

# ATTITUDINAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERATION-X AND OLDER EMPLOYEES

Natalie Ferres  
Anthony Travaglione  
Ian Firms

## ABSTRACT

Using qualitative and quantitative methods the current paper investigated the differences in levels of trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention between Generation-X employees (Gen-Xers) and older age group employees. 234 participants were included in the study, 83 Gen-X subjects and 151 older, non Gen-X subjects. No difference between the Gen-X and the older group was found for levels of affective commitment or trust. As predicted, Gen-X employees displayed lower continuance commitment, exhibited stronger turnover intentions, and had lower scores for perceptions of procedural justice. Relationships between the variables were similar across the Gen-X and older age group. The implications of these findings for the effective management of Gen-X employees are discussed.

**Keywords:** Generation-X, trust, commitment, procedural justice, turnover intention.

## INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature accepts that Generation-X (Gen-X) employees are those born between 1965 and 1975 (McShane & Von Glinow 2000). These young adults have been categorised by the popular media as being Postbaby-Boomers, Twenty/Thirty-Somethings, Baby-Busters, Slackers, Hackers, Thirteeners, Grungers, and the Repair Generation. Labels aside, Gen-Xers may be changing the culture of many organisations via the new approach they bring into the employment relationship.

Researchers and writers examining generational differences have noted a variety of Gen-X employee characteristics. Compared with older employees, Gen-X employees are said to be more collaborative or accustomed to working in teams, better educated, less hierarchical, more entrepreneurial, more likely to move from one job to another, more technologically skilled, less conscious of formalized rules and regulations and more likely to choose a career that offers a balanced lifestyle (Burke 1994).

Gen-X employees also have entered a workforce that is characterised by widespread organisational change. Recent corporate restructuring and downsizing have likely changed the traditional psychological contract between employees and employers (Travaglione 2000). Trust, commitment, perceptions of justice and intent to stay with the organisation would conceivably be affected by these dynamic trends. Prior to organisations investing in strategies

---

Natalie Ferres ([Natalie.Ferres@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:Natalie.Ferres@newcastle.edu.au)) is a lecturer in organisational behaviour with the Graduate School of Business, University of Newcastle; Anthony Travaglione ([ttravaglione@asm.adelaide.edu.au](mailto:ttravaglione@asm.adelaide.edu.au)) is a Professor of Management and Dean of the Graduate School of Management, University of Adelaide; and Ian Firms ([ianfirms@bigpond.com](mailto:ianfirms@bigpond.com)) is a consultant, researcher, and lecturer in management at Curtin University of Technology.

---

seeking to build these positive employee attitudes in Gen-X employees within organisations today, a clearer picture of these variables must emerge.

### **THE CONCEPT OF TRUST**

Trust in the workplace has been identified as an employee's willingness to act on the basis of the words, actions, and decisions of management under conditions of uncertainty or risk (Albrecht & Travaglione 2000). Recent times have seen a dramatic upsurge in the management literature on organisational trust (e.g. Mayer & Davis 1999; Clark & Payne 1997; Kramer & Tyler 1996; Payne 2000). Today's researchers and practitioners are increasingly recognising that trust is integral in determining organisational success, organisational stability and the well being of employees (Shaw 1997). Specifically, trust in management has been found to contribute significantly to discretionary work effort among employees (Bull 2000). Higher levels of trust have also been shown to motivate employees towards team and organisational goals, rather than towards individual objectives (Mishra 1996). In addition, trust in the workplace has been associated with lower operational costs (Creed & Miles 1996). Equally important is that trust in organisations has been positively correlated to higher levels of organisational commitment amongst employees (Tan & Tan 2000). Tyler and DeGoey (1996) also suggested that organisational commitment can be preserved during organisational decline if trust has been established with employees.

### **ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT**

By definition, organisational commitment is characterised by a belief in, and acceptance of, the organisation's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organisation, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organisation (Mowday, Porter, & Steers 1982). Allen and Meyer (1990) devised a model that identified three dimensions of commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. According to the researchers, employees with a strong affective commitment remain at an organisation because they *want* to, those with strong continuance commitment remain because they *need* to, and those with strong normative commitment remain because they feel they *ought* to do so. While support exists to suggest that normative element is a separate dimension of commitment, normative measures have generally correlated highly with those of affective commitment (Meyer & Allen 1997). For this reason, the current research did not measure the normative dimension.

