

“Are young and motivated employees positive exceptions of the new working generation?”

An exploratory dyadic study into the mutual perceptions of Generation Y and Generation X on generational differences at work.

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Table of content

Abstract	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Theoretical framework.....	6
2.1 Generations	6
2.2 Research on generational differences.....	6
2.3 Generational differences	8
2.3.1 Self-Determination Theory	8
2.3.2 Work meaning & Work life	11
2.3.3 Organizational Culture.....	13
2.4 Closure.....	14
3. Method.....	15
3.1 Research design	15
3.2 Participants	15
3.3 Interview guide and procedure.....	16
3.4 Data Analysis.....	17
4. Results	19
4.1 Basic needs	19
4.2 Work Meaning & Work Life	23
4.3 Organizational culture & person-organization fit	26
4.4 Organizational commitment.....	27
4.5 Addition of two new topics.....	28
4.6 View on generations.....	29
5. Discussion	31
5.1 Main findings	31
5.2 Theoretical contribution	32
5.3 Practical implications.....	32
5.4 Limitations	33
5.5 Future research	33
5.6 Conclusion	34
References.....	35
Appendix A: Interview script + 2 forms (in Dutch)	40
Appendix B: Informed consent (in Dutch).....	45

Abstract

Purpose – Many articles state how different the new generation is compared to the current workforce. Even consultancy agents start advising organizations in managing different generations at work. But is it true that generations are that different at work and how do employees experience this themselves? This study will focus on the mutual perceptions of Generation Y and Generation X employees on generational differences in the workplace.

Method – A qualitative dyadic study is used to explore employees' perceptions of each other. Six dyads inside six different organizations in the east of the Netherlands were researched. Each dyad consisted of direct colleagues, one from Generation Y and one from Generation X, interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview guide. The self-determination theory is used to explore whether the basic psychological needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness – are changing for the new generation. Due to this dyadic approach, mutual perspectives from both generations could be compared. In addition, the perceptions about one direct colleague from a different generation were compared with the perceptions of the other generation in general.

Findings – In contrast to existing literature, there were no major differences noticed between the work values of Generation Y and Generation X. Particularly the perceptions of the basic needs, showed that the basic needs were quite similar between the dyads. The differences that were mentioned, sometimes even turned out to be in contrast to existing theories on generational differences at work. In addition, participants attribute these differences to a different life stage, work experience or the character of the other person and not to a generation. Especially in relation to the concepts of work meaning and work life, the general image of Generation Y turned out to be negative while the direct experiences inside the dyads are positive. Most of the older participants see their younger colleague as a positive exception of the new working generation. Despite there were no generational differences mentioned in the work values, the findings demonstrate the addition of two new themes in relation to generational differences at work. Especially participants from Generation Y stated that their generation is more open, better in self-reflection, receiving feedback and showing emotions. The other theme is about the fact that Generation Y (can) make more conscious choices in their life and career.

Conclusion – Considering the results of this research it could be discussed whether there is a correct image of Generation Y's needs with regard to the labour market. Companies must be critical in assessing popular articles and be careful in thinking in terms of generations. The advice of consultancy agencies may be based on incorrect results and principles, as proved in this study.

1. Introduction

Talk about generations is everywhere nowadays. When searching for generations in relation to work or opening LinkedIn, many articles explain how different the new generation is compared to the current workforce. Headlines in the media strengthen the stereotyping regarding generational differences with headlines such as: “Employers are annoyed by people in their twenties, everything has to be fun, otherwise they will leave” (De Telegraaf, 2023). In addition, many articles are focused on the difficult position of employers to manage different generations at work, for example: “What employers don’t understand about employees from generations Y and Z” (AD, 2021). Given that, even new jobs are created, such as consulting agents advising organizations in managing different generations at work, which illustrates the impact of these phenomena even more. As the headlines show, most articles are negative about the work values of the new generation. In response to this, young employees from Generation Y and Z share videos on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to share their view on generational differences at work.

In addition to the various media platforms, extensive study in multiple disciplines, such as sociology, psychology and organizational studies, focus on generational differences at work. Generation Y is the most described and most researched generation ever (Torsello, 2019). Studies focus on Generation Y employees and their values and ideas about the workplace. In this context, most of the existing literature follows a quantitative approach to study whether something is a generational difference (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). In addition, many articles are about the changing role of management and leaders in their relationship with Generation Y. For example Anderson et al. (2017) used different leadership theories to research the unique challenges for organizational leaders to manage Generation Y. Interestingly, there is very little qualitative research about the perceptions of generational differences among different generations inside an organization. Therefore, this study will explore the mutual experiences at work from employees in different age groups.

At this moment, the workforce of companies consist of four different generations. The four generations are (from old till young): the Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. This study will focus on the experiences of Generation X and Generation Y, also called the Millennials. Generation X is born between 1956 and 1970, which means that these people are currently between 53 and 67 years old. Generation Y is born between 1986 and 2000, meaning that these young adults are currently between 23 and 37 years old. With more than three million Millennials in the Netherlands, they acquire an important place in the Dutch labour market (Generation Journey by Diversions, 2023).

According to existing literature, multiple differences could be expected between these two generations at work. Lancaster and Stillman (2002) even state that the most significant differences among generations are related to work values. For example, Twenge et al. (2010) explain why Generation Y employees place a high value on autonomy and freedom at work. Generation Y detest micromanaging, are averse to hierarchical structures and prefer more participative forms of leaderships (Behrens, 2009; Shahnaz, 2015). In addition, these employees are known for their need for continuous learning and personal growth. According to Laird et al. (2015) Generation Y employees are more likely to appreciate accountability and feedback. Due to social media they have a constant need for social interaction, however these young adults also seem more individualist and less altruistic at work (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Most popular literature is about the generational differences in the meaning of work and the preferences in work life balance. Different studies state that work centrality declined for Generation Y, whereas importance of leisure values increased with successive generations (Lyons et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2009; Twenge et al., 2010; Wray-Lake et al.,

2011). Thereby this new generation shows weaker commitment to their employer and will easier decide to leave a company when the organizational culture is not fulfilling their expectations (Eversole et al., 2012). In addition, articles state that traditional organizational cultures do not match the expectations of the new working generation. For example the Global talent trends sheets from LinkedIn (2022) explain how organizational cultures should change to meet the expectations of the new generation. Since person-organization fit or cultural fit relates to important work attitudes, the role of organizational culture in generational differences will also be explored during this study.

Despite the large amount of literature about generational differences at work, it is difficult to research generational differences without the use of a time-lag study. Therefore generational differences could be easily confounded with changes due to ageing, experience, life stage and career stage (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Thereby literature presents contradictory findings and controversies in the study of the personal and social values which are typical for Generation Y (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Given this, there is also increasing criticism on this topic and researchers look at generational differences as a hype or a myth (Stassen et al., 2016). To confirm this, different researchers found that there is little solid empirical evidence supporting generationally based differences (Constanza & Finkelstein, 2015; Lyons et al., 2015; Rudolph et al., 2021; Stassen et al., 2016). These researchers look at the complexity beyond generational stereotypes and explain with alternative theories why generational differences are a hype or a myth.

Also in the media there is more and more criticism on the concept of generational differences at work. Despite these critics, recent articles negatively focus on Generation Z, who are just entering the workforce. Consultants claim that this new generation is again very different from the previous generation in a negative way. An American study by Resume Builder (2023) shows that GenZ is the most “unpleasant” group as employees to work with. In this way there is a repetition of what happened in the past to Generation Y. This phenomenon could perhaps also be explained by the use of alternative theories.

This study will explore how the current workforce perceives these phenomena at work themselves. By using a dyadic approach mutual perspectives from both generations can be compared. In addition, the perceptions about one direct colleague from a different generation can be compared with the perceptions of the other generation in general. In this way it will become clear if generational differences at work exists according to the perceptions of employees or this phenomenon really turns out to be a myth. All of this will be researched in this explorative study, focusing on the main research question:

What are the mutual perceptions of Generation Y and Generation X employees on generational differences at work?

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter elaborates on the definition of generations and gives an overview of existing literature on generational differences at work. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is used to explore the basic needs in work motivation for different generations. Other generational differences that could be expected at work according to existing literature are also mentioned. In this way, this chapter clarifies which theoretical knowledge already exists and which knowledge gaps and critical notes (or alternative theories) about generational differences will be further explored in this study.

2.1 Generations

This study will focus on the perceptions of different generations on generational differences at work. To research this, it is important to define the concept of generations and explain when different work values can be seen as generational differences. According to Joshi et al. (2011) pre-modern approaches most accurately describe generations as genealogical kinship, focussing on lineage through blood or marriage. This kinship-based view has been a predominant focus in anthropological research of generations. However, these kinship-based approaches offer only a partial view of generations and other substantively conceptualizations emerged over time (Burnett, 2011). The work of Karl Mannheim in the early 20th century revived the notion of 'kith' (networks of one's contemporaries) as opposed to 'kin' and became an enduring legacy in our understanding of generations. Mannheim (1952) argued that the concept of generations is not only about the biological process of aging in a specific time period, and added the importance of the same formative experiences within the same historical and socio-cultural context. From this moment the term generation has been adopted into common use to describe broader social trends (Joshi et al., 2011). Therefore, Mannheim (1952) and Pilcher (1994) define a generation as:

“a group of individuals born within the same historical and socio-cultural context, who experience the same formative experiences and develop unifying commonalities as a result”.

In this way, Mannheim argued that the concept of generations contains two essential components – common location in a historic time period and a distinct consciousness that is the result of important events of that time. In doing so, Mannheim (1952) claimed generations as a sociological rather than a biological issue. Mannheim's legacy is about the assumption that generations are agents of social change. In this social forces perspective Mannheim identifies generations as interrelated and multidimensional social groups that take shape withing the flow of history. Therefore, Mannheim's theory is about the dynamic interaction of generations as a mechanism for social change (Lyons & Kuron, 2013).

2.2 Research on generational differences

Generational differences in the workplace refer to the variations in work values, work attitudes, and behaviours that exist among employees of different age groups (Weeks & Schaffert, 2017). As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, generational differences in the workplace have been a popular topic among researchers over the past two decades. There is a volume of books, articles and well-known literature about generational differences in work values and work attitudes. The theoretical foundation for generational differences started with Mannheim's theory, recognizing generations as mechanisms to describe broader social trends. The majority of research concerning generational differences in the workplace has assumed that differences among social generations

should be evident in the work domain (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). However, only Joshi et al. (2011) have offered a cohesive theoretical explanation for generations as an organizational phenomenon. Their theory focuses on “generational identity”, which they defined as:

“an individual’s knowledge that he or she belongs to a generational group/role, together with some emotional and value significance to him or her of this group/role membership”.

