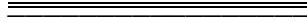
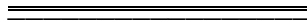


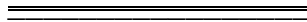
**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



**Generational Supervisory Gaps in Law Enforcement**



**A Leadership White Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**



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## **ABSTRACT**

With the current generational trends brought forth by several social, technological, economic and cultural changes, a newer and more diverse work force has been evolving for the past decade. These trends have played a major role in the reshaping of how workforce acts are led. Generational gaps between leaders and the emerging workforce have significantly changed. Many current leaders have not adapted to this particular change.

The position on how to address workforce changes is through the complex implementation of a training program for today's law enforcement leaders. It includes position points in which it will guide supervisors to make the necessary changes and adjustments to conform to these new trends. The position points will support the need for such a drastic yet subtle change. Changes with the para-military structure of law enforcement are needed to address generational gaps in the workforce. These changes are needed due to technological trends that have impacted leaders' ability to effectively communicate with newer generations.

There are some major supervisory issues that have arisen out of these differences. The issues deal with the manner in which a complex organization such as in law enforcement will lead tomorrow's generation into the future. These assertions are made based on the obvious differences in societal norms that exist between Millennials and Generation X workers. Law enforcement agencies should establish training methods for leaders to address that particular generational gap. The intricate nature of this topic becomes complicated; therefore, a solution should be seriously employed.

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## INTRODUCTION

In defining the term, “workforce”, Oxford Dictionary defines it as “people engaged in or available for work either in a country or area or in a particular company or industry” (para. 1). The definition, although vaguely defined, has many other components that have a particular impact on what a workforce is and what it does. These factors include but are not limited to educational level, socio-economic upbringing, society, and media. There are also other factors that comprise personal bias, characteristics, and prejudices. Simply stated, workforce can be identified as anything that has to do with employment status and work ethic in relation to how the application of daily work life is affected.

The workforce, which also relates to generations, has been changing according to societal norms. Dating back to the industrial revolution, the attitudes and mannerisms of the workforce have evolved according to new trends in society. In specifically looking at the policing models and theories, there has been little, if nothing, done to address these issues. Private companies and large corporations have made an extended effort to ensure their management levels are properly trained and equipped on how to deal with the new workforce (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

In addressing the makeup of the current workforce, there are several identified generational workforces that have had a major impact on the world of law enforcement. The focus of this subject is the generational gaps primarily between supervisors and the emerging workforce. The main focus in this position paper is how to lead Millennial workers. There are a variety of specific criteria that separate Millennials from other generational work groups.

Many would argue that the difference between the generational gaps and law enforcement have nothing to do with the manner in which police operations should be managed. In addition, there is speculation that due to the nature and culture, police leadership should not change and rather prefer the new workforce adapt to current police leadership (Henchey, 2005). These thoughts have been engrained by a specific few that currently lead public safety agencies. The previous conditioning and training methods were developed to provide for strict discipline and obedience that allows for little to no flexibility in the manner in which the new workforce is led (Almashaqba & Nemer Al-Qeed, 2010).

Various leadership models have evolved since the initial police agencies were formed in Old Country England. Autocratic leadership is the leadership style that has evolved throughout the years and is indirectly being used today. It is related to the classical leadership police model, which many leaders and supervisors use today (Mahmood & Basharat, 2012). Current police leaders and supervisors have been trained and conditioned to lead using classical police theories. They evolve with the strict policy and procedure application that allow little to no flexibility in their leadership styles (Mahmood & Basharat 2012).

Millennial workers have a different upbringing, which has led to a different work ethic (Danford, 2013). Like every generation, they have personal characteristics different from Generation X workers. However, they are similar to the work ethic of the Baby Boomer Generation. Their characteristics include radical ideals, similar to the ones from the GI Generation during the Vietnam era (Henchey, 2005). They are surprisingly technologically savvy and inherently intelligent (Danford, 2013).

An issue of generational gaps and problems with the manner in which Millennial generational workers are supervised has been identified because of various factors. The main contributing factors are the fact that law enforcement has trained and conditioned itself to be a para-military organization. With law enforcement, the majority of the upper echelon of the policing structure identify with classical policing theories. Because of the inherent dangers of police and over all nature of police work, there are certain number of rules and guidelines that require no flexibility or animosity. There are written rules, regulations, policies, procedures, criminal and civil laws, and an unwritten code.

