Do shifting demographics equal shifting values?
An analysis of values and aspirations of current and potential government communicators

Dissertation research portfolio submitted to Charles Sturt University for the degree:
Doctor of Communication

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November 2013
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Certificate of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

______________________
Signed Jeremy Berry

Nov. 1, 2013

_______________________
Date
Dedication

To my wife Virginia and my daughter Evangeline: the brightest of all lights guiding me from the tumultuous sea of graduate level research to the calm waters of doctoral completion. Thank you.
Acknowledgements

In addition to the bank, I am indebted to a number of other individuals and institutions. I want to thank Dr. Jane Mills, Dr. John Carroll (forever missed) and Dr. Peter Simmons of Charles Sturt University for their steadfast support and direction.

I could not have achieved this credential without the support of Mount Royal University, in particular the wonderfully supportive group I work with at the Faculty of Communication Studies.

Thank you to the Mount Royal public relations students and the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau staff who participated in my research.

Lastly, an extra special thank you to those educators and professionals I have met along the way who lit a fire in my mind and a passion in my heart, specifically Dr. Michael Real, Dr. Evelyn Ellerman, Mr. Larry Pedersen, and Mr. Marc Chikinda.
**Ethics approval**

Research conducted for this study received approval from Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee and Charles Sturt University’s School of Communication and Creative Industries’ Human Research Ethics Committee under protocols:

2011/030
112/2011/10

Ethical clearance was also required in order to study students at Mount Royal University. This clearance was granted by the Human Research Ethics Board in March of 2011 under the application number 2011-09.
Abstract

_Do shifting demographics equal shifting values?_

_An analysis of values and aspirations of current and potential government communicators_

The original contribution to knowledge in this research portfolio is a better understanding of current and potential Generation Y employees within Canadian government communication and an exploration of the future values, beliefs and skills needed within this integral branch of government.

In any democracy, government communicators are an essential link between a government and its citizens (Lee, 2008). Specifically, in Canada it is recognized that there is a need for an influx of new talent to the public service as Canada’s population is getting older each year (Statistics Canada, 2012) and “Baby Boomers,” that is, persons born between 1946 and 1964 (Tapscott, 2009), are retiring in great numbers (Public Service Commission, 2009). Staffing these positions with younger employees, particularly those born 1977 to 1997 (ages 14 – 34 when the surveys were conducted in 2011), commonly referred to as “Generation Y,” is an integral component of current government recruitment and retention planning and policy.

“Generation X,” persons born 1965 to 1976, remain in the workplace and are also integral to understanding the generational dynamic within government.

This doctoral portfolio for a higher research degree in professional communication comprises three interrelated research studies. The first two studies are exploratory in nature and use a descriptive, online survey to collect data which is analyzed using the predictive analytics software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In each case, a purposive, non-probability sample is used as a means to make contact with “particular settings, persons… deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1997, p. 87). This form of sampling was used because it can achieve
Comparability (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Comparability is key for the third study which is a comparative analysis of two sets of data.

The first study analyzes workplace values and aspirations of “Generation Y” public relations students at a Western Canadian university. Here, students were given an online survey to identify personal values, abilities required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward in the workplace and, lastly, their opinion of working in government. All respondents were members of Generation Y as defined by Tapscott (2009).

The second study analyzes the values and aspirations of three generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y – working in a Canadian provincial government. Like the first study, participants responded to questions about personal values, abilities required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward, and their overall opinion of working in government.

The third study is a diagnostic study which compares analysis of the previous two studies, offering data to outline themes and trends underpinning attitudes of potential employees. These trends and themes are valuable in identifying future research opportunities. Throughout this study, the differences between preceding and succeeding public service values are examined and assessed according to where the current working generations’ values converge with and diverge from those of the government employer.

The study shows that in order to attract Generation Y graduates such as those from the Canadian university studied in this research project, government needs to market itself as innovative and creative. The data also confirms government as an excellent place for long-term employment. According to this sample, however, long-term employment is not necessarily something Generation Y employees value. In both samples Generation Y puts personal values above money, a finding supported by the literature.
Overall, the research for this doctoral portfolio shows that the majority of government communication staff attaches positive attributes to public service communication, while less than half of the public relations students do so. Three-quarters of government staff said they would choose the career they are in if they could do it all over again, while just over half of the university student sample responded that they would consider a career in government communication.

Currently, there is little research specific to generational values within a Canadian government communication context. The research discussed in this portfolio identifies trends and opportunities for future research in this important area. It furthermore offers the opportunity for reflection about the role and nature of government communication from a researcher perspective. This reflection includes an analysis of the researcher’s own beliefs and values as they relate to the codified and vernacular knowledge associated with this topic. In discussing suggestive guidelines and best practices to assist government communication departments in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff, the researcher borrows methods and inspiration from phronetic program planning (Flyvbjerg, 2004; 2006) and researching for impact (Somekh & Lewin, 2005).
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and overview

This research portfolio presents three studies and an exegesis that analyzes workplace values and aspirations of current and potential government communicators, and explores the relationship between these values and aspirations and those of government communication departments. The principal aim of the research was to gain a better understanding of Generation Y communicators which could lead to suggestions and ideas for their recruitment and retention by government communication departments. Definitions for these generations, along with context for studying “generations,” are presented later.

According to a leading academic in the field of generational theory, Tapscott, I fall under the Generation Y banner (2009). I have been relatively successful in my career to this point in terms of experiencing intellectually stimulating and productive employment and, as a result, I have been appointed to a few professional roles that my colleagues often assumed would have gone to someone much older. Throughout my career I have experienced varying degrees of “ageism” and, as a result, I have become intellectually curious about the different working generations and how they interact with each other. Historically, ageism was associated with how the younger generations treated older generations (Abrams, Eller & Bryant, 2008; Bowling, 2007; Elmer, 2009; Hale, 1998) but recently there has been a push – albeit a small one – to assess and analyze the way older generations treat younger generations (North & Fiske, 2012; Binstock, 2010). Research into intergenerational conflict and compromise served as a major impetus for my doctoral research.

The other major impetus for my study was an initial passion for government communication and a gap in the research literature specific to Generation Y communicators. My passion developed into a determination to acquire codified knowledge and understanding – both as a practitioner and as an academic. The gap in knowledge as revealed by the literature is specific to
Generation Y communicators in Canada and I sought to fill it. My position from the outset has been similar to that of Lee: I see government communication as an essential link between the elected and the electorate (2008). I have taken a phrnetic approach (Flyvbjerg, 2004, 2006) to my research, seeking to first provide context for the problem facing government through two exploratory studies and then offering a comparative analysis that is suggestive of future action. As will be shown in the methods section, phrnetic research is “variously translated as practical wisdom, practical judgment, common sense, or prudence” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 284). An exploratory study is defined as a “preliminary study of an unfamiliar problem...” (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, p. 12).

In the last four decades the average age of Canada’s population has increased dramatically. In Alberta the median age was 24.9 in 1971; in 2011 it was 36.0 (Statistics Canada, Population Estimates, 2011). Over 42 per cent of Canada’s population is between 45 and 64, compared to under 30 per cent 20 years ago (Kennedy, 2012). This presents a challenge to all sectors, particularly the public service.

Provincial government communication offices are often the biggest employers of communicators in their respective jurisdictions, and the federal government employs more communicators than any other organization in the country (Canada, 2010). In the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, at the time research was conducted for this portfolio, there were no full-time, permanent communication staff under the age of twenty-five and just 18% of the permanent workforce was thirty-four years of age or less (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012) – meaning 82% of full-time staff were over the age of 34; In 2007 in British Columbia (BC), where there is a government communication model similar to Alberta, 12% of its staff was under thirty and approximately 20% of the workforce was scheduled to retire by 2017 (Government of BC, 2007). Given the ageing workforce and expected need for Generation Y staff, this topic is both timely and relevant. Studying government communication specifically – as opposed to other branches of government – is worth doing, because “public communication is undeniably one of the most important government functions” (Liu, Horsley...
& Yang, 2012, p. 597). Lee goes one step further and argues that government communication “is public administration” (2008, p. xvii). For the purposes of this research project, government communication is defined as the practice of communicating, both internally and externally, to key publics and stakeholders using a variety of tools, techniques and strategies.

Throughout my research journey I have become much more aware of the nuances related to my professional practice, and as such, better informed on the topic. I still see government communicators as an essential link between the electorate and the elected. However, my original perspective and underlying assumptions were challenged throughout this research project.
1.2 Research problem, questions and objectives

The research problem is: To assess whether or not an aging workforce, retirements, and changing demographics will lead to challenges in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff within government communication. And to analyze how this effect – if it is occurring – is impacting the ideal skill and value set needed within the government communication function. By understanding these differences, the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau may be able to plan and make changes that can help it attract and retain Generation Y employees.

The research questions I set out to answer were:

1. How do the values and opinions of Generation Y public relations (PR) students at an Alberta university compare and contrast with the values and opinions of Generation Y communication staff within the Alberta provincial government?
2. Is there a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees?

The two research objectives were:

1. To increase knowledge and understanding of Generation Y Canadian government communicators (current and potential) in the areas of workplace values and opinions.
2. To add to knowledge that relates to recruitment and retention of Generation Y and Generation X; especially to the advancement of knowledge specific to Generation Y within a Canadian government communication role.

This doctoral portfolio for a higher research degree in professional communication comprises three interrelated research studies. The first two studies are exploratory in nature and use a descriptive, online survey as a
means to collect data. A descriptive survey was used to “provide a picture of 
the sample” and as a means to determine whether this work would merit 
future study (Lewin, 2005, pp. 24-25). Data analysis was conducted using 
Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS was used mainly 
in the study of the Public Affairs Bureau as a means to separate each 
working generation and delineate which generation responded to certain 
questions in certain ways. This was important in that it allowed me to 
identify generational trends and in some cases, lack of generational trends. 

In both studies, a purposive, non-probability sample was used as a means to 
make contact with “particular settings, persons… deliberately selected for 
the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well 
from other choices” (Maxwell, 1997, p. 87). This form of sampling can 
achieve comparability (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). This comparability is key for 
the third study, a diagnostic, comparative analysis of two sets of data to re-
examine the implications of the first two studies in order to propose ways 
forward for government.

The main purpose of this portfolio is to report the findings of the three 
research studies, and to analyze, synthesize and explain the findings against 
the larger project objectives, and to outline potential areas for future 
research. In the spirit of Simmons, my portfolio aims to “show clearly that 
each stage derives from the one before” (2009, p. 11).
1.3 Structure of this portfolio

As an integral part of the professional doctorate, this portfolio is, a “legitimate alternative to the dissertation” (Maxwell & Kupczyk-Romanczuk, 2004). One of the fundamental differences between this portfolio and the traditional PhD. dissertation is the requirement to present three published or publishable research articles. Throughout the portfolio, a reflective and reflexive exegesis is also presented (Kroll, 2004). Kroll (2004) sees the exegesis as an opportunity for “the authorial voice once more demanding to be heard, to be part of the communication equation, if only to acknowledge the plethora of forces behind any creative production” (section 3, para 8 and 10) while acknowledging the writer as a critic for his/her own work. Reflective and reflexive approaches are explained in greater detail in section 3.1, Research Position.

This Doctor of Communication portfolio is organized in seven separate chapters. The first three chapters are an introduction to my research. Chapters four to six follow chronologically my research journey. The portfolio concludes with a reflective chapter on outcomes – both personal and professional – and suggestions for future research.

Chapters 1 - 3: Introduction/Literature Review/Research Position
These chapters provide an overview of the research and detail the reasoning behind choosing this particular topic. They also outline specific research questions and objectives of the project as a whole – objectives that are referred to throughout my portfolio. Chapters 2 and 3 include sections on the evolution of the project, existing contributions to the field, my research position and methods, and my literature review.

Chapter 4: Understanding Generation Y students
This chapter analyzes workplace values and aspirations of Generation Y public relations students at a western Canadian university. Here, students were given a descriptive survey to identify personal values relating to work, abilities required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward in the workplace and, lastly, their opinion of
working in government. All respondents were members of “Generation Y” as defined by Tapscott (2009). This chapter includes a research article entitled “Canadian public relations students’ interest in government communication: An exploratory study,” which was accepted for publication in the peer-reviewed, scholarly journal *Management Research Review*. It also includes an exegesis that outlines the background and implications of my study. The outcomes detailed in this chapter led to subsequent thinking and rethinking and subsequent research that shaped my inquiry in Chapter 5.

**Chapter 5: Exploring the inside of a government communication office**

This chapter reports the results of my second study which analyzed the values and aspirations of three working generations – “Baby Boomers,” “Generation X” and “Generation Y” – within a Canadian provincial government. As in the first study, presented Chapter 4, participants responded to questions about personal values, abilities required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward, and their overall opinion of working in government. The main focus of this chapter is a research article, “Understanding generational differences in government communication – An exploratory study of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau,” which is ready to be sent for peer-review. Reflections related to this study are also presented as part of the exegesis.

**Chapter 6: Bringing it all together – comparing and contrasting the data**

The sixth chapter presents the final research study – a diagnostic, comparative analysis of the previous two studies, offering data to outline themes and trends underpinning the attitudes of potential employees and related aspects of government communication employment policy. These trends and themes are valuable in identifying future research opportunities. Throughout this study, the differences between preceding and succeeding public service values are examined and assessed, specifically how these values differ from those of the government employer. This research article, “Generation Y in the workplace: A comparative analysis of values, skills and perceptions of government communication amongst university students and government staff,” is has been accepted with minor revisions by the
Like the two previous chapters, this chapter features a reflective exegesis. It also forms the basis of recommendations to be presented in the seventh chapter.

**Chapter 7: Conclusion**

The seventh and final chapter examines the results of chapters four to six in relation to the objectives detailed in the first chapter. In addition to providing detailed findings related to this research project, Chapter 7 also analyzes government recruitment and retention and proposes recommendations for scholars (for future research) and for government (for future policy and process/planning) based on the findings. Personal reflections from the study and subsequent results are discussed more fully and critically, as are implications and opportunities for further study in this area.

**Citations and References**

Each of the three publishable research articles has its own reference section. All the remaining references are presented in the references section at the end of this portfolio. Citations and references for each research article are done in accordance with that particular journal’s style guidelines.
Chapter 2: Review of literature

2.1 The merits of “generational” study

Analyzing the study of generations as a whole and justifying the use of the term “generation” proved a valuable starting point for my literature review as this thinking underlines my research project. Rotolo and Wilson offer a useful overview of generational theory:

Generation theory is an alternative way of accounting for age differences in behavior and attitudes when using cross-sectional data. Rather than attributing age differences to maturation and life-course events and assuming that the young will one day behave and think like the old, the differences are assumed to be permanent. It is further assumed that period effects, which influence all age groups in the population alike, will leave these generational differences intact (2004, p. 1093).

Generational theory has historical roots in early 20th century sociology (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). One of the seminal contributions to the field of generational theory, according to sociologist Pilcher (1994), is the work of Mannheim, specifically his 1923 essay “The Problem of Generations.” More recently, the theory has been directly attached to the work of Strauss and Howe (1991; 2000). Over the last two decades, Strauss and Howe have generalized the current state of generations and predicted the future state. While Wilson and Gerber (2008) have called the work of Strauss and Howe “canonical,” there remains much debate on the effectiveness of such a broad-ranging study. Historians argue there are flaws in making the predictions they do (Cronon, 2006); while Jaeger, is critical of the broad reaching generalizations he still sees some value in generational study: “an examination of limited phenomena from a generational perspective will frequently turn out to be productive” (1985, p. 291).

Australian researchers Eyerman and Turner define a generation as “a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort over a finite period of time” (1998, p. 91). According to Bourdieu, habitus is not just culture or race or
economic status but a combination of these and other factors that shape who we are and how we act (1977). Habitus, in this case, refers to my career, upbringing and general view of the world. Twenge (2010), while finding merit in the Strauss and Howe model, is also critical of this and other generational research, especially those studies relying on short, qualitative interviews over quantitative data. She argues that the field as a whole needs to move toward a time-lag study model:

One of the biggest challenges in research on generational differences is, to put it facetiously, the lack of a workable time machine. Most studies on generational differences in work values are cross-sectional, with data on workers of different ages collected at one point in time. Thus, any differences could be due to age/career stage or to generation… The best design for determining generational differences is a time-lag study, which examines people of the same age at different points in time. With age held constant, any differences are due to either generation (enduring differences based on birth cohort) or time period (change over time that affects all generations) (2010, p. 202).

Twenge found that, while there are many studies which document generational values:

…no two studies looked at exactly the same work values or variables. However, most of the studies examine at least one variable falling into one of five general categories: work ethic, work centrality, and leisure; altruistic values; extrinsic versus intrinsic values; affiliation or social values; and job satisfaction and intention to leave (2010, p. 202).

This is an important point of consideration in my own study, as in my third publishable paper two Generation Y samples are compared using the same values systems and variables as a baseline.

Studying values within a generation and comparing those values against other generations is common scholarly practice (Twenge, 2010; Egri & Ralston, 2004; Rotolo & Wilson, 2004; Glor, 2001A). The utility of this practice, however, can and should be questioned. Twenge uses Strauss and Howe’s (2000) data related to an increase in volunteering amongst high school seniors over their predecessors to prove her point: “…over this same time period, many high schools began requiring volunteer service in order to graduate; volunteer service also became more important for college
applications. Thus, this trend probably does not indicate an internalized shift toward altruistic values" (2010, p. 204). She argues further that, instead of over-generalizing as Strauss and Howe have, researchers in this area must account for an alternate reading of the data, i.e. that age or career stage may have as much to do with the finding as involvement in a generational cohort (Twenge, 2010). While critical of the work of Strauss and Howe (1991, 2000), Twenge nevertheless sees value in generational research:

The usual linear pattern of generational effects does not necessarily mean that generational labels should be abandoned; they are useful shorthand for generations that escape the ambiguity of calling a group, e.g., “today’s young generation,” as that group will not be so young in a decade or two when another group of young people has replaced them. However, the linear nature of the trends suggests that the usual view of generations as categorical, separate entities may need to be reconsidered. Instead, generations can be viewed as part of social change, which occurs gradually over a number of years (2010, p. 208).

Collecting and analyzing generational data can be effective as long as the researcher understands the different perspectives presented in the literature and is prepared to be extremely cautious about generalizations and not make broad-reaching claims about an entire generation. There is utility in using generational value systems (e.g. over fashion, or purchasing behaviours or choice of music) as a way of understanding certain subgroups of a generation. Specifically, as shown by North and Fiske, “age is the only social category identifying subgroups that everyone may eventually join” (2012, p. 982). Studying values also offers insight into the types of organizations this subgroup of Generation Y would seek to work in.

Inglehart’s work represents, at least from a political science perspective, the principle research in changing values and cultural shifts. Inglehart and Norris argue it is impossible to separate life-cycle effects from generational effects but that there is evidence that “[c]ertain decisive historical events and common experiences can stamp their imprint on a generation” (2004, p. 76). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) further studied generational values and determined that the most effective way to assess whether changing values were attributed to life stage or generational differences was to track individual cohorts’ values over time. In tracking data from Britain, France,
West Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Belgium from 1970 to 1999 they surmised that:

…large value changes actually did take place from 1970 to 1999, and they moved in a predicted direction. These changes reflect the fact that each new birth cohort that enters the survey is more postmaterialist than the previous one and remains so, producing a shift toward postmaterialist values as younger cohorts replace older ones (2005, p. 101).

Ingelhart and Welzel conclude that “if life-cycle effects were the prevailing mechanism, no overall value change would occur” (2005, p. 101). Postmaterialist values are those more closely associated with self-expression values than with survival values (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005).

Egri and Ralston state that “[g]eneration is one type of national subculture that reflects the value priorities emphasized during a country’s particular historical period” (2004, p. 210). Furthermore, they argue that events (political, economic) that occur during the duration of a generation serve to form distinct values and beliefs, behaviours and expectations (2004). The consistency of the focus on values in the work of Egri and Ralston serves as precedent for my own work. This is supported by the thinking of Rotolo and Wilson, who argue that “[g]eneration theory is a cultural theory. It attributes cohort differences in behavior to values and attitudes” (2004, p. 1094).

My conclusion is that using generational theory, specifically with a focus on values, can serve as a useful heuristic tool; the caveat is to conduct the research with a clear understanding that the study is specific to a generational subculture and that each subculture is nuanced and different from others, therefore the data – even in large quantitative samples – cannot and should not be generalized across populations or generations. However, when used with a full understanding of the potential limitations of such a tool, generalizations can be suggested across generational subcultures within a particular context.
2.2 What is Generation Y?

Before examining the issue of Generation Y in government communication within Canada, it is important to put Generation Y into context. Defining Generation Y is no easy task; even selecting the appropriate name can be a challenge. Some, like Canadian researcher Tapscott, prefer to call this group the Net Generation (2009) while others refer to it as the Millennials (Strauss & Howe, 1991; 2000). New Boomers, Generation Next, and the Me First Generation are a few of the other terms used to describe this group. I choose the term Generation Y as it is the most widely used in Canada and it is a logical extension of the generation which preceded it, Generation X. Generalizing an entire generation – which may be 20 years in duration – comes with significant challenges and at the outset, as discussed in section 2.1, the validity of such generalizations need to be questioned.

There is much disagreement on the topic of defining the duration of Generation Y, just as there is for earlier and subsequent generations. This portfolio uses the parameters outlined in Tapscott’s *Grown Up Digital* (2009). According to Tapscott there are three generations which are of working age: Baby Boomers (born between 1946-64); Generation X (born between 1965-1976), and; Generation Y (born between 1977-1997) (2009). The oldest members of Generation Z or the Next Generation, according to Tapscott, are 16 years-of-age (born 1997 or after).

The most salient characteristic of members of Generation Y, according to Tapscott, is that they have grown up with computers and are the “first generation to be bathed in bits” (2009, p. 17). Lipkin and Perrymore, authors of *Y in the Workplace: Managing the “Me First” Generation*, state: “This generation is multi-talented, over-stimulated, socially aware, demanding and resourceful” (2009, p. 16). Others, like Emory University English professor Bauerlein, are not as kind, dubbing the generation the dumbest ever (2008).

Tapscott’s comprehensive study, which includes 7,685 interviews with people born between 1977 and 1997, led him to arrive at eight defining
characteristics of Generation Y, or “Net Generation Norms” (2009, p. 34). These norms, based on Tapscott’s research are eight ways that Generation Y differs from its parents:

1) They want freedom in everything they do, from freedom of choice to freedom of expression; 2) They love to customize, personalize; 3) They are the new scrutinizers; 4) They look for corporate integrity and openness when deciding what to buy and where to work; 5) The Net Gen wants entertainment and play in their work, education and social life; 6) They are the collaboration and relationship generation; 7) The Net Gen has a need for speed – and not just in video games; and 8) They are the innovators (2009, p. 35-36).

Strauss and Howe (2000) describe Generation Y (or Millenials, using their term) as engaged, pleasant, optimistic and people who follow the rules.
2.3 Importance of creativity to Generation Y

According to Tapscott (2009) and Florida (2009), embedded in innovation, collaboration and entertainment, creativity is a characteristic of Generation Y. Based on these findings, it would seem to be an imperative for government to promote opportunities for creative work in order to recruit and retain members of the creative class. Florida states that creative economies are one element in attracting young people, but there are other factors, including the number of potential life partners. According to his research, “Calgary, Ottawa, and Victoria top [the] list of Canadian cities for young singles, followed by Edmonton and Guelph” (2009, p. 247). And while the number of singles may draw young people to Edmonton (home of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau), it is not yet known what role, if any, creativity would play in a Government of Alberta communication role.

Gregory, in her foreword to Green’s Creativity in Public Relations, argues that there is a misconception about creativity and that it is more than “fairy dust” and the “aha factor” and instead it is “problem solving and it can and should influence every part of a campaign” (qtd. in Green, 2010, p. X). Understanding creativity is as challenging as being creative; McIntyre’s work in assessing and analyzing creativity further illuminates this discussion and he notes several important points that need to be considered in future studies:

Firstly, there often appears to be a fallacious distinction made between the creativity ordinary people engage in and that which is seen to be extraordinary…Secondly, further investigation is needed of the stages of the creative process proposed by Graeme Wallas (in Rothenberg & Hausman, 1976). Wallas saw the stages of creativity as: preparation, incubation, illumination and verification…Thirdly, the arguments that spring from the bipolar oppositions of agency versus structure, voluntarism versus determinism and freedom versus constraint, oppositions that underpin many of the assumptions made about creativity in the media, can be resolved once it is realized that these dichotomies are complementary rather than oppositional (2009, p. 166).

While many city planners have adopted Florida’s ideas with enthusiasm, he has also been heavily criticized by a group of scholars. Among other names, he has been called a neo-liberal snake oil salesman (Peck, 2005) and a self-
indulgent yuppy (Zimmerman, 2008). His writings have been critiqued by Scott as being too simplistic: “the basic idea here can be expressed in its bald essence as X → Y, where X is the creative class and Y is local economic development” (2006, p. 11). Mindful of the criticism, in particular Scott’s argument that there are complex interrelationships that Florida ignores and that there are no simple independent variables, was of value in my own research as it forced me to look at more elements than creativity in the recruitment and retention of Generation Y. Furthermore, it forced me to look more closely at creativity in government, specifically intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Glor, 2001C). As a result, Florida’s research and ideas related to creative economies were of value in positioning my own research.
2.4 Understanding the different perspectives in Generation Y research

Generational research spans disciplines and does not fit in any one particular category. In fact, it could easily fit three of the six (or more) social science disciplines as laid out by Somekh and Lewin (2005). These three areas are: sociology, social policy research, and research in management and business studies.

The prevailing methodology in researching Generation Y is quantitative in nature, usually involving surveying and polling. In terms of study size, Tapscott’s 2009 study is perhaps the most comprehensive as it included nearly 8,000 interviews with members of Generation Y (overwhelmingly from developed nations, including Canada) and “30 deep dive, ethnographic studies of Net Geners in their home settings” (2009, p. xii). Bauerlein’s mostly quantitative research approach is based entirely on self-selected secondary sources, and as he notes early on, he does not cover “behaviors and values” (2008, p. 7). The disconnect between the methods used by Tapscott and Bauerlein, two of the most influential Generation Y researchers when it comes to shaping public opinion through the media, offer great insight into this scholarly debate. The methods used by each of these authors, are not polar opposites, but instead should be viewed as different points on a continuum (Newman & Benz, 1998). Analyzing the different methods used in the study of Generation Y allowed me to hone my own methods and led me to a mixed methods approach: quantitative data collection with a qualitative reflective and reflexive component.

Tapscott argues that his project is the “definitive research project on this generation” (2009, p. 289). The first main conclusion of his study is: “…not only are the kids [Generation Y] alright, but as a generation they are poised to transform every institution of society – for the better” (2009, p. 289). He could not resist adding that:

The shocking conclusion from my research is not that the generation [Generation Y] is somehow fatally flawed. Rather, it is that the mean-spirited, gleefully contemptuous characterization of youth today is pretty much without foundation. The cynics appear to be
making up most of this stuff. Their scorn is without basis (2009, p. 304).

Tapscott found Generation Y to be the smartest ever and surmises that it is only reasonable for other generations to be fearful of that (2009). Bauerlein on the other hand, titled his best-known book, *The Dumbest Generation* (2008). This book can be summed up as a cautionary tale about declining intelligence amongst Generation Y. His thesis, supported by empirical evidence, is this: “[They] care not for history books, civic principles, foreign affairs, comparative religions, and serious media and art, and *The Dumbest Generation* knows less” (2008, p. 234). Failure to see the light, according to Bauerlein, may result in this generation losing all of America’s heritage forever (2008, p. 236). Both Bauerlein and Tapscott offer far-reaching conclusions that generalize entire generations and furthermore, compare Generation Y to all other generations without the data to support such claims. This approach, as noted in the beginning of my literature review, is problematic and devalues generational research. And while some might argue that the tone and tenor of this argument is not indicative of a serious research endeavour, understanding the thinking of two major researchers in the field of Generation Y (Tapscott and Bauerlein) is imperative in positioning my own research. As noted earlier, the utility of broad reaching generalizations of generations should be questioned and so should authors writing within this genre. Tapscott and Bauerlein, at least to some academics, fall within a category of “gurus” or “management experts” and not true academic scholars. However, their polarized and opposing perspectives are also found in academic journals. Jurkiewicz (2000), for example, found little difference between Generation X and Baby Boomers in her study (with an N of 241) whereas in their sample of more than 3,000 respondents, Benson and Brown (2011) found, differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X.

One goal of my study is to bridge this wide gap between polarized and opposing perspectives, and present data that can be used to further a more constructive academic debate while applying scholarly rigor to ensure I do not overstep the boundaries of the data collected and the notion of generational subcultures.
2.5 The nature of work within Canadian governments

In order to successfully position my own Generation Y research within the Alberta government’s communication function, it was imperative to examine the nature of work within Canadian governments. Without an understanding of the workplace culture within Canadian governments, it is impossible to argue how Generation Y opinions might converge or diverge with those of the larger government workforce. In this section, the nature of work, the emergence of corporate culture and the knowledge economy will be discussed with the specific aim of getting a more accurate picture of the current situation within Canadian governments.

In Canadian governments, as in most other government and non-government workplaces throughout the Western world, the labour process has radically changed in the last one hundred years, especially since the early 1900s with the adoption of a scientific management system known as Taylorism. Named after Frederick Winslow Taylor, this system relies upon non-skilled workers and adds a managerial element to the work (Salaman, 1997). In the late 1990s, according to Salaman, much of the focus of management was on the customer and not the process, “hence current concern with customer care” (p. 239). Salaman further argues that a shift to the corporate culture approach, which focuses on building an organizational culture with consistent norms and values shared by all members started to occur (1997). Noted cultural theorist, Schein argues that “culture can be studied at three levels – the level of its artifacts, the level of its espoused beliefs and values, and the level of its basic underlying assumptions” (2010, p. 32). For the purposes and scope of my research, basic assumptions of various cultures are applied as a means to begin – thru descriptive surveys – to make sense of beliefs and values.

Culture “refers broadly to a relatively stable set of beliefs, values and behaviours commonly held by a society” (Lim, 1995, p. 16) and corporate culture was developed “to explain the economic successes of Japanese over American firms, through the development of a highly motivated workforce, committed to a common set of core values, beliefs and assumptions” (Lim, 29
Based on the work of Salaman and the shifting culture in the workplace, assessing the organizational culture within Canadian governments becomes fundamental in determining where and how the values and beliefs of Generation Y would fit.

The idea of corporate culture has been critiqued, especially as it can subjugate the worker to the company and promote “corporate hegemony” (Ogbor, 2001, p. 590). Nonetheless, new perspectives on corporate culture – like Senge’s learning organization which focuses on building thriving, organizations that mirror strong communities (1994; 2006) – have been posited. Salaman argues that the notion of corporate culture is important, especially from a command and control perspective (1997). He states that organizational life is a form of government control: “One way of seeing this government of organizations is as a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons” (p. 268). The recent push to reintroduce culture and make meaning in the workplace is a response to Taylorism, according to du Gay, who highlights the importance of culture and argues that life in the workplace has become more “culturalized” over the years (1997, p. 319). Du Gay (1997) argues that attempts to create cookie cutter or one-size-fits-all solutions to culture in the workplace will not work. Instead, he suggests “that the experience and identity of work are historically and culturally constructed” (p. 319). Understanding the shift in production – from a focus on the process to a focus on the customers and the values of the staff – supports powerful questions embedded within my own project, including: have government programs to recruit Generation Y succeeded or failed? And what part of this success or failure is due to the creation of top-down, cookie cutter approaches?

More recently the knowledge economy has produced the knowledge worker, and with it, a changing organizational culture, as described by Tapscott and Ticoll (2003): “Today’s open enterprises provide employees access to a vast amount of information about the firm and its management. They build trust with employees through openness and ethical values” (p. 97). Tapscott and Ticoll argued that there was a shift occurring – no longer did the information flow vertically from top-to-bottom as it did in the old model,
instead the knowledge worker demanded transparency and instant access to information (2003). In 2009, Tapscott extended this idea and started forecasting a revised workplace model that would use “Web 2.0 communication tools to create a collaborative workplace that democratizes and accelerates the performance of an organization” (p. 182).

The nature of work in Canadian governments is shifting, though the changes may be slower and less seamless than those in the private sector. Glor’s research shows that in the past, Westminster public services values “were commitment to the public interest or public good, public service, equality and due and fair process” (2001A, p. 525). Historically, according to Perry and Wise, the main motivation for a public servant was to make a difference (1990). By the turn of the new millennium, on both a provincial and national level, governments had shifted to the New Public Management (NPM) model (Glor, 2001B).

Vakil (2009) notes that the new values are a reaction to globalization, new technology, fiscal pressures, and customer/citizen demands. These NPM values are described by Glor as: “…the focus has shifted to efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer service/satisfaction, and accountability for results” (Glor, 1994/1995 qtd. in Glor, 2001A, p. 525). Years earlier, Perry and Wise (1990) described something similar as “the economic model of behavior” and Glor adds, “incentives have been introduced to influence public servants – positively with rewards, negatively with punishment” (2001A, p. 525). Glor (2001A) and Vakil (2009) argue there is a difference between the new values and the old ones, with the former not always being more effective than the latter. It is worth noting that Vakil’s study concludes that “…the BC [British Columbia] government’s effort to encourage the public service to adopt contemporary work values [NPM] did not succeed” (2009, p. iv).

Based on some of the norms and ideas associated with Generation Y (presented earlier), the NPM governance model – which values efficiency, entrepreneurism, flexibility and is based on a private sector mentality of employees being self-interested (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006)
would appear to be a good fit for this generation. With change being constant, a new governance model has now been posited in Canada, called New Political Governance or NPG (Aucoin, 2012). Aucoin argues NPG is more politicized than the NPM model and that it shifts the meaning of public service loyalty to “being promiscuously partisan for the government of the day” (2012, p. 179). Aucoin takes the time to explain where the NPM and NPG models converge and diverge: “In contrast to legitimate democratic control of the public service by ministers [under New Public Management], NPG constitutes a corrupt form of politicization to the extent that governments seek to use and misuse, even abuse, the public service in the administration of public resources and the conduct of public business to better secure their partisan advantage over their competitors” (Aucoin, 2012, p. 178).