When employees identify themselves as part of a generational (sub)group, this could influence their values, priorities and expectations at work. Therefore, generational identity can influence how employees perceive themselves, as well as their perceptions of other generations inside the organization. Although this theory has not gained traction within the research literature, it could offer important insights in the complexity of generational differences.

Lyons and Kuron (2013) critically reviewed the research evidence concerning generational differences in a variety of work-related variables. Their review indicates that the growing body of research remains largely descriptive, rather than explanatory and has not proceeded from an explicit theoretical framework (Joshi et al., 2011). Furthermore, their review of studies provides evidence concerning generational differences in a broad range of work-related variables, including work values and work attitudes, personality, leadership preferences and behaviours. Since it is difficult to research generational differences without the use of a time-lag study, Lyons and Kuron (2013) only considered longitudinal evidence. In their review, significant studies from Twenge and colleagues are included. In this qualitative study the generational differences reviewed in the paper of Lyons and Kuron (2013) are mentioned and compared with the findings in more recent studies. As a guideline, the basic needs in work motivation are used, to explore in which level these needs are changing according to the mutual perceptions of different generations. In the next part of the theoretical framework, the expected generational differences in basic needs are mentioned.

According to the literature review of Lyons and Kuron (2013) the results provide sufficient “proof of concept” for generation as a workplace variable. However, evidence for generational differences is fractured and fraught with inconsistencies, making generalizations difficult. After the critical review of Lyons and Kuron (2013), more and more criticism on the existence of generational differences appeared. Since generational differences could be easily confounded with changes due to ageing, experience, life stage or career stage, it is difficult to state if something is a generational difference (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008) . Perhaps this is also the reason why literature presents contradictory findings and controversies in the study of personal and social values which are typical for Generation Y. Since it is not clear if generational differences do exist or are a hype or a myth, this study will also look at alternative theories to explain the popularity of generational differences at work.

Rudolph et al. (2021) focused on two alternative and complementary frameworks to explain the science and practice of generational differences. The first theory, the social constructionist perspective, looks at generations as a heuristic in the process of social sensemaking. Generations are recognized as social constructions, which help give meaning to the complexities and intricacies of aging and human development in the context of changing societies. In this way, Rudolph et al. (2021) explain how generations and differences between them are constructed through both the ubiquity of generational stereotypes and the socially accepted nature of applying such labels to describe people of different ages. In this way, the social constructive perspective helps to understand why generations are so ubiquitous. Next to this explanation, Rudolph et al. (2021) use the lifespan development perspective as an alternative way to think about the process of aging and development

instead of thinking in terms of generations. This perspective frames human development as a lifelong process which is affected by various influences (not including generations) that predict developmental outcomes. In this way, differences in work values could be easily explained by the different life stage of people. However, the lifespan perspective has been infrequently considered as an alternative model to generations. During this study, these alternative and complementary theories will be taken into consideration when exploring people's perceptions on generational differences at work.

2.3 Generational differences

In this part of the theoretical framework, the SDT will be used as a prominent theory to look at human motivation at work. Potential differences in the basic needs of different generations will be explained. Furthermore, generational differences in work meaning and work life preferences according to existing literature are mentioned.

2.3.1 Self-Determination Theory

To explore generational differences at work, a prominent macro theory of human motivation will be used as a point of departure. The self-determination theory (SDT) from Deci and Ryan (1985) offers a guideline to explore the psychological needs for different generations within a specific organizational context to be motivated at work. According to SDT, every employee has three basic psychological needs which must be fulfilled to be adequately motivated, perform optimally and experience well-being at work (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to Gagné et al. (2022) people specifically need to feel that they are agents of their own behaviour (need for autonomy), that they are effective (need for competence), and that they experience meaningful connections with other people (need for relatedness). Each basic need will be further explained and potential generational differences will be mentioned. However, it is also possible that the new generation has extra basic needs at work, this will also be explored in this research. Therefore, this study will explore if the basic psychological needs are changing and if the new generation brings new basic needs at work to feel highly motivated.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985) the satisfaction of the three basic needs is essential for psychological health and well-being and facilitate effective functioning in social settings, such as the workplace. Meta-analytic evidence confirms this and show how the satisfaction of these basic needs is associated with better performance, reduced burnout, more organizational commitment and reduced turnover intentions (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Therefore, SDT offers a suitable guideline in this study to explore generational differences at work in relation to the experienced person-organization fit and employees' work attitudes.

Deci and Ryan (2013) make a distinguishing between different types of motivation that employees might experience at work: autonomous- and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation is intrinsic motivation which is more self-determined and in line with personal interests and values. This type of motivation is more positively associated with key attitudinal and performance outcomes as mentioned above, than more controlled motivation. Controlled motivation is extrinsic motivation where someone feels compelled to do something by external pressures (Deci et al., 2017). In addition, the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs is significantly related to more autonomous motivation. In this way, SDT provides a strong framework for building high-quality motivation through basic need fulfilment. When the basic needs are satisfied, employees show both their highest quality efforts and their highest well-being (Ryan et al.,

2010). In fact, it is precisely when employees are most empowered and engaged that they experience the most wellness and satisfaction with work.

According to Rigby and Ryan (2018) high-quality motivation turns out to be even more evident when employees pursue goals and values that are personally meaningful. In this way, the goals of the organization and the individual converge and the employee identifies with and willingly embraces the work. Therefore, high-quality motivation also relates with other topics in this research, such as meaningful work and person-organization fit. Not surprisingly, the organizational culture and leadership style in general, can also support the need fulfillment and motivation of employees. In a culture of need support, employees are more satisfied in their work and compensation, have greater trust and loyalty for the organization, and show greater creativity and performance (Güntert, 2015). In addition to these direct positive benefits, such need supports also inoculate against physical illness and absenteeism (Williams et al., 2014), and increase organizational commitment (Collie et al., 2015) and customer loyalty (Doshi & McGregor, 2015), bringing further direct benefits to organizations.

Autonomy

Autonomy is the basic need to be the author of your own life and feel that you have a sense of choice and self-endorsement in decisions and actions to be made (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). People want to feel ownership and volition in their work. When employees feel free to do things in their own way and express their own ideas and opinions at work, they experience autonomy. Since, organizational structures and leadership forms can affect the level of autonomy at work, these topics are included inside this basic need. Supervisors can support the need for autonomy when they help everyday work tasks feel meaningful and important. When employees have a sense of purpose in what they are doing, autonomy needs can be fulfilled, even when tasks are repetitive or not enjoyable (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

According to Twenge et al. (2010) the need for autonomy grows with each successive generation. Generation Y and Generation Z tend to value autonomy more than Generation X and Baby Boomers. Sheahan (2005) and Espinoza et al. (2010) confirm this and state that Generation Y employees place a high value on autonomy and freedom at work. The more individualistic culture nowadays and the opportunities to make decisions independently, could be a reason for this higher need in autonomy (Twenge & Campbell, 2012). In addition, Generation Y employees are typically described as being averse to hierarchical structures and they prefer more participative forms of leadership (Behrens, 2009; Shahnaz, 2015). In line with this, Generation Y detest micromanaging and often view this as a sign of distrust. They prefer a leadership style that values their input and gives them the freedom to make their own decisions. Generation Y desires to be coached rather than directed and prefer their manager to take a mentor approach. This preference is partly explained by their generational call for more egalitarian values, which turns out to be much less common for Generation X employees (Brown, 2012). To summarize, the younger generation seems to need more autonomy at work to feel highly motivated compared to the older generation. If and how employees experience these generational differences in the basic need for autonomy, could be explored during the interviews.

Competence

Competence is the basic need to feel effective, to be successful, and to grow (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). First of all, employees want to feel confident in the performance of their daily tasks. The level of competence depends on the capability of employees and certain qualities and skills that are

necessary in their job. Alongside this, employees want to stretch their abilities and growth toward personal and professional goals. Therefore, employees would like to envision a path that includes new challenges and responsibilities to anticipate growth in their work (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

In general, literature states that Generation Y is known for valuing continuous learning and personal growth in their careers. Therefore, they may feel frustrated when their job does not provide enough opportunities for development. However it is quite difficult to state if a higher need in competence and development is a generational difference. When studying the psychological need for competence among different generations, generational differences should not be confused with life stage or experience. It makes sense to expect that the younger generation feels less competent in their job and needs to develop more than an older colleague with more experience.

However, when looking at communication about tasks and competencies, generational differences are found. Generation Y employees are more likely to appreciate accountability and feedback from their supervisors (Laird et al., 2015). Despite their preferences for participative leadership and more egalitarian values, direct feedback channels from management and senior employees are eagerly sought when it comes to demonstrating their qualities and skills (Torsello, 2019). According to Cascio (2014) this makes the relationship with organizational structure more a matter of preferentiality than of functionality. This is what has led some analysts to call this the “Me Generation,” underscoring the functions of a type of egocentric approach to organizational culture (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010).

When looking at tasks, task clarity and task definition seems to be one of the most important features that Generation Y employees value in organizational culture (Meier & Crocker, 2010). Interview-based research has shown that Generation Y employees find it difficult to deal with tasks that are changeable or poorly defined (Deloitte, 2017). On the other hand, Generation Y employees increasingly seek flexible patterns of employment, which entails that their job tasks may likewise become more flexible or subject to redefinition (Özcelik, 2015). Therefore, there is a common tension in literature between the need for task clarity and the need for flexibility. Although Generation Y tends to be the most flexible generation inside organizations, they are also described as more prone to multitasking and therefore turn out to be less effective in listening, communication and time management – all skills that are crucial in determining task performance (Pekala, 2001). According to Cekada (2012) other generations view Generation Y even as impatient. However, Generation Y employees are used to multitasking and as proficient multitaskers they can move from one activity to the next easily, using different communication media. Therefore they are able to give instant feedback to others and expect it in return. Sometimes they place more importance on the speed of the response rather than the content in the response (Cekada, 2012). This tension relates to the apparent contradiction that task clarity is increasingly sought even when it may not fit within a general panorama of work flexibility that many employees seek in order to achieve a more favourable work-life balance (Torsello, 2019).

Relatedness

Relatedness is the basic need for connection and relationships that are supportive and meaningful in nature. People want to feel supported while experiencing that others need and value their support as well (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). In other words, people want to feel that they belong and “matter” to others. At work, employees want to feel respected, valued and included at all levels of the company, including direct managers, colleagues, and leadership. When employees feel connected with others

at work and have the feeling to be part of a group, they experience relatedness.