This unwritten code almost makes it automatic for an individual in a supervisory position to refer to that autocratic style without hesitation. This autocratic leadership style that supervisors adhere to needs to be changed. In addressing this issue, agencies should establish specific training sessions on how to assist supervisors with dealing with the new work force. This will provide a more amiable and congruent work environment with the new emerging trend, technology.

Certain criteria identified through the presented position points will support the need for the change. Although support is present, there are some setbacks these points may encounter. As setbacks are identified, rebuttal points will provide some clear indication some changes need to be made to adapt to a new work trend. Several recommendations on how to deal with some of these issues caused by an extreme generational gap are further analyzed and explored. This issue is causing major clashes between supervisors and Millennials to the degree it is affecting the manner in which police services are rendered.

## POSITION

In order for the functionality of law enforcement agencies to continue in a positive manner, changes must be made to current supervision styles. Although complex, the changes made to current leadership approaches will still fall within the core context of the values and morals that were instilled with since the beginning of the various law enforcement careers. In essence, a need to establish a strict and direct training regimen is essential to the prosperity of an agency.

Each individual supervised has a different upbringing and attitude about life and structure. With the evolving workforce, there may be challenges with the ability to effectively and efficiently supervise Millennials. The answer would be simple. One reason why leaders should be trained is that Millennials offer a diverse work style which includes flexibility and innovation. Leaders need to be fluid in their supervisory approaches and adapt to different personalities, personal problems, and other social characteristics that may affect the productivity and output of Millennial personnel.

The majority of new supervisors are stuck in the classical policing style. As the new generation of workers begins to enter the workforce, there is an identified dilemma which has caused much confusion and apprehension amongst the first line ranks. Attribution is made to the age difference along with different methods of learning to adapt to this new work force. It is not necessarily a bad thing what Millennials bring to the work force (Stein & Sanbrun, 2013). Filled with new ideas and approaches, Millennials can bring balance to the revolving technological world and use those same advantages to assist crime fighting efforts (Wilson, 2012). The Millennials come with a new directive to work and work hard. Their services, while some consider too liberal,

are the exact push needed to ensure that police officers provide a better service to the community.

Millennials' thirst for recognition and advancement will not be fulfilled unless they are placed in the desired positions and placed in a position of responsibility (Stein & Sanbrun, 2013). They do not seek monetary compensation, quite often playing with the idea they will take the supervisory job and not worry about getting paid for it. These are all viewed as threats by Gen Xers. From a command leadership point of view, they view it as an advantage for themselves. This causes them to consider the notion that the new Millennials will be better for the agency. Communities stand to benefit from millennials presence in the workforce based on the taxpayers' notion that less compensatory requirements will lead to less taxpayer monies spent on social services. This notion is based on the seemingly inflated salaries of veteran officers afforded to them by agencies with guaranteed collective bargaining agreements. The fact remains that Generation X leaders will be there for life. Based on their thirst for knowledge and leadership, Millennial's have and will be assuming the leadership roles sooner than anticipated (Harrison, 2007).

Certain flexibility of established policies and procedures exist. This also allows leaders to also be flexible to the customary rigidity of the law enforcement profession. Another reason why leaders should be trained to deal with the Millennial workforce is that they provide the technically savvy components which can assist leaders in running a more efficient and effective work operation. This training will provide leaders the necessary team building skills needed to solicit assistance on how to use technology to explore its advantages. Leaders need to better their computer literacy skills to stay



ahead of the technological change that is facing law enforcement in general. The use of e-mail, various computer programs and, more importantly, the use of social media are all necessary components for better communication and investigative needs. These topics are necessary components for supervisors to allow them to more actively and effectively communicate to the millennial generation employees the agency's goals and objectives for the future.

Nothing else says better service to the community more than to allow new workforce to think outside of the box. This is something they are good at and will succeed if given multiple opportunities to do so. The previous workforce and current supervision can learn from all of this. It is simply stated that the workforce is primarily comprised of Gen Xers' who have a slowed approach to working. This has and will continue to cause some leaders headaches due to the inability to motivate the current workforce. Some Gen Xers are current supervisors in today's workforce (Henchey, 2005). However, the Millennials now entering their tenth year in the work force will be giving them competition for supervisory position of choice based on their ambition to succeed as mentors (Harrison, 2007).

The majority of the Millennials, as they take over, will be able to provide a service that will push the Gen Xers to a new competitive edge. Provided with the training and newer leadership approaches, the Gen Xers have the ability to adapt due to the overburden that will be placed on them by a more energetic, liberal, and hardworking Millennials who have been trickling into the workforce since 2005. With the examples set forth by Millennials and continued support by leadership by allowing all to think outside of the box, it might be one-two punch needed by the Gen Xers' to get back on

track and step up to the challenge of working more, if not harder, than the Millennial generation.

## **COUNTER POSITION**

Although the new generation workforce has evolved into an unprecedented work style, there is an important reason why current supervisors work the manner in which they do. This important reason is that law enforcement agencies ensure they operate safely. Now take the components of flexibility and questioning authority as a characteristic of the Millennial Generation (Harrison, 2007). Compare the flexibility concepts with keeping a safe work environment. The combination between those two simple concepts and officer safety are not compatible with a copious work environment. The strict discipline that has been implemented in the criminal justice discipline is to ensure field officers have that safety factor in every call for service that is handled.

The counter position for training leaders is to training Millennials to adapt classical style of policing instead. This supports the notion that there is a need to also train Millennial workforce on strict discipline to address the officer safety concerns. This starts by ensuring personnel attend a structured academy at one of the employing law enforcement agencies. This will allow for the discipline to be engrained in their work habits and will assist in keeping them safe. This needs to be applied during the conditioning phase of the beginning of their law enforcement career. The strict discipline is again to address their concern for their safety and not to attempt to change their positive work ethic.

While the strict classical style of policing may have the characteristics needed for officer safety, it does not allow for the use of new technology and innovative methods of

policing. Flexibility has been one of the Millennials' strong points and refutes the presented counter position (Harrison, 2007). Flexibility to be able to cope with a strong command presence during an academy training session is exactly what they would have to relay to in order to be able to adapt to this type of pressure. Particularly when responding to a call for service, there are decisions that have to be made that actually may require the in depth use of cognitive skills to handle anything thrown their way. The exposure to a strictly disciplined academy will nourish those cognitive skills and expose the Millennials as to the reasons why the Gen Xers are different from them.

This exposure will harden them into knowing what to do when an emergency arises. They will be able to follow orders without question. It may seem a little extreme, but societal norms demand the ethical and normative performance of jobs. The public expectations are for agencies to provide a quick and efficient service to address their needs. This is present because they have a certain expectation for the tax dollars they spend for these and other governmental services. Their needs do not matter in this case. So there must be a balance of sensitivity and hardiness to ensure they are professional and courteous as the situation may dictate.

Further, a second counter position deals with classical conditioning. When implementing these new methodology and conditioning of current leaders, opponents may think of the inability to teach "old dog's new tricks". It supports the notion that if it has worked in the past, why change it. Most supervisors will feel this is being implemented as a form of pushing them out the door as if they are being forced out to retire (Hedge, Borman, & Lammlein, 2006). Generation X leaders have a frame of mind that they become suspicious of anything and everything the administration does. Being

mindful of no one but themselves, Gen X leaders need to ensure they do not get stuck in the stigma of being un-trainable (Almashaqba & Nemer Al-Qeed, 2010). Rather, they need to be flexible when it comes to the performance of their law enforcement duties. Being around a group of mid-level managers at weekly staff meetings is evident of the manner in which they are apprehensive of their perceived roles when a new policy or procedure is introduced. The first question asked is “who messed up”. They are stuck in the classical police theory and in their mind that is the right way to lead.

