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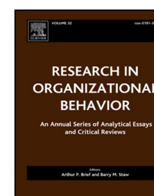

Intergenerational resource tensions in the workplace and beyond: Individual, interpersonal, institutional, international

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ABSTRACT

The workforce is rapidly aging. Already at record highs, labor force participation rates of both over-55 and over-65 age segments are expected to nearly double in the immediate future. The current chapter describes how these sweeping demographic changes necessitate both the unprecedented utilization of older workers and intergenerational collaboration, but also present the danger of heightened generational tension. We describe the specific risk factors for such tensions, highlighting the presence of generational boundaries at multiple levels: (a) individual, (b) interpersonal, (c) institutional, and (d) international. Drawing from our own work and relevant management literature, we then identify three broad domains within which intergenerational tensions are particularly salient at each of these levels: active Succession tensions over enviable resources and influence (e.g., employment), passive Consumption tensions over shared asset usage (e.g., healthcare) and symbolic Identity tensions over figurative space (e.g., cultural fit) (SCI). We conclude with suggestions for potential interventions, and major open areas for future organizational research, both of which should focus on how to maximize the utility of unprecedented intergenerational collaboration.

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Although not universally known as a founding father of the Internet, Brian Reid might as well be considered one. After all, he has spent the better part of his life dedicated to developing the web's fundamental building blocks, such as conducting foundational Internet-related research as a Stanford professor and working integrally in developing the prominent early web search engine AltaVista. Later, in 2002 and at that time over 50 years of age, Reid was fortunate enough to land a operations manager position at Google – yet another internet hot spot – a seemingly apt capstone to his seminal career in the industry.

Nevertheless, this later chapter did not go as planned. Instead, it presented some unexpected and unprecedented hurdles. From his younger co-workers and supervisors, derogatory labels (“old man,” “old fuddy duddy”) and dismissive remarks (“too old to matter,” “not a cultural fit”) grew common, and Reid found himself struggling to fit in to the new culture of his lifelong trade. Eventually things came to a head: Reid was laid off by then-30-year-old CEO Larry Page, Reid countered with an age-discrimination lawsuit, and the case became publically emblematic of Silicon Valley's broad “ageism problem” (Nathanson, 2014; Scheiber, 2014).

Silicon Valley's uniquely out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new culture aside, such stories are becoming increasingly common in the modern workplace. On a macro level, the workforce has aged at an unprecedented rate (56% growth in over-55 labor force participation from 2002 to 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013); at the same time, work-related age discrimination charges have also steadily risen in recent years (a 45% increase from

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1999 to 2014; U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2015). On a micro level, employers increasingly need to accommodate up to four generations in the workplace, which presents new challenges (Lieber, 2010; Twenge, 2010). Thus, the increasingly older and intergenerational workplace certainly portends increased opportunities for intergenerational collaboration, but also heightened, pragmatic risk of intergenerational friction, as Brian Reid's case illustrates.

Understanding the nature of generational tensions also comprises largely under-investigated theoretical territory. Organizational scholars have long examined subtle, potentially volatile workplace surface-level "faultlines" (i.e., subgroup divisions formed along race, gender, age, or other social categories; Lau & Murnighan, 1998). These investigations have unearthed the potential of these subtle fissures to undermine certain elements of group-based productivity (e.g. team learning, psychological safety, and collaboration across faultline divisions; Lau & Murnighan, 2005) while aiding others (e.g., creativity; Nishii & Goncalo, 2008). However, investigation of faultlines from an *intergenerational* perspective per se has attracted relatively scant attention. Although age is sometimes cited generally as a source of faultline tension (Bezrukova, Jehn, Zanutto, & Thatcher, 2009; Gratton, Voigt, & Erickson, 2007), precisely how and what types of tensions form between generations remains a largely unanswered organizational behavior research question (Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011).

To this end, this chapter addresses the specific roots, manifestations, and potential interventions of such generational strain in the workplace. The first portion discusses the initial *theoretical* seeds of these tensions: the key theories explaining how age-based perception and generational identity potentially sow the seeds of such tension at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and international levels. The second part focuses on the *practical* seeds of these tensions: particularly shifting age dynamics of the workplace, and how potential tensions are progressively more common as a result. The third section identifies the specific *types* of tensions that exist between generations, and the types of resources that drive them – active *Succession* of enviable resources, passive *Consumption* of shared resources, and symbolic *Identity* resources (SCI; North & Fiske, 2013a,b) – and describes how the tensions emerge at a similarly multi-level fashion. The fourth section discusses existing *interventions* for these types of tensions, and provides suggestions for developing organization-specific interventions going forward. In the final sections, we conclude with broader suggestions for future research in explicating both the theoretical and practical seeds of generational tensions in the workplace.

Theoretical seeds of generational tension: Age perception and generational outlook

Individual level: Age and generation are formative categories in making sense of ourselves

Although age, race, and gender are three fundamental dimensions with which people rapidly categorize themselves and others, race and gender have gained significantly greater research attention across various disciplines (North & Fiske, 2012). This is especially peculiar, given that age comprises categories that every single living person eventually joins, provided sufficient lifespan.

Closely related to age is *generation*, which formative work in sociology defines as a social group that shares a common point in time and a "distinct consciousness" stemming from foundational events of that time (Mannheim, 1928/1952). Similar to the relatively scant attention given to age, the concept of generations within organizations has also been largely neglected by organizational researchers, although recent work does issue a call for more work in this realm (Joshi et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the dearth of generation-focused scholarship is again surprising, given a plethora of common narratives pitting generations against one another in and out of the workplace (e.g. "Boomers versus Millenials"; Winerip, 2012). Moreover, with age, people tend to strongly identify with their own generation, even more than age per se (Weiss & Freund, 2012; Weiss & Lang, 2009).

A major imperative for research on generational dynamics in the workplace is that it is increasingly multi-generational. Currently, the labor force features predominantly four distinct generations (Lieber, 2010; Twenge, 2010): The Silent Generation (a.k.a. Traditionalists, born roughly 1925–1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1981), and Generation Y/ Millennials (born 1981–2000). The picture stands to become even more complicated soon, with "Generation Z" – those born around 2000 – fast approaching working age (Levit, 2015).

Interpersonal level: Age-based categorization is a fundamental process in making sense of others

In a closely related vein, age-based social perception – how we perceive others on the basis of their age – is most often investigated through the lens of age-based prejudice and discrimination, or "ageism" (Butler, 1969). Resembling the topic of age more broadly, ageism is vastly understudied compared with racism and sexism (North & Fiske, 2012). One reason for this is that age-based stereotypes are typically more socially condoned than other types of stereotypes—to the point that many overlook ageism as a form of prejudice altogether (Nelson, 2005).

Ageism is peculiar in the first place, as noted, being the one form of bias that is a potentially universal experience: Every single living person eventually joins each age group, provided sufficient lifespan, and as such is at risk for being the target of this form of prejudice, eventually. But rather than generating sympathy, the opposite appears to be true: The pressure to deny one's own aging is strong, to the point where older people themselves dis-identify as "old," likely as a means of protecting themselves from negative stereotypes and anxieties over getting older (Weiss & Freund, 2012; Weiss & Lang, 2009).

Where does categorization of elder others come from? A few key theories help explain. A *terror management* explanation casts older adults as living, breathing reminders of mortality – given their advanced age – which drives younger people to identify more strongly with similar (and

less threatening) others (Becker, 1973; Collette-Pratt, 1976; Greenberg, Schimel, & Mertens, 2004; Montepare & Zebrowitz, 2004). Similarly, an *evolutionary* perspective posits the devaluation of elders as a way of distancing the self from illness, favoring the young and healthy over the old and infirm (Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama, 1994; Duncan & Schaller, 2009; Kurzban & Leary, 2001). Meanwhile, classic *social identity* theory argues that negative age-based categorization of older adults derives from younger generations' attempt to identify strongly with younger ingroup members, and devalue those who are furthest away (i.e., older adults; Kite & Wagner, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Ageist treatment also derives from good intentions, in the form of *compassionate ageism*-such as when lofty expectations of possessing great wisdom (''sageism'') or manifesting a ''youthful older age'' go unfulfilled, resulting in backlash toward older adults (Coupland & Coupland, 1993; Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000; Palmore, 1999).

Institutional level: Society-level roots of age-based stereotyping

The roots of elder devaluation manifest in even broader forms, as evidenced by certain mainstream media portrayals (think of Homer Simpson's senile, narcoleptic father Abe, or his grumpy, older boss, Mr. Burns). Many argue that such macro-level perceptions are a result of institutionalized beliefs about older adults, much as beliefs about race or gender relations become a part of the mainstream consciousness and spill over into specific representations of target individuals.

Theorists point to a variety of socio-cultural trends that have integrally shaped modern age-based stereotypes at this broader level. A prime example of a such trend is *modernization*; both the advent of the printing press and increase in literacy younger generations helped antiquate traditional elder roles of wisdom and storytelling (Nelson, 2005, 2011). From an organizational standpoint in particular, the industrial revolution placed a new emphasis on difficult manual labor tasks and mobility toward available jobs, both of which emphasized youth and vitality over maturity and wisdom per se (Nelson, 2005; North & Fiske, 2012). Evidence of a modernization-ageism link persists today, in the form of technologically cutting-edge industries that place particular emphasis on the ability to quickly learn new skills and develop ''fresh'' ideas, trumping experience and industry know-how per se (e.g. Silicon Valley; Scheiber, 2014).