There is evidence to show that Generation Y values creativity and collaboration, though it remains to be seen which model governance model they will most identify with and why. Jenkins with Clinton, Purushotma, Robison and Weigel (2006), for example, argue that Generation Y teenagers aged from 16-19 are actively involved in a “participatory culture,” a culture celebrating creativity and civic engagement. According to Jenkins (2006) we are currently experiencing “convergence culture” where new and old media collide – but do not replace each other. Jenkins argues that a shift to a more participatory culture is occurring, though not all are recognizing it. He maintains that the Internet opened a “floodgate for young people” but television (classified as the old guard; the establishment) has not followed suit (p. 251). He adds that there has been resistance by the establishment – which could include government – to fully embracing the so-called convergence culture. Jenkins also argues that government could be stronger and its employees better off with a more participatory, community based approach (2006).

A question that this research raises for my own project is this: Is the NPM or NPG model reflective of the shift as described by Jenkins (2006)? If governments want to act in a more participatory, collaborative way – with their internal staff and with external stakeholders – it will take a shift in the
power dynamic, an area that has, at least historically, had a great effect on government communication. Furthermore, it remains to be proven if Generation Y within government communication prefer more historical (Westminster governance) or contemporary (NPM/NPG) governance systems.
2.6 The dominant paradigm of public relations

In 1984, Grunig and Hunt outlined four traditional models of public relations practice: press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric communication and two-way symmetric communication (1984). These four models became part of the public relations vernacular, particularly in the United States. Grunig and Hunt’s research and conclusions opened up a critical battleground among PR scholars and practitioners. The four models remain cornerstones of public relations practice and theory, though the dialogue and critique has evolved since 1984. If two-way symmetrical communication is the ideal, Heath argues that a one-way model is better suited to emergency communication (2006). Furthermore, while many practitioners educated in public relations at tertiary level note the importance of practicing two-way symmetrical communication, it is not the norm in the practice of public relations (Moon, 2002; Jackson, 2003). More recently, at least in academic circles, the debate has been less about which model fits where and has instead focused on questioning the descriptive nature of the models themselves (Sha, 2007).

Pieczka argues that the four models offer an idealistic stance and that the theory is normative at best (L’Etang & Pieczka, 2006, p. 354). The four models and subsequent excellence theory (Grunig, 1992) are like religious scriptures, according to Pieczka, in that they make perfect sense to the converted but should be questioned by non-believers (2006, p. 355). Fawkes (2012) places public relations theory in four categories: 1) excellence, 2) advocacy, 3) relationship management, and 4) critical theory. Excellence, she argues, is the theory most closely tied to the work of Grunig and many other pro-public relations people: “... because it glorifies their contribution to democracy and social progress, and avoids awkward discussion of its involvement with historical or contemporary propaganda” (2012, p. 121). Advocacy focuses less on two-way symmetrical relationships and more on persuasive, asymmetrical communication and relationship management explores elements that are integral to positive relationships. The fourth theoretical category posited is critical theory, which includes a healthy scepticism of the role of public relations. Fawkes argues that scholars who
have chosen the critical theory approach have “...rejected the normative influence of the excellence approach, argued for greater reflexivity, accepted the role of propaganda in the formation of public relations, and reached outside the field...” (p. 124). While those within the dominant paradigm, like Grunig, see public relations as ethical and necessary, others make “predictable counterstatements” (Merkelsen, 2011); Merkelsen has summed the argument up as “the double-edged sword of legitimacy in public relations” (2011, p. 125). Merkelsen, Pieczka and Fawkes are not alone in challenging the dominant US-based public relations paradigm (see: Ilhen & Verhoeven, 2012; Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; McKie & Munshi, 2007). Of interest is that the critical/activist viewpoint of public relations (i.e.: those researchers questioning the dominant paradigm) is not prominent in North America. “Public relations research from within this paradigm has, broadly speaking, stemmed mainly from Europe and Australia/New Zealand. In the USA, critical approaches have been slower to take off, perhaps largely due to the predominance of post-positivist public relations research” (Curtin, 2012, pp. 37-38).

Challenging the dominant paradigm of public relations has also opened the door to new research approaches, from justice (Simmons & Walsh, 2012) to “sociology, postmodernism, cultural theory, anthropology, rhetoric, critical theory, communication science and communication studies” (Ilhen & Verhoeven, 2012). The goal is to produce “a richer and wider approach to the study and practice of public relations” (Ilhen & Verhoeven, 2012). In addition, scholars are also researching the differences and similarities between the public relations and organizational justice fields to determine what could be gained from understanding how the two relate (Simmons & Walsh, 2012).

Questioning the dominant paradigm within public relations is uncomfortable, but necessary as “[m]ore theoretical variety might be healthy for public relations development” (Pieczka, 2006, p. 355). As noted by Fawkes, debating right and wrong may not be a useful exercise: “Hermeneutics supports the move away from reason as the sole arbitrator of either right or good, encouraging greater self-awareness, a call echoed by
Jungian psychology, with the ultimate goal not goodness but wholeness” (2012, p. 135). Pieczka states that there is “nothing wrong with choosing one of these views over another, as long as it clear that as a result of the choice certain questions do not get asked” (2006, p. 357). Types of questions to be left out could relate to power, knowledge, language and perspective (Pieczka, 2006).

Merkelsen argues that the dominant paradigm in public relations was created to reinforce and legitimize the work of PR practitioners, and to show an evolution of the practice:

It is reasonable to interpret the ethical evolution thesis, which is present from Goldman's (1948) notion of the-public-be-informed to Grunig's ideas about the supremacy of two-way symmetrical communication, as a way of dealing with the double-edged sword of legitimacy. In this case, promoting a theoretical concept of the PR function as a boundary spanner that operates through an ethically sound two-way dialogue serves neither as a representation of reality nor as a case of best practice but rather as a way of ensuring the legitimacy of the PR profession (2011, p. 136).

By challenging the existing paradigm, this new public relations scholarship is taking research in new and different directions. In the process, viewing the public relations function with a critical lens allows government communications practitioners, like myself, an opportunity to reflect on our personal epistemologies and develop a better knowledge of why we do the things we do.
2.7 Government public relations practice

Government public relations is connected to the broader field of public relations. As such, scholars have studied the practice in relation to Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models and in critiques of the four models. Furthermore, much work has been done looking at connections between effective communication by government and effective policy creation. The practice and perceptions of government public relations will be discussed in this section.

To Lee, government public relations and government administration are synonymous (2008; 2012). He argues that government public relations can do two things very well: “(1) implementing the agency’s central mission and (2) fulfilling the democratic responsibilities inherent in government” (2012, p. 12). Liu, Horsley and Yang state that:

Public communication is undeniably one of the most important government functions. Government entities must communicate about changes in laws, public safety issues, matters related to international diplomacy, and a host of other topics in an effective and time-sensitive manner. Unlike most business communication, government communication often deals with life and death issues, as during a natural disaster or terrorist attack, and with issues that directly affect citizens, such as taxes, elections, and public policies (2012, p. 597).

The importance of the communication function within government adds weight to the significance of understanding public relations students’ and government communications staff attitudes toward government communication.

Reflecting on the dominant paradigm of public relations, Grunig and Hunt argued that the public information model was most used by government communication (1984). Supported by further research by Pollack (1984), Grunig and Hunt estimated that the public information model “is nearly always used in government agencies” (1984, p. 26). The use of this model within governments has deep historical roots. In 1913, US Congress passed the Gillett Amendment “which prohibits government agencies from hiring ‘publicity experts’ unless money is specifically appointed by Congress” and essentially limits government to the one-way information model (Grunig &
Hunt, 1984, p. 36). This amendment remains today and continues to “intimidate those who work in government public relations” (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, p. 501). For this reason, government activities in the US remain under the umbrella of “public affairs” as opposed to “public relations” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

According to Pollack, the second most used communication model in government, at least in 1984, was press agentry (1984) a model synonymous with P.T. Barnum-style showmanship and the pseudo-event (Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). Grunig and Hunt, while favouring the two-way symmetrical model throughout their seminal 1984 work, do state that using a one-way model can be effective at times; however, for truly effective and proactive public relations, the two-way model should be embraced. While the call, and push for two-way symmetrical communication, is nearly 30 years old, a recent study shows that one-way communication is still more prevalent than either of the two-way models (Tindall & Waters, 2010).

In Canada, the Sponsorship Scandal1 cast government communication in a negative light and is a glaring example of government communication done poorly and unethically (Kozolanka, 2006). This negative attention toward government is supported by a survey of private and public sector communicators which shows that government communicators are covered more often by the media and are portrayed more negatively than their private sector counterparts (Liu, Horsley & Levenshus, 2010). Nevertheless, government communicators are faced with a tough task: “An important challenge, somewhat ironically, is the problem government communication is supposed to solve: public distrust” (Liu, Horsley & Yang, 2012, p. 597).

While there has been minimal recent scholarship examining Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) four models in government communication, one recent study examined the use of Twitter in relation to these models within a government

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1 Sponsorship Scandal refers to a Government of Canada program that ran from 1996 until 2004. The program was an effort to raise awareness of government contributions to Quebec but it was badly managed and led to an investigation. The Gomery Inquiry into the scandal found serious misuse and misdirection of public funds.
communication context. Waters and Williams (2011) found that government agencies used Twitter as a one-way communications tool to educate and inform, not to start a conversation. While the two-way symmetrical model has been described as the “ideal” (L.A. Grunig, 1990), one-way communication is as important as ever (Tindall & Waters, 2010). Furthermore, as argued by Waters and Williams, what is the incentive for government to move to a more symmetrical model:

> Organizations are not inclined to sacrifice the one-way distribution of messages to mass audiences in order to spend more time and resources to have many one-on-one symmetrical conversations. Likewise, organizations are not going to abandon the control that they maintain in one-way communications for give-and-take conversations on issues where external stakeholder input is not warranted (2011, p. 357).

It is important, however, to get some historical context for why government communication and government communicators are seen in a different light from their private sector counterparts. In the late 1980s Larissa Grunig and James Grunig argued that if government had access to more knowledgeable communicators, they may engage in more professional communication practices:

> … public relations practitioners with the knowledge, training, and experience to practice a two-way model of public relations are more likely to be included in the organization's dominant coalition. They also are more likely to have power in that coalition rather than to serve it in an advisory role. When public relations managers have power in the dominant coalition, they can influence organizational ideology and the choice of publics in the environment for which strategic public relations programs are planned. At that point, public relations practitioners can fulfill a communication counseling and management role and truly practice the profession defined for them in public relations textbooks but seldom fulfilled in the real world (1989, p. 60).

Government public relations practice has evolved since 1989, but challenges, including the Gillett Amendment (in the US), an overall lack of resources (Garnett, 1997) and specifically a lack of a budget (Liu, Horsley & Yang, 2012) remain as challenges, especially when making comparisons with the private sector (Liu, Horsley & Levenshus, 2010).
Fairbanks, Plowman and Rawlins (2007) argue that a well informed public is central to a successful democracy. In their 2007 study they analyzed transparency in government communication using 18 semi-structured interviews and found that while many people distrust government, the government communicators interviewed strongly value and advocate for transparency (p. 33). While the sample size is small for this qualitative study, the information is valuable in that it illuminates an area of government not covered by previous research. They also found that administration, office structure and politics could have great influence on the level of transparency. Liu and Horsley identified “eight attributes that affect government public relations: politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for public relations practitioners, poor public perception of government communication, lagging professional development, and federalism” (2007, p. 377).

Other research into government communication has focused on structured systems and less on competencies of communicators (Gregory, 2006). While Liu and Horsley (2007) state some of the problems facing government communication, they reinforce the importance of this function: “The public will never lose its reliance on government information” (p. 391). If, as noted by Tapscott (2009), Generation Y values integrity and is quick to scrutinize, clearer information about the role of the professional communicator within government would be a step in the right direction to recruiting from this demographic. However, public relations has negative connotations associated with it that go beyond the public sector. To some authors, public relations is synonymous with propaganda and spin (Hiebert, 2003; Stauber & Rampton, 1995). Noting that throughout much of the literature government communication is perceived as less effective than other private sector-specific areas of public relations (Grunig & Grunig, 1989) and that government communicators do not have access to the same resources as their private sector counterparts (Liu, Horsley & Levenshus, 2010) helped me realize that gaining a better idea of the perceptions of potential employees was a necessary direction for my research to take.
While the work of Grunig and Hunt can and should be questioned, assessing the historical and contemporary roots of public relations is nevertheless valuable in gaining a better understanding of government public relations. While the dominant paradigm is subject to scholarly scrutiny, “all four models of public relations are still practiced by organizations” (Waters & Williams, 2011, p. 356). Part of my study will seek to determine how prominent the four models of public relations are within this sample of government communicators to ascertain whether those educated in PR feel differently about these models than those who are not educated in PR.

This review of the literature has given me great insight into my research topic and has served me well in framing my own research position and methodology. My research will outline prevailing values and beliefs of current and potential government communicators within a small generational subculture, while illuminating some of the challenges and highlighting successes within the government communication function of one Canadian province.

As shown in the literature review, government communications is an important, changing and understudied component of government administration. Furthermore, Generation Y plays an integral role in the future of government and government communication and deserves further attention and study. Using existing public relations literature and scholarship is useful in gaining a better understanding of the government communication function; while articulating and applying existing generational research against the government communication backdrop will be of assistance in answering current questions around recruitment and retention of Generation Y and will no doubt generate new questions worthy of future study.
Chapter 3: Research position and methods

3.1 Research position

Throughout, I strived to be both reflexive and reflective following Ryan’s advice: “to be reflexive, participants investigate their interactions via introspection as they occur and in the reflective mode participants reflect on various elements (verbal, nonverbal, feeling and thoughts) following the action” (2005). The tone and purpose of my writing changed throughout this process, informed by new knowledge and constant reflection. With each new draft of each of my three research projects, I learned how to better articulate the importance and value of my research while gaining new appreciation for the role of the independent academic researcher. In my approach to reflexivity I borrow some of the ideas of Willis, who urges practitioners to produce realist narratives that are accessible by ordinary people (2000) but I am also influenced by Denzin, who cautions that simply communicating with ordinary people is not enough. “The critical, performance ethnographer is committed to producing and performing texts that are grounded in and constructed in the politically and personally problematic worlds of everyday life” (2010, p. 270).

My role in this process has been multifaceted as I found myself firmly positioned at the interstices of the workplace (as a former British Columbia government communicator), the profession (as an accredited member of the Canadian Public Relations Society) and the academy (as an associate professor of public relations at Mount Royal University).

Despite my increasing awareness of the need to maintain a rigorously independent scholarly approach, the data I collected and questions I asked inevitably reflected my own personal values. While I made every attempt to recognize my own biases and minimize their impact, it is important to
acknowledge that a “researcher’s thinking puts a particular angle on a research project from start to finish” (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 8). Purposefully, I chose reflexive and reflective methods as a means of triangulating my quantitative data and to highlight my own subjectivity in this research project. According to Daymon and Holloway, I was embracing my own subjectivity, including “philosophical stance, background, experiences, biases and emotions” (2011, p. 9).

Reflexivity is integral to my research process, because without it, the “research is blind and without purpose” (Flood, 1999, p. 35). As I look deeper into my own personal epistemology, elements of post-modernism and critical theory are at the forefront. A post-modern perspective influences my thinking in that I believe there are no single truths related to my research instead (Merriam et al., 2001), multiple interpretations and an element of co-construction between my research subjects and myself. My own personal beliefs relating to age and generations in the workforce, specifically younger generations being subjugated by older ones, highlight a critical perspective which focuses, at times, on power imbalances. Highlighting my own subjectivity has been important to my doctoral research project as it is an element that can “impinge on, and even transform, research” (Finlay, 2002, p. 210). In addition to being important, reflexive analysis can be challenging. According to Finlay:

Reflexive analysis is always problematic. Assuming it is even possible to pin down something of our intersubjective understandings, these are invariably difficult to unfold, while confessing to methodological inadequacies can be uncomfortable (2002, p. 212).

Finlay (2002) offers five variants of reflexivity, which are useful in positioning my own approach, they are: introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique and discursive deconstruction. In introspection, primary evidence is based on the researcher’s own reflection and thinking. Intersubjective reflection goes beyond introspection to a place “where the self-in-relation-to-others becomes both the aim and object of focus” (p. 216). Mutual collaboration
refers to the “notion of shared realities” but it can also “disguise essentially unequal relationships” (p. 216). Addressing the power dynamic is the main concern of the social critique variant, which affords researchers “the opportunity to utilize experiential accounts while situating these within a strong theoretical framework about the social construction of power” (p. 222). And finally, in reflexivity as discursive deconstruction, specific attention is given to the “ambiguity of meanings in language used and how this impacts on modes of presentation” (p. 222).

How does a researcher choose which variant is best? Finlay offers useful advice:

Surely the pertinent, and probably obvious, issue is how well the reflexive analysis is done? Introspection and intersubjective reflection without critical self-analysis, focused on how the self impacts on the research, is of limited value and open to the charge of self-indulgence. Collaborative reflexivity which doesn’t reveal conflicting voices and which lacks a well-grounded critical rationale can rhetorically camouflage inequalities present. In reflexivity as social critique, it is naive, if not disingenuous, to pay lip-service to the power dimension by assuming a fixed and knowable subject position. The focus, instead, needs to be on the diverse and shifting positions mutually adopted. Finally, nihilistic discursive deconstructions, taken too far, can lose the capacity to evoke and be thought provoking (2002, p. 225-226).

Of these variants, introspection and social critique align most closely with my way of thinking – a connection that highlights my overarching position. It is worth noting that crossover can and will exist across each of the variants. When describing introspection in reflexive research, Finlay further suggests that experience is of foremost importance and that interest in a certain subject or topic area is imperative (p. 213). Moustakas states that a challenge for researchers within this variant is “to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher” (1990, p. 27). The challenge and opportunity within this variant is “to become more explicit about the link between knowledge claims, personal experiences of both participant and researcher, and the social experience” (Finlay, 2002, p. 215). Reflexivity as social critique focuses on “how to manage the power imbalance between researcher and participant” (p. 220). This variant plays a
prominent role in my research, specifically in my study of Mount Royal University (MRU) students given my role as faculty member at the same institution. A strength of this variant, according to Finlay is the recognition of multiple, researcher-participant positions (2002). The challenge, she argues, is to not focus solely on egalitarianism in one’s reflection, as the researcher may then lose sight of other noteworthy issues. In terms of theoretical positioning, by focusing on these two areas of reflective practice, I find myself entrenched in two distinct paradigms: social critique is closely related to post-modernism while introspection is more aligned with what Finlay describes as “phenomenological and psychodynamic researchers” (p. 224). She does note, however, that it is possible to embrace several of the variants, which is what I have done.

As part of my methodology I have reflected upon and analysed my career in government communication, and discovered a disconnect between vernacular and codified knowledge. The reflection process was important to my approach because rather than critiquing others, it involves a self-critique. As I had no tertiary education in public relations when I started my career in government communication, I knew little about the codified knowledge associated with my professional practice. Using the work of Hargreaves, I had the procedural and the personal knowledge, but was lacking in declarative and scientific knowledge (2000).

As an example, I used to carry out many media relations campaigns, not knowing that I was practicing the one-way public information model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) or that specific communication models even existed. Based on my experiences in government I argue that while completing the tasks related to their media relations campaigns most government communicators do not associate them with the public information model of public relations. Tacitly, as I did, they practice the public information model without knowing exactly what it is, or as Schön calls it, “knowing-in-action” (1995, p. 30). Furthermore, even if I had been aware of the dominant paradigm within US public relations, would I have sought out the scholarly critique of the Grunig and Hunt models? I, like many others in government communication, at least historically, had moved from journalism into PR.
This path, from journalist to PR practitioner, has been a common entry point into PR (Cutlip, 1994; Donoghue, 1993; Plank, 2004; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009; Likely, 2009; Johansen & Ferguson, 2004).

My experience in government communication, specifically in managing a team of multi-generation communicators, gives me a unique perspective into the chosen topic of my research project. Undertaking a doctoral degree that allowed for my practical knowledge and experiences to intersect with academic enquiry and theory has been extremely beneficial in my development as a reflective practitioner and teacher.

Prior to beginning my Doctor of Communication studies I attempted to oversimplify the views of practice in general and professional practice in particular; I spent much of my time focused on outcomes or outputs. Throughout my doctoral studies, however, I tasked myself to move away from this technicist view and embrace practice fully (Kemmis, 2003, p. 25) from a teaching and PR perspective. As a former government communications manager, and now academic, my challenge has been three-fold: understanding professional practice from the academy’s perspective and from the practitioner’s perspective and understanding the interaction between the two perspectives. This has been challenging because, as noted by Brennan, there is a theory-practice binary which is usually “represented as a distinction between research in the university and practice elsewhere” (1998, p. 45). Brennan further states that universities view “mere” practice while those “wearing the badge of practitioner” regard the university as an “ivory towered home of abstract theory” (p. 72).

The academy and the practice

Making sense of the distinction between the academy and professional practice has consumed much of my time. As Lee et al. note: “The relationship between what might be termed organizational knowledge and higher education has always been complex, dynamic, and contested” (2000, p. 118). Brennan is more specific: “In a professional doctorate, where the student is simultaneously engaged in workplace practice and research-
oriented practice, there is a need to examine carefully what is meant by research and what is meant by practice, especially when the former is supposed to describe the latter” (p. 78).

As I worked through my professional doctorate, it became clear that I needed to question why I do the things I do. For this reason, I decided to conduct research into government communication and Generation Y. In addition to establishing baseline data relating specifically to Generation Y values and beliefs in a government communication context, I was giving myself an opportunity to learn more about the students I interact with on a daily basis.

To become a reflective practitioner Schön argues that first and foremost there is the need to challenge the modern research institute and challenge the epistemology (1995). He states, “that if the new scholarship is to mean anything, it must imply a kind of action research with norms of its own, which will conflict with the norms of technical rationality – the prevailing epistemology built into the research universities” (p. 27). The traditional research institution represents the “high, hard ground overlooking a swamp” (p. 28) – the new scholar, the professional practitioner, lives in the swamp: “On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through use of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowlands, problems are messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution” (p. 28).

And this is the territory that reflective practitioners find themselves in: a swampy middle ground between objective, scientific theories and interpretive, subjective theories. “Technical rationality,” as Schön calls it (1995, p. 29), is one of the by-products of the Veblenian bargain, putting classroom knowledge at the forefront of professional practice, even though, anecdotally, doctors claim most of what they learned was in a hospital, lawyers in the courtroom and PR practitioners in the boardroom. Tacit knowledge is hard to quantify and hard to teach in the classroom, making it hard for a traditional university to market. Humans have the unique ability to reflect on their actions, though it is not something we always do.
Reflection-in-action, according to Schön, is key in professional practice as it makes explicit one’s strategies and assumptions and forces the individual to critique his/her work (1995).

Reflecting on my experiences in the classroom and in the boardroom, I have seen firsthand the intergenerational conflict that can occur. And while it is an uncomfortable topic of conversation for many, especially from older generations, it is a conversation that needs to occur, as shown by Gallicano, Curtin and Matthews:

Given that Millennials are the largest group to enter the workforce and represent the future talent pool, we believe it is more beneficial to treat their concerns with respect and explore strategies that effectively harness the skills and talents of this generation to the benefit of both them and the agencies that employ them. To that end, we note that the Millennials’ recommendations to their employers fit well with Hon and [James] Grunig’s (1999) established framework of relationship cultivation strategies (2012, p. 239).

Drawing on my personal experiences as a public relations practitioner and manager of Generation Y and creating a research plan that highlights my personal practice has allowed me to remain passionate about my topic. Furthermore, discovering the introspective and social critique variants of reflexive analysis (Finlay, 2002) have allowed me to compartmentalize my thinking within the literature.
3.2 Methods

The overarching approach to my research has been phronetic in nature. Aristotle defines, in works translated in 1976, someone engaged in phronesis as being “reasoned, and capable of action with regard to things that are good or bad for man” (1976). Flyvbjerg’s (2004) definition is an extension of Aristotle’s thinking: “phronetic planning research is an approach to the study of planning based on a contemporary interpretation of the classical Greek concept *phronesis*, variously translated as practical wisdom, practical judgment, common sense, or prudence” (p. 284). In a previous work, Flyvbjerg questioned phronesis as a useful tool in examining power relationships (1998); however, he subsequently argues that his more recent scholarship is better equipped to deal with the questions of power (2004), which is an important part of my research. Flyvbjerg (2006) surmises that phronetic research needs to address four main questions: “(1) Where are we going? (2) Is this development desirable? (3) What, if anything, should we [organization, researchers] do about it? (4) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?” (p. 374). These four questions all raise issues for my research that I shall address; my reflective and reflexive thinking outlined in my research position (section 3.1) is contained within the framework of phronesis.

A phronetic approach, according to Kemmis, involves researchers entering “public deliberation about issues in an interpretive-hermeneutic mode; in the second-person attitude of the self talking to others who are also selves. This is a reasonable stance. It is the stance of the public intellectual” (2010, p. 16). Kemmis’ critique of phronesis is that it does not achieve praxis, instead, it merely informs it: “It will be up to others – politicians, administrators, practitioners, communities or organisations – to make their decisions taking account, or not taking account, of the deliberations of the phronetic researcher” (2010, p. 16). As I have already stated, phronesis is an excellent
fit for my research, especially in assisting me not to overstep the boundaries by making specific recommendations to government.

Given that my research involves government, where the elected hold power over the electorate, I felt it imperative to approach my research from a critical perspective and “analyze the unspoken power relations governing [my research subjects] actions and understanding” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p. 344). Furthermore, Generation Y communicators (purely due to age) are not involved in many of the high-level decisions made by their communications managers, directors and executive members, making the critical perspective even more appropriate:

Critical researchers are interested in stimulating emancipation and social change by, for example, challenging orthodox practices and ways of thinking, or uncovering what has been marginalized. Their methodologies are usually grounded in interpretive thinking. Interpretive researchers are concerned primarily with reaching understanding about how meaning is constructed and re-constructed through communication relationships… (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 6).

Within the critical paradigm, I focused on “researching for impact” (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). In researching for impact, the researcher aims to speak for a marginalized population, in this case Generation Y, as they are not yet the ones creating specific government policies and they therefore play a lesser role in generational hierarchies. Attaching the title “marginalized” to Generation Y and neglecting to specify socio-economic status is sure to evoke negative responses from some academic researchers. But as my intent is to compare Generation Y to other working generations, it can be argued that in this sense they are marginalized (Eisner & Harvey, 2009).

Within this paradigm, I am borrowing from the “practice and politics of sponsored evaluations” (Abma & Schwandt, 2005). While not in a relationship involving either a paid contract, or true sponsorship, I nevertheless needed to seek approval from the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau; this process involved a period of discussions regarding my research design and specific wording and contributed to my knowledge and
understanding of the government system I was preparing to research. I was, however, able to keep the integrity of my research intact by ensuring the main line of questioning remained consistent between this study and the previous study at Mount Royal University. As I was not employed by the Government of Alberta, nor paid by government to do the research, it was possible to bring an “outsider” perspective to the research (Blackmore & Lauder, 2005). Ultimately, my research into government was about policy and not for policy and, as Blackmore and Lauder argue, research about policy creates a “useful tension but require(s) high levels of reflexivity on the part of researchers” (2005, p. 100).

I also needed, and received, the ethical approval of Mount Royal University in order to work with students at the institution where, as I have discussed earlier, I am employed. Bridging the academy and the practice with research that could be read and understood by both audiences was important to my research process, leading me to investigate the practice and politics of sponsored evaluations within the researching for impact paradigm. According to Schwandt, the purpose and role of the practice of sponsored evaluations is to: improve performance and accountability, build knowledge, aid development, enhance understanding and create social critique and transformation (2005). Each of these is consistent with my own aims and objectives.

Research studies 1, 2 and 3

Research Study 1 and Research Study 2 are exploratory studies which draw on small, yet purposive samples (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998). Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad define exploratory research as the “preliminary study of an unfamiliar problem...” (2010, p. 12). In this case, the problem that is unfamiliar is whether an aging workforce, retirements, and changing demographics will lead to challenges in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff within government communication. Furthermore, what effect, if this problem is occurring, does it have on the required skill and value set needed within the government communication function? And finally, understanding these differences, the Alberta Public
Affairs Bureau may be able to plan and make changes that can help it attract and retain Generation Y employees.

Purposive research fits well with the approach outlined above as, according to Tongco, purposive research must be consistent with the following:

1. Decide on the research problem.
2. Determine the type of information needed.
3. Define the qualities the informant(s) should or should not have.
4. Find your informants based on defined qualities.
5. Keep in mind the importance of reliability and competency in assessing potential informants.
6. Use appropriate data gathering techniques.
7. In analyzing data and interpreting results, remember that purposive sampling is an inherently biased method. (Document the bias. Do not apply interpretations beyond the sampled population) (2007, p. 151).

In my case, it was key first, that members of the Mount Royal University sample were public relations students or recent public relations graduates of Generation Y age and second, that members of the PAB sample were members of Generation Y, Generation X or Baby Boomers. Purposive sampling was key to research studies 1 and 2 in allowing me to achieve comparability in Research Study 3 (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The use of purposive sampling is “to maximize the likelihood of recruiting participants with sufficient experience with the phenomenon of interest” (Rocker, Young, Donahue, Farquhar & Simpson, 2012, p. 498); thus making it easier to make comparisons. In total, 39 out of a possible 143 MRU PR students responded in Research Study 1, a total of 27%. For Research Study 2, 36 out of a possible 282 PAB staff responded, for an average of 13%. In Research Study 1 and Research Study 2, data was collected using the TooFast survey tool (2010) and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

In Research Study 1 and Research Study 2, participants were asked a number of different types of questions including filter, Likert-scale, ranking, and dichotomous questions requiring a yes or no answer. Questions were structured to return only relative data and most were closed ended for ease
of analysis (Lewin, 2005). More information on the survey questionnaire and the methods applied appears on p. 68. Survey questions (see Appendix 1 for full survey questions) were formulated with input from existing scholarship, including the work of Glor (2001A; 2001B), Perry and Wise (1990) and Vakil (2009) in the area of government values and Wilcox and Cameron (2009) and Lee (2008) in assessing personal skills and the skills that might be required in government. Remaining themes covered in the research include: use of information technologies, work motivation, punishment and rewards in the workplace and respondents’ opinion of government communication.

Vakil’s work, in particular, became an important resource as her study focussed on the British Columbia public service (Alberta’s provincial neighbour to the west). Her study, specifically the values section, was rooted in the research of Dillman (2007), Dwivedi and Halligan (2003), Kernaghan (2007), Langford (2004) and Tait (1996). Each of these sources informed her values section and gave her solid footing to work from; in turn, her study of Alberta’s neighbouring province gave my study some context and comparability. Outside of the Vakil study, the work of Dwivedi (1999) and Kernaghan (2003) also featured prominently in my own study. Vakil’s findings have also been cited in the work of esteemed Canadian public policy expert, Evert Lindquist (2010).

In total, 75 respondents participated in the descriptive, online surveys, 55 of whom fit the description of Generation Y (the entire MRU sample is Generation Y and 44% of the PAB sample meets the same Generation Y criteria). The data cannot be read as representative across larger populations; rather, it should be used as a foundation for future research and to prompt further investigations into the generational dynamic within government communication offices.

Data from these two exploratory studies (research studies 1 and 2) is used as a comparison in Research Study 3, a diagnostic analysis aimed at detailing similarities between and differences among the populations (Golob & Bartlett, 2007) as a means to better inform the problem. Krishnaswami and
Satyaprasad identify diagnostic study as “discovering what is happening, why is it happening and what can be done about it. It aims at identifying the causes of a problem and the possible solutions for it” (2010, p. 12). Furthermore, “a diagnostic study may also be concerned with discovering and testing whether certain variables are associated...” (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 13) which in my case is assessing generational values inside and outside of government and making a determination as to whether or not said values are a contributing factor in the recruitment and retention of Generation Y within a Canadian government communication context.

As for specific research tools, I purposely chose an online survey because I wanted to meet and engage with Generation Y in a space where they were most comfortable. My web survey methodology was informed by the scholarship of Best and Harrison, particularly in deciding on survey length and overall functionality (2009). Best and Harrison recommend an Internet survey as a useful tool in administering non-probabilistic studies; in addition, they recommend advising participants upfront on the total time required to fill out the survey as a means to lessen drop-out rates (2009).

The samples used in this study are small, purposive and by no means representative but give a good indication of how a group of students and recent graduates at MRU and a sub-set of workers in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau feel about working in government communication. Given the small sample size, care is taken throughout the analysis. As noted in my concluding chapter, future studies would benefit from triangulated data generated from larger, representative samples (i.e.: workers in government communication) to further determine validity and reliability.

**Limitations**

It should be noted that the use of purposive sampling is inherently biased, as it requires the researcher to choose specific populations and is not random (Tongco, 2007). According to Goldbart and Hustler (2005), it is impossible to enter the research field with a blank slate as we all bring our prior experiences, assumptions, questions and ideas with us. In this case, my
experiences, assumptions, questions and ideas from my tenure as a government communication practitioner and as an educator of Generation Y affect my research. Furthermore, as noted earlier, just as the research of someone like Bauerlein may be influenced by age (in his 50s, he is a Baby Boomer), I needed to be aware that, as a member of Generation Y, I could have, or be perceived to have, a bias toward other members of my own generation, that is, I could be ageist. Because it is impossible to separate ourselves from our biases (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), an overall awareness of these biases does not necessarily indicate that there are flaws in a researcher’s methodology; instead the process demonstrates the need for a measure of reflection and due care and attention in research design. In my research, this included addressing issues of power and reflecting on my own inherent biases as they relate to government communication.

