

Intergenerational Communication In An Organizational Setting

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By

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## **Introduction to Gen Y and Intergenerational Research**

When MTV launched in 1981, the American network transformed the music industry and popular culture, uniting artists with their fans through television. In the mid 1990s, the commercialization of the Internet revolutionized technology, changing the way people find and share information across the globe. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 then changed Americans' perceptions of safety and security, altering travel procedures and peoples' worldview. Public awareness on environmental issues also increased at the dawn of the millennium, raising consciousness about conservation and sustainability values. While each of these cultural shifts and historical events undoubtedly impacted those who lived to experience them, none were more heavily influenced by these changes than the youngest age group at the time, Generation Y (Gen Y, Millennials, GenMe).

Born roughly between 1981 and 2000, this generation's worldview has been shaped by the events they experienced during their most formative years (from 11-19 years of age). Renowned intergenerational researchers Twenge and Campbell (2008) support this view in defining a generational cohort as "... individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical development" (1120). While research indicates "...cohort effects are linear rather than categorical, with steady change over time rather than sudden shifts at birth cutoffs," society classifies generations based on time frames spanning around 20 years (Twenge et al., 2010, 1120). This project uses these categories to examine the working generations which include the following: "...the Baby Boomers (Boomers; born 1946-1964), Generation X (Gen X; born 1965-1981), and Generation Me (GenMe, also known as Gen Y, Millennials, nGen, and iGen; born 1982-1999)" (Twenge et al., 2010, 1118). While there is no exact time span for each generation, this categorization method enables researchers to focus their

examination of distinctive cohorts. Research indicates the changes and events that occurred within these established time spans influenced each generation's attitudes and abilities to some extent. This project reviews these studies with a focus on Gen Y. Since this is the newest and least researched cohort to date, there is much to explore and examine about this group.

Ironically enough, the least researched generation is also the most talked about in the popular press. These articles typically attract audiences with depictions of Gen Y as drastically different from other cohorts. The implications include the construction of generational stereotypes (both positive and negative), depicting this cohort in stark contrast from the others. Some popular perceptions assert positive traits onto Gen Y, creating excitement and optimism for the future. According to Meyers and Sadaghiani (2010), Gen Y is believed to be, "...more accepting of diversity..., have capabilities with advanced communication and information technologies, have the ability to see problems and opportunities from fresh perspectives, and are more comfortable working in teams" (226). Not all attributes are this positive, however, as researchers also found popular sources depicted Gen Y as being overly-confident, self-absorbed, disloyal, lazy, and poor communicators (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 225). These unfavorable stereotypes create an unsettling issue for older generations who recognize Millennials are the future. Question as to how Gen Y will interact with other cohorts has since raised considerable attention, especially in the workplace.

As seventy million Millennials enter the workforce, concerns as to how employers will effectively integrate and accommodate this group remain a topic of discussion amongst researchers in the fields of business, communication, and psychology. In an effort to gauge how this younger generation of employees will impact organizations, researchers are now studying topics pertaining to generational attitudes, values, and work ethic. Research often compares Gen

Y against their older cohorts (Gen X and Baby Boomers) to determine how the supposed differences affect employee relations within an organization. Since this topic of study is relatively new, with most research spanning less than a decade, much still needs to be done to understand Gen Y and their potential influence. By developing a more informed understanding of Gen Y, this knowledge can be applied to assess intergenerational relations with this cohort. As a Human Resource (HR) professional who is deeply interested in factors pertaining to employee satisfaction and performance, I wanted to investigate how generational differences affect employees in the work environment for my senior project. Choosing to conduct a critical review of the current intergenerational research, this project will focus on the interpersonal, organizational communication, and relational implications now posed by Millennials in a multigenerational workforce.

Before I report my research findings, it is important to understand how Gen Y differs from older working cohorts to explain how these results relate to pre-established generational perspectives. While Gen Y is often compared against Boomers to display contrast between the oldest and youngest working generations, Gen X still posits a unique culture and set of experiences worth studying. The smaller size of Gen X relative to Boomers and Gen Y provoked popular sources to grant this cohort's title as the forgotten generation. However, research on Gen X is still needed to observe and explain generational trends. Some of the events experienced during Gen Xers' formative years include the AIDS epidemic, economic instability, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This generation also witnessed record divorce rates and "job loss due to downsizing" amongst working adults (Twenge et al., 2010, 1120). Researchers note how these experiences shaped Gen Xers' work attitudes and behaviors, deeming this cohort as independent, less loyal to their employer, job-hoppers, and prioritizing work-life balance. In

addition, the work-related qualities ascribed to Gen X include the following: tech savvy, quick learners, value work-life balance and diversity, and prefer informality (Twenge et al., 2010, 1120). Comparing Gen X with Gen Y based on these examples alone serves as a relevant area of research that will be addressed later in this project.

Examining working Boomers in relation to the other two cohorts provides a complete perspective on intergenerational relations in an organization. History indicates Boomers' adolescent years were affected by "the civil rights and Women's movements, the Vietnam War, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and Watergate" (Twenge et al., 2010, 1120). Researchers cited a survey conducted by the Society of Human Resource Management, which found human resource professionals indicated Boomers were "... 'results-driven,' 'plan to stay for the long term,' and 'give maximum effort'" (Twenge et al., 2010, 1120). These purported perceptions clearly have an impact on intra- and intergenerational relations in the workplace, and my research attempts to identify the stereotypes and potential implications for these labels, as well as provide suggestions on how to use research findings to both employers and employees' advantages.

Since research shows generational differences tend to inhibit organizational collaboration, it appears intergenerational communication creates more problems than possibilities. The issue begins with a difference in expectations, as Boomers are claimed to believe Gen Y should "pay their dues," while Millennials want to advance quickly and bypass the grunt work (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 227). Potential problems continue to arise as Millennials "may not share Boomers' beliefs and values," since work-life balance and flexible career paths seem to be more of a priority than building a career (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 227). This same research explains another issue saying Gen Y may be "marginalized by their

older and more senior coworkers,” which makes “it more difficult for Millennials to earn workplace respect and credibility” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 227). Researchers claim this is “problematic because a lack of informal communication in organizations is negatively related to member satisfaction, and low levels of communicative support from supervisors in particular is associated with job turnover” (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 228). This shows how intergenerational communication is significant to organizational maintenance and development. Since there is a suggested divide between these groups because of dissimilar qualities, such as attitudes and work style preferences, my project aims to report these differences and develop an effective and realistic strategy for improving intergenerational communication and consequentially workplace relationships.

In addition to learning more about Gen Y employees in comparison to their older colleagues, this project will hone my analytical skills and knowledge as an HR professional. The critical analysis portion of my project will report what is known and draw conclusions from the previously reviewed studies. This will help organize presented information and develop additional questions to expand upon existing research. As an HR professional, I also plan to use this research to assist my future employer in attracting, satisfying, and retaining Gen Y employees. This knowledge will make me a more attractive and marketable candidate in the HR field. Also, since most of the research is fairly recent, much still needs to be learned in relation to Gen Y and their organizational influence. Therefore, this project is not only pertinent to my career ambitions, but to research and organizations as well.

This project directly relates to the Communication Studies discipline, as it focuses on interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational communication principles. By studying issues pertaining to generational attitudes and values, this project demonstrates how generational

differences affect relationships. This project also studies how different cultural influences affect each generation's ability to interact outside of their respective cohort. More specifically, the focus on an organizational setting further shows how variances across generations impact communication in workplace relations. The primary communication theories applied in this project include Membership Negotiation, Expectancy Violation, and Communication Accommodation. These theories are used in attempts to predict and explain findings related to intergenerational communication as it relates to an organizational setting.

Just like understanding one's audience is important for being an effective speaker, so is the ability to understand generational differences in order to effectively engage in intergenerational communication. As previously stated, employers risk employee dissatisfaction and increased turnover if this factor is ignored. However, it is important to remember that while research is helpful in understanding different generational groups, this should not be the only factor taken into consideration. As communicators, it is important to understand that every individual is unique and assumptions should never be made based on generation alone. This statement does not undermine the significance of intergenerational research, but rather acknowledges all communication messages must ultimately be tailored to the individual. Knowledge of intergenerational differences and how it relates to the workplace serves to directly provide employers and employees with a tentative guide for how to interpret messages and interact with particular cohorts.

In sum, this senior project serves to meet the following objectives: debunk generation-related myths, present empirical evidence to support generational differences/similarities, provide suggestions to improve intergenerational communication/relations in an organizational setting, recommend strategies for effectively integrating, accommodating, training, and retaining



Gen Y, and contribute to intergenerational and communication research. This literature review will focus on Gen Y and compare research against what is known about Gen X and Boomers.

The research will be organized by category and share the following about Gen Y:

- **Parents, Education, and Technology**
- **Distinguishing Characteristics and Skills**
- **Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values**
- **Organizational Communication and Management Strategy**
- **Social and Environmental Values**

Based on this information, I will analyze current, peer-reviewed articles to present the findings, acknowledge relevant conclusions, and explain the implications this poses for the workplace. My overall objective is to develop a strategy to explain how these differences can be used to improve the quality of intergenerational communication to enhance workplace relationships.

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This study applies communication accommodation theory to test Millennial college students' perceptions' about intra- and intergenerational communication in an organizational setting.

TITLE: Age-differentiated communication in organizations: perspectives from Thailand and the United States

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Robert M. McCann and Howard Giles, 2007

SOURCE: *Communication Research Reports*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 1-12

PURPOSE: The purpose for this study is to determine if and how age and generational differences influence Millennials' perceptions and communication in intergenerational groups in an organizational setting. Limited research in intergenerational communication in the workplace spurred researchers to design a study to contribute to this study area. Researchers explain the significance of this study stating, (1) "it is one of the first of its kind to examine the applied domain of organizational intergenerational communication" and to (2) "extend the current research on intergenerational communication from Western, Anglophone cultures... to Thailand" (3). Because Thai traditions differ from countries such as the United States, researchers want to see if and how this influences intergenerational communication perceptions as well (3).

SAMPLE: The sample included "upper-level undergraduate university students from Santa Barbara, California, USA (n = 142; 28 males, 114 females) and upper-level undergraduates and first year graduate students from Bangkok, Thailand (n = 125; 35 males, 90 females)" (4). Participants from Santa Barbara were studying communication and participants from Thailand were studying English or Business. The students' ages ranged between 18 and 34. Only students who had work experience were included in the sample (4).

METHODOLOGY: Researchers developed the following hypotheses for this study:

H1: Young workers perceive that they are accommodated more by young than by older workers.

H2: Young workers perceive that they are nonaccommodated more by older than younger workers.

H3: Young workers perceive they are more respectful yet avoidant in their communication toward older than young workers. (3).

The study was then designed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do young Thai and young American workers report receiving different levels of accommodation from older and young workers?

RQ2: Do young Thai and young American workers report receiving different levels of nonaccommodation from older and young workers?

RQ3: Do young Thai workers use more respectful and/or avoidant communication toward older and young workers than do young American workers? (3-4).

Researchers created the “Global Perceptions of Intergenerational Communication” (GPIC) scale, which contained “50 items assessing respondents’ ratings of communication experiences” (5). The items assessed both participants’ perceptions of others’ communication and their own. These same items also assessed participants’ communication interactions between members of their own age-group (18-34 years-old) and the older age-group (50+ years-old). Participants were asked to rate their responses using a 5-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Researchers also took the following demographic information into consideration: “age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, and year of work experience” (5).

#### KEY TERMS:

*Communication Accommodation Theory*: the “...ways in which individuals use language in intergroup encounters” (2). For the purpose of this study, researchers predict that in regards to age “people of different generations may communicate in ways that are biased in favor of their own age group and not the other age group” (2).

*Accommodate*: individuals “accommodate (e.g., give useful advice, give compliments) their communication behavior to that of another person if they wish to show solidarity with that person’s group (e.g. if that person is an ingroup member). Hence, they may communicate in a positive manner that is attentive to the other person’s needs and concerns” (3).

*Nonaccommodate*: individuals “nonaccommodate (e.g., speak as if they are better than the other person, act superior), or communicate in a negative manner that expresses disinterest or dislike towards their interlocutor” (3).

*Respectfully Avoidant Communication*: “(e.g., avoiding conflict situations at work, or avoiding topics to save another’s face/save one’s own face)” (3).

**FINDINGS:** The results related to Hypothesis 1 were not significant for accommodation based on age, but researchers did find American participants expressed more accommodation than Thai participants (7). Researchers found significant results related to Hypothesis 2, which showed participants from both cultures “reported more non-accommodation from the older target group” (8). The results related to Hypothesis 3 were also significant and showed participants from both cultures reported “more respectfully avoidant communication to the older target, ... than the younger target” (8). Researchers summarize these findings stating:

In general, the young workers surveyed here perceived their interactions with older workers as more problematic than their interactions with other young workers. Specifically, older workers were seen as more nonaccommodative (e.g., they ordered me to do things, they acted superior to me) than young workers, though younger workers still felt more obligation to be polite and respectfully avoidant (e.g., I held back my opinions, I remained silent if my opinion conflicted with theirs) in their communication with older adults than to their peer age group. Such findings paint a picture whereby young workers, despite their negative perceptions of their older interlocutor, remain respectful to the interlocutor’s needs. It is hardly unexpected that they, too, might also feel awkward and avoid such interactions. Lastly, there was no target age group effect for accommodation (8).

**LIMITATIONS:** Since the sample only included college students, the study lacked perspectives from workers with full-time job experience. While this study did not control for age, and therefore may appear as a limitation to intergenerational research, it is not. These results are more reflective of the current workplace, as age and generation are inseparable at a given time.

**FUTURE RESEARCH:** Researchers suggest more study should be conducted on intergenerational communication in organizations. Examining differences such as gender, ethnicity, and organizational rank, in relation to generation and age groups would provide a more developed understanding of intergenerational communication in the workplace (10).

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: Based on current available research, this article's objective is to describe how Millennials are anticipated to communicate in an organizational setting.

TITLE: Millennials in the workplace: a communication perspective on Millennials' organizational relationships and performance

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Karen K. Meyers and Kamyab Sadaghiani, March 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 225-238

PURPOSE: This article presents stereotypes (both positive and negative from popular press) about Millennials and aims to develop an informed understanding of this generation's approach to communication. By examining empirical studies, in addition to popular press and literature, this article provides insight into how Millennials are anticipated to behave and interact in an organizational setting. Since communicative differences are "found to affect coworkers' satisfaction and productivity," these findings serve to explain how workers can effectively maintain and enhance intergenerational workplace relationships with Millennials (225).

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: The findings are organized into five categories, depicting the characteristics and communication-related dynamics displayed by Millennials. These topics include the following about Millennials: "(1) socialization and membership negotiation by organizational members; (2) employment expectations and processes of relationship development in the workplace; (3) use of advanced information and communication technologies; (4) reaction to the current job market and implications of their full-time employment; and (5) orientation toward achievement and their aspirations for engaging in leadership (and the communicative role of Millennials' parents in developing these)" (226).

#### KEY TERMS:

*Membership Negotiation*: "the intentional and unintentional processes through which individuals engage, disengage, and accomplish reciprocal, but still asymmetrical influence over the intended meanings of an individual's participation in organizational functions" (226).

*Expectancy Violation Theory*: "individuals are judged based on beliefs and contextual norms about appropriate behaviors in given circumstances. When members violate others' expectations of appropriate behavior, others' attributions and responses toward that member are affected" (226)

FINDINGS: \*The findings reported from popular press sources were not included in this section, due to the empirically unproven nature of these claims.

Millennials, Communication, and Membership Negotiation: According to findings from empirical research, Boomers and more senior workers think Millennials need to "pay their dues," and be held to the same standard they were at the onset of their careers (227). Since Boomers were seen to devote over 40 hours a week to work when they first started, they are reported to expect Millennial newcomers to do the same. However, Millennial workers are more

likely to communicate the desire for work-life balance and seek a more flexible career path than previous generations (227). Research also shows studies conducted on adolescents and young adults in the 1980s found this generation posited higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression. Consequentially, additional research supports the conclusion that Millennials are extraordinarily confident in their abilities. Researchers suggest this could be due to factors such as grade inflation and standardized tests scores that make Millennials think they are experts based on their marks (228). This is suspected to explain why Millennials may appear more confident taking on significant projects early on, which could frustrate older generations who think newcomers should not assume this level of responsibility at this stage in their careers. Researchers also speculate Boomers “may reflect a level of discomfort, disrespect, or even distrust” of Millennials (228). Consequentially, if Boomers do not completely accept younger colleagues, researchers predict, “Millennials may remain somewhat marginalized by their older and more senior co-workers, making it difficult for Millennials to earn workplace respect and credibility” (228). This is “problematic because a lack of informal communication in organizations is negatively related to member satisfaction, and low levels of communicative support from supervisors in particular is associated with job turnover” (228).

**Millennials’ Expectations, Communication, and Team Relationships:** Both popular literature and empirical research suggest Millennials value and expect the following three workplace interactions: (1) “close relationships and frequent feedback from supervisors;” (2) “open communication from their supervisors and managers, even about matters reserved from more senior employees;” and (3) “work[ing] in teams, in part because they perceive group-based work to be more fun, but also because they like to avoid risk” (229). Research has proven “subordinates’ job satisfaction is higher when supervisors are ‘open’ in their communication with employees: sharing information, conveying bad news, evaluating job performance regularly, creating a supportive climate, soliciting input, and making appropriate disclosures,” but what is particularly interesting is the emphasis the Millennial generation places on this in comparison to older generations (229). For instance, empirical studies have found “Millennials expect communication with supervisors to be more frequent, more positive, and more affirming” than ever before (229). Other empirical studies also suggest, “Millennials are impatient about becoming recognized as valuable contributors” and “have a much shorter time horizon than Boomers (who typically occupy positions of organizational power)” (230). While companies see the advantage of Millennials’ working well in teams for the innovation, productivity, and decreased personnel costs, they also recognize the disadvantages (230). For instance, research suggests Millennials may “find excessive comfort in team-based direction, oversight, and decision making” and try to “avoid the risk associated with independent thinking and decisions” (230). In addition, research note the increased amount of time spent in meetings for group projects as opposed to working alone.

**Millennials and Communication/Information Technologies:** Popular literature also acknowledges how Millennials appear the most comfortable with new technology, devote more time to social media, and create personal Web content than older generations (231). Additional literature also “indicates that Millennials have an affinity for CITs [communication and information technologies] and computer mediated communication (CMC); they see work in flexible terms (especially where and when work is done); and they desire flexible work schedules to accommodate their desire for work-life balance” (231). This explains for the increase in desire

for telecommuting and virtual work, but also contradicts Millennials preference for “high levels of supportive supervision and structure at work...” (231). Researchers expect Millennials preference for technology will influence organizational members and the processes used to perform work.