According to Twenge and Campbell (2009), Generation Y has a constant need for social interaction. Due to advanced networking and mobile technologies, this generation is used to be all the time socially connected. This makes that Generation Y employees are team orientated and prefer teamwork to independent work (Kilber et al., 2014). As a team player, Generation Y enjoy working in a collaborative and informal work environment, where employees can easily share their ideas and opinions. Thereby, Generation Y is most accustomed to working to with diverse people, since they are the most racially diverse workforce generation in history (Kilber et al., 2014). However, as mentioned before, this generation also places a high value on autonomy. Next to their preferences for autonomy, some researchers state that Generation Y seems to be more individualist and less altruistic at work due to changing personality factors. A growing body of cross-temporal evidence from the U.S.A. provides compelling evidence of generational differences in a number of personality factors. Twenge and associates state that neuroticism, narcissism, self-esteem, self-confidence and self-rated drive to achieve are increasing with successive generations (Twenge et al., 2010). Time-lag evidence of Smits et al. (2011) suggests that extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness are also higher in successive generations in the Netherlands. On the other side, the need for social approval (Twenge & Im, 2007), empathetic concern and perspective taking (Konrath et al., 2011) have declined for the younger generations. Therefore, Generation Y seems to be more individualist and less altruistic at work. In other words, they seem to be less concerned about colleagues at work. Looking at these personality changes, you would rather expect that the younger generation prefers to work alone instead of in a team. In line with this expectation, another popular notion in the non-academic literature is that younger generations have less of a preference for teamwork than do older generations, creating the potential for conflict on multi-generational teams (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). To summarize, the research on teamwork preferences and social behaviours of different generations is contradictory. These contradictory findings suggests that generations may place similar levels of teamwork importance but tend to approach it in different ways (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). If and how employees experience these generational differences in the basic need for relatedness, could be explored during the interviews.

To conclude this part about basic needs, there is one specific research found that explores the relationship between multigenerational workforces and employee motivation from a self-determination theory perspective. Heyns and Kerr (2018) used a quantitative research design to study the motivational needs of various generations within a South African workplace setting. With regard to the degrees of satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, no practically significant differences were found. Since, this study will not only measure the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs, but also explore the perceptions on the basic needs of different generations, this will contribute to the limited research on generational differences from a self-determination theory perspective.

2.3.2 Work meaning & Work life

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, most popular literature is about the generational differences in the meaning of work and the preferences in work-life balance. Generational differences that could be expect in the concepts of work meaning and work life will be further explained in this section.

Work meaning

Living a meaningful life and having a meaningful job is getting more important every day. Most people spend much time at work and also identify themselves with their current job. Therefore, ethicists argue that experiencing meaningful work is a fundamental need (Weeks & Schaffert, 2017). But what is the definition of meaningful work? The exact definition will be different for each person. However, most researchers agree that there is an element of “purpose” or “significance” in the definition of meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010). In addition Weeks and Schaffert (2017) state that other researchers examine meaningful work as a ‘personal calling’ as opposed to simply a ‘job’ or a ‘career’.

Research in generational differences in the meaning of work is contradictory. Research on values across generations suggests that younger generations are not seeking meaning at work. According to Twenge et al. (2010) Generation Y is less likely to value intrinsic rewards (which is defined as working for work’s sake), and they also scored lower on finding a job that is interesting, provides a challenge and makes an impact on others. In addition, Generation X scored significantly higher on work centrality than Generation Y. However, other research state that Generation Y views meaningful work as an essential aspect of their lives and careers. According to Berg et al. (2010) Generation Y prioritize purpose, social responsibility, and personal fulfilment in their work. For them, meaningful work involves connecting to a larger cause or mission, having a positive impact on the world, and the ability to express their creativity and individuality in their work. For Generation X work is seen as way to achieve financial stability, independence and career advancement. Where they tend to prioritize job security, Generation Y sees work as a way to make a difference and contribute to society. The younger generation prioritize meaningful work, personal growth and flexibility over job security (Polachek, Zhang & Yotsuya 2018).

Given these contradictions, the definition of meaningful work may varies across different generations. Weeks and Schaffert (2017) researched this and their findings show that generational cohorts define the meaning in their jobs differently. When asking for the definition of meaningful work, Generation Y employees mentioned a definition with: nice coworkers, serving others, seeing lives improved and personal happiness. In contrast, Generation X employees mentioned other concepts in their definition: working with good people, work-life balance and pursue individual goals. However, all generational cohorts share a similar desire to “develop and become themselves” when asked about their definitions of meaningful work (Weeks & Schaffert, 2017). In addition, Weeks and Schaffert (2017) found that all the generational cohorts hold negative perceptions about the lack of desire for meaning in each of the other cohorts. This means that all the generations are negative about the meaning of work for the other generation. In this research, Generation Y and Generation X employees will be asked about their own definition of meaningful work and their perceptions of the other generations’ view on meaningfulness.

Work life

Work life is about the place of work in people’s lives. Some people “work to live”, where others “live to work”. This topic of work life has some overlap with work ethic, work centrality and the meaning of work, as mentioned above. According to Munn (2013) the definition of work-life balance is: “the way individuals choose to prioritize work, family, individual and community responsibilities”. Each person may do this differently, however the organizational culture can influence how effective individuals are at accomplishing their desired level of balance.

Researchers have examined the desire for work-life balance in different generational cohorts.

Results from different studies showed evidence that successive generations place increasing priority on work-life balance (Lyons et al., 2015; Sullivan et al., 2009; Twenge et al., 2010; Wray-Lake et al., 2011). In addition, both Twenge and Campbell (2010) and Wray-Lake et al. (2011) found that leisure values increased with successive generations, whereas work centrality declined. In general it is often stated that the younger generation is less focused on work and place increasing priority on meaningful lives outside of work. In addition, Generation Y tend to favour flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible work hours. This generation prioritizes work-life balance over job security.

2.3.3 Organizational Culture

According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) an organizational culture that supports the personal need fulfilment of employees, relates to different positive outcomes valued by organizations and individuals (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Since literature provides an overview of generational differences in work values, organizational cultures could be differently perceived by generations. Therefore, the concept of organizational culture is included in this study. The organizational theorist Edgar Schein's (1987) defines organizational culture as:

“Organizational Culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions, invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems...” (1987, p. 383).

Due to Edgar Schein's interest in the integration of new employees, his definition will be used in this study. When new generations enter the workforce, the organizational culture is subject to change. The conceptual review of Bellot (2011) confirms this, explaining how organizational cultures are socially constructed and subject to continual change. According to Eversole et al. (2012) organizational cultures that will be able to retain employees across generations need to be developed. The newest generation entering the workforce is substantively different and there will likely be a shift to new ways of working, reflecting the needs and values of the younger generation. Therefore, Eversole et al. (2012) state that interventions are needed to change organizational cultures to be more flexible and increase retention of valued workers across different generations.

How different generations perceive the organizational culture relates to the concepts of “organizational identification” and “person-organization fit”. Organizational identification refers to the degree to which employees define themselves as a member of the organization they work for, and share the same goals, mission and values (Edwards, 2005). This could affect the perceived person-organization fit and the commitment of employees. Person-organization fit (P-O fit) is about the match between an individual's values and the values of the organization (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Theoretical views suggest that the values of an organisation's influential members tend to represent the culture of the organization (Schein, 1991). The generations currently holding the most senior positions are the older groups, introducing the potential for younger employees to experience less fit if they hold differing values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Rani and Samuel (2016) confirm this and state that the management of older generations could lead to a potential mismatch between the work values of Generation Y and the values inside the organization, which could, in turn, lead to high turnover intention. In addition Dencker et al. (2008) posited that shared generational identity will result in common work-related expectations, expressed as “psychological contracts”. The violation of

these contracts leads to negative emotional reactions, then dissatisfaction, lack of commitment and intention to quit. To summary, this study will explore how strong employees identify themselves with their generation and with the organization they work for and how this influences their perceived person-organization fit and work attitudes.

2.4 Closure

As the theoretical framework shows, research on generational differences at work is divided based on different opinions and conflicting results. To research if generational differences at work really exist, the basic needs of people will be used as a starting point. Since most research in generational differences remains largely descriptive and results are contradictory, critical researchers call for qualitative research with a greater consideration of context (Lyons & Kuron, 2013). Therefore this qualitative dyadic study will explore the mutual perceptions of employees in different generations at work.

3. Method

3.1 Research design

To answer the research question, a qualitative research design was chosen. Qualitative research is suitable “to discover the meaning that people award to their social worlds and to understand the meaning of their social behaviour” (Boeije, 2009). Since this study is not only about the work values of employees from Generation Y and Generation X but also about their perceptions of the work values of the other (group), a qualitative dyadic study is used. Each dyad consists of two direct colleagues that work within the same team, one employee from Generation Y and one employee from Generation X. Semi-structured interviews with each employee individually were conducted to get in-depth insights in their work values and perceptions of the work values of the other. One-on-one interviews were chosen to assure that interviewees feel comfortable to share their true thoughts and experiences, without fear of judgement from the other person. Therefore, interviewing each employee individually is a suitable method to gain insight into each person’s unique experiences, perspectives and perceptions of the behaviour of the other. Using this dyadic approach has several advantages. First of all, mutual perspectives from both generations can be compared. In addition, the perceptions about one direct colleague from a different generation can be compared with the perceptions of the other generation in general. In this way the direct experiences with different generations at work and the more general view of other generations become clear. Since a dyadic approach is used, the privacy of interviewees and the confidentiality of what they have said is even more important. To guarantee participants privacy and data confidentiality, an informed consent is agreed with each participant (see Appendix B), and results are anonymized. In addition, this study has been approved by the ethics committee of the Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente. In this way, participants are sure that others, and specifically their colleague, will never find out what they have said during the interview. All twelve interviews were conducted in person at the offices of the participants. Interviews typically lasted 50 minutes and were audiotaped with permission.