It is also important to note that as an academic, I am in a power relationship with my students. From a Foucauldian perspective, this would be problematic given the notion that power is closely linked to knowledge (Hall, 2001; Foucault, 1975). My awareness of this further contributed to my research design as I needed to ensure I could not identify any of my students through the survey process. As a result of this – and the input from two ethical reviews – the survey was completely anonymous and lacked background questions (race, gender, religion, etc) that could potentially identify individual students. Background data like race and gender has been important in quantitative generational studies (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010) but for my research project, this potential data was less important than the recognition of the imbalanced power dynamic. I judged that this anonymity could encourage the students to speak more freely and openly about their experiences than they might otherwise have done. The same anonymity was afforded to PAB staff in the second research study.
3.3 Contribution to the field

In Canada, Generation Y comprises approximately 28% of the Canadian workforce and 37% of the population (“Estimates,” 2011; “Labour Force,” 2011), an indication that we have not yet seen the full effects of this demographic shift. Much has been written about Generation Y in the workforce (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Benko & Weisberg, 2007; Espinoza et al., 2010; Arsenault, 2004). However, little has been written specifically on Generation Y in relation to the field of Canadian government communication. My research fills a gap in scholarly knowledge by looking solely at Generation Y in a Canadian government communication context. Throughout my research journey, there have been points of validation supporting my argument that this is an important topic, one meriting research. Finding out that the Public Service Commission of Canada has “an under-supply of younger workers” (2009) as does the British Columbia government (Human Resource Management Plan, 2007/2008) and the Government of Alberta’s PAB (2012), were points of validation. As was my discovery that PR professionals have documented “finding, motivating and retaining talent as their top challenge” (Blum & Tremarco, 2008).

Not only is there a need for more younger workers within government, there is also a demonstrated need to continue to improve employee engagement and satisfaction. The Alberta government, like many other governments, is planning for the future of its workforce. In its far-reaching planning document entitled “Focus for the Future, 2012-2032” it uses specific terms that are widely associated with Generation Y: collaboration, innovation, co-creation (Alberta Public Service, 2011). The document is a high-level planning piece; it does not, however, reference the current state of recruitment and retention in government. In the Government of Alberta’s, “2010 Employee Engagement Index” (EEI), a better idea of the current situation is offered. The EEI is:

based on the results of six questions from the ‘Corporate Employee Survey’ that are outcome measures of employee engagement: 1)
Satisfaction with their work; 2) Inspired to give their very best; 3) Proud to tell people they work for the Government of Alberta (GoA); 4) Satisfied with ministry/department; 5) Recommend GoA as a great place to work, and; 6) Prefer to stay with GoA (Alberta Public Service, Workforce Report, 2010-2011).

When responses to each question are averaged out, the results from the EEI show that in 2008, 71% of GoA employees agreed with the statements. In 2009, the number was 68% and in 2010 it was 64% (Alberta Public Service, 2010-2011). Another useful measurement from the Alberta government is the “Quality Work Environment Index” (QWEI):

This index is based on the results of 11 questions from the “Corporate Employee Survey” that measure the key determinants of a quality work environment: 1) Positive relationships with co-workers; 2) Job fits skills and interests; 3) Support for learning and development; 4) Know how work contributes to goals; 5) Satisfied with quality of supervision; 6) Support to balance work and personal life; 7) Support to provide high level of service; 8) Opportunities for input into decisions; 9) Opportunities for career growth; 10) Confidence in senior leadership, and: 11) Receive meaningful recognition (Alberta Public Service, 2010-2011).

The results from the QWEI, when responses to each question are averaged out, show that in 2008, 69% of GoA employees agreed with the statements. In 2009, the number was 68% and in 2010 it was 66% (Alberta Public Service, 2010-2011). The data presented in both the EEI and QWEI is the most recent and shows a year-over-year decline in engagement/satisfaction scores. While the data is not cross-tabulated by generation, it would be useful if it was.

In Canada, provincial, national, and municipal governments employ more communicators than any other industry (Government of Canada, 2010), and as such, are an important target audience for communication scholarship. Tapscott argues that Generation Y brings a tremendous amount of value to the workplace (2009) and the B.C. government believes they are an essential resource to maintain current staffing levels in the public service (BC Government Human Resource Management Plan, 2007/2008). By studying government communication – as opposed to another function within government – I am studying what Liu, Horsley and Yang (2012) call “one of the most important government functions” (p. 597). Lee even argues that
government communication and public administration cannot be separated (2008).

This research project gives Canadian governments a better idea about how to recruit and retain Generation Y communication staff in addition to adding to the scholarly knowledge associated with Generation Y values and beliefs in a Canadian government context.
Chapter 4. Understanding Generation Y students

4.1 Context for research study 1

Anecdotally, I had heard much about Generation Y and little that was positive. It seemed many of my older colleagues had a story detailing the lack of a work ethic within Generation Y; much of it in line with the words and thinking of Bauerlein (2008) discussed earlier. In early 2011, when I launched the descriptive survey for my first research study, I was in my fourth year of full-time teaching at MRU, and for the most part, I was observing something totally different – I was witnessing a cohort of driven, ambitious students. These students were my direct and constant connection to Generation Y. This discrepancy demanded further research and led me to examine more scholarly work specific to Generation Y (Tapscott, 2009; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Espinoza et al., 2010; Benko & Weisberg, 2007; Arsenault, 2004).

As part of my research I proposed to collect primary data relating to Generation Y, working with PR students at MRU. Based on my secondary research to this point, I knew it would be critical to involve Generation Y in a discussion about Generation Y. Too often, groups of young people are not involved in discussions directly applicable to them as shown by Cox (2010) in her study of youth voting patterns. I chose MRU as my initial sample for two main reasons: the first was access to the students due to my role as faculty member, although this created ethical issues, which will be described in detail later in this chapter. The second was the commitment from my University as a whole to involve students in academic research (“Undergraduate Research,” 2012). By selecting a specific population, I made the conscious transition from a non-purposive, random sample, to a sample purposive in its intent (Hansen, et al., 1998). The use of purposive sampling is “to maximize the likelihood of recruiting participants with sufficient experience with the phenomenon of interest” (Rocker, Young, Donahue, Farquhar & Simpson, 2012, p. 498).
This shift to purposive sampling added value to my study as I needed input from a very specific group, i.e. Generation Y PR students within a university setting. To work with MRU students, I participated in a rigorous ethical review. This was paramount, given the teacher-student relationship and the power dynamic that particular relationship brings.

After a thorough ethical review and consequent modification to my original survey questions – mostly in the areas of background information relating to gender and race so as to protect the anonymity of individual students – ethical approval was granted. As a result of this ethical review, I created a survey that protected the anonymity of the respondents, making it impossible for me, as the faculty member, to make connections between the data collected and any particular student.

Of greatest concern entering the field for Research Study 1 was the sample itself – a group of public relations students I had taught before and many of whom I would teach again. Protecting their anonymity was essential in ensuring quality data would be returned. In the practice and politics of sponsored evaluations (which this study was as it required endorsement and approval from Mount Royal University), evaluators need to be sensitive to the power dynamic (Abma & Schwandt, 2005). In this case, as a faculty member, I needed to ensure the students were offered complete anonymity and the ability to exit the survey at any time without repercussion; with the assistance of the MRU and Charles Sturt University Ethics Approval Boards this was achieved to my satisfaction.

As I will show, my first research study is integral in building the foundation to answer the first research question: How do the values and opinions of Generation Y public relations students at an Alberta university compare and contrast with the values and opinions of Generation Y communication staff within the Alberta provincial government?

It also establishes findings that serve to achieve the first research objective of my project, specifically to better understand the values and opinions of potential government communicators.
4.2 Research study 1

In this section I present Research Study 1 in the form of an article entitled: “Canadian public relations students’ interest in government communication: An exploratory study.” This article is one of three published or publishable research articles required for the portfolio of this Doctor of Communication degree at Australia’s Charles Sturt University. This first article was peer reviewed by Management Research Review and received final acceptance on June 27, 2012. Management Research Review is an Emerald research journal specializing in “communication of emergent international management research” (2012). The article is presented in the exact form it was approved by Management Research Review, including a structured abstract (as per journal guidelines) and Harvard-style references.

Citation:

As a result of a competitive peer review process, the findings from this research article were also presented at the Canadian Public Relations Society’s annual conference in Victoria, Canada in June of 2012.
Canadian public relations students’ interest in government communication: An exploratory study

Accepted by Management Research Review (Vol. 36, Issue 5, 2013)

Structured Abstract (as per Management Research Review guidelines)

Purpose – To determine Generation Y communicators’ interest in government communication.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper outlines the results of a descriptive quantitative survey conducted with 39 students and recent public relations graduates at Calgary, Canada’s Mount Royal University.

Findings – The results from the small, purposive sample confirm some assumptions employers have about Gen Y and challenge others. The results identify key themes requiring future research.

Research limitations – The research is limited in its sample size, but is not meant to be representative. It is a purposive, exploratory study that provides valuable insight into future research.

Originality/value – Sheds further light on this important topic and fills a gap in the research specific to Generation Y government communicators, offering valuable insight into the recruitment and retention of Generation Y staff in Canadian governments.

Keywords: government, public relations, communication, recruitment, retention, Generation Y

The importance of government communication for a democracy cannot be overstated. In fact, Lee cites it as being integral to public administration (2008). If government communication is important then so too are government communicators. In democratic nations one of the main links between the state and its people is government communication (Fairbanks et al., 2007). In Canada, government (provincial, national, municipal) employs more communicators than any other industry (Government of Canada,
and as such, is an important target audience for communication scholarship. A major challenge facing government communicators is recruitment and retention of younger staff, those under the banner of Generation Y. According to a 2006 study there are more than 70 million Americans who fit the age requirements for Generation Y and they account for more than 20% of the overall workforce (Spiro, 2006). By 2020, it is estimated that 40% of the US workforce will be made up of Generation Y employees (Human Capital Institute, 2008). In British Columbia, its government communications arm is facing a future staffing crunch, with just 12% of employees under the age of 30 (Human Resource Management Plan, 2007/2008). Currently in governments across Canada, there is a shortage of government communicators from Generation Y. The Government of Canada is having numerous policy discussions on the topic: “In 2000, the ratio of labour force entrants to departures was 10 to 6 in Canada; after 2015, it is predicted that the ratio will shift to 8 entrants for every 10 departures – resulting in an under-supply of younger workers” (Public Service Commission, 2009).

Before examining the issue of Generation Y in government communication within Canada, it is pertinent to put Generation Y into context. There is much debate on when certain generations start and end, but for the purpose of this study the date ranges from Canadian researcher Tapscott will be used. According to Tapscott there are three generations of working age: Baby Boomers (born between 1946-64); Generation X (born between 1965-1976); and Generation Y (born between 1977-1997) (2009). The oldest member of Generation Z or the Next Generation, according to Tapscott, would be currently 16 years-of-age (born 1997-present). The term “generation” stems from sociologist Mannheim and is defined as people “who share a common habitus” (Morgan and Ribbens, 2006).

**Context**

There is much past and recent scholarly work on government communication (Lee, 2008; Garnett, 1992; Grunig, 1997; McCamy, 1939). The topic of Generation Y in the workforce has been covered extensively in academic journals and books (Tapscott, 2009; Bauerlein, 2008; Bosco, 2010).
Anecdotally, there is widespread belief that Generation Y is less interested in politics and government than previous generations – voting data supports this. In Canada’s 2008 federal election 78.3% of people over 18 reported that they voted. When broken down to those aged 18-24 the number who reported that they had voted is just 55.9% (Statistics Canada, 2011). These statistics can be misleading however, as only 58.8% of eligible voters and 37% of the 18-24 demographic actually voted in the 2008 election (Statistics Canada, 2011), meaning there is a disconnect between the number of people who reported voting versus the number of people who actually voted [1]. However, based on census data and self-reporting on voting, there has been a steady decline of the youth vote (18-24, 25-29) for the past three decades (Parliament of Canada, 2010). It is worth noting, even if some members of the younger generation do not vote, data supports that they are indeed engaged in politically related activities. A survey done in Canada found that just under 60% of people in their twenties had voted in at least one election immediately preceding the survey, well below the average of other age groups:

However, young adults are just as likely as older age groups to engage in alternative activities. In the year prior to the survey, about 58% of those aged 22 to 29 engaged in at least one non-voting political activity, virtually the same proportion as that among people aged 30 to 64. The report notes that researchers have suggested various reasons that young adults are not as likely to go to the polls. Among them are questions of motivation, marginalization from mainstream politics and a lack of relevance (Statistics Canada, 2005).

Bauerlein (2008) argues that youth are not interested in civics or politics and data confirms this (Levine, 2007; Pryor et al., 2006). The data also shows that when youth are offered a real chance of being involved in civic engagement, specifically cause related movements, they become interested (Youniss, 2009). Cox’s 2010 survey of youth voter disengagement in British Columbia and Canada offers additional support to this research. Cox
engaged young people in focus groups and branding exercises to get a sense of what voting messages resonate with youth and why. She found that the tactics and strategies being used by government bodies, such as Elections Canada and Elections BC, did little to encourage young people to vote:

Unfortunately, rather than taking advantage of youth’s knowledge as subjects of expertise, the focus on deficits (of knowledge, of moral character, of dispositions) is likely to result in a continued understanding of youth in deficient terms, while the material and cultural effects of the current context in which they live – including the creative, innovative aspects of today’s much-discussed experiential shifts, which might be integrated into our (faltering) political system – receive little or no attention (2010, p. 154-155).

As evidenced by the work of Tapscott (2009), engaging Generation Y has indeed become an important topic of research in Canada. Governments are also changing – not necessarily as a result of Generation Y – but because of new technologies that make public reporting easier and more efficient. This too may prove to be appealing to prospective Generation Y employees in the future. The push to make governments more electronic is a means of making government more efficient and better equipped to deal with new technologies, and could be seen as a means to allow Generation Y to use their existing knowledge, skills and understanding to become valued members of the workforce. Some, like Gladwell (2011), argue that social media gives the illusion of participation without substance. Chadwick and May use a similar argument when addressing the delivery of e-government:

We conclude that the democratic potential of the Internet has been marginalized as a result of the ways in which government use of such technology has been framed since the early 1990s. An executive-driven, ‘managerial’ model of interaction has assumed dominance at the expense of ‘consultative’ and ‘participatory’ possibilities (2003, p. 273).

Even Canada, once a leader in e-government delivery, has seen its share of challenges: “According to the four criteria (cost reduction, accessibility, retrieval, and security), the Government of Canada, although it has made valiant strides to make e-government in Canada a universal reality, has not yet been able to achieve the full potential for online government” (Fraser, 2009). Canadian political scientist Small has reviewed new information technologies in relation to political engagement and has found, specifically
with Twitter hashtags, that online conversations are not two-way and are asymmetrical (2011). She concludes that Twitter hashtags are a useful dissemination tool, but less effective for dialogue (2011).

Words like “managerial” appear in a negative light in relation to governments; terms like “participatory” and “consultative” remain yet to be realized ideals – something that may have an impact on appealing to Generation Y. In *Convergence Culture*, Jenkins argues that the convergence of new information technologies is “enabling new forms of participation and collaboration” but that these new forms exist alongside – and do not replace – the power of the state (2006, p. 256). Bennett believes there are two ways to approach youth in politics – the disengaged youth paradigm where we chalk up their failure to engage in the system to technology or the engaged youth paradigm, where we use the tools they use to engage them in collaboration (2008).

Lastly, it is imperative that we examine some of the assumptions scholars have about Generation Y, as this will help frame the data in the subsequent discussion. The defining characteristic of Generation Y, according to Tapscott, is that they have grown up with computers and are the “first generation to be bathed in bits” (2009, p. 17). Lipkin and Perrymore state: “This generation is multi-talented, over-stimulated, socially aware, demanding and resourceful” (2009, p. 16). Others, like Bauerlein, are not as generous, dubbing the generation the dumbest ever (2008). Of course, none of these authors reside under the parameters of Generation Y, perhaps leading to “gencentrism” or the belief that their generation is the best and brightest (Lipkin and Perrymore, p. 17). Cameron studied first year undergraduate students at Australia’s Charles Sturt University and found that they were not yet fully digital natives, lacking in web design and digital video editing skills in addition to resisting web-based learning (2005).

In *Managing the Millennials* the authors heard stories from employers of Generation Y such as: they do not care about customers, if you correct them they quit, and they want a trophy just for showing up (Espinoza et al., 2010). The authors identify nine orientations for Generation Y: autonomous,
entitled, imaginative, self-absorbed, defensive, abrasive, myopic, unfocused and indifferent (2010). In the same book, and this is consistent with other research, Generation Ys’ believe they are not defined by their job, they are very optimistic about their futures and they want critique delivered in a friendly way (2010). The authors note that Millennials tend to have high perceptions of themselves – they feel they work better and faster than others. This assumption is confirmed in research by Berry et al. (2011) where they found younger, entry-level public relations (PR) staff across the United States and Canada rated their writing skills – almost across the board – higher than their supervisors did. According to Benko and Weisberg (2007), Generation Y values challenging and interesting work over pay. Lipkin and Perrymore mention that this generation is self-inflated, creating problems for management. This is underpinned, according to the authors, by getting trophies for 10th place, a feeling that they can do anything they want, and ultimate protection from helicopter parents who are ready to swoop in and shift the blame off of their children (Lipkin and Perrymore, 2009).

According to Tapscott (2009), there are eight defining characteristics of Generation Y:

1) They want freedom in everything; 2) They love to customize, personalize; 3) They are the new scrutinizers; 4) They look for corporate integrity and openness when deciding where to work; 5) They want play and entertainment in their work, education and social life; 6) They are the collaboration and relationship generation; 7) They have a need for speed, and; 8) They are the innovators (p. 35-36).

This is a polarizing scholarly debate and one that is in its infancy, at least on an academic timeline. I will attempt to approach it and view it the way Strauss and Howe did in their 1991 landmark publication, Generations: “…you will learn, as we have, how every generation has its own strengths and weaknesses… but our object here is less to judge than to understand” (p. 17-18).
Questionnaire

This paper sets out the results of a descriptive study (based on a quantitative electronic survey). In the spirit of Grimes and Schulz (2002), it identifies trends and forms a reasonable hypothesis for future research, but does not present data that can be used as any type of predictor for larger populations or that is representative of larger populations. To that end, the sample is purposive (Hansen, et al., 1998) and exploratory, aiming to collect data from a small sample that could later be compared against other similar samples. Data will be presented for the entire sample and then broken down between those entering Year 3 of Mount Royal University’s (MRU) PR program, those entering Year 4 of the same program and recent graduates (the Nov. 2010 class) of the MRU applied degree program [2].

The research question I set out to answer is: What aspects of government communication appeal to MRU PR students who fall under the Generation Y banner? Those who decided to participate in the survey were asked 48 questions – from Likert-scale questions, to ranking questions, to polar questions requiring a yes or no answer. The remainder of this paper will focus on select themes that are prevalent in the survey, including: public relations sector of choice, personal abilities and those required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward in the workplace, public service values and students’ opinion of government communication. Questions relating to the nature of government work and government values were informed by the work Glor (2001), Perry and Wise (1990) and Vakil (2009). Questions specific to personal skills in public relations were designed based on the work of Wilcox and Cameron (2011).

Method

The survey was available between March 28 and April 24, 2011. Students selected for this anonymous survey were full-time public relations students at MRU who were to enter third and fourth year respectively (as of Sept. 2011) and the most recent graduates of the public relations program at MRU (applied degree students convocating in Nov. 2011). An email was sent to 52 students entering their third year of study producing a response from 10
students (a 19% response). The same email was sent to 52 students entering their fourth year of study producing a response from 18 students (35%). And finally, an email was sent to 39 recent graduates evoking a response from 11 of them (28%). This group of students was selected over first or second year students because their ideas and values around the ideal workplace would be more developed due to the nature of the sequenced curriculum. Overall, 39 out of a possible 143 students and recent graduates responded for an average of 27%. This sample is small, purposive and by no means representative but it gives a good indication of how a group of students and recent graduates at MRU feel about working in government communication. Given the small sample size, care is taken in the analysis; however, the research is valuable in that themes are visible and will prompt future research.

Data was collected using TooFAST, a Calgary-based company that allows for anonymous online surveys of students (TooFAST, 2011). Using an online survey was an appropriate way to engage with the Generation Y audience because it preserved anonymity and because the survey was not meant to be applied to the general population, which can often be an issue with online data collection (Best and Harrison, 2009). The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The survey was anonymous and students were free to leave the survey at any time without any risks or consequences.

**Characteristics**

All respondents were born between 1977 and 1997 and therefore part of Generation Y (Tapscott, 2009). Little data were collected in the way of background information about the respondents to ensure the researcher could not identify specific students based on the responses. This was a critical element due to the instructor/student relationship and the possibility of teaching some of these students again in the future. Questions pertaining to race, ethnicity, birthplace and gender may have produced interesting results but would have jeopardized student anonymity.

Ninety-five per cent of the respondents (37) indicated they had a Grade Point Average (GPA) between 3.0 and 4.0 (MRU is on a standard 4.0 grid).
The remaining 5%, or two respondents, indicated they had a GPA of between 2.0 and 3.0. Research has shown that self-reported GPA is reliable and consistent with actual GPA (Cassady, 2001) so it would appear that the survey was responded to by many of the top students in the MRU PR program. While this would be a concern in a representative, probability sample, it is less so in this smaller, purposive sample. Having the best students respond is, arguably, beneficial for government, as its goal is to recruit and retain the best and the brightest. Ten of the 39 responses, or 26%, came from students entering the third year, 18 of the 39 responses (46%) from fourth year students and the remaining 11 responses were from the most recent graduates (28%).

Students and recent graduates were asked about their level of comfort with new technologies (Web 2.0 applications, smart phones), specifically their level of agreement with the statement “When it comes to the use of new technology, I would generally describe myself as very skilled and knowledgeable.” Thirty-seven of the 39 (95%) were in agreement or strong agreement with that statement.

Students and recent graduates were also asked if they were working a part-time or full-time job (again, between March 28 and April 24, 2011). Thirty-three of the 39 respondents (85%) indicated they were working; six said “no” they were not working a part-time job (15%). This is consistent with other studies, including a 2006 Australian study that found 71% of full-time university students working part-time (James et al., 2007). Respondents were asked if they thought public relations should be part of the decision making arm of government instead of acting simply as advisors to government – 100% of respondents (39) agreed with this (not surprising because they are all educated in PR and this is an integral part of public relations education in North America). Also not surprising given the PR curriculum at MRU is that 33 of the 39 students (85%) and graduates interviewed chose two-way symmetrical (28) or two-way asymmetrical (5) as their first choice for most “professional” public relations model [3]. Government has historically been operating under a one-way information or press agentry model (Grunig and Jaatinen, 1999; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Pollack, 1984) which may be one of the barriers to engaging Generation Y,
especially those educated in public relations. Furthermore, when asked which model they would most want to work under, 32 of the 39 or 82% who responded to the survey chose two-way symmetrical (28) or two-way asymmetrical (4).

Values are also important to the students and graduates surveyed with 27 of 39 (69%) saying they would quit a higher paying job to take one more aligned with their values. Students and recent graduates were unanimous when it came to rewards and punishment in the workplace with 100% (39) agreeing that you should be rewarded when you do good work frequently and 100% (38) agreeing that you should be punished when you do poor work repeatedly. Where they differ is in how rewards and punishments should be delivered (see Tables 6 and 7).

**Results and discussion**

Thirty-three of the 39 students surveyed said they were currently working a full or part-time job. Of that group, 39% (13 of 33) said the need to be productive motivates them most in their current job, with the need to make money a close second (11 of 33, or 33%). When it comes to their first PR job out of school, a question for the sample as a whole, 33% (13 of 39) said the need they will be fulfilling most is the need for money, followed closely by the need to be mentored (11 of 39, or 28%).

The need to stay in a place for a long-time is not great. Students and recent graduates were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: When it comes to my first PR job out of school, it is important it is a place I can stay for at least five years. Once you remove the 17 respondents who chose “neither agree or disagree,” 15 of the remaining 22 (68%) said they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Seven out of 22 (32%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Another question of note looked at creativity versus money with students and graduates being asked to rate, on a Likert-scale, this statement: When it comes to my first PR job out of school, I would value the ability to be creative over the need for high pay. Once the six respondents who chose
“neither agree or disagree” are removed, the result is a strong majority of agreement, with 22 of 33 (67%) strongly agreeing or agreeing and 11 of 33 (33%) disagreeing.

**PR sector of choice**

Table 1 (below) shows 16 of the 39 (41%) respondents choosing “publically traded company” as their first choice for employment. Government only garnered three of 39 first-place votes (8%). It is worth noting, however, that MRU is a Calgary, Alberta-based university where the majority of PR graduates end up working in the oil and gas sector. The oil and gas sector dominates the local economy with little in the way of government offices. Had the survey been done in a city with a government-driven economy like Ottawa, Ontario or even Victoria, BC, the results may have been different. Though, as will be outlined later, even though government was not the number one sector chosen, a majority of PR students sampled at MRU said they would still consider working in government.

| Table 1: Which sector of PR would you most like to work in (table represents the respondents’ first choice and is broken down by year of study) |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Year of study | Total |       |       |
| Entering yr 3 | Entering yr 4 | Recent grad |
| Nonprofit | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Private | 2 | 5 | 0 | 7 |
| Publically traded company | 3 | 6 | 7 | 16 |
| Government | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Agency | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 |
| **Total** | **10** | **18** | **11** | **39** |

**Personal abilities and those required in government**

Table 2 outlines the top three personal abilities according to each of the students and graduates surveyed; Table 3 asked students and graduates the same questions, but specific to the importance of those abilities in a government communication role. In both cases, writing received very high scores, which will be welcome news for the people who have studied public relations writing in North America (Berry et al., 2011). Behind writing, students and grads were most comfortable with creativity (32 total points) and working in teams (30 total points). When it comes to what is most
important in a government role, writing ranked second behind political literacy which had 50 total points; third was business literacy, receiving 31 total points. When assessing their own abilities in Table 2, students and graduates had business literacy and political literacy at the very bottom of what they were comfortable with (four total points and five total points respectively). MRU students and graduates gave creativity 32 points in total when assessing their own abilities yet creativity only received one total point when it came to importance in a government position. These findings suggest that future research in this area would add value to the discussion in which the following questions could be explored more fully: if students were more comfortable in the areas of political literacy and business literacy would they be more likely to choose a career in government public relations? Furthermore, are business literacy and political literacy necessary for a career in government public relations?

| Table 2 – Rank these abilities based on your own level of comfort with them (ranking based on highest level of comfort). First place vote = 3 points, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                  | Year of study | Total           |
|                  | Entering yr 3 | Entering yr 4   | Recent grad     | Total           |
| Writing          | 3/0/2          | 5/4/3           | 0/1/4           | 13/5/9 = 58     |
| Planning         | 3/1/0          | 1/2/1           | 0/1/1           | 4/4/2 = 22      |
| Problem Solving  | 2/1/1          | 3/1/2           | 0/2/1           | 5/4/4 = 27      |
| Business Literacy| 0/0/0          | 1/0/1           | 0/0/0           | 1/0/1 = 4      |
| Networking       | 0/0/3          | 0/1/4           | 2/1/2           | 2/2/9 = 19      |
| Adaptability     | 2/1/0          | 3/1/3           | 1/1/0           | 6/3/3 = 27      |
| Creativity       | 0/4/2          | 4/1/1           | 1/2/0           | 5/7/3 = 32      |
| Ability to work well in teams | 0/2/2 | 1/4/2 | 2/2/1 | 3/8/5 = 30 |
| Researching      | 0/1/0          | 0/2/0           | 0/1/2           | 0/4/2 = 10     |
| Political Literacy| 0/0/0          | 0/2/1           | 0/0/0           | 0/2/1 = 5      |
| **Total**        | 10/10/10       | 18/18/18        | 11/11/11        |
Table 3 – Rank these abilities in order of importance to a government communication position with the first choice being the most important to a government position. First place vote = 3 points, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Entering yr 3</th>
<th>Entering yr 4</th>
<th>Recent grad</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>4/0/3</td>
<td>5/3/2</td>
<td>2/1/1</td>
<td>11/4/6 = 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>0/1/0</td>
<td>0/1/5</td>
<td>0/2/1</td>
<td>0/4/6 = 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>2/0/3</td>
<td>1/0/2</td>
<td>3/0/6 = 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Literacy</td>
<td>0/4/2</td>
<td>2/2/1</td>
<td>2/2/0</td>
<td>4/8/3 = 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>1/1/0</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>1/0/1</td>
<td>2/1/1 = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>1/0/1</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>2/1/1</td>
<td>3/1/3 = 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/1 = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work well in teams</td>
<td>1/1/1</td>
<td>0/4/2</td>
<td>1/2/0</td>
<td>2/7/3 = 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching</td>
<td>0/2/0</td>
<td>4/3/1</td>
<td>0/2/3</td>
<td>0/7/4 = 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Literacy</td>
<td>3/1/1</td>
<td>5/5/3</td>
<td>2/1/2</td>
<td>10/7/6 = 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10/10/10</td>
<td>18/18/18</td>
<td>11/11/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role and function of government

Table 4 represents students’ and graduates’ response to the statement: government plays a significant role in my life. Just three of 39 (8%) had no opinion, meaning 36 of those surveyed felt something about this statement. Six of 10 (60%) students entering third year strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, 17 of 18 (94%) of the students entering fourth year agreed or strongly agreed with the statement with the majority (13 of 17) strongly agreeing. Of recent graduates, eight were in agreement and three disagreed.

Table 4 – Government plays a significant role in my life (Likert-scale). Split up by year of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research has shown that the nature of work in Canadian governments is shifting, though the changes may be slower and less seamless than those in
the private sector. Glor’s research shows that in the past, public service values “were commitment to the public interest or public good, public service, equality and due and fair process” (2001, p. 525). According to Perry and Wise, the main motivation for a public servant was to make a difference (1990). Recently, on both a provincial and national level, governments have shifted to the New Public Management model (Glor, 2001). Vakil notes that the new values are a reaction to globalization, new technology, fiscal pressures, and customer demands (2009). “Under the influence of the New Public Management (NPM), the focus has shifted to efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer service/satisfaction, and accountability for results” (Glor, 1994/1995 cited in Glor, 2001). Finding out where students and recent grads stand on this matter is outlined in Table 5 below. Twenty-five of 39 (64%) surveyed chose option B, the option more aligned with the New Public Management model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 – Which statement best describes you (Choose A or B). Split up by year of study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year of study</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering yr 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering yr 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recent grad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perry and Wise (1990) call this the economic model of behaviour. Glor goes farther: “incentives have been introduced to influence public servants – positively with rewards, negatively with punishment” (Glor, 2001, p. 525). This new model appears better suited to Generation Y students at MRU, and may be a positive step for government, at least according to the data collected from this small sample size. Positive and constant feedback has been a staple in the literature on Generation Y, as noted earlier.
Punishment and reward in the workplace

Managing Generation Y is a popular topic, especially amongst older generations tasked with managing the younger group. Given the level of interest, it is imperative scholars and governments understand directly from Generation Y itself what works and what does not; this small sample is the beginning of that process. Table 6 shows the incentives students and graduates of MRU’s PR program would look for as a result of doing good work repeatedly. An “increase in pay” is at the top of the list with 15 of 39 first place votes (38%) followed by “positive feedback from manager/boss” at 14 (36%). Interestingly, a “commitment from management” is not an important factor, with just one of 39 votes. Alternatively, when it comes to punishment for repeatedly doing work poorly (Table 7), students and recent graduates prefer routes that do not affect the bottom line, as both “pay cut” and “hours cut” received zero first place votes. The most popular forms of punishment for poor performance are “lectured by boss” with 16 of 39 votes (41%) and “put on work probation” with 11 of 39 (28%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6 – When you do good work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate reward (1st choice). Split up by year of study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback from Manager/Boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A commitment from Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7 – When you do poor work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate punishment (1st choice). Split up by year of study.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter year 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work late/weekends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on work probation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moved to another work unit | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3
---|---|---|---|---
Less freedom | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5
Lectured by boss | 7 | 6 | 3 | 16
Pay cut | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0
Hours cut | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0
Total | 10 | 18 | 11 | 39

Public service values

Table 8 and Table 9 come as the result of work done by Vakil at the University of Victoria. She studied the BC Public Service’s changing values as part of her 2009 PhD dissertation. She assessed present and future values of the public service by interviewing current and former managers. Each subject was asked to select five values out of 34 that would be important for the present, and five that would be important in the future. According to Vakil, the list of 34 is based on work done by Dillman, 2007, Dwivedi and Halligan, 2003, Kernaghan, 2007, Langford, 2004 and Tait, 1996. Table 8 shows the top five present and top five future value choices from a group of 11 former senior managers surveyed by Vakil and is based on Figure 5 in Vakil’s 2009 study (p. 169). Vakil’s list of present values is based on an N of 54 (11 x 5 options) because one of the 11 former senior managers selected a value not on the list; her list of future values is based on an N of 44 because “four former senior managers did not specify a complete array of ‘future’ values (one person mentioned one value, one mentioned two values, one mentioned three values, and one mentioned four values) (p. 166). As a result, Vakil notes that any comparisons between present and future values “should be viewed with caution” (p. 166).

The same questions Vakil used in her study were replicated in the MRU study as a means for a comparison. In the MRU case, 39 students were asked to give their top five present and future values for an N of 195 in each case. The tables report the percentages to make the comparison as fair as possible.
Table 8 – Top five present and future values, Vakil study on former senior managers at the BC Public Service.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Value</th>
<th>Present: N=54</th>
<th>Future Value</th>
<th>Future: N=44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrity (#1, selected in the top 5 by 9 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>16.60%</td>
<td>Integrity (Tie #1, selected in the top 5 by 5 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service (#2, selected in the top 5 by 5 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship (Tie #1, selected in the top 5 by 5 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability (#3, selected in the top 5 by 4 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>Accountability (Tie #3, selected in the top 5 by 4 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity (#3, selected in the top 5 by 4 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>Results Focused (Tie #3, selected in the top 5 by 4 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>9.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (#3, selected in the top 5 by 4 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>3.60%</td>
<td>Creativity, Effectiveness, Transparency (All three tied for #5, selected in the top 5 by 3 of 11 surveyed)</td>
<td>6.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing the data – even with the small sample size – makes for valuable discussion on the topic of present and future values among Generation Y and challenges some of the assumptions and preconceptions held by some members of older generations. When it comes to present values, only “accountability” and “leadership” appear in the top five of the Vakil and MRU student list. “Accountability” and “leadership” on the Vakil list weigh

Table 9 – Top five present and future values, study of MRU PR students and recent PR graduates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Value</th>
<th>Present: N=195</th>
<th>Future Value</th>
<th>Future: N=195</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 34 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>17.40%</td>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 28 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>14.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty (#2, selected in the top 5 by 17 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>Transparency (#2, selected in the top 5 by 19 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>9.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness (#3, selected in the top 5 by 16 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
<td>Leadership (#3, selected in the top 5 by 16 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>8.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency (#4, selected in the top 5 by 15 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>Innovation (#4, selected in the top 5 by 14 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (#5, selected in the top 5 by 14 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>7.10%</td>
<td>Effectiveness (#5, selected in the top 5 by 13 of 39 surveyed)</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in at nearly 4% (T3 on the top five); on the MRU list, “accountability” is the number one present value, with 17%. “Leadership” ranks fifth on the MRU list of present values at 7%.