Research has focused on individual differences as antecedents of commitment, revealing that factors such as age and organisational tenure are positively correlated with commitment (Mathieu & Zajac 1990; Angle & Perry, 1981). Research has also revealed an inverse relationship between commitment and turnover intention (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian 1974), in addition to showing a positive relationship between commitment and regular employee attendance (Steers 1977).

### **PERCEIVED JUSTICE AND TURNOVER INTENTION**

Research has also demonstrated a link between organisational trust and perceived justice (Tyler & DeGoey 1996; Konovsky & Cropanzano 1991; Lind & Tyler 1988), and between commitment and turnover intention (Hom, Katerberg & Hulin, 1979). Firstly, perceived justice focuses on the ways in which employees determine if they have been treated fairly in their jobs and the ways in which those perceptions influence organisational outcomes (Folger &

---

Konovsky 1989; Moorman 1991). Generally, the two domains that justice research has focused on are: (a) distributive justice, relating to the fairness of the outcomes an employee receives; and (b) procedural justice, which describes the fairness of the procedures used to determine those outcomes. Research has shown that perceived justice, procedural justice in particular, is highly correlated with trust (Konovsky & Pugh 1994; Tyler & DeGoey 1996). The current study, therefore, explored the procedural dimension of perceived justice.

Secondly, turnover intention can be defined as a person's desire to discontinue working at an organisation and has been studied widely as a behavioural correlate of commitment. The literature has generally revealed an inverse relationship between commitment and turnover intention. This relationship is strongest at points in time closest to actual turnover (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian 1974).

## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Although anecdotal accounts suggest age-related differences in levels of organisational trust and commitment between Gen-X and older generations, there is limited empirical work supporting these propositions. In particular, a significant research gap exists in examining trust and age/generational differences. While the general literature commonly depicts trust as a precursor to commitment (Tan & Tan 2000), the existing *age-related* research seems to focus on differences in commitment alone, rather than trust and commitment. McGuinness (2000) looked at generational differences in commitment levels and found no significant difference in the level of organisational commitment between Gen-X employees and their Baby Boomer colleagues. Conversely, Rhodes (1983) reported the results of 17 bivariate analyses that indicated older workers were more committed to their organisations than younger workers. Whilst not specific to generational groups, this research suggests a positive relationship between increased employee age and greater organisational commitment, indicating that younger Gen-X employees may be less committed than their older counterparts. More recently, De Meuse et al. (2001) investigated the extent to which *perceptions* of the relational component of the psychological contract at work have changed during the past 50 years. Regardless of generation, the results showed that people perceived that the contract has changed over time.

The current challenge for researchers is to explore whether trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention levels are different among Generation-X employees. It may be that the links between these constructs do not exist in the same way for Gen-X employees compared to those employees born before Generation-X. If generational differences in these variables do exist, what interventions need to occur in the workplace?

## AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The objective of this paper was exploratory rather than explanatory. The research intended to investigate possible differences in levels of trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention between Gen-Xers and older employees. The research also aimed to explore the direction and strength of relationships between each of these factors across the two age groups.

If Gen-Xers displayed lower commitment levels compared to the older group, it was expected that Gen-X employees would show higher intentions to turnover. This is consistent with research associating lower organisational commitment levels with greater intentions to leave

an organisation (e.g. Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian 1974). Due to expected differences in trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention between the two employee groups, it was also put forward that the links between these variables may be different for the Gen-X group compared to their older colleagues. The patterns and strength of relationships across the workplace attitude variables would conceivably vary across the Gen-X employees and older employees.

## METHOD

### Participants

A total of 284 participants returned survey data. Deletion of missing data and responses from those outside the target age groups reduced the number of responses to 234. The final sample was divided into two groups. The first group included 83 Generation-X subjects (40.2% male and 59.8% female) aged between 25 years and 34 years old. The second group consisted of 151 subjects (40.6% male and 59.4% female) aged 35 years and above. Of this older group, 85 subjects were aged between 35 years and 44 years, 56 subjects were aged between 45 years to 54 years, and 10 respondents were aged over 55 years. The age and gender distribution of the sample was representative of the general demographics within the organisation. Each employee at the organisation had individual access to the organisation's Intranet site. Consequently, each employee had an equal opportunity to complete the research survey that was posted electronically on the Intranet.