3.2 Participants

A total of twelve participants from six organizations based in the Netherlands were selected using purposive sampling. At the start of the sampling, different technical organizations in the east of the Netherlands were approached by phone or email. In this approach the specific attributes that the pair of participants should have were explained. A pair of participants had to meet the following selection criteria: Each pair contains one employee from Generation Y and one employee from Generation X. The employees are direct colleagues and work together within the same department for at least 6 months. In addition, they must have an office job, which makes their opinions on different work values such as work-life balance and working remotely more comparable. Soon it became clear that it is quite difficult to find a suitable pair working together within the same department. A total of sixteen companies were approached by phone or email. The sampling resulted in the participation of six organizations. All the organizations were technical companies in the east of the Netherlands, except one consultancy agency in the centre of the Netherlands. All the six dyads contain employees with the same type of job who work together closely and are both in the correct age range. Given the purpose of this study, it was not possible to deviate from the intensity of cooperation and the right age group, however deviating from the sector does not impact the purpose of this study.

All twelve participants (7 women, 5 men) worked parttime or fulltime at the office and held

at least an educational level of a four-year college degree. All the six dyads consisted of one employee from Generation Y and one employee from Generation X and have worked closely together for a time period of at least 6 months. Hence, all the participants were able to share their opinions on the work values of the other colleague. Participants represented job categories such as engineer, project manager, HR or communication advisor. The six participants from Generation Y were aged between 25 and 29 years (mean age = 27 years). Except one participant who had the age of 22 and is officially from generation Z. To make sure that this creates no bias, this is mentioned in the results when necessary. The six participants from Generation X were aged between 52 and 63 years (mean age = 57 years). The average tenure within an organization was 7 years, with a range from 1 year to 40 years. An overview of the characteristics of all the 12 participants inside the 6 dyads can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of participants

Dyad	Code	Gender	Age	Collaboration	Code	Gender	Age
1	P1 (Z)	Female	22	0,5	P2 (X)	Female	53
2	P3 (Y)	Male	27	1	P4 (X)	Male	63
3	P5 (Y)	Female	27	2	P6 (X)	Female	54
4	P7 (Y)	Female	25	0,5	P8 (X)	Male	57
5	P9 (Y)	Male	27	6	P10 (X)	Male	52
6	P11 (Y)	Female	29	3,5	P12 (X)	Female	60

* Z, Y or X stands for Generation Z, Generation Y and Generation X. Age and Collaboration is in years.

3.3 Interview guide and procedure

The interviews are semi-structured, meaning questions about each topic in the interview are structured in the same way. First the participant is asked about their own view on the topic, then the 'mirror question' is asked about the participants perception of their direct colleague from a different generation. For example the interview started with the topic main motivation in work. The participant is first asked about his or her own motivation at work. Then the participant is asked about his or her opinion on the main motivation at work of their direct colleague. When there is a difference noticed between their own motivation and the motivation of the other, the researcher asks the attribution question. The first time a difference is noticed, the researcher will explain the different categories the participant can think of when answering the attribution question. A difference could be attributed to the different life stage, the generation in general or the character of the person. When there is no difference noticed between own work values and the work values of the other, the participant is asked to think about the different generations in general. In this way participants general image of generations could be compared with the direct experiences at work. Example question: 'If we zoom out to your generation in general and the generation of (name colleague), do you see a difference in the meaning of work / the need for autonomy / the need for connection at work?' This structure for the questions about each topic are presented in Table 2 with some example questions.

Table 2*Structure questions for each topic*

Fixed structure	Example questions
1. Participants own view	How important is autonomy at work for you?
2. Participants perceptions of their colleague	How important is autonomy for your colleague?
3. Difference noticed? → Attribution question	What do you attribute this difference to?
4. No difference noticed? → General image question	If we zoom out to Generation Y and X in general, do you see a difference in the need for autonomy?

After questions regarding the topic main motivation, the other topics and work values inside this research follow in a logical order: Work meaning, Work life, Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness and last Organizational commitment. By starting with the meaning and place of work in someone's life, the relation between people and work becomes more clear for both generations. Afterwards it becomes clear whether the basic needs at work differ for both generations and to what extent. By using the fixed structure inside each topic, the experiences inside the dyads can be compared with the perceptions of the generations in general. When all these topics are questioned in the same way, the participant will be asked to fill in two different forms about person-organization fit (see Appendix A). First the participant can fill in their own perceived person-organization fit. Afterwards, the participant can fill in the form about their perception of the person-organization fit of the other. The researcher will ask the participant to explain why the forms are filled in that particular way.

After the person-organization fit forms, two questions about generational identification and generational image are asked: 'Do you feel part of a certain generation at work and why is this?' and 'Do you have a certain image of other generations at work and why is this?'. Finally, the last questions in the interview are about the participants view on the organizational culture. To end with the question: 'Do you have the feeling that the organization changes with the arrival of new generations?'. The complete interview script and the two different forms about person-organization fit can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first researcher, leading to 257 transcript pages. To ensure data security, only the first researcher was involved in the analysis of the data. First all the transcripts were anonymized by substituting names for general concepts or codes. Then a repetitive coding technique is conducted to analyse the data. In the first round of analysis, all the comments which were assessed as relevant were shaded in colours and coded. This list of comments reflected all kinds of important statements and opinions according to the different subjects in this study. Since this is a dyadic study, participants' answers describe not only their own work values, but also their perceptions of their direct colleague or a generation in general. Therefore it appeared important to make a clear distinction between these different groups of answers by using specific codes. For example the code P1(Y) is used when the first participant from Generation Y says something about their own work values. The code P1(Y>X) is used when this participant gives his/her opinion on the work values of their direct colleague, participant two from Generation X. All the codes are grouped according to the main topic it relates to and the code that is used (Y, X>Y, X or Y>X). In this way one

schedule is created in which it is visible per theme what has been said by Generation Y, Generation X and whether this is in line with what the other person says about him/her or the generation in general. In addition, a final results group has been created per theme, where you can immediately see whether the needs are equal or not and what this difference is attributed to. Table 3 represents an example inside the coding scheme for the topic motivation and the answers inside the first dyad. While creating this coding scheme, it became clear that the basic needs at work were often quite similar within the dyads. The perceptions of the direct colleague were mainly positive and corresponded with the participants' own work values, as the example in Table 3 shows. However, especially inside the topics work meaning and work life, participants also talk about their general image of the other generation, which is often more negative. In the results chapter this comparison between positive direct experiences at work and the negative general picture of a generation is given in section 4.2 Work meaning & work life.

Table 3

Example coding scheme

Document Code Group	Code (own answer)	Code (answer dyad)
A) Motivation work GenY	P1(Y) Helping other people P1(Y) Gaining experience P1(Y) Nice team	P2(X>Y) Gaining experience P2(X>Y) Nice team
A) Motivation work GenX	P2(X) Improving processes P2(X) Nice team	P1(Y>X) Diversity work P1(Y>X) Helping other people P1(Y>X) Nice team
A) Motivation	P1&P2 Same motivation at work P1&P2 Small difference attributed to different life-/career stage	

4. Results

4.1 Basic needs

First the basic needs in motivation at work will be analysed by using the coding scheme. According to the self-determination theory (SDT), all employees have three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. The satisfaction of these basic needs at work promotes autonomous motivation, high-quality performance and wellness (Rigby & Ryan, 2018). Therefore, three main questions in the interviews were about the participants' need for autonomy, competence and relatedness at work. In addition there was one more generic question relating to the participants' main motivation at work. Hence, it could be researched if and how the basic psychological needs in work motivation are changing for Generation Y compared to Generation X. By creating different code groups the main differences in participants' psychological needs are analysed. The main outcomes for each psychological need will be further explained below.

Autonomy

The first psychological need mentioned during the interviews is autonomy. Autonomy is the basic need that seems to be most similar for the different participants and generations. All participants mentioned the importance of autonomy at work and surprisingly, they all experience enough autonomy at work. When asking about the need for autonomy for the other colleague, almost all the participants responded that this is equal to their own need for autonomy (see Table 4).

Table 4

Answers about autonomy

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>"Autonomy is very important to me because I think it is important that I can share my ideas and that they are listened to, but that I can also really do something with them, so that I can implement them."</i>	<i>"For me autonomy is very important. I have enough self-knowledge to know what I can do myself and what I need help with. If I am limited in my freedom then I am less active and also less enterprising at work."</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X
<i>"I think that is the same for her, yes that is identical. She is also able to handle that freedom well and takes initiative herself."</i>	<i>"The same I think, yes, she always talks about the freedom she has in her job to do the things she finds important, she really appreciates that."</i>

Two participants from Generation X do mention that they have not experienced enough autonomy at their work in the past. For them this was also the main reason for leaving the organization. In addition, they mention that some of their friends or peers are also jealous of the freedom they experience now. This confirms that the older generation also prefers to experience sufficient autonomy.

As mentioned before, all the answers confirm the importance of autonomy for both generations. At the same time two participants from Generation X do mention that the younger employees from Generation Y sometimes need more guidance and may have difficulties with the high degree of autonomy. However, this is described as a difference attributable to the different life stage of the younger employees, with less work experience, instead of a generational difference.

The following quote from a younger employee from Generation Y confirms this need:

“I do think that every generation wants to work autonomously, although perhaps the younger generation sometimes needs a little more guidance, I also notice that for myself. It is really great that I can work very autonomously, but sometimes it is also important for me to have a little guidance.”

Competence

Competence is about the need to develop on both a personal and a professional level. Based on participants’ own answers, there are no big generational differences between participants’ need to develop themselves at work. Almost all the participants state that professional development is important to them. However, four participants from Generation Y do mention that their older colleague is less focused on development based on their work experiences and life stage. The quotes in Table 5 provide an overview of the answers about development at work.

Table 5

Answers about competence

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>“Development is extremely important to me, which was one of the reasons why I chose (name of organization). There are plenty of colleagues here that I can learn from, which I personally find very important.”</i>	<i>“I think it’s quite important to find a way to continue developing throughout your career. For me this is important, but there is sometimes too little attention paid to this due to daily tasks.”</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X
<i>“Development is also very important for (name colleague), especially because she is still at the beginning of her career. She is ambitious and very eager to learn new things.”</i>	<i>“I think this is less important for (name colleague), simply because he already has more experience and is in a different phase of life. He completes the last years of work based on all his experiences.”</i>

In general, Generation Y seems to be more active in their development at work than Generation X. This difference in professional development is mostly attributed to the different life stage and work experience of the participants. Exemplified by the following statement from a participant from Generation X:

“Well look, I no longer have to take a course to get better in my field. Of course I can grow and they can offer me courses here to broaden my field. But like I have said, I’ve narrowed it down and this is what I’m good at and what I want, how I want to grow old. But I can imagine that the younger generation says: wow, yes I will follow that! And I’m more like: Well, don’t call me anymore!”