**Millennials, Communication, and Adversity:** History shows Millennials grew up during fairly ““good times”” in regards to supportive parental and academic environments. Empirical research suggests this has influenced Millennials’ attitudes, developing a generation that is “high on self-efficacy and is unusually self-assured” (232). The recent tough economic times, with the recession in 2008, have posed some interesting questions for researchers seeking to understand this generation. However, it is still to soon to see the full effects this will have on Millennials as workers. The current empirical studies suggest Millennials and Boomers share desires for recognition and promotion, as well as the opportunity to give back to society. Some Millennials also do not seem to express the same sense of urgency to get a job as previous generation did, since some families still support their children after college. In addition, Millennials are reported to be traveling, volunteering, interning, or pursuing advanced degrees more so after college than previous generations (233). The article then speculates on the possible pros, such as more diverse experiences and world awareness. However, the possible cons suggest this approach could also make Millennials “more susceptible to ‘job hopping’” (233).

**Millennials’ Achievement Orientations, Parental Communication, and Leadership Aspirations:** Parental and academic environments have been reported to influence Millennials desire to achieve, particularly those of higher class (233). Empirical studies suggest Millennial parents placed higher expectations on their children than previous generations. For instance, parents pressure their Millennial children to enroll in advanced college prep courses and actively involve themselves in the college search process. Companies even report “... increasing parental involvement during job recruitment” (234). Researchers explain this noting, “... the first job is expected to be ‘initial payoff for all the planning, stress, and shared ambition’” (234).

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This article provides insight on Millennials, by discussing the defining characteristics of this generation as it relates to interpersonal, organizational, and technology based communication.

TITLE: Millennials in the world of work: an organization and management perspective

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Andrea Hershatter and Molly Epstein, March 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 211-223

PURPOSE: By citing behavioral research on the Millennial generation, authors aim to assist employers in effectively incorporating the new and next generation in the workforce. As more Millennial college graduates enter the workplace, it is critical employers come prepared to manage a group with potentially different “sets of behaviors and expectations” (211). Researchers in this article studied how college-educated members from the “Millennial generation approach the world of work, especially in the context of their particular relationships with technology and institutions” (212). By developing an understanding of Millennial’s communication style preferences, organizations can better prepare themselves for what to expect from this cohort.

SAMPLE: Researchers studied college-educated individuals from the Millennial generation and additional studies.

METHODOLOGY: The findings presented in this article primarily stem from the authors’ personal observations in their roles as a professor and academic dean in the undergraduate business program at Emory University. Their observations were then paired with other professionals’ findings, research, and surveys on Millennials.

FINDINGS: Millennials and Technology: Digital Immersion, Content Creation and Engaged Interaction: Millennials early introduction and aptitude for using technology distinguish them from their older cohorts, who were raised during a time when these devices did not exist. Since Millennials experienced technology at birth, they are also referred to as “digital natives.” Gary Small, a neuroscientist at UCLA, discovered Millennials’ early and increased use of technology showed changes in their neuro circuitry. The research reported Millennials as better at “multitasking, responding to visual stimulation, and filtering information, but less adept in terms of face-to-face interaction and deciphering non-verbal cues” (212). Millennials were also reported to assume “all necessary information can be gathered with the touch of a button on a 24/7/365 basis” (213). This group is also known to show little concern for source validity, expect all information to come with easy access at no cost, and are extremely comfortable using devices they might have little to no experience with (213). Organizations are also interested in Millennials inclination and fascination with creating net content and expressing their opinions online. Psychologist Jean Twenge, refers to Millennials as “Generation Me,” and had discovered this group “to be more ambitious, assertive, and even narcissistic than previous generations” (214). Millennials use of technology also differs from older cohorts as they are



more likely to engage in text messaging and other modes of communication outside of the office, whereas Gen Xers and most especially Boomers stick to email as their primary source.

While Millennials are comfortable using technology and having access to a wealth of information, concerns as to whether this generation will be able to “analyze, synthesize, and represent that information in a way that is relevant to the problem at hand” appears will be an issue (213). However, this article notes how many organizations are taking advantage of Millennials technological abilities to develop and market their products (214). Researchers also recommend employers “rethink the use of the web in terms of interactivity, visually appealing interfaces, and opportunities for personalized interaction and co-creation” (214). While this new and innovative goal appears beneficial for organizations wanting to be on the cutting-edge, the use of technology and the uncontrolled interaction could pose problems. Researchers warn companies that while blogs and social networks are created to “endorse, recommend, and share” they can also be used to “reposition, bent, and complain” (215).

**Millennials and Organizations: Millennial Meritocracy and Supporting Structures:** Most Millennials are reported to have been raised in a highly parental-controlled and supportive environment. However, this same group views their upbringing as also being “pressured” and “high-achieving” oriented (215). Reports show this generation has an increased percentage of students attending college, with more representatives from low-income and minority groups than ever before. Researchers note this is partly due to the emphasis Millennials’ parents place on their children to achieve. For instance, the number of parents enrolling their children in head-start pre-K programs has increased significantly over the years, as parents seek to give their child a competitive advantage over others (215). As parents invested more in their children’s education, expectations for both the schools and child-student are also reported to have increased as well. The authors in this article notes how “... parents expect their children to capitalize on every opportunity present to them by earning the grades, varsity letters, leadership positions, debate trophies, and AP credits that the best colleges seek” (216). With 42% of all high school graduates receiving an A-average, grade inflation also appears to exacerbate the issue of Millennials’ attitudes towards work and rewards. This article notes “one of the largest challenges for organizations” is accommodating Millennial preferences, while still upholding organizational expectations (216). A prevailing issue amongst educators and (consequently) managers are Millennials’ demand for “... very clearly outlined, objective rubrics, and well-defined expectations” (216). This attitude also translates to the workplace with research finding, “Millennials prefer to work in organizations with centralized decision-making, clearly defined responsibilities and formalized procedures” (217). A problem arises, however, when Millennials believe they can choose and customize their tasks and are reluctant to work otherwise (217).

**Millennials and Careers: Feedback and Clarity, Work and Life, Employer Relationships and Institutional Loyalty:** While some managers consider Millennials as a “demanding workforce,” some research suggests otherwise. For instance, the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force (study also cited in the Harvard Business Review) found “more workplace affinity between Boomers and Gen Y than between Gen X and either of these two generations” (217). Researchers conclude this is largely due to the shared values between Gen Y and Boomers, such as societal contribution and work-life balance. Authors in this article recommend programs like reverse mentoring to bridge the generational divide by developing relationships between the two

grounds. This allows Gen Y to learn from the Boomers organizational experience and Boomers to learn from Gen Y's technological prowess. Since Millennials are reported to seek feedback more so than generations of the past, authors recommend managers from older cohorts devote more time during the initial training phases and progressively step away as Millennials begin to confidently perform on their own. Just like in the educational environment with college preparation timelines, research shows "Millennial employees thrive in organizations that similarly create a clear path to success by identifying employees' ideal skills, creating realistic timelines for promotions, and detailing career progression" (218).

In addition, researchers note the importance Millennials place on work-life balance, with 27% of students claiming this as their first career goal (219). The authors in this article explain this attitude, suggesting Millennials experiences with their Baby Boomer parents working long-hours possibly influenced their desire to find a more balanced approach to work and life. Technology has also made this more possible by allowing employees to work from home. The article cites *Fortune's* "100 Best Companies to Work For," which reports how "80% [of these companies] allow employees to telecommute or work from home at least 20% of the time" (219). While this satisfies the desire for work-life balance, it creates an issue for companies in regards to employee "accountability" and "need for frequent face-to-face interaction with peers and supervisors" (219).

Researchers also note Millennials' desire to develop close interpersonal relationships and how this translates to the workplace. Since Millennials were encouraged to develop "close relationships with parents, teachers, mentors, and advisors" from a young age, researchers reason this explains for Millennials' increased desire to have a personal relationship with their bosses (219). Unlike Gen X and Boomers, Gen Y believes they should feel comfortable approaching their boss, asking for help, and speaking with senior level executives regardless of their rank in the company (220). This could cause problems as expectations for how to interact within the hierarchy differ from one generation to the next. Authors note a viable solution for organizations would be the development and execution of mentoring programs, like the CIA uses. The CIA found that through these programs, which are designed to foster mutual respect and trust, the organization has been able to report a 94% rate. An increase in loyalty aids in retention, but researchers find differences in how Millennial employees define this term in comparison against the organizational understanding. For instance, organizations expect Millennial employee loyalty to reflect "passionate, intelligent and enthusiastic work," whereas Millennials' loyalty is conditional (220). For instance, Millennials are reported to expect organizations provide "ample opportunities, offer professional development and training, and provide coaching and mentoring" in return for their loyalty (220).

CATEGORY: Social and Environmental Values

FOCUS: Based on two surveys conducted on college graduates, this article suggests Generation Y and Boomers share similar workplace preferences.

TITLE: How Gen Y & Boomers will reshape your agenda

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Sylvia Ann Hewlett, Laura Sherbin, and Karen Sumberg, August 2009

SOURCE: *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 1-8

PURPOSE: This article's purpose is to reveal the results from two surveys, which provide insight into generational aspirations and preferences in the workplace. By revealing what motivates and attracts workers, this information provides organizations with suggestions for employee retention strategy, particularly Generation Y.

SAMPLE: Four companies from the Brain Drain Task Force, "a group of 50 multi-national companies committed to global talent innovation," administered "two large-scale, nationally representative surveys" in 2008 and 2009. The 2008 study included 3,782 employed college graduates and the 2009 study included 1,046 participants of those from the initial study.

METHODOLOGY: The article includes the results from two surveys. The authors then "augmented" the surveys' results "... with qualitative input from 30 focus groups and 40 interviews" (2).

FINDINGS: The survey results showed, in spite of tough economic times, Boomer and Gen Y workers largely desire flexible work arrangements and the opportunity to give back to society over monetary rewards; this is also referred to as the rewards remix. Researchers found both "bookend" generations [Boomers and Gen Ys] were attracted to opportunities that enable them "to explore passions, hobbies, and good works" (4). For example, the studies results showed 53% of Gen Ys and 49% of Boomers used their time ways from the workplace to pursue their passions or volunteer (4). These two generations were also found to share a serious commitment to social and environmental maintenance and prosperity, whereas Gen X showed less interest. Since Gen Y's parents are typically from the Boomer generation, researchers figure this could be why these generations are more comfortable interacting than either is with those from Gen X. The studies found "Boomers delight in taking Ys under their wing: 65% say that members of the younger cohort look to them for advice and guidance. Generation Y's motto, meanwhile, seems to be 'Trust those over 50'" (5). More than half of Gen Y participants claimed they prefer professional advice from Boomers to Xers and more than "three-quarters say they enjoy working with Boomers" (5). Lastly, both Boomers and Gen Yers "rate four others forms of pay as at least as important as money: a great team, challenging assignments, a range of new experiences, and explicit performance evaluation and recognition. (Women in particular of both generations place high importance on receiving recognition for a job well done) (5). These results suggest talent managers should take these workplace preferences into consideration to best satisfy their employees' desires.

COMMENTS: While the rewards remix relieves talent managers seeking alternatives to costly monetary rewards, it is also challenging, as it requires redesigning incentives. The authors in this article recommend employers provide employees with the following options: “modularity, flexibility, opportunities to give back, progressive policies, and intergenerational mentoring” (6-7). Authors also claim “more important than any program or set of imperatives is the insight that every new generation of workers brings with it particular values that reflect not its members’ youth but, rather, their fundamental makeup. Some times, lacking sufficient heft and arriving in subordinate roles, they—and their preferences—hold little sway. In other areas, like this one, they get what they want” (7). This said, concerns as to how organizations will manage the generational shift in executive leadership as Gen Xers replace Boomers poses an issue for satisfying workplace preferences amongst two not so similar cohorts.

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: Researchers developed an empirical study to prove/disprove stereotypes about Millennials and their workplace expectations and preferences.

TITLE: New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study Of The Millennial Generation

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Eddy Ng, Linda Schweitzer, and Sean Lyons, February 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 281-292

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to better understand Millennials' career expectations. Employers sponsored this study with intent to use the findings to guide their recruitment and management practices. Following this reasoning, sponsors think information regarding Millennials' mindset towards work-related choices and career decision-making will aid in the retention this generation. Unlike other research in this topic area, this study does not test Millennials' responses against other generations

SAMPLE: The findings reported in this study came from 23,413 Canadian undergraduate students born during or after 1980. The age range tested was 18-27, with 22 years as the median age for respondents (283).

METHODOLOGY: Canadian employers from large organizations commissioned three strategic consulting firms to test Millennials, in effort to better understand this generation's career expectations, preferences, and views. Researchers surveyed Canadian undergraduate students born during or after 1980. Respondents were measured in the following areas: career expectations, advancement expectations, pay expectations, and desired work attributes (284). In addition to respondents' age, the following demographics were taken into consideration: gender, minority group affiliation, work experience, and students' year in school (284). Respondents either answered questions or rated the importance of work-related attributes using a 5-point scale, with 1 = not at important and 5 = essential) (284).

FINDINGS: While the demographic differences did impact the findings on Millennials' expectations and priorities, researchers claim the variance is not as significant in comparison to the general findings about this generation altogether. Therefore, the following report will only include the results that can be attributed to the entire sample generation. Career Expectations: The results from the survey showed 71% respondents "would accept a less-than-ideal job as a career starter" (285). Respondents desire "to spend their whole career with a single organization" was split at 50%, with the remaining group unsure as to what their preference would be. Pay and Advancement Expectations: In support of stereotypes suggesting Millennials are "impatient to succeed" (282), 68.5% of survey respondents "expect to be promoted within the first 18 months in their first job," with the average at 15.1 months (285). Respondents' expectation for a starting salary was reported at \$42,964 (SD = 15,093.54) (286). However, respondents also expect to receive a 63% pay increase within the first five years after gradation at \$69,663 (SD = 34,073.10) (286). Researchers reason Millennials' realistic expectations for a first job could be due to respondents' research on entry-level job salaries and/or the recent tough economic

situation. Desired Work Attributes: The most desired work-related attribute amongst respondents was “opportunities for advancement,” followed by “good people to work with and good people to report to” (286). After these three desired career decision-makers, Millennial respondents listed the remaining work-related attributes in the following order: training and skill development, pay, benefits, and job security. Counter to stereotypes, results from this study revealed Millennials’ “commitment to social responsibility, opportunities to have a social impact, and strong commitment to employee diversity ranked at the bottom of the list” (286). It is also important to note the student respondents with work experience reported the greatest career/workplace expectations and desire to be challenged (290).

COMMENTS: This study is based on the assumption that Millennials are significantly different in comparison to older generations.

LIMITATIONS: Researchers acknowledge the following limitations to this study: (1) “the data were self-reported;” (2) “only a third of students had some school-related work experience through co-op education and internships” which could influence the remaining respondents’ unrealistic expectations; (3) in regards to demographic factors, “further research is needed to identify which other factors impact the expectations and priorities of Millennials;” (4) the sample only includes Canadians and generalizability is questionable; and (5) data on older generations’ career and workplace expectations was unavailable to be compared against (291).

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study isolates generational differences in attempt to reveal the leisure, extrinsic, social, and intrinsic work values of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Me (Gen Y, Millennials).

TITLE: Generational differences in work values: leisure and extrinsic values increasing, social and intrinsic values decreasing

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Jean M. Twenge, et al., September 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Management*, Vol. 36 No. 5, pp. 1117-1142

PURPOSE: This study serves to provide empirical evidence to support theories suggesting generational distinctions in work values. While there is a lot of popular literature surrounding this topic, there is little empirical evidence to support these claims. Researchers wanted to provide a more credible basis for these claims and better determine what employers need to do (if anything) to recruit and maintain key talent with as a new generation enters the workforce.

SAMPLE: Researchers used “a nationally representative sample of U.S. high school seniors in 1976, 1991, and 2006 (N = 16, 507),” studying mostly 17 or 18 year-olds from each of the following three generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

METHODOLOGY: Unlike other generational studies, the methodology used in this study collected data over time to control for potential differences found in age differences. Researchers conducted a survey, using “a multistage random sampling procedure to select high schools” and students from those schools to complete the test (1125). Schools across the United States were chosen and “variables such as region, race, gender, and socioeconomic status” were controlled for to ensure a representative sample. The survey questions pertained to workplace values and most were answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale.

KEY TERMS:

*Work values*: “...the outcomes people desire and feel they should attain through work” (1121).

*Extrinsic work values*: “focus on the consequences or outcomes of work—the tangible rewards external to the individual, such as income, advancement opportunities, and status” (1121).

*Intrinsic work values*: “focus on the process of work—the intangible rewards that reflect the inherent interest in the work, the learning potential, and the opportunity to be creative” (1121).

*“Other” work values*: “include influence or autonomy in decision making; job stability or security; altruistic rewards such as helping others or contributing to society; social rewards related to interpersonal relationships at work; and leisure, which refers to the opportunity for free time, vacation, and freedom from supervision” (1121).

FINDINGS: Younger cohorts (Gen X and Gen Y) “were progressively more likely to value leisure at work” than Boomers (1132). Younger cohorts also valued extrinsic rewards significantly more than Boomers, with the starkest contrast seen against Gen X. Gen Y valued intrinsic rewards the least out of the three, and minimal difference was found between Boomers

and Gen X. Unlike popular literature suggests, “there were no significant differences among GenMe, GenX, and Boomers” in regards to a workplace that values and supports altruistic behavior. Most importantly, the results showed “GenMe placed slightly less emphasis on ‘a job that gives you an opportunity to be directly helpful to others’ than Boomers did at the same age” (1133). Lastly, Gen Y also placed significantly less value on social interactions than Gen X and Boomers.



CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This article examines empirical evidence revealing generational differences in work attitudes among Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

TITLE: A review of empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Jean M. Twenge, February 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business and Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 201-210

PURPOSE: The main purpose for this article is to present empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes. Unlike most other studies in this topic area, Twenge only reviews time-lag studies, which control for age and career stage. Twenge acknowledges how most popular press sources exaggerate generational differences to generate interest (and consequentially revenue) without providing empirical data to support these claims. This is problematic because it perpetuates false stereotypes, costing organizations' money (by influencing misinformed business decisions) and potentially harming the generation(s) defined by them. In addition, this review of generational differences also provides employers with real data to consider when strategizing in areas such as recruitment, retention, and satisfaction.

SAMPLE: This review included studies that sampled Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y at the onset of their careers. The participants in these studies come from the following areas in addition to the United States: Australia, Belgium, Europe (collectively), and New Zealand (202).

METHODOLOGY: Twenge only chose to review studies that used a time-lag design, which controls for age and career stage. While there are still weaknesses to these studies (such as a low response rate in one and no data for the Boomer generation in another), the data collected from these designs posit the few comprehensive intergenerational findings on work attitudes currently available (202).

