Generational Differences in Work Attitudes

A comparative analysis of Generation Y and preceding generations from companies in Sweden

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Abstract

Introduction: A population that can live and work longer has resulted in a wider range of generations being active in the workplace simultaneously and the diverse multi-generational work environment is a new challenge for human resource management. The most recent generation that is entering the job market is Generation Y, which is also referred to as Millennials. Currently, organizations and Human Resource departments are facing the issue of Generation Y entering the workforce and the issue at hand is considered to be real. The main focus in this paper is Generation Y and how their work attitudes in the workplace differ or resembles that of the previous generations.

Purpose: With this research we want to primarily establish and present our observation of the differences in Generation Y and preceding generations’ work attitudes occurring in multi-generational workplaces, and later evaluate to what extent it is present in the work environment of the chosen business sectors in Sweden.

Method: This thesis major applies the deductive approach. Both primary data and secondary data were collected during the research. Primary data was collected through interviews and the secondary data was gathered from Internet resources, books, published articles and journals.

Conclusion: The differences between the generations’ work attitude are present within all of the aspects of work attitudes studied excluding individual vs. team orientation where the data was conflicting. Differences in some aspects were more and the potential to cause clash was noticeable and in other aspects there were less differences or personal factors found to be more important than generational factors.
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1. Introduction

A population that can live and work longer has resulted in a wider range of generations being active in the workplace simultaneously (Shah, 2011), and based on Lancaster and Stillman (2002, p.11) “For the first time in history, we have four separate and distinct generations working shoulder-to-shoulder and face-to-face in a stressful, competitive workplace”. This diverse multi-generational work environment is a new challenge for human resource management (Shah, 2011; Mann, 2006). These four generations who are present at the workplace nowadays have been categorized differently by different scholars. The most recent generation that is entering the job market is Generation Y, which is also referred to as Millennials (Armour, 2005; Hansen & Leuty 2012). The generations prior to Generation Y are respectively labeled Generation X, Baby Boomers and Silent Generation. Although, there are alternative names for each generational group, for the sake of clarity and unanimous understanding, we will use these terms in the course of this paper.

*Generational collisions are among the key management issues being faced by leaders of today’s organizations.* – Lancaster

Admittedly the four groups share some traditional work values, however, each of them brings different characteristics to the workplace (Mann, 2006). According to Bassett (2008) and Lloyd (2007) “differences in values, perceptions and communication styles among generations can lead to conflict in the workplace” (Cited by Bearfield et al, 2009, p.10). Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) also noted that 40% of human resource professionals noticed clash between employees as a consequence of generational differences. Therefore, to carry out and
achieve organizational goals more efficiently, a thorough understanding of generational differences and their implications for multi-generational work environments is imperative. In order to investigate and understand generational differences and similarities it is of essence to categorize different aspects that are linked to the phenomena. The categorization of these different aspects in this research will be shaped in the form of traits, work value and work attitude. The central focus of this particular research will be on work attitude. However, generational traits and work value are also included to give the reader a wider perception of the generational differences present in the literature. For simplicity and for increased focus on the matter, a cross-comparison of all the generations will not be made. Generation Y is the generation of focus, hence, the comparison made will be between Generation Y and the preceding generations. Researchers have chose Generation Y as the generation of focus, since it is the current generation entering the job market. By capitalizing on Generation Y, we hoped to find how the work attitudes of the latter group at the workplace differed or resembled to those of its previous generations. Authors chose to focus on Generation Y, since it is the most recent generation entering the workforce. Moreover, the authors decided not to focus on two generations only, since the other three preceding generations are still present in the workplace and hence, there is a cross-generational communication between all of them in the workplace. However, there are existing differences between previous generations, which, is not the focus of this study, and further research can be done to explore differences in preceding generations. Our primary data amassed through interviews were applied for conducting a comparative analysis against the secondary data independently secured by other researchers in previous surveys on the subjects. Then the data was examined to see to what extent this phenomenon
prevailed in different sectors of Sweden economy ranging from its banking, insurance commerce and industrial enterprises. The research is hopeful to determine whether generational differences, as defined in the relevant literature also exist in the context of the chosen workplaces in Sweden. First we will look at generational theories and generational research. The general traits and values accounted for by the literature will be compared in the form of tables.

1.1 Background

Currently, organizations and Human Resource (HR) departments are dealing with a new generation of job seekers entering their respective organizations. Generation Y as new labor market entrants and their immediate bearing on the working and staff relations is already on the top of the HR agenda in many enterprises (Council of Graduate Schools, 2007). According to Strauss and Howe (2000), whose work is predominant in this area, say that Millennials are “a direct reversal from the trends associated with Boomers (P. 45)” and “represent a sharp break from the traits that are associated with Generation X (P. 7)”.

A review of the literature on the subject of generational implications of employees’ interactions at the enterprise levels reveals that a somewhat new phenomenon is taking place along with the entering of Generation Y to the workplace. Born between 1980s and 1990s, Generation Y, also known as the Millennial Generation, is the fruit of the rapid pace of a constantly changing society. Generation Y is known to have grown up under the umbrella of their parents and other social institutions; receiving protection, coaching, fairly proper living and adequate school arrangements (Strauss & Howe, 2000). Generation Y is also born in an era characterized by the unprecedented spread of information technology and social spheres (Black, 2010). Due to their
rather special growing environments, Generation Y is believed to possess unique characteristics, personalities, and perspectives.

Strauss and Howe (2000) define Generation Y or Millennials (as they named them) as people born between 1982 and 2002 and according to Lancaster & Stillman it is from 1982 to 2000. There is no consensus over the birthdates that defines this particular generation and the other generations. However, in the literature review this will be addressed accordingly. Keep in mind that this research will mainly focus on Generation Y. A more detailed account of the era each generation is attributed to in the literature review this will be addressed later.

The study of generational challenges and clashes is not only limited to studies conducted by Strauss and Howe in United States. In Australia, New Zealand and Europe other researchers and business schools have addressed this phenomenon. With four generations of Australians now in the workforce, a growing number of older executives are being forced to reassess their management and communication styles because of their poor retention of young staff (Kershaw, 2005). Institute of Leadership and Management, (ILM, 2011) a business school from England together with Institute of Leadership and Management have done several studies on the phenomenon and note that Generation Y needs a different type of management, one in the form of “coaching” because this will yield in a managing style that delivers: “awareness and understanding”, and provides them with a degree of “freedom and autonomy”. Such findings in the respective literature review have motivated us to look further into the issue and to venture into a relatively new territory in academic research.
1.2 Problem Discussion

At present, Generation Y is the fastest-growing segment of the workforce. Freshly minted Generation Y graduates are ambitious to have their first positions in their workplace. However, research has shown that there exist differences between Y and previous generations (Armour, 2005; & Tulgan 2009). Therefore as Generation Y graduates, are distinctive to the people who are managing them, it is evident that a better understanding of the working attitude, expectations and behavioral differences of the former generations would have positive bearing on the human resources yield and a better working relations at the workplace and enterprise level.

From among the prevailing working attitudes observed in different Swedish business sectors, we have chosen a general phenomenon that could potentially lends itself to a form of a generational clash at the workplace level. In our research we wish to determine whether that generational attitude could be indeed serious and lead to a clash. The phenomenon of the differences in work attitudes in the workplace between the Generation Y and its previous generations has been examined so as to shed more light on issue as well. In view of our research restraints, however, we have only investigated the work attitudes and strived to be more focused on what seems to be a multifaceted, complex and relatively unexplored research topic.

Our examination and observation of this phenomenon has been conducted through the revision of the relevant scientific publications and specialized journals and articles on the subject of generational traits and characteristics of the employees in the working environment.

1.3 Purpose

Our research primarily attempted to establish and present our observations of the differences in Generation Y and its preceding generations’ work attitudes. Such differences were assumed to
occur in workplaces characterized by the presence of multi-generations, and therefore we attempted to evaluate to what extent such differences prevails in the working environment of the chosen business sectors in Sweden.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ: Do generational differences attributed to work attitude exist between Generation Y and its previous generations?

1.5 Delimitations

Since, there are not so many studies done on the chosen topic in Sweden, we intend to investigate the existence of similarities and differences in the work attitudes between Generation Y and its previous generations in the workplace and the extent of their frequency and to see to what extent the previous findings in other countries are applicable to the job market in Sweden.

We have investigated the afore said through direct interviews with the managers and personnel of Swedish enterprises. Due to time and resources limitation in conducting this investigation, its conclusions will be valid for the organizations/persons interviewed and cannot necessarily be generalized for all companies in Sweden.

1.6 Definitions and Keywords

- **Generation** - Refers to groups of individuals born and living contemporaneously who have common knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors (Johnson and Johnson, 2010, p. 6).
- **Cohort** - a group of people banded together or treated as a group.
• **Generational Cycles** - lasting approximately the length of human life.
• **Turnings** - Each generational cycle consists of four turnings that is sometime referred to mood areas.
• **Previous Generations** - Referring to the cohorts born between 1925 to 1981 (Silent Generation, Baby Boomers and Generation X)
• **Work Attitude** - Time and location flexibility, feedback demand, preferred organizational structure, and work-life balance. (Generally defined, work attitudes are evaluative (cognitive) or emotional (affective) reactions to various aspects of work (Hulin & Judge, 2003).

### 2. Theoretical Framework

In this research we tried to investigate the differences between Generation Y and preceding generations. Therefore, while defining the theoretical framework of our research, we attempted to investigate previous research done on the issue of generational studies and particularly chose those concentrating on generational attitude at the workplace. In order to conduct a comparative analysis with our empirical findings, we initially examined the two most prevalent generational theories. By using a funnel approach, we started from the well-established Mannheim generations’ theory and then we looked at Strauss-Howe generational theory. Having completed our thorough examination of generational theories, we then looked at traits and characteristics of generations and attempted to narrow it down to dominant generational behavior at the workplace by concentrating on the work attitude of different generations and their important characteristics.
2.1 Generational Theories

Studying generations on the basis of their distinctive characteristics and features have been the subject of a series of studies among scholars of different fields including sociologists, philosophers, historians and anthropologists. Each Scholar has examined the concept of generational characteristics, features and traits from its own perspectives. While an anthropologist chooses to rely on biological factors as the most outstanding traits in the examination of the generational characteristics of different generations, a social thinker and theorist may tend to mainly focus on social and behavioral traits and values that can more visibly distinguish one generations from another.