All the six participants from Generation X are positive about their own development at work, however three of them are quite negative when it is about their generation in general. Example, participant from Generation X:

“In my own environment of friends in the same age group, I don’t see many people who take the initiative for training, and those who do this are often encouraged by their employer. I think this is typical for my generation: You finished school and you start working and then that is it.”

Participants confirm this and state that the older employees are mostly motivated by others to follow a course or training. A nice example of someone from Generation X who is motivated by the (young) organization to work on personal development:

“Well this organization brought me to that coach and motivated me to follow that course. Otherwise I would have never done this. It turned out to be exactly what I needed. So personal development is if you can grow personally and that this is offered by your employer, well chapeau, that is amazing.”

According to the younger generation, the differences in personal development can be seen as a generational difference. They state that their generation, Generation Y is naturally more self-motivated and active in their personal development. According to some of the participants this is in line with the fact that the younger generation is more open and engaged in self-reflection. They also notice this, when looking at the topic of feedback inside organizations. The generational differences in openness and self-reflection are new and will be discussed in section 4.5 Addition of two new topics.

Feedback

Another topic from literature about generational differences in development at work is feedback. Feedback concerns both the extent to which someone can give and receive feedback. Three participants, especially from Generation Y started talking about openness in giving and receiving feedback themselves during the topic competence. Otherwise, another question about feedback is asked to all the participants. The generational differences regarding this topic became evident during the first seconds after asking this question. Participants from Generation Y immediately knew what this was about and stated that the younger generation is much more open in giving and receiving feedback than the older generation. On the other hand, participants from Generation X remained silent and sometimes responded almost offended asking what I meant by this question. This is an interesting result, since the question for both generations was exactly the same: “Do you notice any differences in giving and receiving feedback among different generations at work?”.

A participant from Generation Y explains why giving and receiving feedback is so important to her and why this seems more difficult for her older colleague from Generation X:

“For me that is really important and I often notice when things are not spoken out and then I take the initiative to talk about it. Even when it’s not always nice, I just really want to know if I can do something different or better.”

“This is different for her (older colleague), I do think she finds it more complicated to receive feedback and is less open about it and I do think this is a generational thing. They are just less open, just also not used to speaking things out and reflecting openly.”

Relatedness

The last psychological need derived from the self-determination theory (SDT) is relatedness.

Relatedness is about the need to have meaningful relationships with others. At work, relatedness is about the need for formal and informal contact with colleagues and the need for collaboration.

Different studies (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002) state that Generation Y is less focused on meaningful relationships at work. However, in contrast to most literature, this study found that the need for relatedness is almost equal and sometimes the younger generation is even more focused on meaningful connections at work. Most participants attribute this to the different life stage of Generation Y. In addition, four participants from Generation Y mentioned their need for more informal and personal contact at work, whereas participants from Generation X talked more about professional contact and a nice working atmosphere (see Table 6).

Table 6

Answers about relatedness

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>"For me connection is very important, I really enjoy having contact with different people and also having more informal and personal conversations between work. I also need this to feel connected."</i>	<i>"I think it is important to have social contacts every day at work and this is reflected in the collaboration with colleagues, it is important to work together pleasantly."</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X
<i>"Yes, connection at work is also very important for (name colleague). This is quite similar, however I do think that she sometimes is better in this and more open".</i>	<i>"I think that work-related contact is very important to her, but personal contact or spending time with colleagues outside working hours, I think she needs that less than I do."</i>

Some participants also zoomed out to look at the need for relatedness for different generations in general. The next examples explain why participants think that different generations have the same need for relatedness or think that this need differs among different generations.

Example participant Generation X explaining same need for relatedness:

"We sometimes have a drink together or do something nice together and in fact, everyone is actually there, it doesn't matter if you're young or old. Also when I look at my daughters, they also go to parties at work and look for connections, so I don't think that's specifically for a generation."

Example participant Generation Y explaining different need for relatedness:

"I am young and I want to socialize, I want to bond with my colleagues and that will undoubtedly be much less for the older generation. They have their family and just do their job and have less interest in all those new colleagues that fly by all the time."

Motivation

To conclude the results according to the basic needs in work motivation, the answers about main motivation at work will be discussed. In general most of the dyads mentioned similar aspects when talking about their main motivation at work. For example, many participants mentioned topics such as a nice working atmosphere or a nice team. Other participants mentioned characteristics of their function, such as freedom or diversity, the ability to work with different people or their passion for technology. When there is a difference mentioned in the main motivation of work compared to the other generation, this is mostly attributed to the different life stage of the participants. One of these examples is about the amount of work experience in relation to ambitions at work (see Table 7).

Table 7

Answers about motivation

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>"I still have the ambition to grow here. I'm still young and I would like to innovate and grow and yes I would like to have a good job and buy a nice house."</i>	<i>"So now I have the drive to my job well. But I have no ambitions. My ambition now is actually to have no ambitions anymore, but just to be satisfied and that's good."</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X
<i>"(name colleague) mainly wants to gain knowledge and experience. She's at the beginning of her career and is still searching for what she wants. On the other hand, I would like to apply my work experience, knowledge and skills."</i>	<i>"What I notice is that (name colleague) already knows exactly what he likes to do. He has been in this field much longer and also gets a lot of energy from that. I am still driven to find out what I enjoy doing most."</i>

4.2 Work Meaning & Work Life

Work meaning

Work meaning is about the meaning of work for people and the way people look at meaningful work. For both generations work seems to be an important aspect in life. Participants want to have a meaningful job and do something useful. During the interviews it was found that for the younger generation work meaning is still more focused on gaining experience and figuring out what they want. But one thing is sure: They want a job with meaning that really suits them. The older generation also mentioned more basic elements such as the financial aspect of work, the importance of routine and having social contacts at work.

Table 8

Answers about work meaning

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>"For me it is important that what I do here makes a contribution and matters to both the company, but also to others and myself."</i>	<i>"I think having a job is very important. Having colleagues and interaction and feeling like you contribute to this world."</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X

“Work also has an important place in life for (name colleague), she works hard and finds it important to make a meaningful contribution.”

“For (name colleague) work also has a prominent place in life, however she is more focused on good results than the bigger picture.”

As the quotes in Table 8 illustrate, inside the dyads participants were positive about the meaning of work for their colleague. However, the general image of the other generation in relation to work meaning is more negative. Especially according to the older employees, the younger generation does not feel the need to work, they have it too good nowadays and there is too much wealth. Since the own experiences at work with a younger colleague are positive, participants from Generation X mention that they expect that their younger colleague is a positive exception of Generation Y:

“In terms of work and purpose, she (younger colleague) has much more defined values that I attribute to my own generation than the younger generation, which she does belong to in terms of age.”

Work life

Work life is about the place of work in people’s lives. As mentioned in the topic work meaning, for all the participants work seems to be an important aspect in their lives. However, most participants also mentioned how important their personal life is and three participants specifically mentioned that they “work to live” instead of “live to work”. When looking at work-life balance, both generations state to have the need for flexibility. Participants experience sufficient freedom to organize their own tasks, hours and work from home. The interviewees all state that this freedom is important to them. Actually the older generation works from home more often than the younger generation, which is in contrast to most literature. The older generation was first a bit sceptical about working from home, but they use this opportunity more often now. Both generations prefer a good work-life balance. However, it is clear that the younger generation is very conscious and aware of their own work-life balance. They think about this often and try to find the perfect work-life balance. They also seem to be better in setting boundaries and guarding those boundaries to protect their work-life balance. The quotes in Table 9 provide an overview of the answers about work life.

Table 9

Answers about work life

Generation Y (own answer)	Generation X (own answer)
<i>“I am very conscious in finding a good work-life balance in which I have sufficient energy at work and outside work.”</i>	<i>“For me it is important that I can organize my own time and shift my hours or work from home when necessary.”</i>
Generation X about Generation Y	Generation Y about Generation X
<i>“I think that flexibility is also important for (name colleague), she seems also better in handling this flexibility than I am.”</i>	<i>“First (name colleague) was a bit sceptical about working from home, but now he uses this flexibility actually more than I do.”</i>

Similar to work meaning, the general image of Generation Y in relation to work life is again negative, while the direct experiences with younger colleagues at work are positive. The general image is that the younger generation refuses to work fulltime or stay longer at the office to finish work. However, most young participants are more often at the office and work the same hours as their older

colleague or even more. Table 10 shows how the direct experiences are in contrast to the general view older participants have about Generation Y.

Table 10
Work life – general view versus experiences

Generation X about Generation Y in general
<i>“But I also hear stories in the labour market now and then that young people say: Yeah I will never work fulltime, or even only 3 days. And then I think there is something structurally not right in the Netherlands”.</i>
Reason:
<i>“Maybe the benefits are too high or they still live at home and they will find out later? Or maybe the younger generation have less need for luxury, a car or a nice house.”</i>
However, own experiences:
<i>“But (name colleague GenY) also works fulltime, makes long days and does what needs to be done. She hardly makes use of flexible working hours or working from home. I actually have to encourage her to use these possibilities, she doesn’t do this on her own”.</i>

Interestingly, not only the older participants have a negative image of Generation Y, also the younger participants have a negative view on their own generation in relation to work-life. Two young participants first mentioned that they notice that their generation refuses to work fulltime and prefers to work as least as possible. However, when asking about their direct friends, they both had to admit that they also worked fulltime. Probably, the young participants and their direct friends were both exceptions of Generation Y in general. Table 11 shows how the direct experiences of young participants are in contrast to their own general image of Generation Y.

Table 11
Work life – general view versus experiences

Generation Y about own generation in general
<i>“I do see that my generation prefers to work parttime. They say: yes, I can work 40 hours, but I actually don't need the money and would rather have a day off”.</i>
Reason:
<i>“Probably they value their free time more than the extra money. However, I must say they have often already bought a house”.</i>
However, own experiences:
<i>“I don’t mind working 40 hours, that’s fine for me. Actually, when I think about it again, I have to admit that most of my direct friends do work fulltime”.</i>

As mentioned before, the young participants were all very aware of their work-life balance and they were all searching for a suitable work-life balance. In addition, they have clear boundaries to protect their work-life balance. A participant from Generation Y explains this:

"I just don't check my email at night or things like that. I just have my phone on silent, I think this is very important outside office hours. And of course, if I have to work overtime I do that, I don't look at the clock, so I really make my 40 hours but I also think it's just important to have the evenings and weekends off, really days off for myself. That free time is also really important to me."