FINDINGS: Twenge summarized and organized his review findings in the table below.

**Table 1** Summary of empirical evidence for generational differences in work values

Work value or trait	Findings
Work centrality	Silent > Boomer > GenX > GenMe
Work ethic	Silent > Boomer > GenX > GenMe
Leisure values	GenMe > GenX > Boomers
Altruistic values (helping, volunteering)	No differences
Intrinsic values (meaning, using talents)	No differences
Extrinsic values (money, status)	GenX > GenMe > Boomers
Affiliation or social values	Time-lag: Boomers > GenX > GenMe Cross-sectional: GenMe > GenX > Boomers
Job satisfaction and intention to leave	GenMe > GenX in job satisfaction Conflicting results for intention to leave
Individualistic traits and attitudes	GenMe > GenX > Boomers > Silent

*Note:* Silent born 1925–1945; Boomers 1946–1964; GenX 1965–1981; GenMe/GenY/ Millennials born 1982–1999

These comparative findings show linear generational trends in work centrality, work ethic, leisure values, extrinsic values, social values, job satisfaction and intention to leave, and individualistic traits and attitudes (207). This suggests that generational differences could be due to social change over a period of time, as opposed to dramatic shifts at certain birth years (208). Twenge notes that while these differences are significant, they are only average and more variation is often seen within a generation than among generations (207). What is also interesting is that no significant differences were found in altruistic (helping, volunteering) and intrinsic values (meaning, using talents). Unlike the indications in popular press sources, Generation Y does not appear to value volunteering or using their talents any more than older generations. Instead, Twenge explains other factors could contribute to these false perceptions, such as new high school requirements for community service hours that would make it seem Generation Y is more volunteer driven.

Twenge concludes his article by offering suggestions for future research. One suggestion promotes the study of generational differences to explain why these trends are occurring. For the trends that appear negative from an employers' perspective, such as declining work centrality and work ethic, Twenge recommends these areas receive particular attention. However, Twenge notes that while generational differences have proven important to understanding individuals, he explains individuals cannot be defined by generation alone (209).

CATEGORY: Parents, Education, and Technology

FOCUS: This article presents a comparison of the literature produced when Boomers entered the workforce (1965-1975) against the more recent literature on the Millennial generation in the workforce (1998-2008). Researchers found the following five similar themes between Boomers and Millennials: “educational level, parenting, the impact of technology, commitment to employers and meaningful work” (89).

TITLE: Boomers and Millennials have much in common

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Marilyn S. Wesner and Tammy Miller, Fall 2008

SOURCE: *Organizational Development Journal*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 89-96

PURPOSE: Since there is limited empirical research to support or refute the stereotypes suggesting Millennials are significantly different from previous generations at their age, this article presents findings from literature published on Boomers and Millennials to show the similarities between the two. Scholars reason that the commonalities between these two generations may “require similar remedies by human resources (HR) and OD practitioners,” as opposed to entirely new ones (90).

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: Researchers studied literature published between 1965-1975 for when Boomers first entered the workforce and did the same for Millennials, examining the related literature published between 1998-2008.

FINDINGS: While researchers found differences between Boomers and Millennials, the literature revealed significant similarities. Education: Just like Millennials are reported to be “the best educated generation to enter the workforce,” Boomers held the same title in the 1960s (91). Studies showed Boomers were dissatisfied with their first jobs, since most did not need to utilize their education, as almost half of those in the workplace had attended some college (91). Millennial newcomers now face a similar problem, with one study reporting 88% of participants with bachelor’s degrees and 35% with their master’s. An additional survey found 73% of Millennial workers intend to earn more advanced degrees or certifications in the future (91). Research suggests that just like Boomers, Millennials also understand that in order to keep up with technology, they will need to adapt and continue their education throughout their careers (92). Parenting: Boomers were reported to demonstrate a “lack of respect for authority... once they entered college and the workplace” (92). Research then showed Boomers’ children (Millennials) exemplified this same nature after being raised to be creative and question authority. Research also shows Millennials “exhibit great levels of self-confidence,” which is attributed to the strong parental support with emerging roles, such as “soccer moms and little league dads” (92). Researchers also note the social emphasis on achievement in all areas (academics, athletics, music, etc.). Both Boomers and Millennials experienced parental support in terms of education. However, unlike Boomers, Millennials show a significantly greater parental support system in terms of active involvement. For instance, Boomers are commonly

referred to as Helicopter Parents for their insistence on being up to date on their child's status. Research shows parents have been found to "write their children's resumes and ... attend their job interviews as well" (92). Some managers fear this level of parental involvement could negatively impact Millennials' problem-solving and decision making skills (92).

**Impact of Technology:** Boomers experienced significant technological advances in their lives, most notably the television and computer. This generation was then exposed to information from across the globe and influenced the way Boomers' viewed the world. Similarly, Millennials experienced "rapid technological advances" that influenced their attitudes toward technology and earned them names, such as the Connected or Net Generation and Digital Natives (93). One study reports Millennial college graduates have devoted 10,000 hours to video games, 10,000 hours to their cell phones, and 20,000 hours watching television (93). This is said to have influenced Millennials suggested ability to multi-task and interest in learning new technologies (unlike Boomers) (93).

**Commitment to Employers:** Researchers reported "Boomers were more likely to change jobs or companies than their elders" in 1972 and reported "allegiance to themselves first" (93). Similarly, Millennials are also mobile and some studies suggest this generation will be more inclined to move if a company lacks up to date technology (93).

**Meaningful Work:** Boomers and Millennials were both found to seek out opportunities to give back to society and help the environment. Boomers and Millennials were also reported to seek out opportunities for professional growth and challenging/interesting assignments (94).

**Additional:** This article also notes the importance of accommodating generational preferences to increase the likelihood of employee satisfaction. For instance, recruiters are already changing their methods of communication with prospective job candidates from the Millennial generation by using Facebook and text-messaging as opposed to email. Employers are even changing the "design of work" and work space to enhance the "collaboration among work groups, both face-to-face and virtually" by allowing employees to work anywhere with different modes of communication technology (94).

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study focuses on Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers work ethic construct. Researchers administer an empirical study to determine if and what differences exist across these cohorts.

TITLE: Generational differences in work ethic: an examination of measurement equivalence across three cohorts”

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: John P Meriac, David J. Woehr, and Christina Banister, February 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 315-324

PURPOSE: This study serves as one of the few empirical reports on generational differences. Researchers aimed to find whether or not significant differences in work ethic do exist across generations. If so, researchers wanted to clearly distinguish the differences and provide recommendations for future study. The more research supporting or refuting difference, the more information employers have to understand these groups and gauge how to accommodate and manage diversity.

SAMPLE: The data for this study “were collected from business students at a large Southeastern university and combined with portions of responses included in” a previous study conducted by Miller et. al in 2002 (317). The results were recorded between 1996 and 2008, which includes 1,860 participants.

METHODOLOGY: Researchers organized the study by dividing participants into their established generation (i.e. Baby Boomers born between 1946 and 1964). The demographic characteristics were controlled for, with each generation having approximately equal gender and racial representation. Participants were asked to complete a 65-item self report test designed to measure the following 7 dimensions on work ethic: self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification. This test is referred to as the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) and used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Based on the responses, researchers analyzed the results and compared the generations against each other to see if there were any significant differences.

KEY TERMS:

*Work ethic*: “... a set of beliefs and attitudes reflecting the fundamental value of work” (316).

*Measurement equivalence*: “... the extent to which individuals from different groups, who are identical on the construct of interest (e.g., work ethic), have equal probabilities of attaining the same score on a test of that construct” (316).

FINDINGS: The study’s results revealed differences between the tested generations. However, researchers realized participants’ interpretation of the item content could have been different based on their generation. Therefore, while this study provides empirical evidence to support generational differences in work ethic, it also reveals the complexity in determining matters in this field of research. The examination of the mean differences showed “Baby Boomers were

significantly higher than both Generation Xers and Millennials on all dimensions except leisure. In addition, Millennials were significantly higher than Generation Xers on three dimensions (morality/ethics, hard work, and delay of gratification) and not significantly different on four dimensions (leisure, self-reliance, centrality of work, and wasted time" (319-320). Based on these findings and in comparison to the other tested cohorts, Generation X ranked the lowest in work ethic and Baby Boomers the highest. However, researchers note it was impossible to determine true differences between Generation X and Millennials because non-equivalent scales were used. In addition, the age differences between Generation X and Millennial participants in this study were not significantly different, whereas Boomers were significantly older than both. Assuming older people hold higher positions due more years of experience, this could affect the attitudes one would have towards work in this later stage of life than in an earlier stage.

COMMENTS: While this article holds more credibility, due to the empirical nature of the study, it is difficult to gauge the significance of these results with the noted limitations. It appears there are differences in work ethic, but the results cannot truly explain the meaning behind the extent or why. This study does, however, caution those who read popular press articles suggesting Millennials are lazy and draw conclusions with no concrete evidence to support this notion. The different ages at which participants take these tests must also be taken into consideration, as people typically have different roles and responsibilities at different ages. For instance, a recent college graduate from Generation Y probably does not experience the same kind of pressure a top executive from a Baby Boomer generation might at this stage in their life, which could influence their work ethic. In spite of this limitation, the authors of this study recommend researchers test to find why there is no equivalence across the three generations to better understand these reported differences.

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study focused on generational differences in workplace attitudes, testing the effects of generation on work attitudes and whether or not Millennials' differ significantly in comparison to other generations.

TITLE: Millennials' (lack of) attitude problem: an empirical examination of generational effects on work attitudes

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Brenda J. Kowske, Rena Rasch, and Jack Wiley, March 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*: Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 265-279

PURPOSE: The purpose for this study is to provide empirical evidence to support or refute popular press, literature, and media claims suggesting Millennials demonstrate significant attitudinal differences in the workplace. This study examines the following work attitudes to determine whether or not these claims are substantiated: "overall company and job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and satisfaction with pay and benefits, recognitions, career development and advancements, and job security" (268). Researchers asked the following questions in attempt to contribute to the developing empirical literature on generational influence (if present) on work attitudes:

"RQ1: Is variance in work attitudes attributable to generation, controlling for age and period? In other words, are their generational differences in work attitudes?

RQ2: If the answer to RQ1 is "yes." Then how are Millennials' work attitudes different from prior generations? (269)."

SAMPLE: Respondents came from a randomly sampled volunteer panel of U.S. employees, with 115,044 participants (N = 115, 044) surveyed over an 18-year period.

METHODOLOGY: Researchers used an employee opinion survey called WorkTrends and collected the data (annually or bi-annually) from 1985 to 2009. Of those who volunteered, a vendor selected the survey participants based on specific demographic need requirements. For instance, the study required full-time employees (working over 32 hours a week), near equal gender representation, and needed to include employees from a variety of age groups and industries. Generations were then divided using Strauss and Howe's generation taxonomy and participants were divided into early, middle, and late sub-groups. A random effects model was used, which allowed researchers to make "broader inferences about the generation effect," and not just the generations in the sample (269). Since researchers were "interested primarily in estimating (as opposed to also explaining) the separate variance components for generation, period, and age," a simple model was used to configure the data (270).

FINDINGS: In response to RQ1, the study results suggest, "individual level variables are much stronger predictors of work attitudes than are period or generation" (273). While researchers found statistically significant generational variance, these results were not practically significant. The results on the specific variables showed generation "...contributes least to turnover intentions, satisfaction with pay and benefits, and the work itself, while it contributes most to

overall company and job satisfaction, and satisfaction with recognition, career development and advancement, and job security” (273). However, the general consensus from this study and review of empirical literature reveals generational attitudes at work are more similar than different.

In response to RQ2, the study results found “trends across generations in overall company and job satisfaction, satisfaction with recognition, career development and advancement, and job security are clearly visible,” depicting a curvilinear u-shape (273). The research showed a sharp decrease in overall company and job satisfaction from GIs to late Boomers, and a gradual increase from late Boomers to late Millennials (274). Millennials exhibited above average satisfaction overall. Results on satisfaction with recognition showed a sharp decrease from GIs to Gen X, and then increased with Millennials, once again ending higher than average (274). When examining generational satisfaction with career development, GIs and Millennials posited the highest levels. Results on generational attitudes towards job security once again revealed a similar trend, with Millennials reporting greater feelings of security than Generation X, Boomers, and late Silents. Focusing on Millennials’ levels of satisfaction, the variables ranked in the following order (beginning with the “largest differential from the grand mean”): satisfaction in career development and advancement, recognition, overall company and job satisfaction, and job security (274). In addition, researchers found the three other work attitudes tested, satisfaction with work, pay, and turnover intentions were “practically negligible” (275). The differences that were found across generations only accounted for 1-2% of the variance, making this statistically significant, but still small in comparison to overall work attitudes (275).

COMMENTS: The results of this study suggest Millennials, as a generation, are not significantly different from previous generations in terms of work attitudes. Since this study does not provide an explanation for the reported trends in data and the variance found, it would be interesting if researchers pursued this topic further in future studies. These studies should aim to control for age and period to prevent any additional response bias and collect data over time (277). Authors in this study also recommend employers, HR professionals, and managers “investigate the generational differences in their own organizations, coupling their organization-specific results with the results of this study,” before making any policy and/or practices changes (276). Authors advise these same organizational leaders consider “... the intersection of organizational culture, structure, practices, and individual differences in the organization,” before attributing issues to generational differences (277).

LIMITATIONS: Authors acknowledge the following four limitations present in this study: (1) the time of the study prevented researchers from examining the entire Millennial population (due to age, as some were too young to be tested); (2) survey respondents were volunteers, which presents a bias in results even when demographics were controlled for; (3) the sample is unable to be generalized to the entire population as it only revealed the attitudes of full-time, U.S. employees who work for organizations with 100+ workers; and (4) “the selection of criterion variable and their measurement was limited” because of the survey design (277).



CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This article provides survey research and popular literature to support and explain developing conclusions about Generation Y, with a focus on management strategy.

TITLE: Managing Generation Y

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Susan P. Eisner, Fall 2005, p4

SOURCE: *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, Vol. 70 No. 4

PURPOSE: The purpose of this article is to develop an understanding of Generation Y to prepare employers for anticipated changes in this cohort's workplace preferences. Eisner provides a background on Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, and Generation X to compare and contrast these groups with Generation Y. This approach shows the similarities and differences across and between generations; it also raises questions as to how these factors affect the workplace. This fact influenced the main research question for Eisner's study, which asks the following: "Will Gen Y's presence in the workplace present strategic challenges for managers?" (p4).

SAMPLE: The sample for Eisner's survey included 350 students from Generation Y, who were enrolled in a 300-level Organizational Theory and Behavior class at Rampao College in New Jersey. The data was collected from 2000 to 2005, which included 14 academic sessions. Most of the survey participants reported having worked part-time jobs.

METHODOLOGY: The survey asked students "to reflect upon their workplace experience, indicate the level of their managers' competence in each of 18 characteristics, and specify the level of their own overall satisfaction with work using a whole number response scale of one/low to four/high" (p4). Towards the beginning of the academic term, students completed the survey after an informational lecture on the characteristics measured in the study.

FINDINGS: The survey results showed respondents "ranked their managers most highly overall on the qualities (accessible, competent, ethical, respected, and fair) they possess" (p4). Eisner notes the interesting part about these findings is that these attributes "tend to be expected of managers in both traditional command/control and contemporary flat/empowered workplaces" (p4). Therefore, these results suggest Generation Y shares preferences similar to Traditionalists and Baby Boomers. Survey respondents then ranked their managers similarly in the following order:

- 1) functional competence (plan, organize, control, and lead), 2) managerial skills (communicate, analytical/quantitative, interpersonal, technological, and critical/creative thinking), and 3) managers' effectiveness at achieving goals through and with others (create positive work environment, lead proactively, present opportunity to achieve high performance, and provide incentive to achieve high performance).

Another interesting factor is student respondents reported their managers needed improvement in the five following areas: "ability to use technology, present opportunities to achieve high

performance, lead, think critically/creatively, and provide incentives to achieve high performance” (p4). The survey results also showed a strong relationship between managerial competence and Generation Y’s workplace satisfaction.

In addition to the survey results, Eisner presented additional research that showed both potential advantages and challenges managing Generation Y. Some of the potential advantageous characteristics of Generation Y include the following: positive attitudes toward work-related practices and procedures (i.e. work-life balance and performance reviews), collaborative and inclusive tendencies, and optimistic and open-minded approaches to work. Some of the core values posited by Generation Y also include the following: teamwork, fairness, strength, cooperation, energy, conformity, virtue, and duty (p4). Some of the potential challenges for managing Generation Y include the following: lower job satisfaction than older cohorts, willingness to leave for something better, lower respect for the hierarchy and “more respect for ability and accomplishment,” express dislike for menial work, demonstrate poor conflict management with difficult people, and impatience (p4). Another study cited notes Generation Y’s “strong technical skills are not matched by strong soft skills such as listening, communicating, independent thinking, being a team player, and managing time” (p4). Other studies claim Generation Y workers “tend to look for instant gratification rather than long-term investment of time and effort” and “prefer special projects rather than ‘dues-paying chores’” (p4). Generation Y’s more liberal upbringing is said to have influenced their tendencies “to be constant negotiators and questioners” (p4).

COMMENTS: This study provided a fairly well rounded analysis of Generation Y in relation to older generations. I especially appreciated the inclusion of a study that “identified several core dimensions of the workplace transformation” (p4). Eisner cites intergenerational expert Bruce Tulgan, who acknowledged the following six workplace shifts: 1) “work has become more demanding,” 2) “the employer-employee relationship has become less hierarchical and more transactional,” 3) “employers have moved away from long-term employment relationships,” 4) “employees have less confidence in long term rewards and greater expectations for short-term rewards,” 5) “immediate supervisors have become the most important people in the workplace, and 6) “supervising employees now requires more time and skill at the very time when there are fewer managers” (p4). This said, it is not surprising Generation Y would expect their workplace to reflect these changes.

LIMITATIONS: Eisner’s survey presents the following limitations: 1) Generation Y respondents were students and not full-time employees, 2) the sample was restricted to “mostly Business majors living and working in the New York-New Jersey region,” 3) the survey did not consider other demographic factors such as gender, race, and/or income, and, like most studies, 4) only includes college educated respondents.

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: Researchers conducted an exploratory study and presented findings on executive respondents' perceptions of the "Net Generation" (Generation Y) and corporate leaders' current strategies for addressing issues posed by a new generation in the workforce.

TITLE: "How Executives Perceive the Net Generation"

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Karine Barzilai-Nahon and Robert M. Mason, April 2010

SOURCE: *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 396-418

PURPOSE: The study was created to better understand executives' perceptions of Generation Y and their attitudes towards integrating this new cohort. This article assumes intergenerational tension exists and expounds on how Generation Y's purported differences in values, behavior, and use of technology influence executives' perceptions. Most importantly, this article explains the various strategies executives are using to address issues related to intergenerational tension, particularly between Generation Y and Baby Boomers.