In this section we tried to study generational theories, in order to have a better understanding of generational traits, features, values and more specifically their work attitudes. We furthermore sought to investigate differences at the workplace to see if there is any value conflict and/or any generational clash in a multi-generational work environment. By trying modestly to theorize the concept of characteristics and features of different generations, we are hopeful to help form a solid foundation that will provide for further studies on the subject. According to Schofield and Honoré (2009), generational theory can be used as shorthand especially in analyzing generations. Therefore, it is necessary to have an appropriate grasp of prevailing generational theories and understand their applicability. However, it is important to bear in mind that the established models and theories of research, irrespective of their strength, shall not reasonably limit our ability to venture into new territories of research. On the contrary, it should, among other things, sufficiently provide for independent, impartial and critical analysis of the existing researches on the subject.
Generational theories may also potentially provide a large horizon for new studies by scholars of different fields including labor market analysts, private employment agencies, social theorists, historians, etc. and may best help today’s business management in better personnel management and providing a more enabling working environment for employees of all generations. Increasing population and their longevity, generational shifts and the ever-increasing inflow of the X and Y Generations to the job market may very well justify the need for more studies of the behavioral traits of different generations in the world of work.

According to McCrindle (2006) in order to achieve success it is necessary to understand traits, attitude shifts and social changes. By the same token that the Baby Boomers and Generation X need to understand traits and popular culture of Generation Y, the latter also needs to be cognizant of the traits and social culture of the previous generations. McCrindle (2006) maintains that understanding the generational changes and keeping up with the trends in the generational behavioral traits are indispensable tools for success in any business. A thorough understanding of the behavioral traits and different requirements of each generation, furthermore, may greatly help employees and employers in workplaces with multi-generation mixes to provide for a more friendly and collaborative working environment, where knowledge and the experience of the previous generations may be better transferred to the younger generations. Such an enabling working environment, among other things, shall also have direct bearing on the labor relations at the workplace, the productivity, competitiveness and eventually the sustainability of the enterprise versus rival companies that fail to deal with the repercussion of generational clashes.

The above argument seems to adequately justify the need for a closer look at two major generational theories so as to better understand customary perspectives on generations. Mannheim’s Theory of Generations, for instance, mainly relies on a sociological approach
toward the concept of generations. It has also proved itself as a very effective tool in dealing with other generation related studies and has repeatedly demonstrated its effectiveness in the field of relevant studies. The second theory that we strived to thoroughly investigate was the Strauss-Howe Generational theory and its categorization of generations as Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials). Although, different researchers have introduced different names and terms for generations, they also seem to have heavily relied on Strauss-Howe categorization of generations.

### 2.1.1 Mannheim's Theory of Generations

Karl Mannheim is known in the circle of sociology as one of the influential sociologist of the 20th century. In his essay “The Problem of Generations” he duly discusses his Theory of Generations from a sociological point of view. Mannheim emphasizes on social location and classes factors as dominant variables affecting generational traits and as Pilcher (1994) points out Mannheim tends to regard social location as a generational factor that can explain different behaviors and approaches attributed to different generations. To Mannheim, biological factors alone cannot explain the historical and generational changes that predominate each generation; rather it is necessary to look at social and cultural factors that may well justify the commonness of certain characteristics among specific generations.

Mannheim was critical to the two 19th century dominant viewpoints on the dichotomy of generations. The first one is known in the literature as the positivist formulation and the second one is traditionally labeled the romantic-historical formulation. Mannheim indicates that generations can be primarily characterized by special behavior and collectively shared knowledge (Corsten, 1999). He, therefore, argues that the positivist formulation that aims to
provide a universal law and a general rhythm of generational characteristics, one the one hand, romantic-historical formulation that only attempts the qualitative factors and collective feelings of the generations, on the other hand may not amply provide for a thorough theory of generation (Corsten, 1999).

Furthermore, Mannheim argues that development of the distinct generational consciousness and altered approaches depends on social changes (Pilcher, 1994). Therefore it is important to consider social, political, economic and historical factors that can help shape and change common generational characteristics and features. These factors will eventually lead in the development of certain traits and qualities in each generation that might distinctively distinguish it from others. Although, these differences might not be as distinctive as some of the existing similarities among different generations, it is necessary to be aware of them so as to identify the values system and behavioral pattern of each generation, its transformation process so as to eventually understand how Generation Y is different from its previous generations. For instance, it is believed that the generation that survived the Great Depression is above all affected by economic hardships that helped it shape its behavior and attitude versus the society and the labor at the later junctures. The economic hardship of the Great Depression made that particular generation more cautious economically. In examining traits and characteristics of each generation, different factors and variables that in one way or another influenced the relevant generation should be reasonably identified and duly analyzed. One may, therefore, soundly conclude that circumstances not only alter the cases, it also alter the character of the generation that outlived that particular circumstance.
2.1.2 Strauss-Howe Generational Theory

In conducting their studies and researches on generational traits and attitude, William Strauss and Neil Howe primarily focused on repeated generational cycles in the American history. Their studies, however, irrespective of its heavy American characteristics, have been widely used by other scholars and their findings could greatly help us understand recurring characteristics and traits of generations. Furthermore, we found that Strauss-Howe categorization of generations also has been widely applied to studies and researches about Generation Y and its preceding generations in other corners of the world namely in UK and Australia. In spite of application of the said theory in different societies around the globe, one may not, however, soundly conclude that this theory can be universally applicable to all countries of the world. Application of this theory to studies conducted in UK and Australia, nevertheless, may imply that this theory has the capacity to be applied to other working environments and other societies that have greater economic and social commonalities such as industrially advanced countries of the west, at least.

Strauss-Howe generational theory aims to give a picture of the future by studying “recurring dynamics of generational behavior and how and when it results in social change” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 8). The theory seeks to predict where the society is heading to by understanding characteristics of generational cycles. As stated earlier they noticed that generational cycles tend to be recurrent and believe that such patterns are recurring. Therefore, it is necessary to look at these cycles as generation cohorts.

Giancola (2006, p. 33) defines a cohort generation “as a group of people who experience a particular historical or environmental event at approximately the same time in life”. A cohort generation experiences a group of events that can distinguish it from other generations. Considering the social changes as a continuous phenomenon, then the consequence of events on
how constantly they affect generations can be comprehended. For instance, an event that occurs at one point of time can affect not only the generation of its time but also next generations. Today, Strauss-Howe generational theory is widely used in business studies to understand traits and behavior of different generations in a multi-generational work environment and to diminish cross-generational misunderstandings. As mentioned earlier Strauss-Howe theory helps us to understand traits and characteristics of different generations. They have observed and identified eighteen generations within five generational cycles, which are as follows:

Table 2.1 Generational Cycles (Strauss & Howe, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Colonial Cycle</th>
<th>Puritans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cavaliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glorious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enlighteners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Revolutionary Cycle</td>
<td>Awakeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Republicans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compromisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Civil War Cycle</td>
<td>Transcendentals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gilded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Great Power Cycle</td>
<td>Missionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G.I.s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Millennial Cycle</td>
<td>Boomers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13ers (Generation X)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennials (Generation Y)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, since we are looking at current generations who are present in the workplace we will focus on the last four.

Strauss-Howe assigns different archetypes to each generation. In their book “Generations” they mentioned these archetypes as: Idealist, Reactive, Civic and Adaptive. However later and they revised the terms they used in their book “Generations” and changed their terminology. In “The Fourth Turning” they called those archetypes as: Prophet, Nomad, Hero and Artist (Strauss & Howe, 1997).

Strauss-Howe theory argues that each generational cycle is about a length of human life and these cycles are constituted of four turnings. Each turning has its distinctive characteristics and also shares some similarities with other turnings. There are archetypes for each turning. As stated earlier a cycle is about a human life long so these four turnings stand for four generations within a cycle for period of 80 to 90 years.

2.2 Theories Appraisal

Both theories attempt to study Generations and tend to address generational traits and behavior, however, they have different approaches in discussing generations. Mannheim’s argument, for instance, is primarily based on criticism of the two major 19th century viewpoints and emphasizes on social classes to explain different traits and attitudes. His studies have been the bases for other social studies on generations.

William Strauss and Neil Howe were also greatly influenced by Mannheim’s theory and his theory was one of the bases of their argument. Conversely, the notion of generation in Mannheim’s theory that also served as the bedrock of other sociological studies would not help studying Generation Y and their traits and characteristics alone. Mannheim’s theory provides a
very broad view on generation studies. Strauss-Howe theory, nevertheless, is more focused on the contemporary issues of generations and can be more practical in helping understand different generations’ behavior. Therefore, in order to understand the work values of generations and to examine their similarities and differences, it is necessary to have an in-depth grasp the Strauss-Howe generational theory.

In spite of its recognition in the research circles on generational studies, Strauss and Howe data collection methodology that led to the development of their theory has been under some criticisms also. Twenge (2010) criticizes that some of the theoretical assumptions of Strauss-Howe are not reliably verified. For instance, Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Tulgan (2009) who have done major studies on generations and their traits and values are criticized by Twenge (2010) to have relied more on qualitative than quantitative data. The Table below highlights major similarities and differences between Mannheim and Strauss-Howe theory.

Table 2.2 Comparisons of the Two Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mannheim’s Theory of Generations</th>
<th>Strauss-Howe Generational Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sociological approach</td>
<td>Has been influenced by Mannheim’s theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative studies are necessary alongside Qualitative studies</td>
<td>Criticized for focusing on Qualitative data more than Quantitative information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on biological, social, and cultural factors</td>
<td>Introduces the term generational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
· Put emphasis on social changes as a driver of distinct generational characteristics (e.g. Great Depression, World War I & II)
· Each cycle as a generation cohort

2.3 Information and Characteristics of the Generations

There are different classifications used by scholars, labeling each generation differently and also using different time ranges. Moreover, as previously stated, according to the literature reviewed the parameters set out are not in consensus. Two major classifications based on Lancaster and Stillman (2002) and Strauss and Howe (2000) can be seen in “tables 2.3 & 2.4”. However, to keep consistency in our research we developed our argument based on Strauss and Howe’s parameters for the birth years since we utilized their Generational Theory.