The list of future values bears greater similarity with three of the same values represented in each list. The Vakil list has “accountability” at 9% (third on the list of five), followed by “effectiveness” and “transparency” in a tie for fifth at just under 7%. The MRU list has “accountability” at 14% (first on the list of five) followed by “transparency” at 10% and “effectiveness” in fifth at 7%. Interestingly, “integrity” tops Vakil’s list of present and future values but does not even register in the top five of either MRU list. Paradoxically, “accountability” is number one on both MRU lists by a wide margin (17% present, 14% future) but only registers at close to 4% in the present Vakil list and at 9% in the future. Other points of interest: “creativity” and “entrepreneurship” are mentioned in the top five of the Vakil study, but neither makes an appearance on the MRU top five lists – interesting given that these values are often associated with Generation Y as a whole, but perhaps might not be what Generation Y students at MRU think of when they think of government.

Students’ opinion of government communication

Question 25 on the survey asked students and graduates to rank a few different statements based on what they first think of when it comes to government communication. Their first choice is outlined in Table 10. There are 11 categories to choose from – six are positive attributes, four are negative, and one – “strictly media relations” – is neutral given it could be positive or negative if you liked or disliked this area of public relations. Of the responses given, 17 (44%) would fall under positive, 21 (54%) under negative and one under neutral (3%). “Dealing with constant approvals” and “decent long-term employment” were the top selection of round one, gaining nine of 39 votes each (23%). “Creativity,” “cutting-edge technology” and “covering up mistakes of politicians” each recorded zero votes. When looking at the top three responses from all 39 students and graduates, 18 of 39 (46%) chose two or more positive statements, one student was completely neutral (one positive, one negative and one neutral
response) and 20 of 39 (51%) chose two or more negative statements in their top three. These responses are even more intriguing once we introduce question 48 of the survey (Table 11) which asks students and recent graduates if they would take a job in government public relations. Thirteen of 39 (33%) said no and 26 of 39 (67%) said yes. Of those who said no to a job in government public relations, 11 of the 13 (85%) selected two or more negative statements in their top three. Of those who said yes to working in government public relations, 17 of the 26 (65%) chose two or more positive statements as part of question 25. Making government more interesting and relevant to Generation Y students at MRU would seem like a logical step in the right direction, especially if data from future studies supported the data presented here.

| Table 10 – When I think of government communication I think of… (rank the following. This table represents the #1 choice of each of the 39 respondents). Separated by year of study. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year of study | Total |
| | Entering yr 3 | Entering yr 4 | Recent grad |
| Excitement(+) | 1 | 3 | 2 | 6 |
| High Functioning Team (+) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Access to High Quality Mentors (+) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Boring (-) | 5 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Strictly Media Relations (+-) | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Dealing with Constant Approvals (-) | 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 |
| Lack of Freedom as a Communicator (-) | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Decent, Long-term Employment (+) | 0 | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| Cutting-edge technology (+) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Workplace Culture NOT Consistent with my values (-) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Creativity (+) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 10 | 18 | 11 | 39 |
Table 11 – Would you want to work in a government communication role? (Yes or No). Broken down by year of study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of study</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entering yr 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

There has long been a disparity between the teaching of government and public administration and the practice of public relations (Lee, 2008). Waldo has called PR “a significant but neglected topic” in public administration (1992, p. xi). Furthermore, there has been a disconnect with teaching of public relations and the practice, especially in government. The disconnect between vernacular and codified knowledge is not in the particular tactics used in government, of which there are many, but in overall strategy. Government, at least historically, has practiced the one-way information and press agentry models of public relations (Grunig and Jaatinen, 1999; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Pollack, 1984); students and graduates of PR programs, as shown in this study, prefer the two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models of public relations. With the evolution of e-government, specifically the opening of the feedback loop, the public service is slowly changing the way it does public relations – moving to a model that should be more appealing to Generation Y moving forward.

Yes, this group of students and recent graduates selected “money” as the most important need they want to satisfy upon graduating, but it is worth noting that they selected “the need to be mentored” second, and mentorship is an area where government can attract Generation Y communicators. Also, the majority of students and graduates surveyed said they would value the need to be creative over the need for high pay.

One of the most interesting findings is that while students and graduates gave government high-praise as a place for “decent, long-term employment” (Table 10) they also indicate they are not interested in long-term employment. Students were asked to rate their level of agreement with this
statement: When it comes to my first PR job out of school, it is important it is a place I can stay for at least five years; removing the respondents who said “neither agree or disagree” of the remaining 22, 68% said they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

Students and graduates rated government last on the list of PR areas they would like to work at out of school (16 of the 39 instead choosing “publically traded company” as their first choice for employment). This is an area that requires further research, as it may or may not be a reflection of where the MRU program is based, i.e.: results may have been a different if the survey took place in an area with a more government-driven economy. Additionally, a majority of the sample still said they would work in government communication despite their preference for work within a publically traded company. Nevertheless, there appears to be a need to better educate Generation Y public relations students at MRU about government.

The data presented throughout this paper is very similar across Year 3, Year 4 and recent graduates of the MRU public relations program. Two areas where there are differences are in the role government plays in the lives of students and recent graduates and whether or not they would want to work in government public relations. In Table 4 it was shown that 14 of the 39 (36%) students and graduates strongly agreed with the statement “government plays a significant role in my life.” Of these 14, 13 are from the group of students entering fourth year. This is noteworthy, because Table 11 (Would you want to work in a government communication role? Yes or No), reveals a similar pattern. Just 30% of those entering third year said “yes,” 64% of the recent graduates said “yes” while 89% of those entering fourth year said “yes”. These groups of students are, by and large, very similar. The only notable difference is in the courses they have had up until this point. The group of recent graduates is from the applied degree program and did not have access to a class on government public relations. The group of students entering third year will take a government public relations course in January, 2012 and the group of students entering fourth year, have already taken their course in government public relations – and their results are different. This survey was not designed to determine
whether or not a government public relations course would play a role in one’s perception of government and in turn one’s desire to work in a government communication role. However, the data, at least in this small, purposive sample, does show that an education in government public relations can play a role in shaping student interest in taking on a government communication position. Further research in this area would provide great value to governments and public relations educators alike.

This sample suggests that for government to attract the best and brightest young communicators it will need to market itself as creative and innovative. As more data is collected and more research is done, it will be valuable to learn if the findings from this small sample are replicated over larger, more representative samples. So far, the findings suggest that the onus is not just on governments, but on public relations educators and researchers to better understand Generation Y communicators.

Endnotes

1. Voting in Canada remains a confidential act. To collect data on voter turnout, the Canadian Election Study therefore relied upon post-election surveys. Methodologically speaking, these surveys tended to produce higher rates of turnout than official rates because, among other things, of the social desirability of responding as though one had indeed voted. The sample of respondents to the survey also tended to contain more voters than non-voters (Parliament of Canada, 2010).

2. Prior to Mount Royal University’s four year Bachelor of Communication – Public Relations degree it offered an applied degree in public relations. The new degree was launched in Sept. 2008 and as a result the applied degree was phased out. The last large group of students from the applied degree convocated in Nov. 2010.

3. When it comes to public relations education, there are four models that are featured prominently in the North America curriculum. These models are: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. J. Grunig and Hunt developed these models while studying the history of public relations (1984). “Extensive research has shown that one of these models, the two-way symmetrical, is more effective than the other when used alone or combined with the two-way asymmetrical model” (Grunig, 1997).
References


<<End of Research Article 1>>
4.3 Outcomes for research study 1

Reflecting on the outcomes of Research Study 1 has been as informative and educative as the study itself and an important part of my research process for my doctoral project. If researching for impact requires the investigator to provide a voice for the marginalized (Somekh & Lewin, 2005), I judge that the study can be considered a success. Generation Y can be viewed as marginalized when examining the generational power structure where they are overshadowed by Generation X and Baby Boomers (Eisner & Harvey, 2009). It is worth noting that determining the marginalization of a population is in the hands of the researcher; a researcher could equally argue that Veterans (i.e., those born before 1946) are marginalized in the workforce because of their age. It is nevertheless important to document the voice of Generation Y subculture, as it will be valuable in future studies.

As already noted in section 4.1, great care was taken to ensure complete anonymity of the respondents. What I do not know is how students felt about answering the research questions. Did some students not trust that there was full anonymity and leave the survey as a result? Were there students who thought they could be identified and therefore provided answers that they thought the faculty member wanted? Did social norms and social control play a role (Cialdini, 2007)? While these questions do not need answers for my research project, they offer a potential field for future researchers wishing to further explore power dynamics within quantitative and qualitative research, especially from a faculty-student perspective.

The peer review process with the journal, *Management Research Review*, assisted greatly in my development as a scholar. Reflecting on the process, I am grateful for the challenges it presented. Originally, the peer reviewers challenged my scholarship and my choice of language. Throughout the process I questioned myself: was I reverting to a journalistic point-of-view and in the process silencing my academic voice? Was I still thinking in terms of vernacular knowledge as a professional PR practitioner, and not a reflective one at that? As I worked through this inner struggle and intellectual discourse, I became more receptive to feedback and change. In the end, the dialogue I entered into with the anonymous peer reviewers
concerning the changes they recommended not only improved my inquiry but caused me to question my beliefs: they led me away from being a pure specialist or “technicist” to a place where I could view my practice as a whole. As Kemmis (2006) describes it, I was ready to embrace practice fully.

The findings from Research Study 1 served to establish the foundation for Research Study 2. The questions used in the descriptive survey in the first study are nearly identical to those used in the second exploratory study; this was purposeful to allow for the means to compare data in a future study (i.e.: Research Study 3). Research Study 1 was focussed on answering: *What aspects of government communication appeal to MRU PR students who fall under the Generation Y banner?* To that end, the paper was successful.

The findings from Research Study 1 show that the most appealing parts of government communication to Generation Y students at MRU are “decent, long-term employment” and “excitement.” The data also shows that the most unappealing parts of government communication work are “dealing with constant approvals” and doing “boring” work. Gaining a better understanding of what their responses mean in relation to the government communication function will assist in further illuminating the findings. In addition, the fact that “creativity” registered zero votes as something students think about in relation to government communication is thought-provoking and suggests further research relating to the importance of creativity to Generation Y (Tapscott, 2009; Florida, 2009).

The results of Research Study 1 are indicative of a group of people taught the dominant paradigm of public relations, with 100% agreeing that public relations should be part of the decision-making arm of government instead of acting simply as advisors to government and 85% choosing either two-way symmetrical or two-way asymmetrical communication as their first choice for what they consider to be the most “professional” public relations model. These particular results are as interesting as they are problematic: interesting because they are a direct reflection of the type of education these students, and others in North America, are receiving (i.e.: US-based,
dominant paradigm) and problematic for that exact same reason. This is a point that will be brought up through the remainder of this research portfolio.

The findings in this section shaped the second phase of my inquiry. In Research Study 2, Generation Y, Generation X and Baby Boomers within the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau were asked many of the same questions as the respondents in the MRU sample. Comparing and analyzing their responses provides insight into generational differences and similarities.
Chapter 5. Exploring the inside of a government communication office

5.1 Context for research study 2

The first research study, as discussed in the previous chapter, provided data relating to values and workplace aspirations of Generation Y public relations students at MRU. The data was valuable for my research project in that it provided an overview of what a particular subculture of Generation Y students think about government communication and shows that a strong majority would consider working in government. The data also shows that government is thought to offer “decent, long-term employment” and that while for some respondents this is considered “exciting” work, others responded with the opposite answer, considering government work to be “boring”. The data and overall approach from Research Study 1 served as the starting point for Research Study 2, the second of two exploratory studies which includes another published or publishable academic article as required for my doctoral portfolio.

To better understand how the MRU sample was the same or different from working government communicators, I needed to access a subculture sample within a government communication organization. Once Research Study 1 was complete, I set out to find a suitable sample for the second phase. I approached the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) and asked for permission to invite their staff to participate in a survey. After minor changes to the wording (to ensure my survey questions would be understood by the government employees, i.e.: ensuring I was using the appropriate government language) of the survey and suggestions on how to communicate it to staff – that is, using the company intranet – I eventually gained approval and on September 23, 2011 I commenced my research with the workforce of the PAB. Later in this portfolio, Research Study 2 is compared with Research Study 1 as a means to triangulate data (Somekh & Lewin, 2005; Denzin, 1978) and further diagnose the potential issues identified in my research problem (Krishnaswarmi, 2010) as noted in section 1.2 and in line with my phronetic approach.
Whereas the first research study focused solely on Generation Y, Research Study 2 was open to the three working generations at the PAB – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. As in Research Study 1, there were necessary concerns about safeguarding anonymity. In this case, the biggest concern was in ensuring staff identities were protected so that they, the respondents, could freely speak about their experiences within the PAB. This type of survey is not without challenges as staff are required to answer the questions on their work computers, during work hours and, furthermore, the original email with the invitation to participate would come from the PAB executive team. I fully acknowledge that all or some of these factors could, or may, have played a role in the data collection.

When evaluating government programs or people, it is necessary to take every measure to “avoid polluting the evaluation process” (Abma & Schwandt, 2005, p. 107). Schwandt explains that it is imperative to get the necessary permissions and the evaluation must be calculated so that these approval groups cannot “curtail or otherwise influence the conduct or conclusions of the evaluation” (p. 107). To that end, after the formal approval process had taken place, PAB executive allowed me to conduct the research freely and did not question the process or the data collected. My position in Research Study 2 was not to question government policies, but to collect factual data to better illuminate the situation among the working generations within a government communication department. Building upon my knowledge and understanding of the research process that I gained as the result of the reflective approach I had adopted during my first research study, I became aware that the more enveloped I was in the research the more I felt the need to question government policies and develop a more critical approach to the object of my study (Gustavsen, 2006).

Prior to engaging in this study, I knew there would be risks associated with gaining research approval. I therefore designed a data collection process in ways consistent with the practice and politics of sponsored evaluations (Abma & Schwandt, 2005). In my case, there was no sponsorship but the rules associated with sponsored evaluations were helpful in establishing my own research direction. Specifically, as noted by Abma & Schwandt (2005),
I needed to critically reflect on value-rational questions and remain focused on values related to social action and experience. The warnings of Weiss (1999) were also valuable in planning and conducting my research:

> Evaluators will never supersede policy makers nor take the politics out of policy making...too many other elements enter into the policy process to allow data to determine the outcomes. Of course, there are situations when the major stakeholders agree on the values to be upheld and directions that policy should take, and the only issue is how best to fashion policy to meet its goals (p. 483).

Relating directly to values in government, I am indebted to Glor (2001A; 2001B; 1994/95) as her work on the topic has been integral to my own study. But while her studies examine value systems of working generations in government, they do not cover Generation Y or government communication specifically. In addition to using Research Study 2 to collect data with which to compare the data from Research Study 1 in my final study (see Chapter 6), I used it as an opportunity to test some of the previous findings from scholarly researchers such as Glor (2001A; 2001B; 1994/95), Vakil (2009), and Kernaghan (2007).

The results of Research Study 2 assist in answering my first research question – How do the values and opinions of Generation Y public relations students at an Alberta university compare and contrast with the values and opinions of Generation Y communication staff within the Alberta provincial government? – by providing suggestive generational data that can be used, in Research Study 3, to compare and contrast with the data from the MRU sample presented in Research Study 1. Furthermore, the findings in Research Study 2 also begin to address my second research question: Is there a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees?

The following exploratory study, written up as a publishable article, analyzes the values, skills and aspirations of three generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y – working within the Alberta PAB, with a specific focus on Generation X and Generation Y. Like the first study, participants responded to questions about personal values, abilities
required in government, role and function of government, punishment and reward, and their overall opinion of working in government.
5.2 Research study 2

In this section, I present Research Study 2. This includes one of three published or publishable articles required for my portfolio. While not currently submitted to an academic journal, the article is written using Chicago-style citations and formatting and is ready to be sent for peer review.

Citation

Understanding generational differences in government communication
– An exploratory study of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau

Summary

This article is based on an exploratory study of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) intended to determine if there is a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring within the PAB that is affecting its ability to recruit and retain current and future employees. Data reveals that there are differences between Generation X and Generation Y staff as well as striking similarities. The Generation X and Generation Y samples both selected government as a good option for long-term employment and both highlighted accountability as the number one current and future value for government. A major difference between Generation X and Generation Y is the latter’s propensity to choose money as a driving force for workplace motivation over the former. This study also examines the differences between preceding and succeeding public service values and assesses where the current working generations’ values converge and diverge, including an indication that nearly three-quarters of the Generation Y subculture sampled within the PAB prefer more traditional governance models.

Keywords: government communication, governance, public relations, recruitment, retention, Generation Y, Generation X

Introduction

The aim of this article is to articulate the differing values and skills of three working generations in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (PAB). Government communication offices employ hundreds of communicators across the country, with the federal government employing more communicators than any other organization in the country (Canada, 2010). Each provincial, territorial, and municipal government also employs its share of communicators. This article examines specifically the Alberta PAB which employs nearly 120 full-time communicators (Government of Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012). Currently in the Alberta PAB there are no permanent staff under the age of twenty-five and just 18% of the permanent
workforce is thirty-four years of age or less (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012). Given the ageing workforce and expected need for Generation Y staff, this topic is both timely and relevant. Government communicators are integral to public administration (Lee, 2008) and as Fairbanks, Plowman and Rawlins note, they are a main link between the state and its people (2007).

Studying the government communication function within the Province of Alberta in relation to generational profiles – instead of another function of government – is useful in that the public servants within the communication function are, perhaps more so than other staff within the public service, entrenched in a grey zone between politics and the bureaucracy (Brown, 2012) and as such, serves as a useful marker in the ongoing evolution of governance. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, as noted by Lee, because of the importance communication plays in all government decision making, government communication and public relations “is public administration” (2008: xvii).

The research question I set out to answer in this article is: Is there a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees? To answer this question, the article examines three working generations within the PAB, specifically their values and opinions of the government communication function.

**Study Context**

Public versus private sector

Governments face a complex challenge with regard to recruitment and retention of skilled workers. As noted by Holzer and Rabin twenty-five years ago, “Our society seems to have an insatiable appetite for public services, yet it is ceaseless in its criticism for those who provide those services” (1987: 3). Holzer and Rabin dismiss the criticism of public service employees as “dim-witted” (1987: 4) and maintain that this is what led to problems in recruiting and retaining the best and brightest (1987: 7). They argue that the public service should be seen as a profession with its own
According to Perry, there are a number of empirical studies that point to differences between public and private sector employees, especially relating to pay, helping others and status (1997). Perry’s finding that private sector employees value high paying jobs more than their public sector counterparts has been proven in a number of other studies (Frank and Lewis, 2004; Karl and Sutton, 1998), including a Canadian study by Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins (2006). Fundamentally in this article, the private sector refers to privately held business whereas the public sector refers to government. The related issues of trust and ethics, however, are two of the most significant differences according to Perry and Wise who state that trust in American institutions is on the decline, and “nowhere is the decline in public trust more apparent than in government” (1990: 367). They argue that the public sector ethos no longer exists, but is shifting to a model based on self-interest where government managers reward with extrinsic rewards (1990). The general public’s expectations for public servants are also fundamental to this debate; Vakil comments that we expect “far more from public servants than from other mortals” (2009: 133) and Dwivedi argues that the public service is a calling not unlike the priesthood (1999).

Studying public service motivation has, in the last four decades, become an important field of study within public administration. Buchanan II (1975) and Rainey (1982) were early pioneers of the PSM movement which at its core is a tool used to measure what motivates people to join the public sector as opposed to the often more lucrative private sector. It is also worth noting that the work of Kim et al. (2012), including Perry found that public service motivation, or PSM (a four dimensional, 16 item measurement tool), was highest in countries with Anglo-Saxon welfare states like the US, Australia and the United Kingdom. Kim et al. adopt the terminology “Anglo-Saxon welfare states” from the work of Houston (2011), who describes this typology as English speaking European nations like Ireland and Great Britain, and by extension, Canada and the U.S., which are “characterized by public welfare benefits that largely are means tested, with
a substantial reliance on private market provision of services.” (p. 765). These countries, the researchers argue, “share many characteristics likely to influence cultural values and dispositions” (2012: 20). Canada, while not part of the Kim et al. study, would fit within the framework of Anglo-Saxon nations (Houston, 2011). PSM is not without its critics. Rose in his study of careers in the non-profit sector versus those in government found that undergraduate students believe that the non-profit sector “provides a better outlet for altruistic values” (2012: 1) and that “confidence in institutions should be incorporated in PSM research” (1).

Governance models

One of the keys to understanding today’s public service, and therefore the workers employed in it, is to understand traditional, or Westminster,1 public service values and New Public Management (NPM). The basic values of the Westminster system were political neutrality, public servant anonymity, and ministerial responsibility (Kernaghan, 2003). Vakil notes that “public sector work values derive from the historical relationship between governments’ elected officials and their primary governing instrument, the career public service” (2009: 133). NPM, according to Glor, “has become an established public administration model in the last twenty years” (2001b: 122). She outlines Loeffler’s idea of NPM as “performance management, more managerial flexibility in financial management, a devolution of responsibility for personnel management, responsiveness to customers/users, decentralization from higher to lower levels of government, greater use of market-type mechanisms and privatization” (2001b: 122). Negative consequences of this shift – a shift which, according to Glor (2001b), has been felt most by three provinces, including Alberta – have put an increasing amount of stress on staff in the public service and have led to under-resourced programs that deliver less value (Glor, 2001b). More recently, Aucoin has argued that Canada is shifting from NPM to what he calls a more politicized New Political Governance model (2012: 178), or NPG. According to Aucoin, “In contrast to legitimate democratic control of the public service by ministers [under New Public Management], NPG constitutes a corrupt form of politicization to the extent
that governments seek to use and misuse, even abuse, the public service in the administration of public resources and the conduct of public business to better secure their partisan advantage over their competitors” (Aucoin, 2012, p. 178). While the data collected in this study does not specifically mention NPG, an understanding of this newest form of governance, specifically the shift from neutrality to partisanship, will prove valuable in the subsequent analysis.

Generational characteristics

In order to determine if there is generational shift occurring within the Alberta government’s communication arm, the Public Affairs Bureau, it is fundamental to first understand the working generations themselves. Tulgan describes the generational shift as the Silent Generation (those born before 1946) and the Baby Boomers leaving the workforce and being replaced by new generations, and in turn, new values and norms (2004). In 2004, he argued that this shift was profound and continuing (Tulgan, 2004). Eyerman and Turner define a generation as: “people passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture, a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the generation over a finite period of time” (1998: 93).

Arsenault states that his study into generations “validates that generations create their own traditions and culture… In addition, the study illustrates significant differences in how these generations rank admired leadership characteristics, which correlates to their preferred leadership style and favorite leaders” (2004: 124). Canadian researcher Tapscott, who studied more than 7,000 members of Generation Y in several countries, including Canada, has identified three generations that are of working age: Baby Boomers (born between 1946—1964); Generation X (born between 1965—1976), and Generation Y (born between 1977—1997) (2009). It is these generational definitions that will be used for this study. Arsenault (2004) cites the work of Zemke et al. (2000) in painting a picture of the core values of the various generations. Core values for Baby Boomers are: “Optimism, personal gratification and growth” (Arsenault 2004: 129). Core values for

While members of Generation Y are not overly interested in long-term employment, they are concerned about long-term issues, such as how they will fund their retirement. The Human Capital Institute (HCI) reports that 52% of Generation Y members it surveyed anticipate leaving their employer in less than five years; for Generation X, that number was 31% (Human Capital Institute, 2008). A Price Waterhouse Coopers (2008) report found that the majority of Generation Ys surveyed believed they would be responsible for funding their retirement, not an employer or government pension. The Canadian Public Service Commission (2009) and Tapscott (2009) argue that Generation Y wants flexibility and customization in their careers. “Other experts note that the younger generation – although intelligent and highly motivated to succeed – is displaying a level of egocentric behaviour based on a sense of entitlement and an inflated view of the self” (Public Service Commission, 2009). One of the most vocal scholars decrying Generation Y in the workplace is Bauerlein, who argues Generation Ys’ attitude towards history, politics, religion and art may result in this generation losing America’s entire history forever (2008: 236).

When it comes to pinpointing which values are representative of Generation Y and which ones are not, there is little consensus in the academic community. Strauss and Howe (2000) describe Generation Y as optimistic rule followers while Florida (2009) says that they wish to participate in a culture of innovation and have a need for creativity. Meanwhile, Jurkiewicz (2000) in her study of Generation X in the public service found that there was little difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Xs work-related motivational factors. In fact, she argues that much of the research associated with the differences between Generation X and Boomers is based on the biased work of Tulgan (2000: 57). Jurkiewicz summarizes her article by stating that the same stereotypes associated with Generation X, “…cynical, sullen, contemptuous, naïve, arrogant, unfocused, and
“materialistic” were used to describe young Baby Boomers (2000: 68). She ends her article wondering if it is simply a case of history repeating itself when it comes to questions about the newest working generation; an important thought to consider when discussing Generation Y. In contrast, Benson and Brown found, in their sample of more than 3,000, that there are differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X and that “these differences generally conformed to the profiles of different generations of workers presented in media and business journals, and so provide further evidence of a generational effect” (2011: 1858). Specifically, they found that Boomers were more satisfied in their jobs and less likely to quit when compared to their Generation X counterparts. Benson and Brown (2011) note that their findings directly address researchers who have challenged the validity of generational and inter-generational studies.

Glor, a former employee of the Canadian federal government and a leading academic on public sector innovation, writes about different working generations specifically from the perspective of the public service (2001a). She “assumes agreement that ethical behaviour by public servants is necessary to good government” and generations do matter in establishing and maintaining values (2001a: 525). To Glor, Boomers are “mature,” “self-motivated” and “oppose compromise,” whereas Generation X is committed more to their group than government (Glor, 2001a: 529). She cites a survey conducted by Mancuso et al. (1998) on the values of Canadians: “The study found a pattern of differences in generational beliefs, with boomers’ values being closer to those of matures and those of Generation X being farther from matures” (2001a: 530). While a researcher has to be careful not to attribute all differences between people in the workforce to age or generational values, some insight can be gained from doing so; insight, that, if combined with consideration of other factors (environment, corporate culture) can add a depth of understanding to employers.

**Politics and government communication**

To better understand generational differences within government communications, it is important to look closely at the sometimes political
nature of this branch of government. One of the primal tenets of public service according to the Government of Canada is a “staffing system free of political influence” and staff who perform their “duties in an impartial manner” (Public Service Commission, 2008). That said, high-profile events like the Sponsorship Scandal, have negatively affected the reputation of the non-partisan public service. The Public Service Commission of Canada, during an influx of new employees, addressed the issue of partisanship as follows: “Given these large numbers, it is important to bring attention back to the traditional calling of an impartial public service in order to maintain it for the 21st century” (2008: 3).

It is hard for government communicators to escape the politics surrounding their work. As Appleby notes, “other institutions, admittedly, are not free from politics, but government is politics” (1945: 63). Due to high profile scandals and the never ending news cycle, today there is an even higher level of scrutiny and this plays a role in the perceptions of would-be government communicators. Despite these concerns, Fairbanks, Plowman and Rawlins found that while many people distrust government, the communicators working in government strongly value and advocate transparency – with administration, office structure and politics having great influence on the level of transparency (Fairbanks et al., 2007).

Communicators within government also practice a form of public relations that some scholars argue is less effective than others. Grunig and Hunt (1984) predicted that the public information model – one of four traditional models of public relations they posited – was the model most used by government communication. This was supported by Pollack (1984). The public information model is seen as less effective than the two-way symmetrical model of communication proposed by scholars like Grunig and Hunt as the standard (1984). Garnett supports this view, stating that the US government’s use of one-way information sharing models has limited feedback and dialogue (1997). Though, as noted by Heath (2006), two-way symmetrical is not always the best option, as in the case of emergency communication. In public relations education the four models – press
agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical – are featured prominently, especially in North America. Grunig and Hunt developed these models while studying the history of public relations (1984). “Extensive research has shown that one of these models, the two-way symmetrical, is more effective than the others when used alone or combined with the two-way asymmetrical model” (Grunig, 1997). Recently, scholars have challenged the Grunig and Hunt theories, arguing they are only descriptive in nature and support the dominant paradigm (Sha, 2007; L’Etang and Pieczka, 2006; Fawkes, 2012; Merkelsen, 2011). Given that these models are taught at colleges and universities throughout North America, using them to determine a baseline understanding of public relations theory, even if only of the dominant paradigm, adds credibility to the study.

While scholarship exists on government communication (Lee, 2008; Garnett, 1992; Grunig, 1997; Liu and Horsley, 2007; Waldo, 1992) and, separately, the topic of Generation Y in the workforce (Tapscott, 2009; Bauerlein, 2008; Bosco and Bianco, 2005; Arsenault, 2004; Vyncke, 2002; Florida, 2009; Lipkin and Perrymore, 2009); this study fills a niche in that it is specific to subcultures of different generations working within the Alberta PAB and will further illuminate the larger discussion about recruitment and retention within Canadian governments.

**Study Background**

Inside the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau

In his thorough analysis of the Alberta government’s communication function, Kiss notes that Peter Lougheed, Alberta Premier from 1971—1985, “formed this central agency in 1972 to provide communication and public relations services to government departments and information to citizens” (2008: 1). In the beginning, the PAB was intended to be non-partisan and non-political (Kiss, 2008). Years later, Kiss argues, under the direction of Premier Klein (1992—2006), the Public Affairs Bureau became “politcized” (2008: 2). This claim is of concern to those in government today, especially since the distinction between the political arm and the
public service is of fundamental importance (Savoie, 2003). To this day, the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau is funded by and reports to the Executive Council (Executive Council Report, 2009-2010), in essence to the Premier. As Kiss notes, this fundamental change was made by Klein to make the PAB more political and was in direct conflict with Westminster values (2008). Brownsey argues that the changes Klein made to the PAB are in-line with his overall “premier-centred administrative style” (2005: 218). Brownsey goes on to state that having communications officers report to the communications director within the Premier’s office further politicized the role (2005). The Alberta government is also unique to other provincial governments in Canada, in that the Progressive Conservatives have held a majority since 1971.

In June 2012, after data collection for this study was complete, it was reported a press secretary would be appointed to each minister within the Alberta government; a press secretary who would be completely partisan instead of a non-partisan communications director within the Public Affairs Bureau (and career civil servant) (“Redford getting party word out,” 2012). While this new role may serve to de-politicize the PAB, it is not yet known what impact this change will have and how it might change the role of the PAB as a whole.

**Questionnaire/Method**

This section explains the results of a descriptive study based on a quantitative electronic survey. Data is broken down by the three working generations: Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. While the results from the Boomer generation are reported, due to the small sample and lack of statistical significance, great caution is taken in any subsequent analysis of data relating to the Boomer sample.

**Research Question:** *Is there a generational shift occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees?*
The survey included standard Likert-scale questions, ranking questions, dichotomous questions requiring a yes or no answer and open-ended questions. Questions were structured to ensure only relevant data would be returned with all quantitative responses being closed ended for easy analysis (Lewin, 2005). Survey questions were designed with input from existing scholarship. Specifically: questions relating to government values and the nature of government work were designed based on the work of Glor (2001a; 2001b), Perry and Wise (1990) and Vakil (2009) while questions assessing personal skills are based on the work of Wilcox and Cameron (2011). Remaining themes covered in the article include: use of information technologies, work motivation and respondents’ opinion of government communication.

The survey was placed in the PAB’s e-newsletter and posted in the “news” section of the PAB’s intranet site. The link was open and available to the staff from 23 September 2011 to 18 October 2011. In total, 282 staff had access to the survey eliciting a response from 36 staff, or 13%. During the time the survey was available, staff were notified three times about the survey as a means to increase the sample size. While this is a small sample and cannot be considered fully representative of the whole workforce within the PAB, for the purposes of an exploratory study, it is still valuable. The survey results provide a picture of the range of thoughts and feelings across a cross-section of the PAB, specifically Generation X and Generation Y.

Data was first collected using TooFAST (2011), a tool which allows for anonymous online surveys, and then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The survey was anonymous and staff were free to exit the survey at any time without incurring risks or consequences. While designing the survey instrument and choosing the survey tool, great care was taken to protect the anonymity of staff. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, no personal background information was collected. This was essential in order to encourage honest and accurate responses from employees about their employers. Specific questions relating to birthplace, ethnicity, and gender, among others, may well have produced thought-provoking data, but would have compromised anonymity so were excluded.
Characteristics

Survey respondents were divided into three specific age ranges using Tapscott’s generational parameters outlined earlier. Of the 36 respondents, five were from the Boomer generation (48—66 years of age), 15 from Generation X (36—47 years of age) and 16 from Generation Y (15—35 years of age). Due to the small sample size of the Boomer generation, these numbers are not used in direct comparison to Generation X or Generation Y unless relevant.

Seventy-two per cent of respondents reported having a degree of some kind; 28% of respondents had no degree. Those who said “yes” to having a degree were then asked to indicate the discipline in which they studied: 12% selected public relations; 15% selected journalism; 15% selected political science; the remainder (54%) selected “other”. One individual selected a degree in communication.

Given Generation Y’s propensity to use information technology (Tapscott, 2009), staff were also asked about technology and what impact, if any, changes in technology have had on their jobs. Sixty-nine per cent said such changes made their jobs easier; 11% said technology made their jobs harder and the remaining 19% said they did not notice a change. It is worth noting that all Baby Boomers surveyed said technology made their jobs easier.