On the other hand, this participant noticed that her colleague from Generation X is always available:

"(Older colleague) works less hours a week, but is always available. Maybe this could also be traced back to her long employment and the commitment she has. While, I also feel really connected to the organization, but I also want to keep my work-life balance and think: the organization can really continue without me for a few days."

The younger participant relates this to the long employment and organizational commitment of the older employee. In section 4.4 Organizational commitment, more results about employment duration in relation to organizational commitment will be given.

4.3 Organizational culture & person-organization fit

As explained in the theoretical framework, the management of older generations tend to represent and shape the culture of organizations. Therefore, it could be expected that the younger generation experiences less cultural fit or person-organization fit. In participants' view on the organizational culture, no generational differences were noticed. All the participants mentioned the informal or open culture and mentioned how important this is for them. Also in the answers about perceived difficulties in the organizational culture, no remarkable differences were noticed. Despite the fact that some participants did mention that they expect that the values inside the organization will better fit to the work values of Generation X, the results of the person-organization fit forms show the opposite result. Actually the results show that participants rate younger employees higher on person-organization fit (see table 12). These results are in line with the fact that the younger generation made a more conscious decision in choosing the right organization that fits to their own values. The generational differences found in making conscious choices in life and career, is a new topic in this study and will be further explained in section 4.5 Addition of two new topics. To conclude this section it is important to mention that the differences in P-O fit were not large, usually the differences were between rate E (moderate fit) and F (large fit) or between F and G (very large fit). In addition, participants do mention that the organization is changing with the arrival of new generations.

Table 12*Results person-organization fit*

Results person-organization fit forms	Result for:
1. Same fit according to both participants	2 dyads
2. Same duration of employment, greater fit for younger participant according to both participants	2 dyads
3. Older participant longer employment, however greater fit for younger participant according to both participants	1 dyad
4. According to older participant is fit with organization lower for younger generation (however this is based on general image of generation Y)	1 dyad

4.4 Organizational commitment

As explained in the theoretical framework, it could also be expected that the younger generation shows weaker commitment to their employer and will easier decide to leave a company when the organizational culture is not fulfilling their expectations (Torsello, 2019). Again the results in this study show the opposite. Since the younger generation made a more conscious decision in choosing the right company to work for, they actually seem to be more committed to the organizational goals. They really choose the company they want to work for, were the older generation is more focused on the job itself or the job and organization just came on their path. However in general, the older generation still thinks that their generation is more committed to organizations, purely based on their long employments and the shorter employments of the younger generation. Interestingly, the younger generation is better in explaining their relatedness to the organization than the older generation, who already worked there for more years.

A participant from Generation Y explains why lifetime employment does not always means more organizational commitment:

"I notice that very clearly and I think that a generational difference is that the older generation is more of staying with an employer for life if everything is right, while I notice that the younger generation is more looking for variety, development, seeing different companies and perhaps have less commitment. I have to say, I don't notice this very much myself. I don't feel that pressure to change every few years but I do feel really committed. However, I don't see myself working for the same employer all my life."

Three participants from Generation X mention that they are surprised by the high commitment of younger employees, an example to illustrate this:

"Considering her age, she is actually very committed to the organization. I also have 2 other very young colleagues and there I notice the same. They have been working here for 2 years now and have really committed themselves strongly to the organization. Despite several struggles in terms of employment conditions, they really do not give up easily. This really surprises me. Maybe I would have said: well, I don't agree with this and there is still a wide world around this full of opportunities".

4.5 Addition of two new topics

This section of the results chapter is about the addition of two new important themes in the topic of generational differences at work. Since these themes are interrelated with some of the previous topics, they are already shortly mentioned. The first new theme is about openness, showing emotions and self-reflection. The second new theme is about conscious choices in life and career. In this section, these themes will be further explained with some quotes and examples.

Openness and self-reflection

As mentioned before, when it comes to personal development, Generation Y is naturally more self-motivated than Generation X. According to some of the younger participants this is in line with their perception that the younger generation is generally more open and engaged in self-reflection. Personal development, openness and self-reflection are words that are mostly mentioned by the younger generation. Four participants from Generation Y mention the generational differences in openness and self-reflection. Opposing, the participants from Generation X seem to be not aware of this or just didn't mention this.

Participant from Generation Y about openness and self-reflection:

"I think my generation is a lot more open about self-reflection than the older generation. I also hear this from older people I work with, they say that we are a lot more open, even if things go a little less. Sometimes the older employees have to get used to that too, so I see a difference there."

Generation Y refers to these differences in openness and self-reflection as generational differences. They state that the younger generation is more open in showing their emotions, even when these emotions are negative. On the contrary, they see how difficult it is for their older colleague to talk about personal issues or emotions and feelings in general. The participants from Generation Y attributes this to two different developments: the rise of social media and the higher level of education.

Example explaining the role of social media:

"I think there is a trend going on social media to be more honest and also in showing true feelings and real life. In this way you find out more and more that people are very much the same and everyone has the same struggles. The older generation didn't have that, so you might keep those feelings to yourself more".

Example explaining the role of education:

"Perhaps it also has to do with the level of education. We are all studying longer and most studies are also very focused on personal learning goals and your reflection on that."

Conscious choices

The second new theme is about making conscious choices in life and career. As mentioned before, the younger generation seems to be more conscious in choices in their own personal development, but also towards choices that affect their work-life balance. In general, it seems that Generation Y is

more conscious in their choices in different aspects in their life and career. For example in choosing the right next step in their career or the best fitting organization. They are also more focused on finding something that suits to their personal values in life. Where on the other side, the career of the older generation 'just turned out that way'. Perhaps therefore the younger participants scored higher on the person-organization fit forms. This difference in conscious choices is also related to all the possibilities that are available today. There are numerous studies that the younger generation can choose from and there are also many possibilities in the current labour market. Including all the new technologies and developments worldwide, the opportunities and choices are endless. However, all these possibilities can also have a downside. The younger generation can always be reached and try to do many things at the same time. Maybe this is also the reason why they set very clear boundaries to protect their work-life balance. The next examples illustrate these generational differences in relation to conscious choices in life and career.

Participant from Generation Y choosing the best fitting organization:

"I searched for an organization that really makes or does something that I think is important and cool and that also fits to my own personal values and goals. And based on that combination I chose this organization."

Participant from Generation Y explaining all the possibilities for the young generation:

"In the past it used to be more common to just do what your father did or to start working in a company nearby. But nowadays you have so many studies to choose from and then it's still broad what you can do next. It's up to you to choose something and I'm convinced that this doesn't make you happier in the end."

Participant from Generation X confirming these differences:

"I notice very clearly that (colleague GenY) is really looking for something that suits her. This is really a generation thing, 30 years ago, after my education I just went to work, there were not that many choices and you just did what came on your way and that was fine. The current generation is also much more aware of all the possibilities they have."

Participant from Generation X about multitasking and burnouts in young generations:

"The younger generation is almost multitasking and I think that's impossible. You can also see that people at the age of 25 already have a burnout, that's probably because they are trying to do too many things at the same time."

4.6 View on generations

Identical to the interview structure, the results chapter will end with participants' view on generational identification and the concept of generations in general. In answering the questions relating to generational identification, most participants mentioned that they are not really concerned with that. The interviewees don't have the feeling to belong to a specific generation at work and they also don't think about this during work.

However, when asking about the generational image, again the general image of the other generation (or sometimes even their own generation) is quite negative. This is notable, because many of their previous answers indicated that their colleague seems to have the same work values as they have. Despite the latter, they still express a negative image of the other generation in general. Apparently participants think that their colleague is a positive exception of the other generation. One participant from Generation X also explicitly states this at the end of the interview:

"Yes and I think, I will tell you that, I do think that like how (Colleague GenY) and I work, work together and still have that degree of equality that we have. I don't think this will be very widespread, we will be an exception in this."

Despite this negative image of another generation, direct experiences with colleagues from another generation are positive. In general, it is noticeable that participants like to collaborate with different generations at work. Most participants indicate that it is important to work with different generations within organizations and thus be able to learn from each other in the workplace.

As mentioned before, there were no major differences noticed in participants' perceptions of each other. If any differences were noticed, participants attribute this to the different life stage or the character of the other person. Some participants also mentioned during the interview that there will always be different types of people and they find it difficult to state something about all the people inside one generation. However, there seems to be a tension here, since participants talked easily about generations in general. One participant from Generation Y explains how she sometimes feels like she has to defend herself against this general image at work:

"I'm often pushed into that corner, I often sit in meetings in which older employees say something about the younger generations. And I'm a bit on the edge, not really Gen Z, but more a Millennial, but still they often talk negatively about the work ethic of the new generation and that makes me feel addressed because I'm often the youngest in the room, so I feel like I have to explain all that."

Similar to the lifespan development perspective of Rudolph et al. (2021), as explained in the theoretical framework, two participants explained that they don't look at different generations in generational terms. The next explanation shows how a participant from Generation Y looks at generations:

"I would maybe just divide it into three different life stages. You have young people like me who are a bit more naïve and full of life energy to make the world a better place. We are just very busy with development. And you have old people (from fifty or sixty) who start realizing that they are just one of the billions of people here on earth and are more concerned with family and the end of life. And then you have the people who are just in the middle of life and maybe have young children and many responsibilities and are actually just sort of surviving there. So, yes it is all more about life stages."

5. Discussion

5.1 Main findings

In contrast to existing literature, there were no major differences noticed between the work values of Generation Y and Generation X. Particularly the perceptions of the basic needs – autonomy, competence and relatedness –, showed that all the basic needs were quite similar between the dyads. Perhaps this could also be explained by the basic elements of SDT, explaining that every person has these three basic needs. The differences that were mentioned, sometimes even turned out to be in contrast to existing theories on generational differences at work. In addition, participants attribute these differences to a different life stage, work experience or the character of the other person and not to a generation.

The findings in this study show that participants of Generation Y and Generation X all need autonomy, development and connection at work. However, in contrast to research about autonomy, freedom and flexibility at work (Espinoza et al., 2010; Sheahan, 2005; Twenge et al., 2010), the younger participants seem to be more focused on flexible work arrangements, such as working from home. Participants attribute this to the life stage of older participants, were people for example combine work with the care of children at home. In relation to freedom, Generation Y actually seems to need more guidance at work. This is in line with Meier and Crocker (2010) who emphasizes that Generation Y needs task definition and clarity. However in contrast to Özçelik (2015) who states that Generation Y has a higher need for flexible patterns of employment. Participants attribute this to the life stage of Generation Y with less work experience. Existing research on generational differences in the need for connection at work, is also contradictory. Twenge et al. (2010) and Konrath et al. (2011) state that Generation Y is more individualistic and less concerned about colleagues at work. Nevertheless, the findings in this study show that the younger generation is actually more focused on meaningful relations at work. This is in line with Twenge and Campbell (2009) who emphasizes that Generation Y has a constant need for social interaction.