Another common perspective on age categorization stems from the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011; Fiske, 2015; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). This perspective posits that people are rapidly categorized on two fundamental dimensions, warmth (''How friendly and trustworthy are these people?'') and competence (''How well can these people enact their intentions?''). Although this quick classification occurs at both the interpersonal and group level, the roots of competence and warmth perceptions derive primarily from group-based perceptions of status and competitiveness, respectively (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007). These perceptions also echo perceptions of organizational scholars, and managers, who often value older employees more strongly for their warmth-related ''soft skills'' than for competence-oriented ''hard'' ones (Turek & Perek-Bialas, 2013).

Also contributing to institutionalized, negative perceptions of older adults are certain labor laws, which risk casting older adults as unserviceable to organizations. For instance, a normative retirement age carries the stigma that people over a certain age are no longer qualified to contribute (Higo, 2015; Painter, 2014)—although mandatory retirement in the United States is general illegal, and applied to a select few occupations (e.g., commercial airline pilots; Buckley, 2015; Federal Aviation Administration, 2012).

Such perceptions also carry the expectation that older workers are least deserving to be hired. In one experiment involving hypothetical job applicants aged 33–66, those over 54 were the least preferred, all else equal; this effect held even controlling for work-related competencies per se, although notably all participants were young university students (Richardson, Webb, Webber, & Smith, 2013). Even on the job, these pre-existing beliefs lead managers to fall short in accommodating older employees' skills training needs; one study found that fewer than 10% of organizations polled were highly engaged in providing training and retraining opportunities for older workers (Armstrong-Stassen & Templer, 2005). This is particularly so when resources appear scarce, in which case older workers are additionally perceived as less likely to succeed on the job, and less worthy of receiving bonuses (Wallen & McClure, 2015).

A final way in which negative portrayals of older adults become institutionalized are mainstream media accounts, such as those pitting ''Boomers versus Millennials'' or ''canes versus kids'' (Minkler, 2006). Such narratives imply zero-sum generational competition over scarce resources, and suggest that providing benefits to the aged undermines generational equity (North & Fiske, 2012). From this perspective, older adults risk ''greedy geezer'' perceptions of hoarding resources at the expense of the young (Binstock, 2010; Covey, 1991; North & Fiske, 2013a). These perceptions extend to the workplace, in ''lump of labor'' arguments that older workers take jobs from the young (Greenhouse, 2009; Sedensky, 2014).

International level: Age-based attitudes across cultures

As both population and workforce aging present concerns on a global scale, understanding age-based categorization across countries and cultures has generated growing research interest. Arguably one of the most important cross-cultural distinctions in thought, spanning cross-cultural management, social psychology, and other fields, contrasts the ''East'' – typically countries in East and South Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Vietnam) – with the largely English-speaking or Western European ''West'' (e.g., U.S.A., Canada, U.K. Australia, France, Germany; Nisbett, 2003). Although perhaps rooted more in tradition than geography, and at times at risk of overgeneralizing what are actually quite heterogeneous nations (Fiske, 2002; Oyserman, Coon,

& Kemmelmeier, 2002) these distinctions, and resulting patterns of Western individualism versus Eastern holism, underlie cross-cultural differences in a number of organizational behavior domains—including conflict management strategy, work motivation, job satisfaction, negotiation style, and ascription of blame in organizational scandals (Adair & Brett, 2004; Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, 2007; Menon, Morris, Chiu, & Hong, 1999; Morris et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, definitive understanding of how cultures potentially differ in their valuation of older adults remains a largely open question. Although lay beliefs assume that Eastern filial piety traditions imply elevated respect for elders in those cultures relative to Western ones (Ng, 1998, 2002), a comprehensive East-West comparison in this domain has been lacking. Moreover, cross-cultural comparisons of attitudes toward older workers per se are relatively rare and inconclusive with respect to East-West differences in this domain (Chiu, Chan, Snape, & Redman, 2001; McCann & Giles, 2007; McCann & Keaton, 2013). As a step toward this aim, later in this chapter we will summarize our own recent cross-cultural analysis of attitudes toward older adults, and its implications for organizational research going forward.

Summary of theoretical roots of generational tensions

Drawing from the literature on generational identity and age perception, the roots of generational tension are robust, occurring at (at least) four different levels: individual interpersonal, institutional, and international. Theoretical explanations for such tension typically focus on reasons for why older adults are devalued: perceptions of illness, incompetence, irrelevance, and generational competition. Whether such perceptions persist across cultures is an open question, but given the increased presence of different generations in the workplace, these theory-based roots of tension are fast growing in organizational importance.

Practical seeds of generational tensions: The aging and ever-multigenerational workforce

The theoretical perspectives covered above suggest that the seeds of generational tension have long existed below the surface. Meanwhile, modern demographic and workforce trends suggest that these roots may well be intensifying. At a broad, macro level, as already noted, the U.S. labor force is already aging at record levels and experiencing historically high older workers participation rates (e.g., Johnson, 2010). These trends are expected to only intensify: Per U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 55-and-over segments of the labor force are the only ones projected to grow substantially in coming decades (Tossi, 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Moreover, these demographic shifts span the entire world; by 2050, the over-65 population proportion in most developed societies around the world will resemble that of Japan today (over 20%; Kuenen et al., 2011). Worldwide, there may not be enough younger workers with sufficient education, training, or skills to replace retiring Baby Boomers (Paullin, 2014; Phillips & Siu, 2012).

These macro-level trends present various micro-level consequences in the workplace: namely, increased (a) frequency of older workers, (b) number of generations, and (c) risk for intergenerational tensions.

A practical need to accommodate older workers

Given the simple fact that a growing number of older workers are sticking around, the need for organizations to adapt for older workers is greater than ever in the industrialized world. Indeed, some argue that it is more cost-effective to retain older workers and accommodate accordingly (e.g., by retraining them) than to hire new employees and incur the costs associated with recruiting, training, and socializing them into the workplace (Paullin, 2014). Although organizations are beginning to adapt accordingly, such as by offering flexible work arrangements (Atkinson & Sandiford, 2015), many organizations remain behind the curve.

Various reasons explain why this is the case. Many people rate older job applicants lower than younger ones, even when similarly qualified (Avolio & Barrett, 1987; Saks & Waldman, 1998). Others believe that older adults are too slow to train and unable to adapt to new technologies and fast-changing industry environments (Magd, 2003; Maurer, Wrenn, & Weiss, 2003). Still others recognize equal or even superior productivity among older workers compared with the young, but worry primarily about the former's greater practical cost (Burtless, 2013).

Although each of these concerns presents some degree of merit, in various ways they are exaggerated. For example, despite concerns, job performance generally does not decrease with age (Liden, Stilwell, & Ferris, 1996). Also, despite anxieties over cost, older workers are often willing to take less money in exchange for flexible hours or greater fulfillment than their previous position (Johnson, Kawachi, & Lewis, 2009). Therefore, focusing solely on the potential burden of older workers appears fairly unconstructive and impractical, given the noted impetus for utilizing the aging workforce. Moreover, such preoccupations overlook ways in which older workers tend to be better than younger ones, offering calmness, stress management, (less) neuroticism, optimism, company loyalty, and general conscientiousness (Carstensen & Mikels, 2005; Loehlin & Martin, 2001; Pitt-Catsouphes, Smyer, Matz-Costa, & Kane, 2007).

Organizations that anticipate demographic changes, and act accordingly, stand to benefit. A qualitative summary of organizations that have made older worker-focused changes, such as altering ergonomics and targeting older worker-specific skills, indicates bottom-line gains in both profits and employee retention (North & Hershfield, 2014). Moreover, those who successfully avoid age-discriminatory hiring practices experience higher levels of overall success—in terms of employment desirability, industry reputation, and sales and profits rankings (Bendick, Jackson, & Romer, 1997). However, at the same time, older workers are statistically more likely to become disabled and therefore protected by ADA, which presents potential costs down the road, and contributes to reluctance among employers to hire them (Neumark, Song, & Button, 2015).

Nevertheless, fully utilizing older workers is a growing imperative, as noted, and one that requires comprehending their unique strengths, skills, and contexts for maximizing performance—all of which practitioners and scholars alike have only begun to investigate. One seminal perspective argues that many researchers focus too much on ability and not enough on motivation when characterizing the link between age and performance—and more broadly, that inter-individual differences are over-emphasized, compared with intra-individual ones (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). From this perspective, in order to adequately predict performance from worker age, one must take into account within-person, age-related changes in key domains, such as attitudes toward high-effort work and its perceived utility (Kanfer, 1987). In fact, intrinsic work-related motivation increases with age, whereas extrinsic and growth-oriented motivation appears to decrease over the lifespan (Kooij, De Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dikkers, 2011). Moreover, managers must not overlook gains in crystallized, experience-based intelligence, and they should avoid fixating on "fluid" declines in working memory speed and ability to learn new skills (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004)—the latter of which might be overblown anyway (Salthouse, 2011).

A practical need to accommodate multiple generations

Clearly the presence of older workers does not exist in a vacuum; the rise in older worker participation means that workplaces also comprise more generations (up to four, as noted) than ever before in the industrialized world. Thus, understanding the different needs, expectations, and motivations of multiple labor generations is an equally pressing managerial issue—extending from relatively mundane work preferences (e.g., differences in communication styles; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) to meta-level beliefs (e.g., disparate attitudes toward the nature of work and career per se; Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008).