SAMPLE: Researchers collected data from Chief Information Officers (CIOs), Chief Technical Officers (CTOs), and other top-level executives from the United States. The interviews included 10 CIOs and CTOs. The focus groups included 110 CIOs, CTOs, and other executive who attended a seminar on information technology management. Participants were divided into 12 groups, with 8-10 executives in each. Executive participants represented a variety of industries, including engineering and health care. An online survey was also distributed to executive clients from a consulting service and garnered 49 responses (400).

METHODOLOGY: Researchers first examined the current literature on Generation Y, focusing on how characteristics unique to this generation might affect executives' attitudes and behaviors towards this group. A study was then designed for executives using the following three methodologies: interviews, focus groups, and an online survey. In each methodology, researchers presented executive participants with scenarios and examined their responses (400). Researchers explain their rationale for using a scenario-based approach as opposed to surveying for the following reasons: (1) It allows participants' freedom in their responses; (2) realistic examples are found to stimulate participants' reactions; (3) it increases participant involvement; and (4) it allowed researchers to "identify strategies" the executive participants employed in addressing the issues presented by the scenarios (400). All three methods followed the same procedure. Once the scenario was introduced, participants were asked to respond to the following four questions:

- "1. Are there any issues that you have experienced or observed that are missing from the scenario?
2. What issues do you feel are most critical at this point in time?
3. How are you addressing the issues identified in question 2?
4. Do you see some issues as becoming more important over time?" (400).

Researchers then used a thematic analysis to identify “concepts and key phrases” executives used and “grouped the responses into clusters of mechanisms” (401).

**FINDINGS:** Researchers noted 10 clusters of issues executive participants reported about Generation Y. The 10 clusters are as follows: organizational culture, human resources, communication, technology, control, risk, collaboration, legal implications, intellectual property, and boundaries (Personal vs. Professional/Public) (401). The organizational culture cluster elicited the most responses with concerns about multi-tasking and work ethic. In the human resources cluster, participants expressed concerns about lack of focus and turnover. Concerns about information sharing also came up in various clusters, with executives nervous about leakage of intellectual property and uncontrolled technology usage.

Researchers organized executives’ responses on how they are addressing the issue, by categorizing their responses into the following four clusters: project management, technology, human resources, and policy. The project management cluster included responses to “management rules, testing performance, and restricting ways of working” (404). The technology cluster included responses on “the use of technology to address tensions,” which typically entailed “prohibiting or restricting the use of” certain devices (404). The human resources cluster included responses to the “HR function in addressing tensions,” from screening to training (405). Lastly, the policy cluster included responses “that referred to organizational processes, managing risk, and specific organizational policies” (405). In each of these clusters, researchers identified the management strategies executives used to address the scenarios and elicited the following results:

Strategy	Description	% Using This Strategy
Coercive/authoritative	One-sided, top down, the organization upholds and enforces existing policies	52%
Cooptation	Upper level employees manipulate members from Generation Y to accept policies in place	64%
Responsive	React to issues as they occur	52%
Negotiative	Compromise on issues, allowing members from Generation Y to participate	40%
Participatory	Collaboration between executives and Generation Y	32%
Transformative	The organization changes structure and norms to something new	28%

% refers to percent of executives’ (N = 160) responses in the named strategy classification  
 Since respondents can use multiple strategies, the total is >100%.

(Table 3, 406)

Researchers caution executives who intend to continue using top-down management strategies as literature suggests it is less effective than other approaches. In addition, researchers caution executives who think training is all that is needed to relieve intergenerational tension.

**LIMITATIONS:** Researchers acknowledge the following limitations to this study: Conclusions are restricted to the United States; the sample only includes established organizations and does not include younger companies, such as Google and Facebook, which may be more geared

towards Generation Y; the sample is not representative of all executives; and the exploratory and interpretive nature of the study could have produced bias in the results.

COMMENTS: This study is useful because it provides current research that shows how executives may perceive Generation Y in the workplace. These perceptions will undoubtedly have an impact on inter-workplace relationships and employee satisfaction. I would be curious to find a study that explores the perceptions of members from Generation Y towards upper level management and executives.

## CATEGORY: Distinguishing Characteristics and Skills

FOCUS: This article focuses on the generational differences posed by Generation Y in the workplace, regarding personality, attitude, psychopathology, and behavior.

TITLE: Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Jean Twenge and Stacey M. Campbell, 2008

SOURCE: *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 23 No. 8, pp. 862-877

PURPOSE: This article provides quantitative data collected from various studies to determine what (if any) generation-specific attitudinal and behavioral trends have emerged in the workplace since the 1930s. These findings serve to inform discussions on how Generation Y is expected to impact the workplace and consider the implications of their reported differences.

SAMPLE: Since this article contains data from studies using personality, attitude, psychopathology, or behavior scales, the sample collectively includes 1.4 million participants, who were mostly college students at the time. Researchers analyzed data from the 1930s until 2008 (862). Therefore, this study includes data on Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y.

METHODOLOGY: Researchers only included data from empirical studies conducted over the past eight decades (starting in the 1930s). These studies pertain to subjects related to personality, attitude, psychopathology, and behavior. The study's design enabled researchers to display generational trends over time and draw conclusions based on these findings.

FINDINGS: Twenge and Campbell charted their findings to clearly show the "generational changes evident in the workplace and the accommodations vs counterpressure used by organizations" (873).

\*The information provided in the table below is the same as noted in Twenge and Campbell's article.

Trait change	Evidence in workplace	Change in employee needs/values	Organizational change: accommodation	Organizational change: counter pressure
Need for social approval down	Casual dress, less formality	"Do what's right for you"	First name basis, casual dress	Dress codes
Self-esteem and narcissism up	Higher expectations, fulfillment	"It's all about me!"; ethics problems	Praise programs, ethics training	No self-evaluations
Locus of control more external	Not taking responsibility for successes or failures	Need push by organization to produce	More work in teams	Accountability for performance
Anxiety and depression up	Stress levels up	More internal health services needed	Provide mental health services	Releasing employees stressed by job environment
Women more agentic and assertive	More female workers in more powerful positions	Gender equality, child care needs	Child care, flex time, promotion of women	Rewarding longer working hours

COMMENTS: These findings support claims that suggest there are generational differences present in the workplace in regards to attitudes, behaviors, and psychological traits. This study is unique in that it provides quantitative data that controls for age.

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This article examines the empirical evidence that proves or disproves generational differences that are anticipated to impact the workforce.

TITLE: Millennials at work: what we know and what we need to do (if anything)

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Jennifer J. Deal, David G. Altman, and Steven G. Rogelberg, 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25. No. 2, pp. 191-199

PURPOSE: This article presents what is known in regards to generational differences and serves to inform employers' discussions about issues related to the subject. Researchers acknowledge the significance of social context when studying generations and emphasize this factor as more indicative of differences in behavior than generation.

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: Researchers only selected data from empirical studies to review and discuss.

FINDINGS:

Millennials in Comparison to Older Generations (X, Baby Boomers, Veterans)

\*All findings are based on empirical data

Topic	Differences Supported (Significant/ Modest/ None)	Findings Explained	Conclusions/ Implications Reported
Work Attitudes	Modest	Research supports small differences in work centrality (lower for younger generations), but no real differences in altruistic work values (192).	Researchers acknowledge there probably are differences in work attitudes, but none that are significant enough to alter the work environment (192).
Personality Traits	Significant	Research supports significant differences, with Millennials reporting higher levels of self-esteem, assertiveness, and narcissism (192).	This data is not reflective of the entire Millennial population, since the study only includes college students. The negative trait of narcissism is concerning, since these individuals tend to demonstrate greater aggression when rejected (192).
Technology Usage	Significant	While each generation has experienced advances in technology, Generation Y experienced the most frequent and rapid advances yet (192).	Due to technology, people are more connected than ever before. Research in neuroscience found "the human brain cannot effectively integrate multiple inputs at the same



			time” (193). Uncertain as to how this will affect Generation Y and the workplace.
Work Hours	None	Research shows people are working more hours than ever before and that Millennials are not working lesser hours than older generations did at this age (193).	Workloads have increased and technology has made it impossible to “leave work at work.” Studies suggesting Boomers’ work longer and harder than younger generations is often skewed because it does not take employees’ level within the organization into consideration (193).
Knowledge	None	While more members from Generation Y have entered college than previous generations, data shows further education has not shown significant differences in knowledge levels across generations (193).	This data suggests education and certifications alone are not indicative of knowledge (193).
Health	Significant	Compared to previous generations at the same age, Millennials show the highest rates of obesity and least overall fitness. In addition, research reports Millennials are less likely to identify themselves as being overweight, which suggests there is less social pressure to confront the issue (193).	There are multiple factors that have contributed to this epidemic, such as sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy food choices. Researchers project over 30% of the children born in 2000 will experience significant health issues that will jeopardize their performance and attendance at work, costing employers and the government in medical expenses (193).
Cultural Shifts	None	While Generation Y has experienced the highest divorce and immigration rates in the nation’s history, researchers explain these shifts have been gradual over time. Therefore, these shifts are not expected to show dramatic differences across generations (194).	These cultural shifts could explain for the recent focus on diversity and attitudes towards alternative lifestyles. It will be interesting

Once researchers presented what is known, they also emphasized the importance of studying generations within social context. Researchers explain that, “... behavior is more likely to be affected as a result of maturation, life stage, the economy, or other environmental factors than it

is some fundamental shift in generational attitudes or behaviors” (197). Researchers recommend future generational studies should be performed on a large-scale over an extended period of time to determine real, significant differences. For now, the only significant findings researchers can report in terms of generational differences are Generation Y’s aptitude for using new technology, attitudes towards tattoos, and lack of temperance, as seen in by their poor eating habits (198).

## CATEGORY: Distinguishing Characteristics and Skills

FOCUS: This article presents known generational differences in character traits, identifies potential intergenerational conflict(s), and provides suggestions for management, as these issues relate to the workplace.

TITLE: Understanding generational differences for competitive success

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Amy Glass, 2007

SOURCE: *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 39 No. 2, pp. 98-103

PURPOSE: The workplace is more diverse than ever before and this article focuses on the integration of three generations in the workplace (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials). Since generational differences have been found to create challenges for organizations, researchers studied how generational differences affect workplace expectations and interactions. This article seeks to identify the expected challenges and provide suggestions for approaching issues related to generational differences. Researchers' reason that if generational differences are acknowledged and understood, people will be more inclined to appreciate these variances as opposed to avoid or refute them.

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: This study reviewed a variety of intergenerational related research to identify motivators and characteristics indicative of Baby Boomers, Generation X, or Millennials.

## FINDINGS:

\*Table developed based on pp. 99-101

Generation	Years Born	Work-Related Traits/Styles in Comparison
Baby Boomers	1941-1960	-Idealistic -Driven -Work + Personal Sacrifice = Financial Success
Generation X	1961-1976	-Skeptical -Less Loyal -Fiercely Independent -Value Work-Life Balance
Millennials	1977-1992	-Most Confident -Parental Dependency ("Helicopter Parents")

Generation	Work Ethic	Management and Change	Technology/Communication
Baby Boomers	-Believe younger generations do not work as hard as they do	-Require minimal feedback	-View telecommuting from home as weird -Highly value face-to-face communication
Generation X	-More concerned with outcome than process of completing work		

	-Feel pressure to maintain work-life balance		
Millennials	Results-oriented	-View Boomers as resistant to change -Expect feedback, detailed instruction, and praise	-View Boomers as technology avoidant -Prefers instant messaging, text, and email to face-to-face communication and talking on the phone -Addressing negative issues over technology could increase tension -Over-reliance on technology could inhibit relationship building

This article provides four suggestions for intergenerational relationship improvement in the workplace:

- Adjust Human Resources (HR) Policies/Corporate Philosophies
- Maintain an Environment for Effective Communication
- Incorporate Collaborative Decision Making
- Develop Internal Training Programs to Focus on the Differences

Research shows age and generation affects employee attitudes and preferences. While HR can provide different compensation and benefits alternatives to support various preferences, this does not mean companies need to make drastic changes to all of its policies and procedures. The point is to be aware of the differences in order to choose the most viable solution for the company and its employees. It is important to recognize what each generation wants and prefers in order to best accommodate them. For instance, research shows Boomers want their experience and efforts recognized and the opportunity to mentor younger employees. Generation X desires opportunities to learn and grow, while maintaining work-life balance. Lastly, Generation Y wants to find meaning in their contributions and get involved (102). By understanding attitudes and preferences like these, employers and employees can work towards minimizing problematic intergenerational tension and conflicts.

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This article presents evidence suggesting Millennial college students lack the required communication skills necessary to meet business demands. Researchers address the issue by promoting Millennials' education of communication style-typing and flexing to improve their current communication skills.

TITLE: Optimizing Millennials' Communication Styles

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Jackie L. Hartman and Jim McCambridge, 2011

SOURCE: *Business Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 74 No. 1, pp. 22-44

PURPOSE: Researchers discuss reports suggesting Millennials' lack work-appropriate communication skills and acknowledge the issue this creates for employers who deem communication as one of the most important job qualifications for achieving business success. The authors of this article identify Millennials' communication shortcomings and offer educational suggestions for improvement, using communication style and flex inventories.

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research on Millennial population

METHODOLOGY: The authors' reviewed research on Millennials and communication skills. Based on this research, educators recognized the need to develop Millennials' communication skills. Educators' reasoned an effective way to develop these skills was to create awareness amongst by administering the communication style type assessment described below. If awareness creates consciousness, researchers anticipate Millennials' will be more inclined to work at improving their communication skills, both professionally and interpersonally. Researchers used an updated version of Mok's (1975) Communication Style Inventory. They made some adjustments using research from Alessandra and Hunsaker (1993) and Merrill and Reid (1999). The version used by the authors was labeled Hartman and McCambridge 2010.

KEY TERMS:

*Style-typing*: "...is a technique used to understand one's own communication style as well as the styles of others in the communication process" (28).

*Style-flexing*: "...is a follow-up to style-typing. It is based on the concept of reciprocity, which stresses mutual understanding of one another's communication processes and the development of effective communication relationships" (28).

FINDINGS: Current research suggests Millennials' exposure and use of technology has changed the way this generation communicates. Technology serves as the most popular means of communication amongst Millennials. While various forms of technology enable constant communication, researchers have found these devices to influence informal and impersonal interactions as well (24). Employers express concern about Millennials' communication abilities, particularly their interpersonal skills. This is worrisome for business leaders who rank communication as the most important factor for effective job performance. Studies also show "effective communication" is "directly linked to organizational success" (25). There are

numerous benefits to effective communication in the workplace, such as increased employee job satisfaction and productivity, reduced turnover, and greater return on investment (25-26).

Research suggest educators should understand Millennials need to feel engaged and a part of the learning process (27). Studies have found Millennials “are described as social learners and tend to work best in a team environment, using peer-to-peer and cooperative learning strategies” (27). Other studies have found Millennials “respond to methods that are more horizontal and informal, rather than formal and vertical” (27). The learning environment needs to be inclusive and ““student-centered”” (as opposed to a ““teacher-centered”” one). The first communication assessment exam was introduced in 1970 and various modifications have been presented over the past few decades. In spite of these modifications the following assumptions remain the same:

- Everyone uses a blend of communication styles.
- Most people have a dominant style.
- Styles are reflected in behavior and are observable and identifiable.
- Most people are quick to respond to communication that is similar to their dominant style.
- It is possible to alter one’s individual style to adapt to others’ styles.
- There is not one best style (29).

Researchers in this article organized communication styles in the following four categories: driver, analytical, amiable, and expressive. The following four dimensions then modify these styles: assertiveness, responsiveness, priority (task vs. relationship orientation), and pace (fast vs. slow) (29).

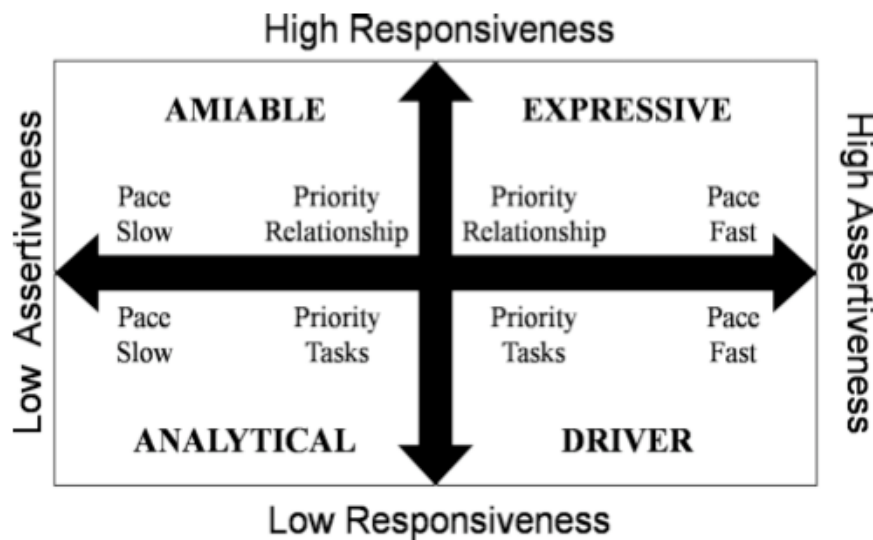


Figure 1. Comparison of the Four Communication Styles

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Values, and Expectations

FOCUS: This study attempts to predict how Millennials would impact business if they were currently in charge.

TITLE: The time has come to embrace Millennial perspectives

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Alexandra Bradley, August 2010

SOURCE: *T + D*, Vol. 64 No. 8, pp. 22

PURPOSE: This study surveyed Millennials in effort to anticipate how this generation would lead business if given the opportunity. Researchers plan to use this data to inform discussions about this group.

SAMPLE: This study included Millennial participants from the United States and the United Kingdom. The quantitative surveys collected data from over 800 Millennials.

METHODOLOGY: Researchers used the following three approaches to collect data over a six-month period: “digital ethnography (an online community created to attract Millennials from around the world to a single place to discuss various lifestyle topics); virtual companies (which identified to Millennials’ main approaches for creating and managing a successful business); and quantitative surveys (of more than 800 individuals to confirm the study’s findings)” (22). Participants were tested on their attitudes towards three prime areas of business (the organization, the product, and the marketing) (22).

FINDINGS: In the organization topic area, researchers found that Millennials “prefer a collaboratively led enterprise” (22). Millennial participants reported the following:

- 82% believe colleagues should be able to perform each other’s jobs
- 54% prefer a consensus on decision-making and 70% when amongst peers (22)

In the product topic area, researchers found Millennials’ prefer to use technology, customize items, and value quality (22). Researchers also note that while Millennials are “perceived as eco-conscious,” only 20% of participants expressed concern about a product’s impact on the environment. In the marketing topic area, researchers found Millennials are “a generation that innately consumes, creates, and participates in media” (22). The study results also found Millennials dislike “one-way communications and brands that do not fully interact with them,” and prefer “word-of-mouth recommendations” to other means of marketing (22).

