Generation Y’s Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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SYNOPSIS

The entrance of a new workforce from Generation Y (people born after the 1980s) into the workplace has aroused much discussion in Western countries. It has drawn academic scholars and practitioners’ attention to the potential generational clashes arising from Generation Y’s interactions with other generations. The main concerns come from the new learning styles and expectations upheld by this generation. It has been found that the characteristics and expectations of Generation Y are barely available in academic studies (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). For the Generation Y findings that have been published, they are largely confined to Western countries and can hardly be generalized. The applicability of these findings in other parts of the world, especially in Chinese communities, is still largely unknown to academics. This exploratory study purports to investigate the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and their impacts within the contemporary workplace setting in order to enhance generational theory. Chinese Generation Y employees, and non-Generation Y managers having Generation Y subordinates, in Hong Kong from a range of diverse industries and job functions were selected through purposive sampling. Individual semi-structured interview was adopted for data collection. The study found that Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong share more commonalities than exceptions with their Western counterparts. The evidence shows that Chinese Generation Y employees differ greatly from non-Generation Y managers in various work expectations in Hong Kong. The results reveal that the Chinese Generation Yers' perceptions are in conflict with the other generations' expectations and are a source in generating the identified workplace tensions. The intergenerational gaps have created broad impacts on people management. The research generates information on the Chinese Generation Y’s people management to substantiate the generational theory and contribute to the academic literature and management practice, as well as business training and executive learning.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

It has been noticed that organizations today encounter greater generational clashes and that there is a need to find effective ways to tackle this age diversity issue (Beaver & Hutchings, 2005). The concern arises because the working relationships have become more complex than ever. At present, the workforce has four visible generations: Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980) and Generation Y (born after 1980) (Eisner, 2005). These generations, however, do not seem to know each other’s choices (Kowske, Rasch & Wiley, 2010).

The problems have become more acute with Generation Y joining the workforce (McCindle, 2009). It is also particularly problematic as Generation Ys have new learning styles and expectations (Taylor, Dayaram, Coffey & Holmes, 2009). As reported, conflicts between younger and older workers in organizations are common in the workplace nowadays (Work Ethic Primary Conflict, 2004, cited in Eisner, 2005).

The potential for generational clashes arising from Generation Y’s interactions with other generations has subsequently drawn academic scholars and practitioners’ attention. Scholars have noted that Generation Y’s expectations have major implications for corporate culture (Judge & Bretz, 1992), ethical issues (Dose, 1997), the success or failure of human resources initiatives (Jurkiewicz, 2000), and a host of other corporate issues (Smola & Sutton, 2002). It can affect, if not properly handled, employee productivity, innovation and generate staff retention problems (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

This background highlights the complexity of the contemporary workforce and the
emergence of potential generational tensions arising from Generation Y. Against this background, this dissertation focuses on exploring the work expectations of Chinese Generation Y employees, and their consequential impacts on people management at work, in Hong Kong.

1.2 Preliminary Literature Review

Generations are defined as cohorts of individuals born in the same time period and raised in a similar social and historical environment (Mannheim, 1953). They are particularly moulded by distinctive experiences during their critical development periods (Caspi, 1987; Stewart & Healy, 1989). To examine Generation Y’s work expectations and consequential impacts on people management at work, the preliminary literature review focuses on the following aspects:

1.2.1 Generations at Work

In conducting a literature review on generational theory, it is understood that each generation is shaped by critical events to develop a ‘collective persona’ (Strauss & Howe, 1991, cited in McCrindle, 2014). Generational theory takes the year of birth to characterize and understand groups of people (Medland, 2012). Their shared experiences will contribute to a generation’s unique characteristics (Ryder, 1965). The generational theory is not fully supported by other scholars. It is suggested that generation identity may not be tied strictly to birth cohort but also varied by age, gender, race and education (Dencker et al., 2008).

In order to examine the four visible generations at work, the definitions, labels and the start and end dates of each of the generational categories are studied. The characteristics, aspirations and expectations of Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (1945-1964), Generation X (1965-1980) and Generation Y (born after 1980), as defined by Eisner (2005), are also reviewed and adopted in this research.
1.2.2  Generational Differences

A literature review on the generational gap or generational differences for analyzing Generation Y’s role and impact on contemporary people management issues is considered crucial to this research. Scholarly studies have disparities of views on the idea of a generation gap or intergenerational differences (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Jorgensen, 2003; Giancola, 2006). It is argued that generational differences are largely exaggerated, not based on rigorous scientific research, and primarily promulgated by consultants and journalists (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Treuren & Anderson, 2010). These arguments are cross-examined against supporters’ findings (Eisner, 2005; Gibson, Greenwood & Murphy, 2009; Shragay & Tziner, 2011; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Though there is no universal agreement on whether intergenerational differences exist (Gibson et al., 2009) or not (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Jorgensen, 2003), the examination of scholarly studies provides a foundation for analyzing generational difference issues in this research.

1.2.2.1 Work Expectations for Generation Y Employees and Other Generations

As Generation Y is considered to be a potential factor for raising generational clashes (Beaver & Hutings, 2005; McCinddle, 2009), this generation’s work expectations will be identified and contrasted with other generations' work expectations from previous studies. In Tolbize’s study (2008), some work expectations differences and similarities between the four identified generations are found. However, there is a lack of empirical research on the characteristics, expectations and implications of the generations in the workplace (Cogin, 2012).

1.2.2.2 Generation Y Employees’ Impacts on People Management

Generation Y employees’ impacts on people management will be further sourced and reviewed. Other generational groups’ perceptions on Generation Y are assessed to understand the people management concerns found in previous studies. However,
issues associated with generational diversity in organisations have been neglected in the past (McGuire, By & Hutchings, 2007).

1.2.3 Chinese Employees and the Chinese Generation Y in Hong Kong

It has been observed that research conducted specifically with working Generation Yers are limited (Wong, Gardiner, Lang & Coulon, 2008). For the Generation Y findings published, they are dominated by studies from the UK, US and Canada (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Chen & Choi, 2007; Glass, 2007). It is unclear whether these formative events similarly impact across countries and cultures, as well as across economic and labour conditions. Though a few empirical studies on Chinese Generation Y are found, they are not specifically focused on exploring the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and people management impacts, comparable to Western studies. Therefore, a research on the Chinese Generation Y’s expectations is desirable. Hong Kong (a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China) is chosen for this exploratory study.

1.3 Research Objectives and Research Questions

This research study purports to contribute to the existing generational theory, with insights into the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations. It aims at identifying the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and their impacts on people management in Hong Kong in order to fill the research gaps: (a) the characteristics and expectations of Generation Y are barely available in academic studies (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008); and (b) the Generation Y findings published are largely confined to empirical studies in Western countries. The key research question is:

*What are the Chinese Generation Y's work expectations and how do they impact on people management?*
The sub-questions are:

- What are the work expectations of Generation Y employees in Hong Kong?
- What are the work expectations of non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong?
- What differences, if any, exist in the work expectations between Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers?
- To what extent do non-Generation Y managers perceive Generation Y employees as a source of workplace tensions?
- To what extent do non-Generation Y managers adapt workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y employees’ needs?

1.4 Research Methodology

The qualitative research methodology was chosen to generate a richness and depth of the explorations and descriptions (Myers, 2000) in this research. Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers in private organizations were the units of analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection and information exploration. Individual face-to-face interviews were adopted to identify and compare the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and their impacts on people management in private firms in Hong Kong. Twenty participants from private firms, subject to the separate criteria specified (Figure 3.1) for Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers were selected. Equal numbers of 10 volunteer Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers with Chinese Generation Y subordinates from diverse industries and job functions were selected by the purposive sampling method. An invitational email (Appendix B), with the Participant Information Statement (Appendix C) and the Consent Form (Appendix D) attached, were sent to the prospective participants. Only participants sending return emails with the signed Consent Form that indicated agreement to
participate in the interview were included in the research. A set of questions was designed (Appendix E) to allow the researcher the opportunity to perceive consequential thoughts and ideas held by the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011) in the interviews. Each interview session typically lasted for one hour for the Generation Y employees, and up to two hours for the managers. The information gathered was compared to identify similarities and differences of work expectations between this new workforce and the non-Generation Y managers. It enabled an understanding of the different ways of work being undertaken at the workplaces and validated the existence of intergenerational differences. The consolidated information was further analyzed to assess the role of workplace tensions and the impacts of Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations on people management.

1.5 Results and Implications

The research findings point to the fact that the local Chinese Generation Yers, though they share commonalities with their Western counterparts, have distinctive characteristics which are different from those found in Western research studies. The major variance is the fair demand in the work expectation for creativity and innovation. The anticipation of individual capability limitations will further affect local Chinese Generation Y employees’ willingness in handling new situations and job challenges. They prefer to hold back their opinions on matters they do not fully understand. Indeed, the Chinese Generation Y employees have great expectations in receiving clear job instructions. Their expectations of teamwork, for relationship building purposes, also need particular attention. Unlike their Western counterparts, local Chinese Generation Y employees pay less attention to corporate branding and social contributions. As reflected in the study, work-life balance is not fully supported by all the Chinese Generation Y employees. Work-life integration is still upheld for fulfilling personal goals and for career achievement.

This research study found that Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong show great differences in various work expectations.
Different ways in undertaking work in the researched work settings were found. Tensions arise from ways of communication, delivering job instructions, authorization understanding, work prioritization, task cooperation and follow-up activities. Slightly over half of the participants reflected that the Chinese Generation Y group is a source in generating the identified workplace tensions. The level of the positions held by the Generation Yers, and the nature of the industry or firm, may affect their emergence as a critical source of workplace tensions.

Sixteen research participants (eight non-Generation Y managers and eight Generation Y employees) agreed that intergenerational differences exist in Hong Kong. It was confirmed that many Chinese Generation Yers’ perceptions are in conflict with other generations’ expectations. The intergenerational gaps have generated broad impacts on people management leading to management approach changes, job expectation matching, as well as policy and procedural re-alignments. A re-consideration of the superior-subordinate relationships, including communication and job instructions, motivation and recognition, gaining job commitment and personal caring and attention giving, are necessary. Work collaboration, organizational culture and working environment initiatives, work-life considerations and staff retention were also affected.

Fifteen participants confirmed that workplace management practices have been adopted by their companies to accommodate the impacts of Chinese Generation Yers. It shows that many companies are ready to question the suitability of their long practised people management approaches and to accept the need to change human resource management and development practices to meet the new workforce’s expectations.

1.6 Research Significance

Despite limitations associated with the qualitative research methods, the research findings supplement generational theory with the understanding that local formative
incidents may have impacts in creating the Chinese Generation Y’s unique work expectations. The research findings substantiate the generational theory by filling in the unique Chinese Generation Y characteristics, which differ from their Western counterparts. It further indicates that the Generation theory, other than the age/career stages' predictions (Levinson et al., 1974; Super, 1984), might have direct impacts on Chinese Generation Y employees' work expectations. The knowledge gained from a further understanding of the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations, intergenerational differences and Chinese Generation Y employees as a source of workplace tensions contributes to the development of new management practices, business training and executive learning.

1.7 Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation begins with an overview of the research, the research aims and project scope in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 includes a literature review on generational theory, understandings of generational differences, work expectations of Generation Y and other generations, Generation Y’s impacts on people management and other features of Chinese Generation Y. Chapter 3 outlines the research method used. Presented in Chapter 4 are the research findings interpretations, analysis of Chinese Generation Y’s impacts on people management and workplace management practices. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the research, its contributions, the research limitations and suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review of the thesis. The key issues that address the proposed research topic on Generation Y’s workplace expectations and impacts on people management in Hong Kong are discussed. Literature studies from multiple disciplines related to the generations at work, workplace relationships and the intergenerational impacts on workplaces are subsequently searched.

Generational theory is firstly reviewed in order to understand the basis of generation development. The thesis then proceeds to study the literature findings on generation name labelling, the time scopes in defining generations and the characteristics of four visible generations in the workplace: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. The distinctions between scholars’ views on intergenerational differences are further examined. A specific literature review on the work expectations of the new workforce, Generation Y, follows.

Other generations’ work expectations are also reviewed in the section to pave the way for an examination of the people management impacts. Other generations’ perceptions are contrasted with the Generation Y employees’ work expectations to highlight the possible people management impacts at work. After exploring the literature studies, it is understood that findings from Western studies may have limitations in their generalizability. A section on Chinese values and Chinese Generation Y in Hong Kong is written to incorporate related literature findings. This chapter ends with a section on identifying the literature gaps in order to formulate the research questions.

2.2 Background

Eisner (2005) suggests the working relationships become more complex as the
current workforce has four visible generations: Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980) and Generation Y (born after 1980). It is noted that these generations do not seem to know each other’s choices well (Kowske et al., 2010), as conflicts between younger and older workers in organizations are common in the workplace (Work Ethic Primary Conflict, 2004, cited in Eisner, 2005). The problems become more acute with the Generation Y joining the workforce (McCindle, 2009). If generational differences are not properly handled, they can affect employee productivity, innovation and generate staff retention problems (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

These issues highlight the need for conducting an academic research study to explore the work expectations of the new generation, Generation Y, and their consequential impacts on people management at work.

2.3 Generational Theory

To address the research purpose, literature studies from human resource management, applied psychology and organizational behaviour related to the generations at work, workplace relationships and the impacts on workplaces are reviewed. Academic studies have been searched and located to identify the underpinning theory for generational classification. The research extends further to review the existing literature on characteristics of the different generations, followed by specific reviews on the work expectations of Generation Y, and their impacts on people management in superior-subordinate relationships, the work environment and team expectations. Additionally, research papers from professional institutes and associations have been sourced as supplementary readings to identify the latest trends and developments in Generation Y at work.

The modern research on generations goes back to the work of Karl Mannheim, who, in 1953, defined generations as cohorts of individuals born within the same time period and raised in a similar social and historical environment (Mannheim, 1953),
with shared experiences in the same historical events (Ryder, 1965). The theory further presupposes that the critical events shape each new generation, and that they would develop a ‘collective persona’ (Strauss & Howe, 1991, cited in McCrindle, 2014). Supporting research studies also indicate that people will interpret historical events differently at various developmental stages (Duncan & Agronick, 1995; Noble & Schewe, 2003) and create generational differences. Their shared experiences will then contribute to a generation’s unique characteristics (Ryder, 1965). For the Baby Boomers, this event was the social upheaval of the 1960s, for Generation X it was the Cold War and for the Generation Y it was 9/11 (Medland, 2012). It is asserted that people who grow up in different time periods will develop unique beliefs, values and expectations (MacManus, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991) and create general behavioural impacts in workplace (Glass, 2007; Inglehart, 1997). Generational theory thus takes the year of birth to characterize and understand groups of people (Medland, 2012). It considers the group broadly, not the individual, for establishing a set of group characteristics “strong enough to support a measure of predictability” (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 42).

Understanding an identifiable group in terms of ‘generation’ is meaningful. It “captures the culture of one’s upbringing during a specific time period” (Twenge & Campbell, 2008, p. 863). By grouping people according to the year of birth, it presumes that major events that happen in each life stage will have an overall effect and create impacts on the entire group. Generations are thus particularly moulded by distinctive experiences during their critical development periods (Caspi, 1987; Stewart & Healy, 1989). The shared life experiences at key development points of the group subsequently influence and define each generation (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000). No generation could be exempted from the impact of a major event to formulate values and perceptions (Medland, 2012). These shared events eventually distinguish one generation from another (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998) with the unique characteristics (Kowske et al., 2010) to form their values and perceptions (Medland, 2012). The collectively defined values formed by a generational group will then influence the individuals throughout their lives (Codrington, 2008). Individuals,
though diverse in every generation, will still share certain thoughts, values and behaviours in common (Tolbize, 2008). Generational theory thus points out the importance of the “formative years of childhood in defining the generations” and “each life stage has different characteristics and unique elements at any given time” (Medland, 2012, p. 10).

The generational theory presumes collective characteristics will override individual diversity in behavioural predictions. This corresponds with the Labour Process theorists' proposition that all value is determined collectively (Carter, 1985, cited in Lucio & Stewart, 1997). Yet, “[an] individual employee concerned with the effort-reward bargain in its various forms” often involves in an antagonistic relation with management (Lucio & Stewart, 1997, p. 65). Collectivism thus may not explain individualised relations at work. Perceptions of externalities to the business also affect how an organization develops its approaches in the labour process and how employees' responses (Teague & Roche, 2013, cited in Ramsay & Kemble, 2015). It is unknown whether the group characteristics upheld by the theory might appropriately explain an individual's behaviours in all economic situations or not. The theory is not fully supported by other scholars either. To them, the generational theory supporters lack the consideration of “the complex interplay and dynamism of generations as a social force” (Lyons & Kuron, 2013, p. S150). Variables including personality, qualifications, social status and labour market development that may moderate individual behavioural outcomes are ignored. In particular, previous research studies have not separated the specific effects of birth cohort from those of age (Laufer & Bengtson, 1974) to identify generational differences. Generations could be “more complex, context-dependent and multi-dimensional than previously acknowledged” (Joshi et al., 2011, p. 181). Generation identity may not be tied strictly to birth cohort but also varied by age, gender, race and education (Dencker et al., 2008). The generational theory is therefore suggested to study “the patterns of variability within generations as important moderating variables” (Lyons & Kuron, 2013, p. S151).
2.4 Generations At Work

To examine the work expectations and impacts of Generation Y on people management, it is necessary to firstly find out the generational profiles at work. As revealed in Section 2.2 above, there are currently four visible generations at work. Each generation of employees, sharing “birth, years, age, location, and significant life events at critical development stages” (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66), is an identifiable group of individuals. Unique elements occurring at any given time will formulate each generation’s distinctive characteristics (Medland, 2012) at work. Visibly, different cohorts (or groups) of individuals will develop their special values, belief systems, and peer personalities (MacManus, 1997; Strauss & Howe, 1991) to generate similar group work values, attitudes and behaviours (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000) that distinguish one generation from another. Distinctive sets of generational values, preferences and beliefs as collectively exhibited (Stauffer, 1997) will have life-long effects and remain stable over time (Arsenault, 2004).

However, to identify a generational taxonomy at work is not a straightforward task. Firstly, without any single authority on the start and end dates to each of the generational categories, writers from various locations have used different time scopes in defining generations. Between countries, “there is variation in the metrics typically used to define the birth years of generations” (Salt, 2007, p. 12). It seems difficult, with these inconsistencies found, to have a clear-cut definition of each generation in the literature (Angeline, 2011). Furthermore, authors have adopted various kinds of labels to describe some generations (Appendix A) at work (McCindle, 2014).

Other than the time scope and naming differences, academics and practitioners have consensus on a general descriptive (Eisner, 2005) or similar descriptions of the characteristics (Angeline, 2011) of the generational groups, which is critical to this research. For this research study purpose, the time scope and labels defined by Eisner (2005) for each generation, i.e. Traditionalists (born before 1945), Baby Boomers
It is noted that generational groups have general collective characteristics (Patota, Schwartz & Schwartz, 2007) and different value priorities (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002). In the following sections, each generational group’s unique characteristics, aspirations and expectations (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008) are examined.

2.4.1 Traditionalist (born before 1945)

Traditionalists, also known as the Silent Generation or Veterans, experienced the great depression and World War II. They are loyal, self-sacrificing (Francis-Smith, 2004), hard-working but conservative (Codrington, 2008). They value consistency (Allen, 2004), discipline (Niemiec, 2000) and prefer rules, orders and formal hierarchies in minimizing risk. Tobize (2008) further characterizes Traditionalists to be highly dedicated and prefer risk avoidance. This group of people prefer formality and a top-down command approach, and make decisions based on past successes and needs to be respected (Kersten, 2002). Notably, they are slow in action and make incremental advancement (Codrington, 2008) with care. They will strive, firstly, for the best for the organization instead of considering their own personal benefits (Macon & Artley, 2009).

2.4.2 Baby Boomers (1945–1964)

The Baby Boomers, also known as the ‘Me Generation’, were mostly borne after World War II. It has the largest membership population of any generational group (Medland, 2012). They enjoyed generally prosperous times throughout the second half of 20th Century. They believe in lifetime employment, loyalty to a company (Elunden & Lyer, 1999), and are workaholic and competitive. This generation considers the ‘self’ more than other generations (Medland, 2012). Many of them hold senior management positions in their working organizations. Baby Boomers are
idealistic, driven (Macon & Artley, 2009), goal oriented and bottom-line focused. Though much motivated by vision, mission and strategy (Codrington, 2008; Medland, 2012), this generational group “does not consult with other generations” in leading others (Codrington, 2008, p. 7). However, they are ready to put aside personal and professional interests for consensus (Macon & Artley, 2009). Baby Boomers respect authority, but also expect to be treated as equals (Allen, 2004). Being optimistic, confident and with value free expression (Francis-Smith, 2004), they uphold morality and social standards (Codrington, 2008; Medland, 2012). Baby Boomers are the most competitive generation and work well with others (Raines, 2003; Twenge, 2006).

2.4.3 Generation X (1965–1980)

They grew up with a sluggish job market, corporate downsizing (Tolbize, 2008), and experienced the 1987 stock market crash in their adulthood, Generation X entered the job market “amid an era of economic rationalism” (Salt, 2007, p. 12) and encountered high property prices when purchasing their own house.

Generation Xers are now in the middle management level and are moving into the senior management positions. Though considered as smart workers and efficient problem solvers (Gursoy, Maier & Chi, 2008), this generational group lacks clear distinctive characteristics (Marconi, 2000). They are sometimes regarded as reactive (Codrington, 2008; Medland, 2012), individualistic and “have feelings of pragmatism, alienation and cynicism” (Macon & Artley, 2009, cited in Medland, 2012, p. 3). They seek specific and constructive feedback for targeted outcomes (Allen, 2004). They look for room to grow (Francis-Smith, 2004) and value keeping skills current in personal development more than gaining a job title (Eisner, 2005). However, they work only for themselves and are poor at networking (Macon & Artley, 2009). They are more independent and ready to look for job opportunities elsewhere (O’Bannon, 2001). Generation Xers lack loyalty and are distrustful of corporations (Eisner, 2005). Generation X employees prefer work-life balance (Gursoy et al., 2008): they work to have a life but not live to work (Codrington, 2008; Medland, 2012).
2.4.4  Generation Y (born after 1980)

The label Generation Y was firstly coined in 1993, by the magazine Advertising Age, to refer to the last generation born in the 20th century (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009). Generation Y (also known as the Echo Boomers, Millennials, Generation Next or Nexters) are the children of the baby boomers (Eisner, 2005). They have generally experienced a world of rising economic prosperity and a period of rapid technological and social change (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). It draws McCrindle (2014) to label Generation Y to be the world’s first global generation. Through internet and wireless communication media, this cohort can access a greater amount of the global sources of information easily (Rawlines, Indvik & Johnson, 2008). It is a cohort “united by age and life stage, conditions and technology, events and experiences” (McCrindle, 2014, p. 3). In view of the large size, level of education and technical skill competency of Generation Y, this group of people will be in a position to resemble the Baby Boomers’ impact on business and society (Allen, 2004).

Generation Yers are unique when compared to previous generations (Medland, 2012). They are “highly educated, entrepreneurial and global in their thinking” (Salt, 2007, p. 12) and strive to make a difference to measure their own success (Eisner, 2005). Generation Yers are flexible (Martin, 2005), adaptable to change (Jenkins, 2007) and, in comparison to older generations, the most confident group (Macon & Artley, 2009; Sacks, 2006). They will not tolerate boredom or a job that lacks personal challenge. That is why they always seek intellectual challenges (Eisner, 2005). These youngsters have the ability to adapt to a constant state of flux which makes them extremely valuable in the process of innovation and achieving improved productivity. They are independent and less process focused (Crampton & Hodge, 2006). As fast learners, they have no problem in learning if the rationale and justifications are clearly stated (Sheahan, 2005).

Generation Yers are demanding (Martin, 2005), optimistic and respectful (Medland,
2012). They are well versed in new technology (Kersten, 2002) and are able to communicate simultaneously with several groups of people through this means. Generation Yers are able to manipulate technology at ease and to do instant messaging with their contacts while doing work (Lewis, 2003). Notably, they accept the introduction of new technology that can increase work efficiency. Multi-tasking is normal to them. They desire practicality and expect opportunities to use their ability to think creatively and innovatively (Sheahan, 2005). They are eager to share ideas with others (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Zemke et al., 2000). If challenged, these youngsters will then look for a solution on their own. Organizations that proactively attempt to better themselves will be a perfect match and highly preferred by Generation Yers.

This new generation considers societal contribution, parenting well and a full and balanced life to be more important than making a lot of money (Allen, 2004). They have shifted their focus from career to lifestyle (Medland, 2012). To Generation Yers, their career choices are much more determined by the opportunities to have meaningful roles in work that could help others (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). To them, peer group networking is important as they prefer to be team players at work. They prefer to work in teams and take collective action (Zemke et al., 2000). Being technologically and globally oriented, Generation Yers are visualized as tolerant, optimistic, protected and self-entitled conformists seeking instant gratification (Medland, 2012).