Employees were asked about their level of comfort with new information technologies (Web 2.0 applications, smart phones), specifically their level of agreement with the statement: When it comes to use of new technology, I describe myself as very skilled and knowledgeable. Eighty-three per cent of respondents were in agreement or strong agreement with that statement, showing agreement across the generations. When asked if government plays a significant role in their lives outside of work, 28% agreed, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed and 44% disagreed. When it comes to the public relations model PAB staff think is the most professional, 37% – the majority of which came from the Generation Y group – chose two-way symmetrical, suggesting that over a third of the sample had, at some point, been exposed to the dominant paradigm of public relations (through formal education,
mentors, exposure to professional societies, etc). Forty-five per cent said they were unfamiliar with these models, causing no surprise, given just over 10% were educated in public relations.

**Findings and Discussion**

**Personal Values**

Personal values chosen for the survey were selected to give respondents a wide range of options, from extrinsic motivation like “money” to more intrinsic options like “the need to give back to society.” As outlined in Table 1 (Select the option which motivates you most at work), the six respondents who chose “money” are all from Generation Y (representing 17% of the total sample). Seven respondents, or 20%, selected “need to be part of a team,” five of whom were from Generation X. The “need to be productive” was the most popular choice overall, with nineteen votes, or 54%. The “need to be productive” was the number one choice for both Generation X and Generation Y.

Table 2 documents the response when asked: what need were you looking to fill most when you first left school to pursue a career? Here again, the options available were chosen to highlight extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Generation Ys’ desire for “mentoring” is supported by Crampton and Hodge (2011) and “money” is consistent with US Census (2006) data. The question is purposely worded to ascertain what need respondents were looking to fill most when they first graduated and while there is a temptation to argue that all generations need money most when they are just leaving school (i.e.: that this finding points out that life stage is a driver, not generation) there is evidence to the contrary. US Census data shows that freshmen in 2005 have changed significantly since 1970, with the need for money replacing the need for “developing a meaningful philosophy of life” as the most important objective (Census, 2006). Tapscott notes that Generation Y is fascinated by celebrity culture and that “the most popular career choice for 13-year old girls is to be an actress, while the boys want to be a pro athlete” (2009: 301). Both these careers are associated with high pay and further support Arsenault's findings that Generation Y was the only one to choose sporting icons and celebrities as leaders they look up to.
(2004). “The need to give back to society,” the most intrinsic of the options, only registered one vote as part of question eight (outlined in Table 1) and two votes as part of question nine (outlined in Table 2), which runs contrary to the public service “calling” ideal (Vakil, 2009; Dwivedi, 1999). And while this public service ideal may not be important in this study, if conducting an international study, like Kim et al. (2012), the differences between the countries may be significant, with public sector motivation showing stronger in Anglo-Saxon regions.

Table 1 – Select the option that motivates you most at work. Broken down by generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (17.10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to work hard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be part of a team</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>7 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to give back to society</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to feel productive</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
<td>7 (46.6%)</td>
<td>19 (54.20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>35 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – In your first PR/comms job out of school what need were you looking to fill most. Broken down by generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
<td>11 (30.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (43.7%)</td>
<td>10 (27.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to give back to society</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to show others you are doing well</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be creative</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>5 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t remember</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never dreamed of being in PR</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>36 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also pertaining to values was question 14: Would you quit a higher paying job to take a lower paying one that was more aligned with your values? Forty-seven per cent of the respondents said “yes” and 53% said “no”. From the Generation X group, 60% said “no” and 40% said “yes”; for Generation Y the totals are almost reversed – 44% said “no” and 56% said “yes”. Being the youngest of the working generations, it is understandable that Generation Y finds money and mentoring to be important, as members are likely to need both more at the start of their career than at any other time. These findings fit with the generational profiles. The data also shows that this Generation Y subculture would quit a higher paying job to take one more aligned with their values, whereas the majority of Generation X in this sample would not.

Personal skills and assessment of skills required in government

In this section, respondents were asked to rank the top three skills based on their own level of comfort (Table 3) and then they were asked to rank the most important skills required in government (Table 4). The skills respondents could choose from are based on the top five skills (writing, planning, problem solving, business literacy, researching) required in public relations according to Wilcox and Cameron (2011) and supplemented by other skills, including political literacy, adaptability and creativity.

A first place choice was worth three points, a second place choice two points and a third place choice one point. Writing was the skill with which the respondents were most comfortable (72 total points); it was also the attribute respondents felt is most needed in a government role (63 total points). Writing is a staple of public relations, and is often referred to as the most important skill for public relations practitioners (Wilcox and Cameron 2011; Berry et al., 2011). Broken down by generation, 38 of the total writing points for question 10 (out of a possible 72) came from Generation Y. And while this subculture of Generation Y may feel they are comfortable with writing, scholarly reports indicate that Generation Y communicators in North America have an inflated view of their writing skills, when compared with views of their employer (Berry et al., 2011).
Table 3 – Rank these skills based on your own level of comfort with them. Ranking based on highest level of comfort. First place vote = 3 points, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2/1/2</td>
<td>4/5/2</td>
<td>9/5/1</td>
<td>15/11/5 = 72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>0/1/0</td>
<td>1/2/1</td>
<td>1/1/3</td>
<td>2/4/4 = 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>1/0/1</td>
<td>6/0/1</td>
<td>1/0/3</td>
<td>8/0/5 = 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Literacy</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/2/0</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/2/0 = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>1/2/0</td>
<td>1/2/1 = 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>0/1/0</td>
<td>2/2/2</td>
<td>0/0/2</td>
<td>2/3/4 = 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>0/1/1</td>
<td>0/3/1</td>
<td>1/4/3</td>
<td>1/8/5 = 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work well in teams</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>2/1/2</td>
<td>3/1/1</td>
<td>5/2/3 = 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching</td>
<td>2/1/1</td>
<td>0/0/3</td>
<td>0/3/2</td>
<td>2/4/6 = 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Literacy</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/2</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>0/0/3 = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5/5/5</strong></td>
<td><strong>15/15/15</strong></td>
<td><strong>16/16/16</strong></td>
<td><strong>36/36/36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Rank these skills in order of importance to a government communications position with the first choice being the most important to a government position. First place vote = 3 points, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2/1/2</td>
<td>4/5/0</td>
<td>10/0/1</td>
<td>16/6/3 = 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>1/1/3</td>
<td>1/2/4</td>
<td>2/3/8 = 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>1/1/0</td>
<td>3/1/2</td>
<td>2/1/2</td>
<td>6/3/4 = 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Literacy</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>0/0/2 = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>0/1/0</td>
<td>0/0/1</td>
<td>0/2/0</td>
<td>0/3/1 = 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>1/0/1</td>
<td>5/1/0</td>
<td>3/0/1</td>
<td>9/1/2 = 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/0/0 = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work well in teams</td>
<td>1/0/0</td>
<td>2/2/3</td>
<td>0/4/1</td>
<td>3/6/4 = 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching</td>
<td>0/2/1</td>
<td>0/2/3</td>
<td>0/4/6</td>
<td>0/8/10 = 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Literacy</td>
<td>0/0/0</td>
<td>0/3/2</td>
<td>0/3/0</td>
<td>0/6/2 = 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5/5/5</strong></td>
<td><strong>15/15/15</strong></td>
<td><strong>16/16/16</strong></td>
<td><strong>36/36/36</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problem solving was second on the list of skills respondents were most comfortable with (26 total points), followed by creativity (24 total points). On the list of skills required for government communication, adaptability was second (31 total points) followed by problem solving (28 total points). Creativity received 24 total points in the question about own personal skills and zero points in the question about attributes necessary in government communication. Consistent with the Tapscott (2009) profile of this
generation, nearly half of the Generation Y staff positioned creativity in the top three skills with which they felt most comfortable. Political literacy scored very low on both fronts – just three total points for own personal comfort and 14 total points for importance in a government position, suggestive of the non-political role of the professional public service, contrary to Kiss (2008) and Kozolanka (2006).

Nature of government work

Table 5 highlights government value systems and governance models. Each respondent was asked to select the set of terms that best describes them. Option A was based on Westminster values and included: “public good, public service, equality… and fair process” (Glor, 2001a: 525); Option B was based on Glor’s definition of New Public Management (NPM): “efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer/service satisfaction, and accountability for results” (1994/95; 2001a: 525). The question does not explicitly state that Option A is Westminster and Option B is NPM; this was a purposeful decision to allow respondents to connect with the values associated with the governance models, as opposed to the governance models themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5 – Which statement best describes you (Choose A or B). Split up by generation. Terms from Glor 1994/1995, 2001A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Public good, public service, equality, fair process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer satisfaction, accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that a strong majority of staff surveyed prefer the traditional public service values, though they may not understand the
significance of the terms and the differences between the two options. Given all the research on the changing face of public service values in Canada (Glor, 2001a, 2001b; Vakil, 2009; Aucoin, 2012) this particular finding requires further study. To discover that 11 of 16 (69%) Generation Y staff working in the Alberta PAB prefer the historic model over NPM is reason to further explore governance preferences and working generations to determine if and how they converge and diverge.

Punishment and reward in the workplace

One of the bi-products of the NPM, according to Glor, relates to the issue of incentives: “…incentives have been introduced to influence public servants – positively with rewards, negatively with punishment” (2001a: 525). At the outset, one would assume this model would favour Generation Y as the literature points to its members wanting positive and constant feedback (Espinoza, Ukleja and Rusch, 2010; Tapscott, 2009). However, according to the data collected in this study, all generations favour rewards when good work is done and punishment when poor work is done.

When it comes to reward and punishment in the workplace, the various generations are close to agreement (92%) that a person should be rewarded when they do good work repeatedly and punished when they do poor work repeatedly (92%). Where the generations differ is in the types of rewards and punishments, as outlined in Table 6 and Table 7. Generation Y and Generation X both prefer positive feedback as a reward, something governments could easily afford to give. The second choice for Generation Y is an increase in pay, which aligns with their preference for money (as indicated in Table 1 and Table 2). According to Espinoza et al., feedback is integral to effectively managing Generation Y: “Millennials have a preoccupation with feedback… Their desire to make a contribution causes them to doggedly track the life of their suggestions and ideas” (Espinoza et al., 2010: 76).
Table 6 – When you do good work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate reward (1st choice). Split up by generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reward</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>2 (15.4%)</td>
<td>5 (31.2%)</td>
<td>8 (24.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time bonus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback from Manager/Boss</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>8 (61.5%)</td>
<td>8 (50%)</td>
<td>18 (54.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A commitment from Management</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>1 (7.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>3 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More freedom/flexibility</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (15.4%)</td>
<td>2 (12.5%)</td>
<td>4 (12.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>13 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>16 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>33 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 – When you do poor work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate punishment (1st choice). Split up by generation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work outside of regular hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (7.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on work probation</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
<td>7 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to another work unit</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less freedom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (42.9%)</td>
<td>9 (27.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined by management</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>8 (53.3%)</td>
<td>5 (35.7%)</td>
<td>15 (45.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay cut</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours cut</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>15 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>14 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>33 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to a recent worldwide survey of some 4,000 employees conducted by the multinational Lumesse Talent Management Agency, 38% of workers aged 56—60 believe they will be recognized for working harder and only 19% of workers aged 18—25 felt the same way (Inspiring Talent, 2011). The survey – based on interviews with staff at large companies in countries like the US, China and the United Kingdom – also states that 46% of those surveyed between the ages of 18—25 were planning to leave their current jobs (2011). Clearly, Generation Y and Generation X want feedback and recognition, but the Lumesse numbers indicate the vast majority of young Generation Ys do not think it will come.
On the issue of punishment, Generation X prefers to be “disciplined from management.” This could mean a number of things, including negative feedback. For Generation Y, “discipline from management” is a close second to “less freedom” indicating some believe they had the freedom they wanted in the first place. “More freedom” was not the most popular choice as a reward for doing good work repeatedly, possibly relating to the fact that freedom and flexibility have become a reality due to new technology and different workplace demands. According to a US government report, new hires of all generations “rate flexibility as a critical factor to their decisions to pursue careers in this sector” stating that this desire is nearly equal to the “desire for job security and traditional benefits such as health insurance and retirement benefits” (Christensen, Weinshenker and Sisk, 2010: 179).

Public service values

This portion of the article outlines the five most important values for today’s public service and the top five for the future (as shown in Table 8). The options presented to the survey respondents in this section were based on the work of Vakil (2009) who studied the BC Public Service’s changing values as part of her 2009 PhD dissertation. For this part of her work, she assessed present and future values of the public service by interviewing 11 former managers. In her research, and in this study, each subject was asked to select five values out of 34 that would be important for the present, and five that would be important in the future. The work cited in this article is based on the top five present and top five future value choices from a group of eleven former senior managers surveyed by Vakil (2009: 169). The values selected for Vakil’s survey were based on the work of Dillman (2007), Dwivedi and Halligan (2003), Kernaghan (2007), Langford (2004) and Tait (1996).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 12 out of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 13 of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency (#2, selected in the top 5 by 9 out of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
<td>Transparency (#2, selected in the top 5 by 9 of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>11.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency and Effectiveness (Tie #3, selected in the top 5 by 6 out of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>Efficiency and Innovation (Tie #3, selected in the top 5 by 8 of 16 surveyed)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 8 out of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
<td>Accountability (#1, selected in the top 5 by 10 of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (#2, selected in the top 5 by 7 of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
<td>Creativity (#2, selected in the top 5 by 7 of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>9.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency and Responsiveness (Tie #3, selected in the top 5 by 5 of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>6.60%</td>
<td>Innovation and Leadership (Tie #2, selected in the top 5 by 6 of 15 surveyed)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the PAB sample, Generations X and Y share many of the same values, with both groups choosing “accountability” as the number one present and future value. “Innovation” was not selected by either generation as a top present day value, but both chose it is a top future value (tied for third in the Generation X and Generation Y sample), suggesting that this sample within the PAB believe that the public service needs to become more innovative. Surprisingly, “creativity” was not that important to Generation Y, but it was very important to Generation X with nearly 50% selecting it as a top five future value. While transparency was not important to Generation X, 56% of the Generation Y staff picked it as a top five future value.

The top three values selected by PAB staff – across all generations surveyed – for today’s public service were: accountability (12%), efficiency (8%) and leadership (7%). The top three future values – across all generations surveyed – were: accountability (15%), innovation (8%) and transparency.
This prioritization of values differs from those presented by Vakil. In her survey of the 34 values possible, with each respondent choosing five, “integrity” was the number one present value (17%) and tied for the number one future value with “entrepreneurship” (11%). The remaining most popular present values were “service” (5%), “accountability,” “leadership” and “creativity” (4% each). For future values, “accountability” and “results focused” were tied in third (9%) (Vakil, 2009: 169).

Accountability was the top present and future value across the PAB sample (number one choice by both Generation X and Generation Y), which differs from those presented by Vakil (2009). She found that integrity was the number one present value and integrity and entrepreneurship were tied for the number one future value. While there is no definitive answer as to why the difference in values, Vakil’s study does focus on managers while this study does not differentiate rank, just working generations. Further studies would benefit from cross-tabulating both age and rank.

Opinion of government communication

To form respondents’ overall opinion of government communication, each was asked to rank a few different statements based on what they first think of upon hearing or reading the term “government communication”. Their first choice is outlined in Table 9. There were twelve categories to choose from – six are positive attributes, five are negative, and one – “strictly media relations” – is neutral and could be positive or negative if respondents liked or disliked this area of public relations. The attributes selected are consistent with some of those used to describe government communication (Lee, 2008; Liu and Levenshus, 2010; Liu and Horsley, 2007; Kiss, 2008) and there is purposely a mix of positive and negative attributes. Of the responses, 67% are positive, 28% are negative and 10% are neutral. “Decent long-term employment” ranks number one with 39% of the first place votes, followed by “dealing with constant approvals” (14%) and “high functioning team” (11%). One of the issues with government work is the idea that it is filled with “red tape,” which in the case of communication would pertain to obtaining constant approvals. The criticism that communication in the
Alberta government is filled with “constant approvals” is not unfounded in the research on the PAB (Kiss, 2008). As Kiss notes, “[t]he reporting relationship for directors of communication had always been a vexing question in the particular institutional design of the Public Affairs Bureau” (2008: 150). One of Kiss’ subjects sums it up thus: “Who am I accountable to? That’s a good question. It’s confusing and not really clear. I’ve gotten shit from my manager, from my deputy, from the Public Affairs Bureau and the Premier’s Office” (2008: 151). It is worth noting that communication approvals and approval systems are in place at most, if not all, public, private and non-profit organizations; the difference is likely one of degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9 – When I think of government communications I think of… (rank the following. This table represents the #1 choice of each of the 36 respondents). Separated by generation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Functioning Team (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to High Quality Mentors (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring/Lacking in excitement (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly Media Relations (+-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Constant Approvals (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Freedom as a Communicator/Strict rules(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly reactive public relations(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent, Long-term Employment (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting-edge technology (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Culture NOT Consistent with my values (-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity (+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Constant approvals” seems to be the counterbalance to “decent long-term employment” – as the two are often referenced at the same time. As Rabin et al. report, “Members of the public who were employed commonly viewed the better security and fringe benefits of federal employment as the chief advantage of such a job; however, these same individuals identified as the chief disadvantages the perceived lack of self-determination, increased bureaucracy, and red tape” (1985: 45). Government suffers from an image crisis – it is perceived as offering decent, long-term employment but filled with red tape and constant approvals; a perception that is supported in this study and in a non-representative previous study specific to communication students of Generation Y age (Berry, 2013). The data collected in this study does not indicate whether Generation Y wants long-term employment, just that government offers “decent long-term employment” though researchers have noted Generation Y is not interested in long-term commitment (Human Capital Institute, 2008). This, however, is open for debate as Tapscott found that 68% of Generation Y in Canada would, given the right conditions, prefer to work for one or two companies in their business lifetime (2009: 153).

As shown in Table 9, “creativity,” recorded zero mentions in the area of what respondents think when they hear “government communication”; this is mirrored in Table 4, where there were zero mentions of creativity being important in a government communication position. Of the top three responses from all 36 respondents, 61% chose two or more positive statements, 6% were completely neutral (one positive, one negative and one neutral response) and 33% chose two or more negative statements in their top three.

When respondents were given the opportunity to answer two open-ended questions, themes prevalent throughout the quantitative study were again present in the qualitative analysis (as shown in Tables 10, 11 and 12 in the appendix for this article). The qualitative data is coded (Daymon and Holloway, 2011) and placed into broad groupings using the attributes identified in Table 9: Excitement, High functioning team, Access to high quality mentors, Boring/lacking in excitement, Strictly media relations,
Dealing with constant approvals, Lack of freedom as a communicator/strict rules, Strictly reactive public relations, Decent long-term employment, Cutting-edge technology and Workplace culture not consistent with my values. Additional codes were also necessary as there were other frequent statements that did not fit within the above framework, these include: Poor management, Serve public, Variety, Political/outside forces, and Money. In cases where a single statement could be linked to two or more codes, only the most prominent code match is reported. This process is similar to other public relations specific qualitative research projects where “…fragmented initial codes were consolidated into several condensed themes that described and highlighted the relationships within the data” (Tindall, Sha & Dozier, 2011).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10</th>
<th>Generation X (N = 14 as one did not answer)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In one sentence… the best part about working in government communications</td>
<td>Code In one sentence… the most challenging part about working in government communications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. A variety of work and projects in a fast-paced ministry with a terrific director. | Variety | Turnover of directors and an assistant director who is a lousy manager and has kept lousy staff - so we have some great people here and some absolutely useless ones that wouldn't last a day in the private sector. | Poor management | Yes |

2. The ability to be involved in a variety of public policy issues - to make a difference | Variety | Translating technical information into meaningful information for citizens | Serve public | Yes |

3. The team I work with | High functioning | Balancing the political needs | Political/Outside forces | Yes |
| Team of the Minister with what is timely and needed for effective quality service delivery. | 4. The team High functioning team Things that are outside of our control Political/Outside forces | Yes |
| Things never stay the same - issues and projects change constantly, enabling things to not get stale and stagnant. | 5. Things never stay the same - issues and projects change constantly, enabling things to not get stale and stagnant. Variety Staying within the limits and boundaries of government - not having consistent and top-level technology throughout the whole of government so we can communicate together properly. Cutting-edge technology (lack of) | Yes |
| Serve public Changing old-school thinking and trying to break through to new, innovative ways of doing things. | 6. The ability to know what we are doing to help share information with Albertans. Serve public | Yes |
| Decent, long-term employment Working through the red tape and dealing with bureaucracy. | 7. Secure employment Decent, long-term employment | No |
| Access to high-quality mentors Dealing with slow approval chains when one has tight deadlines is one of the most challenging parts of working in government. | 8. The fact that I am always learning is the best part of government communications Access to high-quality mentors | Yes |
| High functioning team Things out of your control | 9. The people High functioning team | Yes |
| Variety Working in a political atmosphere can be frustrating. | 10. Our current organizational structure allows for movement, change and opportunities within government ministries. Variety | Yes |
| Decent, long-term employment Trying to message decisions I may not agree with. | 11. A good wage, solid pension and opportunity to serve the public. Decent, long-term employment | Yes |
12. Because our work connects with so many Albertans on some very basic levels, we can affect meaningful change through clarity and responsiveness.

| Serve public | Risk-aversion in government can challenge our ability to do our best work with and for Albertans. | Political/Outside forces | Yes |

13. Issues management

| Excitement | Inconsistent processes | Dealing with constant approvals | Yes |

14. It provides stability for my family and I.

| Decent, long-term employment | Ridiculously convoluted approval processes in which much valuable time is wasted for very little value added to the end product. | Dealing with constant approvals | No |

### Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers (N = 5)</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Yes or no to “knowing what you know about government communications, if you were just graduating from university would you want to pursue a career in government communications?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In one sentence... the best part about working in government communications</td>
<td>In one sentence... the most challenging part about working in government communications</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting-edge technology</td>
<td>Did not answer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High functioning team</td>
<td>Deadwood</td>
<td>Poor management</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High functioning team</td>
<td>The most challenging part of working in government communications is sometimes not having buy-in or approval from</td>
<td>Dealing with constant approvals</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
well-informed about what is happening in the world today.

upper levels to proceed with innovative ideas.

4. The opportunity to help Albertans gain information they need to understand what government is doing for them with their tax dollars.

Serve public

Digging down to find the convergence of bureaucratic and political will and plain “languageing” it to clearly identify the benefits to the "average" Albertan.

Political/Outside forces Yes

5. The best part are the opportunities provided to me in the workplace to be innovative, to be a leader and to grow and develop in my career.

High functioning team

Challenges...I love challenges...bring them on!

Excitement Yes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12</th>
<th>Generation Y (N = 16)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In one sentence… the best part about working in government communications</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In one sentence… the most challenging part about working in government communications</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes or no to “knowing what you know about government communications, if you were just graduating from university would you want to pursue a career in government communications?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Stability and a positive, supportive, learning-focused work environment.</td>
<td>High functioning team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of creative freedom, tendency to lean toward jargon.</td>
<td>Creativity (lack of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer this question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The ability to provide advice to officials, and providing fair, accurate communication s to the public.</td>
<td>Serve public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not always agreeing with government decisions/direction .</td>
<td>Political/Outside forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dependability, being able to rely on a steady</td>
<td>Decent, long-term employmen t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to encourage any sort of creativity or innovation,</td>
<td>Creativity (lack of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income, a pension. I also appreciate the experience in terms of learning government communication strategies and being able to put government experience on my resume.</td>
<td>Especially in terms of social media. Government communications are very reliant on the &quot;old school&quot; PR tactics such as press releases and speeches, and are not very open to any type of new tactics, particularly in my ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Higher paying entry-level positions than private sector.</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The support and services available to further career.</td>
<td>Access to high quality mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The variety of initiatives and level of involvement we have on most projects.</td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Making a difference by ensuring Albertans are aware of and have access to the programs and services they need</td>
<td>Serve public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Something different every day.</td>
<td>Variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The salary.</td>
<td>Decent, long-term employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Job security and pay, as well as the opportunity to &quot;change careers&quot; by working in many different ministries over the course of</td>
<td>Decent, long-term employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. It is meaningful work that pays well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. My boss/bosses have been great to learn from.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. The best part of working in government communications is that it is an opportunity to see and learn what works and what doesn't work in many different areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Having the ability to inform Albertans about important issues/good news stories in our province.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. The opportunity to use a wide range of skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Great mentors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After using this coding process to identify themes, the data from Generation X suggests that “variety” (4 out of a possible 14) is most common when describing the best part about government communication and for the biggest challenge, the most common theme is “political/outside forces” (7/14). For the Generation Y sample, “decent long-term employment” (4 out of a possible 16) and “variety” (4/16) were the most prevalent themes in describing the best part about government communication. As for challenges in government communication, for the Generation Y sample the most common theme was “dealing with constant approvals” (7/16). For the small Boomer sample, the most popular theme in describing the best part of government communication is “high functioning team” (3/5) and for challenges, no common themes were evident.
The data reported in Table 9 reveals greater potential significance for government recruiters when compared with the results of a key question within the survey, as shown in Table 13. When respondents were asked if they would take a job in government public relations knowing what they now know nearly 23% said no and 77% said yes. Of those who said no to a job in government public relations, 63% selected two or more negative statements in their top three. Of those who said yes to working in government public relations, 74% chose two or more positive statements. Overall, 87% of Generation X and 73% of Generation Y said they would want to pursue a career in government communication if they were starting over. This overall positive response indicates a significant change in attitude towards government public relations, but does not fully explain the situation at the Alberta PAB. Historically, management in government has largely ignored the communication function, often laying off workers in this area first when cuts are required (Liu and Levenshus, 2010). Garnett notes that this treatment forces many skilled communicators to leave government (1997). However, when Klein came to power in Alberta in the 1990s, the first thing he did was increase the size of the Public Affairs Bureau (Kiss, 2008; Brownsey, 2005).

| Table 13 – Knowing what you know about government communications, if you were just graduating from university would you want to pursue a career in government communications? (Yes or No). Broken down by generation. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Generation** | **Baby Boomer** | **Generation X** | **Generation Y** | **Total** |
| No | 2(40%) | 2(13.4%) | 4(26.7%) | 8 (22.8%) |
| Yes | 3(60%) | 13(86.7%) | 11(73.3%) | 27 (77.2%) |
| **Total** | 5(100%) | 15(100%) | 15(100%) | 35(100%) |

**Conclusion and Limitations**

Generation X and Generation Y communicators who responded to the survey share some important values, with both groups choosing “accountability” as the number one present and future value for government. Additionally, neither generation selected “innovation” for a present day government value, but both chose it in the top three future values, suggesting that the current workforce believe the public service needs to
become more innovative. A third of both samples selected government as a good option for long-term employment and 87% of the Generation X sample and 73% of the Generation Y sample said they would want to pursue a career in government communication if they were starting over.

When it comes to recruitment and retention of Generation Y, some of the challenges include lengthy approval processes and a lack of creativity. Additionally, Generation Y is more interested in money than their Generation X counterparts – this could be the result of many factors, but the simplest is that Generation Y is younger and in some cases, just starting out. The data collected also suggests that the Generation Y sample is more likely than their Generation X counterparts to quit a higher paying job to take one more aligned with their values. While the data does support an argument that Generation Y in this sample is more extrinsically motivated, the finding related to governance systems – where the more traditional, Westminster system was the preferred option – is counterintuitive in that regard.

Sixty-nine per cent of Generation Y in this small, exploratory study, support traditional, or Westminster, public service values (53% of Generation X preferred this traditional model over the more contemporary one); these values have long been associated with much older generations in government. This finding is increasingly important given the documented shift from New Public Management to a more politicized governance model, New Political Governance (Aucoin, 2012). In addition, political literacy (both as a personal skill and a skill required in government) ranked near the bottom for Generation X and Generation Y – this emphasizes the non-political role of the PAB, or alternatively, suggests that those sampled are not well equipped to do work in a politicized communications environment (i.e.: unable to identify what is political and what is not). This finding may be suggestive of a group of communicators who desire the Westminster governance structure, and who are not yet ready (or willing) to adopt a more politicized, or NPG, governance model.

With the June 2012 announcement that the Alberta government is introducing partisan press secretaries in each ministry, as opposed to using
non-partisan communication directors from within the PAB (“Redford getting party word out,” 2012), there is the potential for a more non-partisan Public Affairs Bureau. The Public Service Commission of Canada states that a primal tenet of public service is a “staffing system free of political influence” and staff who perform their “duties in an impartial manner” (Public Service Commission, 2008). If the system was free of political influence, would the Alberta PAB be shifting back toward a more traditional, Westminster model? Despite this preference, as shown by both Generation X and Generation Y, “the need to give back to society,” a value which would be consistent with the “public service calling ideal” and the Westminster model, did not feature prominently as a motivating factor for Generation X or Generation Y in this sample.

The quantitative data collected and the subsequent analysis suggests that this small sample of Generation Y communicators within the PAB desires mentoring and more opportunities for creativity. It also suggests that they believe writing is the most important skill in government – a skill that the vast majority of the Generation Y group sampled believes that they possess. The qualitative data suggests that Generation X likes the “variety” associated with their work and dislikes having to deal with “political/outside forces.” For the Generation Y sample, “variety” and “decent long-term employment” were the themes most associated with what they liked about government communication while “dealing with constant approvals” was the theme most common as they described what they disliked about government communication.

This exploratory study sheds light on generational subcultures within the PAB. Better understanding these subcultures working within the PAB is integral in understanding the changing face of government under New Political Governance, as government communicators are often “on the cusp between politics and administration, nurturing both but belonging fully to neither” (Brown, 2012). Government communication is an important, if not integral, link between citizens and the state, making this an important matter that deserves further attention.
This article set out to answer the following question: Is there a generational shift occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees? While there are many similarities between Generation X and Generation Y presented throughout, it is the differences that are most intriguing. The data presented does suggest that there is a shift occurring, however, the magnitude of this shift requires further research.

Limitations

As the study is exploratory in nature, it is not meant to be representative. Further studies in this area will require larger samples that are representative of the age, gender and ethnic composition of the PAB. Also, given that much of the research into generations is US-based, caution must be exercised in transposing US data, theories and models with this Canadian sample.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that respondents were self-reporting, potentially impacting reliability and validity. The data needs to be triangulated with representative samples under similar circumstances (i.e.: workers in government communication) to further determine validity and reliability. The recruitment and retention challenge facing the Alberta government is shared by other provincial governments and the federal government, making a communications branch in one of those governments an ideal option for a future comparative study. Any subsequent studies also need to look more closely at the role institutions and institutional culture play in shaping attitudes and values of workers.

Furthermore, a key finding of this study is the suggestion that the Generation Y group sampled prefers a more traditional (Westminster) governance system. What this study into the PAB does not ask is “which model reminds you most of today’s workplace situation?” Nor does this study, at least in the primary data collection, address the newest governance system, New Political Governance, an extension and further politicization of the NPM model (Aucoin, 2012).
Finally, the situation within Alberta appears to be a bit of an anomaly as communicators have been placed in high regard, which is not always the case within government (Liu and Levenshus, 2010; Garnett, 1997). However, by placing communicators in the highest regard – and having the PAB report directly to the Premier’s office – an intended or unintended consequence has been the politicization of the PAB, and ultimately a shift away from traditional values and the public service ethos. Furthermore, Alberta has been governed by the same party, the Progressive Conservatives, since 1971 – a situation not consistent with other provinces. These anomalies require further research.

Endnotes

1 ‘Westminster’ public service values are named after the parliamentary system that many Commonwealth countries, including Canada, use. The basic values of this system are political neutrality, public servant anonymity, and ministerial responsibility (Kernaghan, 2003)

2 HCI is the global association for talent management and new economy leadership, and a clearinghouse for best practices and new ideas. More information at: http://www.hci.org/about

3 Sponsorship Scandal refers to a Government of Canada program that ran from 1996 until 2004. The program was an effort to raise awareness of government contributions to Quebec but it was badly managed and led to an investigation. The Gomery Inquiry into the scandal found serious misuse and misdirection of public funds.

4 “The essential feature of the Canadian system is the clear division between politicians and civil servants... Moreover, Canadian politicians continue, publicly at least to embrace the political administrative dichotomy and hence the need for politicians and career officials to occupy distinct spaces” (Savoie, 2003: 11).
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<< End of Research Article 2 >>
Fundamental to my on-going evolution as a reflective practitioner is the notion that instead of taking a binaristic, or black-and-white, approach to the study of practice, a postmodern approach like that of Kemmis – whereby the researcher acknowledges his/her role in the research and investigates that role reflexively – is preferable because it can reveal a substantial grey area (2003). Reflecting on my role in my research has been aided by the coursework I completed in the Doctor of Communication degree, specifically the module, titled ‘Deepening perspective on practice and the professions’. This allowed me the opportunity to critically reflect on my own practice, on my profession (public relations) and on the concept of professional practice.

Aristotle’s notion of phronesis, which “concerns values and goes beyond analytical, scientific knowledge (episteme) and technical knowledge or know-how (techne) and it involves judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social actor” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 370), is a logical extension from my coursework and is therefore useful in framing my thinking around the outcomes for Research Study 2. Kemmis, who wrote the module I refer to above describes phronesis as “public deliberation about issues in an interpretive-hermeneutic mode…” (2010, p. 16); Flyvbjerg (2006) describes phronesis as organizational research that matters.

Flyvbjerg (2006) surmises that phronetic research needs to address four main questions:

1. Where are we going?
2. Is this development desirable?
3. What, if anything, should we [organization, researchers] do about it?

He also argues that the researcher’s perspective is important and that there is no “neutral ground” in phronetic research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I will endeavor to answer these four important questions in the conclusion of this research portfolio. For the remainder of this chapter, however, I focus on my role in
the research and my personal perspective.

As I embarked on my own reflective practice, the work of Kinsella was useful: “reflective practice asks professionals and policy makers to rethink the dominant, taken-for-granted epistemological assumptions of professional knowledge – technical rationality” (2009, p. 11). In my reflection on this research study, I focus on two key variants: introspection and social critique (Finlay, 2002). An introspective approach allowed me to reflect on my own personal experiences within government and pushed me to choose a topic area that most interested me, that is, the aspirations and expectations of Generation Y within government communication. In introspection, according to Finlay (2002), primary evidence is based on the researcher’s own reflection and thinking.

