, postmodern and generational management strategies need to become more systematic. Appropriate and evidence-based generational diversity training is important to promoting a more effective multigenerational workforce. It begins with identifying actual versus perceived generational differences (Gibson *et al.*, 2009; Lester *et al.*, 2012). Another important element is ongoing research on generational differences and similarities in managing the organizational change process with Bourne (2015) “identifying five areas: (a) communication, (b) employee involvement, (c) understanding how change impacts employees, (d) perceptions of change, and (e) generational perceptions” (pp. 141–159). This approach entails an integrated mission-driven approach to develop an organizational “branding” and marketing approach that is compatible with employee values and cultural experiences (Williams *et al.*, 2010; Rajput, 2014; Ozcelik, 2015). Employees should receive training on emotional intelligence principles to enhance interpersonal skills such as emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy to reduce biased and stereotyped attitudes and behavior (O’Boyle *et al.*, 2011). Another key area relates to workplace ethics and exploring generational differences in the influence of moral relativism (VanMeter *et al.*, 2013). Finally, it is important to develop job competency models that incorporate diversity and generational management/leadership elements, including mentoring programs (Kapoor and Solomon, 2011; Baran and Klos, 2014).

11. CONCLUSION

To be effective, the public sector must be strategic with any transformation of its organizations in this postmodern era. Faced with the challenge of replacing millions of Baby Boomers, today’s leaders must attack

these issues holistically. Consequently, the federal government must solve a human capital crisis over the next several years due to driving environmental forces, which include the reduction in the replacement labor force cohorts and the image problem of public service. One of the great challenges facing the federal service is to address the negative perceptions of the quality of work life experienced in the federal service, especially for younger employees. Current organizations are often complex, emotional, and chaotic. The current landscape is troubling to many senior executives faced with global threat, budget shortfalls, and self-indicted internal issues. Simply put, today's leaders cannot continue with the status quo in a postmodern society. Clearly, this process must encompass facilitating relationships and stimulating creativity among followers. Understanding leadership theory in postmodernism will be vital in this knowledge transition. This article examined what leadership concepts and competencies can assist in the positive transformation of the federal government.

As this article further demonstrated, there are some significant generational issues emerging with this new workforce. However, the specific influence of the generational differences is not clear as evidenced by the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. In mixing modern and postmodern values in organizations, the threat of generational conflict increases. Thus, federal agencies must use innovative ways to implement succession planning. Obviously, a multigenerational workforce will demand a rejection of the "cookie cutter" approach to managing human resource matters.

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About the Authors

Dr. Daryl D. Green is an assistant professor in the College of Business at Oklahoma Baptist University. He is a former U.S. Department of Energy program manager with over 25 years of professional management experience. He is a nationally syndicated columnist where he writes in the areas of leadership, decision making, and culture. Dr. Green has a doctoral degree in strategic leadership from Regent University.

Dr. Gary E. Roberts is a professor of Government at Regent University. His current research interests center on workplace spiritual intelligence, servant-leader human resource policy and practice, the impact of the religious friendly workplace, and organizational policies to promote employee work-life balance. He has authored four books plus 40 plus journal articles and book chapters on various human resource and public management issues.

Dr. Richard D. Rudebock, the Robert L. and Sara Lou Cargill Chair and Professor of Business, has been with Oklahoma Baptist University since 2001. From 2004 through 2008, he served as the dean of the Paul Dickinson College of Business at Oklahoma Baptist University. He brings 28 years of business experience in sales, management, and training into the classroom. Known for his volunteerism, Rich has volunteered his time as a phone specialist at a crisis hotline since 1988 logging over 6076 hours.