As discussed above, the four generations at work bring with them the critical aspects of character that differentiate one generation from another. Each generation’s distinctive character may, in turn, create diverse viewpoints regarding management approaches at workplaces (Sheahan, 2005).

With the generational characteristics identified, the following section examines the literature on generation gap or intergenerational differences.
2.5 Empirical research on Generational Gap or Intergenerational Differences

Scholarly studies have a disparity of views on the idea of a generation gap or intergenerational differences (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Giancola, 2006; Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Jorgensen, 2003).

2.5.1 Generational Differences

Jorgensen rejected the notion of distinct generational difference and tailored workforce strategies (Jorgensen, 2003). This is further supported by Johnson and Lopes, as they are sceptical about much of the stereotyping about Millennials, claiming that generational differences are largely exaggerated, not based on rigorous scientific research and primarily promulgated by consultants and journalists (Johnson & Lopes, 2008).

No clear or outstanding distinction between the different generations in their employment conditions expectations (Treuren & Anderson, 2010) was found. In some research studies, significant differences between the generations in their work values, work satisfaction, organizational commitment, the intention to leave the organization, and the degree of fit between the values of the individual and the organization (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008) are highlighted. However, the differences found under observation are more related to age than generation (Wong et al., 2008).

The existence of generational differences is questioned as the research studies on work values are based on observation rather than large scale empirical findings (Jorgensen, 2003). Without rigorous scientific research, the notion of distinct generational difference could be largely exaggerated (Johnson & Lopes, 2008). Therefore, tailored workforce strategies to cope with the mentioned differences would be unnecessary (Jorgensen, 2003).
However, these research studies have limitations in their generalizations. Treuren and Anderson’s research (2010) has engaged individuals (Generation Y university students) in undertaking study of Baby Boomers or Generation X. They could not provide typical responses for the employment expectations of the cohort and found that they are fundamentally out of touch with the concerns of their generation. As for Cennamo and Gardner’s study (2008), the ratio of generational cohorts tested was uneven and the data is narrowly confined to eight organizations which cover the Auckland location only. Likewise, in Wong et al.’s (2008) findings, the data collected, generated from sources serving diverse purposes, are not originally targeted for examining whether differences (if any) are linked to age or generational differences.

Some scholars argue that any difference at work could be due to age/career stage or to generation, and it is impossible to separate the two (Schaie, 1965; Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983). The suggestion is debatable as the relationship between age and attitudinal variables in life and career stages is unsecured (Rush, Peacock & Milkovich, 1980). In Levinson et al.’s model of life and career stages (1974), it is stated that people have four career stages between ages 20 and 45. Each stage has its own development tasks and related behaviours and attitudes. The stages are strictly determined by age and progress in a well-ordered sequence (Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989). Super's model (1984), on the other hand, asserts people may be in any career stage at various life times. These two models assume predictions about attitudes and behaviours of people in their course of career are possible. However, individual people's satisfaction and performance vary and do not exhibit any consistent order across the career stages (Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989) as predicted. These models have neglected that value changes will affect behaviour changes (Kalleberg & Loscocco, 1983). A convoluted approach including the effects of age, career development stages and cohort composition and variable periods is suggested for understanding generational views (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Other scholars have highlighted different findings. They consider that the implications of the generational characteristics in the workplace (Shragay & Tziner,
are eminent and deserve particular attention. In Eisner’s research study (2005),
the four generations’ characteristics are discussed and it is concluded that Generation
Y’s workplace satisfaction has a strong relationship with perceived managerial
competence. In particular, Generation Y needs appreciation of their strong,
self-centred career focus and inputs on career development (Maxwell, Ogden &
Broadbridge, 2010). Workplace fun will positively affect their job satisfaction and
task performance as well (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). This workforce possesses higher
self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety, and depression (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), and
tends to be less collectivistic (Harris-Boundary & Flatt, 2010) and less engaged (Kralj &
Solnet, 2010). Nevertheless, they are pragmatic and expected to make positive
contributions to the business world (Bell, Connell & McMinn, 2011).

The conflicting behaviours of different generations were also outlined by the scholars
to highlight the potential challenges to people management at work. This was
confirmed in a comprehensive review of both academic and popular publications,
aimed at producing a profile of each of the three generations (i.e. Baby Boomer,
Generation X and Generation Y), and considerable differences between them were
found (Whitney, Greenwood & Murphy, 2009, cited in Shragay & Tziner, 2011). The
main concern is that much data and information are gathered from students with
either no or little working experience (Bell et al., 2011; Harris-Boundary & Flatt, 2010;
Eisner, 2005; Maxwell et al., 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008) or are confined to
selected locations (Kralj & Solnet, 2010; Maxwell et al., 2010).

For these studies, there is little argument on the findings of the existence of distinct
profiles of generations. The main differences lie in the relationship of Generation Y’s
work values, expectations and impacts on their workplace management. These
findings need further validation as only a few academic studies have taken this issue
into account by examining work values using a time-lag design (Twenge, 2010). On
the other hand, Smola and Sutton (2002) found that work values are more influenced
by generational experiences than by age and maturity. It is argued that due to different
times, conditions and social events, generations have different aspirations (McCrindle,
The appreciation for a value would not change and values will remain the same in an individual’s life span (Rokeach, 1973). As found, “work values do not change as people age” (Cogin, 2012, p. 2289). These findings assert that learning generational differences may be a tool for managers to generate employee productivity, innovation, and corporate citizenship (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Debates on whether intergenerational differences exist (Gibson et al., 2009) or not (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Jorgensen, 2003) continue, and no universal agreement has been reached.

2.5.2 Work Expectations for Generation Y Employees and other Generations

It has been observed that “people of the same age are likely to have similar underlying value systems, regardless of their country or community of birth” (Codrington, 2008, p. 2) as people around the world are impacted by the same defining events. As a result of globalisation, youngsters in Australia, the USA, the UK, Germany and Japan are encountering the same events, trends and developments (McCrindle, 2014). Collective memories will then foster a common set of beliefs, values and expectations unique to that particular generation (Patota et al., 2007). These ‘value systems’ are good predictors of behaviour and expectations (Codrington, 2008). In a global survey on workplace conflict involving 12 countries, 42 per cent of respondents have noted that generational gaps were the main cause of problems (McCindie, 2014). It is evidenced that generational conflict has become an increasing problem (McCindie, 2014). It draws attention to understanding the different generations’ work expectations in order to address possible people management problems in the workplace.

Generational differences in work values have received extensive media coverage recently (Twenge, 2010) as a result of Generation Y entering into the workforce. This new workforce promptly attracted attention as their learning styles and expectations are very different from earlier generations (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Shaw &
Fairhurst, 2008). In another survey undertaken by The SMART Company, Roy Morgan Research and Dunn and Bradstreet with more than 300 small and medium-sized Australian business owners, it was found that almost 70 per cent of them reported dissatisfaction with Generation Y employees’ performance (The World Today, July 13, 2007). In the USA, nearly half of the employers concur that younger employees lack the capabilities of their older co-workers (Armour, 2005). To many, Generation Y challenges the older generations with completely different assumptions (McCrindle, 2009). It draws this research study to firstly explore all the four generations’ work expectations prior to further investigation of their possible impacts on people management at workplaces.

The Traditionalists expect obedience, loyalty, adherence to rules (Dries, Pepermans & Kerpel, 2008; Tolbize, 2008), consistent of performance, a strong work ethic (Macon & Artley, 2009) and conformity (Sheahan, 2005) in daily work. Job consistency and uniformity, based on past workable practices, are highly desired (Tolbize, 2008). They trust ‘cautious, hard work, patience and modesty’ as the core working values and employees should be ready to ‘sacrifice’ themselves, be ‘reticent to express emotion’ and perform ‘duty before pleasure’. For them, employees should have ‘respect for position’ and be ready for ‘delayed reward’ (Codrington, 2008; Sheahan, 2005). Traditionalists prefer to work within traditional and hierarchical management structures (Francis-Smith, 2004) and are used to adopting a top-down style in management (Tolbize, 2008). They inform others only on a need-to-know basis and can be satisfied by a perfect job done (Allen, 2004). Being detail oriented and thorough minded (Zemke et al., 2000), Traditionalists will look for command-and-control leadership (Tolbize, 2008) at work.

Similar to the Traditionalists, Baby Boomer employees will not accept laziness (Tolbize, 2008) and expect that step-by-step promotion (Rath, 1999; Sheahan, 2005) should be based on seniority and loyalty (Codrington, 2008; Tolbize, 2008). To them, hard work and sacrifice are fundamentals for success (Tolbize, 2008). To attain this end, Baby Boomers prefer to micro-manage others (Francis-Smith, 2004). They also
have some work expectations which are different from the Traditionalists. This employee group dislikes authoritarianism (Francis-Smith, 2004) and is dedicated, diligent and self-motivated at work (Codrington, 2008). In addition, Baby Boomers care very much about image, are competitive (Niemiec, 2000), and look for idealism in pursuing excellence in job performance. They tend to seek consensus (Francis-Smith, 2004) and expect to group together by similarity of belief and involvement (Codrington, 2008). Noticeably, Baby Boomers have a sense of entitlement, want good relationships and are unwilling to confront peers (Zemke et al., 2000).

Generation X employees share different work expectations from the previous generations. They are materialistic, skeptical and prefer not to take up additional work (Gursoy et al., 2008). Unlike the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, Generation X employees worry more about the uncertain future and resent being repeatedly told or reminded of what to do (Angeline, 2011). They are more independent, autonomous and self-reliant (Jenkins, 2007; Zemke et al., 2000) and look more for work-life balance (Karp, Fuller & Sirias, 2002; Jenkins, 2007) than previous generations. In contrast to the Traditionalists, they expect to be appreciated (Tolbize, 2008) and rewarded promptly (Angeline, 2011) upon attaining the organizational targets. And, unlike the Baby Boomers, Generation X employees expect “interesting jobs, flexible work schedules and opportunities for internal promotion” (Angeline, 2011, p. 251). They are result oriented (Crampton & Hodge, 2006), adaptable to change (Zemke et al., 2000), and only work as hard as needed (Tolbize, 2008) to get things done. This group of employees will find speedy ways to get things done smartly, even by bending the rules (Martin & Tulgan, 2004) or talking directly to their superiors for quick solutions (Altimier, 2006). To address their job expectations, Generation Xers need “informality, choice, individualism, lifelong learning and immediate gratification” (Codrington, 2008, p. 6) and jobs that meet their expectations in order to satisfy them. Failing to meet their expectations, Generation X employees are confident to job hop to gain higher positions and pay (Altimier, 2006).
As a new workforce, most of the Generation Yers have been working in the corporate world for less than 10 years. It is already widely noted that Generation Y employees’ work expectations are radically different (McCartney, 2011; McGuire et al., 2007) and are incongruent with conventional thinking on how new entrants should think and act at workplaces (Glass, 2007; Martin, 2005; Morton, 2002). They have a very unique set of values and perceptions of the world (Medland, 2012). This group of employees have high expectations on future careers, employment status (Wood, 2004), personal and financial success, get-it-done result-producing attitudes (Breaux, 2003, cited in Eisner, 2005) and a stronger sense of entitlement than older workers (Alsop, 2008). Unlike the Baby Boomers, they dislike conformity (Twenge & Campbell, 2008) and rigid policies and procedures that control them (Angeline, 2011). In many countries, these youngsters strive for openness and honesty (McCartney, 2011). They are confident, civic-minded, and fast learners (Zemke et al., 2000). At work, they expect fairness, tolerance and equity (Broadbridge, Maxwell & Ogden, 2007; Gursoy et al., 2008) and opportunities for training, development and work variety (Gursoy et al., 2008; Sheahan, 2005; Terjesen, Vinnicombe & Freeman, 2007).

Different from the Generation Xers, Generation Y employees prefer jobs that are challenging and entertaining to meet personal goals as well as bettering the world (Eisner, 2005). They do not expect job security (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), so they will be engaged in work only if they feel it to be important and interesting (Lewis, 2003). They are multi-tasking employees and want to engage in different project teams simultaneously (Angeline, 2011). While seeking flexibility and autonomy in task achievement (Martin, 2005), Generation Yers have a short attention span (Hill, 2002).

With regard to superior-subordinate relationships, Generation Y employees want clear direction and management support (Martin, 2005), and they will be anxious if they do not receive it (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Unlike other generations, they pay more respect to a superior for their ability and accomplishments and have less respect for his/her rank (Eisner, 2005). In contradiction to the Traditionalists, they favour an
inclusive management style (Francis-Smith, 2004) to involve them in the workplace (Gursoy et al., 2008; Szamosi, 2006). They expect managers to support them (Martin, 2005), respect their opinions and contributions to enable them to be more confident, optimistic and enthusiastic in their learning processes (Hill & Stephens, 2003).

In addition to listening to their ideas, managers need to provide impromptu feedback about performance (Francis-Smith, 2004) and rewards for their achievements (Sheahan, 2005). Instant gratification is expected, and they would not devote a long-term investment of their time and effort in a job (Southard & Lewis, 2004). They dislike ambiguity and risk (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), slowness (Francis-Smith, 2004) and will never hesitate to speak up and demand reasons and a rationale (Codrington, 2008) if anything bothers them. Generation Y employees, as discussed earlier in Section 2.4.4, want to be connected as team players. There is a high desire for them to be accepted and belong (Huntley, 2006) to a group of committed co-workers with shared values (Eisner, 2005).

Generation Y employees pay equal attention to the variables contributing to the working environment. Generation Yers want encouraging and supportive management styles and a constructive corporate culture that let them perform well (Maxwell et al., 2010) in order to thrive through changes and uncertainty (Harris, 2006). As suggested by Twenge and Campbell (2008), they expect excitement in a company vision, management, meaningful work and available chances to contribute. They expect to work in environmentally friendly organisations that take their social responsibilities seriously (Angeline, 2011). Similar to Generation X, this group of employees is highly mobile (Medland, 2012). They will move on to the next opportunity (Alsop, 2008) if a job does not meet their expectations.

The key visible work expectations of different generations are tabulated in Table 2.1. It is found that there are generational differences and similarities in work expectations (Tolbize, 2008).
2.5.2.1 Attitudes Towards Jobs

Evidence shows that there are visible differences in expectations and motivators across generational cohorts (Cogin, 2012).

**Job worthiness and extent of job ownership**

From Table 2.1, it is clear that Generation X and Generation Y look at a workplace from an entirely different perspective than Traditionalists and Baby Boomers (Glass, 2007). It is noted that Generation Yers will not work as many hours as Baby Boomers (Allen, 2004) and Traditionalists (Murphy, Gordon & Anderson, 2004). There is a clear trend of a decline in ‘hard work’ with younger generations. While ‘hard work’ is very important for Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, Generation X treasure ‘asceticism’ and Generation Y ‘leisure’ as their work values (Cogin, 2012). Differences are also visible in daily operational processes. The detail-orientation and thorough mindedness of the Traditionalists (Zemke et al., 2000) and the micro-management adopted by Baby Boomers (Francis-Smith, 2004) are much hated by Generation X and Yers. Generation X employees are concerned more about result attainment (Crampton & Hodge, 2006; Glass, 2007) and Generation Yers expect flexibility and autonomy in the process. They want to manage their own time and pace as long as they can complete a task right by the stated deadline (Tolbize, 2008).

**Motivator: monetary reward**

Murphy et al. (2004) argue that pay rises are not equally expected by different age groups. All generations expect the timing of receiving money rewards differently. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers assume money will be obtained only after hard work, as a ‘delayed reward’, and they “need to devote great efforts to earn it” (Sheahan, 2005, p. 4). For Generation X, they must obtain rewards promptly (Angeline, 2011; Codrington, 2008). For Generation Y, they want rewards after attaining some results. After all, financial reward is not everything for the younger
employees (Sheahan, 2005).

**Career development and promotion**

It is noted that there is a change from seeking basic employment security to challenging assignments in the career development expectations between different generations. For the Traditionalists, they prefer to remain in a single company over time (Allen, 2004) to pursue their working career. Both Baby Boomers and Generation Xers want to work their way to the top. However, the former works towards this progressively (Rath, 1999; Sheahan, 2005), and the latter wants to find the shortcut to get to the top (Angeline, 2011; Sheahan, 2005). Career security is more important than job security for Generation X (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generation Y has very different expectations on career development than other generations. They seek a portable career (Glass, 2007) where challenging and meaningful assignments exist (Alsop, 2008; Baruch, 2004).

**2.5.2.2 Superior-Subordinate Relationships**

*Supervision/Leadership: authority and rules; respect and trust*

All generations expect respect at work, but they have different understandings of it. Though Baby Boomers seek respect (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007) and want to be treated as equals (Eisner, 2005), they are generally in agreement with Traditionalists in respecting authority and position (Codrington, 2008; Dries et al., 2008; Sheahan, 2005; Tolbize, 2008). The great difference is that Baby Boomers dislike authoritarianism (Eisner, 2008) or top-down management approaches adopted by the Traditionalists. On the other hand, respect and authority are interpreted differently by Generation Xers and Yers. Generation X equates being ‘polite’ with being respectful, while Generation Y goes further in thinking respect must only be earned by showing one’s ability and accomplishments (Martin, 2005; Sheahan, 2005). In other words, respect will not be automatically given by both Generation Xers and Yers. Generation
X employees are not impressed or intimated by titles (Altimier, 2006). Similar to Generation Y’s dislike of rigid policies and procedures (Angeline, 2011), Generation X will even bend the rules to attain their expected results (Martin & Tulgan, 2004).

*Communication and Job Instruction*

Different generations require feedback to different extents (Tolbize, 2008). Younger employees resist the micro-management favoured by the older generations (Francis-Smith, 2004). Traditionalists expect perfect job outcomes and will inform others on a need-to-know basis only (Allen, 2004). On the other hand, there are variations in the expectations of receiving feedback between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees. Baby Boomers expect to complete the assigned jobs on their own and little feedback from managers is required (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Tolbize, 2008). This approach would not satisfy the Generation X and Yers’ expectations. For Generation X employees, they resent being told or reminded repeatedly (Angeline, 2011) as do Baby Boomers. Unlike the Baby Boomers, they demand more specific and constructive feedback from managers (Allen, 2004). The timing of receiving feedback is crucial to Generation Yers. They expect to have immediate and continuous feedback (Francis-Smith, 2004; Tolbize, 2008) from their superiors and be included or involved in daily operations (Francis-Smith, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2008; Szamosi, 2006). All generations expect their superiors could lead them in daily supervision but their aspirations for a leader vary. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers prefer a leader to be credible. For Generation Y employees, they expect a leader to be someone who listens well (Deal, 2007).
2.5.2.3 Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment

Change

Change is not expected by Traditionalists and Baby Boomers (Sheahan, 2005). However, change becomes more acceptable to Generation Xers and Yers. Indeed, Generation X employees will be adaptable to change (Smith & Clurman, 1997; Zemke et al., 2000) and Generation Y even welcome it (Gursoy et al., 2008; Sheahan, 2005; Terjesen et al., 2007).

Loyalty

In terms of their loyalty and commitment expectations, more similarities between Traditionalists and Baby Boomers are found. Both groups share a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the companies they work for (Codrington, 2008; Dries et al., 2008; Eisner, 2005; Tolbize, 2008). Loyalty, in terms of time perceptions, however, vary widely between generations (Cogin, 2012). Generation X is not likely to have a long-term engagement with a single company like the Traditionalists or Baby Boomers. They will be loyal to a person they trust instead (Francis-Smith, 2004). To the Generation Y employees, a long-term commitment means one year (Martin, 2005). In a longitudinal study of job mobility, it was found that a typical young employee will work for seven organizations (Topel & Ward, 1992) or change careers three or four times (Morrison, Erickson & Dychtwald, 2006) during their first 10 years in the labour market. Younger employees are less loyal to the company and more ‘me’ oriented (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Therefore, the idea, cause or product must appeal to Generation Y’s dedication to gain their loyalty and commitment (Tolbize, 2008). It is questionable that any commitment change may be caused by a limiting of the possible engagement of employees instead of age or birth cohort (Ramsay & Kemble, 2015).
2.5.2.4 Work-life Considerations

What Generation X and Y treasure more is work-life balance (Allen, 2004; Jenkins, 2007; Karp et al., 2002; Tolbize, 2008). This expectation is in contradiction with Traditionalists’ work to life understanding (Adams, 1998) or the Baby Boomers’ full devotion to work (Tolbize, 2008).

As reviewed, great work differences between the Generation Yers and the other generations are found. In comparison to the Traditionalists’ high expectations for moderation, hard work and authority, Generation Y is remarkably different in their confidence, self-belief and desire for life (Cogin, 2012). Differences between Generation Yers and Baby Boomers are also noted. Tolbize (2008) states that Baby Boomers are process-oriented, but the younger generations are more result-focused. It is evidenced that there are differences in meeting each other’s work expectations: “Baby Boomers obsession with work versus Generation Y’s flexibility, Baby Boomers’ preference for autonomy and Generation Y’s for collaboration and working in teams, Baby Boomers’ respect for workplace hierarchy against Generation Y’s preparedness to challenge management and so on” (Helyer & Lee, 2012, p. 568). The understanding of respect differs between older and younger generations as well. Traditionalists and Baby Boomers may not want equal respect to all, but they need to be treated with more respect (Deal, 2007). They want younger generations to give more attention to their ideas and follow exactly what they are told. Generation X and Generation Y employees consider respect differently. They want others to give weight to what they say and to be listened to (Tolbize, 2008). Finally, a greater difference also occurs in the high expectations for work-life balance by Generation Y than in the older generations.
Despite the differences, similarities between generations have also been found in a cross-cultural study (Murphy et al., 2004). It is noticed that all generations value rewards (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffmand & Lance, 2010) to various extents and they expect happiness and similar workplace cultures (Tolbize, 2008). As found in Table 2.2, fairness and ethical, straightforward ways in handling work issues are commonly expected by different age groups of employees. All generations need to feel valued, recognized and appreciated in a supportive environment (Tolbize, 2008) as well. They all look for jobs that are interesting, embedded with opportunities to grow, and good management practices (Giancola, 2010, cited in Hannay & Fretwell, 2011).

Table 2.1: Work Expectation Differences Between Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Expectations</th>
<th>Traditionalists</th>
<th>The Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towards Job</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Detail oriented and thorough minded (Zemke et al., 2000)</td>
<td>● Micro-managing others (Francis-Smith, 2004)</td>
<td>● Not taking up additional work (Gursoy et al., 2008)</td>
<td>● Flexibility and autonomy (Martin, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Obedience (Dries et al., 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motivator: monetary reward</td>
<td>• Delayed Reward (Codrington, 2008; Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>• Earn it (Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>• Reward promptly (Angeline, 2011; Codrington, 2008)</td>
<td>• Give it for achievement (Sheahan, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Development and Promotion</td>
<td>• Employment Security (Sheahan, 2005; Smith &amp; Clurman, 1997)</td>
<td>• Work the way to the top (Rath, 1999; Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>• Shortcut to the top (Angeline, 2011; Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>• Challenging and meaningful assignments (Alsop, 2008; Baruch, 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior-Subordinate Relationships</td>
<td>• Value authority and rules (Dries et al., 2008; Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>• Respect authority and be treated as equals (Eisner, 2005)</td>
<td>• Not impressed or intimidated by title (Altimier, 2006; Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>• Dislike rigid policies and procedures (Angeline, 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision/Leadership: authority and rules</td>
<td>• Top-down management (Smith &amp; Clurman, 1997; Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>• Dislike authoritarianism (Eisner, 2005)</td>
<td>• Bend rules to get things done (Martin &amp; Tulgan, 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and Trust</td>
<td>● Respect for position (Codrington, 2008; Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>● Seek respect (Westerman &amp; Yamamura, 2007)</td>
<td>● Is polite (Sheahan, 2005)</td>
<td>● Earn respect for ability and achievements than rank (Martin, 2005; Sheahan, 2005)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Earn respect for ability and achievements than rank (Martin, 2005; Sheahan, 2005)
- Immediate and continuous (Francis-Smith, 2004; Tolbize, 2008)
- Be included and involved (Francis-Smith, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2008; Szamosi, 2006)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work-Life Consideration</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the data are adapted from Tolbize (2008, pp. 8-12) and information from Section 2.5.2
Table 2.2: Work Expectation Similarities Between Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Expectations</th>
<th>Traditionalists</th>
<th>The Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Straight-forward(Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>Straight-forward(Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>Straight-forward(Tolbize, 2008)</td>
<td>Fair(Broadbridge et al., 2007a; Gursoy et al., 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling valued</td>
<td>Feeling valued</td>
<td>Feeling valued</td>
<td>Feeling valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the data are adapted from Tolbize (2008, pp. 8-12) and information from Section 2.5.2

2.5.3 Generation Y Employees’ Impacts on People Management

Having examined the various generations’ work expectations, literature studies will be reviewed in this section to unveil the other generations’ perceptions of Generation Y employees. This may subsequently help in understanding the impacts of Generation Y’s work expectations on people management in workplace.