Table 2.3 Generation’s Birth Years According to Lancaster and Stillman (2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Born Between</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent Generation</td>
<td>1925 - 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1946 - 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>1965 - 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>1982 - 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4 Generation’s Birth Years According to Strauss and Howe (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Born Between</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent Generation</td>
<td>1925 - 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1943 - 1960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.1 Silent Generation

Silent Generation is also well known as being the “Traditionalist Generation” or “Greatest Generation” for their traits of being a “withdrawn, cautious and silent” (Strauss & Howe, 1991). This is the generation with the most working experience and the one that in the near future will be retired. This is the only generation that experienced difficult periods such as World War II and the Great Depression. The Silent Generation is believed to be the bearer of traits such as loyalty, patriotism, the faith in institutions, and a high work ethic (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). According to Kupperschmidt (2000), this generation value “earning money and saving money” and hence according to Strauss and Howe (1991) has turned into a generation of wealth. In comparison to the other generations, they are also generally characterized by their inclination for marriages and establishing families. Among traits and values populated in Table 5, they are also known for favoring job stability and long-term employment.

Table 2.5 Traditionalists’ (Silent Generation) Traits and Values (Lancaster & Stillman, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriotic; loyal; heads down, onward and upward attitude; polite; fiscally conservative; faith in institutions; high work ethic; graciousness; experience; keepers of institutional memory; may feel overlooked and unappreciated</td>
<td>Job stability; long-term careers; great reputation; fiscal responsibility; take care of possessions and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.2 Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers as the generation that grew up in the post Great Depression and World War II era comprises the largest number of the labor force of the world of labor. According to Lancaster & Stillman (2002) the rather big size of this Generation forced them into a cruel and severe competitiveness “for resources and opportunities”. Being brought up in a flourished environment they are said to be “very optimistic and responsible for many social movements” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). They value and treasure their careers very much and are not very keen on switching jobs or careers. Strauss and Howe (1991) stress that often Baby Boomers are seen as “workaholics”, they seek the meaning in life from work and place much importance on their careers. Their core traits being the following: idealistic, optimistic and highly competitive (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Table 2.6 Baby Boomer’s Traits and Values (Lancaster & Stillman, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Idealistic and optimistic; highly competitive; overwhelming need to succeed; question authority; the “sandwich generation” with elder-care concerns; responding to healthcare issues, divorce, death of parent, kids in college; may be turning inward; have difficulty admitting something is wrong; don’t like to ask for help; at risk for burnout; experienced; team-workers; skilled at mentoring.</td>
<td>Who am I? Where did my passion go? Is it too late to get it back? Seek organizations with integrity; politically correct; eager to put their own stamp on things; good pay; community involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.3 Generation X

Generation X is the smaller generation and entered the market at the era of “corporate downsizing”. In comparison with their previous generations, they are known to be more computer savvy (Kupperschmidt, 2000) and are believed to be more independent (Gabriel, 1999). Their independence is maintained to be the result of their breeding environment that left their working parents with no option but to leave most of the time their latchkey kid “behind closed doors” (Kupperschmidt, 2000). As latchkey kids they had to “take care of themselves for hours each day while their parents were still at work” (Strauss & Howe, 1991). In comparison to the previous generations, they also tend to desire more of a balance between work and their private life (Tulgan, 2000). Losyk (1997) found that their tough experience of growing up alone because of working parents, encouraged them to value family and flexible work arrangements that allow them to balance work with family demands. According to Lancaster and Stillman, as shown in Table 2.7, Generation X can been distinguished from other generations with traits such as resourcefulness, their being eclectic and their ease and comfort with change.

Table 2.7 Generation Xers’ (Generation X) Traits and Values (Lancaster & Stillman, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eclectic; resourceful; comfortable</td>
<td>Be my own boss; team environment contrasted with entrepreneurial spirit;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with change; self-reliant; adaptable;</td>
<td>advancement opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skeptical about relationships and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>distrust institutions; high divorce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rate; info-highway pioneers;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entrepreneurial and independent;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>innovative; full of energy; fun at</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work; the generation that “got rid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the box”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.3.4 Generation Y

This is the generation that grew up in an environment where technology and social networking permeated (Swift, 2001). According to Wallace (1999) it is also a generation that is considered to be highly educated. Some research suggests that they are peculiar in the sense that they seek or expect frequent and honest feedback in the workplace (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Sujansky and Ferri-Reed also suggest that Generation Y has the capability and the desire to work within a flexible working environment. The reviewed literature also suggests that Generation Y has “high expectation of pay and conditions” (Richardson, 2010). ILM (2011) findings in 2011 also favorably validate such findings. Through his survey ILM established that Generation Y has high ambitions for career advancement. Upon completion of his study, he also concluded that Generation Y needs a different type of managing that has a somewhat resemblance to “coaching”. He argued that by coaching Generation X rather than practicing traditional management methods, one might ensure “awareness and understanding that provides members of this particular generation with a higher degree of freedom and autonomy”.

According to Council of Graduate Schools (2007) communicators and their findings in the related literature, Generation Y embodies many characteristics, traits and views attributed to work that are not demonstrated by previous generations. Among other things, they are known to have generally manifested confidence, visual, multitasking, and very technology literate. In comparison to their previous generations they are said to more organized, self-disciplined and life-work balance oriented.

On its contradictory note, the study of Murray, Toulson and Legg (2011) concludes that while comparing various generations, they found more similarities than differences among them. They
also stress that “popular press” that often times base their research on stereotypes rather than empirical data, tend to choose a raw and oversimplified manner to deal with and illustrate the complex phenomena of generational behaviors. They also conclude that as being human beings, HR departments do oversimplify and that it is also necessary in order to “cope with reality” (Murray et al, 2011).

Generation Y also demand and call for constant access to their manager to receive feedback on their work and progress. They are known to be a generation that constantly seeks to gain more knowledge and, therefore, do not relinquish asking new questioning wherever possible. “They’ve grown up questioning their parents, and now they’re questioning their employers. “They don’t know how to shut up, which is great, but that’s aggravating to the 50-year-old manager who says, ‘Do it and do it now’ ” (Tulgan, 2007). However, realizing that posing questions could at times cause tension in the workplace, they learned how to seek their end at lowest cost possible.

In Strauss and Howe’s (2000) now-canonical Millennials Rising: the Next Great Generation, the authors identified seven key traits of Generation Y (cited in Wilson & Gerber 2008).

**Special**

Generation Y is a huge demographic entity and is the generation that was eagerly awaited by their parents. Apart form their own aspirations; this generation is also to fulfill the unrealized expectations and dream of their parents. They are “the largest, healthiest, and most cared-for generation in American history” (Strauss & Howe, 2000, p.76). The parents of Generation Y greatly sacrificed for the success of their children.

**Sheltered**

Generation Y is currently pretty much exposed to the media; it is considered as hardened veterans of the world (Wilson & Gerber 2008). Actually, this generation, in comparison with
other generations in American history, received more protection due to the new regulations aimed to particularly guard children and adolescents during their growth.

Confident

Noveck and Tompson (2007) conducted an extensive survey among the people between thirteen and twenty-four years to learn about the nature of happiness among America's young people. This survey found that 72% of whites say they are happy with life in general. Generation Y’s are known to be optimistic about their future prospects, especially the economic standing.

Team-oriented

Generation Yers have long worked not only in school task groups but also in game task groups and are famous for skill required for collaborative and team work projects. Strauss and Howe (2000) have found that Generation Yers are developing strong team instincts and having strong connection with peers. School uniforms and emphasis on group learning are best token to demonstrate their team-orientation spirit.

Achieving

The young adults are believed to be generally more ambitious and are known to have big aspirations and plans for their future particularly about their careers. Based on the research of Strauss and Howe (2000), although Boomers were ambitious, but in terms of their motivational characteristics and traits they tend to be more internally driven. The Millennials respond best to external motivators and deliberate degree, salaries and employment trends.

Pressured

Brought up in an economy designed for the provision of highly skilled labor, Millennials receive the message inwardly that they should provide for a noticeable Curriculum Vita soonest. The concept that competition makes the world a better place to live also has been constantly
communicated to them. They learned to believe in the principle of the survival of the fittest and strive to be among the best and the fittest in their study, trade and tasks. Strauss and Howe (2000, p. 184), therefore argue that Millennials “feel stressed in ways that many of their parents never felt at the same age”.

**Conventional**

Born in a high-frequency divorce society, “family” is a keyword for the millennials. Strauss and Howe (2000) describe that they are willing to accept their parents’ values.

Table 2.8 Millennials (Generation Y) Traits and Values (Lancaster & Stillman, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits</th>
<th>Aka “The Digital Generation”; globally concerned; integrated; cyber literate; media and technology savvy; expect 24-hour info; realistic; probably have too much stuff to sort through; acknowledge diversity and expect others to do so; environmentally conscious; will try anything</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>High value on education; high value on lifestyle balance; work is not the most important thing; stepping stone for future opportunities; high tech, innovative; diverse workforce; Be my own boss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Work Attitude

- Generally defined, work attitudes are evaluative (cognitive) or emotional (affective) reactions to various aspects of work.
Rather rapid and unprecedented technological changes ensued rather radical and unexpected social changes in different communities around the world. These changes served to shorten the time frame of certain generational behaviors and some researchers argue that recent generations seem to demonstrate even short-lived behavioral patterns (Armour, 2005). Therefore, in our era, it is very likely to see different attitudes by the newer generations that were not in any manner exhibited by their preceding generations. According to Lancaster and Stillman (2002) understanding generational differences will help in a more effective recruiting, managing, and retaining employees and it also helps in maintaining a better relationship between employees and employers. One of these generational differences can be found in “work attitudes”. Generational differences in work attitude have presently gotten media exposure (Twenge, 2010). Generation Y is entering the workforce and their differences might catch the eye of preceding generations at the workplace.

According to Kowske et al. (2009) there has been very limited empirical research on working attitudes, and they believe a lot that has been done cannot be considered as empirical research but as views of the “popular press”. On the other hand, the empirical study made on work attitudes across generations is said to be “sparse and mixed” (Kowske et al, 2009).