However, in many cases, the goal of getting generations to work with one another is easier said than done. A generation-based "collective consciousness," developed through shared experiences during maximally formative young adulthood years, often shapes one's general outlook beyond any other demographic categories (Joshi et al., 2011). Indeed, at least one large-scale analysis finds years of shared experience – essentially a mixture of age, tenure, and job level – to trump gender and ethnicity in terms of fostering interpersonal ties within organizations (Lawrence & Zyphur, 2011). A similar, yet more theoretical approach emphasizes the importance of "generational memories" in fostering work-related expectations and positive or negative emotions, which shape organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Dencker, Joshi, & Martocchio, 2008).

At the same time, managers need to be careful to not enforce generational categories too rigidly, or else they risk unfairly over-categorizing individuals. One study, using manager-assigned performance ratings, showed that perceived worker deviation from age norms per se (i.e., being old for one's career level) reduces perceived performance, whereas being comparatively young increases it (Lawrence, 1988). Thus, using generation as a proxy for performance can be misleading.

A heightened risk of intergenerational tensions and a departure from traditional generational turn taking

A key roadblock in generations working together productively is the potential for intergenerational tension. Broadly speaking, tensions between people are particularly common between those experiencing close proximity and interdependence—implicating gender and age more so than race, and the family and the workplace as primary battlegrounds (Birditt, Miller, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2009; Glick & Fiske, 2011; North & Fiske, 2013a,b). Although not inevitable (and by some accounts, vastly exaggerated in the media; Fraone, Hartmann, & McNally, 2008), the potential for generational tensions is particularly high in a rapidly aging, modernized world, which exacerbates such latent tensions, raises interdependence-oriented concerns, and stokes generational equity fires (Lee & Mason, 2011; North & Fiske, 2012).

The seeds of generational clashes are apparent also at both workforce and workplace levels. At a macro level, younger (aged 16–24) workers currently hold the highest rates of unemployment by a significant margin (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), and a growing number of people – including some Boomers themselves – blame older generations for Millennials' economic plight (Frezza, 2014; Sinek, 2014). Moreover, more than half of the Millennial generation believes there will not be any Social Security funds left for them to enjoy in retirement, as older generations currently do (Pew Research Center, 2014), and current projections do indicate that Boomers will eventually reap more than they have paid into Social Security (Hornick, 2011). On the other hand, some counter that low wages overall, rather than Boomer behavior, are the main culprit of depleted, wage-funded social programs (Kasperkevic, 2014). Nevertheless, these far-reaching trends cause many younger workers (or would-be workers) to believe that they are the "Screwed Generation" or the "Broke Generation" (Kahn, 2012; Kotkin, 2012).

These broad anxieties might trickle down to managers attempting to accommodate different generations. On the one hand, the need to invest in older workers is greater than ever, for the noted reason that they represent the only growing segments of the labor force. On the other hand, investing in older workers alone risks exacerbating already-present lamentations from younger generations about unequal opportunities compared with older generations. For instance, one study finds that younger adults, at baseline, express feeling greater levels of age discrimination, reduced opportunities, and age-based victimization than do older adults (Garstka, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Hummert, 2004). Indeed, in the increasingly age-diverse workplace, employee benefits – designed ostensibly to attract and retain employees – may inadvertently spur intergenerational workplace conflict by placing differential financial burden on different-aged employees to subsidize them (some of which – e.g., Social Security – younger employees may never themselves enjoy; Dencker, Joshi, & Martocchio, 2007). Moreover, a recent survey finds

approximately 60% of workplaces report the presence of intergenerational conflict, with over 70% of older employees expressing dismissal of younger worker abilities, and nearly half of younger employees dismissing their older colleagues' skills (Armour, 2005; Murphy, 2007). This further indicates the clash of generations to be a critical, practical, and timely managerial challenge.

Finally, the current demographic seeds of tension underscore the need for a *dynamic* perspective on generations within organizations: the idea that generations fundamentally take turns – at different levels of resources, status, influence, and so on – passed along from one generation to the other (retirement, in which older generations step aside for younger ones, is such a case; North & Fiske, 2013a). For example, age discrimination charges are often based on the awkward ambiguity between expectations for older generations to retire, but resistance from those older generations who may not be quite ready to do so. Similarly, generational equity concerns over availability of societal assets (Social Security, Medicare, employment) center on whether younger generations will get their eventual turn at reaping such rewards (North & Fiske, 2013c). Moreover, the older population, once feckless and impoverished youth, now constitutes a wealthy and powerful voting bloc, the extent of which younger generations may never fully experience when reaching the same age (Binstock, 1985; Censky, 2011; Minkler, 2006). All of this speaks to a different sort of tension built from older generations, where they are no longer relinquishing their turn as they once might have. Rather than transitioning toward the invisible "elderly" (as the literature would suggest), they appear to be staying very much in the relevant mainstream, quickly changing notions of older age (North & Fiske, 2012). In the next section, citing our own work, we identify the kinds of specific resources that lie at the heart of such intergenerational tensions.

Summary of practical seeds of generational tensions

Buttressing the theory-driven roots of generational tensions, recent demographic trends have intensified the potential for such fissures. Elevated levels of both older worker retirement delay and younger worker unemployment have presented emergent challenges for managers – namely, accommodating both older workers and diverse generations within the modern workplace. Managers who successfully distinguish perceptions from realities in accommodating older workers stand to benefit a great deal; at the same time, they must recognize that rapidly changing organizational demography has threatened traditional, generational turn taking, fostering generational imbalances that might undermine workplace harmony.

Types of intergenerational resource tensions in workplaces and workforces: Succession, consumption, identity

Based on the idea that generations do uniquely take turns, fostering expectations for older generations to step aside and make way for younger ones, our own work has identified the particular types of tensions that are most likely to emerge between generations in the modern, aging world. These tensions rest on the idea of *prescriptive* stereotypes – that is, "should"-based expectations that seek to control what members of a certain social group are to do (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Prentice & Carranza, 2002) – dictating how older generations should think, act, and behave. In contrast to typical theoretical perspectives on older adult stereotypes, which cast older generations as largely irrelevant, invisible, and infirm, these prescriptions have become more relevant, as older populations around the globe have become progressively more visible, relevant, and employed (North & Fiske, 2012).

Using factor analytic techniques on data from adult samples of a wide age range, we have found that these prescriptive expectations fall into three distinct categories, each with direct workplace relevance (North & Fiske, 2013a,b): (1) active *Succession* of enviable resources, (2) passive *Consumption* of shared resources, and (3) avoidance of symbolic *Identity* resources. As we will discuss, each dimension is uniquely intergenerational in nature, and thus relevant to the multigenerational workplace. (We do not claim that these three dimensions exhaust the possibilities, merely that they comprise three salient factors.)

Succession: Active tensions over enviable resources and influence

Succession-based tensions revolve around elders' active withholding of enviable resources and status. In contrast to traditional views of older adults as poor and dependent (as noted), Succession expectations derive from the view that older adults have actually acquired a degree of enviable assets, such as wealth or influence (North & Fiske, 2013a,b). Indeed, households headed by older adults (65+) in the modern U.S. are 47 times richer than households headed by those 35 and below, in terms of median net worth—the largest intergenerational gap in history (Censky, 2011; Fry, Cohn, Livingston, & Taylor, 2011). The expectation of Succession signifies, broadly, the idea that older adults should actively know when to step aside and cede such assets. (This perception is notwithstanding the heightened need to accumulate assets before retirement, given the demise of traditional pensions; Mackenzie, 2010.) Generally, these expectations more likely target the (approximately 55-75 year-old) young-old, who are more likely to still be working, rather than the old-old, who are further past traditional retirement age (North & Fiske, 2013c).

The expectation to actively step aside pertains directly to organizational hiring practices, which have resulted in a steady rise in age discrimination lawsuits in recent years (Elmer, 2009). Although age is indeed a protected category under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers do sometimes decide that removing expensive older employees, who often reap the most lucrative benefits and salaries, is a practical, cost-effective practice (Levitz & Shishkin, 2009). As illustrated by Brian Reid's case, and

countless others, particular ambiguity surrounds employees who delay retirement: Such workers are at or around traditional retirement age, but on the other hand, factors such as relatively good health, often-steady job performance, and financial bonuses provide little incentive for retirement (Friis, 1991; Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004).

Succession expectations affect on-the-job attitudes toward older workers as well. Recent empirical evidence indicates that Succession-based expectations underlie decisions concerning investment in older worker training: When confronted with a hypothetical scenario involving a younger, middle-aged, or older worker, younger participants tended to deny training resources to the older worker—a relationship mediated by pre-existing Succession-related beliefs (North and Fiske, in press; also described later in this chapter). Indeed, by some estimates older (55+) employees receive less than half the amount of training as younger workers, presumably due to employer expectations that older workers will (or should) soon retire (Dychtwald, Erickson, & Morison, 2004).