It was found that in 2011, 1 per cent of the workforce in America are from the Silent generations. Baby Boomers are occupying 29 per cent of the workforce, followed by
44 per cent of Generation X and 26 per cent of Generation Y, respectively (Murphy, 2007). Pfeffer (1983) argues that diverse employees could have more conflict with each other as “they have fewer shared experiences and more opinion differences than similar employees” (McGuire et al., 2007, p. 601). With the highly diverse work styles, attitudes and behaviour of the four generations at work, organizations face the possibility of greater generational clashes.

As found, more than 70 per cent of older employees are dismissive or lack confidence in younger employees’ abilities. On the other hand, nearly half of the employers say that younger employees are dismissive of the abilities of their older generation co-workers (Armour, 2005). It was reflected that 50 per cent of younger employees do not trust their older co-workers (Espinoza, Ukleja & Rusch, 2010). Tolbize (2008) echoes that “while younger workers complain that there is a lack of respect towards them in the workplace, older workers share similar complaints” (p. 7).

It is generally agreed that there are difficulties in managing an age diversified workforce, with the potential for conflict (Wei, 2008; Zemke et al., 2000). Between the examined generations, as discussed in Section 2.2, there is “an inherent lack of understanding about the other generations” (Medland, 2012, p. 21), leading to increased conflict at work. Every generation of employees, using their own life experiences and expectation as the basis, tend to perceive others differently (Angeline, 2010).

Technically able, highly informed and confident (Johns, 2003), Generation Yers enter the workforce with different expectations than older generations. Their expectations for “work-life balance, job flexibility, promotion based on merit instead of experience, impatience and a need for recognition” (McCrindle, 2009, cited in Medland, 2012, p. 22) directly challenge the status quo concept upheld by the Baby Boomers. Furthermore, to address Generation Y employees’ expectations, managers from other generations may feel pressurized to know them by names, understand their needs and expectations and care for their well-being and casual
work-style (Gursoy et al., 2008). Even though Generation Y employees can perform best when their abilities are identified and matched with challenging work (Eisner, 2005) in speed, customization and interactivity (Martin & Tulgan, 2004), their unique work expectations are considered to be rude and disrespectful (Angeline, 2011) by others. Many managers equate Generation Yers’ independent working spirit as reluctance to conform (Martin, 2005). Without clear directions, Generation Y is more likely to ‘rock the boat’ than any other generation (Johns, 2003, cited in Eisner, 2005) and will be very difficult to manage (Hill, 2002).

Baby Boomer managers have perceived Generation Yers to be inconsistent, unreliable and calculating in their work; to these managers, Generation Y employees “do not deserve prompt recognition and reward” (Gursoy et al., 2008, cited in Angeline, 2011, p. 252). Being workaholic and diligent, Baby Boomers only perceive the attitude of ‘live to work’ to be acceptable. They could hardly accept Generation Y’s ‘working to live’ behaviour. (Medland, 2012). In the opinion of Baby Boomers, Generation Yers are ‘slackers’ and show no work ethics. They are not very reliable and show no consistency in job performance. To them, these young employees would not take up ‘ownership’ either, they would just keep saying, “It is not my job”. (Gursoy et al., 2008, p. 453)

Generation X employees do not rank their overconfident Generation Y colleagues highly either. They think the Generation Y employees, amidst insufficient job knowledge and experience to perform well, are pampered by the management by over-praising and over-rewarding them (Angeline, 2011). After all, the Generation Y’s work expectation of an inclusive management style (Francis-Smith, 2004), to be involved (Gursoy et al., 2008; Szamosi, 2006) and a strong desire to be accepted and belong (Huntley, 2006) to a group of committed co-workers with shared values (Eisner, 2005), runs in contradiction to the Generation X employees’ work belief in ‘individualism’ for immediate personal gratification (Codrington, 2008). Generation Xers opine that the Generation Y employees are overconfident, lack ownership and have no sense of urgency. They just want to be thanked for doing the required job
duties and need very high maintenance from others (Gursoy et al., 2008).

As reviewed, Generation Y employees’ work expectations are, in one way or another, in confrontation with previous generations’ working beliefs. Taylor et al. (2009) note that contemporary workplace challenges of intellectual capital, skill requirements and talent retention are particularly problematic in relation to Generation Y. In particular, Generation Y’s workplace satisfaction (Eisner, 2005) and needs for appreciation on their career development (Maxwell et al., 2010) have major implications for corporate culture (Judge & Bretz, 1992), particularly in ethical issues (Dose, 1997), the success or failure of human resources initiatives (Jurkiewicz, 2000) and other corporate issues (Smola & Sutton, 2002). The generational differences in work/career expectations and aspirations (Johnson & Lopes, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2007) will create people management challenges (McGuire et al., 2007) in team stability handling (Jackson et al., 1991; Wagner, Pfeffer & O’Reilly, 1984), organisational attachment (Tsui, Egan & O’Reilly, 1992) and rating performance (Judge & Ferris, 1993). Managers will be frustrated if they view these differences as potential problem areas (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Conflicts, if not resolved, will result in unhappy employees, high turnover and lower productivity (Penttila, 2009). Therefore, appropriate management practices need to be adopted (Murphy et al., 2004) to deal with the generational differences.

A critical factor in striving for organizational success, is to understand the attitudes of different generations (Alas, 2005). However, issues associated with generational diversity in organisations have been neglected in the past (McGuire et al., 2007). Indeed, other than the studies conducted by Eisner (2005) and Broadbridge et al. (2007), it has not attracted equal attention from scholars, as very little academic work has been undertaken on the characteristics and expectations of Generation Y (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). There are few empirical research studies found to support “the proposition that major differences exist in workplace expectations” (Wesner & Miller, 2008, p. 95). The academic studies on potential people management concerns generated from the generational differences of youth in the
workplace are limited, and largely dominated by studies from the UK, US and Canada (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Chen & Choi, 2007; Glass, 2007).

It is argued that a race has its own unique value sets (Harris & Moran, 1996; Peppas, 2001) which are inherited or determined as its racial identity. Cogin (2012), however, finds that “only one large-scale cross-cultural study has examined instrumental and terminal values across generations” (p. 2271). It is unclear whether the formative incidents in Western countries would similarly impact across countries, cultures, and economic and labour conditions (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). As the work expectations and impacts of Chinese Generation Y employees have not been empirically explored, a research study on Chinese Generation Y expectations is desirable.

The aim of this research study will be to explore the work expectations and impacts of Chinese Generation Y employees on people management. The findings will contribute to the generational theory with Chinese insights. In the following sections, the specific literature on Chinese work values will be firstly reviewed, and general observations on the Chinese Generation Y situation in Hong Kong will subsequently be highlighted.

2.6 Chinese Employees

At the time of this research study, there is a lack of similarly empirical evidence from Chinese communities to support the scholarly findings in the West. A few literature studies using the Western Generation Y findings to explore individual work issues have been found. Yet, they are not specifically focused on exploring Chinese Generation Y work expectations and their people management impacts, in comparison to Western studies.
2.6.1 **Chinese work values**

Despite that Chinese people live and work in different Chinese nations, as an ethnic group their work values are rooted in traditional Chinese philosophies, primarily Confucianism (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). Chinese countries share the Confucian emphasis on harmony, cooperation, loyalty and reciprocity (Reischauer & Fairbank, 1960). In the workplace, Chinese workers in these countries put “challenge, non-work time and recognition” (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987, p. 572) to be their common work goals. Indeed, the Chinese place more importance on work and assigned insufficient time for personal and family life. According to Shenkar and Ronen (1987), the groupings of work goals seem to be generally in line with each other in the Chinese countries studied.

The findings indicate more similarities in Chinese work values amongst the Chinese communities and that “Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore are frequently used as proxies” (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987, p. 564) for conducting research related to Chinese workers. When compared with academic findings in the West, it is noted from previous research (Redding, 1976) that workers in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) frequently display different work values from Western workers (Shenkar & Ronen, 1987). It is also reported in a cross-cultural study of cultural values and work that Hong Kong and Taiwan place strong emphasis on “hierarchy” (Schwartz, 1999, cited in Oi-ling, 2003). It is then suggested that the underlying values and belief systems of individuals produce significant “differences in employees’ expectations and work attitudes” (Hofstede, 1980, cited in Shenkar & Ronen, 1987, p. 564).

However, a research study in 2012 examining the impacts of the six principles of traditional Chinese culture on young educated Chinese professionals draws a very different conclusion. It found that the Generation Yers in the PRC have similar values as their counterparts around the world (Shapero, 2013). They are “aggressive, open-minded, open for communication and trendy” (Shapero, 2013, p. 31). They expect promotions and rewards to be linked to their individual accomplishments.
These youngsters expect promising work, to be promoted quickly within a short period of time and are eager to quit a job if their career advancement expectations are not satisfied. This study also found that the concerned youngsters “have learned that getting ahead means taking initiative and becoming empowered” (Shapero, 2013, p. 34) and they are more confident in questioning superiors. It appears that this group of employees in the PRC are concerned more with self-interest, lack teamwork and have greater expectations for materialism and incremental wealth (Shapero, 2013).

The findings in this study have some limitations in its conclusions on the Chinese Generation Y’s characteristics and expectations. It primarily focuses on finding the impacts of traditional Chinese culture on the new Generation Y. The study does not aim to reveal the work expectations of this new workforce. Therefore, the literature studies on the Western Generation Y’s characteristics and expectations are not specifically used in comparison to the Chinese Generation Yers. The Chinese Generation Y features subsequently found are piecemeal, at best, without an in-depth analysis of the different aspects of the values and expectations of this new workforce. The findings only highlight the weakening impacts of traditional Chinese culture on the generation. The work expectations of Chinese Generation Y and their impacts on people management are barely observable.

Its conclusion that Chinese Generation Yers having similar values to their Western counterparts is also in contradiction with another study conducted, from October 2010 to April 2011, by N-Dynamic and IBM (2011). Data was collected from 2,480 employees using an online survey and subsequent focus group meetings with managers in N-Dynamic’s research. It was found that Generation Y in China is notably different from their counterparts in other parts of the world. It argues that the previous findings are written with a global perspective and group all Generation Y in one category without taking unique regional differences into consideration. Indeed, Chinese Generation Yers happen to be “even more impatient and eager for resources and advancement than their global peers” (N-Dynamic & IBM, 2011, p. 3). They have high expectations and a greater sense of restlessness and entitlement in the workplace.
(N-Dynamic & IBM, 2011), and are becoming more individualistic (Parker, Haytko & Hermans, 2009).

Wong et al. (2008) further observed that research conducted specifically with working participants are limited. Even though some expectations of Chinese Generation Y are highlighted in the reviewed literature studies, the findings are scattered and could hardly be generalized. More structured empirical studies to explore the specific work expectations of Chinese Generation Y employees are necessary. This research is therefore undertaken by selecting a city in the PRC to study the work expectations of the Chinese Generation Yers. Hong Kong, having been used as one of the proxies in past research studies, was selected.

2.6.2 The Rise of Chinese Generation Y in Hong Kong

As an exploratory study, Hong Kong (a special administrative region of the PRC), located in the Southern part of China, is chosen for research because it is a developed Chinese financial city where abundant educated Chinese Generation Y live. The local Chinese Generation Yers understand modern workplace expectations well and would be representative of the concerned cohort. The literature containing information on Hong Kong’s Generation Y has been researched to generate a better understanding of this particular local workforce.

Generation Y is not the only generation working in Hong Kong. There is a mix of generations, Baby Boomers (1945–1964), Generation X (1965–1980) and Generation Y (born after 1980), that are working in organizations in the city. Within this working context, it is observed that Generation Yers and their more senior supervisors are experiencing a generational disconnect (Samara, 2011).

In the coming decades, Baby Boomers will gradually retire and Generation X will succeed to their positions, while generation Y will become the major workforce. The number of Generation X leaders is insufficient to fill the growing leadership gap and
it requires “younger employees to lead earlier in their career” (Richards & Morga, 2013, p. 15). By 2020, Generation Y will overtake Generation X and the Baby Boomers, in terms of disposable income, as well as in their earning and spending power (Lee, 2010). Generation Y will then represent nearly 24 per cent of the Hong Kong population and provide the necessary labour force to fill the business needs (Richards & Morga, 2013).

As found in Kwok’s study (2012), the Chinese Generation Y in Hong Kong are facing more competition with heavier workloads, longer working hours, and an unstable working environment. They put more value on independence, challenges, being responsible and hardworking (Oi-ling, 2003). One of the greatest concerns among Human Resource professionals in Hong Kong is how Generation Y employees conduct themselves (Lahrichi, 2013). In one comparative study on the Generation Y’s working encounter, it was found that Chinese Generation Y’s work attitude is to question almost everything and that they would not abide by tradition or convention (Kwok, 2012). They also have strong views on interpersonal relationships and work to satisfy personal needs. Yet, this workforce is more reactive than Western Generation Yers. They tend to stay silent about their preferences and needs, which frustrates the managers and employers (Samara, 2011). When combined with the traditional work-related Confucian values of hard work, endurance, reciprocity and loyalty as being central to working life (Oi-ling, 2003), and the other Chinese work values mentioned in Section 2.6.1, the Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong may display work expectations different from their Western counterparts.

2.7 Literature Gaps and Research Questions

Organizations today face the possibility of greater generational clashes (Beaver & Hutchings, 2005). Yet, the previous studies on generations are largely based on observation, and very little empirical research has been done on the characteristics, expectations and implications of generations in the workplace (Cogin, 2012). With very little academic work focused on the characteristics and expectations of
Generation Y (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008), and the Generation Y findings largely confined to Western countries, it warrants a viable research opportunity for initiating this research study. To fill the identified literature gaps, this research study aims to explore the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and their impacts on people management in order to make a contribution to generational theory with Chinese insights.

The key question is: “What are the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and how do they impact on people management?” The sub-questions are as follows:

**Research Question 1a:** What are the work expectations of Generation Y employees in Hong Kong?

**Research Question 1b:** What are the work expectations of non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong?

It leads the study to further enquire whether generations have different perceptions over their work expectations or not.

**Research Question 2:** What differences, if any, exist in the work expectations between Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers?

The relationship of Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and their impacts on particular aspects of people management need to be further explored. In Western countries, Generation Y has been cited as the main cause of workplace tensions (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Taylor et al., 2009). Therefore, the following two research questions are formulated to examine the validity of the assertions within the Chinese workplace context.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do non-Generation Y managers perceive Generation Y employees as a source of
workplace tensions?

Finally, the implications on human resources initiatives (Jurkiewicz, 2000) have to be properly explored. Therefore, Research Question 4 is developed to reveal the contemporary people management situation at work.

**Research Question 4:** To what extent do non-Generation Y managers adapt workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y employee needs?

The following Chapter 3 will discuss the research methodology to address the four research questions.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology for the study. It is comprised of eight sections that explain and justify the choice of the research methodology process.

This chapter starts with an introduction to the research methodology. An overall discussion of the considerations in applying the qualitative research design to explore Generation Y’s work expectations and impacts within the contemporary workplace setting of Hong Kong follows. The criteria for selecting the research participants and the semi-structured one-to-one interview research instrument are outlined separately in the subsequent two sections. The data collection method is then explained, followed by the data analysis. To comply with the ethical application requirements, the ethical implications of this study, with the appropriate actions taken, are further elaborated. The chapter ends with an explanation of the research limitations.

3.2 Research Design

To explore the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations in Hong Kong, qualitative research was used instead of quantitative research. In Chapter 2, it was explained that previous academic research on Generation Y was largely conducted in Western countries. The Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and impacts at work could barely be found at the time of research. The relationships among the measured variables are still unclear and undefined for explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Therefore, it is difficult to quantify or measure the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations.

A research methodology that allows the flexibility to capture broad information on Chinese Generation Y is needed to serve the study purpose. A qualitative research methodology, largely used for discovery rather than verification (Ambert, Adler &
Detzner, 1995) in the social science field, was selected. It provides “a systematic inquiry into the nature or qualities of observable group behaviour in order to learn what it means to be a member of that group” (Colarado State University, 2009, p. 1). More importantly, it considers “the diversity of views that those who participate in the survey have to offer” (Myers, 1997, p. 241) to yield rich data (Bonous-Hammarth, 2000) to address the research objectives. It captures the data richness and depth of exploration and descriptions (Myers, 2000) of the underlying work expectations of the Chinese Generation Y employees.

Participants can express ideas freely in this research study process. Their responses and feedback will be solicited to explore “the behaviour, processes of interaction and the meanings, values and experiences [of the participants] in their ‘natural context” (Kitto, Chesters & Grbich, 2008, p. 243). Comprehensive information will be gathered and vivid ideas, without interference, are generated. Through this process, the Chinese Generation Y employee’s values, meanings and motivations, together with their interactions within business operations, was explored. An interpretative approach was adopted to gain a deeper comprehension of the phenomena by understanding the interpretations of those experiencing it (Shah & Corley, 2006). There was a focus on the “processes by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified within a specific human context” (Schwandt, 1998, p. 225). In gathering a range of interpretations related to the phenomenon, areas of both commonalities and differences were examined in order to draw generalizations, wherever applicable.

A cross-sectional design to gather multiple cases at a single point in time (Bryman & Bell, 2011) was applied. Hong Kong, located in the southern part of China, was selected to explore the complex social processes (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), new variables and relationships (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002; Shah & Corley, 2006) of the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and their people management impacts. It was chosen not only because of its mature business centre nature, but also because it is a developed financial city where an abundance of
educated Chinese Generation Yers live. It is probable that the local Generation Y could provide broad and resourceful workplace information for the study. They could be representative of their age, to speak for the Chinese mind on their contemporary workplace concerns.

Chinese Generation Y employees from different natures of business in Hong Kong were interviewed to compare their work perceptions and how they affect their job expectations. Non-Generation Y managers, based on the same set of semi-structured questions, were then interviewed. The collected data was compared against the Chinese Generation Y’s findings to identify the core Generation Y’s work expectations and impacts at work. By using a comparative study to review cases from a variety of situations, it will facilitate examining particular issues or phenomena of Generation Y to compare their manifestations in different socio-cultural settings (Hantrais, 1996). The key people management issues concerning Chinese Generation Y employees’ expectations on job scope, superior-subordinate relationships, collaboration with colleagues, corporate branding, organizational culture, work environment and work-life considerations could then be properly addressed.

3.3 Research Participants

Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers in private organizations were the units of analysis. The actual sample size to be selected for qualitative research depends largely on the research question(s) and objectives (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009) stated in the research study. Qualitative investigations should “involve the use of small samples” and “should not be too large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 242). According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), twelve in-depth interviews should be adequate to meet the research aim of finding the commonalities of workplace expectations within a fairly homogenous group of Chinese Generation Yers in Hong Kong. Twenty interviews were selected and considered to be sufficient for understanding the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations. An equal number of 10 Chinese
Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers with Chinese Generation Y subordinates were sampled. It enabled information to be collected from employees and management in a balanced manner in order to assure data reliability and validity. The interviews were continued until it was apparent that no new data would be gathered.

The purposive sampling method was selected to study the specific Chinese Generation Y sample. It was feasible to examine the work expectations of this particular group in great details and facilitated common phenomenon to emerge. The participants selected by this sampling method could provide the direct personal information necessary to address the research questions in Chapter 2. Ten volunteer Chinese Generation Y employees living in Hong Kong were selected out of a list of referrals from human resource management consultants and practitioners by the purposive sampling method. The human resource management consultants and practitioners were selected by the researcher. They were experienced human resource management professionals, with exposure in working with the new generation workforce, and had established professional networks with business organizations in Hong Kong. The research’s need to source Chinese Generation Y employees from different business nature and job functions would be emphasized for identifying suitable participants.

To safeguard data reliability and validity, it was purposely designed to include participant diversity in the sample selection process. Generation Y employees were selected from different industries, business functions and job duties from the list of referrals. The intention was to facilitate a comparison and validation of the similarities and differences of work perceptions and to enable reliable analysis in exploring their impacts on contemporary people management issues. This stringent sample selection process was incorporated to enhance the data reliability for the research study. Similarly, managers referred by human resource management consultants or sourced through the researcher’s personal connections had been compiled into a list for sampling.
In addition to the research needs, a special emphasis was placed on the requirement that the identified non-Generation Y manager must have Chinese Generation Y subordinate(s) reporting to him/her. Ten managers, with Chinese Generation Y subordinate(s), were subsequently selected from different job functions in various industries by the purposive sampling method. The purpose was to include information from a wide spectrum of managers. In the invitational e-mail sent to individual non-Generation Y manager (Appendix B), together with the Participant Information Statement (Appendix C) and Individual Consent Form (Appendix D), it was stated again that any manager without any Generation Y subordinates would be excluded in the sampling process. The informant, if they failed to meet the critical requirement, should not accept the invitation. The concerned non-Generation Y manager would not be contacted for participation in the interview.

Purposive sampling with specified criteria for selection of research participants, highlighted in Figure 3.1, was adopted. Volunteer interviewees were chosen from different organizations.

Criteria for Purposive Sampling

Sampling will be conducted within the contemporary workplace setting of Hong Kong.

A Generation Y employee interviewee is restricted to:

- a local Chinese Generation Y resident, and
- is in a full-time or part-time job at the time of interview.

A manager interviewee is restricted to:

- a non-Generation Y manager,
- with management responsibilities in a business organization, and
- has at least one Chinese Generation Y subordinate directly reporting to them.
Participant diversity for Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers, as outlined from Tables 3.1 to Table 3.6 below, was assured in the research design.

### 3.3.1 Participants by Years of Working Experience

As mentioned in Section 2.4.4, Generation Y refers to those born after 1980. In Hong Kong, this group of employees was aged 34 or below and they had less than 20 years of work experience at the time of the study. Table 3.1 below shows that there was an even representation of Chinese Generation Y employees interviewed between the different periods of years of working experience. For the non-Generation Y managers, 30 per cent were Generation X and 70 per cent were Baby Boomers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of working experience</th>
<th>Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Generation X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years and above</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Participants by Industry Type and Nature of Firm Ownership

Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below highlight the industry types and the nature of firm ownership of the participants. A higher proportion of employees, as shown in Table 3.2, were working in the service industries. On the other hand, more non-Generation Y managers were from the retail and financial industries. As reflected in Table 3.3, 60 per cent of the participants were working in local Chinese firms.

Table 3.2 – Composition of Participants by Industry Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Industries</th>
<th>Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service (incl. legal, consultancy, hotel, social welfare, physiotherapy)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 – Composition of Participants by Nature of Firm Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Firm Ownership</th>
<th>Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People Republic of China firm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Chinese firm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign firm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.3 Participants by Company Size

Table 3.4 below provides an overview of the size of the companies that participants represented. By September 2014, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) accounted for over 98 per cent of the total business establishments and employed about 47 per cent of the workforce in the private sector in Hong Kong (HKSAR Trade and Industry Department, 2014). These enterprises include manufacturing businesses, with fewer than 100 employees, and non-manufacturing enterprises with fewer than 50 persons (HKSAR Trade and Industry Department, 2007). As shown in Table 3.4, a greater number of Chinese Generation Y employees were selected from small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). There is a higher representation of the majority viewpoints from the Chinese Generation Y workforce in Hong Kong. Non-Generation Y managers from different sized companies were selected and included in the study.
Table 3.4 – Composition of Participants by Company Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Size (number of employees)</th>
<th>Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>over 1,000 employees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 – 999 employees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 100 employees</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.4 Participants by Staff Levels

Table 3.5 below outlines the composition of the participants by staff levels. It shows that 70 per cent of the Chinese Generation Y employees were general staff, even though a small number of them had moved up to senior staff levels. It represents the contemporary working situation in Hong Kong mentioned in Section 3.3.1. Most of the Chinese Generation Y employees are new entrants in the workforce and they are still struggling their way up to higher positions. Despite this, Chinese Generation Yers' observations from different organizational levels were included and represented (Table 3.5), it enabled the Chinese Generation Y employees' work expectations, as a generational cohort, could be broadly collected. For the non-Generation Y managers, they hold final decision-making authority in top or middle management positions. Therefore, they could reflect other generation's observations on Chinese Generation Y employees' impacts on people management.
Table 3.5 – Composition of Participants by Staff Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Levels</th>
<th>Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Management (Chief Officer, Director, General Manager and above)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Management (Division Head and Department Manager)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontline Management (Section Manager, Officer, Supervisor)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Staff</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.5 Participants by Job Function

Table 3.6 below provides an overview of the job functions held by the participants. As reflected in the table, the Chinese Generation Y employees were equally distributed between business and supporting functions. 7 out of the 10 non-Generation managers were in supporting functions.
As reflected from Tables 3.1 to Table 3.6, a mix of participants from different business organizations, industries and years of working experience was covered in the research design. Various sizes of companies were represented, with a higher representation of both Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers from local Chinese firms. The participants’ observations could generally represent the situation in the contemporary Hong Kong working environment. Participants from all staff levels, covering top management to frontline employees, were included to reveal a broad range of work expectations and perceptions in the workplace. Information was solicited from over 10 job functions, comprising both business generating and support functions. The range of job functions and responsibilities covered business development, financial investment, sales and marketing and various business support functions. The participant’s broad profiles enabled the research analysis and findings to be comprehensive, objective and reliable.
3.4 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviewing was selected as a key data gathering tool to ensure the widest possible responses from the participants. Interviewing allowed the researcher to gather data that addressed the study’s goals and questions (Savenye & Robinson, 2004). Participants were asked to “answer open-ended (but structured) questions about their experience” (Shah & Corley, 2006, p. 1828) or facilitate conversations in unstructured interviews at natural points (Bernard, 1988). It helped in deriving rich representations of participant interpretations (Bryman & Bell, 2011; May, 2010) and collected infrequent, but might be hard to visualize data, of phenomena (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Data hidden behind the highly episodic phenomenon of interest could be subsequently exposed. A semi-structured interview, rather than an unstructured interview, was used in this research study to facilitate a list of themes and questions (Saunders et al., 2009) to be explored. A set of questions was designed (Appendix E) to facilitate discussion in the interviews. It allowed the researcher the opportunity to perceive the consequential thoughts and ideas upheld by the participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A one-to-one interview was considered to be the most suitable means to learn participants’ underlying perceptions towards their workplace. Face-to-face interviewing was used in this study because of its capacity to uncover complex information and to unveil hidden issues. It was designed to unfold issue complexities from different perspectives in order to address the research topic (Shah & Corley, 2006). Telephone interview, though an effective means of obtaining speedy responses from subjects located over different city locations, was not considered. It lacked the opportunity to explore complex issues or to bring ordinarily difficult ideas to articulate to the surface. A one-to-one interview with the employees and non-Generation Y managers was desirable to avoid leakage of ethical issues. The information gathered from individual interviews is commonly comprehensive and has a higher validity as the data is less likely to be affected by interference. Focus group interviews was dropped as participants may be reluctant to express personal values
and viewpoints openly in the focus group setting.