The study of generational differences as a multifaceted, complicated and ever-changing phenomenon affected by numerous intervening social, economic, political and technological variables require a great deal of attention and motivation. Such a comprehensive domain may not be reasonably accommodated in any single research, particularly one at our caliber. To avoid falling into complication of different generational variables adversely affecting one another, we,
therefore, chose to focus only on one its particular aspect and opted for work attitude. Let it not remain unsaid that the sole and core purpose of our paper is not merely to focus on generational behaviors and work attitude but also to explore differences between them so as to learn how such differences may potentially affect the labor relations at the workplace. We also wished to examine whether such attitudinal differences may result in disputes and potential clash and among co-workers of different generations.

2.4.1 Time Flexibility

One of the work attitude aspects recognized is the flexibility of the newer generation. Fielding (2012) and Bearfield et al. (2009) state that newer generation is more flexible and desires work flexibility in their workplace. Moreover, Fielding (2012) discusses that the reason for being flexible, which will be discussed under “Salary and Career advancement”, is Generation Y wants to grow professionally by being flexible and wants to have newer and better opportunities.

In our study we wished to see how Generation Y and its preceding generations generally deal with the concept of working hours. In our days some organizations have strict and fixed working hours while others tend to have flexible working hours, whereby entering and leaving to the workplace by the employees will not be checked by the employers, or whereby the employees can choose at their discretion to work within their desirable time frame also approved by the employers.

Lloyd (2007) discusses that while generation Y wants to undertake challenging tasks, they also want freedom to work at their own choosing and tend to deliver more in a shorter time. Lloyd (2007) also argues that Generation Y thinks that they can finish the same task in a shorter time than their previous generations. Living in the time of great depression and World War II, Silent
Generation had to work hard because of the hardship that characterized their era. This encouraged Silent Generation to teach their children (Baby Boomers) to work out of necessity. At a later juncture, both these generations continued to expect newer generations to also work hard (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). On the other hand, Generation Y that has seen their parents and grandparents working too much and too hard, chooses to strike a reasonable balance between their work-life styles by gaining control over their working hours. This does not mean that Generation Y is not willing to work hard but that they want to have to control over their working hours. They maintain that being present at the job at fixed hours does not necessarily make them more productive. Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) argue that while working hours is a subject open to discussion for Generation Y, it is not an immediate concern for the baby boomers. They suggest that managers should focus more on the quality of the delivered job rather than focusing on the job delivery process.

### 2.4.2 Job Loyalty

According to Gravett and Throckmorton (2007), if Generation Y feels that they are not positively contributing to their work, they tend to quit the job altogether. Moreover, generation Y is very focused on self-improvement and they want to grow in their career rapidly. Recent studies on young accountants in UK shows that unlike their previous generations, they are more likely to change employers in order to get more experience and have new opportunities (Fielding, 2012). According to Cassidy and Berube (2009), Millennials exhibit a higher voluntary turnover rate than Generation Xers and Boomers (Cited in Kowske et al, 2009). Voluntary turnover rate means the rate voluntarily initiated by the worker for the termination of the job.
2.4.3 Feedback

According to ILM (2011), Generation Y are reported to prefer being coached rather than being “controlled and directed” at the workplace. They are also reported to be inclined toward seeking freedom in the form of independence and autonomy as opposed to “objective setting and regular feedback” at the workplace. In their research they also found that the managers’ views on important management issues and managerial behavior differ from one generation to another. Managers of the previous generations, for example, tend to believe that regular feedback and setting a clear objective is of relatively high importance for successful management, Generation Y managers, however, do not seem to fully comply with such understanding and rate it as “relatively unimportant”. Only 21% of the Generation Y prioritized feedback as their top three factors of importance, while on the other hand, 50% of the managers placed it in top three. Alsop (2008) discusses that while companies are providing formal performance reviews once or twice annually, they should give frequent informal progress reviews continuously. Moreover, Generation Y is likely to take constructive feedback and is more willing to have a continuous informal discussion about their progress. Besides receiving continuous feedback Generation Y also wants to know how to improve and how to develop their skills (Alsop, 2008).

2.4.4 Work-Life Balance

Armour (2005) indicates that regardless of differences in Generation Y they still want to work but they do not want work to be the sole purpose of their lives. Gravett and Throckmorton (2007) in their studies on generational attitudes and their bearing on the performance of the employees refer to work ethics and work-life balance as two main sources of conflict between generations. Newer generations saw their parent and grandparents spending
far too much time on their work rather than their families. Therefore, they decided to strike a more reasonable work-life balance relation at choosing their job and while working at enterprises (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). Moreover, Loughlin and Barling (2001) in their research found that many researchers are somewhat implying that the newer Generation do not tend to prioritize their work as a top priority agenda. They report having observed a shift of attitude from “living to work” to “working to live” in Y Generation. According to their research findings the newer generation observed “their parents making great sacrifices for their work with no direct or immediate benefits”. Hence, the newer cohort knowingly “may be less willing to make sacrifices for the sake of their job”. The difference in work-life balance outlook between generations to some extent also complies with what ILM (2011) found in their research. ILM (2011) states that the managers in the businesses that they had examined tended to “underestimate” the importance of work-life balance for the younger generation. A study that they drew their conclusions from revealed that while “63% of the previous generation managers, at least once or twice a week, take their work home, only 38%” of the younger generations tended to do so. 19% of Generation Y “never switches on to work outside of the workplace compared to only 4% of their managers ever doing so”.

Overall the work-life balance ended up being one of the five most important work attitudes of Generation Y, while some managers underestimating this trait simply rated it their tenth item on the work attitude priority list. Generation Y is also reported to carry out substantially more personal activities at work than the previous managers used to do. These figures stand at 39% for Y Generation compared to 25% for previous Generations respectively. According to ILM (2011) the two generations also tend to differ on their attitude versus “long working hours” for which the previous generations have developed a reputation. On the balance, the Y Generation tends to
reduce mixing life with work in comparison to their earlier generations. 25% of Generation Y does not mix work with life, while only 6% of the managers do not mix work with life.

2.4.5 Salary and Career Advancement

According to Anderson (2011) generation Y attaches more values on money and rapid career advancement and salary rate is a potential source of labor dispute for them. Fielding (2012) notes that besides desiring to work for an attractive brand, newly graduates are looking for secure and well-paid employment contracts. Additionally, Anderson (2011) indicates that 45% of newcomers in the workforce are not satisfied with their salary rate.

Generation Y has a relatively high desire for career advancement in the company (ILM, 2011; Anderson, 2011; Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007). However, they do not share the same views with their managers who tend to support a more “conservative view of the graduates” about their rapid advancement to managerial position. ILM (2011) argues that 56% of Generation Y feels as if they are capable to achieve a management role within only three years from their employment. 13% of them even feel that they can simply acquire a management role in their enterprise within their first year of employment. 71% of Generation Y feels that they will be able to progress at “same pace or more quickly than their boss” to a management role. Commenting on the desire of Generation Y to rapidly acquire managerial position, earlier generation managers reported to have seen such an appetite among 77% of them. ILM (2011) highlights that Generation Y is very motivated and is often driven by variables such as money and status. 38% of Generation Y said that they are dissatisfied with the pace of their career advancement. Salary and advancement in career are among the top three priorities of Generation Y. As high as 45% of Generation Y say that their salary is “below their expectations”. ILM (2011) believes that expectations in a
relatively higher salary and career advancement could be due to the fact that Generation Y feels that their academic education qualify them for adopting more managerial roles. Generation Y is reliably reported to have generally a higher level of education in comparison with their managers. While 59% of Y Generation managers have a bachelor’s degree and 35% of them have a master’s degree, the same figures fall to 34% and 26% for the managers of earlier generations respectively.

Kowske et al (2009) research found that Millennials are feeling more satisfied than all previous generations with their opportunity to get a better job and develop their career. In their study they also concluded that there were many similarities between generations, including satisfaction with pay. In other words their findings established that there were no significant differences between Generation Y and previous generations in terms of their satisfaction with pay.

According to a survey done by KPMG on business students in 2007 on their main considerations when choosing an employer, more than 50% are reported to have chosen “career opportunities” versus 13% who prioritized salary and benefits (cited in Alsop, 2008).

Smola and Sutton (2002, p. 378) argue in their research about the Generational differences when it comes to work values that

*Newer employees were generally found to be less loyal to the company and more ‘me’ oriented. They wanted to be promoted more quickly than their older counterparts; were less likely to feel that work should be an important part of one’s life; and, according to their responses, would be more likely to quit work if they won a large amount of money.*
2.4.6 Individualism and Team Orientation

According to Mann (2006) Generation Y is a generation that can succeed with teamwork and is willing to work in teams. Generation Yers have long worked not only in school task groups but also in game task groups and are skilled in collaborative effort. Strauss and Howe (2000) have found that Generation Yers are developing strong team instincts and having tight connection with peer. It can be obviously observed from soccer to school uniforms and a new classroom emphasis on group learning. Owing to this special relationship they can quickly ask peers for their suggestions and opinions when faced with a problem (Downing, 2006).

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the authors will present the whole research methodology and how the research data has been conducted. Besides, the authors will also explain why the particular research tools were selected. Finally, the limitation of the methodology will be included at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Research approach

“Well begun is half done”

------Quoting an old proverb

The general research approaches to this study intended to investigate distinctive work attitudes between generation Y and its preceding generations through an in-depth, phenomenological study involving companies and organizations within Swedish business sectors. To provide an
effective analysis and explanation of the theme of the research, it was, therefore, imperative to choose a proper methodological approach that could well fit its practical purpose the scientific conclusion about the society, organization and human behavior can be drawn from two research approaches. By choosing and deploying deductive approach in our research, we wished to test the reliability of the findings of this theory in practice. Authors observed the generational theory and the differences of work attitudes in the previous studies conducted on the subject. Authors, however, administered our research by collecting primary data independently and then attempted to test their validity against our findings originated from these theories in the working environment of Sweden.