From a purely intergenerational perspective, too, Succession beliefs are particularly salient, in the sense of younger generations endorsing expectations for older ones to actively step aside. The younger generations do subscribe to the belief that their own job opportunities are limited by delayed retirement among older workers (Scrutton, 1999). These beliefs persist in the face of recent macro-level evidence that zero-sum generational labor competition is overblown (Pew Charitable Trust, 2012), and despite significant micro-level practical realities, such as near-retirement workers holding, on average, only about two fifths of the recommended savings needed to maintain adequate standard of living in later life (Klein, 2010). Moreover, claiming Social Security benefits before retirement age incurs a penalty of at least 25% for monthly future payments (Block, 2009). Nevertheless, the cry for older adults to "just retire already" might be especially common among the young in the face of scarce resources within the modern, aging world (North & Fiske, 2013c).

Succession-based pressures targeting the older generation are apparent even in policy-level considerations. One such debate comprises mandatory retirement considerations, which are gaining ground in multiple countries around the world (Higo & Klassen, 2015; Weinberg & Scott, 2013). Other discussions center on the rapidly growing wealth gap between older and younger generations (Taylor, Fry, D'Vera Cohn, Livingston, & Kochhar, 2011). Nevertheless, critics argue that initiatives to level the generational playing field might foster subtly prejudiced treatment of older adults, clandestinely blocking their opportunities in a "silver ceiling" fashion (Kornadt & Rothermund, 2015).

Also constraining justifications for Succession-based biases against older generations are recent legal trends, which prohibit the use of broad, older worker generalizations to justify favoring younger workers over older ones in hiring, firing, and training decisions (Posthuma, Wagstaff, & Campion, 2012). Nevertheless, age discrimination laws, and related court cases, have received far less mainstream attention than other forms of discrimination (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013).

Consumption: Passive tensions over shared resources

Contrasting with active Succession's emphasis on actively accumulated enviable assets, *Consumption* tensions derive from passive depletion of shared resources (North & Fiske, 2013a,b). Also differentiating these concerns from Succession, Consumption concerns are more likely to target the old-old than the young-old, given the former's particularly perceived low status and non-competitiveness (in contrast to the latter's status as often still active and employed, making them greater targets for Succession biases; North & Fiske, 2013c). Nevertheless, Consumption-based anxieties potentially target older adults of any age, given the (presumed) passive societal burden that a historically large over-65 population presents.

From a hiring standpoint, Consumption-based concerns are most saliently expressed through beliefs that older workers inevitably cost more than other employees (Chiu et al., 2001). However, a variety of potential counter-arguments make the case: Empirical demonstration that older workers demand higher wages is scant; premiums paid to senior workers tend to be based on experience, rather than age per se; and relative cost-per-worker differences are greatest between 25–34 and 35–44 age brackets, versus older ones (Cappelli, 2009; Restrepo & Shuford, 2011). Older and younger workers also tend to occupy different positions within organizations and sectors, warranting a distribution of resources at both senior-level and entry-level positions (O'Higgins, 2001). Moreover, key labor outcomes of younger (20–24) and older workers (55–64) – specifically, unemployment, employment, and hours worked – tend to correlate positively, rather than negatively, contradicting typical zero-sum, intergenerational, narratives (Munnell & Wu, 2012). Notwithstanding this evidence and the potential benefits that older workers bring to the company table, misconceptions about salary and benefits make many employers resistant to hire them (Brandon, 2012).

The attitude that older generations should reap minimal use of shared resources extends to on-the-job treatment, where employers are often reluctant to invest too much into older worker development. For instance, the belief that older workers will retire sooner than younger workers leads employers to believe that such initiatives are hardly worth the investment in the first place (Bell, 2011). Likewise, stereotypes about older workers being less "moldable" imply that they are passively obstructive by being slower to learn and more stuck in their ways (Seifert, 2010). But similar to hiring practice concerns, these on-the-job concerns have been met with recent skepticism: Older employees are statistically likely to stick with their current employer for significantly longer than younger employees (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014), and in at least one recent study, older workers were more eager to learn new skills than were younger workers (Karaivanova & Zinovieva, 2014), suggesting that stereotypes may not always hold true. Either way, investing in older worker training has already proven to be an effective bottom-line strategy for multiple organizations, given far greater frequency of delayed retirement in recent years (North & Hershfield, 2014).

Concerns over the passive resource depletion of older generations are often at the heart of modern intergenerational attitudes as well. Most saliently, younger generations worry that the governmental entitlements that older generations currently enjoy will be depleted by the time it is their presumed turn—notably in domains of Social Security and Medicare (Pew Research Center, 2011). Unfortunately, these concerns appear well founded, as neither program will remain sustainable under current financing structures (Social Security Administration, 2014). These concerns likely exacerbate work-related tensions by interfering with the need for interdependent generations to view each other as allies.

Modern policy debates, including political campaigns, also commonly focus on passive Consumption issues. For example, Medicare took center stage in the 2012 presidential election platforms, with each candidate casting his own long-term plan as more fiscally solvent than the other's (Obama, 2012; Romney, 2012). Even beyond specific entitlements, pundits worry that the global older population presents a passive burden economically, slowing down economic growth worldwide (Johansson et al., 2012).

More tangibly, others propose revoking older adult drivers' licenses in the name of reducing their (alleged) passive physical obstruction or presumed danger on the road (while acknowledging the importance of driving as a source of older adult mobility, and underscoring that not all older adults are unsafe drivers; Dobbs, 2008). In all of these debates, mirroring intergenerational angles described throughout this chapter, one side argues generally for clearing a more sustainable path (literally and figuratively) for younger generations, whereas the other side advocates for the rights and realities of older citizens—with cogent arguments to be made on both sides of the generational coin.

Identity: Symbolic tensions over figurative resources

As opposed to Succession and Consumption, which directly concern tangible assets, *Identity*-based tensions are more symbolic in nature. Generally speaking, older adults who act much younger than they are risk being perceived as denying realities of getting older. For instance, evidence does show that older people who attempt to look younger, such as showing interest in plastic surgery and age-defying drugs, risk facing backlash from the young for crossing defined age-group boundaries—an effect driven by perceived threat to youth-focused social identity (Schoemann & Branscombe, 2011). Other evidence corroborates that such resentment is most likely to come from the young because they are particularly motivated to maintain generational distance, as a means of asserting symbolic autonomy and compensating for practical dependence (North & Fiske, 2012, 2013a,b).

From a workplace perspective, Identity-based biases against older adults may at first glance seem more trivial than the practical assets at stake within Succession and Consumption, but such treatment does shape key organizational outcomes. At the hiring level, for example, framing of job descriptions can yield subtle bias against older hires: Emphasis on "fitting in with a young team" or seeking "employees who are young and keen enough to revel in the pressures and excitement" of the job puts older prospective workers at a subtle disadvantage (McGoldrick & Arrowsmith, 1993). Increasingly common, too, are job requirements explicitly requesting "new" or "recent" college graduates—language that has incurred recent legal ramifications (Kopytoff, 2014).

These symbolic biases extend to on-the-job treatment, where older workers are similarly denied equal opportunities due to a presumed lack of fitting in. Indeed, companies commonly cite a need for "new blood" as justification for demotion, promotion denial, or outright layoffs of mature workers (Cardinali & Gordon, 2002). More broadly, an ever-growing need for tailoring workplace organizational cultures to be more "age-friendly" remains largely unfulfilled (Appannah & Biggs, 2015; Preissing & Loennies, 2011). Part of the problem – resembling the just-noted job description language – is that the line between adequate age friendliness versus cold, practical decisions regarding cultural fit-oriented skills (e.g., cutting-edge knowledge or skills) remains blurry and debatable (Hyde, 2003). Nevertheless, the symbolic exclusion of older workers is often palpable, creating a hostile work environment, as Brian Reid's case once again illustrates.

Excluding older generations on a figurative basis is inherently intergenerational in nature. The tendency for younger generations to exclude older ones is so strong that younger ingroup members are actually viewed more positively, both consciously and unconsciously, if they express anti-older adult views as opposed to positive ones (Castelli, Pavan, Ferrari, & Kashima, 2009). Reflecting the cited, exclusive language used in job postings, intergenerational manifestations of Identity-based exclusion within organizations can be similarly subtle, such as expecting willingness to work long hours, fostering a youthful "work hard, play hard" culture, or even looking down on those with certain email address domains (e.g., AOL) perceived to be out of date with the mainstream (Bolton, 2006; Kinsley, 2012; McBride, 2012). Theoretically speaking, and resembling broader society, excluding older generations in organizational contexts serves as a means of asserting autonomy among the young in spheres where they typically possess comparatively few practical resources (Hagestad & Uhlenberg, 2005). Nevertheless, in industries where younger adults do possess high influence, youth-exclusive culture is particularly likely to damage the other-aged, both within the workplace and in the broader sector (Silicon Valley being the prime example; Nathanson, 2014; Scheiber, 2014).

Multiple levels of intergenerational resource tension

Our own program of research has filled some of the gaps noted in this chapter with respect to intergenerational tensions, operating at various levels inside and outside the workplace. Moreover, our work has focused on the same levels introduced earlier: individual, interpersonal, institutional, and international.

Individual manifestations

To measure the presence of prescriptive expectations targeting older adults at the individual level, our work has created a scale (North & Fiske, 2013b), comprising the specific types of (SCI) intergenerational tensions described in the previous sections. The scale measures individual beliefs about the kinds of resources that older generations presumably should possess in modern society, and the types of activities they allegedly should perform.