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected from both Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers. The Chinese Generation Y employees living in Hong Kong were selected out of a list of referrals from human resource management consultants and practitioners by a purposive sampling method. They were selected from different industries, business functions and job duties to ensure participant diversity. Similarly, non-Generation Y managers referred by human resource management consultants or sourced through the researcher’s personal connections were compiled into a list for sampling. Managers from a diversity of job functions in various industries were sampled. As the participants were referred by human resource management consultants or practitioners, they would not be identified or known beforehand. The prospective participants identified could simply refuse to be referred for the research.

For the non-Generation Y managers to be recruited by personal connection, the potential risk for prospective interviewees to feel obligated to participate was prevented by using it only as a last resort. This means was used only when the list of proposed participants referred by human resource management consultants was inadequate for the research study. If this unique situation occurred, rarely contacted potential participants would be approached. They were not obligated to participate and could decline the research invitation easily. They would be reminded and further assured of their choice and could voluntarily withdraw at any time as stated in the Participant Information Statement (Appendix C) and the Individual Consent Form (Appendix D). An invitational email, with the Participant Information Statement and Individual Consent Form attached, was sent to the prospective participants (Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers). The copies of the invitational email, Participant Information Statement and the Consent Form are found in Appendix B, C and D, respectively. Only participants sending returned emails with the signed Individual Consent Form that indicated agreement to participate in the
interview were included in the research. With the mentioned measures in place, it was assured that the objectively of the data collection was secure.

The interviews were arranged at a convenient location agreeable to the participants. Each interview session typically lasted for one hour, for the Generation Y employees, and up to two hours for the managers. They were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. In the interviews, the participants were firstly invited to express their reflections on their work expectations, with illustrated examples. Participants were asked to reflect not only on the differences in how work was undertaken, but also about the sources of work tensions at their workplaces. The Generation Y employees’ role in any workplace tension was subsequently explored. Through this means, any people management issues and the impacts related to Generation Y were revealed.

Throughout the process, participants were asked to clarify any doubts, which enabled the reality to emerge. It facilitated participants in explaining their personal viewpoints so that more in-depth knowledge could be generalized. Information provided by the participants was clarified, summarized and re-confirmed in order to ascertain the correct understanding of the situation for data collection accuracy. It enriched the subject matter understanding and assisted in learning the reasons behind the participants’ work expectations. Notes were taken at each interview to capture thoughts on the process, visible behaviour and the expressed emotions of the participants and their feelings about the process (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The practices would enable the feasibility of a constant review of information and avoided distortions and bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Each case, though selected as a separate unit of analysis, could then contribute through comparison, replication or extension to other case(s) (Yin, 2003). By comparing cases between the Chinese Generation Y employees of diverse job functions and industries, and validated further by the non-Generation Y managers’ reflections, it facilitated the generalization process to support, refine and extend the emergent theory (Shah & Corley, 2006). The responses collected in each interview were transcribed by the
3.6 Data Analysis

It was found that after the research was “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23), reliable and valid findings could be generated. The reliability and validity of data were critical issues to be taken care of in the qualitative research. This study used “synchronic reliability” (Kirk & Miller, 1988), which applied commonly appearing phenomena for reality construction (Kwok, 2012), to manage the data. Validity was further assured through comparing data collected in the research process to ascertain the emerging phenomena. In the data analysis process, an interpretive approach was used to present a holistic view of the data collected.

Miles and Huberman (1994) noted the three concurrent flows of activity in qualitative data analysis to be data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction includes selecting, coding and categorizing the data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2011). Data collected during the interviews was transcribed as soon as possible. To reduce and condense data, individual transcripts collected were thoroughly examined separately and compared, aggregated, contrasted and sorted in order. The data was managed and initial codes noted on the transcripts. Codes were given to units of text for subsequent grouping and categorization. They were generated from the literature and the information evolved out of the interviews for this research study. Coding units were assigned for a single identifiable theme or issue to enable a deeper understanding and to make cross-case analysis feasible. After discovering the data connections and organization to generate coherent categories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2011), patterns, links and relationships (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) were searched. The coding and categorization of the patterns enabled themes to emerge for analysis. Thematic analysis and data analytics comparison were conducted to find the similarities and differences related to the research objectives and the four research questions. Data was then displayed visually in tables and charts, wherever...
appropriate, to assist in drawing conclusions.

The researcher compiled a reflexive review of the research notes and log entries as well. The data recorded was carefully checked against field notes several times to ensure accuracy. The data collected was constantly examined to compare and identify different work expectations, labelling variables and finding relationships that might inform their impact on people management approaches, superior-subordinate relationships, work collaboration, organizational culture and working environment, work-life considerations and staff retention.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

Upholding ethical practice (Bryman & Bell, 2011) in research involving human participants is critical. The fundamental concerns with regard to privacy, confidentiality and informed consent (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993) were highly attended to in the study. As required by the Australian *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, it is necessary for research undertaken by staff and students of the University of Newcastle involving humans to obtain approval from the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) before commencement. This study obtained approval from HREC for conducting the research study (Approval Number H-2014-0126 - Appendix F).

Voluntary participation and ensuring that each participant’s anonymity was sustained were especially important in this study as interviews were directed to individuals in the capacity of either a Generation Y employee or a non-Generation Y manager having one or more Generation Y subordinates. As explained earlier, prospective participants were informed of the research details through the invitational emails, Participant Information Statement and the Individual Consent Form (Appendix B, C and D). Only participants indicating his/her agreement to participate in the interview by returned emails were contacted. Prior to the interview, they were requested to sign the Consent Form which included a clause highlighting the participant’s consent to
digitally record the interview. They had been assured of confidentiality and could withdraw at any time of their own free will before the completion of data gathering. Consent forms were scanned and stored on a USB, with the password secured, solely for this research project. It was accessible only to the researcher and his supervisors. After scanning, the hard copies were shredded.

When relating information from different perspectives, only direct causal relationship should be considered. The audio recordings and notes taken in the interviews were scanned and stored in the same password secured USB. It was kept in a locked box and the key was retained by the researcher only. After the transcripts had been verified by the participants, the recordings and written notes were erased. Transcripts were kept electronically in the researcher’s password protected computer. They could be accessed only by the researcher and the project supervisors. To ensure anonymity and privacy further, pseudonyms were used in the reporting. Research data would be retained by the researcher for five years after approval of the dissertation. Thereafter, all data will be deleted and the USB in use will be destroyed.

3.8 Limitations

It is aware that the research methods used have limitations. Firstly, the data collected through interviews, though capable of finding rich information, may be limited by the subjectivity of individual participants, the capability of participants in listening, understanding and interpreting messages with personal assumptions, hiding of sensitive issues, trust in expressing personal feelings and competencies to rightly relate questions to concrete answers.

Secondly, only one Chinese city, Hong Kong, was selected for the study. An analysis between different Chinese cities has not been conducted in this research project. The non-generation Y managers’ perceptions about Generation Y employees, and the collected cases in Hong Kong business corporations alone, would not be comprehensive enough to draw critical features for the whole Chinese community.
More cross-sectional studies focusing on specific variables need to be conducted in future research studies.

Thirdly, even though both male and female participants were included in the study, this research has not separated their work expectations for analyzing the gender impacts. Similarly, older generations managers' perceptions over Generation Y employees were not classified from the gender perspective. The impacts of the gender difference in Chinese Generation Y employees' work expectations and subsequent impacts on people management are still unknown.

Fourthly, other determinants of work expectations, including individual personality, preferences or life/career stage (Delcampo, Haggerty, Haney & Knippel, 2011; Fenton & Dermott, 2006), are not researched. Their impacts are uncertain, in comparison to the generational influence, on the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations. Additional research on the mentioned determinants is needed in the future.

Fifthly, this research did not compare or analyze Chinese Generation Y employees' findings on industrial basis. It is unclear whether the nature of the industry would affect Generation Y employees' work behaviour to emerge as a source of workplace tensions or not.

Finally, even though it is trusted that the findings will be reliable, as samples of employees and managers have been collected from participants working in different sized firms and business functions, the comparatively small sample size will be questionable as a representation for generalizability. It is therefore recommended that longitudinal or cross-sectional studies, based on a similar research design, should be further conducted to validate the research findings in the future.

The following Chapter 4 reports the results from the data analysis.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzes the research information gathered from the twenty participants selected by the purposive sampling method. The findings will meet the literature gaps identified from the literature reviews and address the research questions outlined in Chapter Two. As reviewed in the literature studies, findings from Western research studies may have limitations in their generalizability across countries, cultures, and economic and labour conditions (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). To explore this research problem, local Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations have been analyzed and evaluated against the critical findings on Generation Yers in the Western studies. In subsequent sections, the non-Generation Y managers’ work expectations are discussed and compared against the local Chinese Generation Y employees’ findings. The practices in undertaking work at workplaces and the sources of workplace tensions reflected by the participants are also examined. The role of Generation Y employees contributing to the workplace tensions is analyzed. Perceptions between Chinese Generation Y and the non-Generation Y managers are subsequently cross–examined in order to determine the existence of intergenerational gaps in Hong Kong. Afterwards, the impacts of the local Chinese Generation Y on people management are reviewed. The workplace management practices which might accommodate Generation Y employees’ work expectations are discussed in the final section.

4.2 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this research study is to explore Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations in Hong Kong and impacts on people management to make a contribution to generational theory with the study’s Chinese insights. The research has been developed to enable information to be collected from a wide spectrum of industries and businesses. The work expectations of Generation Y
employees and non-Generation Y managers were analyzed. Findings were compared to identify work expectation differences, ways of undertaking work and workplace tensions. Analysis was conducted on the role of Generation Y employees in workplace tensions and the cross-generational perceptions in order to derive the intergenerational differences situation in Hong Kong. The impacts of Generation Y were reviewed and the current management practices in accommodating the Hong Kong Generation Y employees’ needs were also researched and analyzed.

Twenty participants from private firms, subject to the criteria specified separately for Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers in Chapter 3, Figure 3.1, were selected.

A Generation Y employee interviewee is restricted to:
- a local Chinese Generation Y resident, and
- is in a full-time or part-time job at the time of interview.

A manager interviewee is restricted to:
- a non-Generation Y manager,
- with management responsibilities in a business organization, and
- has at least one Chinese Generation Y subordinate directly reporting to them.

Only participants accepting the invitation with the signed Individual Consent Form were contacted to participate in the research interviews. An equal number of 10 Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers with Chinese Generation Y subordinates from different industries, company sizes, job functions, staff levels and years of working experience were interviewed. The wide representation of participants means that observations and reflections on the research topic could be broadly solicited. The findings could then reflect the contemporary situation in Hong Kong workplaces. All interviews were successfully conducted during June - August, 2014.
4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis and Findings on Work Expectations and Workplace Tensions

Information collected from the twenty participants was analyzed to address the research problem and research questions mentioned in Section 2.7. The research questions include:

**Research Question 1a:** What are the work expectations of Generation Y employees in Hong Kong?

**Research Question 1b:** What are the work expectations of non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong?

**Research Question 2:** What differences, if any, exist in the work expectations between Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers?

**Research Question 3:** To what extent do non-Generation Y managers perceive Generation Y employees as a source of workplace tensions?

**Research Question 4:** To what extent do non-Generation managers adapt workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y employee needs?

To answer the Research Questions 1a and 1b, the work expectations of the Generation Y employees and the non-Generation Y managers were analyzed in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. Other than the literature review findings (Table 2.1 and Table 2.2, pp. 31-35), additional variables for work expectations, especially on collaboration with colleagues and the working environment, were generated from information evolved out of the interviews for analysis in this research study.
4.3.1 Work Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees

From Table 4.1 to Table 4.5, the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations were analyzed from the aspects of job scope, superior-subordinate relationships, collaboration with colleagues, corporate branding, organizational culture, working environment and work-life considerations. The findings from each work expectation were evaluated further against the Western Generation Y information identified from the literature review in Chapter 2. It helped in determining whether the formative incidents in the West would similarly impact across countries, cultures, and economic and labour conditions (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). The findings indicated that the Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong might have commonalities as well as some unique work expectations which differ from their Western counterparts, as found in the literature studies in Sections 2.4.4 and 2.5.2. It provided specific Chinese Generation Y insights contributable to the generational theory.

4.3.1.1 Expectations on Job Scope

Job nature, job worthiness and the extent of job ownership were explored, together with motivators and career development and promotion.

Job Nature

Under the job nature aspect, the meaning of a job, job variety and job stability were examined. Four Chinese Generation Y employees considered meaningfulness of jobs to be important to them. As reflected in Table 4.1, they expected to be entitled to frequently raise whatever questions they had in mind. Their queries should be clarified and answered immediately when asked. However, one of the participants noted that superiors were not considered as the source of assistance and raising questions was not a means to resolve their problems. A majority of the Generation Y employees stated that they should be given opportunities to set job priorities based on personal values and interests, or else they would only act on the activities that were
considered feasible by them. As one Chinese Generation Y employee observed, “[Chinese Generation Y employees] will not hesitate to do the minor tasks in their own ways to attain the desired result”.

Over half of the participants thought that job variety, including roles and activities, should be an integral part of their jobs. They did not want to indulge in routine duties and that there must be an expansion of activities and changes in job activities. Around one-third of the participants preferred to have job stability and wanted to complete jobs within their comfort zone.

*Job Worthiness and Extent of Job Ownership*

Chinese Generation Y employees considered job worthiness to be more important if they could sustain their living standards with a reasonable salary. Most of the Generation Y employees wanted a job that was focused with concrete duties and could bring job satisfaction and fun to them. The job should cherish talents and allow flexibility. Otherwise, they will question, as one participant remarked, “why should things be rigidly done only in a standard way if you could fulfill the expectations?” Work values that matched their personal values were indeed critical to these youngsters. Chinese Generation Y employees would further expect the opportunity for self-initiative to utilize their potentials. They had confidence in managing themselves and used their own means to obtain the results.

Only a few Chinese Generation Y employees expected new job assignments and challenges in their jobs. The challenges should not exceed their capabilities in handling the activities. As mentioned by one of the participants, “challenges should be set at the level that one could do it but just with a little more effort”. Unlike the creativity and innovation expectations found in Western Generation Yers (Sheahan, 2005), creativity and innovation were not particularly demanded in Hong Kong workplaces. The participants just wanted to complete the assignment given and followed the instruction to produce the required output. They expected “the superior
should draft the framework so that [Generation Y employees] can fill in the details. It saves time to think through [the details]”, one participant echoed. It helped in getting things done precisely and speedily and minimized the chances of committing errors. The main concern for the Chinese Generation Yers was to leave the office on time without delay.

Motivators

The top three items that motivated the Chinese Generation Y employees to work were: job nature, career development prospects with visible promotion opportunities and salary. Salary was however placed by the participants as the lowest one because they needed only a reasonable salary to sustain a living. They were ready to lower their salary to pursue a job with better future career prospects. “Money is not a priority in Chinese Generation Y's personal aspiration”, one participant claimed. “They would rather do things they proud of, enjoys and feel happy basically.” Indeed, career development prospects with visible promotion opportunities and job nature were more preferred. To them, a job nature that allowed autonomy, broadened exposure and supported participants in attaining their personal values would induce job interest and highly motivate a Chinese Generation Y employee. Other key motivators raised included: learning opportunities and support, work-life balance, good working relationships, corporate branding and organizational culture.

Career Development and Promotion

Even though career development prospects with visible promotion opportunities was indicated as a key motivator, Generation Y employees did not have a long-term career objective in mind. Individual achievement, as remarked by one of the participants, was placed even higher than the company's success or the whole community’s achievement. Visible promotion prospects were quite important to some Generation Y employees. However, they might not take up promotion accelerating opportunities that did not create pride or satisfaction. If promotion or development prospects were
not available, they were ready to change jobs and pick up opportunities to broaden their knowledge horizon and global insights.

Table 4.1 – Analysis of Expectations on Job Scope (Chinese Generation Y Employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Nature</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Meaning of job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Entitlement in raising questions and be answered</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Set own job priority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Job Variety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● roles and activities changes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● expand job activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Job Stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● complete jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within comfort zone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Worthiness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Work Satisfaction and fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● match personal values</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● reasonable salary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Be focused</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Cherished talent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● chance to utilize potentials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Flexibility</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e) Chance for new job assignments</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(f) Creativity and innovation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Extent of Ownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>Complete the assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Follow the instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• get required outputs quickly and precisely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>Complete the assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Follow the instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• get required outputs quickly and precisely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Motivators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>Meaningful job nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• match personal interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have exposure and a free hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• meet personal values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>Career development prospects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with visible promotion opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(d)</td>
<td>Learning opportunities and support for professional qualification attainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e)</th>
<th>Work-life balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>Good working relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(g)</td>
<td>Corporate branding and organizational culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Career Development and Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>Present Focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• no long-term career objective or planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>Promotion Opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• visible and readily available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• broaden knowledge horizon and global insights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of Participants’ Job Scope Expectations

The Chinese Generation Y employees had a strong sense of entitlement to raise questions and expected to be answered promptly. The underlying reason, as unveiled
by one of the participants, was “to make contributions and want to make sure the contributions are valid”. They wanted autonomy in setting their own job priorities according to personal interests and values, as well as to be given the chance to utilize their potential. The local findings matched the stronger sense of entitlement (Alsop, 2008) expected by the Western Generation Yers. Probably, they also disliked slowness in the pace of work (Francis-Smith, 2004) as the participants preferred to follow what was required of them in their instructions. They also expected new job assignments and challenges in job activities. But, these new job assignments would be confined to individual employees’ prediction of their capability limitations.

The major variance from the Western findings was in their creativity and innovation expectations. In the literature reviews, it was found that Western Generation Yers prefer personal and intellectual challenges (Eisner, 2005) as well as strive for creativity and innovation (Sheahan, 2005). In this research, it was revealed that the Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong did not have strong preferences for them at a workplace.

4.3.1.2 Expectations of Superior-Subordinate Relationships

In Table 4.2 below, the work expectations on the roles of superiors, leadership, respect and trust, communication, job instructions and recognition were collected for analysis.

Roles of Superiors/Leadership

50 per cent of the interviewed Chinese Generation Y employees expected their superiors to perform multiple roles. Other than a manager, the superior should be a coach, a mentor and a leader as well. A superior should act as a personal coach to lead and teach the employees with their individual needs in mind. He/she should guide and assist subordinates, not based on fixed rules, in tackling problems as a mentor. The superior needed to maintain a good balance between giving a freehand and control
over the subordinates. One of the participants suggested that “a professional distance should be upheld” to mark this subtle balance.

In Table 4.2 below, it was further found that two of the participants expected to have a leader-supporter relationship. The controlling or ‘boss type’ superior focusing solely on work completion or deadlines was rejected. To them, their superiors should be leaders. They should be considerate, supportive and able to assess work issues from a subordinate’s perspective. Superiors ought to listen and understand the subordinates’ underlying reasons for job delays to enhance mutual understanding. Care and guidance were highly expected by most of the participants. As analyzed, they wanted a similar kind of caring as found in a family. Superiors should be attentive to an individual subordinate’s feelings and be proactive in learning and understanding each subordinate’s thoughts, as if they were family members. Subordinates should be encouraged to seek advice, give feedback and raise any difficulties encountered. On the other hand, superiors should be ready to offer help and intervene only when it is absolutely necessary.

**Respect and Trust**

Chinese Generation Y employees will not follow instructions blindly. As remarked by one of the participants, “authority and position were really vague for Generation Yers”. Instructions enforced by authority and power position would not be workable for Generation Y employees. Experienced superiors did not have the right to be judgmental. To them, employees with experience and seniority had no right to control things other than Generation Y’s responsibilities at work. To earn the Generation Y employees’ respect, decisions made ought to be supported by reasons. The participants would always ask ‘why?’ and confront the superior if they found anything to be unreasonable. Generation Y employees wanted to understand the rationales behind decisions and let superiors know their personal viewpoints. Generation Yers would also skip some operational steps if they considered them to be unimportant. They, as explained by one Generation Y participant, “do not want to do
irrelevant things”. To them, everyone should be respected as an individual and be equally treated. Chinese Generation Y employees also wanted to be trusted. It represented a superior’s confirmation of the individual employee’s capability and their work quality.

*Communication and Job Instruction*

60 per cent of the Chinese Generation Y participants expected that they could directly approach and discuss any problems openly with the superior for the right solution to be taken. They preferred face-to-face or phone communication at work. A majority of the participants were ready to speak up to protect their baselines. However, they would not voice their opinions on matters they did not fully understand. To meet their expectations, superiors should be more communicative on work issues. Open communication meetings should be regularly arranged so that everyone could share their viewpoints on feasible actions to be selected.

From Table 4.2 below, it was further found that 70 per cent of the participants had very clear expectation on the scope of job instructions. To them, broad directions with specific goals and boundaries would be adequate. Superiors should not define the details or give answers in the instructions. Chinese Generation Y employees wanted a freehand and the chance to decide their own means for actions. They expected that superiors could guide or give them hints and assistance whenever problems occurred. Direct instructions stating the required standards with clear ideas on how to make things work were expected. To them, instructions should be specific to ensure no other meaning could be interpreted.

*Recognition*

Chinese Generation Y employees expected superiors to give them credit and recognition promptly at the right time in public.
Table 4.2 – Analysis of Expectations on Superior-Subordinate Relationships
(Chinese Generation Y Employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles of Superior</th>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Be a coach, leader, mentor and a manager</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Balancing a freehand and control</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>(a) Leader and supporter relationships</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● considerate and supportive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● understand underlying reasons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Caring and provide guidance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● understand subordinate’s thoughts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● give opportunities to raise difficulties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● give feedback on work and offer help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and Trust</td>
<td>(a) Not blindly follow position or authority</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) No right to use experience to control or</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>judge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Decisions supported by reasoning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Earned respect</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● respect each other as an individual and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>treat them equally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● actions based on reasoning and justification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) Be trusted</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation of Participants’ Expectations on Superior-Subordinate Relationships

In the Western research studies highlighted in Chapter 2, it was found that Generation Yers wanted inclusive management and involvement (Francis-Smith, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2008; Szamosi, 2006), their ideas listened to and to be given impromptu feedback (Francis-Smith, 2004) as well as to be parented well (Allen, 2004). They would speak up and ask for reasons and a rationale (Codrington, 2008). In addition, they should be respected for their opinions and contributions (Hill & Stephens, 2003) and be given instant gratification (Medland, 2012).