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007), the nature of the topic and time available to the researchers can influence the choice of research approach. Firstly, based upon Creswell (1994, cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007), we attempted to identify a topic with a plethora of literature on which we could reasonably build the theoretical framework of our research. Although Generation Y is a comparatively fresh research topic, concerns and considerations about the fact that this rather big and fresh generation has to interact with its previous generations at workplace encouraged the preparation of numerous articles and plenty of literatures on the subject. The same understanding could very well justify its selection as a research topic for us too.

Along our attempt to address different aspect of this thesis through review of literature and articles and specialized journals on the subject, we gained the basic understanding of Generation Y, their work attitudes and the gap that existed between them and their earlier generations. Besides this research, as mentioned earlier, is build upon some previous research concerning the characteristics and challenge of Generation Y in America and Australia. This study attempted, as
far as reasonably possible, to see if the findings of aforesaid researches could be reliably extended to some business sectors in Sweden as well. The other reason for choosing deductive approach for conducting our thesis research was the question of short amount of time available to us (about four months only) and our limitation in the collection primary data through interviewing various companies and organizations covering different business sectors in Sweden. The deductive approach was hoped to be conducive enough to help us with our findings and conclusions.

3.2 Research purpose categorization

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the research purpose can be classified into three types: exploratory study, descriptive study and explanatory study. In this chapter, firstly the characteristics of each of the above purpose will be enumerated and in order to give the reader a clear picture of what this research seeks to address, the purpose of this paper will be duly defined too. Robson has described each categorization of research purpose as below (cited in Saunders et al, 2007).

**Exploratory study** – a valuable means of finding out ‘what is happening; to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’.

**Descriptive study** – the objective of this research is to ‘portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations’.

**Explanatory study** – studies that establish causal relationships between variables may be termed explanatory studies. The emphasis here is on studying a situation or problem in order to explain the relationships between variables.
However, the research project may have more than one purpose, if the research question happens
to be both descriptive and exploratory. The question in the present research is descriptive as it is aim to portray differences in work attitudes of Generation Y and its preceding generations. The second question that attempted the factors related to the prevailing situation in Sweden in respect of generational differences, however, is exploratory. Apparently no research has been ever done on this particular topic in Sweden and the present research tended to explain, “what is happening” and wishes to assess and shed more light on this phenomenon in the context of working environment of Sweden. Although the research begins by broad questions on generational similarities and differences at its initial stage, it will gradually narrow down on the rather particular question on work attitude of Y Generation as the research progresses.

3.3 Method

Our aim in the present research is primarily to examine, as far as reasonably possible, different work attitudes of both the Generation Y and its preceding generations in the context of working environment of Sweden. In general, two different methods: quantitative method and qualitative method could be reasonably employed in conducting our academic study. Our study, above all, attempted to answer “what” and “how”, on work attitude of the Generation Y versus its earlier generations in the context of Swedish sectorial activities. Defining generational behaviors and attitude in quantitative terms and in the form of numerical and standardized data, was beyond our means and time. Therefore, we found the qualitative method far more appropriate than quantitative method in addressing subject of our thesis. By gaining knowledge from qualitative research, we were hopeful to understand what distinguishes the work attitudes of Generation Y
from its preceding generations in the working environment of Sweden and to learn if they are, in any way and manner different from earlier findings on the subject elsewhere in the world. Through interview, we were hopeful to be able to achieve numerous answers from the potential respondents on the questions of the research. These detailed and practical views were further hoped to contribute to development perspective of our research. Although the quantitative method had rather important significance to our study; we were fully aware of its disadvantages as well. In the meantime, due to the limited time at our disposal, we also had to circumspectly consider the problem of who may be the proper respondents to our research questionnaires. Finally, so as to give our findings more validity and reliability, we decided to choose our target population among different working generations of fairly different sectors of Sweden economy, namely a university, a bank, and an insurance company.

### 3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection as a process of accumulation of empirical material to approve or disapprove of the main question of the research is an integral and crucial component of any academic study. In order to find appropriate answers to research questions, one should always choose an appropriate data collection method. Generally speaking any data collection method seeks to amass two sets of data, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is the information collected specially for the undertaken research project (Saunders et al, 2007, p. 607). Secondary data, however, is the data that are originally collected for some other purpose (Saunders et al, 2007, p. 611). In this thesis, the primary data were independently gathered by interview and the secondary data were meticulously collected through review of specialized books, articles and journals on subject of comparative and contrastive generational behaviors.
3.4.1 Secondary data

It is generally believed that while conducting a research it is much easier to gather secondary data than primary data. As mentioned before, we tended to use the deductive approach in our research, which allowed us to build and support our assumptions on the basis of the earlier findings in the related literature. Considering that our study is not the first one about Generation Y, and bearing in mind that we did not have to invent the wheel again, we found it necessary to deeply familiarize ourselves with studies done in our research area. Accordingly, before embarking on the research, we compiled a fairly considerable pool for our literature review including available articles, books and journals on earlier studies about Generation Y and other generations. We used some keywords to find the resources, for instance, Generation Y, Millennials, generational clashes at the workplace and so on. We chose Google Scholar and web of science as our main search engines and heavily relied on our school and public libraries, as well as other dependable articles available on the cyberspace. Reference list from books and articles were found useful when searching relative information and screening irrelevant references. At the initial stages of the literature review, we simply found too many resources and soon found out that reading all of them would be an impossible task in view of our time limit. Therefore, we chose to more heavily focus on their introduction and conclusion that seem to have provided the heart of the subject in each of the respective research. The literature review seems to have successfully provided for a rather reasonable knowledge about the context, theoretical framework, gaps and criticism on generational traits and characteristics.

Table 3.1 Key words used for literature search

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<thead>
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<th>Key words</th>
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3.4.2 Primary Data

Besides secondary data, we proceeded to gather the major primary data through interview. Qualitative interview is known to be a fairly dependable way of uncovering and exploring the meanings that underpin people's lives, routines, behaviors, feelings etc. (Rubin, 1995). We preferred interviews to questionnaires on the ground that firstly, depending on the different situations of respective companies, the questions had to be either open-ended or complex and secondly, we had a considerable time limit that made the examination of a large number of samples who have had working experience with Generation Y almost next to impossible.

At the beginning, we contacted a PHD candidate in JIBS who enjoys working relation with Science Park to see if he could give us some contacts in companies. He gave us the details of a contact in Science Park, but unfortunately the person replied us that he did not have HR contacts
in either or the companies and suggested that we contacted companies located in Jönköping on their homepages. We tried to contact some of the enterprises through email, but there were no response at last. Besides, we went directly to Nordea bank, Swedbank and SEB located in the city center to see if they could help us with our research, but they simply rejected our requests on the ground of potential loss of their staff working time. Finally, we succeeded in convincing a bank and an insurance company who generously accepted to help us with conducting our survey. The interview generally comprises three types namely structured (standard), semi-structured and unstructured (in-depth). For this research, due to prevailing condition in the respective companies and enterprises and special considerations of their managers and staff, we chose to conduct semi-structured interview with the managers and the human resource department. In the process of our interviews, the order of questions has not been constant and has varied between different interviewees and organizations. The themes and nature of the questionnaires, however, were constantly aligned with our research purpose. In order to avoid the errors and bias pointed by Saunders (2007), we exercised some flexibility depending on the requirements of different situations.

While reviewing methods of primary data collection, among other things, our assumption was that a face-to-face interview would provide the researchers with the opportunity to also witness the nonverbal behavior of the participant that as times could be even more important than their verbal messages. The interview questions were written in English and long and complex sentences, as well as jargon and slang phrases were also cautiously avoided to ensure effective communication with our subjects.

We realized that when asking open-ended questions from our subjects, it would be difficult for us to absorb all delivered information and make particular notes among them on the spot,
therefore, we asked for their permission to audio-record the whole interview process. The recorded version of the interviews helped retrieving all information, which we later transcribed possible. Transcribing the interviews also served to refresh our memory on what was said during each interview, as we could listen to the recorded material as often as necessary to get an accurate representation of the information (Bryman, 2002). All transcribed information was later categorized according to the generations of different respondents and was saved under separate files labeled with the date, names and generation of the interviewees and their respective enterprises. Such classification and marking is an integral part of the function of the researchers in the process of analyzing the data (Dey, 1993; Yin, 2003). After finishing all the transcribing, the respective texts were sent by email to the interviewee to guarantee that the information comports with the content of interview.

3.4.2.1 Interview at Jönköping International Business School (JIBS)

Having the privilege of being JIBS student, we could get fairly easier access to the organization for our research purpose. The subject interviewees were randomly chosen from among people on the 5th and 6th floors of JIBS which house the offices of professors, Ph.D. candidates and assistants. We selected our target population with the understanding that as the employees of JIBS, they have enough experience in respect of attitudes at that workplace. The purpose and our thesis theme were briefly explained to each subject after we introduced ourselves. On the ground of time consideration, some of the subjects politely rejected our request for interviews, and we could finally interview only 10 people including 6 preceding generation and 4 Generation Y. We provided each subject with the hard copy of the interview questions written in English, so that the interviewees can read them direct and have enough time to prepare for the responses. Besides, after receiving the permission from interviewees, we audio-recorded the interview to
assure that all the information necessary for our research is duly gathered and properly retained. The transcription has been done after the interviews.

### 3.4.2.2 Interview with Åke Fagelberg

Another interview was done with Åke Fagelberg who currently functions as the chairman, consultant and auditor in various projects, companies and even in maritime defense. Following is a list of his current positions that he holds:

- Åbro Bryggeri AB (Brewery), Chairman
- Gabriel Keramik AB (Ceramic Fabric), Trustee
- Svensk Sjöfart och Sjöförsvar (Shipping and Maritime Defense), Trustee/Auditor
- Marin & Maskin Tanzania Ltd (Maritime and Engineering in Tanzania), Chairman
- EU-project, ImPrim, Chairman
- Stiftelsen Barometern i Kalmar (Institution), Chairman

He has also been involved in many other firms such as Bevi, which is an electrical engineering firm where he was Vice-Director and Export Director. In a health care project he is reported to have four thousand employees under his supervision. His list of employment background and positions and projects he has been involved in is an outstanding example of managerial quality and caliber.