The findings in relation to work meaning and work life, illustrates negative perceptions about generations in general, whereas the direct experiences inside the dyads are positive. The negative general image is often coherent with existing literature, the positive direct experiences are often in contrast to existing literature. Based on the perceptions inside the dyads, work seems to be an important aspect in life for both generations. This is in contrast to research that states that work centrality is higher for Generation X (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Wray-Lake et al., 2011). All the participants want to have a meaningful job and do something useful. However, the definition of work is different for both generations. Generation Y is more focused on personal growth and finding work that really suits them. Generation X is more focused on the financial aspect of work, having a routine and social contacts. This is in line with research that states that Generation Y is more focused on meaningful work and Generation X is more focused on job security (Berg et al., 2010). The general view of participants on the meaning of work for the other generation is negative. This is in line with Weeks and Schaffert (2017) who found that all the generational cohorts hold negative perceptions about the lack of desire for meaning in each of the other cohorts. Interestingly, the findings in this study show that generations also hold negative perceptions about their own generation. In other words, the participants seem to be a positive exception of their generation.

Participants did notice potential generational differences outside the basic needs and topics from literature. These differences were based on two general topics: Generation Y's higher level of openness and self-reflection and the fact that Generation Y (can) make more conscious choices in

their life and career.

5.2 Theoretical contribution

The results of the semi-structured interviews revealed three interesting main outcomes that are important to mention. First of all, there were almost no differences noticed in the basic needs of work motivation between the two generations. If there appeared to be any difference at all, it is usually attributed to the different life stage or the character of the other person. Therefore the results of this study are in line with earlier quantitative research of Heyns and Kerr (2018) where also no significant differences were found with regard to the basic psychological needs between generations. To conclude, basic needs really turns out to be basic needs and are not changing for new generations in the context of work motivation. This qualitative study contributes to existing descriptive research on generational differences with a greater consideration of context, as requested by Lyons and Kuron (2013). In addition, most differences that were found were in contrast to the literature and turned out to be more positive about the younger generation. This leads to the second important outcome of the interviews: The general image of generations (particularly of the younger generation) turned out to be way more negative than the direct personal experiences between the dyads. Most of the older participants were surprised about this and mentioned that they expect that their younger colleague is an exception of the rest of the new working generation. This study therefore shows that generational images and stereotypes do not correspond with the experiences of employees in practice. The third and last main outcome is about the addition of two new important themes in the topic of generational differences at work. Especially the younger participants from Generation Y mentioned the generational differences in openness, showing emotions and reflection. The other new theme revealed in the repetitive coding is about conscious choices. Most of the generational differences mentioned in the interviews are about the conscious choices that the younger generation (can) make in his or her career.

5.3 Practical implications

As the headlines of the articles in the introduction section of this study show, the media often describes Generation Y in a negative manner in relation to work. Consultancy agencies use these articles to demonstrate why their advice in managing the new generation at work is so important. As discussed in the main findings, the results of this research are contradicting to existing theories and press releases on generational differences. The work values of Generation Y employees seems to be quite similar to the work values of their direct colleagues from Generation X. When differences were found, employees attribute this to a different life stage or work experience, rather than a generation. Considering the results of this research it could be discussed whether there is a correct image of Generation Y's needs with regard to the labour market. Therefore, the approach of certain companies towards Generation Y is probably not correct. Stassen et al. (2016) confirm this and state that managers and organizations have to be skeptical about the belief that Generation Y is fundamentally different from previous generations. Companies must be critical in assessing popular articles and be careful in thinking in terms of generations. The advice of consultancy agencies may be based on incorrect results and principles, as proved in this study.

According to the findings in this study, employees are not thinking in terms of generations at work. Just like these employees, organizations should not think about differences inside the workforce in terms of generations. Rudolph et al. (2021) confirm this and explain that generational

thinking is problematic because it assumes that aggregate social phenomena can explain individual level attitudes, values and behaviour. Instead of thinking in generations, the focus should be more on individuals with own needs and expectations in relation to work (Stassen et al., 2016).

However, thinking in terms of generations appears to be persistent and people easily rely on unsupported stereotypes. Therefore, Constanza and Finkelstein (2015) argue that organizations should focus on real and impactful differences among employees and resist the temptation to implement talent management and HR strategies that are based on unsupported and ill-defined ideas about the characteristics of groups of people. When organizations want to approach employees as a group, this should be in a more context-dependent manner. According to Stassen et al. (2016) employers can look at organizational generations that are forming within the organization. As an example Stassen et al. (2016) mention groups that enter the organization at the same time or employees that hold the same position within the organization. However, the lifespan perspective from Rudolph et al. (2021) is more in line with the results found in this study. Therefore, employers could better focus on different kind of challenges and difficulties that are associated with a certain phase in life.

5.4 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that should be noted. To begin with, these findings are based on a small number of participants ($n = 12$). Although theoretically data saturation can be occurred within the first twelve interviews (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006), it is not stated that the perceptions within this study are the only perceptions that exist regarding generational differences at work. It would be interesting to conduct similar studies with more participants or in other regions in the Netherlands, so these findings could be compared and extended. The use of a dyadic approach is beneficial and has many advantages, however it could also lead to some disadvantages. Since participants are direct colleagues, social desirability bias is a possible limitation. Based on the privacy and confidentiality measures, participants should feel safe to share their true thoughts and opinions. Nevertheless, it is still possible that participants are somewhat reserved in their answers.

For many of the participants it took quite some time to answer the interview questions, they had to think about certain questions for a while. Many participants mentioned that they are normally not really thinking about these types of questions and topics, which confirms the relevance of this study. However, it is also possible that this had a negative effect on the quality of the answers that were given.

5.5 Future research

Next to a similar dyadic study with more participants, I look forward to see future research regarding generational stereotyping. It would be interesting to have an explanation for the fact that people hold on to negative generational images, while their direct experiences at work are positive. In this research, the generational image of participants seems to be created based on stories in their environment. Participants mention that they hear these negative experiences and stories in their environment. Sometimes, I asked what the role of popular media is in their perception of generations. Participants stated that media have no influence on their negative perception. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to research the influence of popular media, such as the articles on LinkedIn or the videos on Instagram, on generational stereotyping. Another type of research, for example focus groups, could also add interesting insights on the creation of negative generational images. However as explained in the section practical implications, researchers must go beyond the

traditional way of thinking in terms of generations and generational differences at work. Alternative theories, such as the social constructionist perspective from Rudolph et al. (2021) could be applied and further researched.

5.6 Conclusion

My own personal view on generations at work is quite in line with the short abstract given in the article of Altimier in 2006. Interesting to note that from 2006 many studies and theories have followed in the field of generations at work, but a brief summary of what is happening within a multigenerational workforce is already given back then. Of course, it is still not completely clear why people tend to hold on to generational stereotyping, however generational differences are still exaggerated whereas similarities are overlooked. And last, but certainly not least: communication is the key to more connection at work.

Altimier (2006):

“We all work in a multigenerational workforce. With extremes in generations, skills are needed to foster understanding among staff. There are many myths and realities about the age-related generations. While there are challenges in working in a multigenerational workforce, the generational differences tend to be exaggerated while the similarities are overlooked. A better understanding of these generations allows us to prevent communication breakdown and to close the communication gaps where they exist, creating a unit of harmony rather than discontent”.

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Appendix A: Interview script + 2 forms (in Dutch)

Allereerst ontzettend bedankt dat je wilt deelnemen aan dit onderzoek!

Dit onderzoek voer ik uit in het kader van mijn Master Scriptie voor de opleiding Communication Science aan de Universiteit Twente. Het doel van dit onderzoek is het onderzoeken van generatieverschillen in werkmotivatie en basisbehoeften op het werk. De ervaringen hierin van twee directe collega's van verschillende generaties binnen één team worden bevestigd. In dit interview bespreken we dus jouw eigen werkwaarden, maar onderzoeken we ook hoe jij aankijkt tegen de werkwaarden van jouw collega. Tevens bekijken we of deze eventuele generatieverschillen, invloed hebben op bepaalde werkhoudingen en de ervaren fit met de organisatie. Om ervoor te zorgen dat jullie open kunnen spreken over jullie persoonlijke ervaringen, gaan wij vertrouwelijk met jullie gegevens en antwoorden om. Het mag natuurlijk niet zo zijn dat jouw collega later kan achterhalen wat jij gezegd hebt. Daarom zullen we nu eerst samen het informatieblad en toestemmingsformulier doornemen en ondertekenen. Daarna kunnen we starten met het interview.

Open vraag om mee te starten:

Kun je iets meer vertellen over jouw rol hier? Wat voor werk doe je?

Vraag over Motivatie:

Wat motiveert jou in je werk?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Wat motiveert hem/haar?

(Kan je daar een inschatting van geven? Waarom denk je dat? Kun je hier een voorbeeld van noemen?)

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Dan gaan we vanaf nu verschillende specifieke werkwaarden per onderdeel langs. Iedere keer zal ik eerst vragen naar jouw eigen behoeften en ervaringen en daarna naar die van jouw collega.

Werkwaarde 1: Work Meaning

Work Meaning gaat over de betekenis van werk voor jou. Daarnaast kun je het ook lezen als betekenisvol werk. Dus welke plek heeft werk in jouw leven en wanneer is werk voor jou zinvol? Geloof je in wat je aan het doen bent en dat dit een verschil maakt?

Wat is de betekenis van werk voor jou en wanneer ervaar jij werk als betekenisvol?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen betekenisvol werk?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Werkwaarde 2: Work Life

Work Life gaat over de balans tussen werk en leven buiten werk. Hoe verhoudt werk zich op dit moment tot jouw persoonlijke leven en wat vind jij hierin belangrijk? Dit gaat ook over de behoefte aan flexibiliteit in werkuren en de mogelijkheid tot thuiswerken.

Hoe ziet een goede werk-privé balans er voor jou uit?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen een goede werk-privé balans?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Werkwaarde 3: Autonomie

Autonomie gaat over vrijheid en zelfstandigheid op het werk. Voel jij je vrij om dingen op je eigen manier te doen en zelfstandig keuzes te maken op je werk? En hoe belangrijk is dit voor jou? Dit hangt ook samen met de organisatiestructuur, de mate van hiërarchie en de leiderschapsstijl binnen de organisatie.