In developing the scale, we first asked participants ''What are things that older people should or shouldn't do'', in order to conjure up open-ended statements centering on resource-focused beliefs targeting the old. After gathering this initial set of statements, four separate samples (total $N = 2010$) rated their level of agreement with the generated statements, using a Likert scale; factor analytic techniques progressively winnowed down this set of items to a final 20-item, three-factor solution (see Table 1). Corresponding with the three prescriptive domains indicated, the three domains comprised key resource beliefs targeting the old: active, envied resource *Succession* (e.g. ''Most older workers don't know when it's time to make way for the younger generations''); passive, shared-resource *Consumption* (e.g. ''Older people are too big a burden on the healthcare system''); and symbolic youth-oriented *Identity* avoidance (e.g. ''Older people probably shouldn't use Facebook'') (SCI). In addition to fostering these three dimensions, the scale demonstrates predictive validity (North & Fiske, 2013b, Study 4): Those who score highest on the scale most resent an older person who appears to violate any of these prescriptive expectations.

In identifying the specific domains of resources underlying intergenerational tensions, the measure presents both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical standpoint, this work introduces a novel, *prescriptive* approach to age bias and intergenerational tension, as noted (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). The scale also allows for comparisons of prescriptive older-age attitudes to other forms of person perception (North & Fiske, 2013b, Study 2): The scale moderately correlates with the group-hierarchy focused Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), but not with the construct of social control per se, Right-Wing Authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1998). Moreover, the scale also does not predict bias toward younger generations (e.g., ''Younger people shouldn't use so much foul language''; North & Fiske, 2013b, Study 3). Finally, younger people consistently score the highest on the measure, demonstrating these beliefs are uniquely intergenerational in nature (North & Fiske, 2013b), in contrast with certain other measures of age-based biases (Hellbusch, Corbin, Thorson, & Stacy, 1994).

From a practical standpoint, the scale provides a contemporary tool to measure beliefs about older generations' use of social and practical resources, from the broad policy level to the workplace. As the population ages rapidly and generational equity concerns grow along with it, the scale can be used to document potential changes in attitudes toward mandatory retirement and health care allotments, longitudinally.

Table 1
Succession, identity, consumption scale of prescriptive ageism (adapted from North & Fiske, 2013b).

Factor 1: Consumption
Doctors spend too much time treating sickly older people
Older people are too big a burden on the healthcare system
Older people are often too much of a burden on families
At a certain point, older people's maximum benefit to society is passing along their resources
Older people shouldn't be so miserly with their money if younger relatives need it
Older people don't really need to get the best seats on buses and trains
AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) wastes charity money
Factor 2: Succession
If it weren't for older people opposed to changing the way things are, we could probably progress much more rapidly as a society
The older generation has an unfair amount of political power compared to younger people
Most older people don't know when to make way for younger people
Most older workers don't know when it's time to make way for the younger generation
Older people are often too stubborn to realize they don't function like they used to
Younger people are usually more productive than older people at their jobs
Job promotions shouldn't be based on older workers' experience rather than their productivity
It is unfair that older people get to vote on issues that will impact younger people much more
Factor 3: Identity
Older people typically shouldn't go to places where younger people hang out
In general, older people shouldn't hang out at places for younger people
Generally older people shouldn't go clubbing
Older people probably should use Facebook
Older people shouldn't even try to act cool

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Interpersonal manifestations

Focusing further on these three domains of prescriptive expectations targeting older generations, we conducted a set of experiments to bring these tensions to life in the context of an interpersonal interaction (North & Fiske, 2013a). We again focused on the specific types of (SCI) intergenerational tensions identified, exploring whether encountering people appearing to over- or under-utilize resources yielded differential reactions, depending on the age of the target person.

Utilizing both vignette experiments and simulated behavioral interactions, six experiments systemically varied a target male's age (younger, middle-aged, older) and his behavior (either adhering to or violating age-based prescriptive expectations). For two Succession studies, the target was portrayed as actively withholding or ceding enviable resources (wealth); for two Consumption studies, passively depleting or conserving shared resources

(healthcare); and for two Identity studies, invading or respecting young ingroup territory (music). After encountering the target person, participants rated his perceived warmth and competence—arguably fundamental dimensions of person perception (Cuddy et al., 2011; Fiske, 2015; Fiske et al., 2007). For the simulated interactions, participants additionally rated their willingness to interact with the manipulated target, presented either via webcam (Succession experiment), online chat room (Consumption experiment), or email platform (Identity experiment).

Results indicated that, across studies and outcome variables, younger (compared with middle-aged and older) participants most resented the older violators of prescriptive stereotypes. Moreover, these younger participants were most polarized toward older targets (compared with middle-aged and younger analogs)—rewarding elders most for prescription adherences and punishing them most for violations. The uniquely extreme reactions toward older people for adhering to or violating SCI expectations further support the idea that these prescriptions most target older generations.

Taken together, these findings paint a nuanced theoretical picture concerning modern attitudes toward older generations. They suggest how the perception of elders – whose traditional stereotype of trustworthiness but incompetence generates the related emotion of pity (Fiske et al., 2007) – shifts to either prescriptive resentment or reward when specific resources are at stake, at least when younger generations are the judges. Moreover, these studies show that, in the context of age perception, the story is more complex than a mere ingroup-outgroup one; that is, although older generations are targeted by younger generations, middle-agers are largely spared. Although one might predict that middle-agers would be the focal target of such bias – seeing as they tend to possess the greatest status, influence, and resources (North & Fiske, 2012), and are rated by participants of all ages as the high-status age category, relative to younger and older adults (Garstka et al., 2004) – study participants of all ages nevertheless endorse the investment of resources toward middle-aged adults, even when generational inequity is made salient (Garstka, Hummert, & Branscombe, 2005).

From a practical standpoint, these studies demonstrate how intergenerational tensions might come to pass at the face-to-face level. In the newly intergenerational workplace, where greater frequency of such interaction is taking place, it will be particularly important for managers to be sensitive to these kinds of tensions, and to foster collaborative situations in which older workers are not perceived as obstructive to younger ones. As the Brian Reid case illustrates, the mere presence of an older worker – let alone one who is presumed to violate expectations to step aside and stay out of the way – can create tensions that permeate workplace culture.

Institutional manifestations

A separate set of studies (North and Fiske, in press) move to the broader, institutional level. These investigations explore the potential impact of macro-level competition narratives on the interpersonal tensions demonstrated in the previous section. As indicated earlier in this chapter, characterizing zero-sum competition between generations is all too prevalent in the current aging world (e.g., Winerip, 2012)—but it is also possible that downplaying such beliefs might mitigate tensions between generations both within and outside the workplace.

Recruiting young participants and manipulating resource usage by older targets, three separate experiments (North and Fiske, in press, Studies 1a–c) tested the effects of perceived intergenerational resource scarcity on prescriptive age-based biases. In each study, participants first read a brief news article concerning the growing older population in the United States and resulting implications for available jobs and assets. One of two possible frames appeared: In the *scarce* condition, the article emphasized how the enlarged older population signifies that "there simply won't be as much to go around" between generations. In the *abundant* condition, the article put a more positive spin on shifting age dynamics, stating that "there should be plenty to go around" even with a greater number of older adults. These young participants were then entered into a simulated professional networking database, and asked to rate their willingness to connect with an older, male adult—who, as in prior experimental designs, either adhered to or violated the given prescriptive domain (Succession, Consumption, or Identity).

Each study found the same pattern. When presented first with the scarce resource frame, a polarized reaction toward the older prospective networker emerged—punishing him for adhering to expectations about elder resource hoarding, but rewarding him for adherence to prescriptions for elders to abstain. (This replicated the interpersonal-level findings described.) However, perceived resource abundance mitigated these effects, such that younger people did not differ in their reactions toward the prescriptive violators or adherers under these circumstances. Portraying intergenerational resource availability thus shapes younger generations' desire to connect professionally with older generations, presenting significant considerations as society copes with a rapidly aging, intergenerational workforce.

Notably, a follow-up study (North and Fiske, in press, Study 2) had participants read the same news article (scarce or abundant), then impelled them to allocate scarce training resources among three similarly qualified but different-aged employees (younger, middle-aged, and older). Regardless of the macro-level frame, under the more salient context of micro-level scarce resources to be actively distributed, results showed older workers to consistently receive the lowest such investment. In line with prior findings, younger participants emerged as the greatest deniers of resource allocation to older workers—but mediation analyses indicated that this age effect was driven by existing Succession beliefs, as measured by the SCI scale (North & Fiske, 2013c). This finding indicates that resource-based beliefs among the young – namely, that older generations should step aside and make way for younger ones – is a key driver of intergenerational tensions within the workplace.

These interpersonal findings offer various theoretical contributions. First, the results mirror prior studies showing that age-based prejudices arise from perceived

intergenerational inequity (Garstka et al., 2005); the current work shows that these same biases extend to workplace contexts per se. Second, they underscore the importance of resource attitudes in driving generational competition, and how macro-level resource perceptions between age groups translate to micro-level interpersonal perceptions, which other work has shown in domains apart from age (e.g., race; Brief et al., 2005; Norton & Sommers, 2011). Third, the fact that Succession attitudes mediate the relationship between rater age and beliefs about older generations' resource use identifies a mechanism underlying the interpersonal-level findings depicted in the previous section (North & Fiske, 2013a,b). Such a mechanism presents an optimistic outlook for future intervention work, too: Although changing chronological age (or related elements, such as generational outlook or industry experience) might be impractical, interventions targeted at reducing prescriptive age-based expectations per se might be more plausible. For example, labor-oriented policies that acknowledge the current trend of delayed retirement might work to change default expectations of retiring at 65, as a means of fostering (among other outcomes) intergenerational understanding.