### Measures

A questionnaire was designed to allow the researchers to collect relevant information to test several organisational factors. A 7-point Likert response format (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) was used to measure the following constructs:

**Trust.** The five questions used to measure trust were adapted from Cook and Wall's (1980) six-item management subscale, with one negatively worded question omitted. The negative item was admitted because strong arguments have been forwarded suggesting that it may be unwise to think of distrust as the real opposite of trust (Kramer 1999). The use of reverse coded trust items, being framed in terms of distrust, may not be tapping into trust. Reliability (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) scores on two different facets of the original subscale ranged between .69 and .78 (Cook & Wall 1980). A more recent study that employed six items from the Cook and Wall (1980) measure, obtained Cronbach alpha of .70 (Cordery, Mueller, & Smith 1991).

**Commitment.** The 16 questions measuring commitment were comprised of two 8-item subscales of Allen and Meyer's (1990) three component model of organisational commitment. The first subscale measures affective commitment (ACS). The second subscale relates to continuance commitment (CCS). Reliability (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ) scores of the affective and continuance scale items have been reported to be between .74 to .89 for the ACS, and between .69 and .84 for the CCS (Meyer & Allen 1991).

**Procedural Justice.** Procedural justice was measured using 13-items adapted from an instrument developed by Sweeney and McFarlin (1997). Items were modified from the original 5-point scale to a 7-point scale, such that higher scores were indicative of greater procedural justice. No internal reliability figures were reported.

**Turnover Intention.** The three questions that measured turnover intention were taken from the Intention to Turnover Scale contained in the Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh 1979). These researchers reported the internal reliability of this scale as  $\alpha = .83$ .

**Demographics.** Respondents were also asked to provide some demographic information, including their age, gender, education level, position and tenure in the organisation. Age was originally grouped into 5 categories (1 = Below 24 years, 2 = 25-34 years, 3 = 35-44 years, 4 = 45-54 years, and 5 = 55 years and above). The final data set used responses from the 25-34 year age group (1 = Generation-X) and collapsed the three older age groups into one category (2 = Older Age Groups).

## PROCEDURE

The study combined both qualitative and quantitative methods. Open-ended questions were circulated to all employees via the organisation's Intranet network. The researchers content analysed the responses to determine the most relevant issues to include in a questionnaire. The developed questionnaire was customised to allow for its delivery via the organisation's Intranet network. The survey was posted organisation-wide to each employee using web-based technology. Surveys were sent back to the researchers electronically to a central server, without personal identifiers.

## RESULTS

### Analysis

Exploratory data analysis was used to screen for normal distribution and outliers over all constructs. One outlier was detected and subsequently deleted from the analysis. Where appropriate, significant assumption violations were discounted through analysis of residuals.

### Mean Differences

Table 1 displays the means and standard deviations of participants' ratings of trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention over Gen-X employees and older employees. Table 1 shows that the level of trust within the organisation was moderate for both groups. From a possible score of 7, the mean scores for trust were  $M = 3.33$  ( $SD = 1.36$ ) for the Gen-X employees and  $M = 3.68$  ( $SD = 1.37$ ) for the older age group. Both age groups showed modest affective commitment levels ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 1.3$  for Gen-X employees and  $M = 3.31$ ,  $SD = 1.4$  for the older age group respectively) and moderate continuance commitment scores ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.18$  and  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ). Gen-X employees had slightly lower scores than the older age group for procedural justice ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = .88$  for Gen-X compared to  $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) and scored slightly higher on the turnover intention scale ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = .88$  for Gen-X compared to  $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = .94$  for older employees).

**TABLE 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for Trust, Commitment and Other Organisational Variable Scales for Generation-X and Older Age Groups**

Variable	<i>n</i>	M <sup>a</sup>	SD
Trust			
Generation-X	83	3.33	1.36
Older age Group	151	3.68	1.37
Affective commitment			
Generation-x	83	3.11	1.3
Older age group	151	3.31	1.4
Continuance commitment			
Generation-x	83	4.34	1.11
Older age group	151	4.76	1.23
Procedural justice			
Generation-x	83	3.76	.88
Older age group	151	4.07	.94
Turnover intention			
Generation-x	83	4.03	1.18
Older age group	151	3.26	1.23