Social critique as a reflexive practice has enabled me to reflect on the power dynamic and the multiple and differing researcher-participant perspectives (Finlay, 2002). Like introspection, social critique affords researchers “the opportunity to utilize experiential accounts” (Finlay, 2002, p. 222). By choosing a topic that is personal and familiar, I have been able to intertwine my own experiences into my research, something Finlay argues is of foremost importance (2002).

As I reflect on my own experiences within government, I am reminded that creativity – a defining characteristic of Generation Y (Tapscott, 2009; Florida, 2009) – was not always part of my daily routine. The results from Research Study 2, like the MRU Generation Y student sample from Research Study 1, provides support for the notion that Generation Y and Generation X feel PAB offers “decent long-term employment,” but lacks the opportunities for the workforce to be “creative”. However, even with a lack of creativity, the majority of government communication staff, from all generations, enjoy their job and would choose PAB as an employer if they were entering the workforce today. The implications of this disjuncture between these findings will be examined in depth in the next chapter of this portfolio which compares and contrasts the results from research studies 1 and 2.
Overall, staff had positive things to say about their role in the Alberta government. As I reflect on this finding, two questions emerge that would benefit from further enquiry. First, as noted earlier in section 5.1, were there power issues that influenced these results? And second, how have the researcher’s experiences in government influenced the study? Using social critique as a reflexive practice has enabled me to reflect on the power dynamic. Prior to beginning my study I made a conscious decision to study the Alberta PAB as opposed to the British Columbia PAB (where I once worked as a communications manager); this was a prudent move to allow some professional distance from the subject matter and the subjects. Before proceeding, it needs to be stated that: “In reflexivity as social critique, it is naive, if not disingenuous, to pay lip-service to the power dimension by assuming a fixed and knowable subject position” (Finlay, 2002, p. 226).

In order to access staff, initial approval from Alberta’s Public Affairs Bureau executive was necessary. To obtain these necessary approvals, some modifications (slight changes to wording) to my survey instrument were requested and made. While having to seek approval is not ideal in that the approving body could compromise the integrity of the research, the fact remains that without the approval, there is no ethical way to gain access to the staff. In this particular case, it is necessary for me to address “the idea that power and knowledge are indisociable from another” (Fox, 2000, p. 857). In that sense, it would be impossible to separate the knowledge generated as a result of this research from the power of government and furthermore, no matter the circumstances, power remains a constant. Fox’s approach is reminiscent of Foucault, specifically the idea of power: “without power nothing is achieved” and that instead power is both “relational and productive” (Fox, 2000, p. 858).

As I explored the limitations of my study to this point, I became concerned about the validity of my results and often found myself reflecting on future research options. One way to build confidence in the data would have been to add a third sample to this research – this would have created three different points of verification, or data triangulation (Somekh & Lewin,
While adding a second government study (and a third study overall) would serve to build confidence in the data collected, it would not solve the procedural and methodological questions associated with gaining approval to access research subjects within government.

In addition to questioning the issues of power that may have affected the data, I questioned my own way of thinking and approach to the research. With reflection, it is apparent that I did not just arrive at the point of studying the Alberta PAB without being influenced by my own habitus – that is my career, upbringing and general view of the world. The harder question confronting me was: did these factors compromise my research?

Reflecting on my career as a public relations practitioner within government, I am aware that it has played a pivotal role in my development as a researcher and teacher. Throughout my research journey to this point I made detailed notes. One of the most useful notes reflects on my personal experiences in government communication, specifically some of the negative experiences I had with the lengthy approvals system and the lack of a public service “ethic” (Kernaghan, 2007) shown by some colleagues. As noted by Holly and Altrichter, a researcher cannot separate themselves from their experiences “…[w]hile this may be seen as a liability, it is also an asset” (2005, p. 28). An asset, I concluded, because we learn from our experiences, and being able to reflect on those experiences and better understand them, makes for higher quality research (Altrichter & Holly, 2005).

If, as stated by Daymon and Holloway (2011), one of the goals of critical research is to emancipate marginalized populations, my study has given a voice to the youngest of the three working generations. The intent is to compare Generation Y to other more established working generations (Eisner & Harvey, 2009) – while not diminishing other marginalized populations (e.g.: homeless people). Fox’s Foucauldian perspective is of value in my own reflexivity as social critique. Addressing changes to existing practices and development of new practices, Fox argues:

> Power conflicts within communities of practice are possible as a result of such dilemmas. Practices evolve partly through the agency
of the members of a community as ways of working are changed. What is sacrosanct to one generation may be changed by the next. Different masters may compete with each other in leading the way to the future (2000, p. 856).

By giving this Generation Y subculture a voice, my research has enabled me to move practices along a progressive continuum and challenge, at least in some small way, what is perceived as sacrosanct. One means open to me of achieving this goal was to disseminate my research findings via traditional and open-source academic journals.

The data collected and analyzed in Research Study 2 provides a snapshot in time of the values and beliefs of a sample of the various generations working in the PAB. In the next chapter the data and analysis from Research Study 2 will be compared with the data and analysis from Research Study 1 to identify and analyze trends among Generation Y communicators – both those in the university setting and those working in government – specific to values, skills and perceptions of the government communication function. It is in the next publishable article where the two previous exploratory studies (research studies 1 and 2) are compared for this first time.
Chapter 6: Bringing it all together – comparing and contrasting the data

6.1 Context for research study 3

Research Study 3 is the point where data from Research Study 1 and Research Study 2 intersect for the first time. Each of the previous two exploratory studies was designed in a similar and purposeful way so as to achieve comparability in this, the third phase. Questions posed to respondents in the second research study mirrored those in the first where possible.

One of the biggest challenges with comparative analysis is comparability of data (Pelgrum, 2005). Early on in the research process I had an approach and research trajectory in mind, so as to address challenges with comparability in the final research study. My initial reasons for proceeding with a comparative analysis were inspired by Hargreaves who, when he assessed the medical and teaching professions, concluded:

There are two grounds for undertaking a comparative analysis of the knowledge-base and associated processes of the medical and teaching professions. First, by examining the similarities and differences between the two professions, it should be possible to advance a generic mode of a professional knowledge-base. Secondly, the contrast offers some indications of what each profession might learn from the other (2000, p. 219).

If my teaching practice could benefit from my public relations practice and vice versa, then my research project would be successful. Additionally, if different generations in this sample could learn from each other – inside and outside of the government context – then I would be furthering an important and timely discussion.

This third and final research study is a comparative analysis aimed at detailing similarities between and differences among the populations (Golob & Bartlett, 2007) as a means to better inform my research problem, identified earlier as whether an aging workforce, retirements, and changing demographics will lead to challenges in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff within government communication. Furthermore, what effect, if this
problem is occurring, does it have on the ideal skill and value set needed within the government communication function?

A diagnostic study is beneficial because its aim is “discovering what is happening, why it is happening and what can be done about it” (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 12). While not all of these questions will be answered in Research Study 3, they will be addressed in the conclusion of this portfolio.

By analyzing similarities and differences between the Generation Y student sample at MRU and the working generations at the PAB, specifically Generation Y and Generation X, I was aiming to advance understanding of the various and differing aspects of government communication – values, skills, opinions – in order to determine where the various generations’ values converge and diverge (RQ1). Research Study 3 further addresses the concept of a generational shift and how this shift – real or perceived – might affect the Alberta PAB’s ability to recruit and retain future employees (RQ2). Additionally, Research Study 3 addresses the first and second research objectives of my doctoral research topic which, to recapitulate, are:

1. To increase knowledge and understanding of Generation Y Canadian government communicators (current and potential) in the areas of workplace values and opinions.
2. To add to knowledge that relates to recruitment and retention of Generation Y and Generation X; especially to the advancement of knowledge specific to Generation Y within a Canadian government communication role.

While no new primary research data was generated as part of Research Study 3 and therefore no ethics approval was required, writing the publishable article proved to be challenging due to the sheer volume of data that needed to be analyzed and compared. The data, and subsequent analysis, presented in Research Study 3 are the basis for answering key questions laid out in this portfolio and serve as motivation for future research.
6.2 Research study 3

This article is the third in a series of three published or publishable articles required for the portfolio of a Doctor of Communication degree at Charles Sturt University. This article was submitted to the journal *foresight* on March 11, 2013 and was accepted with minor revisions on August 13, 2013. *Foresight*, a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal “is an international bi-monthly journal concerned with the study of the future” and provides “…a much-needed forum for sound thinking about the future and will focus on themes and issues, which demand a strategic and long-term view” (2012).

The article is presented in the same form as submitted to *foresight* and meets the journal’s particular requirements, including Harvard style referencing.

*Citation*

Generation Y in the workplace: A comparative analysis of values, skills and perceptions of government communication amongst university students and government staff

Structured Abstract (as per foresight guidelines)

Purpose – By analyzing similarities and differences between the Generation Y public relations student sample at a Western Canadian university and the working generations of a communications branch within a provincial government, specifically Generation Y, the article aims to advance understanding of the various and differing aspects of government communication as a means to determine where the various generations’ values converge and diverge and to forecast the future implications of the findings.

Design/methodology/approach - This comparative study uses data from two previous studies to identify and analyze trends among Generation Y communicators – both those in the university setting and those already working within government – specific to values, skills and perceptions of the government communication function. It asks: how do the values and opinions of Generation Y university public relations students compare and contrast with values and opinions from Generation Y communication staff within a provincial government?

Findings – As well as supporting some of the assumptions and previous findings relating to Generation Y, the findings from this purposive survey and subsequent comparative analysis offer a new and deeper understanding of the workplace needs and wants of those represented by the particular sample. The findings also provide a glimpse into what the future of government communication might look like and the skills the next generation of employees will need to have.

Research limitations/implications – The sample size used in this article is small and purposive, and should not be read as representative. The intent is
not to generalize broad populations and generations, but to add to knowledge in a very specific area.

**Practical implications** – The results of this study directly inform the practice of government communication by addressing current and future recruitment challenges.

**Originality/value** – A study of generational values within Canadian government communication has not been conducted previously by scholars and academics. This study fills a gap in the research and offers valuable insight for future research.

**Key words**: Generation Y, Generation X, Government Communication, Public Relations, Recruitment, Retention

**Introduction**

The multi-generation workforce is here, and with it, new challenges and opportunities for employees and employers. Definitions for each generation, widely referred to as Baby Boomers and Generations X and Y, are discussed more fully later in this article but in brief, Baby Boomers are currently retiring from the workforce and Generation Y is entering in great numbers. This shift, which is happening across all sectors, is dramatic, much more so than the one that occurred when Generation X entered the workforce in the mid-1980s, largely because of the sheer numbers of Generation Y in comparison to Generation X (Shaffer, 2008). As an example, in the United States a 2010 forecast shows 22% of the workforce is Generation X compared to 38% born into Generation Y (Behrstock and Clifford, 2009). In Canada, Generation Y currently comprises 28% of the workforce and 37% of the population (“Estimates,” 2011; “Labour Force,” 2011).

Much has been written about Generation Y in the workforce (Lipkin and Perrymore, 2009; Benko and Weisberg, 2007; Espinoza et al., 2010; Arsenault, 2004). However, little has been written specifically on Generation Y in relation to the field of Canadian government
communication (Berry, 2013). This paper focuses on a cohort of Generation Y public relations (PR) students at Mount Royal University (MRU) and a group of Generation Y staff at the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) to present a comparative study of values, skills and opinions of government communication based on data produced in two previous studies. (Unless otherwise indicated, data relating specifically to Generation Y MRU students refers to Berry, 2013 [Canadian public relations students’ interest in government communication: An exploratory study].

The focus on government communication in this research is purposeful, given the importance of government communication in a democratic nation (Lee, 2008; Fairbanks et al., 2007). Further supporting the relevance of this study, the Canadian federal government is the biggest employer of communicators in the country (2010). Moreover, government communication occupies a grey area between the political and bureaucratic arm of government (Brown, 2012), making it unique among government. Like large corporations throughout North America facing a staffing shortage and generational shift (Eisner, 2005), government currently faces a shortfall of young talent. Tulgan describes the generational shift as older generations leaving the workforce and being replaced by new generations, who bring new values and norms (2004). The Public Service Commission of Canada has “an under-supply of younger workers” (2009) as does the British Columbia government (Human Resource Management Plan, 2007/2008) and the Government of Alberta’s PAB (2012). As of March 2012, the Alberta PAB has no permanent full-time staff under the age of 25 and less than 20% of its permanent workforce is under 34 (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012).

This article presents a new understanding of the relationship between Generation Y and government communication in a Canadian context.

**Literature review**

There is a significant amount of literature on the working generations, including the work of Strauss and Howe (1991) who succinctly capture the
history of America’s generations from 1584 to 1991 and provide predictions for the future, up to 2069. There is little consistency in the scholarly literature on when generations start and end, though the parameters are often very similar. For the purpose of this study, I use the parameters as defined by a leading Canadian generational researcher, Tapscott: Baby Boomers are those born between 1946-64; Generation X are those born between 1965-1976, and; Generation Y are those born between 1977-1997 (2009).

As Generation Y continues to enter the workforce in significant numbers, an increasing number of scholars have begun to research the impact this shift is having on the workforce, often drawing contradictory conclusions. Tapscott (2009) assesses the generation to be, among other things, more technologically literate than their parents. Bauerlein (2008), on the other hand, argues that Generation Y is slowly letting U.S. history slip away by not caring about the past. While Benko and Weisberg argue that Generation Y values challenging and interesting work over pay (2007), Lipkin and Perriyore state: “This generation is multi-talented, over-stimulated, socially aware, demanding and resourceful” (2009, p. 16). Espinoza et al., argue that Generation Y does not care about customers and live in a land of entitlement (2010). They too, find that Generation Y has a high impression of itself (Espinoza et al., 2010), a perception that is not always shared by their employers (Berry, Cole and Hembroff, 2011).

As Arsenault argues, understanding generations is important in building better management models and improving the workplace but every generation is different and looks to different leaders and leadership styles (Arsenault, 2004). Generation Y, according to Tapscott, can be summed up by eight norms: “freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, innovation” (2009, p. 35). For Generation Y (or, as Arsenault called them almost ten years ago, “Generation Next”), core values include: “optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement” (Arsenault, p. 129). Flexibility and customization are fast becoming hallmarks of Generation Y (Public Service Commission, 2009; Tapscott, 2009), but this can also be seen as egocentric entitlement (Public Service Commission, 2009). In contrast, core values for Baby Boomers are: “Optimism, personal gratification and growth” (Zemke et al., 2000, p.129), while core values for
Generation X, according to Zemke et al. are: “diversity, technoliteracy, fun, [and] informality” (p. 129).

For Jurkiewicz (2000), who found few differences between Generation X and Baby Boomers in her study of the U.S. public service, the whole notion of generational differences (especially Generation X versus Baby Boomers) is founded upon an original yet highly biased sample by Tulgan “…based solely on his interviews of 85 self-selected friends and friends of friends…” (p. 57). Authors like Jorgensen have rejected the notion of distinct generations, instead proposing that employers instead acknowledge “the technical, economic, political and social dynamism of modern life rather than the flawed conclusions of popular generational theory” (2003, p. 41). Alternatively, Benson and Brown (2011) studied more than 3,000 Baby Boomers and Generation Xers and found differences that generally conformed to what has been written by generational “gurus” and in business journals. Clearly, the study of generations is not without its challenges – and needs to be properly contextualized by including factors other than age, such as: salary, rank, workplace culture, and environment. While generational factors are not the only force influencing workplace behaviour this study will illuminate this one small but critical area within the study of generational subcultures.

Aside from the existing scholarship relating to generations in the workplace, there is also a significant quantity of scholarship exploring values in the public service. Specifically, in countries like Canada, with governance systems modelled after the Commonwealth’s Westminster system, there is an understanding that there is an on-going shift from Westminster values to the New Public Management (NPM) (Vakil, 2009; Glor, 2001B) and from NPM to New Political Governance or NPG (Aucoin, 2012). As outlined by Kernaghan, Westminster public service values, once the basis of the Canadian system, are: political neutrality, public servant anonymity, and ministerial responsibility (2003). Glor summarizes NPM as being closely related to private sector approaches, specifically, changing the way success is measured, down-sizing and improving flexibility (Glor, 2001B). According to Glor, NPM has become well established in the last couple of
decades (2001B, p. 122). Aucoin (2012), however, argues that NPM has shifted to a more politicized governance model, or NPG. According to Aucoin, under the NPM model government ministers has “legitimate democratic control of the public service” but the move to NPG “constitutes a corrupt form of politicization to the extent that governments seek to use and misuse, even abuse, the public service in the administration of public resources and the conduct of public business to better secure their partisan advantage over their competitors” (2012, p. 178). The public service is also, to some, not a job but a calling (Dwivedi, 1999; Vakil, 2009). With its focus on government communication specifically, this article presents new insight into this existing body of scholarly knowledge.

Rationale

With little research conducted in the area of profiling Generation Y within the communication function of government, this research is new. It fills a gap in scholarly knowledge as well as in knowledge about governmental operations in the Canadian context. As a major employer, research into Generation Y is highly valued by the Canadian federal government; the Canadian Public Service Commission has acknowledged the importance of recruiting and retaining this up-and-coming generation as it responds to a significant exit of retiring Baby Boomers (2009). By looking specifically at values and opinions of Generation Y communicators inside and outside of government, this article explores the reasons some young people might choose to work in government communication, and why others might choose not to.

The research question I set out to answer in this article is: how do the values and opinions of Generation Y university public relations students compare and contrast with values and opinions from Generation Y communication staff within a provincial government (and to a lesser degree, Generation X staff)? This article outlines the responses from PR students at MRU and those from Generation Y staff in the Alberta PAB.
Research methodology

The first study, conducted between March 28 and April 24, 2011, used a descriptive online survey to assess the workplace values of MRU PR students. The survey was distributed to 143 Generation Y students who formed three groups: those entering third year of the four-year degree, those entering the fourth year, and recent graduates. The results of this study were published by Management Research Review (Berry, 2013).

The second study, conducted between September 23 and October 18, 2011, used a descriptive survey to assess the workplace values of three different generations – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y – working within the Alberta PAB. The survey was issued electronically to 282 staff (including full-time, part-time and contract workers). The sample breaks down as follows: Generation X (36—47 years of age) (42%), Generation Y (15—35 years of age) (44%) and Baby Boomers (48—66 years of age) (14%). While the focus of this article is the comparison of the two Generation Y samples, Generation X data is incorporated where appropriate in order to better inform key differences and similarities. While the results from the Boomer generation are reported, due to the small sample and lack of statistical significance, great caution is taken in any subsequent analysis of data relating to the Boomer sample.

The sampling method for this study was purposive following the recommendation of Hansen et al. (1998); purposive sampling is useful as it allows data to be compared (Teddlie and Yu, 2007). In total, 75 respondents participated in the descriptive surveys, 55 of whom fit the description of Generation Y (the entire MRU sample is Generation Y and 44% of the PAB sample meets the same Generation Y criteria). It is not proposed that the data should be read as representative across larger populations; rather, it provides the foundational knowledge that can be used to promote further investigation into the generational dynamic within government communication offices. In total, 39 out of a possible 143 MRU PR students responded, for a mean average of 27%. The Alberta PAB survey had 36 respondents out of a possible 282, for an average of 13%. In both studies
data was collected using the TooFast survey tool and analyzed using SPSS software. [1]

As noted by Golob and Bartlett: “The comparative study is often used in explorative research to detect and explain the differences between (and similarities among) the objects of research” (2007, p. 4). By using two previous exploratory studies in this comparative analysis, the aim is to further define, diagnose and anticipate (Krishnaswarmi and Satyaprasad, 2010) what, if any problems the Alberta PAB is having related to a generational shift, and the recruitment and retention of Generation Y specifically.

For the most part, questions in the Alberta PAB study mirrored those in the MRU study. This was deliberate as it provided the means to generate a comparison. In both studies, participants were asked a number of different types of questions including filter, Likert-scale, ranking, and dichotomous questions requiring a yes or no answer. The structure of the questions and the questions themselves allowed for only relevant data to be returned and most were closed ended for ease of analysis (Lewin, 2005); the Likert-scale and ranking questions also gave respondents five options, as “[s]ome respondents may avoid extreme responses (either end of the scales) in which case a 3-point scale may need to be avoided” (Lewin, 2005, p. 219). The remainder of the article will focus on the analysis of specific topics about which the participants were questioned. These include: personal values, personal skills, skills required by government, role and function of government, punishment and reward in the workplace, and lastly, opinion about working in government. Specific survey questions relating to values within government and the nature of government work were informed by Glor (2001A; 2001B), Perry and Wise (1990) and Vakil (2009). Questions relating to personal skills are based on the work of Wilcox and Cameron (2011) and Lee (2008).

The author is an associate professor at Mount Royal University and a former manager at the B.C. PAB. To ensure the researcher could not identify specific respondents based on their answers, little data was collected relating
to personal background information. To protect the anonymity of the respondents – although information on gender and ethnicity could have been useful, as shown in Ng, Schweitzer and Lyons’ study on Generation Y in Canadian universities (2010) – in a small purposive sample, less in the way of background was deemed ethically prudent; this anonymity, moreover, was intended to encourage the students and employees to speak freely and openly about their experiences. [2]

Findings

Background of respondents

Some non-personal background information that was collected related to the area of technology and PR practice and theory. Nearly all MRU students and recent graduates (95%) and more than three-quarters of PAB staff surveyed (83%) agreed that they were comfortable with new information technologies. The data shows that of the respondents from the three generations surveyed, Generation Y was most comfortable with new technologies; this supports Tapscott’s observation that for Generation Y, technology is like “air” (2009, p. 18). Problematic, though, is the speed at which governments can shift gears in offering new technologies; especially since Canada has not yet achieved its full potential for e-government (Fraser, 2009).

Additionally, and relating specifically to PR theory, respondents were asked if they thought PR should be part of the government decision-making arm rather than play just an advisory role. All of the MRU respondents agreed and nearly all (92%) of the PAB respondents agreed. When asked which of Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) PR models (two-way symmetrical, two-way asymmetrical, public information and press agentry) was the most professional, a strong majority (72%) of the MRU sample chose two-way symmetrical; from the PAB sample, less than half (37%) – the majority of which came from the Generation Y group – chose two-way symmetrical, which according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) is the most professional. Nearly half of the PAB sample (45%) said they were unfamiliar with these models. This may be explained by the fact that very few of the PAB respondents
(12%) have PR undergraduate degrees (15% of the sample had degrees in journalism; 15% had degrees in political science; 3% had a communications degree and; 54% selected “other” for their degree). The Grunig and Hunt models are taught in PR diploma and degree programs throughout North America, and as such, are a good barometer for PR knowledge. However, the models are not without critics (Sha, 2007; L’Etang and Pieczka, 2006; Fawkes, 2012; Merkelsen, 2011) and as a result, need to be placed in the context of the dominant paradigm of public relations.

| Table 1 – Which of the following four models would you say is most "professional"? Broken down by generation and sample. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | PAB Sample | MRU Sample | |
| | Baby Boomer | Generation X | Generation Y | Generation Y |
| Two-way symmetrical | 2 (40%) | 4 (26.7%) | 7 (46.7%) | 28 (71.8%) |
| Two-way asymmetrical | 0 | 2 (13.3%) | 2 (13.3%) | 5 (12.8%) |
| One-way Public information | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 (10.3%) |
| Press agentry | 0 | 1 (6.7%) | 1 (6.7%) | 2 (5.1%) |
| Not familiar with these models | 3 (60%) | 8 (53.3%) | 5 (33.3%) | N/A |
| Total | 5 (100%) | 15 (100%) | 15 (100%) | 39 (100%) |

The findings in this section indicate that Generation Y respondents (across both samples) are most comfortable with information technologies and that the Generation Y students surveyed are far more likely to embrace the two-way symmetrical model of public relations than their PAB counterparts, which, it can be argued, is a direct result of the PR education they received.

**Personal values**

According to both samples, personal values are very important to Generation Y, more so than pay. That said, the need for money is still great. Personal values are so important to the PR students that 27 out of 39 (69%) would quit a higher paying job in favour of a lower paying one more aligned with their values. In the PAB survey, half (50%) of the work force surveyed agreed they would quit a higher paying job to take a lower paying one more
aligned with their values. The other half, 18 of the 36 surveyed, said they would not quit a higher paying job to take a lower paying one more aligned with their values. Breaking down the PAB respondents on this issue further: from the Generation X group, six out of 15 (40%) said “yes” and nine out of 15 (60%) said “no”; for Generation Y the totals are almost reversed – nine out of 16 (56%) said “yes” and seven out of 16 said “no” (44%). The Generation Y data is similar in both samples, but not identical. It is worth emphasising that at the time of data collection, the Alberta PAB had no full-time employees under the age of 25, so the Generation Y sample is biased toward staff between 26 and 35 years of age. Even so, a majority of Generation Y in both samples would not compromise their values for monetary gain.

### Table 2 – I would quit a higher paying job to take one that better aligns with my values? (Yes or No). Broken down by generation and sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PAB Sample</th>
<th>MRU Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>9 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another question relating to values asked both samples what need they are/were looking to fill when in their first PR job post-college or university. Thirteen respondents (33%) in the MRU sample said the need they are looking to fill most is money followed by 11 (28%) who chose mentoring. In the PAB sample, seven of the 16 (44%) Generation Y respondents chose mentoring, followed by six of 16 (38%) who chose money. For Generation X, four of 15 (27%) said they never dreamed of being in PR, followed by a three-way tie (three out 15, or 20%) for money, mentoring and creativity. As the MRU students are in a PR program, the “never dreamed of being in PR” response was not an option in the survey questionnaire. As the youngest working generation, the stated need for money is expected as most are just starting their careers. A previous study found pay to be the most important “motivational factor for the Millennials [Generation Y]” (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). This sample shows that pay is important to this group (with mentorship a very close second in the MRU sample), but that it does not necessarily trump personal values.
Table 3 – In your first PR/communications job out of school what need are/were you looking to fill most? Broken down by generation and sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need to give back to society</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>MRU Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
<td>13 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (43.7%)</td>
<td>11 (28.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to give back to society</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show others you are doing well</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>5 (12.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be creative</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>8 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't remember</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never dreamed of being in PR</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historically, not all of the youngest working generations have felt this way; in the 1970s the greatest need was “developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (U.S. Census, 2006). The focus on money is potentially problematic for the “public service calling” ideal put forth by some researchers (Vakil, 2009; Dwivedi, 1999) as in both the MRU and PAB samples the need “to give back to society” recorded just two responses (5% of each sample). The findings do not unequivocally show that Generation Y values money above all else, or that values are more important than money. The above comparison suggests similarities between the two Generation Y samples relating to the need for money and the importance of personal values as well as subtle differences between the Generation X and Generation Y samples. However, as Ng et al. found in their study of 24,000 Canadian university students, Generation Y motivation is highly complex and highly nuanced (2010).

**Personal skills and assessment of skills required in government**

Writing shines through as the number one attribute already possessed by Generation Y respondents in both samples, and also the most necessary skill
in government, again according to the Generation Y sample. Of note is where creativity fits. It is highly rated as a Generation Y personal attribute but when asked about the skills required to work in government communication, creativity drops significantly.

The findings for this section of the questionnaire were determined as follows: each respondent was asked to rate their top three personal skills and then the top three skills required in government. The skills available for respondents to choose from are based on the top five skills required in public relations, as noted by Wilcox and Cameron (2011): writing, planning, problem solving, business literacy, researching. These are supplemented by other skills, including political literacy, adaptability and creativity. Results were calculated using a points system: a first place vote was worth three points, second place two points and a third place vote was worth one point.

When it came to personal abilities, the MRU respondents selected writing as number one with 58 total points, followed by creativity with 32 total points. From the PAB sample, the Generation Y group selected writing number one (38 total points), followed by creativity (14 total points). The Generation X group selected writing first (24 total points) and problem solving second (19 total points). The focus on writing is consistent with PR research (Wilcox and Cameron, 2011; Berry, Cole and Hembroff, 2011), just as the focus on creativity is consistent with the work of Tapscott (2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 – Rank these skills based on your own level of comfort with them. Ranking based on highest level of comfort. First place vote = 3 points, 2nd place = 2 points, 3rd = 1 point.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAB Sample</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baby Boomer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work well in teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When respondents were asked to categorize the most important skills required for work in government communication, the differences between those at university (MRU sample) and those already working in government (PAB sample) were pronounced. The MRU sample chose political literacy as the most important skill (50 total points), with writing a close second (47 total points). The lowest total numbers in the MRU sample went to creativity (1 point). From the PAB sample, Generation Y chose writing as the number one skill required in government communication (31 total points) followed by researching (14 total points). The Generation X staff chose writing first (22 total points) followed by adaptability (17 total points). Adaptability and researching were seventh and fifth respectively in the MRU sample. MRU students and recent graduates selected political literacy as the most important attribute in government communication, an attribute that only received 14 totals points across the three working generations in the PAB (paradoxically, the MRU respondents selected business and political literacy at the bottom of their own personal skills). Clearly, those not yet working in government (the MRU sample) believe political literacy is more important than those who are working in government communication (PAB sample) and these believe adaptability and planning are more important than those still studying PR at university. The findings on political literacy certainly deserve further research, as Aucoin (2012) argues that the Canadian governance model is now more politicized than ever before. Are the PAB staff who participated in this research not aware of the “politicization” of their function because they are so entrenched in the culture? Or is the “politicization” of their role overblown by critics?
In terms of new knowledge, the findings on creativity provide a better understanding of the needs and wants of the various working generations. When combining the MRU and PAB samples, creativity received 56 total points in the area of personal skills. Alternatively, when combining both samples in the area of skills required in government, creativity receives one total point – illustrating a clear disconnect between what those in the sample think they do well and what they think is important in a government communication role. Urban studies theorist Florida argues that creativity is just one element in attracting young people (Florida, 2009). Future studies would need to look deeper into creativity within government, specifically asking what “creativity” means exactly to each respondent.

**Role and function of government**

Each of the respondents in the sample was asked if government plays a significant role in their lives. As PAB staff deals with government as part of their daily work routines, the phrase “outside of work” was added at the end of this particular survey question to get an indication about how government affects them personally, outside working hours. This was added purposefully to better align this line of questioning with the MRU survey. For the MRU sample, more than three-quarters (80%) were in agreement or strong agreement that government plays a significant role in their lives.
From the PAB sample, less than a third (28%) agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion.

Values in Canadian government workplaces are shifting, as has been well documented by Glor (2001A; 2001B) and Vakil (2009). Perry and Wise found that in the past “[t]he primary motivator for public servants was the opportunity to contribute, to make a difference” (Perry and Wise, 1990). As discussed earlier, the shift we are seeing is from traditional, or Westminster, values, which Glor describes as “…commitment to the public interest or public good, public service, equality and due and fair process” (2001A, p. 525), to what is called the New Public Management model (2001A). This new model focuses on “efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer service/satisfaction, and accountability for results” (Glor, 1994/1995). New Political Governance, or NPG, as postulated by Aucoin (2012) was not factored into the survey question. Anecdotally, the New Public Management model (NPM) appears to be well-suited to Generation Y as it values rewards and punishment and is incentive based.

To test that theory, each participant was given a list of key words describing the two public service value systems and asked to select which set of terms best describes their own values. Respondents were not given the names of the governance systems. Twenty-five (64%) MRU students and recent graduates selected the terms associated with NPM as the model that best describes their own values. For the PAB sample, a majority of each working generation selected terms associated with traditional, or Westminster values, including nearly three-quarters (69%) of the Generation Y sample. In this case the results show polar opposite responses from the Generation Y group. Age may be a factor, as noted earlier, with Generation Y in the PAB sample being older than those in the MRU sample. And while NPG was not part of the survey question, the fact a majority of current PAB staffers chose traditional Westminster values as the ones they identify with most is an important finding. In addition, further research in this area would need to assess which model the current workplace is most similar to (traditional Westminster, NPM, or NPG), as opposed to asking which model best represents the individual respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PAB Sample</th>
<th>MRU Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Generation X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A) Public good, public service, equality, fair process.</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>8 (53.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer satisfaction, accountability.</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (46.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Punishment and reward in the workplace

When comparing the preferred type of punishment and reward in the workplace, results between the two samples are similar, with both agreeing overwhelmingly that punishment and reward are important parts of the employee/employer relationship. The findings in this section are particularly useful for government recruitment and retention, as it is quite common to have four generations – Veterans, Boomers, Generation X and Generation X – all working in a single office and all with different needs (Crampton and Hodge, 2009). The results presented below provide insight into punishment and reward preferences among Generation Y and Generation X.

When comparing incentives for doing good work repeatedly, “positive feedback from manager/boss” was second on the MRU list with 14 respondents choosing it (after “increase in pay” with 15 votes) and first with both Generation X and Generation Y in the PAB sample (eight of 13 and eight of 16, respectively). This finding is consistent with scholarship around Generation Y and the need for positive feedback (Espinoza et al., 2010; Tapscott, 2009). Breaking down the Generation X and Generation Y samples’ second choice, the data show that Generation Y workers in the PAB much prefer an increase in pay over their Generation X colleagues. The similar findings for each of the Generation Y samples further support the point presented earlier – money is the most important need to these groups in their first job out of post-secondary (tertiary). A “commitment
from management” was not important to Generation Y in either sample (with one out of 39 votes in the MRU Generation Y sample and one out of 16 votes in the PAB Generation Y sample) which aligns with the Generation Y ideal of not wanting to stay in a job for too long (Shaffer, 2008; Ng et al., 2010). This is a prospect further supported in Berry 2013, which showed nearly three quarters (68%) of decided MRU respondents (those with an opinion) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion of staying in their first PR job for at least five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7 – When you do good work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate reward (1st choice). Split up by generation and sample.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PAB Sample</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baby Boomer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-time bonus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive feedback from Manager/Boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A commitment from Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More freedom/flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to punishment for doing poor work repeatedly, students and recent graduates of the PR program indicated that they preferred routes that did not affect the bottom line (both “pay cut” and “hours cut” received zero votes). This was consistent with each generation in the PAB sample. The preferred punishment for the MRU sample was to be lectured or disciplined by management with 16 total votes (41%); in the PAB sample “disciplined by management” was the first choice for Generation X with eight of 15 respondents choosing it (53%) and the second selection for Generation Y with five of 14 respondents choosing it (36%). The number one choice by Generation Y in the PAB sample was “less freedom” with six respondents choosing it (43%), perhaps an indication that they have plenty of freedom already. Flexibility in the workplace might sound like a Generation Y ideal, but increasingly it is the norm and not the exception (Christensen, Weinshenker and Sisk 2010, p. 179).
Table 8 – When you do poor work repeatedly, which is the most appropriate punishment (1st choice). Split up by generation and sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punishment</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work outside of regular hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (7.1%)</td>
<td>4 (10.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put on work probation</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%)</td>
<td>11 (28.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to another work unit</td>
<td>1 (25%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (7.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less freedom</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>6 (42.9%)</td>
<td>5 (12.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined by management</td>
<td>2 (50%)</td>
<td>8 (53.3%)</td>
<td>5 (35.7%)</td>
<td>16 (41.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay cut</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours cut</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>14 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall there are many similarities, with “disciplined by management” chosen as the number one form of punishment by the Generation X PAB sample, the MRU sample and second choice, behind “less freedom” for the Generation Y PAB sample. For rewards, the MRU sample selected “increase in pay” as their first choice whereas the majority of the Generation Y and Generation X PAB samples chose “positive feedback” over an “increase in pay.”