The immense experience that Fagelberg has achieved during his career is impressive and very valuable for this research. His interview was done in Swedish language via electronic mailing system due to the difficulty in accessing him direct - Fagelberg’s lives Kalmar. From our point of view, the interviews done through exchange of email have some positive advantages, namely ease and flexibility of administration cost and time saving implication and ease of variables.
control. Unlike previous interviews, for instance, we did not have to audio-record and transcribe the text of the interviews, because we received the answers to all our questions in writing. However, the language bias might have occurred because the replies from Fagelberg were in Swedish and we had to translate them into English.

3.4.2.3 Interview at Handelsbanken

Handelsbanken today enjoys a strong position on the Swedish and Nordic banking market and relies on a national network branch in Sweden and a fairly well-established banking network in other countries in the Northern Europe.

The interview with one of the top-notch managers of Handelsbanken in Jönköping was conducted face-to-face in their local office. To lessen language bias, as far as reasonably possible, we prepared our interview questions both in Swedish and English versions. We also thought that by removing language barriers, he might feel more comfortable with the questions and come up with more reliable answers. Audio recording was not done in this particular interview, however, the interviewee insisted to verify his account and to see if he may add more substance to his answers. After the interview, therefore, a copy of the answers was sent to the interviewee. He decided not to add anything to his earlier answers, and insisted to remain anonymous.

3.4.2.4 Interview at Länsförsäkringar

Länsförsäkringar Alliance is bank and insurance company. They have strong regional offices across Sweden and they are boastful about their ability and agility, as a small regional enterprise, to reach their customers with the same strength of their stronger rivals. Today Länsförsäkringar AB has 23 regional insurance companies/banks and one of their offices is situated in Jönköping.
The researchers’ interview with the above enterprise was conducted in a face-to-face manner at their Jönköping Länsförsäkringar's office. The interviewee was Niclas Beermann who is Head of Business Support Marketing & Communications at Länsförsäkringar AB. His interview was also carried out in Swedish and it was not recorded. The results of the interview were later sent to the interviewee in order that he could add new substance to them, if he so decided.

3.5 Limitation of the methodology

Since we decided to choose the interview as our primary data collection method, we had to deal with some of the intrinsic limitations of the interview as well. Firstly, we could never eliminate the possibility that the interviewees might answer the questions according to wishes and preferences of their immediate superiors and the managers of their enterprises, particularly under autocratic bureaucracy. Secondly, we never felt all so sure about the honesty of the answers we got from our interviewees under audio-recording condition, particularly when we posed them to sensitive questions such salary satisfaction, promotion ladder and their working relationship with their managers, directors and others. Thirdly, we had to spend a lot of time to contact the companies for the interview arrangements and transcribe the audio recording.

4. Empirical Findings

In this chapter we aimed at reproducing our communication with the interviewees in terms of their experiences concerning work attitudes of different generations at the workplace. In order to make it clearer for interviewees, authors have used the terms Generation Y and younger generation, interchangeably. Moreover, Silent Generation, Baby Boomers and Generation X are all integrated into the term preceding generations.
4.1 Time Flexibility

In order to investigate the flexibility aspect of work attitudes between Generation Y and its preceding generations, we attempted to find answers to the two related questions. One refers to time flexibility and the other refers to working location flexibility. Among the interviewees in JIBS, all interviewees including the new generation and its preceding generations, when posed to the questions on flexible time arrangements, almost spontaneously approved of the idea. In their own wordings, flexible time gives them opportunity to adjust their life-work balance and allows them to plan their living the way they want. One interviewee of the new generation said: “I prefer being flexible. I have problems with fixed working hours because I think that the efficiency in discharging my workload depends not only on what task is assigned to me but also how I feel during the day I deliver it.”

Another interviewee who belongs to the preceding generations told us ‘I like to come and go as I please, and that suits me. Because I have other things in my life as well, so I can adjust as long as I am not teaching or doing anything else where people are dependent on me being present.’

The new generation and its preceding generation want jobs characterized with flexibility and availability of options that could allow them to formulate a more reasonable relation between work-life balance and family relations.

In terms of the working location flexibility and distant working, only an interviewee from the preceding generations chose to work at home and the rest preferred working at the enterprises. The interviewees from the new generation considered that home is not suitable for working and that the interaction at the workplace is important in fulfilling one’s job. Two of the preceding generations thought that the nature of assigned work decides for the place of work as well; they are obliged to be in the office to meet with their students and other colleagues.
It is generally believed that the new generation workers are far more flexible than the older generations. During the interview with one of the head managers at Handelsbanken, the observed differences in terms of time flexibility were more apparent. He also mentioned that the newer generation is generally more open to change and can better cope with it. He felt the office was no longer the only working place and that the younger generation access to the bank's from their homes was generally higher than the older employees. He also mentioned that apart from the preference of the office over home or the other way round, the new generation who had not yet established a family tend to have greater flexibility in moving to and from offices across the state or the country.

In Länsförsäkringar, according to Beermann Niclas, the new generation appreciated having more flexible working time possibilities, while the old generations were more accustomed to fixed working time arrangements. However, due to the nature of the business, and in order to maintain high qualitative service for its customers Länsförsäkringar decided to only provide flextime arrangements within a specific time frame. Beermann said that Länsförsäkringar does not have any regular home -based worker, but flexible solutions may be provided, if deemed necessary. The workers of the bank can get connect to the office when on the move or when working from other offices. Beermann thought that the newer generations are somewhat more skillful on the new technology than the preceding generation.

Fagelberg also confirmed that he has found the newer generation to significantly demand more flexibility than the previous generations. He also mentioned that in the previous decades there was much more control on the employees a time clock being an example. He states that presently there is less of this and more directed towards quality and confidence in the employees. He explained this relationship with the words: “more carrot than whip”. Fagelberg also stated that in
the companies he is involved in work from home is accepted and are carried out through the means of Internet, intranet and phone. However, he did not state whether he has experienced any differences among the generations.

4.2 Job loyalty

Job loyalty is another important aspect of work attitudes. When the manager at Handelsbanken was interviewed, he mentioned that the new generation employees care more about themselves than the company and that they tend to be a more egocentric and more individualistic generation. According to him the older generations are seemingly more loyal to the company. From Beermann’s perspective, all the employees at Länsförsäkringar are loyal to the company. However, when commenting on the jobs mobility, he said that there was a large difference between the attitude of the new and old generations on the subject. The new generation in comparison to its previous generations generally tends to be more mobile and does not mind moving around to different employers for new employment opportunities.

Fagelberg pointed out that “usually there are no big differences in loyalty and this is more of a individual question”. Stability is necessary for both the preceding generations and the newer generation. Loyalty is more belong to one basic personality.

4.3 Feedback

Everyone needs feedback to improve their work; however the frequency of the desired feedback is not the same among different generations. According to results from JIBS interviews, neither the new generation nor the preceding generations chose the annual feedback as a means for work improvement. Only one of the new generation interviewees replied that the quarterly feedback is better than monthly feedback on the ground that the latter would be too annoying. Another
individual from the new generation felt that the frequency of feedback should rest with the task. Contrarily, the preceding generations preferred the continual and frequent feedback on even daily and weekly basis. They maintained that since they can get the feedback on their job as soon as possible, in view of the quick integration, the chance that feedback will be possibly lost would be eliminated. A member of the preceding generation has said, “It’s better to have it quick so it won’t accumulate”.

At Handelsbanken, the manager said that the new generation desires not only feedback but also something else in return for what they are to do. They think about “what is in it for me” or “if I am going to do something I must get something in return” or “why should I do this”. Beermann also confirmed the different requirement of feedback between the new and old generations. He has observed that the new generation want to have more feedback on their work, whereas the preceding generations don’t need as much assurance and confirmation as the new generation. It seems that the old generations probably feel more comfortable and confident in their roll. What’s more, the differences exists not only new and old generation but also women and men. Fagelberg pointed out that the newer generation has a greater need for a “thank you” and the “well done” sort of feedback. He also expressed that one should develop upon feedback and that for instance having a feedback session once a year is not enough. He stated that in order to motivate there is a must for spontaneous acknowledgements and feedback, according to him this applies especially to newer generation.

4.4 Work-life balance

For the purpose of testing the differences of work-life balance between the new generation and preceding generations, the interview questions attempted to seek how do the different generation prioritize job over private life. It seemed that depending on their situations, the interviewees
were trying to establish a reasonable balance between their lives and work, but they had to make concessions sometimes as well. Among the interviews, most of the preceding generations have reported to have good private life, but still tended to prioritize work over their private life. One preceding generation interviewee, for example acknowledged “I used to go out, do some hunting with family but then again I had to work 14 hours a day sometimes”. The new generation showed different views towards the work-life balance, a Swedish Ph.D. candidate, for instance, considered that job should not dominate private life and that the job should be confined to the working hours only. An employee from new generation, who comes from Vietnam values work more than private life. He maintained that it is pivotal for him to do better than the natives so as to get the chance to get the same job. Although some of the highly motivated students from business schools tend to be more ambitious to work and make a far rapid progress than their older generations, in general the new generation places more significance to their free time and seek a more reasonable work-life balance. From Beermann’s point of view, the work aspect of new generation is not similar to the preceding ones; it is no longer treated as the central part in new generation’s life. Job can get a less central role especially when the new generation start their own families and get children. One similar statement from Fagelberg was that the newer generation demand more free time, more flexible working hours, parental leave, and were against gender disparity.

4.5 Salary and Career Advancement

At present, wage and benefits generally do not seem to be the only and/or the most crucial considerations of the employees including both the new and the preceding generations. They attach significant importance to other variables such as independence, time flexibility and work-life balance as well. However, finding a job that could provide independence and satisfactory
salary at the same time is not all that easy. During the interview, four subjects of the preceding generation expressed that the independence at the workplace was absolutely more important than salary. One went as far as saying that “employees should be able to express themselves and stand for their values”. Whereas one of the interviewees of preceding generations gave priority to high salary and acknowledged that, “I do not think there is a tradeoff. I don't believe I can be dependent”. It seems that for the members of the new generations a high salary is not the only criterion for an ideal job any further, as they are also equally concerned about the ease and comfort of working environment and seem to be ready to take a job at a more comfortable working environment against less salary. During the interview with a head of Handelsbanken, he observed that the preference of money, over other factors, mainly depends on personal situation of the employee. Based upon the observations of the manager at Handelsbanken, within the first five years when a new generation comes to work, they are inclined to place less importance on money than learning.