Researchers recommend businesses adopt the following “10 core principles” to effectively engage the Millennial generation:

- Encourage open collaboration across the organization.
- Ask more from each employee.
- Recognize and reward good ideas, wherever they exist in your organization.
- Use technology to customize products and personalize communications.

- Maintain high-quality products.
- Integrate responsibility into your business.
- Connect to customers in authentic, relevant, and meaningful ways.
- Keep two-way communication open by partnering with consumers.
- Create products and marketing that encourage consumers to share their positive experiences, leveraging word-of-mouth advertising.
- Continually search, evolve, and find new ways of doing things.



CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This article focuses on recruitment and management strategies employers are practicing on prospective and current Millennial accounting professionals.

TITLE: Recruiting and managing the ‘why?’ Generation: Gen Y

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Kathryn Yeaton, April 2008

SOURCE: *The CPA Journal*, Vol. 78 No. 4, pp.68-72

PURPOSE: This article aims to inform and prepare employers for what to expect when recruiting and managing accounting professionals from Generation Y. The article discusses characteristics specific to Generation Y and links these findings to the suggested recruitment and management strategies. Since the accounting profession has become a highly competitive field in recent years, employers are especially interested in recruiting and retaining the most qualified candidates.

SAMPLE: Article examines prospective and current Millennial accounting professionals.

METHODOLOGY: This article draws its conclusions from a variety of cited studies.

FINDINGS: This article’s recruitment and management strategies are organized in the following table:

EXHIBIT Gen Y Recruiting and Management Strategies		
Gen Y Characteristic	Recruiting Strategy	Management Strategy
Strong sense of morality: Why am I doing this?	Demonstrate the significance of the position and the role the individual will fulfill within the organization.	Explain the importance of the tasks and functions performed by the employee.
Goal- and achievement-oriented	Identify opportunities to advance, and communicate them to potential recruits.	Clearly delineate expectations.
Digital natives	Use the Internet as a recruiting tool for companies.	Encourage computer technologies to make the organization more efficient; encourage technological innovations.
Value intelligence, innovation, and frequent feedback	Emphasize challenges, growth opportunities, and contributions to the organization; describe the progression up the organizational ladder.	Work with employees to develop the ability to accept and synthesize constructive comments.
Value work/family balance	Emphasize benefits packages and work-schedule flexibility, if available.	Provide good benefits packages; increase work-schedule flexibility; minimize excessive overtime and travel.
Multitaskers	Quickly ask if they need to turn off their cellphone, which should set the tone and avoid interruptions during an interview or office visit.	Explicitly describe the organization’s rules concerning the use of computers, cellphones, and PDAs during work hours. It may be necessary to give explicit instructions to focus on only one task.
Group work and collaboration	Evaluate skills during the recruitment process by watching potential hires performing informal team-building exercises.	Encourage collaboration and innovative approaches to projects.

COMMENTS: The researchers in this article recommend an inclusive management style for Generation Y. Unlike other popular press sources; this article does not dwell on the apparent generational differences, but provides realistic suggestions for recruiting and managing this cohort. Just like every generation, Generation Y posits both positive and negative traits from an employer's perspective. Therefore, researchers and employers should focus their efforts on how to effectively work with generational differences as opposed to worrying or complaining about it.

LIMITATIONS: Since this article is only focused on prospective and current accountants from the Millennial generation, it appears the findings can only be generalized to this group of Millennials. However, I find it interesting that the findings seem to verify what other studies suggest about college-educated and working Millennials in the United States in general.

CATEGORY: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy

FOCUS: This article presents findings on Generation Y and provides strategies on how to effectively manage this group.

TITLE: From high maintenance to high productivity: what managers need to know about Generation Y

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Carolyn Martin, 2005

SOURCE: *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 37 No. 1, pp. 39-44

PURPOSE: This article's main objective is to provide managers with an understanding of Generation Y and explain how to effectively integrate and engage this new cohort in the workplace. By developing an understanding of this generation, researchers assume this knowledge can be used to maximize productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and increase retention.

SAMPLE: Article presents findings from Generation Y participants born between 1978-1988.

METHODOLOGY: This article presents research from Rainmaker Thinking Inc.'s study on Generation Y in the workplace. The findings are based upon hundreds of interviews with managers and Generation Y.

FINDINGS: The study identified the following characteristics about Generation Y and explained the challenges posed by management. The findings are organized in the table below (40-43).

Characteristic	Description	Management Challenge
Independent and Self-Reliant	-Works well alone, but better in groups -Wants freedom and flexibility to get tasks done on their own	-Needs to be flexible enough to provide time for trial and error, factoring in their pacing and need for collaboration
Tech-Savvy	-Interested in using and creating technology -Expect companies to possess the latest technology	-Understand Gen Y has high expectations for technology and seeks the most up-to-date stuff
Sense of Immediacy	-Consider a year at a company long-term -Wants to know what they can learn and contribute to today	-Needs to customize training programs to prepare Gen Y for each task -Master coaching skills -Devise an incentive program that rewards for high performance -Challenge policies that prevent achievers from advancement
Entrepreneurial	-Creative mindset -Gen Y starting up their own businesses in record numbers	-Gen Y always wants an explanation -Not satisfied with one solution, without exploring other options
Wants More Responsibility	-Interested in proving themselves -Seeking opportunities for	-“How do you position increasing responsibilities as rewards for

	advancement	Generation Yers' accomplishments?" (42).
Hates Micromanagement	-No one likes to be micromanaged, especially Gen Y -Irony: Gen Y is easily bored when there is nothing to do and does not know how to manage their time	-Needs to train Gen Y in how to break-up long-term projects, manage interruptions, meet deadlines, and provide them with realistic timeframes
Seeks Flexibility	-Gen Y is prepared to "adapt to new people, places, and circumstances" (42) -Change is expected and demanded	-Options and opportunities need to be available, with continued socializing, education, and creativity
Free Agency Attitude	-Not about business, but making oneself more marketable	-Managers "need to become a talent and expert negotiator" (43). The question is not how to retain someone for 25 years, but rather how to have access to talent when needed.

Researchers provide six key strategies for managers to develop relationships with Generation Y:

- Take the time to get to know them. Listen. Note Generation Y feels more comfortable in an informal setting.
- Develop a "coaching" relationship. Look for ways to help Generation Y develop skills and improve.
- Address Generation Y as colleagues. Do not use condescending language, as if they are teenagers or interns.
- Provide flexibility with work schedules.
- Provide constructive feedback when it is due and offer ways to help. Do not wait to cover it in a performance review.
- Give praise and provide rewards, recognition, and incentives for good performance.

CATEGORY: Parents, Education, and Technology

FOCUS: “The focus of this article is on the United States labor market, though the issue of how to measure generational differences is not unique to the United States nor to the labor markets in developed economies” (258)

TITLE: Millennials and the world of work: an economist’s perspective

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Alec R. Levenson, 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Business & Psychology*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 257-264

PURPOSE: The author of this study’s applies an economist’s perspective to intergenerational research, testing to see if whether the purported “generational differences in life choices get translated into behavioral differences that in turn lead to substantially different outcomes” (257).

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research from Baby Boomers, Generation X, and most particularly, Generation Y.

METHODOLOGY: The article acknowledges the measurement problem when studying generational differences. Levenson explains “the next best step is to use cross-sectional data and panel data spanning shorter periods of time to make reasonable inferences” (258-259). Since there are multiple generational differences to consider, Levenson approaches the challenge by focusing on the demographic and labor market trends to draw conclusions (259).

FINDINGS: This article presents problems, challenges, and findings related to studying generational differences. First, Levenson discussion the main measurement problem when studying generations, explaining it is “because each generation goes through a natural life cycle evolution in their attitudes toward and decisions about work” (258). For instance, young workers devote much of their attention to learning and handling the challenges and opportunities they initially experience at work. Middle-age workers experience the challenge of balancing child-rearing and managing single or dual-income working lifestyles. Older people contemplate retirement and post-work options. The differences in life-cycle also influence how other generations perceive each other and it is often difficult to distinguish between “normal life cycle stages in attitudes and decisions about work that largely are the same in each generation, form the ones that are truly and meaningfully different” (258). Levenson explains the main struggle to identify generational differences is due to the fact that there is limited, if no, data to distinguish between generation and life-cycle and no “ability to link attitudes with actions” (258).

Levenson explains the differences in education trends, where 32% of people (Baby Boomers) in the 1970 between the ages of 25-29 had attended some college, with 16% of those earning a bachelors degree (259). Fast forwarding to 2008, 59% of people (Millennials) within the same age range have attended some college, with 31% earning a bachelors degree (259). The article also notes Millennials have had to pay the most for their education, with tuition fees increasing quicker than inflation (259). Levenson explains the implications for Millennials with higher education costs saying the “financial burden of attending college may at least partially offset the

benefits of greater credentials at the start of the Millennials' careers, leading them to make less risky choices with respect to nontraditional occupations and lines of work" (259). Even still, consider the 70%+ Millennials without a degree and the challenges they will face (if not already) in securing a job (259).

The article further explains how the demographic changes in the United States have made a difference between generations. For instance, "the long-run decline in the nuclear (two parent) family means that larger percentages of women in the Millennial generation likely will up raising children by themselves, when compared to their mothers" (260). In addition, Millennials are "much more likely to be a part of a dual-income household, a reflection of steadily rising female labor force participation rates" (260). Due to rising levels of female enrollment in college, researchers suggest this explains for the long trend seen in the delay in child-bearing (260). Another possible trend is the increasing number of Millennial graduates living at home after college (260). Researchers suggest the reasoning for the "'boomerang kid' phenomenon" is due to the high housing costs, poor job market, and increasing student loan debt (260). Studies have yet to prove how these differences affect career choices. In spite of all these findings, Levenson notes the difficulty in determining true generational differences against life stage and economic cycle (260). Levenson concludes that, "What matters—and what both commentators and researchers should focus on—is not just the short-run economic climate, but also the impact that the climate has on people of all generations, at least those still in their formidable working years" (260).

Levenson then presents the evidence from the life cycle analyses, but chooses to ignore the "obvious" questions, such as how "people are less likely to work while attending school" (261). The article cites a study that found "people tend to try out different industries and occupations when changing jobs during their early years in the labor market" (261). With time, these same individuals tend to choose a career path and stick with it (261). Another study found the self-employment entry rate for men "is relatively constant over the range of ages represented by the life cycle, but the exit rate decline with age" (261). Researchers suggest this means an increase in Millennials' pursuit of entrepreneurial endeavors later in life (261).

Millennials are undoubtedly entering a completely different job market than previous generations and Levenson notes the labor market trends to better understand this generation. Studies conducted on Millennials in 2006 and 2008 found "there has not been a strong increase in overall job instability in the United States in recent decades (though the recent recession that started in 2008 may change that story, at least temporarily)" (261). However, researchers did find a "decrease in job instability for some groups (women; men with shorter job tenure) coupled with an increase for others (men with lower levels of education; men with longer job tenure)" (262). Another factor to consider is the increasing number of companies who are outsourcing lower-level jobs. Levenson explains how this could be a potential problem for many Millennials, as these are typically the types of jobs this age groups applies for at this stage in their career (262). The article also notes the "dramatic disparity of wages for people within the same segments of the labor market" (262). This means Millennials will have to figure out for themselves "that choosing a vocation today involves a lot more randomness in one's professional success than it did for their parents' generation" (262).

COMMENTS: This article is rare and highly valuable because it takes social context into consideration when studying generational differences. While the changes noted in studies appear to suggest dramatic shifts from generation to generation, Levenson notes how many of these changes are developed over time. Levenson explains saying “The real issue is not whether things change—they do, of course—but more about whether that change is perceived as not very significant versus a defining characteristic for an entire generation” (263). He concludes the article stating the current evidence supporting significant generational differences is “insufficient” and that life cycle changes need to be taken into consideration (263).

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study tests “hypotheses regarding generational differences in the effects on organizational loyalty of workplace insecurity, restructured workplace temporalities, and technological access to the workplace” (163).

TITLE: Generational differences in the effects of insecurity, restructured workplace temporalities, and technology on organizational loyalty

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Charles J. Brody and Beth A. Rubin, February 2011

SOURCE: *Sociological Spectrum*, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 163-192

PURPOSE: This study analyses data testing for generational differences in organizational loyalty. Researchers acknowledge:

The economic transitions that have restructured workplaces and organizational life have created 24/7, technologically-mediated workplaces characterized by a charged social employment contracts and an organizational ‘commitment crisis’ that generates costly turnover and, by some accounts, uninspired work effort (164).

While the popular press claims younger generations are less loyal than their Baby Boomer and Veteran generation predecessors, researchers in this article argue the opposite. Reasoning that older cohorts have “experienced the greatest erosion of the conditions that fostered loyalty,” researchers suggest this develops “more negatives consequences for older cohorts of workers than younger” (164). Therefore, researchers main purpose for study is to determine whether or not “work arrangements that violate the normative social contract will have more negative consequences for the loyalty of older cohorts of employees than for younger cohorts” (164).

SAMPLE: Self-employed participants were not included in the sample. Wage and salaried participants were then required to work in the following occupations to be included in the sample: managerial, administrative, technical, sales, or administrative support (173). The total sample includes 1,857 participants from primarily the Baby Boomer (born between 1946-1964) and Generation X (born between 1965-1976) demographics, but also include Veteran (born before 1946) and Generation Y (born after 1976) (173).

METHODOLOGY: Researchers used data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce. Harris Interactive collected the data and “generated a list via random-digit dialing to reach eligible respondents consisting of those who worked for pay in the civilian labor force on a variety of demographic and economic traits” (173). The dependent variable in this study measures employee loyalty as it relates to the “implicit social employment contract” (174). Researchers developed the following hypotheses in relation to the following independent variables (in addition to generation) insecurity, restructured workplace temporalities and technology:



H1: “Insecurity will have more of a negative impact on the loyalty of the older cohort than that of the younger” (168).

H2: “Restructured workplace temporalities will have more of a negative impact on the loyalty of the older cohort than the younger” (171).

H3a: “‘Convenience’ technologies will have a more positive impact on the loyalty of the older cohort than for the younger” (173).

H3b: “‘Tethering’ technologies will have a more negative impact on the loyalty of the older cohort than for the younger” (173).

Researchers then analyzed the data and discuss the implications these findings have on the workplace.

#### KEY TERMS:

*The Commitment Crisis*: “...reflects employees’ lack of attitudinal and behavioral commitment to their organizations since, it is argued, they rationally withhold loyalty from organizations that no longer reciprocate loyalty to them” (164).

*Commitment*: “...reflects affective and behavioral attachment to an organization; it is a multifaceted, oft-studied concept that remains important for organizational success, even in the context of the current economy characterized by broken career ladders and short-term employment contracts” (165).

*Social Employment Contract*: “...generalized normative expectations associated with the employment relationship” (166).

**FINDINGS**: In general, researchers found “the working experiences of the cohorts appear more similar than different” (179). For instance, researchers found that while the effect of downsizing was more negative for the older cohorts (Veterans and Baby Boomers), it was not significant. Researchers conclude that downsizing reduces employee commitment to an organization in general; therefore, the data did not support the first hypothesis testing insecurity. However, researchers did find some significant differences between cohorts in the following hypotheses. The results for workplace temporalities proved significant and included the following independent variables: “having control over one’s working hours, working a regular schedule, being required to work overtime without notice and reporting never having enough time to complete one’s work” (183-184). The older cohort reported greater loyalty when they had control over working hours and worked a regular schedule (i.e. 9-to-5). The study also found a regular work schedule had “less positive influence on the loyalty of Gen X employees (184). Due to the similarities between the final two variables, which both describe a “fast-paced and high-pressure workplace,” researchers combined the final two variables. The results showed a significant difference between cohorts, suggesting these work qualities had a greater negative impact on Baby Boomers than the younger generations (184). The third hypothesis tested to find how technology affects employee loyalty. The results showed the older cohort reported greater loyalty when using a home computer to accomplish work (via email and other assignments) than younger generations. Researchers suggest this is due to the fact that the younger generations may take this use of technology for granted.

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study examines how “an ethical and socio-cultural context within a turbulent economic and multi-cultural global environment” influences “the values and beliefs of a racioethnic group of Millennials” (1).

TITLE: New games, different rules – Millennials are in town

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Janice Witt Smith and Gloria Clark, 2010

SOURCE: *Journal of Diversity Management*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 1-11

PURPOSE: Researchers acknowledge and examine the current and projected changes in the workplace in relation to globalization, ethics, and diversity. This study presents what is currently known about Millennials and focuses specifically on African college students’ ethical convictions about cheating and sharing misinformation in school and in their job search. The purpose for this study seeks to provide insight into the attitudes and intentions of college-educated Millennials from a racial minority. Researchers from this study suggest, “This insight might provide guidance in framing initiative to successfully manage issues..., such as employee engagements, organizational commitment, unplanned turnover, and performance management” (8).

SAMPLE: In addition to the reviewed reports on Millennials and workplace data, this study sampled “...245 undergraduate management, marketing, accounting, and liberal arts students from a single Master-Level 1 HBCU in the southeastern United States” (50). Participants were between the ages of 17 and 24, with most respondents reporting from the African American demographic (5).

METHODOLOGY: The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

(1) “To what extent, if any, does this sample of Millennials report their intent to enhance their qualifications through fabrication or lies? If they intend to fabricate, in what areas would they be more likely to fabricated during their job search?”

(2) “What view do the Millennial respondents have toward the workplace presence and/or immigration of other racial and ethnic groups?” (5).

Participants completed “a pen-and-paper survey” and were rewarded with extra credit (5). The survey tested to find what participants would be willing to lie about (if anything) on their resume in the following categories: “Grade point average, work experience, extracurricular activities, organizational activities, awards and hours, references, career objectives and previous salary” (6). Researchers asked participants to rate the “items for potential fabrication” on 5-point scale with 1 = very unlikely to fabricate and 5 = very likely to fabricate (6). Participants also answered open-ended questions on “U.S. immigration policy and media portrayals of minorities” (6). Researchers acknowledge the “insufficient numbers of white students to be able to compare the results to African American students and to have a strong degree of certainty that the results are

meaningful” (6). Even still, the descriptive statistics and qualitative analyses used to produce the following results are still worth noting.