Opinion of government communication

As a means to determine overall opinions of government communication, each of the respondents in the sample was asked to select the terms they would associate with the communication function in government. There were eleven terms from which they could choose. Six were positive attributes: excitement, high functioning team, access to high quality mentors, decent long-term employment, cutting-edge technology and creativity. Four were negative: constant approvals, boring/lack of excitement, lack of freedom/strict rules, and workplace values not consistent with my own. One option relating specifically to media relations was deemed neutral since the response to the question could be either positive or negative if the respondent liked/disliked this particular facet of PR. Of the responses given in the MRU sample, less than half (44%) were positive,
more than half (54%) were negative and the remainder were neutral (3%). “Dealing with constant approvals” and “decent long-term employment” were the top selections. “Creativity” and “cutting-edge technology” each recorded zero votes with the MRU respondents.

Responses from the PAB sample were much more favourable to government, with nearly three-quarters (69%) of the respondents choosing a positive attribute, a quarter (26%) choosing a negative attribute and the remainder being neutral (6%). The number one choice by staff was “decent long-term employment,” second was “dealing with constant approvals” – both of which were tied for number one in the MRU sample. The responses by the PAB staff were far more positive than the MRU responses, a plausible finding given that the PAB sample is working in the environment every day and are more aware of what it is actually like; however, even the “outsiders” from the MRU sample chose the same top two attributes (one positive and one negative) as the “insiders” from the PAB sample did.

As in the MRU sample, no one in the PAB sample selected “creativity” as something they associated with government communication and none from Generation Y or Generation X chose “cutting-edge technology.” What is clear from this comparative study is that respondents – those working inside government and those in university – believe government offers “decent long-term employment.” The survey was not designed to indicate whether this is an incentive for Generation Y. Other researchers, however, have noted that Generation Y is not interested in long-term commitment (Shaffer, 2008; Ng et al., 2010). Tapscott found a majority of Generation Ys in Canada would prefer to work for just one or two companies in their careers if the conditions were right (2009). These conditions, according to Tapscott, include access to leading edge technology, a creative workplace and lack of an organizational dictatorship (2009). Other research has shown that Generation Y seek employers whose values match their own (Ng et al., 2010). It is worth reiterating that, when it comes to government communication, “dealing with constant approvals,” the lack of creativity and lack of “cutting-edge technology” ranked high with Generation Y in these two exploratory studies.
Table 9 – *When I think of government communications I think of…* (rank the following. This table represents the #1 choice of each respondent). Separated by generation and sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(PAB Sample)</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>MRU Sample</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excitement(+)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6 (15.4%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Functioning Team (+)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>2 (13.3%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to High Quality Mentors (+)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring/Lacking in excitement (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>6 (15.4%)</td>
<td>6 (15.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly Media Relations (+-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (13.3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Constant Approvals (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 (31.3%)</td>
<td>9 (23.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Freedom as a Communicator/Strict rules(-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>4 (10.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictly reactive public relations (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent, Long-term Employment (+)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>5 (33.3%)</td>
<td>6 (37.5%)</td>
<td>9 (23.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting-edge technology (+)</td>
<td>1 (20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Culture NOT Consistent with my values (-)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (6.3%)</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity (+)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the MRU sample was asked if they would want to pursue a career in government communication, a strong majority (67%) replied “yes.” Similarly, respondents of the PAB sample were asked: “knowing what you now know about government communication, would you pursue a career in the field?” Over three-quarters (77%) replied “yes.” The group surveyed which was most likely to say yes was the Generation X PAB sample. Overall, respondents choosing positives attributes for government were more likely to want a career in government communication, or to continue their existing careers in government communication.
Table 10 – PAB Q: Knowing what you now know about government communications, if you were just graduating from university would you want to pursue a career in government communication? (Yes or No). Broken down by generation and sample. MRU Q: Would you want to work in a government communication role? (Yes or No).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
<th>MRU Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>13 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>11 (73.3%)</td>
<td>26 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Until now, little has been written on Generation Y within a Canadian government communication context. The findings from this purposive sample and subsequent comparative analysis support some assumptions and previous findings relating to Generation Y and offer new knowledge on which to build a greater understanding of Generation Y within government communication. Across the two Generation Y samples there is a demonstrated need for positive feedback and money, findings consistent with the literature. Personal values, according to the two samples, are very important to Generation Y, even more so than pay.

In relation to the skills that are valued and considered necessary for work in government communication, writing reigns supreme in the Generation Y demographic in each sample. Of note is where creativity fits – Generation Y in this sample feels they have creativity on a personal level, yet it rates extremely low as a perceived requirement for working in government. When it comes to public service values, intriguing data is presented. Twenty-five of 39 (64%) MRU students and recent graduates selected the NPM as the model that best describes their own values. For the PAB sample, a majority of each working generation selected traditional, or Westminster values, including nearly three-quarters (69%) of the Generation Y sample. The values associated with NPM, as noted by Glor, are: “efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer service/satisfaction, and accountability for results” (Glor, 1994/1995). Some of these values are consistent with those presented by Tapscott (2009) yet are not supported by Generation Y within government. Further research is needed to better
articulate this disconnect.

Other areas worthy of future research include the real or perceived role governments play in the lives of Canadians, as more than three-quarters of the MRU sample felt government plays a significant role in their lives, while less than a third of the PAB sample agreed that government plays a significant role in their lives outside of work. This is a counterintuitive finding that requires more attention; at first glance, this finding is a communication conundrum – if government does not play a significant role in the lives of Albertans, how can PAB staff communicate the importance of their messages to the population? Furthermore, and to the contrary, what did respondents think when confronted with “outside of work” – is it impossible to separate the work done on a daily basis with the interactions they have with government “outside of work”? Further research into reward and punishment in the workplace is also warranted, as the data collected and analyzed here outlines the preferences of each respondent, but does not assess or document the type of reward and punishment employees in the PAB are currently receiving.

The majority of PAB staff attach positive attributes to public service communication, while less than half of the PR students at MRU selected positive attributes. Two points relating to this finding are clear and noteworthy: in both samples the top two choices for attributes of public service communication were “dealing with constant approvals” and “decent long-term employment.” Lack of creativity and limited access to “cutting-edge technology” within government are points that should also be highlighted, as respondents in both samples noted them and because each would be a factor in recruiting and retaining Generation Y.

While studies, including this one, have shown long-term employment is not strongly desired by Generation Y, more and more scholarship is available outlining how to improve an organization’s relationship with Generation Y employees. Gallicano, Curtin and Matthews, in their study of 281 Generation Y members of the Public Relations Society of America, found
that just 55% of respondents felt they had a long-term bond with their PR organization (2012). Based on their findings, Gallicano et al. suggest that the high turnover of Generation Y could be lessened by improving interaction with employees, offering more mentoring and making the experience more personal (2012). Tapscott found that many Generation Yers would like to work for one or two companies in their careers – if the working conditions were right (2009). As noted earlier, access to leading edge technology and a creative workplace are among the conditions (Tapscott, 2009). As governments continue to shift to electronic delivery of services and enable greater use of cutting-edge technology, the connection between technology and recruitment and retention of Generation Y will need to be explored further. An assumption that needs to be tested is whether the incorporation of new technology will make government more interesting to potential Generation Y staff.

Overall, a strong majority (77%) of those already working with the Alberta PAB value their jobs in government, and if they could do it all over again, most would be happy to be where they are today. A lesser percentage of the MRU students said they would be interested in a job in government communication, but the number is still a strong majority at 67%.

This comparative analysis flags current successes and challenges within the communication function at the Alberta government while identifying areas for future research. The results of this study suggest that both Generation Y samples have a need for positive feedback and money, but that both are potentially of lesser importance than personal values. The two greatest insights offered by this study are: 1) Generation Y in this sample believes they have creativity on a personal level, but that it is not reflected in government and, 2) the Generation Y sample at PAB chose Westminster values over, what could be argued is, the more ‘Gen Y’ value set chosen by the Mount Royal sample, the NPM of New Public Management.

It is worth reiterating that the study of generations is not without its critics and that these findings should be considered alongside other factors, like environment, workplace culture, opportunity to express values and socio-
economic standing. It is also worth noting, that while researchers cannot predict the future with any degree of certainty, if we can understand the current situation with Generation Y in government communication then – due to the length of time they will be in the workforce – an argument can be made that this new understanding will assist future recruitment and retention efforts and even inform the future of government communication.

This study, while not representative, focuses in on generational subcultures within the PAB and MRU and will assist scholars and government recruiters in asking and answering future questions. As noted previously by scholars (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Twenge and Campbell, 2008), data in this important area is scarce; so this contribution sheds new light on the field and will hopefully assist future researchers in asking better questions.

**Endnotes**

1. TooFast ([https://www.toofast.ca/](https://www.toofast.ca/)) is a survey tool supported by Mount Royal University, Carleton University, and eCampus Alberta. It is a free tool that allows for anonymous and/or confidential surveying. SPSS ([http://www-01.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/](http://www-01.ibm.com/software/analytics/spss/)) stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a piece of software used frequently to analyze quantitative data.
2. Ethical clearance was given by Mount Royal University, Charles Sturt University and the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau to conduct these studies.
References


Corporate Leadership Council (2004), Generation X and Y employees, Washington, DC: Corporate Executive Board.


<< End of Research Article 3 >>
6.3 Outcomes for research study 3

One of the biggest challenges I faced with this third article was to resist a temptation to make specific recommendations to government and instead, present independent research that speaks for itself. For the duration of this research journey I was determined to set my own political/governmental views aside and maintain a level of scholarly independence but it has not been easy.

In the beginning, when trying to build specific recommendations for government, I was narrow (and over-focused) in my approach; I leaned more towards the practice than the theory. My research led me to the realization that I needed to bring more balance and rigour to my scholarship. The deeper I researched this topic and engaged in reflective practice, the clearer it became that making specific recommendations for government was not my main purpose. Hager states that Schön’s greatest contribution to scholarly practice has been his influence on the theory/practice dichotomy (Hager, 1995). To this end, as I reflect on my own actions, I continue to generate more questions than answers about my own practice and the theories that underpin it. I acquired much of my tacit knowledge during my career as a public relations practitioner but during my doctoral research I was able to gain a better understanding as to the origins of, and meanings associated with, this tacit knowledge (Hager, 1995).

Learning more about reflective and reflexive practice has assisted me in making an important contribution to my practice without compromising an independent academic position. This will be further discussed in Chapter 7 of this research portfolio, where the results of the study as a whole will be assessed against the overall research objectives and questions.

Earlier in this portfolio, I discussed the concept of phronesis, and specifically delineated four questions: “(1) Where are we going? (2) Is this development desirable? (3) What, if anything, should we [organization, researchers] do about it? (4) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?” (Flybvjerg 2006, p. 374). In the remainder of
section 6.3 I address question one; questions two to four will be considered more fully in the concluding Chapter 7. At this point in my portfolio, given my realization that my purpose was not to create specific recommendations for government, but rather, to present independent research that speaks for itself, the data best informs the answer to the question: where are we going? The concept of phronesis, specifically the four questions outlined by Flyvbjerg, fit well with the diagnostic study model which, according Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad, is tasked with “discovering what is happening, why is it happening and what can be done about it” (2010, p. 12).

*Where are we going? / Discovering what is happening*

The Generation Y samples in each of my first two research studies share many similarities, but the differences are more noteworthy. Specifically, attention needs to be paid to the responses and expressed priorities that the respondents made in the area of public service value systems. Generation Y in the student survey chose the list of values associated with the New Public Management system as that which most closely aligned with their beliefs; Generation Y in the PAB sample, however, chose the values closely tied to the traditional, or Westminster-based system as the ones most closely linked to their beliefs. Before exploring this in greater detail, a caveat is that neither group may have known what these terms explicitly meant on their own; they were asked about specific values not the value systems. This raises key questions for academics and practitioners: What role, if any, do environmental factors play? Does the age difference between the two Generation Y samples (with the PAB sample being older) play a role in these results? Are the results indicative of acculturation of workplace norms?

Published research has shown that environmental impacts can affect employee behaviour and employee thinking (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; Kyriakidou & Ozbilgin, 2004; Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2002; Olson & Borman, 1989). Is it a case, then, of the university setting or the students’ own upbringing influencing their opinions? In the PAB sample, is it
organizational influences pushing them towards the Westminster model? Or, as noted in Research Study 3, is it simply that the Generation Y sample in the university setting is a bit younger than the Generation Y sample in the PAB setting? Another important question to consider is this: were these PAB staff hired because they share the same values as their employer? While this is certainly not uncommon (Glor, 2001A), it would seem unlikely in the case of Alberta as it is one of three Canadian provinces to have implemented the New Public Management model most fully (Glor, 2001B) and as the data collected shows PAB staff prefer the traditional, Westminster values.

Further research in this area would add greatly to the knowledge base, specifically in studying generational values of a student sample and then following that student sample into the workforce to determine if their own values change (a time-lag study as suggested by Twenge, 2010), or if the organizational values serve to subjugate the generational values of the students studied. As stated by Glor, “demographics influence more than the size of populations and pools from which public servants are drawn: they also have an important impact on beliefs and attitudes” (2001A, p. 527). In Canada, there has recently been a shift to a more political, New Political Governance model within government (Aucion, 2012); as Canadian governments work to recruit and retain Generation Y, which value system – New Political Governance, New Public Management or Westminster-based – will be front and centre in the day-to-day practice of these professional public servants?

The concluding chapter in this research portfolio addresses the remaining questions associated with phronesis and diagnostic study. In addition it systematically reviews the research problem, questions and objectives of this project in light of the final results.
Chapter 7:

Conclusions and implications

As noted elsewhere in this portfolio, in Canada Generation Y comprises approximately 28% of the workforce and 37% of the population (“Estimates,” 2011; “Labour Force,” 2011). With Generation Y becoming more entrenched in the public service, identifying best practices for management, motivation, recruitment and retention has become a priority for the Canadian Public Service Commission (2009). Currently, scholarship exists on government communication (Lee, 2008; Garnett, 1992; Grunig, 1997; Liu & Horsley, 2007; Waldo, 1992) and on the topic of Generation Y in the workforce (Tapscott, 2009; Bauerlein, 2008; Bosco & Bianco, 2005; Arsenault, 2004; Vyncke, 2002; Florida, 2009; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). However, there is a knowledge gap in the area of government communication and generational values in Canada. This research project enhances the knowledge base in this particular area.

Although a truism, it is nonetheless important to state that I recognize that each member of each working generation (including students) is a highly nuanced, highly complex individual. To argue unequivocally that any generational research is somehow representative of a particular individual within a particular generation is to grossly overstate the power and reach of research in this area. My research project focuses on specific, purposive samples aimed at shedding light on the particular samples within a government communication context. The goal from the outset has been to add to the existing knowledge in this area, and fill a gap in the research specific to Generation Y communicators in Canadian government. As will be shown throughout this chapter, the results of my research project reveal patterns that deserve further attention and further study.

Throughout this research project I have used a phronetic approach (Flybvjerg, 2004; 2006), while borrowing methods and inspiration from Somekh and Lewin’s researching for impact approach (2005). Flybvjerg (2004) argues that “phronetic planning research is an approach to the study
of planning based on a contemporary interpretation of the classical Greek concept *phronesis*, variously translated as practical wisdom, practical judgement, common sense, or prudence” (p. 284). As I have outlined earlier, according to Flyvbjerg, phronesis requires four main questions to be asked: “(1) Where are we going? (2) Is this development desirable? (3) What, if anything, should we [organizations, researchers] do about it? (4) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?” (2006, p. 374). This process dovetails with the diagnostic study model (see Chapter 6: Research Study 3), a model concerned with “discovering what is happening, why is it happening and what can be done about it” (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 2010, p. 12).

Here, in summarizing and assessing the research, I draw conclusions, synthesize the data and outline directions for future research. The data presented in this chapter addresses the research problem in order to assess whether an aging workforce, retirements, and changing demographics will lead to challenges in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff within government communication; and to analyze how this effect – if it is occurring – is impacting upon the ideal skill and value set needed within the government communication function. As a means of addressing the main research problem, I will address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do the values and opinions of Generation Y public relations students at an Alberta university compare and contrast with the values and opinions of Generation Y communication staff within the Alberta provincial government?

Research Question 2: Is there a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees?

Addressing research questions 1 and 2 sheds light on the research problem and also fulfills the two research objectives identified in Chapter 1:
1. To increase knowledge and understanding of Generation Y Canadian government communicators (current and potential) in the areas of workplace values and opinions.

2. To add to knowledge that relates to recruitment and retention of Generation Y and Generation X; especially to the advancement of knowledge specific to Generation Y within a Canadian government communication role.

Finally, this chapter reflects on the nature and extent of increased understanding of Generation Y, including strategies for recruitment and retention and suggestions for future research in this field.
7.1 Research question 1

How do the values and opinions of Generation Y public relations students at an Alberta university compare and contrast with the values and opinions of Generation Y communication staff within the Alberta provincial government?

In order to address Research Question 1 a quantitative survey was sent to a purposive sample of PR students at Mount Royal University and employees in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau. The survey questions related to the government values, governance systems and skills required in public relations (Glor, 2001A, 2001B; Perry & Wise, 1990; Vakil, 2009; Wilcox & Cameron, 2009). A number of themes are evident and require summation, these are specific to: personal skills and skills required in government; governance systems, and; the dominant paradigm of public relations.

Personal skills and skills required in government

Generation Y students at MRU chose writing as the second most important skill they considered was required in government and as their best personal skill. This supports existing research that documents the importance of writing in communications/public relations (Berry et al., 2011). Behind writing, students and graduates picked creativity as their next best personal skill, but ranked creativity at the very bottom when choosing the skills required in government. Of note, political literacy was chosen by the student sample as the number one skill required in government but it registered near the bottom when students were selecting their best personal skills.

Consistent with the MRU sample, Generation Y staff in the PAB chose writing as their number one personal skill and as the number one skill necessary in government. Like the MRU students, Generation Y within the PAB sample chose creativity as their second best personal skill, and also ranked creativity last on the list of skills required in government. Creativity received zero votes from both student and PAB workforce Generation Y
samples when ranking terms they associated with government communication. As noted throughout this research portfolio, scholars have identified creativity as an important Generation Y characteristic (Florida, 2009; Tapscott, 2009). My research indicates that there is a perception that government communication work within the Alberta PAB is not creative, but what does “creativity” even mean? Gregory argues that creativity is not “fairy dust” and instead is “problem solving and it can and should influence every part of a campaign” (qtd. in Green, 2010, p. X). Communication scholar Moriarty argues that:

To come up with a Big Idea, communicators have to move beyond the safety of strategy statements and the traditional way of doing things, and leap into the world of the untried and unknown. Once the Big Idea has been captured and successfully executed, it often appears simple… (1997, p. 554).

One implication of this result is the need to further explore what “creativity” means within a government communication context.

While the consistencies amongst the two Generation Y samples are noteworthy, the differences are thought-provoking. The data collected suggests a difference in how the two Generation Y samples view political literacy within government; a finding that is a key contribution to the body of academic knowledge in this area. Generation Y within the MRU sample selected political literacy as the most important skill required to work in government, while Generation Y from the PAB sample ranked it in the bottom third. Future studies would valuably explore what “political literacy” means to respondents. Is it internal forces or external ones? Pressure from politicians or from bureaucratic superiors?

Nevertheless, given the political nature of government (Franklin, 2004; McNair, 2003) and the politicization of governance in Canada (Aucoin, 2012), specifically in the Alberta PAB (Kiss, 2008; Brownsey, 2005), this finding prompts further questions that future research could pursue. Lee argues that mainstream media has always been critical of government and is, in fact, tasked to do so (2008); media coverage could be affecting
students’ perception of government and influencing their survey responses. An alternative reading for the PAB sample, however, is that because they are already working within the system, and thoroughly enculturated, they cannot see how political their role has become. Furthermore, as suggested in Research Study 2 (Chapter 5), the finding relating to Generation Y staff within the PAB may be suggestive of a group of communicators who desire the Westminster governance structure over a more politicized, New Public Management or New Political Governance model (Aucoin, 2012).

**Governance systems**

Twenty-five of the 39 (64%) MRU students and recent graduates (all within Generation Y) selected values associated with the New Public Management (NPM) governance model when asked which set of values best describes them. The values associated with NPM, as noted by Glor, are: “efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer service/satisfaction, and accountability for results” (Glor, 1994/1995). In comparison, nearly three-quarters (11 of 16, or 69%) of the Generation Y sample within the PAB selected traditional, or Westminster, values over those associated with NPM. Westminster values include: “public good, public service, equality… and fair process” (Glor, 2001A, p. 525). At first sight, some of the values associated with NPM are consistent with larger Generation Y norms as articulated by Tapscott: “freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, innovation” (2009, p. 35).

Generation Y within the MRU sample selecting the NPM model is consistent with much of the research related to Generation Y and given pervasive and negative media coverage of government (Lee, 2008b), they likely believe changes need to be made to better meet the needs of citizens like them. One explanation as to why Generation Y within the PAB sample supports the traditional, Westminster system is that they are enculturated within the system and that older generations have influenced them to believe that the traditional, less politicized model is better. In this case, the easy explanation might actually be closely related to the more complex one. Vakil concludes that the British Columbia “government’s effort to
encourage the public service to adopt contemporary work values [NPM] did not succeed” (2009, p. iv) and while no exact study has been done in Alberta, the findings here suggest that the PAB staff sampled believe something similar, the failure of the NPM model. If the Generation Y sample within the PAB does not see political literacy as an important part of their role (as noted earlier) it can be argued it is because they view themselves as working within a non-politicized workplace, the likes of which is associated with traditional, Westminster values. Despite this finding, “the need to give back to society,” a value which would be consistent with the “public service calling ideal” and the Westminster model, did not feature prominently as a motivating factor for either Generation X or Generation Y in the PAB sample.

The dominant paradigm of public relations

Since 1984, the dominant paradigm for categorizing public relations activities has been Grunig and Hunt’s four models: press agentry/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication (1984). These four models have become a part of the public relations vernacular and, as such, asking respondents about these models would serve as a means to understand their level of exposure to public relations theory and education. While this paradigm remains a cornerstone of PR undergraduate education it is not without its critics (Heath, 2006; L’Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Sha, 2007) who suggest that they are merely descriptive and simplistic in nature and only serve to substantiate the dominant paradigm. Furthermore, while many with tertiary or post-secondary education in public relations will note the importance of practicing two-way symmetrical communication, it is not the norm in the practice of public relations (Moon, 2002; Jackson, 2003), as organizations can more easily and more cheaply engage in one-way communication. Nevertheless, “all four models of public relations are still practiced by organizations” (Waters & Williams, 2011, p. 356).

The results from the MRU Generation Y sample are indicative of a group of people taught the dominant paradigm of public relations, with 33 of 39
respondents (85%) choosing two-way symmetrical or two-way asymmetrical communication as their first choice for the most “professional” public relations model. From the PAB sample, less than half (37%) – the majority of whom came from the Generation Y group – chose the two-way symmetrical model, the most effective model according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Larissa Grunig (1990). Nearly half of the PAB sample (45%) said they were unfamiliar with these models – this is best explained by the fact that only 12% have PR undergraduate degrees. Still, it would be interesting to know how the remaining 55% learned of these models, possibilities include: learning of them in university, learning of them from PR educated colleagues and managers, or simply that these models of become part of the government communications vernacular.

At the outset of this project, I would have argued that a lack of exposure to these models and to the dominant paradigm among those working within the PAB would be a challenge in recruiting Generation Y students with post-secondary/tertiary education in public relations. This assumption was based on knowledge that historically government has operated under a one-way information, or press agentry, model (Grunig & Jaatinen, 1999; Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Pollack, 1984). Having conducted this research, I can no longer assert that there is a connection between the two. In fact, an argument could be made that communicators not exposed to the dominant paradigm of public relations may bring different and more diverse viewpoints to their workplace, that is, “[m]ore theoretical variety might be healthy for public relations development” (Pieczka, 2006, p. 355). Gaining a deeper understanding of the theoretical viewpoints and education of the respondents would add to this debate as respondents with degrees in journalism or political science may bring new and fresh perspectives to the workplace – perspectives that may or may not be shared by the respondents educated in public relations.
7.2 Research question 2

Is there a generational shift – a change in the prevailing values and required skill set – occurring in the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau that might influence its ability to recruit and retain future employees?

Analyzing where each generation’s – and each sample’s – values and beliefs converge and diverge assists in revealing patterns, indicating possible trends and in challenging or confirming assumptions relating to the government communication role and to the working generations within it. For the purpose of answering Research Question 2, the results from Research Study 2 (see Chapter 5) are of greatest importance. The data presented in Research Study 2 indicate that there is a generational shift occurring. One of the acknowledged limitations of Research Study 2 is the small number of Baby Boomers who participated and the small number of overall respondents. Because no determination can be made about existing values of Boomers within the PAB, the shift can only be documented from Generation X to Generation Y.

Some of the noteworthy similarities between Generation X and Generation Y communicators within the PAB include the following:

1) Both groups choosing “accountability” as the number one present and future value for government.
2) Neither generation selecting “innovation” for a present day government value but both choosing it as an important future value – suggesting a need for the PAB to explore the meaning and relevance of “innovation”.
3) A majority of both generations also indicated a preference for traditional, Westminster values over values associated with the more contemporary, New Public Management governance model (Glor, 2001A; 2001B). This finding is contrary to the responses from the Generation Y student sample.
4) Generation X and Generation Y respondents within the PAB are also in agreement that political literacy is not of fundamental importance
in their role, again, contrary to the findings associated with the Generation Y student sample.

The differences between the two Generation Y samples (PAB and MRU) may be explained by the fact that the PAB had – at the time of data collection – no full-time employees under the age of twenty-five and less than 20% of its workforce is thirty-four years of age or under (Government of Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012) meaning its sample of Generation Y employees would be closer in age to the Generation X employees than to the MRU students.

The differences between the older (PAB) and younger (MRU) Generation Y samples and the differences between the Generation X and Generation Y samples within the PAB (despite their closeness in age) are the key trends in hypothesizing that there is a generational shift occurring. The data collected throughout Research Study 2 indicates that Generation Y is more interested in money than their Generation X counterparts and that the Generation Y sample is more likely than their Generation X counterparts to quit a higher paying job to take one more aligned with their values. While it is easy to critique this finding by arguing it is related to life stage and not a function of being a member of any one-generation, a US Census study shows that historically not all of the youngest generations have valued money over all else. In the 1970s the greatest need was “developing a meaningful philosophy of life” (US Census, 2006).

My exploratory, indicative study also shows that 20% of the Generation X sample within the PAB found government communications work to be exciting, an attribute not selected by any members of Generation Y within PAB. For nearly a third of the Generation Y sample at the PAB, government communication means “dealing with constant approvals,” an attribute not selected by any of the Generation X staff. The qualitative data presented in Research Study 2 (see Chapter 5) suggests that Generation X likes the “variety” associated with their government work and dislikes having to deal with “political/outside forces” – this finding stands out given that political literacy was not an important personal or government skill for Generation X.
(or Generation Y). Either political literacy is not important in a government communication role, or respondents are not in a position to articulate what it means to them, representing a “knowing-in-action” type paradox (Schön, 1995). For the Generation Y PAB sample, “variety” and “decent long-term employment” were the themes most associated with what they liked about government communication while “dealing with constant approvals” was the theme most common as they described what they disliked about government communication. The themes evident in the qualitative findings are consistent with the quantitative sample, where, when asked “When I think of government communication I think of…” 31% of the Generation Y sample in the PAB said “dealing with constant approvals” and 38% said “decent long-term employment” (these selections tied for number one in the MRU Generation Y sample, each at 23%). Mount Royal University PR students are required to do two work-terms (one in year three and one in year four) and while the Alberta PAB does normally offer a couple of work-terms a year, the jobs are almost always based in Edmonton (where PAB is headquartered).

The data presented here presents new knowledge related to government communicators within the Alberta government context – new knowledge that is both timely and relevant. While not knowing specifically how well recruitment and retention efforts are going within the Alberta PAB, there is some data to indicate that there are significant challenges ahead for the government (Alberta Public Service Final Report, 2010-2011).
7.3 Research problem and research objectives

The research problems attached to the first two exploratory studies (Research Study 1 and Research Study 2) and to the final diagnostic study (Research Study 3) was first, to assess whether an aging workforce, retirements, and changing demographics could lead to challenges in recruiting and retaining Generation Y staff within government communication. Second, to analyze how this effect – if it is occurring – is impacting the ideal skill and value set needed within the government communication function. In answering research questions 1 and 2, it has been shown that this problem may exist and that challenges remain for staffing the government communication function – specific to lack of creativity and innovation and cumbersome approval processes – within the Alberta PAB. In addressing research objectives 1 and 2, this research project also makes a broader contribution to generational research within government.

Research objective 1

To increase knowledge and understanding of Generation Y Canadian government communicators (current and potential) in the areas of workplace values and opinions.

This research project has served to increase understanding of Generation Y government communicators by studying and analyzing their values and beliefs and juxtaposing those findings with related scholarly research on the topic. This contribution fills a scholarly gap in the research. While scholarship exists relating to Generation Y in the workplace (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Tapscott, 2009; Florida, 2009; Bauerlein, 2008) and government communication (Lee, 2008, 2011; Liu, Horsley & Yang, 2012; Liu & Horsley, 2007; Garnett, 1997), there is little that examines Generation Y and government communication together, specifically in a Canadian government context.
The scholarship around Generation Y in the workplace varies along a continuum – fear on the one end, hope on the other. Tapscott (2009) argues that this generation is the smartest ever and that those who want to work with them need to be aware of the eight norms outlined earlier:

1) They want freedom in everything; 2) They love to customize, personalize; 3) They are the new scrutinizers; 4) They look for corporate integrity and openness when deciding where to work; 5) They want play and entertainment in their work, education and social life; 6) They are the collaboration and relationship generation; 7) They have a need for speed, and; 8) They are the innovators (p. 35-36).

On the other side of the continuum, Bauerlein argues that this generation is the dumbest ever (2008). Other scholars occupy the middle ground, variously arguing that “[t]his generation is multi-talented, over-stimulated, socially aware, demanding and resourceful” (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009, p. 16), they do not care about customers, if corrected they quit, they want a trophy just for showing up, and that they are optimistic about their futures (Espinoza et al., 2010) and they value challenging and interesting work over pay (Benko & Weisberg, 2007).

While the goal of my study was not to confirm or deny these specific claims, the results of my research project do show that, while money is important to my Generation Y sample, they also want and need to be creative. The need not to compromise their personal values is also important to the majority of Generation Y in both studies (more so than Generation X). My findings further indicate that the student Generation Y sample is not interested in staying in a job for more than five years after graduating from high school. This finding is consistent with the Human Capital Institute’s findings (2008) and cause for concern amongst employers who invest significant time and money in training new employees. Another finding is Generation Y in my sample expects to be rewarded for doing good work repeatedly and to be punished for doing poor work repeatedly. The top suggestions for rewarding good work were: “positive feedback from management” (Generation Y from the PAB sample) and an “increase in
pay” in the MRU sample (who selected “positive feedback” a close second). Being lectured by management was the most preferred punishment for Generation Y in the MRU sample; “less freedom” was the preferred punishment for the PAB Generation Y group. These findings suggest that there are viable options to reward and punish Generation Y workplace performance and, contrary to popular belief (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004), not all involve financial incentives.

Research objective 2

To add to knowledge that relates to recruitment and retention of Generation Y and Generation X; especially to the advancement of knowledge specific to Generation Y within a Canadian government communication role.

In Canada, Generation Y comprises approximately 28% of the Canadian workforce and 37% of the population (“Labour Force,” 2011). As a result, recruiting and retaining members of this generation is essential to maintain current staffing levels in the public service (BC Government Human Resource Management Plan, 2007/2008). In the Alberta PAB’s case, at the time this portfolio was prepared, 18% of their workforce was “Generation Y” and 21% was 55 years and older (Alberta Public Affairs Bureau, 2012).

The results of my study suggest that government communication offers decent, long-term employment but is filled with bureaucratic red tape and a system of constant approvals. Consistent with other studies (Human Capital Institute, 2008), the responses from the Generation Y sample at MRU indicate that long-term employment is not hugely important to them at this stage of their lives. However, Tapscott found that 68% of Generation Y in Canada would prefer to work for one or two companies in their business lifetime if the conditions were right (2009). These conditions, according to Tapscott, include access to leading-edge technology, a creative workplace and lack of an organizational dictatorship (2009). Specific to Tapscott’s findings, the research presented here shows that, when it comes to government communication, both Generation Y samples felt there is a lack
of creativity and lack of “cutting-edge technology”. Furthermore, and related to organizational structure, “dealing with constant approvals” ranked at the top of the list for the MRU sample and second amongst the Generation Y PAB sample when asked “When I think of government communications I think of….” Lowe, Levitt and Wilson (2008) conclude that the keys to retaining Generation Y employees are:

understand their relationship with their immediate supervisor; create a coaching system; assign them meaningful projects; give consistent and constructive feedback; ensure work environment is fun and flexible; and ensure workspace is innovative and technologically competitive (p. 53).