As mentioned before, the members of the new generation characterized by strong self-confidence and inclination for rapid career advancement is indeed a fast-going generation. Beermann, one of our interviewees, for instance has observed that the present society by encouraging the concept of “everything should go fast” has helped develop this individual attitude among labor forces as well. However, he believed that, irrespective of one generation and/or motivation, salary is of great significance to everybody. Hence, salary should be closely related to their achievement. From the perspective of career advancement, as compared to the preceding generation, the well-educated new generation thinks that the career is momentous and wants to advance fast. The desire for career advancement may very well explain why the new generation more frequently changes its jobs. Fagelberg thought that the demands of wage were higher among the youth. If
the youth are not satisfied with their wages, they would move around more as a result. Contrarily, the old generation normally remained very long with their employers. The youth now value and calculate much about advancement and success in career. As they choose school cautiously, they choose their first jobs as well.

4.6 Individual VS. Team orientation

It is common knowledge that the teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success. The workplace operations do not, therefore, rely on individuals and an increasing spirit of teamwork prevails at any given enterprise. In JIBS the interviewees of the new generations welcomed both individualism and teamwork. Working in a team, however, among its other advantages also provides the opportunity to share and care and promotes the spirit of coordination and collaboration with fellow workers enjoying multiple cultures and experiences. Although the spirit and virtues of teamwork are generally praised, sometimes it is an individual that should complete the task. Some of the preceding generations preferred teamwork for the reason that “usually the result would be better when you work in teams, but it also nice to work on your own and in quiet sometimes”. The head of Handelsbanken has observed that the new generation tends to be more individualistic and self-centered than the preceding generation. Admittedly, however, it would be hasty and hard to generalize such finding as a generational trait. According to Beermann’s observations at the workplace, the spirit of teamwork or being individualistic at work has no relevance neither to the age nor the generation. The new generation is tamed and trained to work more in groups and teams; this attitude in intrinsic of their academic education, however, he exclaimed that it was hard to generalize and classify this trait. Fagelberg pointed out that he has had good and positive experience with the younger generation and that he felt it to be easier to work with the younger generation.
5. Analysis

In this research we attempted to investigate some of the differences between generations in the workplace to see if they really existed. Once identified, we also wished to learn if they can result in cross-generational miscommunication and lead to generational clashes. We have looked at three economic sectors in Sweden to see to what extents this phenomenon is present. We, therefore, chose three representative organizations namely JIBS from educational institute sector, Handelsbanken from financial and service sector, and finally Länsförsäkringar from insurance sector to examine if generational differences did indeed exists in the representative sectors in Sweden. However, it should be kept in mind that our findings do not necessarily explain the existence of the same pattern in the whole sector and should not, therefore, be generalized for other sectors. Due to time and logistics limitations we could not reasonably contact every single company in the above four sectors and our findings only hinge upon the investigated companies. The finding in the above enterprises, nevertheless, are hoped to give us a picture of the existence and depth of the phenomenon of generational differences in Sweden sectorial economy, as also mentioned and corroborated in the related literature. This research is also hoped to be the point of departure for further studies in Sweden on the issue of generational differences at the workplace and their different bearings and implications.

When studying Generations and their differences at the workplace, we have noticed that no such research may reasonably take note of all different generational variables that could have an eventual bearing on a better understanding of such behaviors. In our opinion, it would be next to impossible to examine all variables such as personal experiences and cultural and national background of the subjects, as well as their individual cosmology, character, motivational attitude, etc. that could have some bearings on generational behavioral patterns. Generations are
not discrete from each other; therefore, previous researches did not aim to distinctly delineate generations but to give a perspective and a framework that can be relied on when studying generations.

5.1 Time Flexibility

Fielding (2012) and Bearfield et al. (2009) stated that Generation Y desires more flexibility. Our research finding and its empirical data also verified their statement. Moreover, Fielding (2012) stated that one source of this desire is to rapidly improve in the career. However, in our findings we did not see the relation between flexibility and career advancement, as interviewees did not fully reflect on that. As mentioned before, Generation Y is believed to be more in favor of flexibility. A manager at Handelsbanken felt that this was very much the case in his workplace also approved of the finding of our research. He felt that the differences on time flexibility were apparent and that the older generations do not share the same view on this aspect with the younger generation. According to Beermann, the older generations of his workplace were more used to having fixed hours. The findings of both of these interviews testify that there seem to be a correlation between Generation Y and their desire for a more flexible workplace. Fagelberg also pointed out that he has noticed that newer generation has a significantly higher demand for flexibility. All of these interviews are testament that there seem to be a correlation between Generation Y and their higher desire for a more flexible workplace.

On the other hand, responses received from the interviews conducted at JIBS explained that different generations desire time flexibility. The interviewees, irrespective of their generations had the same tendency toward time flexibility. They all believed that the time flexibility would allow them to work when they feel most productive and also helps them establish a better work-
life balance. However, there were few responses from older generations saying that time flexibility would not be their main concern and that they needed to work a lot at any rate. They also maintained that time flexibility would be a good alternative.

Commenting on our research findings on flexibility, we also observed that according to both the interviewees at Handelsbanken and Länsförsäkringar, the younger generation generally are more prone to use modern technology and are fairly more skillful at using the technology to access work from home or other locations apart from their workplace. Fagelberg did not address whether any generations were more likely or more mastered on the mobile business solutions, however he did mention that in all the companies he is involved in mobile solutions are accepted.

### 5.2 Job Loyalty

Another aspect that was of interest and worth mentioning in our research is the concept of job loyalty among different generations. Literature is regretfully void of substantial studies on job loyalty. Our humble research, however, seem to have provided some empirical data on that particular concept. According to Gravett and Throckmorton (2007), Generation Y are very focused on self-improvement and they want to grow in their career rapidly. This notion largely correlates to our findings as well. The manager at Handelsbanken said that the “younger generation cares more about themselves than the older used to” and that “the older generation is more loyal to the company”. Beermann at Länsförsäkringar said that according to his observation the “younger generation are more mobile as it pertains to work, and generally tend to move to different employers”. While from Fagelberg’s point of view, he thought the differences were not distinct since the loyalty was related to the individual and not to the generation.
A reason behind the younger generations moving around on the labor market, according to Beermann is that the younger generation wishes to advance fast in their career. If they do not see promising career advancement with one employer, they will change employer to try their chance elsewhere. This finding also, to a large extent, is in line with the result of a study on young accountants in UK, where they reported changing their employers in order to get more experience and have new and better job opportunities (Fielding, 2012). Younger generations tendency to leave their jobs may also have some resemblance to the higher voluntary turnover rate that was found by Kowske et al. (2009) in the sense that the younger generation terminates their job voluntarily in order to find another one.

Authors could not get any conclusive data from respondents at JIBS, as there was no data suggesting if there is a difference in job loyalty between generations.

5.3 Feedback

It is generally argued that generation Y does not like to be controlled; rather they much prefer to be coached. They also tend to value freedom and autonomy (ILM, 2011). Although, these factors may make us think that Generation Y is not open to feedback but the truth is that on the contrary they welcome feedback greatly. Interestingly, we have found that Generation Y is more open than the preceding generations to receive feedback. However, they seem to have their own preference in respect of the form of feedback and employer and employee communication. Generation Y is more willing to receive feedback in an informal way than receiving it on a fixed rolling schedule. In interviews done in JIBS, we found out that there is not much difference in willingness to receive feedbacks among different generations. Fagelberg specifically pointed out that feedback should be more spontaneous and that acknowledgements should also be
spontaneous. This he said will be especially beneficial for motivating the newer generation. In interviews done in JIBS we found out that there is not much difference in willingness to receive feedbacks.

5.4 Work-Life Balance

According to the literature review, the work-life balance and the way different generations regard it is one of the major sources of conflicts between the Generations. Our empirical findings at the Swedish enterprises level, however, did not approve of this assumption. We, nonetheless, noticed differences among members of different generations on the concept of work-life balance that may be attributed to an underlying cause for conflict at the workplace.

In the interview conducted with Beermann at Länsförsäkringar he said “work does not have the same central role for the younger generations it has for the older generation”. This correlates with our findings to the effect that the newer generation does not put their work on the top of their priorities. This also goes hand in hand with the quote “working to live” as opposed to “living to work”. When asked about teamwork and individual work the manager at Handelsbanken answered that he feels the younger generation “is more individualistic and egocentric” which could also be a reason as to why the younger generation prioritize their private time over their work time. Fagelberg also pointed this out; he mentioned that the youth today mostly prioritize differently when it comes to this issue. They prioritize differently in the sense of desiring more free time and more flexible working hours.

The manager at Handelsbanken thought that the “younger generation have a larger demand for their free time”. However, he also mentioned that he does not think that this is only a generational question but an individual one. He stated that a newly graduate from the Business
school might be more ambitious in work than an older worker. So the notion of the younger generation’s preference of private life over work does not always hold true and may be at times be the other way round. ILM (2011) argues that Generation Y is less willing to mix work with private life.

Our findings as to the inclination of the younger generations toward distant and home-based working testify that they are keener on accessing their work-network from home. By doing so, one could argue that they knowingly tend to mix their private life with their work. If the data of our research could be similarly interpreted, it could be argued that our findings contradict earlier conclusions on Generation Y in terms of their work-life balance.

5.5 Salary and Career advancements

Previous researches implicate that Generation Y has a high desire for career advancement and high salary. This statement could lend itself to different interpretations. One can infer that Generation Y is money driven, while another may regard them to be more ambitious. One may also convincingly argue that as far as the task at hand is done skillfully and efficiently, there is nothing wrong with the worker to be motivated financially. Though our findings do not contend earlier findings on the issue of ambition of the younger generation, it sheds new lights on the underlying causes of their ambition and it also reveals that the money is not sole factor in stimulating and motivating younger employees. As we also learned from majority of people in JIBS, they value their independence as much as salary or even more.