As analyzed above, Chinese Generation Y employees shared work expectations with their counterparts in the West in demanding inclusive management and involvement through regular, open and transparent communication, to be listened to and to be given feedback as a coach and a leader. The expectation to be parented well was visible in local Chinese Generation Yers as they expected individual care at work. Similarly, Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong would speak up to protect their baselines, requested reasons and justifications for actions and expected to be respected as an individual. Finally, they expected instant gratification to be given at the right moment in public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>(a) Speak Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• approach superior directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Regular, open and transparent in communicating work issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Instruction</td>
<td>(a) Scope of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• broad directions with specific goals and boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• no answer given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Clear instructions with results/standards outlined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>(a) Personal recognition in front of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Be given at the right moment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1.3 **Expectations on Collaboration with Colleagues**

In Table 4.3 below, the expectations on work relationships, social networking and teamwork situations were gathered for analysis.

*Work Relationships*

Chinese Generation Y employees considered good interpersonal relationship with peers to be important. They expected to go beyond the basic working partnership and wanted to establish a casual and friendly working relationships with each other. These youngsters looked forward to having colleagues work like friends or family members. To minimize disputes and conflicts, different viewpoints should be raised in open discussion. Notably, the harmony of working relationships that generated happiness and fun at work were highly expected.

*Social Networking*

A majority of the participants favoured social networking and considered it to be important for relationship building. However, as one participant reflected, “social networking is still a sort of leisure thing and [Chinese Generation Yers] do not really relate it to work too much”. Social networking was not expected for tackling work issues. They would refrain from discussing work related issues in social activities. Social networking was desired for enhancing or strengthening working relationships. It was subsequently viewed as a means for social balance to release stress and tension.

*Teamwork*

From Table 4.3 below, it was reflected that Chinese Generation Y employees valued individuality more than teamwork. 60 per cent of them expected individual work to be manageable with controllable tasks. They wanted to accomplish a task individually
as it was a recognition of personal achievement. As mentioned by one of the participants from the management consultancy industry, “it gave the Generation Yers a sense of individual existence”.

On the other hand, they still cherished teamwork if every employee was respected as an individual in the team. Mutual support, irrespective of position difference, to create the spirit of togetherness was expected. Chinese Generation Y employees wanted their personal role and value to be seen in teamwork. They would try to persuade others to reach consensus. Once decided, they would comply with the team decisions. To them, teamwork was valued for enhancing working relationships.

Evaluation of Participants’ Expectations on Collaboration with Colleagues

As compared with the Western findings, local Chinese Generation Y employees also valued connections, to be accepted and to belong as team players (Huntley, 2006). The difference was that teamwork would only serve the purposes of relationship building, rather than resolving workplace issues. In essence, they still preferred individual performance and to be respected as an individual person within the team. Therefore, a visible individual role and a valuable contribution to team performance was indispensable.
### Table 4.3 – Analysis of Expectations on Collaboration with Colleagues
(Chinese Generation Y Employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Relationships</th>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Casual and friendly</td>
<td>Peer group is a means to release stress and tension</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Work harmony</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Happiness and fun</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Networking</th>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) For relationship building</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Separating social life from work life</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teamwork</th>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Respect individuality, personal role/value and mutual support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Prefer individual work and recognize personal achievement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3.1.4 Expectations on Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment

The work expectations on corporate branding, organizational culture and the working environment raised by Chinese Generation Y employees were analyzed in Table 4.4 below.
Corporate Branding

Only a few Generation Y employees in Hong Kong care about company image or branding. To those who considered it to be important, they concerned more about the professionalism projected by the company and whether it had a promising business project or not. For the participants born in the late 1980s or early 1990s, they expected employers to pay attention to community needs in doing their businesses. Social responsibility and environmental protection activities were two key concerns.

Organizational Culture

As reflected in Table 4.4 below, companies should embrace a relaxed culture and take care of the employees’ well-being at workplaces. To allow every employee to freely express their ideas, an open and care-free working environment with fewer management layers was appreciated. Corporations should remove rigid rules to allow flexibility and choices for employees to take appropriate actions.

(i) Justice

Local Chinese Generation Y employees looked for fairness at workplaces. They desired to be respected, irrespective of the employees’ position, and to be treated equally. To them, justice could be justified. Superiors needed to show proof and reasons for their decisions. It was therefore important for the Generation Y employees to have equal opportunities in raising questions and expressing their viewpoints directly and openly. Even in teamwork, they wanted to define the task clearly and to have a clear cut job scope. It would, as discussed earlier, recognize personal roles and values within teams for assessing individual performance on a fair basis.

(ii) Change

It was firmly expressed by the participants that changes should be an integral part of
work. They would not indulge in routines or repetitive tasks. In particular, Chinese Generation Y employees wanted new job assignments and challenges in their job duties. They expected to utilize their potentials to make the changes.

(iii) Loyalty

Participants had a low sense of loyalty to the company but could be loyal to the superior if he/she was a good leader. In the case where a company’s values were not aligned with an employee’s personal goals or values, a Generation Y employee’s sense of loyalty would be weakened. Generation Yers had no hesitation to look for opportunities outside a company. Chinese Generation Yers, as pointed out by one participant, “are born in an age of opportunities and possibilities. We [Chinese Generation Yers] could easily start a movement”. Loyalty could be built but not guaranteed in this new generation’s minds.

Working Environment

(i) Technology Application

As analyzed in Table 4.4 below, participants had no hesitation in using technology. They wanted instant responses by ‘WhatsApp’ instead of other electronic devices like email. However, ‘WhatsApp’ was used solely for communication but not for decision making. They would try to keep their personal emails and phone calls away from work related activities as far as possible.

(ii) Training and Development

Participants expected the company to provide training and learning opportunities for them. Learning at work to increase skills and experience was important. Whether the company would provide training sponsorship or not was out of their consideration. However, the company should support or at least encourage them to take up available
training opportunities to show their care for the employees.

Table 4.4 – Analysis of Expectations on Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment (Chinese Generation Y Employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Corporate Branding</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Positive company image</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be professional with promising prospects</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Concern for corporate social responsibility and environmental protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Concern about individual well-being</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Open and care-free working environment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Free of hierarchy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No rigidly fixed rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(i) Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Fairness within work team</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Sense of togetherness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(ii) Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Must have change</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) New job assignments and challenges</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(iii) Loyalty</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Loyal to superior as a leader, not the company</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Loyalty can be built, but not guaranteed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation of Participants’ Expectations on Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment

It was found from the above analysis that the local Chinese Generation Y employees had the same expectations on fairness, tolerance and equity (Broadbridge et al., 2007; Gursoy et al., 2008) and wanted changes (Sheahan, 2005) as their Western counterparts. Striving for a relaxed organizational culture, flexibility and choice of actions without rigid fixed rules also reflected their dislike of rigid policies and procedures (Angeline, 2011). Local Chinese Generation Y employees would quit a job easily (Sheahan, 2005) as they had a low sense of loyalty to companies. As for technology usage, local Generation Yers also “feel [technology] in their gut” (Sheahan, 2005, p. 4). However, they would keep their technology devices separate, to be used for different purposes. They tried to ensure their social life would not be interrupted by withholding their personal phones and email accounts from work contacts as far as possible.

4.3.1.5 Expectations on Work-Life Considerations

In Table 4.5 below, both considerations on work-life integration and work-life balance raised by the local Chinese Generation Y employees were analyzed. It was found that the Generation Y employees shared different opinions on work-life
considerations.

Work-Life Integration

Three of the Generation Y employees from management consultancy, financial planning and internet media businesses had integrated their work into their life. These participants needed to generate business for their companies and met customers outside normal office hours. They accepted work-life integration in order to accomplish their job duties.

Work-Life Balance

A majority of the local Chinese Generation Y employees cherished work-life balance. They placed heavy emphasis on non-work issues and lifestyle activities. Local Chinese Generation Y employees would try their best to keep office work away from home. One of the participants remarked that she would rather resign, irrespective of the job title earned, for the sake of her work-life balance.

70 per cent of the participants did not want office work to affect their private lives and they would not go to the office during holidays or at night time. Office duties should stop after the normal office hours. The participants did not want to receive office work enquiries from ‘WhatsApp’ or by other means after leaving their offices. To them, it would create great pressure and affect their mood for the rest of the day. Some Chinese Generation Y employees would assess the level of urgency, based on their personal judgment, to decide whether they would take up an urgent assignment or not after working hours.
Table 4.5 – Analysis of Expectations on Work-Life Consideration (Chinese Generation Y Employees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Integration (a) Integrate work-life activities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Balance (a) Cherish work-life balance (b) Place great significance on non-work issues and lifestyle</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evaluation of Participants’ Expectations on Work-Life Considerations

Similar to the Western findings, a majority of the Chinese Generation Y employees expected to have a full and balanced life rather than making a lot of money (Allen, 2004). It was however found that work-life balance was not fully supported by all the interviewed Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong. A few participants preferred to have work-life integration in order to fulfill their personal goals for career achievement.

4.3.2 Work Expectations of Non-Generation Y Managers

This section analyzed the work expectations of non-Generation Y managers so as to make it feasible to identify the similarities and differences with the local Chinese Generation Y employees’ expectations. Information collected from the 10 participants was from the generations of Baby Boomers (aged between 50 and 69) and Generation X (aged between 34 and 49). No Traditionalists (aged 70 or over) was included in the
interviews as most of them had already retired. In fact, the labour force participation rate for those aged 65 or above was only 13.2 per cent for male and 3.3 per cent for female of the labour force in 2013 (HKSAR Census and Statistics Department, 2014). Traditionalists still working in Hong Kong workplaces were a minority. The majority views of the Baby Boomer and Generation X managers were collected in this study and the absence of Traditionalists’ viewpoints would not affect the credibility of the findings.

4.3.2.1 Expectations on Job Scope

Similar to the earlier discussion in Section 4.3.1, the non-Generation Y manager’s work expectations covered job nature, job worthiness and extent of job ownership, motivators as well as career development and promotion aspects are shown in Table 4.6 below.

*Job Nature*

In this aspect, job meaning, job variety and job stability were examined.

In general, non-Generation Y managers considered responsiveness, courage, integrity and the protection of company interests to be important. To them, it was important to respond quickly as some business issues would not allow indecisiveness. Having courage to speak up and express one’s own independent thoughts would be desirable. Employees should execute jobs under the approved budget limits, protect company interests by fulfilling business expectations and act cautiously to avoid possible errors. Decisions subsequently made should comply with the established rules and regulations.

Non-Generation Y managers focused on their own job responsibilities and worked things out independently. They emphasized detailed planning and expected a strong execution capability in the work process. Job variations should then be limited,
controlled and minimized.

As observed, the participants were task-oriented and concerned about the work outcomes. They wanted to control the result, timing, quality and quantity in the job operations to maintain job security and stability. Their main concern was to generate work outcomes accurately and safely. Through comprehensive research and detailed analysis, the quality outputs could then be attained to meet stakeholders’ requirements to deliver business results.

*Job Worthiness and Extent of Job Ownership*

To the participants, job worthiness referred to meeting business expectations, including sales targets and customer service metrics, and strict compliance with established practices. Obedience and following instructions were important underlying job ethics for them. One of the interviewed Generation X managers noted that he even used his work completion timelines as a basis for benchmarking the subordinates’ job performance.

Job challenges were limited as creativity and innovation were much confined in the assigned jobs. The participants would only allow subordinates to use their own means if they were workable and did not need the managers to take the task up later. To them, the job natures of junior level employees normally required little creativity. Although some creativity could be allowed in selected projects, creativity and innovation were generally discouraged at workplaces. Despite this, they would still require subordinates to raise their viewpoints on work improvements and to take initiative in tackling problems. They insisted, as one interviewed non-Generation Y manager mentioned, “subordinates should raise your question when they encountered work problems”.

As discussed, non-Generation Y managers had no hesitation in taking up full ownership of the jobs given to them. They were devoted to, and executed, the
assigned work as instructed on their own. The participants would work in isolation and focused on their own job responsibilities. They emphasized self-discipline and would choose the appropriate method to enhance job efficiency to meet the stipulated deadlines. Being fully accountable for the jobs, these participants would be detail minded and tried to be safe in completing their job duties. They would not tell their working partners of their jobs on hand.

Motivators

Non-Generation Y managers placed earning money, promotion and salary increment as high motivators at work. There was a slight difference found between the Baby Boomer and Generation X managers in this study; the former expected to get promoted quickly to senior level, while the latter would not devote a great deal of effort for promotion's sake.

Career Development and Promotion

Participants believed long term personal growth and career development could be attained through working closely with people. Work knowledge and skills could be acquired in daily work operations. They also paid great attention to self-image, as it might affect their career development. As reflected, they considered that working harder to produce desirable results and learning more were the critical means to accelerate their pace of promotion.
Table 4.6 – Analysis of Expectations on Job Scope (Non-Generation Y Managers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Nature</th>
<th>Expectations of non-Generation Y Managers</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Job Nature</td>
<td>(a) Meaning of Job:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ courage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ integrity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ protect company interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Job Variety</td>
<td>☐ focus on own job responsibilities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Job Stability</td>
<td>☐ control result, timing, quality and quantity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ ensure quality output could deliver business result</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ comprehensive research work with detailed analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Job Worthiness | (a) Meet business expectations  
|               | ● achieve sales targets  
|               | ● satisfactory customer service  
|               | (b) Rigidity  
|               | ● obedience and compliance with practices and instructions  
|               | (c) Chance for new job assignments and challenges  
|               | ● raise viewpoints on work improvement  
|               | ● take initiatives in tackling problems  
|               | ● superiors considered the means to be workable  
|               | (d) Creativity and Innovation  
|               | ● confined and discouraged | 4  
|               | 9  
|               | 5  
|               | 7  |
### Extent of Ownership

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a)</strong> Be responsible for own job</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• work in isolation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• not telling working partners of the jobs on hand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• try one’s best and be self-disciplined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(b)</strong> Accomplish tasks as instructed:</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• serious and task-oriented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• meet deadlines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• play safe with detailed mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• choose appropriate method to enhance efficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Motivators

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a)</strong> Earning money</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(b)</strong> Promotion and salary increment</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Baby Boomers: want to get promoted quickly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Generation X: if it needs a great deal of effort, promotion is not desirable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Career Development and Promotion

(a) Learning for personal growth and career development
(b) Care about self-image in affecting career development
(c) Promotion
   - working harder and learning more to get promoted

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Learning for personal growth and career</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Care about self-image in affecting career</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Promotion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- working harder and learning more to get</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promoted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.2 Expectations on Superior-Subordinate Relationships

Participants’ work expectations on their roles, leadership, respect and trust, communication and job instructions were analyzed in Table 4.7 below.

Roles of Superior/Leadership

Non-Generation Y managers would perform additional roles other than their management responsibilities. They would be advisors, providing guidance and assistance to subordinates, as well as to coach them whenever needed. In retrospect, subordinates were expected to ask proactively.

As a leader, they preferred to use situational leadership to lead. If possible, they would give opportunities for subordinates to try to work things out independently. In such cases, subordinates were expected to get the job done first and discuss it with the superior later. For acute situations and tasks with time constraints, subordinates would be expected to follow instructions without further enquiries.
**Respect and Trust**

Non-Generation Y managers expected subordinates to respect seniority and to update superiors of need-to-know issues on a timely basis. Subordinates were expected to pay respect to authority and position and to take care of the superior’s concerns in their job execution. Participants also demanded unfailing obedience for the decisions made.

**Communication and Job Instruction**

As reflected in Table 4.7 below, participants wanted subordinates to have more communication with them. They only preferred face-to-face communication for formal meetings. In any case, communication was focused on job-related issues.

Non-Generation Y managers expected to provide some guidelines and to highlight the points subordinates might not know in their instructions. To 80 per cent of the interviewed non-Generation Y managers, a clear job instruction should cover the job itself and the expected completion time. Subordinates were expected to follow without enquiring too much for urgent and clearly stated instructions. Even if the subordinates’ viewpoints were sought in the process, participants would still deliver their intended instructions to the subordinates.
Table 4.7 – Analysis of Expectations on Superior-Subordinate Relationships
(Non-Generation Y Managers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles of Superior</th>
<th>Expectations of non-Generation Y Managers</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Be an advisor and a coach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Subordinates are expected to ask whenever needed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>(a) Situational leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Provide guidance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect and Trust</td>
<td>(a) Authority and Position:</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● take care of superior’s concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● update superior of need-to-know issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● respect seniority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Blind obedience</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(a) Focus solely on job related issues</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Face-to-face communication is preferred for formal meeting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Job Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(a) Provide guidelines and points subordinates may not understand</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Not enquire too much for urgent and clearly stated instructions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4.3.2.3 Expectations on Collaboration with Colleagues

The information gathered from work expectations on work relationships, social networking and teamwork were analyzed in Table 4.8 below.

**Work Relationships and Social Networking**

It was found that non-Generation Y managers preferred only to maintain a simple working relationship with their colleagues. 50 per cent of the non-Generation Y managers had a clear line in separating work relations from social activities. They did not expect to be involved in activities or have much contact with other colleagues after office hours. Even if they were in social meetings, participants had little if not nothing to talk about in the social discussions.
Teamwork

In terms of teamwork, participants had fair expectations for team harmony. Non-Generation Y managers demanded everyone contribute as a whole to meet different stakeholders’ expectations. Team members should be responsible and support each other proactively. Each team member should take up job ownership and work independently when a project was assigned.

Table 4.8 – Analysis of Expectations on Collaboration with Colleagues
(Non-Generation Y Managers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expectations of non-Generation Y Managers</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Relationships</td>
<td>(a) Only working relationship</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Little contact with colleagues after office hours</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Networking</td>
<td>(a) Separation of work and social activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Nothing to talk about in social talks</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>(a) Team harmony</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● better relationships and collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● individual contributions to meet stakeholders’ expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Responsible and supportive team members</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● work independently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● job ownership and support others proactively</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.4 Expectations on Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and the Working Environment

In Table 4.9 below, the non-Generation Y managers’ work expectations on organizational culture, including justice and change, as well as training and development were examined.

Organizational Culture

Participants believed in fostering an absolute obedience culture. Subordinates were expected to listen to superiors and to basically do what they were told. Strict and rigid compliance to office disciplines and rules including punctuality should be observed.

(i) Justice

Attainment of expected results and outcomes were the basis for upholding justice and fairness. Greater emphasis was placed on data collection and visible personal performance outputs.

(ii) Change

Non-Generation Y managers did not see the need for change. Changes were discouraged as they might lead to disastrous outcomes. Old methods were therefore followed to ensure job completion would not deviate from the past. Policies, rules and procedures, codes of conduct as well as office discipline had to be complied with both in principle and in actual work operations.

Training and Development

Participants had strong drives for learning. Non-Generation Y managers trusted that it was necessary to gain knowledge from work-related studies. They encouraged
subordinates to learn through various means to broaden their exposure as well.

**Table 4.9 – Analysis of Expectations on Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and the Working Environment (Non-Generation Y Managers)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Chinese Non-Generation Y managers</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Absolute obedience and act as instructed</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Very strict and rigid compliance</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(i) Justice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Outcome basis and pay attention to results</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Emphasis on data collection and personal performance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(ii) Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Discouraged to avoid disastrous result</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Use old methods</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Comply with the policies, rules etc.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and development</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Encourage subordinate to learn through different means</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Gain knowledge in job-related studies</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2.5 Expectations on Work-Life Considerations

In Table 4.10 below, the non-Generation Y managers’ work expectations on work-life integration and work-life balance were gathered. As found, more participants expected work-life integration rather than work-life balance in contemporary workplaces.

Most of the participants expected to have work-life integration. It meant that they would continue with their office work in their private time. They believed that working hard and working late to complete urgent projects were needed. As long as one worked hard, they would be able to earn more money to meet their needs. This expectation was ranked highly for those non-Generation Y managers occupying more senior positions.

However, two of the non-Generation Y managers supported work-life balance. They believed overtime should not be regular, so that subordinates could have spare time to participate in social and personal activities.

Table 4.10 – Analysis of Expectations on Work-Life Considerations
(Non-Generation Y Managers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations of Non-Generation Y Managers</th>
<th>Frequency raised by Participants (10 participants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Work hard and work late to complete urgent projects</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Working hard will make money to meet one’s needs.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Support work-life balance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) No regular overtime</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.3  Comparison of Work Expectations between Chinese Generation Y Employees and Non-Generation Y Managers

To answer Research Question 2 (i.e. What differences, if any, exist in the work expectations between Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers?) stated in Section 2.7, the work expectations between Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers were explored. Great differences in various aspects of their work expectation were found.

4.3.3.1 Job Scope

In this section, the findings from Tables 4.1 and 4.6 above were compared and analyzed. It was found that Chinese Generation Y employees put much emphasis on the meaningfulness of jobs but this was not so for the non-Generation Y managers. To the former, they expected to be entitled to raise questions and have variety in job roles and activities. However, for the managers, they wanted employees to be responsive, uphold integrity and protect company interests. To meet these ends, job variety was limited, controlled and confined to the given job scope.

Generation Y employees concerned more about personal interests to be generated from jobs, while the managers considered corporate interests to be of utmost importance. Another great difference was the meaning of independency within a job scope. To the concerned Generation Y employees, they wanted autonomy in prioritizing job activities according to their own values and interests. Non-Generation Y managers, however, considered that independency should be limited by rules and regulations. Even though independent thoughts could be raised, the avoidance of errors was the boundary. Decisions could not be taken lightly by employees in the managers’ work expectations. Both Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers expected jobs to be stabilized. The difference was that the former focused on jobs that could be accomplished within their comfort zone, while the latter paid attention to having a safe and known process for attaining the
work outcomes that guaranteed accurate results.

Notably, a divergence of work expectations occurred in job worthiness and the extent of job ownership as well. To the Chinese Generation Y employees, job worthiness included the matching of company and individual values, visible opportunities for taking initiative to utilize potentials, flexibility and be cherished for talents. They preferred to focus on a job that could generate self-satisfaction and fulfillment of their personal interests. On the contrary, non-Generation Y managers only considered jobs meeting business expectations to be worthwhile.

To satisfy personal interests, Chinese Generation Y employees expected new job assignments and challenges within their anticipated capability to be incorporated into their job scope. It went contrary to the managers’ expectations that subordinates should, though allowed to express views on work improvements and tackling problems, have rigid compliance and obedience to authoritative instructions. As such, creativity and innovation, as expected by some Generation Y employees, were discouraged in general by non-Generation Y managers.

Differences also occurred in job ownership expectations. Job ownership was limited as Chinese Generation Y employees would follow the input from the managers for job completion purposes only. It matched, to a certain extent, with the non-Generation Y managers’ expectations for rigid compliance to avoid committing errors. Yet, it might be insufficient to meet the managers’ expectations of completing full job responsibilities by employees. To the non-Generation Y managers, employees should also be devoted, tried their best to work in great detail and chose the most efficient method independently to meet the job requirements. The extent of job completion expected by the Chinese Generation Y employees could only partly serve the job ownership expectations of the non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong.

Non-Generation Y managers placed great emphasis on salary to motivate them to work. For the local Chinese Generation Y employees, even though they considered
salary to be important, it was not the top motivator for work. They only demanded a reasonable salary to sustain their living. Instead, a job nature that induced interest and satisfaction, as well as career development prospects, were the two highest motivators for work in these employees’ minds.

In terms of career development and promotion, expectations differed as well. Most local Chinese Generation Y employees did not have long-term career plans. They focused more on the opportunities, not confined to the work scope, readily available to them. The opportunities should broaden their horizons in order to attain individual achievement. Visible promotion prospects were only fairly important to them as they could easily find career opportunities outside. On the other hand, non-Generation Y managers had a strong desire to advance and expected to gain job-related knowledge through work in order to pave the way for career development in the future. Faster promotion through learning within the company was highly expected.

4.3.3.2 Superior-Subordinate Relationships

It was found by comparing Tables 4.2 and 4.7, that both local Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers agreed that superiors should adopt multiple roles nowadays. In addition to the assumed management role, non-Generation Y manager could be an advisor and a coach as well. Some of them did not consider the mentoring role to be necessary. They thought that their key responsibility was only to lead and assist subordinates to accomplish tasks. Non-Generation Y managers therefore expected subordinates to respect them for their seniority, authority and position held. Obedience from subordinates was implied. This working relationship was not acceptable to the local Chinese Generation Y employees. They did not want superiors to control their work behaviour by focusing solely on work completion or meeting deadlines.

To the Generation Yers, a superior should be their mentor and leader instead. They expected a leader-supporter relationship. A superior needed to act as a leader, provide
guidance and be supportive to them. Non-Generation Y managers should listen to and understand a subordinate’s underlying difficulties as well as to take care of their feelings. Local Chinese Generation Y employees no longer paid respect to superiors due to their seniority, position or authority. They expected superiors to earn their respect by reasoning and upholding equality in the workplace. Instead of blind obedience, Generation Yers wanted to be trusted for taking actions on their own.

It was found that both Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers wanted more communication with each other. They preferred face-to-face communication for discussing formal issues. However, their expectations on the purpose and scope of communication differed greatly. The Chinese Generation Y employees expected to directly approach and discuss issues openly with their superiors.