From a practical standpoint, the interpersonal findings emphasize various considerations for employers attempting to bridge generations in the workplace. First and foremost, emphasizing generational competition is not an effective method of accommodating the aging workforce. Minimizing such tensions will be critical for increasingly intergenerational workplaces, particularly given realities that generations are not in zero-sum competition with one another (Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). Moreover, the knee–jerk reaction to deny limited training resources to older workers suggests that many of the misconceptions cited earlier underlie decisions to invest in them. Contrary to popular belief, older workers are not only highly capable of learning new skills, but also want to be trained in them, especially if their existing knowledge level is taken into account (Myerson, Bichard, & Erlich, 2010). It will be up to managers to bear such truths in mind when attempting to best utilize older employees.

International manifestations

A more comprehensive investigation extends to the broader, international level, comparing countries and cultures around the world on their attitudes toward the aged. Such an analysis is relevant for organizations, as workforce aging is already an international concern (Shultz & Henkens, 2010). This investigation is motivated also by noted lay beliefs – but seemingly scant empirical evidence – that Easterners (i.e., East and South Asia) might be more respectful of their elders than Westerners (i.e., Western Anglophone and Western European countries), due to the former's greater traditional emphasis on collectivism and expectations to respect one's elders (e.g., Ng, 1998, 2002).

However, two contemporary societal trends suggest a potentially more complex picture, extending beyond geography or cultural tradition. The first, *industrialization*, raises the possibility that increasingly modernized societies come to devalue their elders by antiquating traditional elder roles (e.g., storytelling and wisdom; Nelson, 2005; Schoenberg & Lewis, 2005). Second, rapid rises in *population aging* have put sudden, unanticipated pressure on societies to accommodate older adults, such as in healthcare and labor spheres (Börsch-Supan, 2003; World Health Organization, 2011). From this latter standpoint, Eastern cultures in the modern world may have come to devalue their older adults more rapidly, given that they have faced greater spikes in population aging in recent years (Bloomberg Data/United Nations Population Division, 2012) and presumably greater resulting anxieties (as China's one-child policy illustrates; Zhang & Goza, 2006).

To test these competing hypotheses – that is, an Eastern positivity (cultural values) prediction versus Eastern negativity (population aging/demographic strain) – we conducted a meta-analysis, synthesizing cross-cultural studies that directly and quantitatively compared Easterners and Westerners on their attitudes toward older adults (North & Fiske, 2015). To focus on the question of whether Easterners or Westerners revere their elders more, we distilled each study into one overall, standardized mean difference effect size: negative effect sizes representing a given study's finding that Easterners are more negative than the West, and positive effect sizes signifying the opposite.

The overall results were surprisingly, and significantly, in the opposite direction from lay beliefs: Easterners emerged as more negative overall toward older adults (overall standardized mean difference = –0.31; North & Fiske, 2015), and the majority of individual studies found this same pattern. However, these omnibus results were qualified by intraregional moderator analyses: First, East Asian regions appeared marginally more negative toward older generations than were South Asian regions; likewise, Western Europe emerged as more negative than Western Anglophone countries (i.e., U.S.A., U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand).

Finally, we quantified and tested the competing hypotheses. Matched to year of data collection where possible, within each study, we paired country-level data with its (a) level of collectivism (measured via Hofstede's cultural dimensions; Hofstede, 1984—but see e.g. Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006, for discussion of the limitations of this measure), (b) recent population aging speed (calculated as rise in elder dependency ratio – the ratio of over-65 people to working-age people – to time of data collection from 5, 10, and 20 years prior; World Bank World Development Indicators, 2013a), and (c) industrialization speed (calculated as rise in GDP to time of data collection from 5, 10 and 20 years prior; World Bank World Development Indicators, 2013b). A multiple-moderator meta-regression incorporating these variables found that, controlling for GDP (which was not a significant predictor of older-adult attitudes), population aging speed and cultural collectivism both predicted negativity toward older adults. This suggested that, controlling for level of recent industrialization, countries with more rapid population aging strain are coming to devalue their elders—especially in countries with high traditions of collectivism, which may backfire with a growing, potentially burdensome older population (North & Fiske, 2015).

The findings have theoretical and practical organizational significance on multiple levels. The most apparent theoretical contribution is establishing that intergenerational resource tensions are not just a Western phenomenon. Moreover, in debunking a common belief that Eastern cultures are more respectful of the aged than Westerners, the results present various future research directions, such as the possibility that collectivist values in the workplace might prevent the utilization of older workers, or the possibility that other potential cultural variables (e.g., religious traditions) might impact macro-level perceptions of older adults around the world.

From a practical standpoint, these East–West results indicate the presence of intergenerational resource tensions at the broad, macro level. This suggests that aging workforces around the globe risk particular intergenerational tension if they are aging rapidly—and perhaps that aging industries around the world might be experiencing the greatest levels of tensions between generations. As scholars, policymakers, and business leaders work to accommodate the aging, intergenerational workforce, it is important to consider such tensions in crafting best accommodation practices. Although the presence of these tensions at individual, interpersonal, institutional, and international levels might paint a pessimistic picture, various considerations indicate that targeted strategies can work to reduce such tensions, as we discuss in the next section.

Summary of types of intergenerational resource tensions

Mirroring the key levels of intergenerational tension cited earlier, our own work has found evidence for intergenerational resource tensions at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and international levels. These tensions center on three important domains – active Succession of enviable assets, passive Consumption of shared assets, and symbolic Identity assets – and are exacerbated under conditions in which older generations appear to over-use these resources at the expense of younger generations, and when resources appear generally scarce between generations. Moreover, intergenerational resource tensions extend across cultures – including, and even implicating certain Eastern, collectivist nations, contrary to common wisdom – spurring the most negative evaluations of older adults within the most rapidly aging populations.

Resolving intergenerational tensions

Certainly the widespread risk of generational tensions calls for effective interventions to minimize them. However, considering the relative regularity of intergenerational interaction, initiatives geared at bridging generations and clarifying intergenerational misunderstandings are comparatively rare in the literature. The exceptions tend to fall into two overall strategies: (1) contact and (2) education. These strategies have had mixed results (inconclusive outcomes), a somewhat narrow focus (emphasis on the impaired elderly), and generally little program evaluation (Jarrott, 2011). Future research should focus more rigorously on best practices for bridging generations, particularly in organizational contexts.

Existing interventions

Educational

Based on the premise that enhanced knowledge is a "primary intervention" for combating intergenerational misunderstandings (Butler, 1989, p. 142), one type of intergenerational bridge program takes an educational approach. Such approaches typically include introducing gerontology into the school curriculum and covering common topics, such as the physical and cognitive changes associated with the aging process and older adults' unique needs (Blais, Mikolaj, Jedlicka, Strayer, & Stanek, 2006). One recent development has even created a body suit designed to simulate the aging process – such as goggles to simulate poor vision and gloves to make hands shake – to enhance empathy among the young (Innes, 2014; Singer, 2011).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of education-based programs in begetting long-term, positive intergenerational outcomes has been inconclusive. Such programs do seem effective at enhancing knowledge about the aging process (Doll, 2006), and some studies do report a general increase in positivity toward older adults among the young (Lynott & Merola, 2007). However, there is little evidence that gerontological education significantly increases students' desire to interact with the older generation (Dorfman, Murty, Ingram, & Li, 2007). Another critique is that the focus on age-based decline per se might reinforce stereotypes of dependency and frailty, which may be unrepresentative of the older population as a whole, particularly in a workplace context. This might be why such initiatives fail to reduce mortality anxieties associated with older adults (Griff, Lambert, Dellmann-Jenkins, & Fruit, 1996).

Contact

A second approach involves fostering direct cooperation and understanding via intergenerational contact programs (e.g., Chorn Dunham and Casadonte (2009)). Such strategies, such as the shared-site intergenerational program (IG), which pairs after-school-care and nursing-home settings, aim to foster positive young–old interactions (Jarrott, Gigliotti, & Smock, 2006). The natural goal of fostering productive intergenerational contact is to offer both parties high-quality relationships across generations, not only for personal benefits, but for practical reasons as well (e.g., improving quality of geriatric healthcare; Wood & Mulligan, 2000).

However, resembling gerontology education programs, contact-based initiatives have produced similarly mixed success and experienced some of the same limited outcomes. For example, whereas some report generally positive outcomes in the domain of enhancing self-esteem among impaired older adults (Jarrott & Bruno, 2007), other reports indicate that young people may develop even more negative attitudes toward old people if the latter are particularly frail or cognitively impaired (Griff et al., 1996; Seefeldt, 1987). From a behavioral standpoint, contact with

older adults might help dispel negative old-age stereotypes among undergraduates, but does not necessarily motivate them to pursue gerontology (Ramsey, Mendoza, & Weil, 2014). Similar findings emerge in the realm of healthcare, where frequent intergenerational contact does not necessarily overcome prejudicial treatment of older patients (Revenson, 1989). Overall, these findings are consistent with a recent meta-analysis indicating that contact alone between generations yields only mixed effects at best (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Toward future (organization-specific) interventions

The largely mixed results of such interventions might be best comprehended with a contact-hypothesis explanation (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999): Although intergroup contact reliably clears up misunderstandings between different groups, new prejudices can arise if groups are perceived as in direct competition with one another, unequal in status, or habitually not interacting. As we have described in this chapter, the generations risk violating each of these contact criteria, in the workplace and elsewhere. Thus, future initiatives should focus specifically on bridging generations in these specific capacities.