**FINDINGS:** In response to the first research question, the study results showed the following:

**Table 1**

Table 1					
Race	Gender	N	GPA	Gender	GPA
African-Americans	Male	62	2.841	Female	3.005
	Female	92	3.073		
Caucasians	Male	4	3.013	Male	2.907
	Female	4	3.081		
Latinos	Male	1	N/A	N = 97 Males; 148 Females – Not all disclosed GPA	
	Female	1	N/A		
Asians	Male	4			
	Female				
Others (Lumped)	Male	2,598			
	Female	3,246			

**Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Responses**

Response → Question	1 very unlikely to fabricate	2 = (un)likely to fabricate	3 = would probably Not fabricate	4 = Likely to fabricate	5 = very likely to fabricate	Total
<b>GPA</b>	98 = 41.35%	28 = 11.81%	65 = 27.43%	28 = 11.81%	18 = 7.59%	237
<b>Work Experience</b>	88 = 35.63%	40 = 16.19%	67 = 21.13%	32 = 12.96%	20 = 8.1%	247
<b>Extracurricular Activities</b>	78 = 25.74%	45 = 14.85%	60 = 19.8%	32 = 10.56%	22 = 7.26%	303
<b>Organizational Activities</b>	82 = 34.74%	37 = 15.68%	54 = 22.88%	39 = 16.53%	24 = 10.17%	236
<b>Awards and honors</b>	95 = 40.08%	25 = 10.55%	62 = 26.16%	25 = 10.55%	30 = 12.66%	237
<b>References</b>	91 = 38.4%	43 = 18.14%	55 = 23.21	26 = 10.97%	22 = 9.28%	237
<b>Career Objectives</b>	88 = 35.63%	46 = 18.62%	61 = 24.7%	29 = 11.74%	23 = 9.31%	247
<b>Salary</b>	81 = 32.66%	45 = 18.14%	73 = 29.43%	27 = 10.89%	22 = 8.87%	248

Columns do not total 100% because of rounding. Students could choose more than one category.

These results challenged other studies that suggest Millennials are willing to lie and cheat to get ahead. In spite of corporate scandals and other reported unethical behaviors in business, these results show the majority of participants in this study would probably not fabricate.

The results for research question two also proved interesting. The first qualitative question asking which racial groups should be restricted from immigrating to the U.S. found 46.77% of respondents felt “no restrictions should apply” (7). However, 42.7% of respondents felt Latinos or Mexicans should be restricted. The second qualitative question asked which racial group(s) respondents’ think are most disadvantaged by immigration policy. The majority of respondents (75%) reported Hispanics/Mexicans were at the greatest disadvantage. The third question asked participants “which race had the highest favorable media coverage in the US” (7). The majority of respondents (65.4%) felt the media provided Caucasians with the most favorable coverage, with African Americans then receiving (30.2%), Asians (3.3%), and Hispanics (1.11%). Given the participants and their location, it is highly likely this sample is biased and could not be generalized to the entire Millennial population. However, it does provide interesting insight nonetheless.

This article also discusses how cultural context contributes to intergenerational research. With Millennials entering the most “multi-cultural, multilingual, and global environment” in the workforce to date, differences are expected to be more diverse than ever before as well.

Researchers suggest differences in values could create potential problems Millennials will be forced to deal with. While most Millennial research has focused on “Caucasian students in predominately white educational institutions,” more research needs to include other racial minorities as these groups continue to grow (4). The U.S. Census Bureau predicts Hispanics will be the majority group in the U.S. by 2042, with Caucasians, African Americans, and Asian-Americans following in the stated order (4). Researchers in this article emphasize the significance of cultural context in Millennial research as this is anticipated to influence business.

Just like cultural context is important, researchers also emphasize the significance of studying social context when conducting generational research. Researchers note the following reported unethical business events that occurred during Millennials’ formative years and question whether these events will influence their values and behaviors in the workforce:

“The popular press has cited some of the better-known misdeeds of corporate leaders, including the deliberate mis-reporting of financial data (a number of companies are having to ‘restate’ their data); the sub-prime mortgage debacle (Wall Street Journal, Business Week, USA Today, NY Times and others September 2009 to present), which has impacted a number of financial services organization (including Merrill Lynch, AIG, Wachovia, Bank of America, and others); corporate spying on executives and members of Boards of Directors (e.g. Hewlett Packard); insider trading (e.g. Martha Stewart) and other unethical practices (e.g. Enron); sexual misconduct (e.g. former presidential candidate John Edwards); accepting bribes and racketeering (indicted Detroit mayor); fraudulent credentials, and the like. The collateral damage of such individual misconduct has also been significant, particularly to the company and its shareholders... Sarbanes-Oxley and other federal legislation have been passed to legislate ethical behavior in the workplace as a result of these and other scandals” (2).

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This article pertains to generational work values.

TITLE: Exploring four generations beliefs about career: is “satisfied” the new “successful?”

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Nicky Dries, Roland Pepermans, and Evelien De Kerpel, March 2008

SOURCE: *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, pp. 907-928

PURPOSE: Researchers studied four generations (Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) to see if these groups’ views on career differ in regards to type, success, and job security (907).

SAMPLE: The sample includes 750 students and employees from a large Belgian University. Most participants were from Generation Y, but the average age for the study was 36.51 (912).

METHODOLOGY: Researchers designed the study to answer the following three research questions:

- (1) Do people from different generations have different career types?
- (2) Does the importance attached to organizational security differ between generations?
- (3) Do people from different generations evaluate career success differently? (911).

Participants received an email and followed the provided link to complete the designated survey. In order to determine different generations’ career type, researchers developed the following categories:

- Bounded: Stable career; High importance attached to organizational security.
- Staying: Multiple-employer career; High importance attached to organizational security; Expects to stay.
- Homeless: Multiple-employer career; High importance attached to organizational security; Expects to leave.
- Trapped: Stable career; Low importance attached to organizational security; Expects to stay.
- Released: Stable career; Low importance attached to organizational security; Expects to leave.
- Boundaryless: Multiple-employer career; Low importance attached to organizational security (914-915).

Once career types were determined, the survey required participants to rate the “career success of 32 fictitious people” (907). The career descriptions included a combination of the following features: functional level, salary, number of promotions, promotion speed, and satisfaction at either high or low levels (907). To evaluate generational beliefs about career success, researchers incorporated a series of vignettes. The study described “vignette (or: factorial) surveys” as an effective design for “assessing judgments on a wide array of complex issues” (915). By asking how participants assess descriptions of other fictitious characters’ careers, researchers figured they would gain insight into how participants would perceive their careers and standard of

success (915).

**FINDINGS:** The answer to the first research question about generational differences in career type (i.e. bounded, homeless, staying, etc.) received a “cautious ‘yes,’” due to how the analysis of the chi-square tests were conducted (920). Even still, the results showed a trend from Veterans with bounded careers to younger generations (Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials) with homeless and staying career types. Researchers suggest these findings indicate that while younger generations are working for more employers, there is still a desire for job security and career stability (920). These results also supported findings from a previous study that found most people (60%) have bounded career types and only 6% with boundaryless career types (920). The results for the second question also proved interesting, with a U-shaped function to describe the significance generations place on organizational security (920). Results showed the oldest (Veterans) and youngest (Generation Y) generations expressed the greatest “...desire to work for an organization that can offer long-term security and stability” (921). Researchers suggest this could be due to the fact that Boomers and Generation Xers are experiencing the current reality of the workforce, while Veterans’ beliefs have been shaped by what used to be and Generation Y’s optimistic beliefs have yet to be confronted with reality (921). The results to the third question showed no differences in how generations’ define career success. However, researchers note a trend amongst Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y in regards to the increased significance placed on satisfaction in relation to career success. Researchers suggest this would support the literature on how the ““free career agency”” began in the Baby Boomer period and continued once “all career securities disappeared” with the following generations (921). While job satisfaction is universally valued, researchers suggest the steady increase in associating job satisfaction with career success could serve as a replacement for the decline in job security. Satisfaction is a significant aspect of work, but researchers note the importance given to salary when evaluating career success (921).

**LIMITATIONS:** Researchers acknowledge the following limitations to this study: the vignettes were not as effective as using real life conditions to measure beliefs; the terminology used in the vignettes were simple and highly abstract; a broader range of career success categories would have produced more well-developed results; and the high number of Generation Y participants produced an unbalanced sample (922).

**FUTURE RESEARCH:** Researchers suggest more study is needed to “establish the extent to which evolving work values in society translate into shifts in beliefs about career and career success” (922). The study could test to determine if childhood experiences or economic climate influence career-related beliefs (922). Researchers also note how a longitudinal design study could control for life-span and life-stage, which are thought to influence career-related beliefs as well (922).

CATEGORY: Theoretical Concepts

FOCUS: This article explores theoretical concepts on intergenerational relationships.

TITLE: Exploring generational intelligence as a model for examining the process of intergenerational relationships

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Simon Biggs, Irja Haapala, and Ariela Lowenstein, 2011

SOURCE: *Ageing and Society*, Vol. 31 No. 7, pp.1107-124.

PURPOSE: Researchers acknowledge how increased life expectancy has created a wider and more diverse generational scope. Social issues, such as age discrimination in the workforce, indicate there is a growing need to understand how changes and differences are influencing intergenerational relationships. This study examines "... the processes of generational experience" and attempts to distinguish "... between the informational 'intelligence' that is culturally available to social actors and the degree to which it is possible 'to act intelligently'" (1107). This means researchers want to examine how individuals can become critically aware of age in social relations and act accordingly. Researchers suggest "generational intelligence" increases intergenerational communication effectiveness.

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: Researchers examined a variety of studies related to "... two major theoretical traditions" on intergenerational relationships (1108). One relates to conflict and suggests it is expected between generations. The other studies come from North America and indicate the family develops intergenerational solidarity. Some research even includes "... conflict within a solidarity framework" to suggest intergenerational ambivalence (1109). The underlying research question asks "...what sort of 'intelligence' might be needed to engage with the age-other in a generationally inflected context" (1110). Researchers then examined a variety of studies pertaining to this question.

#### KEY TERMS:

*Generational Intelligence*: "... the processes by which individuals or groups become capable of seeing from alternative age-perspectives" (1110).

*Age-Other*: "...identities that emerge based on generational location" as opposed to "particular ages or time periods that hold a specific generation in place" (1110).

*Generational Action*: "...acting with an awareness of one's own generational circumstances" and the "... ideal type for generational consciousness" (1112).

#### FINDINGS:

*From holistic experience to critical generational awareness:*

Researchers explain how older generations are at a disadvantage because younger generations are unable to empathize with them, inhibiting "... intergenerationally-informed understanding, negotiation, and action" (1110). Examples of social ageism are seen in "...the care gap, the role of older workers, pension policy, age-unfriendly environments, and elder abuse" (1110).

Researchers argue, "... generation is experienced in immediate action as a phenomenological whole" and is not limited to "... attitudes to the lifecourse, family and cohort" (1111). A cited researcher argues aging adults develop a greater critical self-awareness because they realize their "... generational identity is no longer at the cultural centre" (1111). By acknowledging both intergenerational conflict and solidarity, researchers suggest generational intelligence will increase as a result (1111).

*Generational consciousness, habitus and generational intelligence:*

Researchers also suggest generational action strengthens a social and historical force that drives social change, most importantly during social transition (1112). This same research also indicates the introduction of a new generation brings forth "a chance for re-appraisal" in terms of cultural and social practices. In sum, researchers suggest the next generation provides the "raw material" to instigate social change and the older generation becomes conscious of the need for social change (1113). As generations are replaced, researchers claim cultural filtering occurs; a process where the priorities of the leading generation relinquish the "outmoded cultural baggage" and develop "new social constructs for novel circumstances" (1113).

*Generational solidarity and the uses of ambivalence:*

Researchers found "emotional closeness between generations was strongly related to solidarity" (1114). This same research discovered family relations override social structures when compared against solidarity saying,

Intergenerational relations at the micro-social level within multi-generational family's have a profound but unrecognized influence on relations between age groups at the societal level. The essence of multigenerational families is interdependence between generation and its members, and this will tend to mitigate schisms between age groups over scarce governments resources (1114).

*Steps toward generational intelligence:*

Researchers recommend the following four steps to develop generational intelligence:

- "Recognizing generational distinctiveness... [which is] necessary in order to locate oneself within generational space and to identify different contributory factors that are expressed through generational identity" (1116).
- "Understanding the relationship between generational positions... [to] identify the key generational actors in any one situation and see them through generational spectacles, thus making intergenerational relations explicit" (1117).
- "Awareness of the value stance of different generational positions" which explains the need for research in this area and individual understanding to increase solidarity (1117)
- "Acting in a matter that is generationally aware" by "...keeping alternative generational perspective simultaneously in mind" and considering the age-other's perspective (1118).

COMMENTS: This study provides insight on intergenerational relationships and consequentially contributes to the currently limited research on theoretical concepts related to intergenerational communication.



CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This article reviews empirical literature to support/challenge existing claims made about Generation Y (and other cohorts), particularly in the workplace.

TITLE: A second look at generational differences in the workforce: implications for HR and talent management

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Kenneth P. DeMeuse, Kevin J. Mlodzik, and Kory/Ferry Leadership & Talent Consulting, 2010

SOURCE: *People & Strategy*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 50-58

PURPOSE: The purpose of this article is to reexamine the current scientific literature on intergenerational research and determine whether or not there is evidence to support/disprove claims in the popular press. This article also provides advice to HR and Talent Management professional in the industry regarding generational recruitment and management.

SAMPLE: N/A, collective research

METHODOLOGY: This study reports on 26 peer-reviewed scientific literature sources on intergenerational research. Researchers first examined the studies that found “differences across the four generations, and then examined those studies that found no differences across generations” (52). Based on these findings, researchers then offer advice to HR and Talent Management professionals.

FINDINGS: Researchers found many of the studies that provided support for intergenerational differences were only moderate in support. Some of the studies provided support for generational differences in career and work-related values and attitudes. However, researchers note the “... specific samples utilized and variable measured limit the generalizability of the findings to other geographic regions or work groups” (53). Therefore, researchers conclude, “These studies, in and of themselves, are not conclusive on the issue of generational differences” (53). Researchers found more studies refuting generational differences than supporting them based on the following:

- Gen X and Y reported the same top work motivators (i.e. continuous employment and opportunities for promotion), with Boomers and Matures noting similar factors as well
- Younger employees may have a stronger psychological contract than older employees “as they feel the burden of the reciprocal relationship more than older employees who ‘paid their debt’ years ago” (53)
- Boomers expressed similar desires to Gen Y when they entered the workforce (i.e. meaningful work, successful careers)
- One study found “level of commitment remains the same across generations, although younger generations may accept a higher level of risk in their early career paths” (53).
- Some older studies (i.e. 1970s, 1980s) reported work values change at different stages in career and other “found no changes in work values over time”

- Study conducted in online classrooms found “no significant generational differences in student responses..., including perceived satisfactions, perceived learning and motivation toward online learning systems” (54).
- Study only finds 3 generational differences out of 15 factors. Gen X reports “higher in ‘freedom from supervision;’ whereas, Boomers were higher on ‘chance to learn new things’ and ‘freedom from pressures to conform both on and off the job’” (54).

For the studies that did provide empirical support for generational differences, researchers provided the following chart to organize and explain the results:

<b>EXHIBIT 2: EXAMINATION OF EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR POPULAR MEDIA CLAIMS</b>				
	<b>Claims Made by Popular Media</b>	<b>Empirical Support for Claims</b>	<b>Level of Support</b>	<b>Scientific Rigor</b>
<b>Career Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen Ys and Xers change careers more frequently and pursue more education</li> <li>▪ Boomers maintain less work/life balance than younger generations, and may retire later</li> </ul>	Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel (2008)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Organizational Loyalty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen Ys show loyalty as long as they are accomplishing their goals</li> <li>▪ Xers are more committed to the right leader than to an organization</li> <li>▪ Boomers are loyal at the expense of self and family</li> </ul>	D'Amato & Herzfeldt (2008)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Davis, Pawlowski, & Houston (2006)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen Ys seek immediate gratification</li> <li>▪ Xers work for self-promotion</li> <li>▪ Boomers are workaholics and expect to be rewarded</li> <li>▪ Matures are dutiful and self-sacrificing</li> </ul>	Twenge & Campbell (2008)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Work Values and Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gen Ys value self-development</li> <li>▪ Xers value flexible work arrangements and long-term marketability</li> <li>▪ Boomers and Matures value contributing to the greater good of the organization</li> </ul>	Cennamo & Gardner (2008)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Lyons, Higgins, & Duxbury (2007)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Smola & Sutton (2002)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
		Yu & Miller (2003)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

(54)

COMMENTS: The researchers in this study examined studies that are also included in this project. Researchers' conclusions that there are more generational similarities than differences further supports the conclusions drawn from other students cited in my research.

CATEGORY: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values

FOCUS: This study focused on four generations in the workforce (Matures, Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials) in regards to work priorities, career attitudes, career experiences, and career outcomes.

TITLE: Summary report of key findings

AUTHOR(S) & DATE: Sean T. Lyons, Eddy S.W. Ng, Linda Schweitzer, 2011

SOURCE: *GenerationalCareerShift*, pp. 1-53

PURPOSE: This study was designed to test for generational differences in the workplace. These findings serve to provide employers, managers, and HR professionals with an understanding of each generation in the workplace.

SAMPLE: Researchers surveyed "... 3,007 Canadians who were either working, retired, or temporarily out of work and seeking employment" (7).

METHODOLOGY: The participants were selected through a survey panel company and the responses were organized based on generation. The first phase of the study included 111 professionals' responses about their work experience. The second phase included a sample of 3,007 professionals, which the research panel ensured was a geographically representative sample. The specific instruments used to measure the survey results were not reported in this summary.

#### KEY TERMS:

*Career Salience* (High vs. Low): "... the degree to which ones career is a central part of ones life and their personal identity. People with high career salience view their career as an important part of their life, and see it as central to their personal goals and life decisions. A person with low career salience is likely to have the attitude that a job is a job and there is more to life than working" (18).

*Locus Control*: "...relates to peoples tendency to attribute circumstances and outcomes in their lives as either internal, meaning that they are believed to be within the control of the individual, or external, meaning that they are beyond the individuals control and subject to fate or the control and subject to fate or the control of others" (19).

*Self-Efficacy*: "... an individuals belief that he or she is capable of accomplishing his or her own career goals, preserving the face of adversity" (25).

FINDINGS: In the *Work Priorities* category, researchers found evidence to support generational differences. Millennials reported more "...importance on work characteristics that lead to self-improvement, as well as social aspects of the workplace" (1). Gen X prioritized work-life balance. Boomers and Matures expressed desire to stay current in the workplace. Boomers were

focused on advancement and achievement, however, and Matures were focused on their final image (1).

In the *Career Concepts* category, researchers found evidence to support generational differences as well. Boomers and Matures identified more closely with their careers than Millennials. Boomers and Matures also reported higher levels of career resilience. Boomers and Gen Xers report lower levels of career salience than Matures. Millennials and Gen Xers report higher external locus of control than Boomers and Matures. Millennials report the lowest level of self-efficacy, with Gen Xers and Boomers reporting the highest. In terms of Career Anchors, researchers found the following:

Millennials rated autonomy and independence, as well as entrepreneurial creativity as more important than all the other generations did.