The importance of constant feedback to Generation Y is prominent both in my study (it was the number one choice for rewarding good work amongst Generation Y within PAB, and number two in the MRU study) and in other scholarship relating to recruitment and retention of Generation Y (Gallicano, Curtin, & Matthews, 2012; Glass, 2007).

Alternatively, certain themes relating to punishment for doing poor work repeatedly were prominent. All generations studied preferred punishment routes that did not affect their bottom line, opting instead for “less freedom” (the number one choice for the PAB Generation Y sample) and “disciplinary by management” (the number one choice of the PAB Generation X sample and the top choice by MRU Generation Y PR students). These findings suggest alternatives to punishment and reward that may enhance or improve employee satisfaction and engagement within PAB.

As I noted in the introduction to this portfolio, the Alberta government uses an Employment Engagement Index (EEI) and a “Quality Work Environment Index” (QWEI) to measure staff engagement and satisfaction. The results from 2008, 2009 and 2010 show a year-over-year decline in engagement and satisfaction, with an average score of 65% in 2010 (Alberta Public Service, 2010-2011). According to the data presented here, it appears the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (a particular branch of the Government of Alberta) may be faring better than the larger government population in relation to employee engagement and satisfaction.
Though this study uses different methods and questions, a strong majority (77% of the entire sample and 73% of the Generation Y subculture) of the PAB staff sampled said that if they could do it all over again, they would be happy to be where they are today and 67% of the Mount Royal University students surveyed said they would consider working in government communication. This finding is an indication that the PAB staff are satisfied in their current government roles and it shows that, despite the generational shift, government communication positions are still appealing to the up-and-coming generation of communicators in Alberta. Year-over-year PAB data is needed to confirm similar or differing trends to the larger Government of Alberta population.
7.4 Future research

The findings presented here offer new knowledge on which to build a greater understanding of Generation Y within Canadian government communication. In order to further this discussion and to better understand the magnitude of the generational shift that is occurring in the Alberta PAB, further research in a few specific areas would be of significant value.

Future studies need to look deeper into the notion of creativity within government, specifically asking what “creativity” means exactly to each respondent. Throughout this study, and with both Generation X and Generation Y, creativity was listed as an attribute that respondents had, but one that was lacking in government communication. Gaining a better understanding of what creativity means to these respondents would assist researchers in probing potential solutions related to this finding. As I noted earlier in this portfolio, access to leading edge technology and a creative workplace are among the conditions Tapscott (2009) argues would contribute to a Generation Y employee wanting to stay with an organization for an extended period. Addressing the sample size is also key in future studies; this can be done with more face-to-face interaction with the respondents. From an ethical perspective, another person who is not directly involved in the research would need to administer the survey and potentially do more qualitative work. In retrospect, the small response to my surveys is likely due to survey overload amongst the students and the PAB staff.

While the majority of Generation Y from the MRU sample chose values consistent with the NPM model, the majority of Generation Y in the PAB chose values consistent with the traditional, Westminster model. Further research could usefully explore and perhaps determine why there is this disconnect. Furthermore, and more broadly, more studies are needed to determine which province has adopted which governance system (NPM, NPG, Westminster) and why.

The Alberta government situation is atypical within Canada as the same party has been in power, uninterrupted, since 1971 thus heightening the
importance of future studies relating specifically to communication departments in other Canadian provincial governments.

Specific to my reflection upon the research methods I used in this study, future studies and research programs need to be structured with the advice of Twenge in mind:

Most studies on generational differences in work values are cross-sectional, with data on workers of different ages collected at one point in time. Thus, any differences could be due to age/career stage or to generation… The best design for determining generational differences is a time-lag study, which examines people of the same age at different points in time. With age held constant, any differences are due to either generation (enduring differences based on birth cohort) or time period (change over time that affects all generations) (Twenge, 2010, p. 202).

More and differing studies into generations are needed. Norris and Inglehart (2004) argue that no “single approach [to generational study] can be absolutely conclusive…” (p. 36) and so researchers must use a “combination of methods, indicators, and datasets” (p. 36) to make determinations. Indeed, Twenge’s argument serves as a prompt for me to pursue future time-lag studies.

From a phronetic research perspective, specifically in relation to the questions outlined by Flyvbjerg, the data presented in this portfolio fully addresses fully his first question “Where are we going?” and partially addresses, his second question, “Is this development desirable?” (2006). The “we” in ‘Where are we going?’ in my study is specific to the working generations at the Alberta PAB and the Generation Y students and graduates at Mount Royal University; it is not a personal statement about my own interests. In relation to the second question, “Is this development desirable?” I conclude that this depends on who is asked. For the Generation Y students from MRU, the results of my study would be of value to a government seeking to better understand their skills and values. For the Generation X and Generation Y samples within government and the Alberta PAB itself, this data may serve to validate or contradict some of their existing thoughts and ideas. Areas requiring further research as a result of this original contribution to knowledge are related to Flyvbjerg’s third and fourth
questions: “What, if anything, should we [organizations, researchers] do about it?” and “Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?” (2006, p. 374). These are longer-term questions that are beyond the scope of this portfolio but deserve further attention nonetheless. The process of conducting phronetic research is not specifically tied to answering all four questions in any one research project, as noted by Flyvbjerg: “It should be stressed that no one has enough wisdom and experience to give complete answers to the four questions, whatever those answers might be for a specific problematic” (2004, p. 301).

This research project is a beginning; it suggests differences amongst generational subcultures within a government and university PR setting. Future research needs to tighten definitions presented, gather further evidence and develop tangible solutions.
7.5 Concluding thoughts

I set out on this research journey to generate answers but instead have created more questions. Early on in my research I identified a question that Glor poses to herself, one I have often asked myself: “What have I learned by documenting the relationship between my ideas and my experiences?” (2008, p. 17). In summary, I have learned that my experiences and my ideas are intertwined. I have learned that reflection is necessary to evolve as a public relations practitioner and as a university educator. But most of all, I have learned how to operate in a grey area full of thoughtful questions and not in a black-and-white area full of irresponsible answers. I have entered a fettle of “permanent provocation” (Foucault, 1980) instead of “settlement” (Brennan, 1998, p. 86); I have become a reflective practitioner and reflective scholar.
References


Berry, J. (2013). *Generation Y in the workplace: A comparative analysis of values, skills and perceptions of government communication amongst university students and government staff*. Manuscript accepted with minor revisions to *foresight*.


Lee, M. (2008b). The media versus the bureaucracy. In M. Lee (Ed), Government public relations: A reader (pp. 87-93), Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.


Appendix 1

Email to Participants

SUBJECT LINE : Generation Ys’ Role In Future Government Communication – Stage One

You have been identified as a potential candidate for research related to Generation Y and government communication.

The survey is completely anonymous. It will take approx. 30 minutes to fill out. You do not have to participate in the project and/or can withdraw from the project at any time by simply closing the window (data is not collected unless “submit” is hit). Opting out of the project will not result in any penalty or discriminatory treatment. Once the on-line survey is submitted participants’ information cannot be withdrawn from the research.

The research is being done as part of Jeremy Berry’s Doctor of Communication Degree at Charles Sturt University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the ethics of this study feel free to contact:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charles Sturt University:</th>
<th>Mount Royal University:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>Dr. Michelle Yeo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
<td>Chair of MRU’s Human Research Ethics Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Academic Governance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sturt University</td>
<td>403-440-6494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panorama Avenue</td>
<td><a href="mailto:myeo@mtroyal.ca">myeo@mtroyal.ca</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst NSW Australia 2795</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone: (02) 6338 4628</td>
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<td>Fax: (02) 6338 4194</td>
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Any complaints should be directed to both Charles Sturt University and Mount Royal University.

Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. This study has also been approved by Mount Royal’s Human Research Ethics Board.
CONSENT FORM

Project name: Generation Ys’ Role in Future Government Communication – Stage One
Lead Investigator: Jeremy Berry, APR, MA, AMRC, Doctor of Communication Student, Charles Sturt University
Supervisor: Dr. John Carroll, Professor, Charles Sturt University, jcarroll@csu.edu.au

By answering yes to question #1 of the survey and clicking submit at the end of the survey, I agree to take part in the Charles Sturt University/Mount Royal University research project listed above. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Participate in an anonymous online survey using Too Fast

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information, including the (potential) risks/discomforts associated with the research.

I understand that no personal information or personal details gathered in the course of this research can be traced back to me and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be seen by the Lead Researcher.

In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participating in this research, no compensation will be provided to you by Charles Sturt University, Mount Royal University or the Researcher. However, you still have all of your legal rights and nothing said in this consent form alters your right to seek damages. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time up to submission of the questionnaire and that if do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

I understand that if I have any complaints or concerns about this research I can contact:

Charles Sturt University:
Executive Officer
Human Research Ethics Committee
Office of Academic Governance
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW Australia 2795
Phone: (02) 6338 4628
Fax: (02) 6338 4194

Mount Royal University:
Dr. Michelle Yeo
Chair of MRU’s Human Research Ethics Board
403-440-6494
myeo@mtroyal.ca.
Any complaints should be directed to both Charles Sturt University and Mount Royal University.

Answering yes to question #1 of the survey and clicking submit at the end of the survey confirms I am over the age of 18 and that I have a full understanding of what is being consented to.

Charles Sturt University’s Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. This study has also been approved by Mount Royal’s Human Research Ethics Board.
INFORMATION SHEET

**Project name:** Generation Ys’ Role in Future Government Communication – Stage One  
**Lead Investigator:** Jeremy Berry, APR, MA, AMRC, Doctor of Communication Student, Charles Sturt University  
**Supervisor:** Dr. John Carroll, Professor, Charles Sturt University, jcarroll@csu.edu.au  

Lead investigator Jeremy Berry is an assistant professor of Public Relations at Mount Royal University and a Doctor of Communication student at Australia’s Charles Sturt University. This research project is in partial fulfilment of his Doctor of Communication degree.

**About Charles Sturt University:**  
Charles Sturt University is a distinctive Australian university that strives to ensure its graduates are competitive in meeting present and changing needs of society, commerce, industry and the professions.

Through four faculties, Charles Sturt University delivers close to 500 courses to around 36,000 on campus and distance education students throughout Australia and overseas.

Charles Sturt is a progressive and award-winning university that has rapidly gained an international reputation for excellence through its innovative approach to higher education.

**Research Statement:**

The research, in Stage One, looks at the workplace values for Generation Y specific to communication/public relations jobs. From that data – collected through anonymous online surveys – I will also wade into questions surrounding government communication and determining what, if any, aspects are appealing to this age group. Stage One of the research will be done with public relations students at Mount Royal University. The researcher requires students going into year three, students going into year four, and recent graduates (recent meaning Nov. 2010 convocation). Data received by researcher will have no names, student ID numbers or anything else that could link the data to any one student.

**What is Required of the Research Participant:**

If you decide to participate, you will fill out an online survey (which will take no more than 30 minutes). Data received by researcher will have no names, student ID numbers or anything else that could link the data to any one student.

**Risks:**

The risk for participants is that the data is being collected by a Faculty member who has taught members of this group in the past, present and will be teaching them again in the future. That said, the Too Fast software
ensures that the survey is completely anonymous.

**Collection of Data:**

The data collected will be used in creating one to three publishable papers and will be part of the student’s exegesis project in fulfilment of the Doctor of Communication degree at Charles Sturt University. As no individual names will be known, the Researcher will share the final data (aggregated averages) with all members of the year three and year four Mount Royal University PR cohort as well as all PR graduates from Nov. 2010 (all members of those years because I have no way of telling who filled out the survey and who did not). Data collection will be done online using Mount Royal University software (Too Fast) and will be stored by the researcher on a password protected server (based in Calgary, Alberta). This data will not contain any identifiable marks that can be traced back to a particular student.

**Withdrawing from Research Project:**

The participant does not have to participate in the project or can withdraw from the project at any time by simply closing the window (data is not collected unless “submit” is hit). Opting out of the project will not result in any penalty or discriminatory treatment. Once the on-line survey is submitted participants’ information can not withdraw from the research.

If you have any questions or concerns about the ethics of this study, please feel free to contact:

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Mar. 18, 2011

Methods/Methodology Statement

RE: Generation Y Role in Future Government Communication – Stage One

About me

I, Jeremy Berry, MA, APR, AMRC, am an assistant professor of Public Relations at Mount Royal University and a Doctor of Communication student at Australia’s Charles Sturt University. I have completed all of the necessary course work in my Doctor of Communication degree (D.COM) and am now embarking on my exegesis project. At this point I am attempting ethics clearance simultaneously from Charles Sturt University and MRU with a goal of collecting data sometime in March 2011.

About the research

Stage One of my exegesis research project (for my D.Com at Charles Sturt University) is specific to gathering information from university students in PR programs (from Generation Y) to determine what they are looking for in a public relations position broadly and specifically looking at what they might like or dislike about government communication jobs in Canada. For this stage of the research, there are two questions I am attempting to answer:

What does Generation Y value in an entry-level communication/public relations position?
What aspects of government communication appeal to Generation Y?

Stage One of the research project is aimed at gathering data relating to Generation Y communication, as a result I am surveying public relations students who fall within Generation Y and attend or have attended Mount Royal University. The data will be collected using Too Fast, a Calgary-based company (founded by an MRU faculty member) that allows for anonymous online surveys of students.

The survey is anonymous and students are free to leave the survey at anytime without any risks or consequences. The lead researcher will send the students via email a link to the survey. Each student will have the same password to the survey and using this method there will be no way to track which students came up with which responses or to determine who responded and who did not. This differs from an option in Too Fast where you can submit student emails and send it directly from Too Fast, whereby it would be possible to determine who responded and who did not. Also, the demographic/background questions on the survey are broad enough to ensure no answers can identify specific students.

Number of students

Stage One of the research will be done with public relations students at
Mount Royal University. I am looking to get PR students going into year three, PR students going into year four, and recent PR graduates (recent meaning Nov. 2010 convocation) involved in my survey. To do this, I will be emailing a link to the survey to the class lists of upcoming third years, upcoming fourth years, and the recent grads. I have a letter from my Chair (attached to application) confirming I can do this. Data received by researcher will have no names, student ID numbers or anything else that could link the data to any one student.

Those who decide to participate, will fill out an online survey (which will take no more than 30 minutes). Data received will have no names, student ID numbers or anything else that could link the data to any one student. The participant does not have to participate in the project or can withdraw from the project at any time by simply closing the window (data is not collected unless “submit” is hit). Opting out of the project will not result in any penalty or discriminatory treatment. Question #1 of the online survey asks participants if they give informed consent based on the survey preamble. No data will be collected unless students hit submit at the end. The last question of the survey says “by clicking submit below I am giving my consent”.

The risk for participants is that the data is being collected by a Faculty member who has taught members of this group in the past, present and will be teaching them again in the future. That said, the Too Fast software ensures that the survey is completely anonymously.

**Dissemination**

The data collected will be used in creating one to three publishable papers and will be part of the student’s exegesis project in fulfillment of the Doctor of Communication degree at Charles Sturt University. As no individual names will be known, the Researcher will share the final data with all members of the year three and year four Mount Royal University PR cohort as well as all PR graduates from Nov. 2010. Data collection will be done online using Mount Royal University software (Too Fast) and will be stored by the researcher on a password protected server (based in Calgary, Alberta). This data will not contain any identifiable marks that can be traced back to a particular student.

Mount Royal students will benefit because they will be involved in the study and because the results of the study will directly affect them, especially those in the Public Relations program. Ideally, the data will help governments make better decisions around the communication function, specific to the views of Gen Y or, alternatively, give us a better idea as to why Gen Y is not interested in government communications work.

The objective of my Doctor of Communication study at Charles Sturt University is to gain better understanding of Generation Y within the context of public relations, specifically government public relations. My overall research project will look at values of Generation Y versus values in Boomers, Veterans and Generation X, with a specific focus on the government communication function.
Stage One (the stage I am seeking ethics approval for) involves a descriptive, quantitative survey (an attempt to identify current norms and values as they relate to the communications workplace) and the launching point of my exegesis project in partial fulfillment of my D.Com degree. Over the past year as I have completed the course work I have been focusing on this topic specifically and have wonderful support from my supervisor, Dr. John Carroll at Charles Sturt University.
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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>I have read the information statement and research consent form and I agree to take the survey</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>For the purposes of this survey, respondents must be born between 1977 and 1997, are you born between these years? If no, please exit the survey.</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<td>Question 3</td>
<td>I was born between (select appropriate range)</td>
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<td>1982 - 1986</td>
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<td>1992 - 1997</td>
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<td>Question 4</td>
<td>Select the GPA range that applies to you</td>
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<td>Below 2.0</td>
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<td>3.0-4.0</td>
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<td>Question 5</td>
<td>Select the following that best describes your current status as a public relations student</td>
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<td>Next year entering year 3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Next year entering year 4</td>
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<td>Recently graduated</td>
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<td>Question 6</td>
<td>When it comes to use of technology (including computers, smart phones, Web 2.0 applications), I would generally describe myself as very skilled and knowledgeable</td>
<td>Likert Scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Are you currently working a</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
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<td>Question 7</td>
<td>part-time or full-time job?</td>
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<td>Question 8</td>
<td>In the past year, I have changed part-time or full-time jobs (not including summer only positions)</td>
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<td>Multiple Choice</td>
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<td>Once</td>
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<td>Twice</td>
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<td>Three times</td>
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<td>More than three times</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
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<td>Question 9</td>
<td>If you answered &quot;yes&quot; to question 7, select the option that motivates you most at work</td>
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<td>Multiple Choice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Money</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A desire to work hard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The need to be part of a team and not let others down</td>
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<td>The need to give back</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The need to feel productive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 10</td>
<td>In your first public relations job out of school, what need are you looking to fill most</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Order options</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The need for money</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The need to be mentored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The need to give back to society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The need to show others you are doing well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The need to be creative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 11</td>
<td>When it comes to my first PR job out of school, it is important it is a place I can stay for at least five years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likert Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12</td>
<td>When it comes to my first PR job out of school, I would value the ability to be creative over the need for high pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likert Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree; Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree; Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 13</td>
<td>Which sector of public relations are you most likely to join following graduation (for those who are already graduated,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Order options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-profit; private; publicly traded company; government; agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
where did you aspire to be once you graduated). Please rank from your first choice to your last (drag and drop answers to create ranking)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Rank these abilities based on your own level of comfort with them (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first being the highest level of comfort)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some options based on Wilcox &amp; Cameron (2009) and Lee (2008)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Question 15</th>
<th>Rank these abilities in order of importance to a government communication position (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first being the most important to a government communication position)</th>
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<td>Some options based on Wilcox &amp; Cameron (2009) and Lee (2008)</td>
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<th>Question 17</th>
<th>I would quit a higher paying, more secure job to take a job that was lower paying and more aligned with my values</th>
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Order options
- Writing
- Researching
- Planning
- Expertise
- Problem solving ability
- Business/Economic literacy
- Political literacy
- Networking
- Adaptability (specifically adapting to corporate/government culture)
- Creativity
- Ability to work well in teams

Order options
- Writing
- Researching
- Planning
- Expertise
- Problem solving ability
- Business/Economic literacy
- Political literacy
- Networking
- Adaptability (specifically adapting to corporate/government culture)
- Creativity
- Ability to work well in teams

Likert Scale
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Yes/No
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<th>Text</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I believe public relations should be part of the decision making/policy making arm, not simply just an advisor</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I voted in the last municipal election (Oct. 2010)</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I voted in the last provincial election (March 2008)</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I voted in the last federal election (Oct. 2008)</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>What motivates you to vote in an election</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Which of the following four public relations models would you say is most “professional”</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>If you had your choice, knowing what you know about the four models, and could choose to practice PR accordingly, which models which you choose (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first model being the one</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Question 25 | When I think of government communication, I think… (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first being the first thing you think about when it comes to government communication) | Order Options
Excitement; Cutting edge technology; High functioning team; Access to quality mentors; Boring; Covering up mistakes of politicians; Strictly media relations; Dealing with constant approvals; Lack of freedom as a communicator; Creativity; Decent, long-term employment; Workplace culture that is not consistent with my personal values |
| Question 26 | Which of the following statements regarding workplace values do you agree with more (choose A or B) Choices based on Glor 2001A, 1994/1995. | Multiple Choice
A) Public good, public service, equality, fair process; B) Efficiency, flexibility, privatization, entrepreneurialism, customer satisfaction, accountability |
| Question 27 | If you do good work repeatedly, do you feel you should be rewarded | Yes/No |
| Question 28 | If you answered Yes to the previous question, rank the most appropriate rewards from the list below (drag and drop, with the first being the best reward in your mind) | Order Options
Increase in pay; One-time bonus; Positive feedback from manager; A commitment from management about my future with company; More freedom (ie: ability to work from home) |
| Question 29 | If you do poor work repeatedly, do you feel you should be punished | Yes/No |
| Question 30 | If you answered Yes to the previous question, rank the most appropriate punishment from the list below (drag and drop, with the first being the best) | Order Options
Work late/weekends; Pay cut; Put on work probation Moved to another work unit; Hours cut; Less freedom/Micro managed; Lectured by boss |
### Question 31
Select the group of words that best describes your values as a generation (Generation Y) (drag and drop to rank from most appropriate to least)

Options based on Glor (2001A) and Tapscott (2009).

**Order Options**
Conformity, rewarded for hard work, sacrifice; Leaders, seek control, resist conformity; Just trying to get through every day, the world is risky, I don’t owe anybody anything; I want freedom, value collaboration over conformity, I want to be heard

### Question 32
Please rank the following eight terms in order of importance to you when it comes to a job or career in public relations (drag and drop, with the first being of the highest importance to you)

Options based on Tapscott, 2009.

**Order Options**
Freedom; Customize/Personalize; Challenge status quo/Scrutinize; Corporate integrity/Openness; Entertainment/Fun; Collaboration/Relationships; Speed of information; Innovation/Opportunity to create

### Question 33
Study the list below carefully and rank the values in order of importance to you (drag and drop as appropriate, with the first in your list being the most important to you, and the last being the least important)

Based on Rokeach, 1973.

**Order Options**
A Comfortable/Prosperous Life; Equality/Equal Opportunity for all; An Exciting/Stimulating/Active Life; Family Security/Taking care of loved ones; Freedom/Independence; Health/Mental well-being; Inner Harmony/at peace from inner conflict; Mature Love/Sexual and spiritual intimacy; National Security/Protection; Pleasure/Leisurely life; Salvation/Eternal life; Self-Respect/Self-esteem; A Sense of Accomplishment; Social Recognition/Admiration; True Friendship; Wisdom/Mature understanding of life; A World at Peace; A World of Beauty

### Question 34
Study the list below carefully and rank the values in order of importance to you (drag and drop as appropriate, with the first in your list being

**Order Options**
Ambitious/Hard working; Broad-minded/Open-minded; Capable/Competent; Clean/Neat/Tidy; Courageous/Standing up for beliefs; Forgiving; Helpful; Honest; Imaginative; Independent; Intellectual; Logical/Rational; Loving; Loyal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 35</td>
<td>Below is a list of words describing public service (government) values. Select the FIVE you think are most important TODAY. Based on Vakil, 2009.</td>
<td>Multiple Checkbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 36</td>
<td>Below is a list of words describing public service values. Select the FIVE you think will be most important in the FUTURE as the public service (government) evolves. Based on Vakil, 2009.</td>
<td>Multiple Checkbox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 37</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Accountability to me is...</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Question Text</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Options</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Entrepreneurship to me is</td>
<td>Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Innovation to me is</td>
<td>Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Integrity to me is</td>
<td>Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Leadership to me is</td>
<td>Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Loyalty to me is</td>
<td>Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Political Neutrality to me is</td>
<td>Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 44</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Public Servant Anonymity to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 45</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Results Focused to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 46</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Risk Taking to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 47</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Service Focused to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 48</td>
<td>Would you want to work in a government communication role</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix 2

Email to PAB Staff

SUBJECT LINE : Research request – Generational Roles In Future Government Communication

Jeremy Berry, an instructor at Mount Royal, has asked for our help in surveying government communication employees as part of a research project.

You have been identified as a potential candidate for research related to Generation Y and government communication. You do not have to be part of Generation Y to complete the survey as we are trying to get a good cross-section of responses.

The survey is completely anonymous. It will take approx. 30 minutes to fill out. You do not have to participate in the project and/or can withdraw from the project at any time by simply closing the window (data is not collected unless “submit” is hit). Opting out of the project will not result in any penalty or discriminatory treatment. Once the on-line survey is submitted participants’ information cannot be withdrawn from the research.

The research is being done as part of Jeremy Berry’s Doctor of Communication Degree at Charles Sturt University.

Click here to access the survey. Or paste this link into your browser : https://www.toofast.ca/takesurvey.php?SurveyID=4230.

Charles Sturt University’s School of Communication and Creative Industries Research Ethics Committee has approved this study.
CONSENT FORM

Project name: Generation Ys’ Role in Future Government Communication – Stage Two
Lead Investigator: Jeremy Berry, APR, MA, AMRC, Doctor of Communication Student, Charles Sturt University
Supervisor: Dr. Jane Mills, Associate Professor, Charles Sturt University

By answering yes to question #1 of the survey and clicking submit at the end of the survey, I agree to take part in the Charles Sturt University research project listed above. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:
- Participate in an anonymous online survey using Too Fast

I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time, and that if I do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

The purpose of the research has been explained to me and I have read and understood the information, including the (potential) risks/discomforts associated with the research.

I understand that no personal information or personal details gathered in the course of this research can be traced back to me and that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be seen by the Lead Researcher.

In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participating in this research, no compensation will be provided to you by Charles Sturt University or the Researcher. However, you still have all of your legal rights and nothing said in this consent form alters your right to seek damages. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation in the research at any time up to submission of the questionnaire and that if do I will not be subjected to any penalty or discriminatory treatment.

If you have any questions or concerns about the ethics of this study, please feel free to contact:

Ms Felicity Plunkett
Secretary, School of Communication and Creative Industries Research Ethics Committee
Charles Sturt University
Panorama Avenue
Bathurst NSW 2795
Ph: (02) 6338 4131
email: fplunkett@csu.edu.au

Charles Sturt University’s School of Communication and Creative Industries Research Ethics Committee has approved this study.

Answering yes to question #1 of the survey and clicking submit at the end of the survey confirms I am over the age of 18 and that I have a full understanding of what is being consented to.
INFORMATION SHEET

Project name: Generation Ys’ Role in Future Government Communication – Stage Two

Lead Investigator: Jeremy Berry, APR, MA, AMRC, Doctor of Communication Student, Charles Sturt University

Supervisor: Dr. Jane Mills, Associate Professor, Charles Sturt University

Lead investigator Jeremy Berry is an assistant professor of Public Relations at Mount Royal University and a Doctor of Communication student at Australia’s Charles Sturt University. This research project is in partial fulfillment of his Doctor of Communication degree.

About Charles Sturt University:
Charles Sturt University is a distinctive Australian university that strives to ensure its graduates are competitive in meeting present and changing needs of society, commerce, industry and the professions.

Through four faculties, Charles Sturt University delivers close to 500 courses to around 36,000 on campus and distance education students throughout Australia and overseas.

Charles Sturt is a progressive and award-winning university that has rapidly gained an international reputation for excellence through its innovative approach to higher education.

Research Statement:
The research, in Stage Two, looks at the workplace values and likes and dislikes for the various generations (Generation Y, Generation X, and Boomers) working in government communication. From that data – collected through anonymous online surveys – I will also wade into questions surrounding government communication and determining what, if any, aspects are appealing to the Gen Y age group moving forward. Stage Two of the research will be done with public relations staff at Alberta’s Public Affairs Bureau. Data received by researcher will have no names, employee ID numbers or anything else that could link the data to any one employee.

What is Required of the Research Participant:
If you decide to participate, you will fill out an online survey (which will take no more than 30 minutes).

Risks:
The risk for participants is that the data being collected relates to their personal values, and likes and dislikes of their job. For this reason, the researcher will have no contact with the employees (other than the original email which will be sent by the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau) and the data
will be collected anonymously using a Mount Royal University tool (Too Fast, www.toofast.ca) that allows for complete anonymity in surveying.

**Collection of Data:**

The data collected will be used in creating one to two publishable papers and will be part of the student’s exegesis project in fulfilment of the Doctor of Communication degree at Charles Sturt University. As no individual names will be known, the researcher will share the final data (aggregated averages) with all members of the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau. Data collection will be done online using Mount Royal University software (Too Fast) and will be stored by the researcher on a password protected server (based in Calgary, Alberta). This data will not contain any identifiable marks that can be traced back to a particular student.

**Withdrawing from Research Project:**

The participant does not have to participate in the project or can withdraw from the project at any time by simply closing the window (data is not collected unless “submit” is hit). Opting out of the project will not result in any penalty or discriminatory treatment. Once the on-line survey is submitted participants’ information cannot be withdrawn from the research.

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<tr>
<td>Bathurst NSW 2795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph: (02) 6338 4131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email: <a href="mailto:fplunkett@csu.edu.au">fplunkett@csu.edu.au</a></td>
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Charles Sturt University’s School of Communication and Creative Industries Research Ethics Committee has approved this study.
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<th>Question</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>I have read the information statement and research consent form and I agree to take the survey</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>Please select the age range you were born. If you are not born within the age range options presented please exit the survey.</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>I have a degree</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>If you answered Yes to question #3, in which discipline/area would your degree fall</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>Changes in technology have made my job</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>When it comes to use of technology (including computers, smart phones, Web 2.0 applications), I would generally describe myself as very skilled and knowledgeable</td>
<td>Likert Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>In the past year, I have changed jobs or positions (including within PAB)</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>Select the option that motivates you most at work</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9</td>
<td>In your first public relations/communication job out of school, what need were you looking to fill most</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money; A desire to work hard; The need to be part of a team and not let others down; The need to give back; The need to feel productive</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Question 10</th>
<th>Rank these abilities based on your own level of comfort with them (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first being the highest level of comfort)</th>
<th>Order options</th>
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<th>Rank these abilities in order of importance to a government communication position (drag, drop and move as appropriate to create ranking system, with the first being the most important to a government communication position)</th>
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<td>Question 13</td>
<td>I believe government communication/public relations is an essential link between the government and the province's citizens</td>
<td>Likert Scale</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 14</td>
<td>I would quit a higher paying, more secure job to take a job that was lower paying and more aligned with my values</td>
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<td>I believe public relations should be part of the decision making/policy making arm, not simply just an advisor</td>
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<td>Order options</td>
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<td>Which of the following statements regarding workplace values do you agree with more (choose A or B)</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
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<td>If you do good work repeatedly, do you feel you should be rewarded</td>
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<td>If you answered Yes to the previous question, rank the most appropriate rewards from the list below (drag and drop, with the first being the best reward in your mind)</td>
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<td>Question 22</td>
<td>If you do poor work repeatedly, do you feel you should be punished</td>
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<td>Question 23</td>
<td>If you answered Yes to the previous question, rank the most appropriate punishment from the list below (drag and drop, with the first being the best most appropriate punishment in your mind and the last being the least appropriate)</td>
<td>Order Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work outside of regular business hours; Pay cut; Put on work probation; Moved to another work unit; Hours cut; Less freedom/Flexibility; Disciplined from management</td>
</tr>
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<td>Question</td>
<td>Select the group of words that</td>
<td>Order Options</td>
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<th>Options</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>best describes your values (drag and drop to rank from most appropriate to least)</td>
<td>Options based on Glor (2001A) and Tapscott (2009). Conformity, rewarded for hard work, sacrifice; Leaders, seek control, resist conformity; Just trying to get through every day, the world is risky, I don’t owe anybody anything; I want freedom, value collaboration over conformity, I want to be heard.</td>
</tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Below is a list of words describing public service (government) values. Select the FIVE you think are most important TODAY</td>
<td>Multiple Checkbox Accountability; Anonymity; Benevolence (inclined to charity); Caring; Compassion; Courage; Creativity; Decency; Due Process; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Entrepreneurship; Excellence; Fairness; Honesty; Humanity; Innovation; Integrity; Leadership; Legality; Loyalty; Neutrality; Openness; Probity (strong moral character); Quality; Respect; Risk taking; Representativeness; Responsiveness; Results focused; Rule of Law; Service; Tolerance; Transparency.</td>
</tr>
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| 26       | Below is a list of words describing public service values. Select the FIVE you think will be most important in the FUTURE as the public service (government) evolves | Multiple Checkbox Accountability; Anonymity; Benevolence (inclined to charity); Caring; Compassion; Courage; Creativity; Decency; Due Process; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Entrepreneurship; Excellence; Fairness; Honesty; Humanity; Innovation; Integrity; Leadership; Legality; Loyalty; Neutrality; Openness; Probity (strong moral character); Quality; Respect; Risk taking; Representativeness; Responsiveness; Results focused;
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Value Description</th>
<th>Importance Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 27</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Accountability to me is...</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
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<td>Question 28</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Entrepreneurship to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 29</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Innovation to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 30</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Integrity to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 31</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Leadership to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 32</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Loyalty to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important; Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 33</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Public Servant Anonymity to me is</td>
<td>Very important; Important;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 34</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Results Focused to me is</td>
<td>Moderately Important; Of little importance; Unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 35</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Risk Taking to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 36</td>
<td>As a government workplace value, Service Focused to me is</td>
<td>Multiple Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 37</td>
<td>In one sentence, the best part of working in government communication is (don't use names, ministries, or other identifiers)...</td>
<td>Qualitative Long Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 38</td>
<td>In one sentence, the most challenging part of working in government communication is (don't use names, ministries, or other identifiers)...</td>
<td>Qualitative Long Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 39</td>
<td>Knowing what I know about government communication, if I was just graduating from university I would want to pursue a career in government communication...</td>
<td>Yes/No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Approval Letter from PAB Executive

Strategic Communication
6th Floor Park Plaza
10611 98 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2P7
Telephone 780-427-9267
Fax 780-427-1010
Email sheri.cameron@gov.ab.ca

July 22, 2011

Jeremy Berry, APR, MA, AMRC
Assistant Professor, Public Relations
Faculty of Communication Studies
Mount Royal University

Dear Jeremy:

Please accept this letter as approval to proceed with your government communication research project, working with the Alberta Public Affairs Bureau (PAB).

As discussed, I understand your next steps will be drafting a survey for the PAB to review and to start your ethics approval.

I look forward to talking to you further about this project.

Sincerely,

Sheri Cameron
Manager, Communication Planning
Public Affairs Bureau