In the workplace specifically, and in line with the multilevel approach presented throughout this chapter, such interventions will likely require multiple levels of functionality. We perceive three key organizational areas on which intergenerational endeavors should focus: (1) changing *employer* mindsets about older workers, (2) changing *older employee* mindsets about themselves, and (3) cultivating productive *intergenerational* dynamics. Overcoming misunderstandings at these three frames of reference will be integral for scholars and practitioners alike in utilizing the newly aging workforce (North, 2014).

Changing employer mindsets

Recognizing realities (versus inaccuracies) about older workers. Changing employer mindsets revolves partly around recognizing realities (versus inaccuracies or overly negative beliefs) about older workers and employing multiple generations. Recent analyses help debunk some of these common perceptions. For instance, contrary to common wisdom that older workers are the most resistant to change, a recent study surveying over 30,000 employees finds younger workers are more resistant to change than older ones (Kunze, Boehm, & Bruch, 2013). A different large-scale analysis on over 38,000 workers finds no overall relationship between worker age and job performance (McEvoy & Cascio, 1989). Moreover, a meta-analysis of 98 field studies (comprising nearly ten thousand workers) finds no evidence that older worker are less innovative than younger ones (Ng & Feldman, 2013).

Recognizing benefits of accommodating older workers. Notwithstanding preconceived beliefs about older workers, the bottom line is that older workers are staving off retirement more frequently than ever before in the industrialized world, which necessitates fostering contexts in which mature talents are maximized (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). To this end, employers who successfully adapt to inevitable demographic trends and make older-worker-specific adaptations, including offering flexible and part-time work arrangements, stand to profit. For instance, BMW's older-worker-focused ergonomic changes coincided with a 7% rise in profits, and the home improvement retailer B&Q reports an even steeper 18% profit rise since it began recruiting older employees to foster a friendlier work environment (North & Hershfield, 2014). Empirical research corroborates the effectiveness of altering physical cues in the workplace, to ensure that employees feel less threatened by pre-existing negative stereotypes or expectations (Walton, Murphy, & Ryan, 2015). Future organizational research directions should focus on how to best motivate employers to enact these adaptive maneuvers. Moreover, employers should avoid fixating on what older workers (presumably) cannot do and more constructively on their unique skills.

Diversity-related interventions. Another promising avenue to changing employer beliefs about accommodating multiple generations is diversity training. Although diversity training has significant positive impacts on knowledge, attitudes toward particular groups are less susceptible to change (Kulik & Roberson, 2008a; Roberson, Kulik, & Tan, 2013). Moreover, diversity initiatives are often driven by external factors (e.g., lawsuits) more than internal motivations, such as diversifying their customer base (Kulik & Roberson, 2008b). Nevertheless, generations in the workplace represent a novel form of diversity rarely considered in the management literature, but one that aligns with various internal motivations for organizations (e.g., work redesign), as well as novel external ones (i.e., the rapidly aging population; Kulik et al., 2014).

One promising avenue to achieving effective age diversity emphasizes the importance of matching intergenerational mindsets with those of the broader organization. The thinking behind this strategy is that faultlines foster tension because group members, by default, behave according to the behavior of their particular group identity (Lau & Murnighan, 1998)—but when group members work toward a superordinate goal, this can foster cultural values that trump faultline divisions. Indeed, a recent study confirms that the normally strong, negative relationship between faultlines and performance in small groups is significantly weakened – or in some cases, reversed – when the bottom-line, results-oriented mindset of groups (either strong or weak) matched that of the broader organization (similarly strong or weak, respectively; Bezrukova, Thatcher, Jehn, & Spell, 2012). Corroborating evidence argues for the importance of fostering dual identities within older employees – that is, as both a member of their generation and a member of their organization – as a means of fostering intergenerational harmony and positive attitudes toward work among older workers (Iweins, Desmette, Yzerbyt, & Stinglhamber, 2013). Thus, managers seeking to effectively harness multi-generational collaboration should strive to emphasize superordinate, organization-focused goals and identities.

Changing older worker mindsets

Overcoming "stereotype threat" in the workplace. Complicating the issue is the potential for older workers themselves to self-handicap as a result of negative, age-based expectations. Indeed, many older workers succumb to "stereotype threat," whereby they worry about confirming negative beliefs about abilities in certain domains, which consequently inhibits their performance (Hess, Auman, Colcombe, & Rahhal, 2003). A subtle reminder of the possibility of age-based cognitive decline is enough to significantly undermine older adults' memory on a task, for which they would ordinarily not experience such decline (Hess & Hinson, 2006). The power of stereotype threat is such that older workers are sometimes motivated to retire earlier than they would otherwise (Gaillard & Desmette, 2010; Whitbourne & Sneed, 2004). Age-related stereotype threat cues are present even at the hiring stage, such as job ads that emphasize a youth-oriented "willingness to learn" or "high ambition" (Kulik, 2014).

Thus, as much as it benefits employers to base their beliefs about older workers on truths, it is equally beneficial for older workers to avoid stereotyping their own abilities based on group-level stereotypes. One promising strategy involves reframing tasks in potentially less threatening ways. For example, older participants who encounter a "memory" task perform better when the same task is encoded as mere "reading comprehension" (Kang & Chasteen, 2009) or "impression formation" (Chasteen, Bhattacharyya, Horhota, Tam, & Hasher, 2005). Thus, it behooves older workers to approach tasks in ways that do not imply an age handicap per se, or even to muster resiliency by challenging negative age group stereotypes (Block, Koch, Liberman, Merriweather, & Roberson, 2011). Naturally the impetus for cultivating an age-friendly environment does not fall on older workers alone; employers can help the cause by not presenting tasks in stereotype-relevant ways, or else by acknowledging and addressing age stereotypes head-on, in an effort to defuse them (Roberson & Kulik, 2007).

More recent evidence underscores the importance of gain-oriented versus loss-oriented mindsets in staving off stereotype threat effects. In line with prior research, older adults experience memory impairment within a stereotype-threat paradigm when the task rewards correct memory with monetary *gains*; but when the task instead punishes incorrect recall with monetary *losses*, older people experience a boost in performance (Barber & Mather, 2013). Translating these findings to the workplace, this evidence suggests that it is beneficial for older workers to adopting "prevention-focused" mentalities, such as striving to be employees who act responsibly and minimize mistakes (Crowe & Higgins, 1997).

Positive aging self-perceptions. Broadly speaking, the more positively older adults view their own life stage, the more they will thrive (Levy, Slade, Kunkel, & Kasl, 2002). However, from an organizational perspective, a major impediment to this aim involves the term "older worker" itself, which fosters their marginalization by essentializing their abilities (or perceived lack thereof), presupposing certain work mentalities, and casting them as a problem needing to be rectified (Riach, 2007). An organizational identity approach to alleviating these issues advocates for re-conceptualizing the term "older" worker as "mature" or "seasoned," similar to rephrasing "retired" as "retiring" (Burlew, 2006). Given that high group identification generally confers high perceived ingroup status via collective self esteem (Pettit & Lount, 2011), future productivity of the modern, more mature workplace may very well depend on older workers adopting desirable identities and embracing adaptive situations. Future research should elucidate how these techniques are best adopted.

Generations working together

De-emphasizing generational competition. Of course, as noted throughout this chapter, the aging workforce corresponds with a greater number of generations in the workplace, too. Also as indicated, minimizing intergenerational tensions will be a key consideration in maximizing the productivity of the intergenerational workplace. This might seem like an uphill battle; by default, generations best know how to work with other members of their own generation, as opposed to others (Bernstein, 2006). Perhaps this is due to generations in and of themselves being distinct cultures, with their own set of values and outlooks, as described earlier (Joshi et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, the reality for organizations is that gearing toward intergenerational collaboration is more adaptive than ever. One clear, important step is emphasizing how generations are not in competition with one another, as is an emphasis on shared organizational goals between workers of all ages (both per the noted contact hypothesis; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999). Fortunately, as noted, supporting evidence for common aims already exists at a macro level, as older and younger worker labor outcomes are positively correlated (Pew Charitable Trust, 2012). At the micro level, too, various researchers and practitioners have begun to identify the challenges of intergenerational collaboration (e.g., Srinivasan, 2012). A variety of books on the subject have come out in recent years, serving as general guides for bridging the generation gap in the workplace (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2009; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). However, empirical support for best practices in accommodating multiple generations presents a wide-open area for future organizational behavior research.

Priming (negative) generational legacy. One promising technique utilizes a more holistic avenue toward alleviating generational competition: Making salient one's legacy so as to better emphasize future fallout of generational actions. Experimental evidence indicates that having a mindset that one's legacy will allocate burdens (versus benefits) for future generations causes people tend to feel greater responsibility for and affinity toward future generations (Wade-Benzoni, Sondak, & Galinsky, 2010)—an effect that occurs when the impact of decisions and self-other tradeoffs are each made salient. Leaving behind a burden for future generations to bear is considered morally worse than failing to leave enough benefits (Wade-Benzoni & Tost, 2009). Thus,

organizations might emphasize older workers' moral responsibility to train and mentor younger ones, so as to avoid future dilution of organizational culture, memory, and history.