Generation Xers rated entrepreneurial creativity more important than Boomers and Matures did.

Millennials rated general management more important than all other generations and Boomers rated it as less important than did the other generations.

Gen Xers rated geographic security as more important than all other generations did and Matures rated it less important than the other generations.

Lifestyle was more important to Millennials and Gen Xers than to the two older generations and it was more important to Boomers than to Matures.

Pure challenge was more important to Millennials than it was to Boomers.

Service and dedication to a cause was more important to the Millennials than it was to Matures.

Technical/functional competence was more important to the Millennials than it was to the Boomers.

In addition, “pre-career Millennials indicated high expectations for salary growth over their careers, despite expecting to take an average of five years off of work for child-rearing and travel activities” (1).

In *Career Experiences*, Millennials reported twice as many job changes per year than the Generation Xers, Boomers, and Matures. The research showed a greater progression in the number of job changes the younger the generation. Researchers also found that even though Millennials and Gen Xers spent less time in their careers, they “...reported equal, if not greater, frequency of career events (e.g., left employer for advancement, took extended leave for travel, reduced hours or workload) than the older generations” (2).

In *Career Outcomes*, “Generation X employees expectations for training and development were met to a significantly lesser extent than all other generations” (2). Researchers also found a progressive decline in “personal pride in career achievements,” with Millennials ranking the lowest. Researchers also found Generation X and Boomers “reported the greatest level of career interference with home responsibilities, which Generation X employees also indicated greatest levels of career interference due to family and personal interest and activities” (3).

LIMITATIONS: All the differences found in this study may not be attributable to generation, but age and life stage instead. For instance, Generation X and Boomers are more likely to have children than Generation Y and therefore may prioritize balancing work and family more. This disclaimer serves as a cautionary note for those looking to draw conclusions from these findings.

**Gen Y: Significant Influences in the Formative Years – Parents, Education and Technology**

This report previously mentioned how a generation's worldview is shaped by events that occur during the formative years. Researchers apply this reasoning by examining a generation's early years to understand and explain certain behaviors and characteristics displayed by a particular cohort into adulthood. Based on the studies reviewed in this project, the findings highlighted three distinguishing influences for Gen Y – Parents, Education, and Technology. Examining the findings related to these three factors acknowledges and develops patterns, which provide insight for researchers, HR professionals, and other vested groups interested in this particular cohort.

**Parents and Education**

The study results reviewed in this report indicate a connection between Gen Y's parental involvement and education. Even with demographic changes, such as the increase in single parent homes and women in the workforce (Levenson, 2010), research suggests Gen Y received the most active parental involvement to date (Wesner & Miller, 2008). If higher parental involvement indicates greater expectations for the child, this would explain the research suggesting Gen Y experiences the most pressure from parents to be achievement-oriented (Wesner & Miller 2008). The competition created by standardized test scores and exclusive acceptance rates to top universities only increases Gen Y's pressure to excel. The added attention given to Gen Y at home appears to translate into the classroom, as Hartman and McCambridge (2011) found Gen Y prefers a "student centered" learning environment to a "teacher centered" one.

Since Gen Y's parents typically come from the Baby Boom generation, researchers often compare these two cohorts to examine potential relational effects. Wesner and Miller (2008)

report how both Boomers and Gen Y received strong parental support in education. Levenson (2010) reports how 16% of Boomers obtained an undergraduate degree, whereas 31% of Gen Yers have already accomplished the same. While there is an increasing number of college graduates, Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg (2010) found no significant differences in knowledge across generations. This suggests that while Gen Y has earned more higher degrees and credentials than other generations, it does not mean this cohort is necessarily better prepared to take on the challenges posed in the workforce. Rising college tuition fees and a more competitive job market increase the pressure for Gen Y's development. The new and increasing trend of Gen Yers returning home after college has earned particular attention, Levenson (2010) study labeling this group as "boomerang children." Some of the potential reasons for this trend could include the following: tough job market, increasing student debt, change in priorities (i.e. travel, volunteer, etc.), or other factors. The active parental involvement mentioned during Gen Y's adolescent years is also noted to continue into adulthood. Meyers and Sadaghiani (2010) found more parents are including themselves in their child's initial job search, networking and/or contacting recruiters at the prospective company.

### Technology

Another notable factor that differentiates Gen Y from their predecessors is technology. While Wesner and Miller (2010) note how Boomers experienced significant technological advances during their formative years (i.e. invention of the television and computer), researchers conclude Gen Y experienced the most rapid advancement in technology with the introduction of video games, cell phones, and the internet. Since Gen Y had access to this technology at the earliest stage of life, Yeaton (2008) labels this cohort as Digital Natives. Hershatter and Epstein

(2010) support this point, indicating Gen Y demonstrates a higher aptitude for using technology.

Note: this topic will be expanded upon in other sections.

### Relevant Conclusions

A valuable aspect of the studies featured in this section includes the consideration of social context when presenting research about generational differences. Since the changes noted in some intergenerational literature suggest drastic shifts without explaining why, researchers who compare findings with social context enhance the credibility of their report. Levenson (2010) indicates how most of these generational changes are developed over time. He explains the need to distinguish between trends and noteworthy differences stating, “The real issue is not whether things change—they do, of course—but more about whether that change is perceived as not very significant versus a defining characteristic for an entire generation” (Levenson, 2010, 263). Therefore, the findings reported in this section will serve as the foundation for explaining Gen Y’s distinguishing characteristics and skills, as well as how this translates to the workforce. Since this project is focused on understanding Gen Y from a HR perspective, the following results will also include a section discussing the implications these findings pose in the workplace.

### **Gen Y: Distinguishing Characteristics and Skills**

The popular press is notorious for casting each generation as drastically different, often emphasizing distinct characteristics and skills (or lack thereof). By including multiple generations in a study sample, researchers test to determine if any variances between generations do, in fact, exist. The studies reviewed in this project highlight the following categories on Gen Y’s distinguishing characteristics and skills: self-image, independence, locus of control, achievement-orientation, teamwork, and technological abilities. This section will also discuss



other potential distinguishing characteristics and skills, as well as the implications these factors have on the workplace.

### Self-Image

The research reviewed on Gen Y's self-image indicates high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, and narcissism. Data from Deal et al. (2010), Hershatter and Epstein (2010), Glass (2007), Meyers and Sadaghiani (2010), Twenge and Campbell (2008), and Wesner and Miller (2008) all support at least one of the previously mentioned characteristics on Gen Y's self-image. In addition, Gen Y was found to posit significantly higher self-efficacy and self-assurance (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010) and express less of a need for social approval (Twenge & Campbell 2008). One study also showed Gen Y exhibits the highest level of self-confidence upon entering the workforce (Wesner, 2008). Twenge and Campbell (2008) also found Gen Y women are more agentic and assertive than the past. This could be indicative of the increasing support women are receiving in academics and athletics, as more females are participating in sports, pursuing higher education, and working.

### Independence

The data on Generation Y and independence showed mixed results. Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer (2011) report Gen Y rated autonomy and independence as more important than other generations. Martin (2005) supported this finding, reporting Gen Y is more independent and self-reliant. This same study also found Gen Y desires more freedom and flexibility to accomplish tasks on their own. However, Gen Y is also reported as being the most dependent upon their parents (Glass, 2007). Since Gen Y is known to have received the most parental support to date, it would make sense that this generation is still dependent in terms of financial support, career

advice, and other factors. More comparative intergenerational research on independence would need to be conducted before drawing any significant conclusions on Gen Y.

#### Locus of Control

Lyons et al. (2010) and Twenge (2008) both reported Gen Y posits a higher external locus of control than Boomers and Matures. This means Gen Y feels less control over their circumstances than Gen X and Boomers. Twenge (2008) explains how this relates to the workplace reporting Gen Y is less likely to take responsibility for successes or failures.

#### Achievement-Orientation

The data reviewed also suggests Gen Y is more goal- and achievement-oriented, with a greater focus on the outcome than the process. Glass (2007), Wesner and Miller (2008), and Yeaton (2008) each presented results to support this finding. Another study supported this finding, indicating Gen Y is more ambitious than other generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Eisner (2005) also found Gen Y prefers special projects to menial assignments, and has more respect for accomplishments and skills than the organizational hierarchy. This indicates Gen Y demonstrates and values achievement. Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley (2010) also report Gen Y expresses the greatest satisfaction with recognition and career development. However, this could be due to the fact that Gen Y is in the early stages of their career and aware of the possibilities for promotion, but have not yet experienced the challenges for earning this achievement. In addition, Lyons et al. found Boomers also prioritize advancement and achievement in the workplace, suggesting a similarity.

#### Teamwork

Research indicates Gen Y prefers and values teamwork, often attributing academics and athletics to this skill. Eisner (2005) and Yeaton (2008) found Gen Y prefers collaborative and

inclusive work styles. Martin (2005) expands on this finding reporting Gen Y works well alone, but better in groups. Gen Y is also described as being social learners, who prefer a team environment (Hartman 2011). Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) explain these findings, with research indicating Gen Y desires group work for social purposes and diffused responsibility. In addition, Bradley (2010) found the majority of Gen Y prefers a “collaboratively led enterprise,” reporting colleagues should be able to perform each other’s jobs, partake in decision-making, and reach a consensus before taking action (22).

### Technological Ability

The previous section mentioned the rapid technological advancements experienced by Gen Y during the formative years. This category expands on how this factor influenced this cohort’s technological abilities, with seven studies supporting this cohort as the most tech-savvy generation to date. Researchers found the following: Gen Y is best acquainted with technological devices (Deal et al., 2010); Gen Y demonstrates strong technical skills (Eisner, 2005); Gen Y demonstrates a higher aptitude for using technology (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010); technical/functional competence is more important to Gen Y than Boomers (Lyons et al., 2011); Gen Y is tech-savvy (Martin, 2005); and Gen Y has an affinity for using Computer Information Technology (CIT) and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (Meyers and Sadaghiani, 2010). Bradley 2010 also found Gen Y prefers to use technology, customize items, and values quality. According to Martin (2005), Gen Y is also interested in using and creating technology and expects companies to possess the latest technology. Meyers and Sadaghiani (2010) support the previous study in finding Gen Y devotes more time to social media and creating web content than other generations. The following findings and predictions on technology also present additional information: Boomers view telecommuting from home as atypical; Gen Y thinks

Boomers avoid technology; Gen Y prefers technological messaging (i.e. texting and email) to face-to-face interaction; and Gen Y's over-reliance on technology is anticipated to inhibit relationship building (Glass, 2007). Hershatter (2010) support this finding, with research indicating Gen Y is "less adept at face-to-face communication and deciphering non-verbal cues" (212). These findings suggest Gen Y's technological adeptness could present disadvantages for communication as well.

#### Other Potential Distinguishing Characteristics

While the following findings received less support than the categories previously discussed, this report will still acknowledge potential distinguishing characteristics and skills for Gen Y. According to some studies, Gen Y is skilled at multi-tasking, demonstrates entrepreneurial creativity, and prefers instant gratification.

- Multi-tasking: Due to the increase in technology, Hershatter (2010) claims this usage has improved Gen Y's ability to multi-task, respond to visual stimulation, and filter information (212). Yeaton (2008) also reports how Gen Y is considered to be skilled at multi-tasking.
- Entrepreneurial Creativity: Lyons et al. (2010) found Gen Y ranks entrepreneurial creativity as more important than other generations. Martin (2005) reports Gen Y is more entrepreneurial and posits a creative mindset. Both Martin (2005) and Levenson (2010) report predictions that entrepreneurial endeavors will increase with Gen Y.
- Instant Gratification: While studies mentioned instant gratification, only two presented data on the topic. Eisner (2005) found Gen Y prefers instant gratification and Meriac (2010) found Boomers rank highest in delay of gratification.

#### Relevant Conclusions

Based on the research presented in this section, Gen Y posits some defining characteristics and skills. The categories on Self-Image, Achievement-Orientation, Teamwork, and Technological Ability received the most empirical support, indicating these factors differentiate Gen Y from their cohorts.

### Implications

From a business standpoint, HR professionals are particularly interested in characteristics and skills for purposes related to recruitment, performance, talent management, and engagement. As Gen Y continues to enter the workforce, HR professionals recognize the need to develop strategies on how to effectively attract, satisfy, and retain their newest, and youngest hires. The following bullets discuss the potential implications posed by the major findings in this section:

- **Self-Image:** If Gen Y demonstrates higher levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, assertiveness, and narcissism, then this presents both opportunities and challenges in the workplace. For instance, Gen Y employees with a healthy level of self-esteem, confidence, and assertiveness would seem more likely to take on challenges, vocalize their ideas, and assume leadership positions. However, Gen Y employees who are over-confident, unnecessarily assertive, and/or narcissistic would seem more likely to cause tension in the workplace and unhealthy conflict.
- **Achievement-Orientation:** Fostering an achievement-oriented mindset could be advantageous for a company seeking to meet goals and accomplish tasks. However, if Gen Y employees are more focused on the results, than the process, this could create problems, such as a lack of attention to critical detail(s). Also, if Gen Y expects to constantly achieve and receive recognition, this could create tension with other generations who performed these same tasks without receiving a “gold star” in the past.

- **Teamwork:** Organizations view the ability to work well in groups as a valuable and essential skill. Since the majority of organizations require the work of multiple individuals, the ability to cooperate, collaborate, and produce is critical. Therefore, findings indicating Gen Y prefers and values teamwork is often perceived as an advantage. However, Meyers and Sadaghiani's finding that Gen Y desires group work for social purposes and diffused responsibility is unsettling, since job responsibilities require focus and ownership (2010). In addition, findings suggesting Gen Y does not respect hierarchal decision-making could be a source of problems as well, especially for older generations who view this as the only approach.
- **Technological Ability:** Findings indicating Gen Y is particularly adept at using technology seems advantageous for organizations, as advancements in this industry continue to redefine and direct business operations. Organizations can utilize this skill to increase efficiency and update practices to stay current with the world's expectations and demands. However, increased technology usage can also create problems for organizations as well. Technology presents some of the following problems: creates distractions from work, costs substantial amounts of money to implement (i.e. purchase price, installation, training, maintenance, etc.), serves as outlets for negative press (i.e. upset comments posted on Facebook), causes tension with different expectations for what devices should be used, etc.

### **Gen Y: Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values**

Part of this research project is designed to determine if Gen Y employees are different from their predecessors, and how this cohort is anticipated to affect the workplace. By developing an understanding of Gen Y's workplace preferences, expectations, and values, HR

professionals (and other influential organizational figures) can prepare and even design their business strategy to most effectively engage this group. Based on the studies reviewed, the following topics prompted the most discussion in intergenerational research: work-life balance, work centrality, work values, work attitudes, organizational loyalty, and ethics.

### Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a prevalent subject in intergenerational research, with ten of the twenty-six studies reviewed testing this workplace preference. The following studies reported these findings for Gen Y: seeks flexibility (Martin, 2005), values work and family balance (Yeaton, 2008), and more likely to communicate a desire for work-life balance (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010). While the data consistently indicates Gen Y values and prefers work-life balance, studies also report Gen X and Boomers desire this same arrangement to some extent as well. For instance, DeMeuse, Mlodzik, and Kory/Ferry Leadership & Talent Consulting (2010) found moderate support for Gen X valuing flexible work arrangements. Reports indicating Gen X feels pressure to maintain work-life balance (Glass, 2007) and prioritizes this arrangement (Lyons et al., 2010) further supports this as well. The findings on Boomers were mixed, with some studies reporting a desire for work-life balance and others suggesting it is less of a priority. For instance, Hershatter and Epstein (2011) found Gen Y and Boomers share desires for work-life balance and Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2009) reported Boomers and Gen Y desire flexible work arrangements over monetary rewards. However, the findings reported in DeMeuse and Mlodzik (2010) challenge these studies, citing research indicating Boomers are workaholics and maintain less work-life balance than younger generations. Even still, the research cited in Lyons et al. (2011) found moderate support for Gen X and Boomers reporting the greatest level of career interference with home responsibilities, with Gen X claiming the most. This could be

due to life-stage, as opposed to generation, as the individuals in this age group are more likely to have children at home and/or serve as a caretaker for an elderly relative. Other findings indicate Gen Y and X value lifestyle more than Boomers and Matures (Lyons et al., 2011), and Boomers report greater loyalty when they have control over their hours, working a regular 9-5 schedule (Brody & Rubin, 2011). Regardless of the inconsistent results in workplace preferences, Deal et al. (2010) found there were no significant differences in numbers of hours worked across generations. This suggests that work-life balance is not an indicator of decreased work hours, but serves as a flexible alternative to work scheduling.

#### Work Centrality

The findings for work-centrality are limited, but appear to show a linear trend across generations. Twenge (2010) found Boomers value work centrality the most, followed by Gen X and Gen Y. Meriac, Woehr, and Banister (2010) support this finding, indicating Boomers rank highest in work centrality. The research cited in Lyons et al. (2011) also found Boomers identify more closely with their careers than Gen Y. Lyons et al. (2011) also supports the findings indicating a declining linear trend in work centrality, reporting Boomers and Gen X report lower levels of career salience than Matures [generation before Boomers]. Deal et al. (2010) found modest differences in work centrality for Gen Y. This suggests that work centrality is a declining trend and not necessarily a distinct aspect of this cohort.

#### Work Values

Twenge (2010) and Twenge et al. (2010) were the only studies found to test intergenerational work values, in addition to the finding reported in Deal et al. (2010). In terms of extrinsic rewards (i.e. money, status), Twenge (2010) found Gen X valued this most, followed by Gen Y and then Boomers. No differences were found in regards to altruistic values (i.e.



helping, volunteering) and intrinsic values (i.e. meaning, using talents). This study also found Gen Y values leisure most, followed by Gen X and Boomers (Twenge, 2010). Seven months later, Twenge et al. (2010) supported the previous findings and reported the following: Boomers show least interest in extrinsic rewards and Gen X the most; Gen Y values intrinsic rewards the least; No significant differences were found in altruistic work behavior; Gen Y places less emphasis on working a job that directly helps others compared to Boomers; Gen Y places less emphasis on social interaction than Gen X and Boomers. Deal et al. supports the findings on altruistic work values, reporting no real differences as well. Based on these findings, extrinsic rewards appear to be the only significant difference found across generations.

#### Work Attitudes

Just like work centrality and work values, there were limited findings on work attitudes. The studies that did test work attitudes found no significant differences. Deal et al. (2010) reported that while there might be differences in work attitudes, none were significant enough to alter the work environment. Kowske et al. (2010) also found results indicating generational work attitudes are more similar than different, noting no real differences in satisfaction with work, pay and turnover intentions. Other findings related to this category include the following: Gen Y expresses positive attitudes toward work-related practices and procedures (Eisner, 2005); Gen Y expresses dislike for menial work (Eisner, 2005); Boomers believe Gen Y does not work as hard as they do (Glass, 2007); and Boomers ranked highest in work ethic and Gen X the lowest (Meriac et al., 2010). However, more studies would need to be conducted to support or refute these findings.