In the communication process, a broad range of matters could be covered to find the feasible solutions. However, non-Generation Y managers would confine the communication content to job-related matters. Another difference was found in the Generation Y employees’ expectations to have open and transparent communication and direct discussions regularly. They were ready to speak up to protect their interests. This was not expected by non-Generation Y managers from the findings.

Work expectations on job instructions also differed. While the Chinese Generation Y employees expected broad directions and boundaries, the non-Generation Y managers often substantiate job instructions with guidelines and points they thought subordinates might not have known. These instructions were not expected by the concerned employees as the Generation Yers wanted a freehand. They wanted to fill in the details by themselves. To them, managers had the responsibility to ensure that no other meaning could be interpreted in the job instructions. Clear job instructions should then be supported by reasons. Non-Generation Y managers, however, just expected their subordinates to follow the instructions without too many enquiries. They did not normally take the Generation Y employees’ expectations into
consideration. Stating supporting reasons in their daily job instructions was unnecessary. A public recognition of individual work achievement at the right moment, as expected by the local Chinese Generation Y employees, was not mentioned by the non-Generation Y managers.

### 4.3.3.3 Collaboration with Colleagues

Tables 4.3 and 4.8 were examined and analyzed to identify the work expectations on collaboration with colleagues between the two groups of participants.

The Chinese Generation Y employees placed great significance on interpersonal relationship in working with others. Relationship should go beyond the working partnership and colleagues ought to treat each other as friends or family members. Happiness and having fun at work were also expected. On the other hand, non-Generation Y managers would hardly cross the working relationship boundary. They tried to keep their working relationships with their colleagues intact. They did not expect any social networking or contacts with other colleagues after office hours. Generation Y employees had a totally different expectation on social networking. They welcomed it for relationship building and viewed it as a means for social balance and to release stress and tension.

Teamwork was more demanded by the local Chinese Generation Y employees than the non-Generation Y managers. Both parties wanted mutual support between team members to attain team results. However, there was a slight difference in the teamwork expectations. For the Generation Y employees, they expected working relationships to be built up as well. Mutual respect as individuals, irrespective of position, to create the sense of togetherness was critical. For non-Generation Y managers, they expected each team member to be responsible and to work independently as an individual member. To a certain extent, the Generation Y employees shared similar expectations as the managers. However, they wanted their personal roles and values to be seen in teamwork. Recognition of personal
achievement by accomplishing a task individually, inside the team, was crucial.

4.3.3.4 Corporate Branding, Organizational Culture and Working Environment

In this section, Tables 4.4 and 4.9 above were further compared and analyzed.

A few Chinese Generation Y employees were concerned about the company image or corporate branding for their personal development, but this was not expected by the non-Generation Y managers. The Generation Y employees had higher expectations for a people caring culture that emphasized fairness, flexibility and employee well-being at work. Free expression to uphold justice and equality in the working environment was very important to them. This contrasted with the non-Generation Y managers’ expectation of an absolute obedience culture to be enforced. They focused more on task accomplishment and had higher concern for performance outcomes. Subordinates were expected to follow a superior’s instructions and to comply with the established rules and regulations closely. Justice and fairness would be considered in accordance to the data or facts collected, as well as the visible outcomes.

The Chinese Generation Y employees wanted changes, including new job assignments and challenges, in their work duties. They expected more instant responses through using technology as a communication tool in their daily work operations. Non-Generation Y managers had different expectations. They strongly urged jobs to be done according to the old methods and established practices, and hardly allowed any deviation from the past operations. The work expectations on the need for changes in jobs and work operations led both parties to perceive work issues differently.

A divergence occurred in the expectations on training and development as well. Even though both parties expected learning was needed, the objectives and desire for training and development activities varied. To the Chinese Generation Y employees,
companies should provide training and learning opportunities to them, not just for increasing work skills but, more importantly, it was a sign of caring for the employees. On the contrary, non-Generation Y managers had a stronger desire for learning, especially in gaining knowledge from work-related studies. Their objectives were to accelerate their learning of work skills and knowledge to enhance their capabilities. It would probably lead to better chances of promotion in the future. Indeed, the local Chinese Generation Y employees, unlike the older generation managers, had a low sense of loyalty to the company. Loyalty should be earned. They expected a manager to be a caring leader to earn their loyalty. In other words, Generation Y employees could be loyal to a person but not to a company in their current workplaces.

4.3.3.5 Work-Life Considerations

Work-life considerations between two different groups of participants were analyzed by comparing the information consolidated in Table 4.5 and Table 4.10 above.

A majority of the Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong had high expectation for work-life balance. They trusted that their private life should not be affected by work after office hours. On the contrary, most of the non-Generation Y managers expected work-life integration. To them, there was no delineation of location and time between work and life. As long as job activities were required, they did not mind continuing their work in their private time.

4.3.4 Observations on How Work Should be Undertaken and Workplace Tensions

As analyzed, it was found that the Chinese Generation Y employees and the non-Generation Y managers had different work expectations. In this section, the research explored how the work expectation differences affected work undertaking and tensions happened in the workplace. Subsequently, the part played by the Generation Y employees as a source of workplace tensions will be examined. The
findings would answer Research Question 3 (i.e., To what extent do non-Generation Y managers perceive Generation Y employees as a source of workplace tensions?) as stated in Section 2.7.

4.3.4.1 Ways in Undertaking Work at the Workplace

The ways of undertaking work in the contemporary workplace in Hong Kong would be affected by employees’ perceptions of the work assigned, and guided by the working parties’ work expectations, as well as how superiors and subordinates considered the work should be undertaken.

The findings were consolidated in Table 4.11 below. As reviewed, job perceptions had directed employees in choosing their ways of doing things. Job perceptions determine the goals and task priority setting, job ownership and accountability, job execution and willingness in admitting own incapability, as well as outcome interpretation.

From the participants researched, it was observed that, partly due to the problems in expressing ideas or defining the amount of information to be shared, goals were sometimes unclearly set by the managers. However, the most critical and serious difference in undertaking work happened in task priority setting. Employees often used different criteria to work their priorities out. Very often, the criteria adopted, like accuracy and risk avoidance, could be in conflict with efficiency and meeting customers’ needs in a priority setting. It led managers, one participant stated, to conceive the Generation Yers as “employees not daring to find out whether the work is really urgent or not”. It further depicted the extent of efforts to be devoted and an employee’s perception of job ownership and accountability.

Expectations in the ways of executing jobs also varied. Employees would interpret the ‘must do’ activities and chose the appropriate options on their own. Subsequently, they would select their action steps to broadly satisfy the whole job spectrum or just completed the job as instructed with personal judgment. In encountering work
problems, some of the employees would not voice their difficulties until the very last moment. Last but not the least, employees had different interpretations of work outcomes, including their understanding of quality of work and its comprehensiveness. These personal perceptions had, in one way or the other, affected all the employees’ ways of undertaking work.

It became more complex when superiors interacted with Generation Y employees. There were many different perception exchanges between superiors and subordinates which finally affected the ways of undertaking the work at a workplace. The weighting of work importance, concern with task complexities, judgment and interpretations, as well as appropriate work methods to be employed, were the most common issues that determine the ways of actions. Superiors and subordinates had different understandings in weighting work importance and task complexities. As found, subordinates would skip less important steps, based on personal judgment, without informing superiors of actions taken. On the other hand, superiors did not trust that the young Chinese Generation Y employees could get sophisticated tasks done properly. Superiors would often take the work back from the subordinates if they considered the tasks to be important and complex. Indeed, both parties had different judgments and interpretations in undertaking the work. It led to misunderstandings or wrong interpretations of the work requirements in the work process. Different methods could attain the same results. However, as analyzed, the superiors and subordinates often had divergences in selecting the appropriate work methods to be employed. Both parties’ expectations on the efforts to be used, the work values and extent of time saved further influenced the methods to be selected and the styles in undertaking the work at a workplace.
Table 4.11 – Analysis of Ways in Undertaking Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Causes of Divergences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(I) Job Perceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal setting</td>
<td>Non-Generation Y Managers do not know how to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● express clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● tell others how to do a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● share information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task priorities</td>
<td>Differences in priority setting:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● accuracy versus risk avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● job efficiency versus meeting customer’s requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job ownership and accountability</td>
<td>● expectancy on persistence and efforts devoted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job execution</td>
<td>● what is a MUST?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● overall accountability versus focus on the required outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness in admitting own incapability</td>
<td>● unwilling to voice work problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● raise difficulties at the very last moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome interpretation</td>
<td>● definition of work quality outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● understanding of comprehensiveness in job completion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### (II) Superior-Subordinate Perceptions

| Considerations of importance and job complexities | • Supervisors do not trust the young employees to get the tasks done properly  
• Subordinates make judgments and skip less important steps |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Judgment and interpretations</td>
<td>• Not fully understand the requirement and wrong interpretations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Appropriate work methods employed                 | • Different methods adopted after considering:  
(i) Effort to be involved  
(ii) Work values  
(iii) Extent of time saved  
• Differences in work style |

### 4.3.4.2 Sources of Workplace Tensions

Different ways of undertaking work could result in workplace tensions. The typical workplace tensions in Hong Kong highlighted by the participants covered ways of communication, scope of instructions, personal interest judgments, weighting of work significance, balancing guidance and attention, as well as attitude in job follow-up activities.

The ways of communication with the working parties was stated as the most serious workplace tension. Confrontation arose when the young employees’ open communication expectations were not satisfied. The older generation employees’ preference for keeping job details to themselves and senior management’s practices in withholding information from subordinates frustrated the Chinese Generation Y employees. The interpretation of job instruction scopes magnified the communication tension further. Tensions came mainly from the different expectations for clear instructions and perceptions of being controlled. To the senior managers and older
generation employees, giving detailed instructions were normal and needed. The young workforce did not understand the thoughts behind the instructions and sometimes questioned some of the decisions made by other generations. That is why, as commented by one interviewed Generation Y employee, “an order type instruction is not workable” and the older generation managers “cannot exactly understand Generation Y’s way of thinking”. They thought that authorization was implied when the superiors instructed them to take particular actions. The older generation employees thought it otherwise and considered authorization needed to be separately given and explicitly stated.

Cooperation was further affected by the personal interest considerations held by different parties at work. The older generation employees often worked in isolation and completed the jobs based on the job requirements. They focused on their own jobs and did not care about how to work closely with other colleagues. This attitude of caring for one’s own task accomplishment generated great discontentment from employees who favoured mutual support in daily operations.

Tensions intensified in situations where work values were unmatched. The primary concern for work security, cautiousness and individualism by the older generation employees was frustrated by others who expected new job assignments and challenges in work activities. This work preference disparity affected individual judgment and interpretations, leading to prioritization differences in the work significance by the parties.

Tensions occurred when team members’ efforts, the time used and the extent of care for meeting deadlines failed to meet each other’s expectations. In one instance, the monthly safety report was considered as routine and unimportant work by a subordinate. The employee placed low significance on this job responsibility and delayed the preparation work for the safety report. Finally, the employee even forgot to release the report to the concerned stakeholders within the normal required timeline. It was already too late when the department manager noticed it. The delay in
the report publication was viewed as a management problem by other departments. Closer supervision was subsequently imposed and work tensions increased. Evidently, work cooperation tensions could be aggravated when job transparency was blocked. As mentioned by one of the non-Generation Y managers, many older generation employees believed in administrative secrecy when handling job activities. Disruptive outcomes, including misunderstandings and mismatched expectations, occurred.

Other common workplace tensions occurred in the areas of provision of guidance, expectations of follow up actions and work-life disturbances. Generally, many rules were vaguely laid down in companies and concrete guidelines by superiors would facilitate the work execution process. However, superiors from older generations did not consider it to be necessary. This belief was affirmed by one of the interviewed non-Generation Y managers, “[the participant] will not tell subordinates every steps in details as they may not need so”. They might not be willing to explain or give suggestions to the subordinates of feasible actions beyond the broadly stated boundaries. Alternatively, the superiors might ask the subordinates to act according to the established ways. It depended on individual subordinates to take initiative to work out the details.

It was noted from the research findings that some employees would not follow instructions exactly or skip some steps they found unreasonable or unimportant in the job execution process. In either case, dissatisfactions or work tensions would likely accumulate. Consequently, tensions also occurred in follow up actions. Employees would consider the job completion ended at the point when the output was delivered. On the other hand, superiors would expect jobs to be completed only when the necessary follow up actions had been taken to ensure stakeholders were satisfied.

These expectation differences extended to work-life considerations. Older generation employees, especially managers holding senior positions, would disregard the work-life balance expectations of the younger workforce. They would contact colleagues to enquire about work issues after office hours. One of the young
employees commented that superiors were “nosy and wanted to know everything”. From the Generation Y employees’ perspective, work-life disturbances would be perceived as another form of ‘power play’ by their superiors.

Having explored the workplace tensions in Hong Kong, it is crucial for this research study to examine the role that the local Chinese Generation Y employees played in creating the workplace tensions.

4.3.4.3 Generation Y Employees as a Source of Workplace Tensions

There was no unanimous agreement on whether Generation Y employees are a source of workplace tensions. Out of the 20 interviewed participants, six non-Generation Y managers and five Generation Y employees trusted that Generation Y employees played a part in generating workplace tensions. However, four non-Generation Y managers and three Generation Y employees did not agree. Two Generation Y employees were uncertain.

To those who agreed, two of the non-Generation Y managers found 70 per cent of the workplace tensions were caused by the Generation Yers. They further mentioned that employees from other generations had already established their programmed ways of doing things. Their superiors could easily visualize the possible work behaviours or outcomes from these old generation employees. So, workplace tensions arising from non-Generation Y employees were less serious. This observation was echoed and agreed to by two Generation Y participants who had subordinates under their direct supervision.

On the other hand, some interesting observations were reflected by the non-Generation Y managers, who did not find Generation Y employees to be a source of workplace tensions. It was noted that the level of positions held by the Generation Y employees and the nature of the industry or firm depicted whether Generation Y employees would be a source of workplace tensions or not. In Hong Kong, a majority
of the Generation Y employees were currently employed in relatively lower staff levels for job execution activities. Their superiors could ignore these youngsters’ suggestions easily.

Generation Y employees had no choice but to adapt their behaviours to suit the management’s requirements. In fact, Generation Y employees might pose little challenges to their superiors, largely due to the nature of the industry as well. In the legal and banking industries, where high compliance to professional requirements are expected, all employees needed to work according to the established mode of work. Many job operations have structured ways of completion. In the legal industry, seniority and professional authority dictated the ways of doing things in daily job operations.

From the above analysis, it was found that the level of positions held by Chinese Generation Yers, and the nature of industry or firm they were employed in, might minimize their impacts as a source of workplace tension. Despite this, more non-Generation Y managers confirmed that the Generation Y employees were, in general, a source of workplace tensions. It directed this research study to examine how these generations perceived each other for subsequently identifying possible impacts on people management.

4.4 Analysis and Findings on Intergenerational Work Expectation Perceptions and Differences

4.4.1 Intergenerational Differences in Hong Kong

Sixteen research participants (eight non-Generation Y managers and eight Generation Y employees) agreed that there were intergenerational differences or gaps in Hong Kong workplaces. These intergenerational differences had caused variations in the ways of doing things at work and, as discussed earlier, the Generation Y employees would be one of the main sources of workplace tensions. As suggested by the
interviewed non-Generation Y manager from the retail industry, if intergenerational difference were properly handled, nearly half of the workplace conflicts could be resolved. To identify the intergenerational gaps in Hong Kong workplaces, it would be necessary to explore the perceptions of both the Generation Y employees and the non-Generation Y managers from each other’s perspectives. Subsequently, the research study would be able to assess the impacts of the Chinese Generation Y employees on people management, as well as to uncover the workplace management practices best able to accommodate the impacts.

4.4.2 Chinese Generation Y Employees’ Perceptions on Non-Generation Y Managers

It was found in Section 4.3.3 that there were great work differences between Generation Yers and the older generations, and that Generation Y was one of the sources of workplace tensions in Section 4.3.4.3. It would be critical to learn their perceptions of each other in order to understand the intergenerational gaps and for identifying the impacts on people management later in Section 4.6.

In Chinese Generation Y employees’ minds, non-Generation Y managers were more serious and task-oriented. Instead of having open discussions and mentoring, the non-management Y managers just gave detailed instructions and then let employees do the jobs on their own. Generation Y employees were dissatisfied with the non-Generation Y managers for being safe at work. Their decisions were solely based on established policies, and actions to be taken might stop there. From the employees’ perspectives, non-Generation Y managers just gave instructions on “what to do” without telling them “how to do it or how to make it work”. The employees had to use a trial-and-error approach to complete the assigned tasks. One Generation Y employee from the business development function commented that non-Generation Y managers have the belief of “Why should I let you [subordinates] know? And, there was no need to do so.”
Nevertheless, the Chinese Generation Y employees noticed that non-Generation Y managers were highly responsible. Non-Generation Y managers were particularly strict and rigid when it came to work. They demanded absolute obedience from others. “The managers just expect us to finish the task [asked to complete]”, one Generation Y employee reflected. Employees needed to listen to them and basically do what they wanted them to do. Activities should be executed on a step-by-step basis and worked according to the stipulated rules and regulations.

In general, they thought that the non-Generation Y managers would not leave the office without completing their assigned tasks. They considered work to be comparatively more important and expected employees to sacrifice their private time to complete the tasks assigned. People issues, including personal attention, caring and open communication, were however much neglected. Though detail minded, non-Generation Y managers were viewed by Generation Y employees to be short-sighted and did not see the big picture.

4.4.3 Non-Generation Y Managers’ Perceptions on Chinese Generation-Y Employees

To non-Generation Y managers, the Chinese Generation Y employees had more and higher expectations than other generations. They were more willing to drive changes as they had their own objectives in mind and understood the intentions behind their initiatives. However, they were very much concerned about the clear separation of tasks. They wanted to ensure that the tasks assigned were within their job responsibilities. In the non-Generation Y managers’ perceptions, Chinese Generation Y employees would evaluate the job value before taking further actions. They would devote themselves to a job only if they found it to be worthwhile. In other cases, they would even reject a meaningless job or just got a job done without putting in any extra effort. One manager remarked, “Generation Yers follow exactly what you tell them step-by-steps and no more”. Non-Generation Y managers argued that, when compared with their generations, this new workforce had a weaker sense of job
ownership and was less serious in completing tasks. They explicitly stated that Chinese Generation Y employees were ‘calculating’ for comparing the amount of work required with the salary earned.

Non-Generation Y managers admitted that these youngsters had a stronger desire than other generations, when they were of the same age, to try different things. To the managers, the Chinese Generation Yers wanted personal satisfaction, autonomy and flexibility at work, but they paid little attention to job details. Their chances of committing job errors were high.

The non-Generation Y managers tended to agreed that the Generation Y employees’ creativity was higher than older generations. However, they were not competent in creating original ideas. They were good only at modifying existing creations. One of the non-Generation Y managers remarked that this new workforce just used ready-to-use tools as they would not build new ones and merely bought a model instead. To utilize their creative potential, the best way was to have something for them to follow. Indeed, non-Generation Y managers found Generation Y employees to have ‘a creative inadequacy’ in creating things from scratch.

Non-Generation Y managers found that these youngsters’ work commitment was much driven by personal interests and emotions. Personal interest was sometimes put as a higher priority in daily job execution. They would be willing to do it if the expected output was within their capability. To the managers, these young employees spent little time to think through how to do the task. They just completed the jobs assigned. As reflected, Chinese Generation Y employees merely focused on the techniques and paid little attention to the rationales in completing a job. They just avoid handling the real issue and delayed completing a task until the deadline. They would ask the superior to select and make decisions for them on the available options. In other words, they were weak in judging the suitable actions to be undertaken. Managers perceived these youngsters to be incapable of applying alternative options to irregularities. As compared to other generations, their work quality was
comparatively lower.

Non-Generation Y managers further reflected that the Chinese Generation Y employees would demand more scientific ways to solve work issues. Even in judgmental matters, they requested data or evidence to be given. In the non-Generation Y managers’ perceptions, these employees had less self-determination and relied more on others to give every detail and step-by-step instructions. Superiors, therefore, ought to work closely with the Chinese Generation Y employees as they might not seriously consider further steps forward. Managers’ continuous feedback and instructions were deemed necessary. These acts might not be welcomed as “Generation Y employees will think the managers are irritating. And, no freedom is given to them”, one interviewed manager responded.

The non-Generation Y managers also had the impression that the Generation Y employees wanted their superiors to be more friendly, approachable and to be available for assistance. These young employees expected to learn from their superiors and needed to be taken care of. However, they would honestly state their thoughts straightaway and would not accept others’ opinion easily. In some occasions, as highlighted by one manager, Generation Y employees would “disagree and state that the task should not be done in a particular way”. They would ask for “the policies and procedures that prohibit them from doing [alternative actions]”. Some managers therefore perceived the young workforce to be less obedient and paid less respect to their superiors nowadays. They opined that Generation Y employees are self-centred, preferred individualistic work and did not really care about others’ feelings. In the non-Generation Y managers’ minds, the Generation Y employees would accept unjustified suggestions only if they had affection for the superior.

In line with the Generation Y employees’ reflections, the non-Generation Y managers agreed that these youngsters had stronger capabilities and willingness for direct communication than other generations. They raised more questions to clarify doubts and had expectations on various matters. Yet, not many Chinese Generation Yers were
ready to stand up to confront others.

The interviewed managers also found that this new workforce had placed higher importance on social networking than older generations. Social networking was not for the purpose of accomplishing a job, but served as a means to obtain information or strengthen mutual reliance to help each other at work. Yet, their working relationships were superficial and, unlike the older generations, they did not look for close ones at work.

In terms of career development, it was perceived that the Generation Y employees had a greater demand for training. They were keen on the visible career path and emphasized personal development, provided that the compensation was reasonable. They looked for fast career progression in a company.

The non-Generation Y managers agreed that the Generation Y employees did not rank work as their first priority. Social life was placed higher than work life and they did not want the job to occupy all of their time.

From the above analysis, it was found that many Chinese Generation Y employees’ perceptions were in conflict with other generations’ expectations. Indeed, non-Generation Y managers found employees of other generations, to a great extent, to be of higher reliability than Chinese Generation Y employees. It was visible that generational differences existed in the Hong Kong workplaces and further confirmed the observation mentioned earlier, that Chinese Generation Y employees could be a source of workplace tension.

4.5 Analysis on the Impacts of Chinese Generation Y Employees on People Management

After comparing the perceptions between Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers, the research study proceeded to analyze the various
impacts of the Chinese Generation Y employees on people management in Hong Kong.

As found in Tables 3.1 and 3.5 above, the majority of Chinese Generation Y employees had less than 15 years of working experience and occupied lower to middle level positions. This new workforce had brought challenges to people management in various ways.

4.5.1 Revisit the People Management Approach

The Chinese Generation Yers’ work expectations had created impacts on management approaches, in terms of a management mindset change, the matching of job expectations, as well as policy and procedures re-alignment.

4.5.1.1 Changing Management Mindset

As discussed, Generation Y employees wanted flexibility in daily operations. This posed great challenges to non-Generational managers to adopt a more flexible management style. To minimize workplace tensions, an adaptation of the management approach, from dictating or directive to more interactive and coaching styles would be necessary. In addition, employees should be accepted as individuals and their unique characters and personality must be taken care of in daily management.

4.5.1.2 Matching of Job Expectations

Management had the tendency, as observed, to think that with rich experience and a senior position, their decisions were much better than others. They might be reluctant to view it from the subordinates’ perspective and considered Generation Y employees to be underperforming. It would therefore be beneficial to link the attributes of Generation Y to the job. Management needed to consider whether the job would be
suitable for the new joiner or not. The recruitment and selection process should be subsequently reviewed. Older generation managers needed to lower the recruitment criteria or redefine the job requirements.

Furthermore, a clearer definition of job boundaries and the separation of task activities for each individual would be needed to uphold fairness at work. More time and fine-tuning work might also be allowed as the Generation Y subordinates preferred to fill in the details themselves. If not, managers might either lower their job requirements or be prepared to help Generation Y subordinates to complete the tasks.

4.5.1.3 Policy and Procedures Re-Alignment

As Generation Y employees looked for autonomy and flexibility at work, company policies, procedures and operational standards might be affected as well. Some companies’ traditional policy that only senior staff were allowed to access the internet were challenged. Generation Y employees considered it to be old-fashioned. It generated employee discontentment when it was found that the policy differed from other more open-minded companies. It would be relatively difficult, if not impossible, to set rules to block them. Chinese Generation Y employees could easily get through the rigid internet rules with their own networks and powerful information flow nowadays.