Summary of potential interventions

Existing interventions for bridging generations typically utilize either educational or contact approaches, but with somewhat limited scope and only mixed results. To help develop best practices for organizations, we propose three levels of resolving or avoiding intergenerational tensions. First, we suggest pushing employers to recognize realities and utilities of both older workers and age diversity. Second, we propose helping older workers to avert self-handicapping, stereotype-threat processes, and to enact positive aging self-perceptions. Finally, we emphasize the importance of getting generations to de-emphasize competition with one another, in addition to motivating older generations to consider their own legacy, as a means of enhancing compassion for younger generations.

Broader organizational research directives

In addition to practical strategies for overcoming intergenerational tensions in the workplace, a number of related future research directions may shed light on new practical techniques and theoretical approaches.

Disentangling correlated underpinnings of generational faultlines

Despite the commonality of seeking to understand generational dynamics in the workplace and beyond, critics of generation-focused research argue that "generational" divisions actually confound multiple factors, such as chronological age, life stage, and birth cohort (Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010). Within a workplace context specifically, further clouding the generational picture are other related variables, including occupational status, skill set, and recency of education (Bantel & Jackson, 1989; Kunze et al., 2013). This complexity has cast doubt in the minds of skeptics that generational effects exist in the first place (Joshi et al., 2011). Moreover, certain generational elements (e.g. birth cohort, occupational status) are more static in nature, whereas others are dynamic and continuously changing (e.g., chronological age)—each of which yields ultimately different status perceptions (Pettit, Sivanathan, Gladstone, & Marr, 2013).

Organizational scholars have worked to disentangle some of these elements. Most notable has been an effort to isolate cohort-based "tenure effects" (that is, length of time on the job), which are often stronger than other demographic categories in predicting workplace relationships (Lawrence & Zyphur, 2011). Although one of the most consistent results is the tendency of tenure "misfits" to withdraw from organizations (McCain, O'Reilly, & Pfeffer, 1983; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), the literature on organizational tenure diversity reports generally mixed findings concerning group-based outcomes, due to mediating processes that remain largely unresolved (Staw, 1991). For instance, those who enter a workplace in close temporal proximity do tend to adopt a similar outlook, which predicts outcomes differentially from age per se (Pfeffer, 1983; Pfeffer, 1985). On the other hand, age similarity (versus tenure similarity) predicts incidence of communication about technical issues within project groups, but this relationship is reversed for communication outside of project groups (Zenger & Lawrence, 1989). Confounding the picture further is task complexity: A recent meta-analysis finds that there is no one-size-fits-all relationship between performance and age, experience, and tenure, respectively—but rather that this relationship depends on job complexity, and on whether performance is measured objectively or subjectively (Sturman, 2003).

Thus, understanding how each underlying factor differentially shapes generational tensions in the workplace remains largely unresolved. Although age-focused investigations to date have often been relegated to control-variable status within organizational studies (Finkelstein & Truxillo, 2013), the workplace provides a convenient context to quantify and test the diverse underpinnings of generational status. Moreover, various, fruitful research questions arise, such as how idiosyncratic organizational factors, including industrial sector or organization size, shape generational identities and the efficacy of bridging generations.

Clarifying generational differences and similarities in work style and attitudes

A related but not identical future direction concerns an immediate, pragmatic concern: How can employers align their own work expectations and styles with those of the different generations currently entering the workplace? As indicated, the employee pool currently comprises four distinct generations, with a fifth (Generation Z) fast approaching working age. However, the majority of popular books, executive briefings, and even scholarly investigations on how generations differ in personality, values, work style, and attitudes are highly qualitative in nature—useful in some sense, but lacking in theoretical and methodological rigor (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

Indeed, quantitative approaches to understanding such generational differences are currently inconclusive (also partly due to the fact that this organizational subfield is relatively nascent; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). One large-scale, individual-difference perspective on generational differences, incorporating eight decades' worth of data since the 1930s, finds that Millennials – compared with other generations at the same age – are highest in self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression, lower in need for social approval (i.e., more about "doing what's right for you"; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). These personality traits also translate to workplace-specific expectations; for instance, lower need for social approval translates to more casual attitudes toward work attire than in prior generations, and heightened narcissism might signify reduced receptiveness to on-the-job criticism. On the other hand, a different study finds that Generation X is similar to Millennials, in work ethic and centrality of work—both of which are lower than for Boomers (Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010). However,

given that the Generation X participants were the same age as Millennials at the time of study, it is difficult to disentangle cross-generational similarities from mere age ones (Meriac et al., 2010). In fact, at least anecdotally, some argue that Boomers are actually the most narcissistic generation of all, in terms of enjoying governmental entitlements while simultaneously raising the national debt to record highs (Pomeroy & Handke, 2015). Resolving such perceptions and realities therefore remains a key direction for future organizational behavior research—and one of special interest to managers seeking to employ members of different generations in the increasingly intergenerational workplace, and to minimize potential tensions thereof.

Identifying when generational diversity helps, and when it hurts

Consistent with the need to clarify generational components and dynamics in the workplace, and organizations' lack in promoting age diversity as frequently as race and gender diversity (Shore et al., 2009), the literature is undecided about how age diversity impacts performance. On one hand, researchers have identified certain positive outcomes: (a) Those who explicitly prioritize mixed-age teams maximize duration of employment for older workers (Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW), 2013); (b) a study on 93 German companies found that age-inclusive HR practices (positively) predicted firm performance and (negatively) predicted employee turnover intentions (Boehm, Kunze, & Bruch, 2014); and (c) age diversity may indirectly boost organizational performance by reducing a climate of age discrimination (Kunze, Böhm, & Bruch, 2011). However, other studies have found age diversity to have relatively weak or even nonsignificant effects on performance (Bunderson & Sutcliffe, 2002; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003; Joshi & Roh, 2009). Still other studies find that age diversity actually predicts *worse* performance, at least in contexts where work-related tasks are highly interdependent (versus independent; Timmerman, 2000) or routine (versus complex)—a finding consistent with the information-processing explanation that greater diversity of perspectives is most useful for solving complex tasks (Wegge, Roth, Neubach, Schmidt, & Kanfer, 2008).

The picture is similarly unresolved when incorporating organizational status—namely, when conceptualizing age diversity in terms of top management teams (TMTs). At least one study finds that organizations with high TMT age diversity tend to perform better with respect to market share outcomes (Kilduff, Angelmar, & Mehra, 2000). By contrast, other studies find little impact of TMT age diversity in domains of debate (and consequent financial performance; Simons, Pelled, & Smith, 1999) and innovation (Bantel & Jackson, 1989). Independent of age diversity per se, a separate finding indicates that averagely *younger* TMTs, with low organizational tenure but high team tenure, are more receptive to pursuing corporate strategic change (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Taken together, these unresolved questions comprise yet another timely topic for researchers and practitioners: gauging the proper balance of age groups within an organization in terms of performance, occupational status, and minimal tension.

How do older generations view younger ones?

This chapter has discussed the presence, risk factors, and interventions for intergenerational tensions, but our focus has been somewhat one-sided: younger generations' attitudes toward older ones. Although the evidence presented in this chapter suggests how younger generations might come to resent obstructive elders, surprisingly little research focus has elucidated how older generations perceive and prescribe behaviors for younger ones. Clearly intergenerational tensions cut both ways, and to fully understand the nature of intergenerational tensions within a rapidly aging, intergenerational workforce, a dual approach is needed.

Understanding cross-cultural variation in older worker valuation and multi-generational integration

The meta-analytic findings presented previously suggest that generational tensions are pan-cultural. Nevertheless, from a workplace standpoint, cross-cultural comparisons of generational dynamics are, to our knowledge, sparse. Moreover, as with many of the topics included in this chapter, studies focusing on cross-cultural perceptions of older workers are largely inconclusive. For instance, Americans and Thais hold largely comparable views of older workers, both positive and negative (McCann & Giles, 2006, 2007; McCann & Keaton, 2013), and similarly mixed findings emerge when comparing U.K. versus Hong Kong participants (Chiu et al., 2001). With workforce aging spanning societies around the globe (Manyika, Remes, & Dobbs, 2015), cross-cultural perspectives stand to become an increasingly important lens through which to investigate the focal topics of this chapter.

Conclusion: Blunting the double-edged intergenerational sword through research and practice

This chapter has reviewed various considerations for identifying and overcoming tensions in the newly intergenerational workplace, at multiple levels. Although more generations mean more opportunities for generations to learn from one another, higher frequency of generations bumping up against one another inside and outside the workplace gives rise to increased risk of cross-generational misunderstanding and resentment within individual, interpersonal, institutional, and international arenas.

Making the increasingly intergenerational workplace a productive one is a responsibility that falls largely on the main players. On the research and theory side, scholars in organizational behavior and related fields should work to elucidate what works and what does not, in terms of overcoming generational boundaries and utilizing the power of intergenerational collaboration. On the practice side, it is up to managers, younger workers, and even older workers themselves to be aware of the relevant issues and act proactively. Much like the generative work reviewed

here, we hope that this chapter represents a significant step toward these adaptive aims.

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