Counter pointing the thesis in this study would be that classical policing methods have been employed for a long time. Referring to a specific example would be with the promotional process. Most law enforcement agencies employ the trait leadership model in selecting the future supervisors of the department. They base the results of their examination and interview/assessments into a raw score to determine who scored the highest. The traits that are measured are intelligence, adaptability, and conversation (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). The described traits are said to be inherited and, therefore, fall under the trait leadership theory.

Applying the classical trait theory in policing sheds the appearance that it is appropriate for its leadership positions. Bear in mind that studies have shown that leadership is a combination of theories and not just inherently based on traits (Zaccaro, Kemp, & Bader, 2004). With this in mind, many Gen Xers feel that classical police methods are employed today. They have the notion that these are effective theories since they have worked for many years and continue to be employed by command structures for promotional purposes.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Law enforcement organizations, whether large or small, should implement a policy requiring all supervisory personnel and line officers to attend training. This training should focus on how to effectively and efficiently overcome burdens of a generational gap between the two age groups. This should be supported by implementing several points supported by reference backing. These points need to be clear and concise on the expectations required for all members of the agency.

A leadership study identifying and addressing the differences between classical policing approach and the new Millennial work ethic is necessary. It is important to provide some guidance for leaders and supervisors to more efficiently and effectively lead a new generation of workforce. In addition, it may provide some guidance and assistance to Millennials in order for them to have a smooth transition into the law enforcement arena. This should include consulting outside agencies and other sources of media to effectively relay to new generational workers.

The specific topic that would need to be discussed would be in congruence with the values individuals have learned as leaders. Although there is a variation of agency and personal core values, the importance of having similarities between both need to allow for the objective nature of leadership to prevail. In making those adjustments, the lesson plan for training supervisors to become better leaders and managers with the Millennial workforce would have to include having merely a more personable attitude with them. Employee and worker relationships need to improve to a new level diminishing the micro-management aspect of supervising Millennials.

The counter points are addressed simply by applying what is beneficial to the agency and, more importantly, to the community. There has to be a balance between agency needs and comminatory needs. Training supervisors on how to deal with Millennials will allow them to be trained in technological advances that will make their jobs that much easier. Finally, Gen Xers will be encouraged to use technological advances to keep up with technological times.

The generational gap has led to the identification of contrasting work ethics between Millennials and Gen Xers. Gen Xers comprise the majority of first line supervisory positions. Most agencies are para-military in nature, therefore, they tend to lend themselves to a more classical policing approach. These contrasting issues have impacted the manner in which police operations take place.

Training leaders on the use of technological advances and their advantages should be part of their training when dealing with their Millennial workforce. With employing millennial models, it enhances its ability to employ new and innovative methods to policing. Technological advances have allowed for a renewed opportunity to use innovative methods to reduce crime.

There is much more questioning of authority when there was done in the past. Millennial individuals seek more flexibility when there is very little room for it in this profession. Millennials are technologically savvy and intelligent. Millennials are risk takers, expect praise, and are looking to move up the chain of command quickly. They are proactive and seek quick solutions to any issues they are exposed to (Howe & Nadler, 2010).

Gen Xers are usually nonlinguistic in a language of law enforcement that it restricts their ability to germinate new and innovative ideas. Gen Xers are slow, sometimes described as lazy and are not dynamic in their approach to crime fighting. Whereas Gen Xers are more computer inept and tend to only use their intelligence as it benefits them (Hedge, Borman, & Lammlein, 2006).

A plan of action to implement in this position would be simple. A development of a curriculum that addresses and describes each generation as part of a mandatory in-service training for all personnel is necessary. Supervisors will be encouraged to be more flexible and entertain new and innovative ideas and encourage others to do the same. They will be afforded the opportunities to become more computer literate with emphasis on social media sites and other informational websites that will expand their horizons.

Whatever a perspective law enforcement agency decides to adopt, it is important that they train all of their personnel to be cognizant of the generational changes and different work styles. In particular, those work ethics employed by Millennials, Gen Xers, and the newer generation of workers should be shared in a training session or retreat to be better informed of how each generation works and what to expect. Overall, agencies need to ensure they are prepared to deal with this generational gap in work styles and the future workforces as well.

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