Non-Generation Y managers would be forced to stay firm only on the expected outcomes, while relaxing the operational steps or loosening some office policies, to meet these youngsters’ expectations. As Generation Y employees always asked ‘why’ and raised questions in the work process, companies might, instead of imposing management’s personal thoughts, pay attention to lay more corporate governance rules in written format. By explicitly laying down what could and could not be done in written form, it would allow Generation Y employees to act freely within the stipulated boundaries.
4.5.2 Superior-Subordinate Relationships

4.5.2.1 Roles of Superiors/Leadership

As analyzed, both the non-Generation Y managers and the Generation Y employees thought that the traditional managerial role would be inadequate to meet the new workforce’s expectations. Superiors needed to change their roles to be a coach and a mentor, work face-to-face with each other, and take care of employees’ feelings throughout the work process. As such, superiors could no longer tell subordinates what to do but have to let them think first. In other words, superiors should be more people concerned. To get things done, superiors might not be willing to employ a hands off approach as the Chinese Generation Y employees had a lower sense of job ownership. Arguably, superiors needed to spare more time and effort to coach these youngsters. They might be prepared to take up or re-do the tasks assigned to the Generation Y subordinates later.

4.5.2.2 Communication

Regular open communication to increase work transparency was highly expected by Generation Y employees. This created long-lasting impacts on daily communication processes. The communication approaches and ways of interacting with Generation Y employees needed to be adjusted. Superiors ought to strengthen their listening power and accept Generation Y’s direct way of expressing ideas. More instant communication time would also be required for clarifying Generation Y’s queries than for non-Generation Y employees.

4.5.2.3 Job Instruction

Another impact on people management was on giving clear job instructions and monitoring the work progress. Generation Y employees only expected task boundaries to be given in job instructions. In such cases, they might get the wrong
directions and misunderstood the requirements. Therefore, superiors ought to be careful in giving instructions. Specific and solid boundaries including the expected outcome, reasons for doing it, impacts on the company and expected benefits should all be included in future job instructions. The methods for completing the tasks could be left to the Generation Y employees. In addition to giving the expected deadlines, as in the past, superiors might now be required to set an interim review time as an integral part of the job instructions. It enabled superiors to provide prompt assistance whenever needed while meeting the subordinates’ expectation of having more freedom at work.

4.5.2.4 Motivation and Recognition

Generation Y employees had high expectations of recognizing individual achievements promptly. Superiors might be forced to change the ways of motivating these youngsters to work. They ought to be more sensitive in affirming individual achievement by giving recognition and praise more frequently. To motivate the Generation Yers further, superiors ought to allow time for these youngsters to try by their means and provide guidance only if requested.

4.5.2.5 Gaining Job Commitment

Generation Y employees expected management decisions should be supported by reasons. Managers therefore needed to analyze the issues for these Generation Y employees with lots of justifications and evidence. In handling grey area tasks, Generation Yers would relate them to inequality or unfair treatment. It would take managers a longer time to handle their emotions and persuade them to consider the assigned tasks from different perspectives.

4.5.2.6 Caring and Attention Giving

Chinese Generation Y employees expected family care, happiness and fun at work.
Many non-Generation Y managers mentioned that they had spared more time and attention to the Generation Yers’ mental status. Frequent talks and follow up meetings with the Generation Y employees would be beneficial in the long run.

4.5.3 Work Collaboration

Working relationships could be affected as well. To cope with the Chinese Generation Y employees’ expectations on having casual and friendly working relationships, some non-Generation Y management participants reflected that they had treated this group of employees as brothers or sisters in daily operations. It would turn the workplace into a friendly environment to gain the Generation Y employees’ support. In addition, Generation Yers highly valued social networking and would be easily influenced by peer groups. Managers should pay special attention to the importance of peer group influence for people management at workplaces.

4.5.4 Organizational Culture and Working Environment

The Chinese Generation Y employees demanded mutual respect, equality and fair treatment in the workplace. It fostered companies to develop a people caring culture for people management. Company support for staff training and development, as well as visible career prospects, were considered as people caring initiatives. In managing this young workforce, managers needed to put in more training and development resources, provide more job exposure and accelerate their career progression.

4.5.5 Work-Life Considerations

Most of the Generation Y employees preferred work-life balance to separate their working life from their private life. In this regard, managers had to re-think about their ‘work-life integration’ expectation in managing people. They should stop interrupting employees with work issues after normal office hours.
4.5.6 Staff Retention

Work was not a major concern for Generation Y employees as many of them could be financially supported by their parents in Hong Kong. Leadership, as well as company and personal values alignment, became two critical factors to retain these youngsters. In managing these youngsters, managers needed to enhance their leadership skills to gain the Generation Y employees’ respect and trust.

After analyzing the impacts of Generation Y employees on contemporary people management, it was found that companies and managers had encountered numerous challenges. It required managers to adopt new management roles as coaches and mentors, strengthen their leadership skills to gain respect and trust, pay attention to people engagement skills as well as to develop a people caring culture to retain Generation Y employees. The research study subsequently explored the workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y employees’ needs. The findings would then address the Research Question 4 (i.e., To what extent do non-Generation Y managers adapt workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y employee needs?) as stated in Section 2.7.

4.6 Analysis and Findings on Workplace Management Practices for Accommodation

The majority of the participants stated that their companies had developed some management practices to cope with Chinese Generation Yers. Fifteen participants’ companies had adopted workplace management practices to accommodate Generation Y’s impacts on people management. It shows many companies are ready to question the suitability of their long practised people management approach, and to accept the need to change human resource management and development practices to meet the new generation workforce’s expectations. The remaining 5 participants stated that their companies did not consider it to be necessary. For these companies, policies or practices ought to be applied generally to all employees. It would be
difficult to have a common solution to address a particular generation. After all, within a group of Generation Y employees, very different ideas and characters also existed.

For the companies which had initiated special means to cope with the impacts of Generation Y, the most common practices adopted were to adjust the management approach to become more facilitating and supporting. In the past, files and servers were confined to certain levels of employees. To support the employees in their work operations, managers were now relaxing some constraints by making materials readily available or easily accessible to all employees. It was hoped that, with more channels made available, both parties’ work expectations could be brought closer together.

In this connection, company policies had been relaxed or adjusted to some extent. Participants’ companies were willing to adapt regulations and lower requirements to suit the Generation Y employees’ expectations of flexibility and personal caring. Many hotels were changing their practices and did not emphasize strict standardization. In one of the large hotel groups, long established grooming standards to uphold the consistent corporate image had been changed. Previously, female employees had been required to tie their long hair up in a bun. Chinese Generation Y employees however did not want to have an identical appearance at work. To meet their expectations, the hotel management agreed to amend the office policy to be ‘casual smart’ for office employees. For frontline operational employees, they were allowed to tie their hair in a ponytail instead. Deviations between individual hotels in the mentioned hotel group were allowed as long as they could secure customer satisfaction. New employee benefit practices were also implemented to meet Generation Yers’ personal caring and social networking expectations. Some companies had started sponsoring employees to join gymnasiums in fitness centres to enhance the staff’s well-being. The purpose was to strengthen this young workforce’s work commitment and sense of belonging.
To cope with the Generation Y employees’ expectations for job variety and decision making powers, isolating activities without strong impacts on core business were used to satisfy these youngsters' expectations. Employee relationship building activities served this purpose. In a large property management firm, activities to build employee relationships were separately organized for specific target group of employees. A few years ago, the mentioned company had organized an electronic game competition for the Chinese Generation Y employees. It helped in generating the happiness and fun treasured by these youngsters at workplaces.

In other cases, Chinese Generation Y employees were assigned with committee duties so that they could make more decisions. Through these special assignments, their expectations for job variety, new job assignments and challenges would be satisfied as well. Job shifting was another practice used to deal with the Generation Y employees’ expectations on expanding job scope and worthiness. In a small health care group, a new policy was set up to allow non-professional employees to take up two different jobs in alternative months. It shortened the Generation Yers’ time in routine work and, at the same time, satisfied their aspiration for job variety. However, these practices could hardly be applied in large corporations. As reflected by one of the non-Generation Y managers, their managers preferred to withhold big jobs from junior level employees to minimize business risks instead.

As revealed, companies had given more resources and efforts to develop and organize training and development activities to reinforce the superior-subordinate relationships. In some companies, training programs on how to work with Generation Yers were organized for the non-Generation Y managers. Particular training activities on workplace communication and work attitude were designed for these youngsters to enhance their collaborative capability with different stakeholders. These training activities further strengthened the Generation Yers’ belief that the company was taking care of them.

In terms of career development prospects and visible promotion opportunities, the
non-Generation management participants did not have particular new practices in place. In large corporations, talented Generation Y employees were selected, on an equal basis as others, into the talent development program to accelerate their career development process. For promotion opportunities, participants reflected that companies had strict conditions for promoting an employee to higher level positions. In one company, promotion by grade instead of position was practised. To a certain extent, this could satisfy the Generation Y employees’ expectations to have promotion opportunities immediately available to them.

The contemporary management practices unveiled were implemented to address the particular expectations of employees. New measures or practices were put in place according to the individual company’s special needs. It was evidenced in this study that no common or standard practices were applicable across companies. As reflected in the research findings, the workplace management practices currently used were piecemeal and not integrated in a well-structured manner.

4.7 Conclusion

From the research findings, it was found that the Chinese Generation Y employees had both commonalities and differences in their work expectations compared to their Western counterparts. As compared with the non-Generation Y managers, great differences were found in work scope interpretations, superior-subordinate relationships, work collaborations, organizational cultures, working environments and work-life considerations. These work expectation differences had led to diversity in the ways of undertaking work and in the creation of workplace tensions. It was confirmed that Chinese Generation Y employees were a source of workplace tensions. Intergenerational differences or gaps were found to exist in Hong Kong workplaces as Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers had different perceptions of each other. Impacts on people management due to the Chinese Generation Yers were visible. It was finally found that companies had devised some piecemeal measures and management practices at workplaces to accommodate the impacts of Generation
Y employees.

The following Chapter 5 reports on the conclusions of the research study.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research findings and outlines their contributions to the overall research study. The chapter will start with a summary of the research objectives and the literature gaps identified in this research project. The literature reviews and research methodology used will then be summarized. In the subsequent sections, the research result summaries addressing the research problems will be provided. The implications of the findings and the research study’s overall contributions to the academic studies and workplace people management will follow. Afterwards, the chapter will state the research limitations and provide suggestions for future research studies. A thesis summary and concluding remarks will be given in the last section of this chapter.

5.1.1 Research Objectives

This research study aims at identifying Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations to fill the research gaps, in particular that (a) the characteristics and expectations of Generation Y are barely available in academic studies (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008) and (b) the Generation Y findings published are largely confined to empirical studies in Western countries. Academic literature from multiple disciplines has been reviewed and it was found that Chinese Generation Y issues have not been affirmed or investigated in previous research studies. The research findings will then address the research problem of “the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and their impacts on people management”.
5.1.2 Literature review

This study firstly reviewed the underpinning theory, generational theory, which defined generations as cohorts of individuals born within the same time period and raised in a similar social and historical environment (Mannheim, 1953). The theory presumes that the critical events that shape each new generation would develop a ‘collective persona’ (Strauss & Howe, 1991, cited in McCrindle, 2014) and contribute to a generation’s unique characteristics (Ryder, 1965). The generational theory is not fully supported by other scholars. It is suggested that generation identity may not be tied strictly to birth cohort but also varied by age, gender, race and education (Dencker et al., 2008). The primary literature on generation name labelling and the time scopes for defining generations and characteristics were examined. It was found that scholars have used different time scopes and labels to describe generations. However, it did not affect academics in deriving consensus on the general descriptive (Eisner, 2005) of the characteristics (Angeline, 2011) of various generational groups at work.

The four visible generations’ aspirations and expectations at work were explored through broad academic studies from human resource management, business psychology and organizational behaviour. It was learnt that scholars had contrary viewpoints on the existence of intergenerational gaps. Specific literature findings on Generation Y were reviewed and then compared with other generations to learn their underlying work expectations. It was found that expectation gaps between different generations are visible. It was also recognized that the academic findings on Generation Y were largely confined to Western countries.

It is unclear whether the literature findings could be generalized to reveal similar impacts across countries and cultures, as well as economic and labour conditions (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). To address this research issue, academic research studies on Chinese work values and general information about Chinese Generation Y in
Hong Kong were sourced and reviewed. Some general work values between Chinese and Western employees were highlighted. It affirmed that there is a research need to explore the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations in the contemporary working settings.

5.1.3 Research Methodology

Information was gathered through the qualitative research methodology. In this exploratory study, semi-structured interviews were used for data collection and information exploration. Individual face-to-face interviews were adopted to identify and compare the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and impacts on people management in private firms in Hong Kong.

Twenty participants from private firms, subject to the criteria specified (Figure 3.1), were sampled separately as Chinese Generation Y employee and non-Generation Y manager interviewees. An equal number of 10 Chinese Generation Y employees and 10 non-Generation Y managers with Chinese Generation Y subordinates from diverse industries and job functions were selected by a purposive sampling method. The research design facilitated information to be collected in a balanced manner. Information gathered was compared to identify similarities and differences of work expectations between this new workforce and the non-Generation Y managers. It enabled an understanding of the different ways of undertaking work at a workplace, and validated the existence of intergenerational differences. The consolidated information was further analyzed to assess the role of workplace tensions created by these youngsters and the impacts of Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations on people management.

5.2 Research Findings

The four research questions outlined in Chapter 2 are addressed with the following findings.
5.2.1 Research Summary – The Work Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees and Non-Generation Y Managers in Hong Kong

The work expectations gathered from the qualitative research method were analyzed. Findings were then classified into job scopes, superior-subordinate relationships, collaboration with colleagues, corporate branding, organizational cultures, working environments and work-life aspects to reflect the contemporary workplace situation in Hong Kong.

5.2.1.1 Work Expectations of Chinese Generation Y Employees

In the job scope aspect, it is found that nearly half of the Chinese Generation Y employees consider the meaningfulness of jobs to be important. They want opportunities to set job priorities based on their own values and interests, raise whatever questions they have in mind and to be answered promptly. Job variety in both roles and activities are expected. Work values that match personal values are critical. To them, job worthiness would arise from a job that cherishes talents, allows flexibility and enhances job satisfaction. Chinese Generation Y employees treasure job satisfaction and fun at work. Yet, they do not particularly demand job creativity and innovation. Individual achievement from immediately available job opportunities would be crucial. They therefore only welcome new job assignments and challenges that could be handled within their capability. As found, they put worthwhile job natures and career development prospects with visible promotion opportunities to be their most important job motivators. A reasonable level of salary is treasured for sustaining a living only. Other motivators in order of significance include: learning opportunities and support, work-life balance, good working relationships, corporate branding and organizational culture.

The work expectations on the roles ofsuperiors, leadership, respect and trust, communication, job instructions and recognition have been collected through semi-structured interviews to analyze the superior-subordinate relationships. The
qualitative research result indicated that the Chinese Generation Y employees expect their superior to be a manager, personal coach, mentor and a leader. The Chinese Generation Y employees place great emphasis on leadership and value workplace equality. Personal care and attention to individual feelings, as well as giving instant recognition, are expected. Leaders should therefore be considerate, supportive and able to assess work issues from a subordinate’s perspective. They will respect their leaders only if the decisions made are supported with justifiable reasons. In this study, it was reflected that a leader-supporter relationship built on respect and trust is crucial. They expect leaders to initiate more direct and open communication in order to discuss the work issues with them. In giving job instructions, superiors should give broad directions, leaving the Chinese Generation Yers to freely define the work details and decide their own means of actions.

Local Chinese Generation Y employees expect harmonious working relationships with a casual and friendly atmosphere. They want happiness and fun at work. Social networking is hence favoured as a means to enhance or smooth work relationships to release stress and tensions. However, they value individuality more than teamwork, as personal achievement will be more easily recognized. The Chinese Generation Yers want their personal role and value to be seen in teamwork. To them, teamwork is just one of the platforms for enhancing working relationships.

In analyzing the corporate branding, organizational culture and working environment, it was found that only a few local Chinese Generation Y employees were concerned about corporate branding. Only youngsters from the late 1980s or early 1990s pay attention to a company’s efforts devoted to social responsibility and environmental protection activities. The Chinese Generation Y employees, however, consider a people caring culture to be important. Instant responses from colleagues, through the latest technological devices at work, are expected. A relaxed culture that allows flexibility, upholds fairness, respect and equal treatment and cares about employees’ well-being are much aspired to. The company must therefore provide, support or encourage young employees to take up learning opportunities at work. Leadership
plays a crucial part in this people caring culture, as local Chinese Generation Yers could be loyal, not to the company, but to a good leader instead.

Opinions on work-life considerations vary amongst Chinese Generation Y employees. Employees from business generating functions favour work-life integration, while others cherish work-life balance. For those who consider work-life balance to be important, various reasons have been raised. To these Chinese Generation Yers, they will not automatically take up an urgent assignment after work. They will use personal judgment to determine whether it is a really urgent task for action or not.

### 5.2.1.2 Work Expectations of Non-Generation Y Managers

The work expectations of Baby Boomers (aged between 50 and 69) and Generation Xers (aged between 34 and 49) were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. The information was then analyzed from job scope, superior-subordinate relationships, collaboration with colleagues, corporate branding, organizational culture, working environment and work-life perspectives to draw the research findings. Traditionalists (aged 70 or above) were excluded as most of them have already retired. As the non-Generation Y managers’ majority viewpoints were covered in this research study, the absence of the Traditionalists’ viewpoints would not affect the credibility of the findings in this research study.

From the job scope perspective, it was found that non-Generation Y managers expect responsiveness, courage, integrity and protection of company interests in job operations. Rigid compliance with rules and regulations is important to avoid possible errors. They want job security and stability and expect employees to deliver business results accurately and safely. Limited job variety is preferred, as employees should focus on their own job responsibilities and follow job instructions closely. Creativity and innovation are therefore generally discouraged. To them, job devotion and taking up full accountability of the assigned work are critical job expectations. As analyzed, these non-Generation Y managers would not disclose their jobs on hand to other
working partners. They considered earning money, promotion and salary increments to be the key motivators at work. It was further reflected that gaining work knowledge and skills from actual work operations, working harder and closer with colleagues could produce the expected results.

From the superior-subordinate relationships perspective, it was found that non-Generation Y managers would assume advisory and coaching roles in addition to the traditional managerial and leadership responsibilities. In acute situations and for tasks with time constraints, they expect subordinates to follow instructions closely without raising further enquiries. Respect for seniority, authority and position, as well as unfailing obedience from subordinates, are highly expected. Non-Generation Y managers would also prefer more communication with subordinates. Yet, they focus on the job-related issues in the communication process. In giving job instructions, non-Generation Y managers will provide guidelines and highlight the points subordinates might not know for job execution.

Non-Generation Y managers expect that a simple working relationship with colleagues is adequate. They try to refrain from social activities after office hours. These managers have fair expectation for team harmony. They demand team contributions, mutual support and responsible team members. Team members, however, should still be accountable for individual job ownership and work independently.

The research results indicated that non-Generation Y managers foster an absolute obedience culture. Subordinates are expected to listen to superiors and basically do as they are told. Justice and fairness are maintained with reference to the results and outcomes attained. Changes are discouraged as employees are expected to follow existing methods to avoid possible job deviations. They have strong drives for learning and trust that gaining knowledge from work-related studies is necessary.

The qualitative responses also affirmed that the majority of the non-Generation Y
managers expect themselves and others to have work-life integration. They believe hard work and working late would enable them to earn more money to meet their needs.

5.2.2 Research Summary - Differences in Work Expectations between Chinese Generation Y Employees and Non-Generation Y Managers in Hong Kong

This research study found that the Chinese Generation Y employees and the non-Generation Y managers in Hong Kong show great differences in work expectations. While the Chinese Generation Y employees put more emphasis on personal interests and the meaningfulness of jobs, the managers consider protecting corporate interests in the work processes to be important. To the latter, job variety should be controlled and confined to the given job scope. This contradicts the young employees’ expectations to engage in different job roles and activities.

Further work expectation gaps were found in defining job worthiness, autonomy and stability. The Chinese Generation Y employees favour a matching of company and personal values, independency in job prioritization for completing jobs within their comfort zone and to be given the chance to take self-initiating actions to demonstrate personal potential. However, non-Generation Y managers consider business requirements should override personal values. Job independency should be confined and completed within the rules and regulations requirements.

A safe and known process in attaining accurate work outcomes is highly expected. Creativity and innovation, as expected by some local Chinese Generation Y employees, are discouraged in most of the revealed cases. The work expectation discrepancies between the non-Generation Y managers and Generation Yers are also visible in their concerns for job motivation and job ownership. While the managers consider salary and promotion to be essential for work, the younger workforce places higher expectations on a worthwhile job nature to attain individual achievement.
As reflected, job ownership for these Generation Y employees is perceived as purely getting the job done as instructed, which is unacceptable to the managers. Great work expectation differences occur in understanding respect and obedience. Managers of older generations expect the subordinates to respect them for their seniority, authority and position. Strict obedience is implied, but this is unacceptable to the young employees. To the Chinese Generation Yers, managers should not control their work behaviour. They expect managers should listen to, and take care of, the Generation Yers’ feelings, and guide and support their subordinates through difficulties. Indeed, respect does not come automatically from authority and position. It needs to be earned by justifying actions with reasoning and enforcing fair treatment in the workplace.

Differences in communication and job instructions are also visible. The Chinese Generation Y employees’ expectations to directly approach their superiors to discuss a broad range of matters and raise questions to protecting self-interests are not normally expected by the older generation managers in Hong Kong. Non-Generation Y managers prefer to confine the communication process to job-related matters. They often substantiate their job instructions with guidelines and points they think subordinates might not know of. This does not match the Chinese Generation Yers’ expectations to just receive broad job instructions with supporting reasons. To the young employees, they expect to fill in the details themselves.

It is further observed that the non-Generation Y managers’ expectations to maintain basic working relationships without much involvement in social networking activities are not in line with the Chinese Generation Y employees’ strong desire to build friendly and family-like relationships at work. In comparison, teamwork is demanded more by the young workforce than the non-Generation Y managers. In addition to the non-Generation Y managers’ emphasis on team task accomplishment, Chinese Generation Y expects working relationships could be further built up through teamwork.
The people caring culture preferred by these youngsters confronts the absolute obedience culture expected by the managers. The Chinese Generation Y’s expectations for flexibility and changes at workplaces also differ from the non-Generation Y managers’ belief in getting jobs done according to established methods and practices. In this research study, it was further found that work-life considerations varied considerably. For the non-Generation Y managers, they generally expect work-life integration and there is no separation of the time between working hours and private time. On the other hand, a majority of the Generation Y employees favour work-life balance and trust that their private life should not be disturbed by office work issues.

5.2.3 Research Summary - Non-Generation Y Managers’ Perceptions of Chinese Generation Y Employees as a Source of Workplace Tensions

It was found that, due to the various reasons identified, employees use different ways to undertake work in the researched working settings. Sources of workplace tensions were identified. Tensions arise from means of communication, delivering job instructions, authorization understanding, work prioritization, task cooperation and follow up activities. Slightly over half of the participants reflected that the Chinese Generation Y group is a source of generating the identified workplace tensions. Two of the non-Generation Y managers noted that 70 per cent of the workplace tensions are caused by this young workforce. This observation was echoed, and agreed to, by two Generation Y employees who had subordinates under their direct supervision. However, the level of positions held by the Generation Yers, and the nature of the industry or firm, may affect the emergence of the Chinese Generation Y employees as a critical source of workplace tensions.
5.2.4 Research Summary - Extent of Workplace Management Practices to accommodate Chinese Generation Y Employees’ Needs

Sixteen research participants (eight non-Generation Y managers and eight Generation Y employees) agreed that intergenerational differences exist in Hong Kong. A cross-examination of perceptions, from both the Chinese Generation Y employees and the non-Generation Y managers’ perspectives, are explored. It is confirmed that many Chinese Generation Yers’ perceptions are in conflict with other generations’ expectations. The intergenerational gaps have generated broad impacts on people management in the areas of:

5.2.4.1 Changing Management Mindset

The non-Generational Y managers’ dictatorial or directive management approaches could not meet the Chinese Generation Y’s expectations. A more flexible management approach which includes adopting more interactive and coaching styles, treating employees as individuals and respecting their unique characters and personality in daily management is needed.

5.2.4.2 Matching of Job Expectations

The older generation managers’ expectations to dictate work behaviour by experience and position is viewed as not acceptable to the young workforce. They need to link the Chinese Generation Y’s attributes to the job by lowering the recruitment criteria or re-defining the job requirements. Clearer definitions of job boundaries and the separation of task activities for each individual are needed. More time and fine-tuning work might also be allowed as the Generation Y subordinates prefer to fill in the details themselves.
5.2.4.3 Policy and Procedures Re-Alignment

The Chinese Generation Y employees look for autonomy and flexibility at work. The non-Generation Y managers would be forced to stay firm only on the expected outcomes, while relaxing the operational steps or loosening some office policies to meet these youngsters’ expectations. More corporate governance rules in written format could be considered. By explicitly laying down what can and cannot be done in written form allows Generation Y employees to act freely within the stipulated boundaries.