Hoe belangrijk is autonomie op het werk voor jou en waarin uit zich dat?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen autonomie?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Werkwaarde 4: Competentie

Competentie gaat over persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling op het werk. Hoe belangrijk is dit voor jou? Voldoende uitdaging en opleidingsmogelijkheden kunnen hierin een rol spelen.

Hoe belangrijk is ontwikkeling op het werk voor jou en waarin uit zich dat?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen ontwikkeling op het werk?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Werkwaarde 5: Verbinding/verbondenheid (met collega's)

Verbinding gaat over betekenisvolle relaties met anderen. Op het werk gaat dit dus over de behoefte aan formeel en informeel contact met collega's en de behoefte aan samenwerken.

Hoe belangrijk is verbinding op het werk voor jou en waarin uit zich dat?

Hoe zit dat bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen verbinding op het werk?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Werkwaarde 6: Binding met de organisatie

Deze laatste werkwaarde gaat over de mate waarin jij binding voelt met de organisatie. In hoeverre voel jij jezelf onderdeel van de organisatie in zijn geheel en wat houdt jou bij deze organisatie?

Hoe belangrijk is binding met de organisatie voor jou en waarin uit zich dat?

Wat houdt jou bij deze organisatie?

Hoe zit dit bij (naam collega)? Hoe kijkt hij/zij aan tegen binding met de organisatie?

Gelijk / verschil + bevestiging

Bij verschil > Attributie vraag: Waar heeft dit volgens jou mee te maken?

(Levensfase/Generatie/Persoon)

Formulier 'IK versus (naam organisatie)' erbij pakken en uitleggen. Vragen of de medewerker dit voor zichzelf en (naam collega) kan invullen.

Vraag over Person-Organization Fit:

Kun je toelichten waarom je de formulieren op deze manier hebt ingevuld?

Heb jij het gevoel dat de werkwaarden die jij belangrijk vindt overeenkomen met de waarden binnen de organisatie?

Welk effect heeft dit op jouw houding richting het werk en de organisatie?

Welk effect heeft dit op jouw betrokkenheid bij het werk of de organisatie?

Dan volgen er nu nog wat algemene vragen over generaties, de organisatiecultuur en de ervaren fit met de organisatie.

Vragen over Generaties:

Voel jij je onderdeel van een bepaalde generatie op het werk? Hoe komt dit?

Heb jij zelf een bepaald beeld over andere generaties op het werk? Hoe komt dit?

Vragen over Cultuur:

Hoe zou jij de cultuur binnen (naam organisatie) omschrijven?

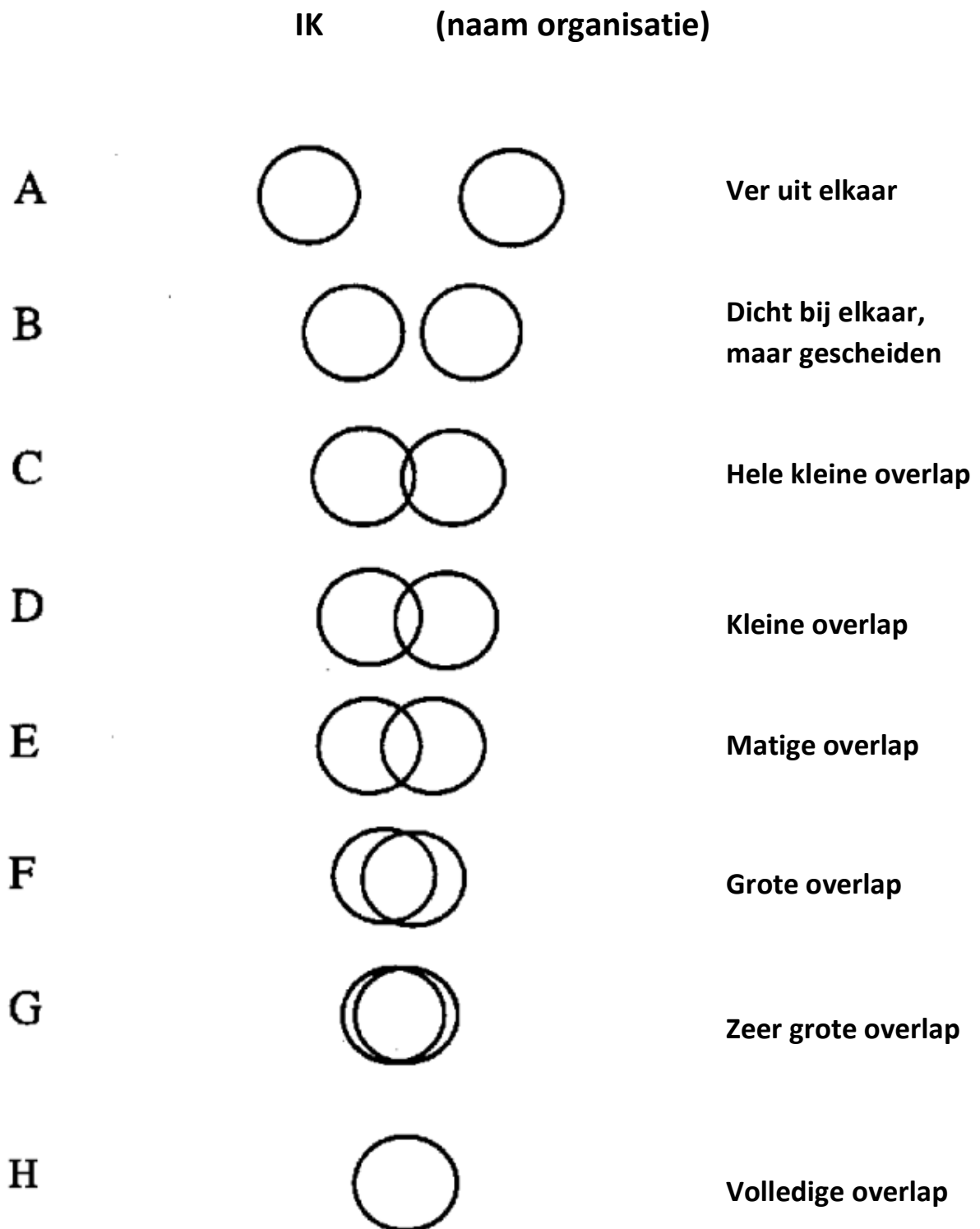
Als je kijkt naar de cultuur binnen (naam organisatie), wat waardeer jij hierin en waar heb je juist moeite mee?

Afsluitende vraag:

Heb je het idee dat de organisatie verandert door de komst van nieuwe generaties?

Kun je dit toelichten met voorbeelden?

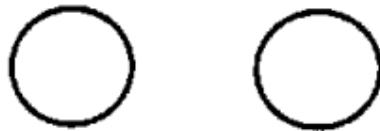
Formulier IK & (naam organisatie)



Formulier (naam collega) & (naam organisatie)

(naam collega) (naam organisatie)

A



Ver uit elkaar

B



**Dicht bij elkaar,
maar gescheiden**

C



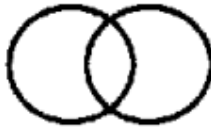
Hele kleine overlap

D



Kleine overlap

E



Matige overlap

F



Grote overlap

G



Zeer grote overlap

H



Volledige overlap

Appendix B: Informed consent (in Dutch)

Informatieblad voor onderzoek '(Gen)Me as part of your organizational culture'

Allereerst ontzettend bedankt dat u wilt deelnemen aan dit onderzoek!

Dit informatieblad en toestemmingsformulier is voor ons noodzakelijk om te garanderen dat u het doel van uw betrokkenheid begrijpt en instemt met de voorwaarden van uw deelname. Daarbij garanderen wij u op deze manier een vertrouwelijke omgang met uw gegevens.

Doel van het onderzoek

Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Babett van der Heijden en uitgevoerd in het kader van haar Master Scriptie voor de opleiding Communication Science.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is het onderzoeken van generatieverschillen in werkmotivatie en basisbehoeften op het werk. De ervaringen hierin van twee directe collega's (waaronder die van u) van verschillende generaties binnen één team worden bevraagd. Tevens wordt er gekeken of deze eventuele verschillen van invloed zijn op de ervaren "fit" met de organisatie.

Hoe gaan we te werk?

U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarbij we informatie zullen vergaren door één-op-één interviews. U en uw directe collega van een andere generatie worden apart geïnterviewd. De antwoorden worden opgenomen via een audio-opname. Van het interview zal ook een transcript worden uitgewerkt. Op basis van dit transcript worden alle antwoorden gecategoriseerd en gecodeerd en worden eventueel geanonimiseerde quotes gebruikt in het onderdeel resultaten in de Master Scriptie.

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken

Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding. Uiteraard is het mogelijk om meer te weten te komen over het onderzoek of de resultaten van het onderzoek. Hiervoor kunt u contact opnemen met de onderzoeker.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen. Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd. Op deze manier zal uw directe collega nooit via het onderzoek of de onderzoeker kunnen achterhalen wat u heeft gezegd tijdens het interview. Wanneer de onderzoeker een geanonimiseerde quote van u wilt gebruiken in het eindverslag, zal dit eerst met u worden overlegd.

Opslag van gegevens

Na afronding van het onderzoek, zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd. Alleen de geanonimiseerde data zal worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente. De onderzoeksgegevens worden indien nodig (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep.

Tot slot is dit onderzoek beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de faculteit BMS (domain Humanities & Social Sciences).

Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgave van redenen. Het stopzetten van deelname heeft geen nadelige gevolgen voor u. Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u aanvullende vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider. Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de onderzoeksleider.

Contactgegevens onderzoeksleider

Naam: Babett van der Heijden

E-mailadres: b.vanderheijden-1@student.utwente.nl

Contactgegevens Universiteit Twente

Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u liever iemand anders spreekt omtrent dit onderzoek van de Universiteit Twente, kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie / domein Humanities & Social Sciences van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl.

Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord.
2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onderzoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

	JA	NEE
1. Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onderzoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is opgenomen in het bijgevoegde informatieblad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het interview audio-opnames te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Ik geef toestemming om mijn geanonimiseerde antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de onderzoekspublicaties.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde geanonimiseerde onderzoeksdata te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek en voor onderwijsdoeleinden.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik geef toestemming voor alles dat hierboven beschreven staat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Naam Deelnemer:

Naam Onderzoeker:

Handtekening:

Handtekening:

Datum:

Datum: