# GENERATIONAL CAREER SHIFTS

## How Matures, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials View Work

Eddy S. Ng, Sean T. Lyons, and Linda Schweitzer

# EMERALD POINTS

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## How Matures, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials View Work

BY

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# FOREWORD

I first became interested in the phenomenon of generations back in the mid-2000s when the popular media and management press was overflowing with stories of how the younger generation – at that time my own age cohort, Gen X – was changing the world of work, and consultants and practitioners were urging employers to develop policies to recruit and retain the new generational groups. As the population grew and Generation Y, or Millennials, entered the labor market, we saw an explosion of interest in the younger groups, in the differences between Millennials, Gen X, and Baby Boomers, and how employers could both attract and retain these groups and manage the conflict that was bound to emerge between them. It was against this background that I first came across Eddy Ng, Sean Lyons, and Linda Schweitzer, the authors of this text.

The four of us, alongside others, have collaborated over the years on conference workshops and symposia, and edited books, alongside less formal discussions of generational diversity, and have both jointly and independently built our academic careers on research that takes this field forward. We share an interest in generational differences at work, and a strong desire to move the knowledge base regarding generations away from one which relies mainly on anecdote and stereotyping, to one that is evidence based and has validity and utility for academics and practitioners. I was therefore

delighted to be asked to introduce this book, both because of my respect for Ed, Sean, and Linda as three of the leaders in research on generational diversity, and because of the importance of this book, and the research it discusses, in providing rigorous evidence of the characteristics of generational groups.

This book builds upon the vast previous work that the authors have undertaken in this field to provide a previously unavailable analysis of the characteristics of generational groups in Canada. Studies as comprehensive and rigorous as this one are generally lacking in the field of generations. While the idea of generational differences has been adopted readily by management practitioners and consultants and is oft promoted in the media, the evidence of these differences is mixed and inadequate. Some scholars have suggested that these differences are overstated (see, for example, Costanza et al., 2012), while others, including myself, have heavily criticized the operational and methodological approaches commonly taken to researching generational diversity (Finkelstein & Costanza, 2015; Parry & Urwin, 2011, 2017). This tension between the beliefs of practitioners and the actual evidence behind these beliefs has led to calls for more systematic and comprehensive analyses of the characteristics of generational cohorts.

This book addresses this need via the use of an impressive research study that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to develop an in-depth understanding of how the career expectations and preferences of Matures, Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials differ. This text also represents the first in-depth study of this type to address the nature of generational differences in Canada, as opposed to the United States.

Through their analysis and interpretation of research findings in order to draw out implications and advice for

practitioners, Ed, Sean, and Linda have built on their expertise in both careers and generational diversity to provide a text that I am sure will sit alongside previous works as seminal in relation to the field of generations. This book therefore provides information that should be invaluable to those of us who undertake academic research in this field and also to those who deal with the day-to-day implications of generational diversity — those in organizations who are working to recruit, motivate, and retain the different age cohorts. I would therefore urge anyone who is interested in the nature of generational differences, whether as an academic looking to undertake research in this field, or a manager or HR practitioner attempting to address the impact of generational diversity, to read this text and to apply the knowledge that it provides in their future work. I hope that it will provide the basis for both future research and for the development of more effective practice in managing an age-diverse workforce.

Emma Parry
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# PREFACE

The Generational Career Shift Project began as Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded research project between Sean Lyons of the University of Guelph, Eddy Ng of Dalhousie University, and Linda Schweitzer of Carleton University. Lisa Kuron, who joined us later in the project, began as our research assistant, and took on more responsibility over the life of the project.

The intention of this three-year study was to investigate whether successive generations of Canadians (i.e., Matures, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials) have had significantly different career expectations, experiences, attitudes, and outcomes as they have moved through their careers. In other words, we wanted to see whether careers have "shifted" fundamentally over the past five decades, as many authors argue they have.

In order to study this phenomenon, we conducted our project in two phases. In the first phase, we conducted phone interviews with 111 individuals from across Canada. During the interview, we asked participants to share their career stories with us and answer questions about their career expectations, priorities, and experiences. These interviews allowed us to explore, in great detail, the career patterns and decisions of individuals from various industries and generations. Doing so enabled us to develop a greater understanding of generational differences in terms of career patterns and priorities, while

also offering novel insights into understanding individuals' career decisions. This was an important step in our research, as it allowed us to further develop and refine measures for use in the second phase of our study.

Phase two was administered to a sample of 3,007 respondents. Through the help of a research panel, we were able to ensure that our sample was geographically representative of Canada's population. This large-scale survey was the basis for the analyses conducted within this book, and allowed us to compare the four generations on a number of research variables, including career identification, work values, locus of control, job and organizational changes, and demographic variables.

For both phases of our research study, we focused on knowledge workers in Canada. Drucker (1999) defined knowledge workers as those individuals who possess high-levels of skill and whose work is complex, often requiring information processing and utilization in order to make decisions. By focusing on knowledge workers, we were able to narrow our target population to include individuals with similar educational and professional requirements. Given the rise of knowledge-work in Canada,[1] this choice ensures that our findings are relevant to a large proportion of Canada's workforce.

Our study provides empirical evidence regarding a timely issue in organizations. Popular press and the media have provided initial evidence of generational differences in the workforce, in terms of their values at work and at home, their attitudes toward jobs, organization, and careers, as well as different expectations toward career paths and career success. Our research will help organizations understand just how generations are different from one another, thus enabling them to better manage their age-diverse workforce.

Managing age diversity is especially relevant, given that a large cohort of employees (i.e., the Boomers) are nearing and entering retirement, while younger employees are being promoted or recruited to take their place. This creates a challenge for organizations as they strive to recruit and retain younger workers who they believe to be significantly different from the older generations of employees. This creates a need for organizations to develop a complex human resource management strategy, as they must not only focus on attracting and retaining new talent, but they must also ensure that they meet the needs of their existing workforce in order to ensure that invaluable knowledge is not lost.

Accordingly, the goal of our research is to help organizations manage this complex task by systematically studying the priorities, expectations, and career attitudes of Canadians. We accomplish this by carefully analyzing our data for differences across generations. Doing so will provide a clear understanding of what each generation values, how they view their careers, as well as possible avenues for employer intervention. We conclude our study by offering suggestions based on our data that will allow employers to get the most out of their age-diverse workforce.

## NOTE

1. For more information, see *The Daily*, Statistics Canada, 2003, http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/031030/dq031030a-eng.htm

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## GENERATIONAL STUDIES

The notion of generation as a construct of investigation can be traced to Karl Mannheim's (1952) seminal work, "The Problem of Generations." In his essay, Mannheim describes a generation as individuals "who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process." However, he notes that simply sharing the same location (i.e., born at the same time) is not sufficient since individuals must also experience the same events. Mannheim adds that a generation must be an actuality, whereby members of the same generation are exposed to and participate as a social unit within a historical period. As a social unit, these individuals undergo a pattern of events, although interpreted differently, and form an identity shaped by their common experiences. His influential work has spawned a body of literature in sociology, anthropology, demography, psychology and, more recently, management and organizational studies.

Following Mannheim's work, Strauss and Howe (1991) later wrote about American history, which is articulated from the lens of generational biographies. They suggest that generations are a recurring cycle of 20 years. Similarly, Strauss and Howe go on to explain that each generation share a common location in history, have beliefs and behaviors that are shaped by key defining events, and they (members of a generation) identify with their peers from the same generation. Their writing gained widespread attention and popularity. They followed up with other titles, *13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?* (1993), which focused on Gen X, and *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), which focused on the Millennial generation.

The works of Mannheim as well as those of Strauss and Howe have generated an awareness that shifting demographics is accompanied by a shift in employee attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in the workplace. Other books on generations also begin to emerge. In Canada, Foot and Stoffman (1996) wrote about how to profit from demographic shifts in their book, *Boom, Bust and Echo*. They claim that demography explains two-thirds of everything, from real-estate meltdowns to the changing nature of work. Foot and Stoffman also conjecture that changing demography is a useful tool for forecasting the supply and demand of goods and services and consequently labor; it is useful for employers, corporations, and government.

Barnard, Cosgrave, and Welsh (1998) further wrote about how to market, employ, and engage with Gen X, in *Chips & Pop: Decoding the Nexus Generation*. The book centers on Gen Xers and how to reach out to a challenging (following Douglas Coupland's characterization of Gen Xers as a dissatisfied and disenchanted) generation as consumers, employees, and citizens. As the Millennials begin to show up in classrooms and the workplace, Jean Twenge (2006) followed up

with the youngest generation (at that time) with *Generation Me*. In her book, Twenge seeks to explain why present-day youths are more confident, assertive, and entitled than previous generations. Her book resonated with a lot of parents, teachers, counselors, and employers, which led to a burgeoning consulting industry that is focused on working with and managing the Millennials.

Other authors focused on managing generational differences, more specifically in the workplace. Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (1999) wrote about the four generations in the workplace, namely, Veterans, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials, highlighting generational differences and offering advice on how to manage them. Likewise, Lancaster and Stillman (2002), using slightly different terms for the generations (e.g., "Traditionalists" in place of "Veterans") also described the four generations that are currently coexisting in the workplace, their differences, and how to bridge the generational divide. Suffice to say, these books are rooted in Canada and the United States with little attention paid to generational work in other countries. To fill this gap, we edited a volume *Managing the New Workforce: International Perspectives on the Millennial Generation*, to document studies of the Millennial generation as a primary focus, across 23 different countries including Australia, Canada, China, Europe, and South Africa.

## GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

The four generations frequently reported in the research literature and popular press are Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen Xers), and Generation Y (Gen Y or Millennials). Some authors have used slightly different terminologies to describe them, notably referring to the Veterans

as the "Silent Generation" or "Traditionalists" (see Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Foot and Stoffman (1996) also used "Baby Bust" (1967−1979) to refer to Gen Xers, and "Baby Boom Echo" (1980−1995) to refer to the Millennials. Given the focus of our research in Canada, we have adopted "Matures" (in place of Veterans), "Baby Boomers," "Gen Xers," and "Millennials" in keeping with the terminologies that are commonly used in both the research literature and popular press.

Foot and Stoffman (1996) and Statistics Canada (2011) employ similar cutoff years to identify the various generations in Canada. Statistics Canada defines a generation as "a sudden rise in the births observed from year to year, […] [and] ends with a sudden drop in the number of births […]." Likewise, Foot and Stoffman describe a generation as "sustained high numbers of births." A comparison between Foot and Stoffman's and Statistic Canada's generational cohorts is provided in Table 1.1. Table 1.2 also provides the size of the various generations in Canada.

We note that these cutoff years differ from research conducted in the United States (e.g., Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010; Zemke et al., 1999). See Table 1.3 for cutoff years used by researchers in the United States. In reality, the exact years demarcating a generation matters less than the shared experiences and historical events that shape their worldviews, values, beliefs and attitudes. For example, we will not anticipate someone born in 1980 (a Millennial) in Canada (or a Gen Xer) to differ in substantive ways, given the historical and geographical proximity to each other.

In this book, we will primarily focus on the four generations, namely the Matures (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (1946−1964), Gen Xers (1965−1979), and Millennials (1980−1992), since they not only constitute the largest

**Table 1.1: The Generations Identified by Foot and Stoffman (1996) and Statistics Canada (2011).**

| Foot and Stoffman | | Statistics Canada | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1914 or Earlier | Pre-World War I | 1918 or Earlier | Prior to 1918 |
| 1915−1919 | World War I | | |
| 1920−1929 | The Roaring Twenties | 1919−1940 | Parents of Baby Boomers |
| 1930−1939 | Depression Babies | | |
| 1940−1946 | World War II | 1941−1945 | World War II |
| 1947−1966 | Baby Boomers | 1946−1965 | Baby Boomers |
| 1967−1979 | Baby Busters | 1966−1971 | Baby Busters |
| 1980−1995 | Baby Boom Echo | 1972−1992 | Millennials |
| 1995−2010 | The Future | 1993−2011 | Gen Z |

generations, but are also found in the workforce during our research period. We also use the cutoff years specific to Canada based on Statistics Canada's definition of a sudden rise (or fall) in birth rates from year to year. Each of the generations is briefly described below.

## Matures (Before 1945)

Although the Matures generation span pre-World War I to the World War II, we are primarily interested in those between 1941 and 1945 as they are still in the workforce when our project commenced. Matures entered the workforce following the war, and were part of a prolonged period of economic growth fueled by demands generated by the Baby Boomers (see Foot & Stoffman, 1996). As a result, we

**Table 1.2:  Size of the Generations in Canada.**

| Label | Description | Years | Number | Percentage |
|-------|-------------|-------|--------|------------|
| Matures | 1918 and Before | Prior to 1918 | 91,195 | 0.3 |
| | Parents of Baby Boomers | 1919−1940 | 3,074,045 | 9.2 |
| | World War II Generation | 1941−1945 | 1,444,035 | 4.3 |
| Baby Boomers | Baby Boomers | 1946−1965 | 9,564,210 | 28.6 |
| Gen X | Baby Busters | 1966−1971 | 2,823,840 | 8.4 |
| Millennials (Gen Y) | Children of Baby Boomers | 1972−1992 | 9,142,005 | 27.3 |
| Gen Z | Generation Z | 1993−2011 | 7,337,350 | 21.9 |

*Source*: Statistics Canada (2011).

**Table 1.3:  Generations Defined by Researchers in the United States.**

| | Strauss and Howe (1991) | Zemke et al. (1999) | Lancaster and Stillman (2002) | Twenge et al. (2010) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Veterans | 1901−1942 | 1922−1943 | 1900−1945 | 1925−1945 |
| Baby Boomers | 1943−1960 | 1943−1960 | 1945−1964 | 1946−1964 |
| Gen Xers | 1961−1981 | 1961−1980 | 1965−1980 | 1965−1981 |
| Millennials | 1982−2005 | 1980−Present | 1981−1999 | 1982−1999 |

anticipate they would follow a traditional or linear career pattern, one that is characterized by steady promotions, few employer changes, and long-term employment.

## Baby Boomers (1946–1964)

The Baby Boom generation, which lasted for 20 years, forms the largest workforce at the time of our research. As the largest cohort, they drove up demands, powered the economic engine (post-war growth), and set the trends (Foot & Stoffman, 1996). When the Boomers entered the workforce, unemployment rate was low, and they generally experienced linear, upwardly mobile careers. The Boomers also saw an increasing number of women entering the workforce. As a result, many workplace practices such as gender equality, work/life balance, and family friendly policies were introduced. Given the long periods in which Boomers remained in the workforce, coupled with economic cycles and changing nature of work, some would change jobs, employers, and even career tracks. We anticipate Baby Boomers will experience some lateral and even downward movements, as employers would down size or reorganize themselves.

## Gen Xers (1965–1979)

Following the Baby Boom generation is a smaller cohort that was often portrayed as less successful compared to the Matures and Boomers. This generation, popularly labeled "Gen Xers," is aptly characterized in Douglas Coupland's novel, *Generation X*. As a generation, they faced a poor labor market when they entered the workforce (Statistics Canada, 2011). When the economy improved, they were too

old for entry-level positions and lacked experience for more senior roles (Foot & Stoffman, 1996). As a result, many had a delayed start in their careers. Many Gen Xers are said to live in their parents' basement when they were in their thirties. We anticipate Gen Xers will have greater job and career movements, as they find their place in the labor market. This also reflects the demographic bind Gen Xers find themselves in, as they arrive behind a large cohort (i.e., Baby Boomers) who still occupies key positions in organizations and the industry.

### Millennials (1980–1992)

Millennials are the children of Baby Boomers, and as a result, they are very much influenced by their parents. As the Boomers have done well for themselves, the Millennials are raised in a relatively middle-class environment (Foot & Stoffman, 1996). They have high post-secondary participation rate, experience rapid technological changes, and saw the same number of males and females entering the labor force (Statistics Canada, 2011). Millennials also enter a tumultuous labor market with the global financial crisis (beginning in 2007–2008). The changing nature of work, driven in large part by technological advancement, saw jobs changing or disappearing alongside the emergence of a "gig economy," which is characterized by part-time, short-term, lower paying jobs. On this basis, we anticipate Millennials will experience the greatest job, employer, and career track changes.

Based on the foregoing, we surmise that each generation, based on their cohort size, having been exposed to significant historical events – such as an economic boom or crisis, technological advances, globalization, and mass migration – will display different work values, hold different attitudes toward

work, and form different expectations about their careers leading to different career trajectories.

## GENERATION — FACT OR ARTIFACT?

A major criticism of generational research is the lack of empirical evidence to substantiate claims of generational differences. Some studies found that the effect sizes were small (e.g., Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014) or the differences are not meaningful (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012), leading some researchers and commentators to call generational differences a myth (Costanza & Finkelstein, 2015). For example, a study conducted in Australia examining personality and motivations found no difference across Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). In reality, most research on generational differences is cross-sectional in nature, often resulting in an inability for these studies to distinguish between the effect of maturation and true generational differences. Second, the four generations conceptualized above are based on sociohistorical events that occurred in the West (usually the United States), and thus may not be valid for samples outside of the United States. Many researchers conducting studies outside the United States erroneously adopt the same birth years or cohorts without considering the national contexts in which they study. For example, Egri and Ralston (2004) found that the value orientations between U.S. and Chinese workers differ significantly within the same generation due to national and cultural differences. Third, many generational studies fail to consider the heterogeneity that exist within a generation. For example, in an era that is characterized by globalization and greater worker mobility, younger generations are much more likely to be

heterogeneous in terms of gender, race (including ethnocultural diversity), and urban/rural socializing and outlooks, leading to a diversity of identities that are adopted by a single generation (see Lyons, Ng, & Schweitzer, 2014).

Furthermore, in demography studies, researchers frequently use birth years to demarcate a generation, rather than relying on social, economic, or political factors (Statistics Canada, 2011). This is problematic since a study cannot meaningfully detect differences across generations are produced by maturity or life stage. For example, we found that many research models detect no generational differences after controlling for age.

It is important to emphasize that a generation, as conceptualized by Mannheim, shares a social space, experiences a common set of events, and has a uniform reaction to (or identifies with) those events, rather than birth years alone. Joshi, Dencker, Franz, and Martocchio (2010) propose another conceptualization of generation as an identity, in which individuals self-identify as belonging to a cohort. In this regard, Urick, Hollensbe, Masterson, and Lyons (2016) have found support on identity-based generations, which can give rise to intergenerational conflicts.

Thus, in order to detect generational differences from life stage effects, we need to clearly distinguish between age effects, period effects, and cohort effects.

## Age Effect

Following Parry and Urwin (2011), age effect occurs as a part of human maturation, in that regardless of the generation to which one belongs or identifies with, they will behave in the same way as those who preceded them during the same life stage. For example, someone is more likely to be engaged

in career exploration in their twenties, establish and advance in their careers between their thirties and fifties, and maintain or wind down their career as they approach their fifties and sixties. As such, individuals who are in their twenties, regardless of generations, are more like each other, than with they are like themselves as they age.

## Period Effect

Period effect refers to historical events or activities that led to a certain generation to form certain values, attitudes, and behave in certain ways. For example, the great depression and the world wars have shaped the values and attitudes of the Mature and Baby Boom generations with respect to work and responsibilities.

## Cohort Effect

Finally, cohort (or generational) effect represents the effect that represents differences that is detected when we compare one generation to another. Thus, the shared identities and common experiences that result from exposure to a set of historical events (e.g., period effect) would set one cohort apart from another, thus allowing us to find differences in values, attitudes, and beliefs across different generations.

## THE PRESENT STUDY

Our study examined career-related differences among the four generations of workers in today's workplace:

1. Matures (born in 1945 or earlier);

2. Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964);

**3.** Gen Xers (born between 1965 and 1979); and

**4.** Millennials (born in 1980 or later).

We surveyed over 3,000 Canadians to determine whether there were significant inter-generational differences in their work priorities, career attitudes, career experiences, and career outcomes. The participants in our study were 3,007 Canadians who were either working, retired, or temporarily out of work and seeking employment. The participants were identified through a survey panel company that recruits participants to be part of an ongoing panel that completes surveys for different research studies in exchange for rewards. Tables 1.4 and 1.5 provide a demographic profile of our participants in terms of their personal and employment characteristics.

## SUMMARY

### Career Concepts

We examined several career concepts, including career identity, planning and resilience, career salience, work locus of control, modern career orientations, career self-efficacy, and career anchors, as well as the expectations of pre-career Millennials. Overall, our study shows significant inter-generational differences across many of these concepts. For example, Matures identified with their careers more than other generations, which suggests that work plays a more central role in their lives. Millennials and Gen X employees indicated a belief that they are not in control of their career success. Moreover, Millennials had lower levels of self-efficacy than both Gen X and Boomer employees. In terms of career anchors, we found that each successive younger

**Table 1.4: Demographic Profile of Sample in the Study.**

| Personal Characteristics | | *N* | % |
|---|---|---:|---:|
| Generation | Millennial | 906 | 30.1 |
| | Gen X | 900 | 29.9 |
| | Boomer | 901 | 30.0 |
| | Mature | 300 | 10.0 |
| Gender | Male | 1,494 | 49.7 |
| | Female | 1,513 | 50.3 |
| Province/Territory | Alberta | 356 | 11.8 |
| | British Columbia | 476 | 15.8 |
| | Manitoba | 203 | 6.8 |
| | New Brunswick | 65 | 2.2 |
| | Newfoundland & Labrador | 41 | 1.4 |
| | North West Territories | 3 | 0.1 |
| | Nova Scotia | 117 | 3.9 |
| | Nunavut | 1 | 0.0 |
| | Ontario | 1,501 | 50.2 |
| | Prince Edward Island | 17 | 0.6 |
| | Quebec | 91 | 3.0 |
| | Saskatchewan | 124 | 4.1 |
| | Yukon | 3 | 0.1 |
| Marital Status | Single, Never Married | 1,000 | 33.3 |
| | In a First Marriage | 1,316 | 43.8 |
| | Divorced, not Remarried | 314 | 10.4 |
| | Remarried | 307 | 10.2 |
| | Widowed, not Remarried | 70 | 2.3 |
| Sexual Minority | Yes | 186 | 6.2 |
| | No | 2,821 | 93.8 |

**Table 1.4:** (*Continued*)

| Personal Characteristics | | *N* | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Visible Minority | Yes | 437 | 14.5 |
| | No | 2,570 | 85.5 |
| Person with a Disability | Yes | 329 | 10.9 |
| | No | 2,678 | 89.1 |
| Highest Education | Less than High School | 25 | 0.8 |
| | High School Diploma | 517 | 17.2 |
| | College | 981 | 32.6 |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 783 | 26.0 |
| | University Certificate above Bachelor's | 230 | 7.6 |
| | Master's Degree | 254 | 8.4 |
| | Doctorate | 46 | 1.5 |
| | Other | 171 | 5.7 |

generation placed more importance on autonomy and independence, entrepreneurial creativity, lifestyle, service, and dedication. Lastly, 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.

## Work Priorities

Our data provide evidence of generational differences in terms of work priorities. The youngest generation, the Millennials, placed more importance on work characteristics that lead to self-improvement, as well as social aspects of

**Table 1.5: Employment Characteristics of Sample in the Study.**

| Employment Characteristics | | *N* | % |
|---|---|---:|---:|
| Current Position | Administrative/Clerical Support | 368 | 12.2 |
| | Front-Line Employee/Production Team Member/Service Team Member | 387 | 12.9 |
| | Services | 221 | 7.4 |
| | Professional/Specialist/Technician | 877 | 29.2 |
| | Middle Management Supervisor/Team Leader | 366 | 12.2 |
| | Senior Management/Executive | 150 | 5.0 |
| | Business Owner/Operator/ Self-Employed | 50 | 1.7 |
| | Stay-At-Home Parent | 20 | 0.7 |
| | Retired | 306 | 10.2 |
| | Not Working Because of Disability | 28 | 0.9 |
| | Unemployed | 60 | 2.0 |
| | Student | 161 | 5.4 |
| | Other | 11 | 0.4 |
| Employment Situation | Employed Full-Time | 1407 | 46.8 |
| | Employed Part-Time | 455 | 15.1 |
| | Self-Employed | 218 | 7.2 |
| | Unemployed and Seeking Work | 130 | 4.3 |
| | Unemployed and Not Seeking Work | 28 | 0.9 |
| | Full-Time Student Not Employed | 202 | 6.7 |
| | Retired | 453 | 15.1 |
| | Other | 114 | 3.8 |

the workplace. In contrast, the values of Gen X employees emphasized the need to find a balance between work and personal facets of life. Both Boomers and Matures were concerned with staying relevant in an ever-changing work environment. However, these oldest two generations differed, in that Boomers remained focused on advancement and achievement while Matures strived to leave a lasting impression in their organizations.

## Career Experiences

In order to determine if and how career patterns have shifted across generations, we examined the number of career, organization, and job changes per year of our participants. Our results show that Millennials have, on average, more than twice the number of job changes per year than the Gen Xers, Boomers, and Matures. Moreover, our results indicate that, for the most part, each successive younger generation has made more career moves (e.g., downward, lateral, upward, organization changes) than the generation that preceded them. These differences remain even after adjusting for age-related differences in the number of career moves (for more information, see Chapter 4). We also found gender differences in the number of career moves. Opposite to what one might expect, we found that the greatest gender differences occurred in the younger generations. More specifically, Millennial men had significantly more job changes of every type than Millennial women, while Gen X men had more frequently moved upward, downward, and changed their career track than Gen X women.

We also studied the frequency of career events, pivotal moments, and the individuals whom our participants believed to be the most influential in their careers. Despite having

spent less time in their careers, Millennials and Gen X employees, for the most part, 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. Millennials were less likely to have encountered several pivotal career moments (e.g., being downsized, having health issues that led to a career change) as compared to older generations. Finally, the two youngest generations seem to be influenced by, and reliant on, more individuals for career advice, as compared to the Boomer and Mature generations.

## Career Outcomes

The extent to which one's expectations are met can influence other important attitudes such as job satisfaction. We examined these met expectations in terms of various career facets in order to examine them for generational differences. Indeed, we found that the Matures' expectations for salary increases, rate of advancement, recognition of accomplishments, engagement in personally meaningful work, and reaching full career potential were met to a greater degree than each of the younger generations. Gen X employees' expectations for training and development were met to a significantly lesser extent than all other generations. Moreover, in terms of personal pride in career achievements, the expectations of each successive younger generation were met to a significantly lower degree than the generation that preceded them. Overall, there was a general pattern of increased satisfaction with various aspects of one's career for each successive older generation.

We also found that the amount of work–life interference varied across the generations. Specifically, Gen X and Boomer

employees reported the greatest level of career interference with home responsibilities, while Gen X employees also indicated greater levels of career interference due to family and personal interests and activities. Matures reported the least amount of career interference with respect to family and friends and leisure, as well as family interference with career.

## Implications for Employers

Our study reveals that generational differences in various career aspects do exist. For employers who are trying to manage age-diversity in their workplace, this study provides several pieces of actionable advice in order to better manage the expectations, values, and priorities of individuals from each respective generation.

First, employers must recognize that individuals are changing jobs with greater frequency than ever before. In order to retain their young and talented employees, organizations must provide opportunity for movement within the organization in order to limit movement outside of the organization. This may include job rotation options or voluntary exchanges across departments and partnering organizations.

Second, although generational differences in work priorities were evident, we found that seven work priorities were common in each generation's "top-ten" list (see Chapter 3). In order to get the most out of their employee investments, employers should offer their employees interesting work, the information necessary to complete job tasks, job security, salary, benefits, achievement, and supportive supervisors. Employers are cautioned, however, that the meaning of these priorities may be different across individuals and generations, and employee input may be necessary in order to best tailor the programs to each generation's needs.

Third, a stark finding of our study is the level of dissatisfaction of the Gen X employees. As the mass retirement of Boomers nears, Gen X employees will become even more critical to the success of organizations. Unfortunately, these employees reported the lowest levels of satisfaction and met expectations, as well as the highest levels of conflict between work and family life. Although there is no easy solution to these issues, employers would be prudent to make engaging and retaining Gen X employees a top priority of the organization. Our research on the work priorities and career anchors of these employees provides a starting point for organizations to reach out to their Gen X employees.

Fourth, members of the Millennial generation need help in order to navigate their careers. We found that Millennials had the lowest levels of self-efficacy and career identification, and rely more on the career advice of others. Taken together, this suggests that employers can help Millennials realize their potential through identifying career options and career paths, providing honest information regarding opportunities, and establishing mentorship programs to help guide Millennials in their careers.

Finally, the information we gathered from pre-career Millennials suggests that many of their career expectations are not realistic, with the exception of starting salary. In order to avoid unmet expectations and subsequent dissatisfaction with one's job and career choices, employers are advised to have open and transparent conversations with potential employees, as well as current employees, to ensure that Millennials know what to expect and when to expect it.