5.2.4.4 Re-consideration of Superior-Subordinate Relationships

(including Communication and Job Instructions, Motivation and Recognition, Gaining Job Commitment, Personal Caring and Attention Giving)

The traditional superior-subordinate relationships do not meet the new workforce’s expectations. Superiors need to change their roles to be a coach and a mentor, work face-to-face with each other and take care of employees’ feelings throughout the work process. Their communication approaches and ways of interacting with Generation Y employees need to be adjusted. Superiors have to strengthen their listening power and accept Generation Y’s direct way of expressing ideas. More instant communication time will also be required. Superiors must be careful in giving specific and solid instructions and to set interim review times as well. It enables superiors to provide prompt assistance whenever needed.

The Chinese Generation Y employees have high expectations of prompt recognition of individual achievements. Superiors need to be more sensitive in affirming individual achievement by giving recognition and praise more frequently. To motivate the Generation Yers further, superiors have to allow time for these youngsters to try their means and to provide guidance only if requested. Furthermore, the Chinese Generation Y employees expect management decisions should be supported by
reasons. Managers have to substantiate their decisions with comprehensive justifications and evidence. If grey area tasks are improperly handled, Generation Yers will relate them to inequality or unfair treatment. It will take managers a longer time to handle their emotions and persuade them to consider the assigned tasks from different perspectives. Chinese Generation Y employees also expect family care, happiness and fun at work. Non-Generation Y managers will be forced to spare more time and attention to Generation Yers’ mental status.

5.2.4.5 Work Collaboration

Workplaces must be refined to become more casual and friendly in order to gain the Chinese Generation Y employees’ support for work collaboration. In addition, the Chinese Generation Yers highly value social networking and will be easily affected by peer groups. Managers should pay special attention to peer group influence for people management at workplaces.

5.2.4.6 Organizational Culture and Working Environment Initiatives

Chinese Generation Y employees demand mutual respect, equality and fair treatment in the workplace. It fosters companies to develop a people caring culture for people management. In managing this young workforce, managers need to put in more training and development resources, provide more job exposure and accelerate their career progressions.

5.2.4.7 Work-Life Considerations

Most of the Generation Y employees prefer work-life balance. Accordingly, managers have to re-consider their work-integration management concept. They need to stop interrupting employees with work issues after normal office hours.
5.2.4.8 Staff Retention

Work is not the key concern for the Chinese Generation Y employees. To stay in a company longer, they consider leadership style as well as the extent of company and personal values alignment to be important. Managers therefore need to devote time and effort to gain the Chinese Generation Y employees’ respect and trust.

Fifteen research participants confirmed that workplace management practices have been adopted by their companies to accommodate the impacts of Chinese Generation Yers. It shows that many companies are ready to question the suitability of their long practised people management approaches and to accept the need to change human resource management and development practices to meet the new generation workforce’s expectations. Management approaches have been adjusted to become more facilitating and supporting.

Company policies are relaxed, with new employee benefit practices implemented to meet the Chinese Generation Y employees’ expectations for flexibility and personal caring. As far as possible, isolated activities without strong impacts on core business, such as assigning individual Generation Yers to working committee duties, are given to these youngsters to satisfy their expectations for job variety and decision making powers.

As revealed, many companies have devoted additional resources to develop specific training and development activities to cope with the expectations on new superior-subordinate relationships. However, the new measures or practices adopted by these organizations are company specific ones. No common or standard practices are found to be applicable across participants’ companies or industries in this study. As reflected in the research findings, the workplace management practices currently used are piecemeal and are not integrated in a well-structured manner to meet the people management impacts of the Chinese Generation Y employees.
5.3 Evaluation of the Research Summary

It can be argued that expectations from different generations can be misleading, as they may not be based on facts, but individual personal intuitions, beliefs and cognitive views of others (Angeline, 2011). However, the qualitative research methodology used in this study captures individual perspectives and interpretations to generate a fuller and better understanding of the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations as a collective group. It provides broad and resourceful workplace information in order to meet the research objectives to identify the Chinese Generation Y’s workplace expectations and their impacts on people management in Hong Kong. It also fills the literature gaps identified in the Western studies.

In assessing the research summary results, it was found that the work expectations of Chinese Generation Y employees have been fully explored and compared against their Western counterparts. The research problem of “the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and their impacts on people management” was addressed through literature reviews, semi-structured interviews and answering the research questions. The literature review offered secondary research information on the characteristics of Western Generation Yers and other older generations. The general findings on intergenerational differences or gaps provided a useful basis for this research study.

The semi-structured interviews helped this research in addressing the research questions by generating real-life insights from both working Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers. The impacts of this young workforce on people management were further confirmed through a cross-examination of the perception differences between Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers. Chinese Generation Yers as a source of workplace tensions was identified and reflections of their people management impacts in the contemporary workplace in Hong Kong were further highlighted.
5.4 **Implications of the Findings and Overall Contributions**

The findings generated information on the Chinese Generation Y’s impacts on people management to substantiate the underlying generational theory, and contribute to the academic literature, management practices as well as business training and executive learning.

5.4.1 **Theoretical Implications and Contributions**

The research study, by exploring the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and people management impacts in Hong Kong, contributes to the generational theory with Chinese insights.

The research findings substantiate the generational theory by filling in the unique Chinese Generation Y characteristics, which differ from their Western counterparts. The major variance was in the fair demand in the work expectations for creativity and innovation. Anticipation of individual capability limitations will further affect the local Chinese Generation Y employees’ willingness to handle new job assignments and job challenges. They prefer to hold their opinions back on matters they do not fully understand. Indeed, Chinese Generation Y employees have great expectations in receiving clear job instructions. Their expectations on teamwork, as serving the purposes of relationship building, also needs particular attention. Different from their Western counterparts, teamwork will not be valued as a means for resolving workplace issues. To them, individual performance and be respected as an individual person within the team are still preferred. Visible individual role giving valuable contributions to team performance is indispensable. Chinese Generation Y employees also expect an uninterrupted social life after work. They will separate their technology devices for different purposes and withhold personal communication devices from work contacts as far as possible. Unlike their Western counterparts, the local Chinese Generation Y employees pay less attention to corporate branding and social contributions. As reflected, most of the Chinese Generation Y employees prefer
work-life balance. Work-life integration will only be upheld for fulfilling personal goals for career achievement.

These research findings affirm that the Chinese Generation Y employees share common work expectations as a unique group. The local Chinese Generation Yers, though they share many commonalities with their Western counterparts, have distinctive characteristics lacking in the Western research studies.

According to the career stages models, the job behaviours should be predictable in relation to individual employees' age/career stages (Levinson et al., 1974; Super, 1984). In this study, the Chinese Generation Y employees, were selected from a diversity of years of working experience, job functions and positions held (Tables 3.1, 3.5 and 3.6). They represent viewpoints of Chinese Generation Y employees having different career stages at work. In case any age/career stages predictions are visible, diversified and individualized work expectations should emerge in the research findings. However, more common work expectations amongst the Chinese Generation Y employees were found. The interviewed non-Generation Y managers further confirmed that the Chinese Generation Y employees are more demanding for scientific ways to solve work issues, more 'calculating' and have a stronger desire than other generations, when they were of the same age, to try different things. The research findings subsequently indicates that the generational characteristics depicted by birth cohort, other than the age/career stages' predictions (Levinson et al., 1974; Super, 1984), might have direct impacts on Chinese Generation Y employees' work expectations.

The knowledge learnt hence supplements the generational theory with the understanding that local formative incidents may have impacts in creating the Chinese Generation Y’s unique work expectations.
5.4.2 People Management Implications and Contributions

The knowledge gained from a further understanding of the Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations, intergenerational differences and Chinese Generation Y as a source of workplace tensions contributes to the development of new management practices, business training and executive learning. The literature review and research results found from the work expectation differences between Chinese Generation Yers and non-Generation Y managers provided insights on the divergences management need to pay attention to in contemporary workplaces. The findings point out that the traditional ways of managing workforce is no longer workable. The management process has to be re-visited to cope with the Chinese Generation Y's new work expectations. Work expectation gaps found in defining job worthiness, autonomy and stability further call for management's mindset changes and a flexible management approach to be adopted. The research findings from management’s perceptions of Generation Y as a source of workplace tensions and the workplace management practices to accommodate their impacts, will form the basis for revising business training contents and enhance executive learning at work. Management should then learn to respect each Chinese Generation Y employees as an individual with unique characters and personality. Job nature should also be reviewed frequently to satisfy the Chinese Generation Yers' personal values.

5.5 Limitations of the Research Study

This exploratory study attempts to understand the work expectations of Chinese Generation Y employees in Hong Kong. It is aware that the research methods used have limitations. Firstly, the data collected through interviews may be limited by the subjectivity of individual participants and the capability of participants in listening, understanding and interpreting messages. Personal assumptions, hiding of sensitive issues, trust in expressing personal feelings and competencies to correctly relate questions to concrete answers may hinder a fuller understanding of the information
gathered.

Secondly, only one Chinese city, Hong Kong, was selected for the study. Analysis between different Chinese cities has not been conducted in this research project. Non-generation Y managers’ perceptions of Generation Y, and the collected cases in Hong Kong alone, are not comprehensive enough to draw critical features for the whole Chinese community. To achieve this, more cross-sectional studies focusing on specific variables need to be conducted in future research studies.

Thirdly, even though both male and female participants were included in the study, this research has not separated their work expectations for analyzing the gender impacts. Similarly, older generations managers' perceptions over Generation Y employees were not classified from the gender perspective. The impacts of the gender difference in Chinese Generation Y employees' work expectations and subsequent impacts on people management are still unknown.

Fourthly, other determinants of work expectations, including individual personality, preferences or life/career stage (Delcampo et al., 2011; Fenton & Dermott, 2006) are not researched. It is uncertain of their impacts, in comparison to generational influence, on the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations. Additional research on the mentioned determinants is needed in the future.

Fifthly, this research did not compare or analyze Chinese Generation Y employees' findings on industrial basis. It is unclear whether the nature of the industry would affect Generation Y employees' work behaviour to emerge as a source of workplace tensions or not.

Finally, even though it is trusted that the findings will be reliable as the samples of employees and managers have been collected from participants working in different sized firms and business functions, the comparatively small sample size will be questionable of their representation for generalizability.
5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

This exploratory study has been conducted in a single Chinese city, Hong Kong. To validate the findings on Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations further, empirical studies in other Chinese cities would be necessary.

It is also recommended that longitudinal or cross-sectional studies, based on similar research design, should be conducted to confirm the research findings. It will then be able to identify the trends and intervening variables to develop feasible models to manage the Generation Y employees.

From the data collected, it is found that the level of positions held by the Generation Yers and the nature of industry or firm may affect the emergence of Chinese Generation Y employees to be a critical source of workplace tensions. It would be worthwhile to conduct industry specific research studies to ascertain the extent of Chinese Generation Y employees’ work expectations and impacts in different industries.

While Chinese Generation Y’s overall work expectations have generated people management impacts, it is uncertain whether other intervening variables like culture, gender, age and personality would produce similar effects. It is desirable to conduct empirical studies to examine relationships of variables in future research studies.

Finally, it is recommended to conduct specific research on Generation X’s perceptions over Chinese Generation Y employee and the impacts on people management. Majority of the Baby Boomers will retire in coming 10 to 15 years. In-depth research studies on the perceptions of the succeeding generation, Generation X, on Generation Y employees for better workplace collaboration will be beneficial.
5.7 Thesis Summary and Concluding Remarks

The findings in this research study are analyzed through a mix of participants from different business organizations, industries and years of working experience. Various sizes of companies are selected, with a higher representation of both Chinese Generation Y employees and non-Generation Y managers from local Chinese firms. It reflects the current situation and observation of the contemporary Hong Kong working environment.

Generational theory is used for examining the Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and impacts on people management in Hong Kong. The findings suggest that the Chinese Generation Y employees have some distinct work expectations which are different from their Western counterparts. It draws attention to unique local defining events which could have “specifically influenced the generations” (Codrington, 2008, p. 13). It is further observed that, similar to the generational theory supporters’ findings in Western studies, intergenerational differences exist in this Chinese city and that Chinese Generation Y employees are considered to be a source of workplace tensions in business firms. Indeed, visible workplace management practices have been developed and designed to cope with the Chinese Generation Y’s impacts in a piecemeal manner in Hong Kong.

This exploratory study achieves its aim in substantiating the generational theory with Chinese insights. It inspires thoughts on future management practices, business training and executive learning in meeting this workforce’s work expectations.

Finally, this research study provides the foundation for conducting similar research investigations on Chinese Generation Y in Hong Kong and other Chinese cities.
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APPENDICES
### Appendix A  Different Labels for Four Generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Builders</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-boomers</td>
<td>The baby boomers</td>
<td>Post-boomers</td>
<td>Echo boomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The silent generation</td>
<td>The sandwich generation</td>
<td>X-ers</td>
<td>The millennials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The veterans</td>
<td>The hippies</td>
<td>MTV generation</td>
<td>Net generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>The greatest generation</td>
<td>War babies</td>
<td>The gap generation</td>
<td>Generation whY</td>
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<tr>
<td>The seniors</td>
<td>The love generation</td>
<td>Slackers</td>
<td>Ygen</td>
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<tr>
<td>The GI generation</td>
<td>Vietnam generation</td>
<td>The options generation</td>
<td>Google generation</td>
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</tbody>
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Note: Adapted for the research study from The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations. (McCrindle, 2014, p. 19).
Appendix B  Invitation to Participate in the Research Project

Invitation E-mail sent to Non-Generation Y Manager

Invitation to participate in the interview in the DBA research project on “Generation Y’s (youngsters born after 1980) Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong” (Non-Generation Y Manager Interview)

Dear

I would like to invite you to participate in the interview in the above research project which is being conducted by Dr John Nolan, Dr John Lewer and Chun Hung Kwok from the University of Newcastle.

Please be reminded that you must be a Non-Generation Y manager with at least one local Chinese Generation Y (i.e. youngster born after 1980) subordinate, who is a Hong Kong resident, under you. Otherwise, you are not our targeted research participant and you will not be contacted for the research interview.

A copy of the “Participant Information Statement” and “Consent Form” are attached for your reading.

Please indicate your acceptance to this invitation by a returned email together with the signed Consent Form to me.

Thank you.

Kwok Chun Hung
Invitation E-mail sent to Chinese Generation Y Employee

Invitation to participate in the interview in the DBA research project on “Generation Y’s (youngsters born after 1980) Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong” (Chinese Generation Y Employee Interview)

Dear

I would like to invite you to participate in the interview in the above research project which is being conducted by Dr John Nolan, Dr John Lewer and Chun Hung Kwok from the University of Newcastle.

A copy of the “Participant Information Statement” and “Consent Form” are attached for your reading.

Please be reminded that you must be a working local Chinese Generation Y (i.e. younger born after 1980), residing in Hong Kong.

Please indicate your acceptance to this invitation by a returned email together with the signed Consent Form to me.

Thank you.

Kwok Chun Hung
Appendix C  Participant Information Statement

Participant Information Statement

Dr. John Nolan  
Faculty of Business and Law  
University of Newcastle  
Callaghan NSW 2308  
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Dr. John Lever  
Faculty of Business and Law  
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Phone No. (612) 96746848

Information Statement for the Research Project:  
Generation Y’s Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong

Document Version 2, dated April 27, 2014

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Dr John Nolan, Dr John Lever and Chun Hung Kwek from the University of Newcastle. The research is part of Chun Hung Kwek’s Doctor of Business Administration studies at the University of Newcastle, supervised by Dr. John Nolan and Dr John Lever from the Newcastle Business School.

Why is the research being done?

The purpose of the research is to explore the experiences and expectations of Chinese Generation Y’s within the contemporary workplace setting of Hong Kong, with a particular focus examining the new learning styles and resultant expectations of this generation.

It is anticipated the managers and staff interviewed in this study will help identify any significant generational differences in employment expectations held by the managers of Chinese Generation Y and members of the Generation Y workforce, and more importantly the methods by which any perceived generational differences can be addressed.

Who can participate in the research?

Generation Y employees and Department Managers in private organisations are eligible to participate in the research. Generation Y employee interviewees are confined to local Chinese Generation Y residents and are holding full-time or part-time jobs at the time of interview. Manager interviewees are confined to be non-Generation Y managers, assuming management responsibilities in a business organization and have at least one Chinese Generation Y subordinate(s) directly reporting to them. Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you.

If you do decide to participate you may withdraw from the project at any time up until verification of transcript without giving a reason.

What would you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to attend an individual face-to-face interview to be held at a place/time convenient and agreeable to you.

For Generation Y Employees

Participants are given the opportunity to express your work expectations, observations and examples of any inter-generational differences and work tensions that may arise from inter-generational workplace.

For Non-Generation Managers with Generation Y subordinate(s)

Newcastle  |  Central Coast  |  Port Macquarie  |  Singapore

Phone: (02) 4921 5083  |  Fax: (02) 4921 5089

Callaghan NSW 2308 Australia  |  Phone: 612 4921 8500  |  Website: www.newcastle.edu.au
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

Participants will be asked on your work expectations, observations and examples of any intergenerational differences, work tension that may arise from intergenerational workforce and methods to address any perceived generational differences.

How much time will it take?

The face to face interviews will be scheduled for a maximum duration of 2 hours.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There are neither risks nor direct benefits of participating in the research, however, it is anticipated that the research results will assist in the identification of Chinese Generation Y’s work expectations and concerns within the contemporary workplace.

How will your privacy be protected?

Contributions to the project will be anonymous and confidential. The real names of organisations and individuals will be replaced by a coding system to ensure your privacy is protected, and information cannot be traced back to participants. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once the transcripts are verified. Consent forms will be scanned and then shredded. Soft copies of the transcripts and consent forms will be stored on password protected computers accessible only to the extent as required by law. The data will be kept for a minimum of five years after approval of Chun Hung Kwok dissertation and then deleted.

How will the information collected be used?

The information used will form part of the dissertation to be submitted for Chun Hung Kwok’s Doctor of Business Administration degree. Upon acceptance it may also be used in scholarly conference and journal publications. Individual participants and participating organisations will be sent a summary of the results once the dissertation is approved.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please read this Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have questions, contact the researcher.

If you would like to participate, please contact Chun Hung Kwok by email as stated on the letterhead to arrange a time convenient to you for the interview.

Further Information

If you would like further information, in the first instance please contact Chun Hung Kwok at chunhung.kwok@newcastle.edu.au or Dr. John Nolen at John.Nolen@newcastle.edu.au or Dr. John Leaver at leaver@newcastle.edu.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Dr John Nolen
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Appendix D  Consent Form for the Research Project

Consent Form for the Research Project:

Generation Y's Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to:

- Participating in a face to face interview which will be recorded.
- Answering questions concerning what my expectations are in the workplace as I undertake my work duties.
- Review interview transcripts.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers except as required by law.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: ____________________________________________________________

Signature: __________________________________________________________________ Date: ________________________________
Appendix E  Interview Questions

FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

The Interview

1. Welcome the participant and thank them for coming. Remind them that the interview is confidential and that they can refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the interview and the research project at any time.
2. Review the consent form and ask if they have any questions.
3. Remind the participant the interview will be taped and that I will be taking notes during the interview.
4. Review the topics to be discussed during the interview (Appendix 4). This will focus the participant and provide a base for discussing work expectations of Generation Y.
5. Ask the participant to relate their work expectations and experiences in as much detail as possible.

Potential focus questions include:

- Can you describe your work expectations?
- Can you tell me if there are differences on how work should be undertaken at your place of work?
- Can you give any examples of such differences?
- Can you describe any differences between what your work expectations are and others with whom you work?
- Can you describe any intergenerational differences that may exist on work expectations?
- Can you describe the source of workplace tensions that may arise from any intergenerational workforce?
- Can you describe any differences that may occur between managing an intergenerational workforce and one that consists of one generation?
- Are there any additional experiences you feel are important to discuss?

Closing the Interview:

1. Thank the participant for participating in the interview.
2. Ask the participant if they would be available to review the written transcript of their interview, reminding them it is not a requirement for them to do so.
Appendix 4: Topics to be discussed during the interview

- Work expectations – work environment, superior-subordinate relationship, work-life considerations, career aspirations, etc.
- Observations on how work should be undertaken at workplace
- Reflections on intergenerational work expectations
- Workplace tension that may arise from any intergenerational workforce – source and extent
- Workplace management practices for accommodation
- Additional Experiences
Appendix F  Ethical Clearance Approval

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Notification of Expedited Approval

To Chief Investigator or Project Supervisor:  
Doctor John Nolan

Cc Co-Investigations / Research Students:  
Mr Chun Hung Kwok
Doctor John Lewer

Re Protocol:  
HKMA2013DBA Kwok Chun Hung - Generation Y’s Workplace Expectations and Impacts on People Management in Hong Kong

Date:  
04-Jun-2014

Reference No:  
H-2014-0126

Date of Initial Approval:  
04-Jun-2014

Thank you for your Response to Conditional Approval submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) seeking approval in relation to the above protocol.

Your submission was considered under Expedited review by the Chair/Deputy Chair.

I am pleased to advise that the decision on your submission is Approved effective 04-Jun-2014.

In approving this protocol, the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) is of the opinion that the project complies with the provisions contained in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007, and the requirements within this University relating to human research.

Approval will remain valid subject to the submission, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. If the approval of an External HREC has been "noted" the approval period is as determined by that HREC.

The full Committee will be asked to ratify this decision at its next scheduled meeting. A formal Certificate of Approval will be available upon request. Your approval number is H-2014-0126.

If the research requires the use of an Information Statement, ensure this number is inserted at the relevant point in the Complaints paragraph prior to distribution to potential participants. You may then proceed with the research.

Note
Please ensure that the venue selected for the interviews does not put the researcher at risk.

Conditions of Approval

This approval has been granted subject to you complying with the requirements for Monitoring of Progress, Reporting of Adverse Events, and Variations to the Approved Protocol as detailed below.

PLEASE NOTE:
In the case where the HREC has "noted" the approval of an External HREC, progress reports and reports of adverse events are to be submitted to the External HREC only. In the case of Variations to the approved protocol, or a Renewal of approval, you will apply to the External HREC for approval in the first instance and then register that approval with the University’s HREC.

• Monitoring of Progress

Other than above, the University is obliged to monitor the progress of research projects involving human
participants to ensure that they are conducted according to the protocol as approved by the HREC. A progress report is required on an annual basis. Continuation of your HREC approval for this project is conditional upon receipt, and satisfactory assessment, of annual progress reports. You will be advised when a report is due.

- **Reporting of Adverse Events**

  1. It is the responsibility of the person first named on this Approval Advice to report adverse events.
  2. Adverse events, however minor, must be recorded by the investigator or as volunteered by a participant in the research. Full details are to be documented, whether or not the investigator, or his/her deputies, consider the event to be related to the research substance or procedure.
  3. Serious or unforeseen adverse events that occur during the research or within six (6) months of completion of the research, must be reported by the person first named on the Approval Advice to the (HREC) by way of the Adverse Event Report form (via RIMS at https://rims.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp) within 72 hours of the occurrence of the event or the investigator receiving advice of the event.
  4. Serious adverse events are defined as:
     - Causing death, life threatening or serious disability.
     - Causing or prolonging hospitalisation.
     - Overdose, cancers, congenital abnormalities, tissue damage, whether or not they are judged to be caused by the investigational agent or procedure.
     - Causing psycho-social and/or financial harm. This covers everything from perceived invasion of privacy, breach of confidentiality, or the diminution of social reputation, to the creation of psychological fears and trauma.
     - Any other event which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.
  5. Reports of adverse events must include:
     - Participant’s study identification number;
     - date of birth;
     - date of entry into the study;
     - treatment arm (if applicable);
     - date of event;
     - details of event;
     - the investigator’s opinion as to whether the event is related to the research procedures; and
     - action taken in response to the event.
  6. Adverse events which do not fall within the definition of serious or unexpected, including those reported from other sites involved in the research, are to be reported in detail at the time of the annual progress report to the HREC.

- **Variations to approved protocol**

  If you wish to change, or deviate from, the approved protocol, you will need to submit an Application for Variation to Approved Human Research (via RIMS at https://rims.newcastle.edu.au/login.asp). Variations may include, but are not limited to, changes or additions to investigators, study design, study population, number of participants, methods of recruitment, or participant information/consent documentation. Variations must be approved by the (HREC) before they are implemented except when registering an approval of a variation from an external HREC which has been designated the lead HREC, in which case you may proceed as soon as you receive an acknowledgement of your Registration.

- **Linkage of ethics approval to a new Grant**

  HREC approvals cannot be assigned to a new grant or award (ie those that were not identified on the application for ethics approval) without confirmation of the approval from the Human Research Ethics Officer on behalf of the HREC.

Best wishes for a successful project.
Professor Allyson Holbrook  
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

For communications and enquiries:
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The Chancellery 
The University of Newcastle 
Callaghan NSW 2308 
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Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au


Linked University of Newcastle administered funding:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding body</th>
<th>Funding project title</th>
<th>First named investigator</th>
<th>Grant Ref</th>
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