#### Organizational Loyalty

Organizational loyalty is a topic of interest in regards to turnover prevention, as well as retention and employee development strategy. Studies suggesting Gen Y is less loyal than other cohorts also report additional factors could be responsible. Considering the current economic crisis, Brody and Rubin (2011) found downsizing reduces employees' commitment to an organization in general; thereby refuting this aspect is indicative of Gen Y. Even still, research indicates younger generations are changing careers more than in the past. The studies reviewed by Lyons et al. (2011) found Gen Y reports twice as many job changes per year than Gen X, Boomers, and Matures. Eisner (2005) reports Gen Y expresses a greater willingness to leave a company if a better opportunity came along. In addition, DeMeuse et al. found moderate support for Gen Y and Gen X changing careers more frequently to pursue higher education. However, this could be due to other factors, such as a more competitive job market and less opportunities. Martin (2005) supports the previous cited research in reporting the following: Gen Y considers a year at a company long-term, Gen Y has adopted a free agency attitude, and Gen Y prioritizes making oneself more marketable over the business. However, when researchers analyzed organizational loyalty across generations, the findings in Wesner and Miller (2008) revealed the following: Boomers were reported more likely to change jobs than older generation upon entry to the workforce; Gen Y is now reported more likely to change jobs; Gen Y is now reported more likely to posit allegiance to themselves over older generations upon entry into the workforce. These findings are challenged by Ng et al. (2010), which reports 50% of Gen Yers express the desire to stay with one organization for their entire career. In addition, Twenge (2010) found mixed results on intergenerational tests regarding intent to leave. Levenson (2010) also notes how life-stage affects loyalty, with research indicating people tend to try out different industries and occupations earlier in their career than later on. Based on these findings, it seems

organizational loyalty might not be attributable to generation alone, but circumstances and attitudes towards organizational loyalty that have changed over time.

### Ethics

The intergenerational research on ethics is limited, with more studies reporting on corporate scandals occurring within the past decade than actual data. While Sarbanes-Oxley and other federal legislation have been passed to sanction ethical behavior, research conducted by Smith, Witt, and Clark (2010) acknowledges the immoral behaviors that have happened in the workplace. The corporate misdeeds noted include the following: deliberate mis-reporting of financial data, sub-prime mortgage debacle, spying on executive and members of Boards of directors, insider trading and unethical practices, sexual misconduct, accepting bribes and racketeering (Smith et al. 2010). Meriac et al. (2010) tested ethics and found Boomers ranked the highest. Researchers also found Gen Y ranked higher than Gen X in regards to ethics, hard work, and delay of gratification. Twenge and Campbell (2008) reported a change in employee needs/values, implying Gen Y's self-focus could potentially create ethics problems. However, Yeaton (2008) found Gen Y maintains a strong sense of morality and Smith et al. (2010) reports Gen Y is unlikely to fabricate, lie or cheat based on the study's experiment.

### Relevant Conclusions

Intergenerational findings on workplace preferences, values, and expectations indicate more similarities than differences overall. While certain topics reported evidence to support differences, researchers attributed these changes to trends and social contextual factors. In review, it appears work-life balance is valued by each generation to some extent. The research on work centrality suggests this is more significant to Boomers, with researchers noting a decline in importance to the following generations. Based on three studies (note: two of which were

conducted by the same researcher), no differences were found in regards to altruistic work values. Gen X was reported to value extrinsic rewards most and Gen Y was reported to value intrinsic rewards the least. The findings on work attitudes were limited, but found no real differences across generations. While Gen Y is reported to change jobs more than Boomers, researchers note this could be attributed to other factors, such as downsizing and the early career stage. While the research reviewed on ethics produced no conclusive results, the findings presented indicate no real generational differences. Therefore, research currently indicates social context, life stage, and other factors appear to have greater effects on workplace preferences, expectations, and values than generation alone.

### Implications

HR professionals should take these findings into consideration before adapting their organization's business strategy, policies, and procedures to accommodate Gen Y. Since research suggests more similarities than difference exist in regards to the topics discussed, HR professionals should focus their efforts on the needs and demands each of these groups express as a whole. Since work-life balance and organizational loyalty were the most discussed topics across studies, this earns the most attention in this analysis. Based on the findings, HR professionals should consider options for work-schedule flexibility, as research indicates this is valued by each generation to some extent. Organizational loyalty seems more complex than generational differences alone. Instead of assuming Gen Y is disloyal, HR professionals should consider whether general increases in turnover are attributable to other factors, and if any measures can be taken to promote organizational loyalty. In sum, these research findings indicating generational differences in regards to workplace preferences, values, and expectations should be examined with consideration to social context.

### **Gen Y: Organizational Communication and Management Strategy**

Hartman and McCambridge (2011) report findings that indicate effective communication is linked to organizational success. This suggests communication is an integral part of the work environment, and some of the studies reviewed in this project suggest Gen Y has different expectations and preferences in this regard. Research also indicates managers and company leaders express concern as how to effectively integrate this group into their organization without experiencing any unnecessary tension. Some of the studies reviewed in this project provide data and advice in regards to Communication and Technology in the Workplace, Organizational Communication and Workplace Relationships, and Management Issues and Strategies.

#### **Communication and Technology in the Workplace**

Rapid advancements in technology, and findings indicating Gen Y is particularly adept at using these devices, poses new challenges and opportunities in the workplace. The research cited in this section mostly pertains to generational communication and technology preferences, as well as how these preferences affect management. Wesner and Miller (2008) note how more companies are using informal modes of technology (i.e. Facebook, text messaging) to communicate with Gen Y, particularly in recruitment. This strategy is supported by Hartmann and McCambridge (2011), which reports the following: Gen Y's exposure to and use of technology has changed the way this group communicates; Gen Y's informal use of technology has influenced this cohort's communication style; and technology serves as the most popular means for communicating amongst Gen Y. In addition, Hershatter and Epstein (2011) found Gen Y prefers to communicate online and create net content.

Differences between Gen Y's technology preferences and that of older generations is also anticipated to create potential challenges as well. Eisner (2005) reports Gen Y is dissatisfied with

their managers' technological and leadership skills. Gen Y's experience with technology is also suggested to have changed their attitudes towards research, with Hershatter and Epstein (2011) reporting Gen Y expects constant access to information and shows less concern for source validity. Another potential issue posed by Hershatter and Epstein (2011) is the finding suggesting Gen Y is "less adept in terms of face-to-face interaction and deciphering non-verbal cues" (212). Research also indicates generational differences in communication style preferences and skills could pose new challenges and problems, particularly in the workplace. Glass (2007) found Boomers highly value face-to-face interaction and addressing problems with technology could create tension. A study testing executives' perceptions of Gen Y found these leaders express concern about employees using technology to address issues, as well as how to manage intellectual property and technology usage in the workplace (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason 2010). After examining the recruitment and management practices being used on Gen Y, Yeaton (2008) recommends supervisors explicitly explain the policies and expectations for using technology in the workplace.

#### Organizational Communication Workplace Relationships

Research suggests Gen Y employees have certain expectations for relationships with their supervisors and managers. Unlike Boomers, who are reported to require minimal feedback for their work performance, Glass (2007) found Gen Y expects detailed instruction and praise. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) supported this in finding Gen Y seeks more feedback from supervisors. This study also found Gen Y desires personal relationships with their supervisors (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Meyers and Sadaghiani's (2010) study testing Gen Y's communication perspective on work relationships both supports and adds to the previous findings reporting the following results: Gen Y expects close relationships with supervisors and

constant feedback; Gen Y expects open communication with supervisors and managers; Open communication from supervisors is reported to increase subordinate job satisfaction; and Gen Y expects more frequent, positive, and affirming interaction with supervisors than other generations. According to Eisner (2005), Gen Y ranked their managers highest on their accessible, competent, ethical, respected, and fair qualities, and also expects this regardless of how the organization is structured (i.e. tall or flat). In addition, Hewlett, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2009) found Gen Y prefers to go to Boomers for advice and guidance over Gen X in the workplace, and Boomers were reported to like mentoring Gen Y. Martin (2005) also found Gen Y expects an explanation for decision making, with researchers jokingly classifying this group as Generation “Why?.”

Expectations are not always met, however, and researchers anticipate this will cause issues in the workplace. Eisner (2005) reported Gen Y lacks the following soft skills: listening, communication, independent thinking, being a team player, and managing time. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) also found Gen Y lacks skills in analyzing, synthesizing, and representing information. A study also found Gen Y demonstrates poor conflict management skills with difficult people and struggles with patience (Eisner, 2005). McCann and Giles (2007) tested to see if and how age-differentiated communication affects organizations. Researchers found Gen Y reports more non-accommodation from older generation workers (Boomers) and more respectfully avoidant communication with this same group. The Barzilai-Nahon and Mason (2010) study also explains executives’ current perspectives and approaches to leadership and management. Based on the previous findings, the results from this study could contribute to more unmet expectations, reporting the following: Over half of the executives tested use coercive/authoritative, cooptation (manipulation), and responsive management strategies; Less

than half of the executives tested use negotiative, participatory, and transformative management strategies. Even though research now suggests top-down management styles are less effective than the alternatives, it appears this style is still dominant.

### Management Issues and Strategies

Generational differences are anticipated to pose issues in the workforce and questions as to how to approach these challenges are addressed in studies typically focused in management. Martin (2005) provides the following management advice for Gen Y based on the current findings: customize training programs to prepare employee for each task, master coaching skills, devise an incentive program that rewards for high performance, challenge policies that prevent achievers from advancement, provide an explanation for decisions, explore options before accepting one solution, do not micromanage, provide opportunities for educational and creative development, explain the opportunities and advantages of each role, and train this cohort in how to manage time, break-up long-term projects, handle interruptions, and meet deadlines. Yeaton (2008) supports some of the previously mentioned advice, recommending managers explain to Gen Y the significance of their role, clarify the importance of tasks and responsibilities, define expectations, and train employees in their abilities to accept and synthesize constructive comments. These reports indicate there are some generational differences in terms of expectations for communication, relationship building, and training.

The findings on Gen Y employees and executives' current attitudes towards each other indicate there could be added tension if these issues are not addressed. According to Barzilai-Nahon and Mason (2010), executives expressed concerns about Gen Y supposed work ethic, multi-tasking, lack of focus, and turnover rate. This same study advises executives address these concerns with the following strategies: introduce management rules, test performance, provide



guidelines for working, utilize HR in screening and training, refer to organizational processes, manage risk, and develop specific organizational policies, and cautions against implementing a one-size fits all approach for dealing with intergenerational tension (Barzilai-Nahon & Mason, 2010). Eisner (2005) tested Gen Y's perceptions of management and found this group expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities to achieve high performance, incentives, and managers' abilities to think critically and creatively. Lyons et al. (2011) also found Gen Y rates general management as more important than other generations.

### Relevant Conclusions

The studies discussed on communication in regards to technology, organization, and management indicates there are some distinct aspects about Gen Y. Research shows Gen Y prefers and expects to use technology, as well as communicate with it in the workplace. In regards to organizational communication and workplace relationships, findings suggest Gen Y desires a closer bond with their manager/supervisor, prefers detailed instruction and affirmative feedback, and expects managers/supervisors to be accessible and open to sharing company information than other generations. Researchers also advise managers/supervisors approach Gen Y employees with a coaching mentality, training this cohort in how to perform by explaining the rules and providing the resources to help them excel in their current position. Other additional findings will be discussed in the following section.

### Implications

Due to the limited research variety, the implications discussed in this section need more support. However, HR professionals and other business leaders/managers can reference this discussion to develop their knowledge on organizational communication and management strategy for Gen Y.

- **Communication and Technology in the Workplace:** Aside from the cost factor, the primary concern about technology and Gen Y in workplace appears to be the uncontrolled usage of these devices and the distraction it is anticipated to create at work. Researchers advise companies develop policies to address these concerns, so expectations for using technology in the workplace is made clear. Another potential issue is Gen Y's reported preference for using technology to communicate, whereas Boomers prefer face-to-face interaction. This could create unnecessary tension. Also, some research indicates Gen Y's reliance on technology has influenced a lack of interpersonal communication skills. While more research would need to be done to explain this, companies may need to consider training programs to develop Gen Y's skills in this area.
- **Organizational Communication and Workplace Relationships:** Research indicates Gen Y wants to develop relationships with their supervisors/managers, expects open communication, and prefers constant, positive feedback. Based on these findings, Gen Y can appear as needy and/or demanding in comparison to their older cohorts. This difference could create tension, but increasing awareness about these issues could help managers/supervisors and HR professionals prepare for this. Some suggestions include mentorship and leader in development programs, which provide opportunities for older generations to foster relationships with Gen Y, train, and share more about the company.
- **Management Issues and Strategies:** It is important to remember each organization is unique and strategies should only be developed based on need, and not generalizations. Stereotypes appear to be a source of tension, with research indicating leaders express concerns about Gen Y before this cohort has fully integrated into the workplace. Companies should not rush to change their policies and procedures unless they recognize

a need to do so. However, the research provided in the previous sections should be taken into consideration and used to make informed decisions about how to effectively manage Gen Y.

### **Gen Y: Social and Environmental Values**

Recent public awareness campaigns on green initiatives and volunteer opportunities give impressions of changes in social and environmental values. Researchers suspect this increased awareness and commitment to making a difference has primarily influenced Gen Y's values, since these issues emerged during this cohort's formative years. Intergenerational studies testing to determine if there are generational differences in Gen Y's social and environmental values often found Boomers shared similar views as well. Four studies reported Boomers and Gen Y share desires to give back to the environment, indicating this may not be a generationally exclusive value (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Hewlett, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2009; Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Wesner & Miller; 2008). Hewlett et al. (2009) expands on these findings, reporting Boomers and Gen Y seek the following social and environmental values: Boomers and Gen Y are attracted to opportunities to explore hobbies, passions, and good works; Boomers and Gen Y share a commitment to environmental and social responsibility, whereas Gen X showed less interest; Boomers and Gen Y desire giving back to society over monetary rewards. Lyons et al. (2011) found Gen Y perceives service and dedication as more important than Matures. Not all research agrees with these findings, however, as some studies indicate Gen Y does not care about the environment as much as they are portrayed to. Ng et al. (2010) found Gen Y ranked comparatively low in regards to their commitment to social responsibility and desire to have a strong social impact. Bradley (2010) also found only 20% of Gen Y reported to express concern

for the environmental impact of the products they used. Findings like these make it difficult to draw any definite conclusions in regards to Gen Y and their social and environmental values.

Findings Summary:  
Gen Y in comparison to Gen X and Boomers

**Formative Years: Parents, Education, and Technology**

- Increasing parental involvement
- More college degrees and certifications earned
- Rapid advances in technology

**Distinguishing Characteristics and Skills**

- Inflation in self-image
- Higher external locus of control
- Greater fixation on achievement
- Stronger preference for teamwork
- Greater propensity for using technology

**Workplace Preferences, Expectations, and Values**

- Increase in vocal desire for work-life balance
- Decline in levels of work centrality
- No significant differences in altruistic work values
- Decline in values for intrinsic rewards
- No significant differences in work attitudes
- Increase in number of jobs worked throughout one's career associated with decrease in organizational loyalty, not necessarily indicative of generation [i.e. social context]

**Organizational Communication and Management Strategy**

- Gen Y prefers to use technology to communicate
- Gen Y desires close relationships with their supervisors/managers
- Gen Y desires frequent, positive feedback on performance from supervisors/managers
- Gen Y expects open communication in an organization
- Gen Y seeks recognition and opportunities to achieve/advance

**Social and Environmental Values**

- Boomers and Gen Y share greater commitment to social and environmental values than Gen X

### Conclusion and Future Research

The findings in this review indicate Gen Y demonstrates both similarities and differences in regards to characteristics, expectations, and values. Overall, Gen Y's distinguishing features reveal trends over time in cross-generational studies [i.e. Boomers(n) < Gen X(n) < Gen Y(n) or Boomers(p) > Gen X(p) > Gen Y(p)]. This suggests the differences found reflect gradual change(s) as opposed to radical transformation(s) at the onset of a new generational period. Other studies support this conclusion when results indicate generational differences, but report none that are statistically significant. In spite of the supported differences, most studies deduced each generation desires the same thing, but expresses those desires differently. For instance, Lyons et al. (2011) reported each generation ranked the following work priorities as highly important: interesting work, having the necessary information to do one's job, job security, salary, benefits, achievement, and supportive supervisors (49). However, it is difficult to gauge how each generation defines these priorities and their level of expectation (Lyons et al., 2011). The most effective and reliable way to determine the extent of these differences will be based on how these generations interact in the workplace.

As Gen Y fully integrates into the workplace, it will be interesting to see how the research relates. While the examined studies provide insight on Gen Y in comparison to their older cohorts, more research needs to be conducted to verify or challenge the findings discussed in this project. The **Organizational Communication and Management Strategy** section particularly needs more empirical support, as many of generational aspects only discussed perceptions and potentially unsubstantiated concerns. Future studies should further examine intra- and intergenerational communication styles and satisfaction as it relates to the workplace. This will provide HR professionals and management with a better understanding as to whether or

not a certain approach is needed, and how to most effectively implement it [i.e. skill-development training]. In general, researchers should also examine if, and what, generational differences/similarities exist across cultures, regions, and ethnic/racial demographics. As the United States' racial/ethnic demographic shifts, and globalization becomes a standard business practice, it is critical organizational leaders and managers increase their awareness to adapt to the ever-changing present. Technology is another factor organizations need to consider as Gen Y enters the workforce. Researchers should continue to test for the implications posed by technology and examine how this impacts work performance. While intergenerational study can cover a variety of areas, it is crucial researchers attempt to explain the reasons for similarities and differences in each instance. This will not only provide a better understanding, but strengthen the support for these findings as well.

Prior to conducting this research project, I had preconceived notions about each generation. Throughout my research, I found the results often challenged my perceptions and caused me to reconsider my viewpoint. I remember experiencing disappointment when studies showed no significant differences between cohorts, thinking my contribution to intergenerational research would now be viewed as insignificant. However, I have come to realize the contrary. This research project proved generations are complex, and only a part of an individual. While popular press sources and personal experiences often work to simplify change by attributing it to factors like generational differences, research examining issues like social context reveal things are not as clear cut. Ultimately, people should focus on getting to know an individual before drawing conclusions based on generation alone. The differences found between and across generations should not necessarily be viewed as negative, but rather an opportunity to learn and develop new possibilities both in the workplace and society in general.

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