According to the findings of our literature review, there is a high desire for career advancements among Generation Y. Reportedly there are some factors that account for Generation Y to be more ambitious for a faster growth in their career. According to previous researches on the
subject in the UK, that was mentioned earlier, Generation Y mostly think that they can become managers in a period of few years only. Reasons behind such expectations, among other things, could be attributed to the fact that the newer generations enjoy better education and spend longer time at schools that make them feel more qualified academically than their predecessors. Such a self-esteem and its ensuing attitude can be a potential source of clash when employees of the Generation Y tend to think and act as if they are as good as their bosses or even better than them. In our examination of different sectors, we also found that Generation Y is actually very enthusiastic and open to acquire new knowledge and tends to constantly upgrade its skill. One of the main underlying reasons in adopting such an attitude might well be attributed to their inclination for rapid career advancement. As the manager in Handelsbanken pointed out “for new employees learning is more important than salary in the first years”.

To conclude on salary, the finding of our reports approves of the importance of money as a financial reward that could well demonstrate the level of the employees’ achievement both financially and socially. Salary and other financial benefits could also help the ambitious Generation Y to keep up with the far rapid pace of recent social changes. Both aforesaid factors reasonably could have some bearing on the inclination of Generation Y to want to grow faster. Both Beermann and the manager at Handelsbanken pointed out that Generation Y are very keen on growing fast to be able to achieve a higher position in the company.

5.6 Individual VS. Team orientation

More than any other time in the history of education, schools mostly in the West and other industrialized countries, have been teaching respect for fellow human beings, treating them fairly, disagreeing them honestly, exploring each other thoughts candidly and working together
for a common goal and helping one another achieve it. We believe that the campaign for team orientation at schools has been bearing fruit for some time now. In respect of our research, for instance, the previous studies done on the question of generational traits and characteristics identified Generation Y as a generation characterized with apparent higher tendency toward teamwork and integration. Our research and its empirical data, however, do not fully support this supposition, as we could not distinguish any obvious differences between Generation Y and its preceding generations in terms of teamwork spirit and collaboration at the workplace. For instance in the JIBS, in terms of their inclination toward teamwork and integration, no such difference was observed. In JIBS both generation welcomed opportunities of working together in teams and found teamwork an appropriate means for knowledge and/or information and experience sharing.

It is worth mentioning that the experience from one of the interviewees was that the new generation is more individualistic and egocentric. On the other hand both Beermann and Fagelberg had the notion of the newer generation being one where teamwork was a great aspect and one that teamwork was more easily done with younger generation, respectively. Here it can be clearly seen that the experiences in the different workplaces and by the managers are different, and it is hard to establish the underlying cause with the information gathered. We therefore tend to believe that personal characteristics, attitude and behavioral patterns such as egocentrism and selflessness and people being prone for cooperation rather than confrontation at the workplace do not reasonably have a one to one correspondence with their age, social background and/or their respective generations. Such traits, as also amply demonstrated in the literature, may well be the results of interaction of, among other things, numerous psychological, social, economic and cultural variables.
6. Conclusion

RQ: Do generational differences exist between Generation Y and the previous generations when it comes to work attitude in the Swedish business sectors?

In this research we observed that apart from individual versus team orientation, different generations tended to demonstrate apparent differences in respect of work attitude in the context of the working environment of Swedish enterprises. In regards of time flexibility, the gathered data and evidences revealed that Generation Y is inclined to have relatively more flexibility at the workplace in comparison to its previous generations. Workers’ inclination toward flexibility, however, could not be confined to generations only, as other factors such the nature of the job, type and environment of the workplace and availability of appropriate flexible time options also have some bearings on workers’ preference for time flexibility arrangement.

Examining the concept of job loyalty at the level of the Swedish enterprises, we observed that companies’ managers believed that the younger workers generally tend to be less loyal and more mobile between different jobs. Our findings also revealed that this phenomenon might be well attributed to the generation Y deep inclination for career advancement that encourages them to move and change job in order to find one where they can excel and advance soonest. Our finding also showed that the previous generations tended to be more conservative in respect of labour mobility and loyally served the same enterprise for a far longer period of time.

Concerning the outlook of different generations toward work-life balance, we observed some conflicting data, but in general the managers felt that generally Generation Y has a greater demand for free time and that unlike its previous generations they do not tend to regard job as the focal point of their lives any further. Hence, their work-life balance attitude differs from that of the previous generations.
In term of salary, bonuses, benefits and career advancement, we also found apparent differences between the generations. The younger generation in our study generally demonstrated a higher tendency to achieve higher positions as fast as possible. In their interviews with the researchers, their managers also testified having come to the same conclusion.

As far as feedback is concerned, our findings in the three business sectors under study revealed that Generation Y employees seek to get feedback more as a kind of confirmation and assurance indicating the satisfaction of the enterprise with their performance, whereas the preceding generations do not need such feedback much.

In respect of different attitudes towards team orientation among the four generations under our study, although in the literature review Generation Y was allegedly regarded as selfish, our findings failed to substantiate any such assumption due to the lack of apparent differences between different generations attitude toward teamwork. We, therefore, tend to believe that team orientation has apparently nothing to do with age and generation and it root causes may well be searched elsewhere.

### 7. Discussion

As the subject of generational differences is too broad to covered in a research at our level and magnitude, we decided to primarily focus on generational work attitudes. Paucity of research on the choice also encouraged us toward our cause, as we thought our humble findings may as well contribute to the domain of the research on work attitude, particularly in the context of Swedish enterprises. Therefore, within different aspects of work attitude, we selected some more prominent factors that we considered may better explain generational differences operationally.
In our findings, we noticed that different generations demonstrate different work and personal attitude under the same working environment. We also found that the variety of work and personal attitude, among other things, may well be attributed to dissimilar social, cultural and economic backgrounds, as well as previous personal and collective experiences and knowledge of the members of a generation. Previous researches in US, UK and Australia showed a big gap between generations in certain respects. Our findings in Sweden, however, did not find a big gap that may result in a clash of interests among generations at the workplace level. Although, differences among different generations were more apparent in certain aspects of work attitude that could lend themselves to potential minor clash of interests, in other aspects there were less differences and personal factors found to be more important than generational factors.

Concerning time flexibility, we have received mixed responses from workers of different generations and different sectors in our study. From the previous researches findings, we understood that newer generations tend to be more prone for time flexibility arrangements. Our own modest findings, however, showed that personal factors could be also very important concerning flexibility. Preference of time flexibility at the workplace seems to have no one to one correspondence with the generational differences. Other factors such as family status of the employees and their personal concept of social life and leisure also seem to have greatly affected their concept of time flexibility. People with family responsibilities, for instance, argued that they are in favor of time flexibility since they need to spend more time with their families and to take care of their familial requirements. Moreover, it is necessary know that factors that we examined in our study of time flexibility are often closely interwoven and interrelated. For Generation Y, on the contrary to the previous generations, flexibility is regarded as an element that may provide better career advancement opportunities due to the alleged connection between
flexibility and productivity. According to the Generation Y understanding the employees do their jobs better at the time they think they can be most productive and therefore, time flexibility may eventually lead to better results and higher levels of productivity.

Along with the observed connection between time flexibility and career advancement, we also noticed the connection between job loyalty and career advancement. We found out that together with the far rapid pace of technological and social changes, Generation Y also tends to be less patient and is eager to fulfill its career advancement as fast as possible. This is one of the reasons that make them seem less loyal to their jobs and employers and their looking for better employment opportunities. They are more likely to work for different employers because it gives them new opportunities and they will learn different things and have more experience.

**Future Research**

Generational differences and their implications for enterprises and labor relations could provide ample research opportunities. A better understanding of generational differences of the employees in terms of their work attitude and other potential variables such as time flexibility, labor mobility, career advancement, and motivational factors, etc., would have direct results on better management of the human resources and a more collaborative labor relations. By conducting comparative and contrastive studies on generational characteristics and traits and by identifying possible grounds of clashes between generations, any such findings is hoped to also positively contribute to productivity, competitiveness and sustainability of enterprises.

For future research on the topic of generational differences at the workplace it would be interesting to see a more detailed and more extensive research in other business sectors of Sweden and the rest of Europe to see if the findings of this humble research may be replicated elsewhere as well. Further researches may also be conducted on generational traits of different
generations of employees to identify the roots causes of their differences in terms of social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. We found that through our interviews that a flatter organizational structure seem to be of preference among the newer generation, this is another aspect that could be of interest in future research. New studies may also attempt generational differences in terms of work value, work ethics and professional identity of the employees of different generations. Do racial and ethnic backgrounds of the employees of different generations and/or their color and creed affect generational difference? Do generational similarities or dissimilarities have any correspondence to the performance of the subjects? Do migrant workers of the same generation but different origins have much in common in terms of their work attitude?

8. Reflections on the writing process

This thesis is accomplished by all the three group members in four months. Amir and Chris were mainly in charge of the theoretical framework, analysis, discussion and conclusion parts. The methodology and empirical finding parts were primarily written by Bicen. We conducted the whole work on Google Docs, it is a particular useful tool for working synchronously together on one document and can save the document momentarily and automatically. Due to the Swedish identity of Chris, most of the interviewees in Sweden companies were contacted by him, what’s more, he was responsible for the translation work. At the beginning we didn’t work together in school and just discussed and talked through Skype, unfortunately we found it was inefficient so we decided to work at school and do some brainstorm. In this way we improved our work a lot within half month. Furthermore, Amir asked a person who was good at English to help us refine
and correct the words and grammar. Before submitting the thesis, we all read and checked through the text carefully to ensure that the mistake was minimum.

We have learnt a lot from each other through this impressive bachelor thesis. Not only the skills of writing an academic paper but also the cooperation and communication between different cultures gave us a valuable experience.
References


Appendix

Interview Questions

1. How are the different generations when it comes to time flexibility (Fixed or flexible)?

2. How are the different generations when it comes to location flexibility and work? (Ex. Home, Office, Travel)

3. Moving between jobs in order to have better opportunities or looking for stable jobs? How loyal are different generations to their job?)

4. Feedback desire on their work from different Generations?

5. What organizational structure different generations are willing to work for? Hierarchial or flat?

6. How are the different Generations when it comes to their Work-Life balance?

7. How important is the salary rate for different generations?

8. What do different generations think about teamwork and individual work?

9. Have you noticed any difference in the drive for career advancement between the generations?

10. Do you think that there are disagreements between generations in the workplace?