<sup>a</sup> Higher scores indicate higher levels for each variable

All organisational attitude variables were examined using MANOVA since the organisational variables were correlated (see 'Correlational Data'). The MANOVA showed a significant difference in the organisational attitudes of employees from the two different age groups (Wilks = .988,  $F(5,228) = 6.3$ ,  $p < .01$ , effect size = .12). Univariate  $F$  ratios teamed with the means displayed in Table 1 provided insight into which of the organisational variables differed significantly across groups. While there was a trend toward lower trust in the sample of Gen-X employees compared with employees in the older age group, this difference was not significant,  $F(1,232) = 3.6$ ,  $p > .05$ . There was also no significant difference found between the two employee groups for the affective commitment construct,  $F(1,232) = 1.12$ ,  $p > .05$ . Generation-X employees displayed significantly lower continuance commitment compared with the older employees,  $F(1,232) = 6.6$ ,  $p = .01$ , effect size ( $\mu^2$ ) = .07. Gen-Xers also exhibited a stronger turnover intention compared with the older group  $F(1,232) = 25.36$ ,  $p > .001$ , effect size = .15, and Gen-X employees had significantly lower scores for perceptions of procedural justice compared with the older group,  $F(1,232) = 6.8$ ,  $p < .01$ , effect size = .09.

No significant differences between males and females across all organisational variables ( $p < .05$ ). However, respondents with a history of long tenure were more likely to have higher intentions to turnover compared to participants who had been with the organisation for a shorter time,  $F(3,232) = 4.2$ ,  $p < .01$ . A power analysis was conducted to test the effect size of this significant result. As Eta squared ( $\mu^2$ ) = .05, 5% of the variation in turnover intention can be explained by the differences in tenure.

### Correlational Data

The correlations between trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention are shown in Table 2. Table 2 displays intercorrelations across the Gen-X employees and older age group for all organisational variables. For example, Gen-X employees who reported more trust were more likely to be affectively committed to the organisation,  $r(82) = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ . This was similar to the moderate, positive relationship between trust and affective commitment obtained for the older age group,  $r(150) = .55$ . Respondents over both groups

that reported higher trust were also more likely to convey an increased perception of procedural justice, with a correlation of .63,  $p < .01$  for both groups. Continuance commitment levels and felt trust were not significantly correlated for either group, with  $r(82) = .12$ ,  $p > .05$  for Gen-Xers and  $r(150) = -.05$ ,  $p > .05$  for the older employees.

**TABLE 2**  
**Intercorrelations between Organisational Variables for Generation-X and Older Age Groups**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Gen-X Group ( $n = 83$ ) <sup>a</sup>					
1. Trust	--	.46**	.12	.63**	-.48**
2. Affective commitment		--	-.04	.4**	-.49**
3. Continuance commitment			--	-.013	-.16
4. Procedural justice				--	-.41**
5. Turnover intention					--
Older Age Group ( $n = 151$ ) <sup>b</sup>					
1. Trust	--	.55**	-.05	.63**	-.36**
2. Affective commitment		--	.02	.46**	-.47**
3. Continuance commitment			--	-.16	-.27**
4. Procedural justice				--	-.33**
5. Turnover intention					--

<sup>a</sup> Generation-X subjects are aged from 25 years to 34 years

<sup>b</sup> The Older age group contains subjects aged 35 years and over

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Differences emerged between the groups in the strength of the relationship between continuance commitment and turnover intention. Specifically, greater continuance commitment was significantly related to decreased turnover intention for older employees,  $r(150) = -.27$ ,  $p < .01$ . This modest negative relationship, was not significant for Gen-X employees,  $r(82) = -.16$ ,  $p > .05$ . To test if the difference between the correlations was significant over both groups, correlations were transformed using Fisher's  $z$ . As  $z = -.83$ , which was less than  $z_{.025} = +/- 1.96$ , the correlation between continuance commitment and turnover intention was unlikely to be significantly different for Gen-X and older employees.

### Cluster Analysis

A cluster analysis allows for the comparison of responses across the generational groups and also provides information on the homogeneity within groups. To determine clusters, or sub-groups, of employees within each of the Gen-X and older employee group who held similar work attitudes, a K-Means analysis was performed.

**TABLE 3**  
**Summary of K-Mean Cluster Analysis over Generation-X and Older Age Groups**

Variable	Gen-x clusters <sup>a</sup>		Older group clusters <sup>b</sup>	
	1 <i>n</i> = 52	2 <i>n</i> = 31	1 <i>n</i> = 90	2 <i>n</i> = 61
1. Trust	4.15	2.54	2.91	4.82
2. Affective commitment	3.56	2.35	2.48	4.53
3. Continuance commitment	4.57	3.96	4.73	4.79
4. Procedural justice	4.12	3.15	3.62	4.82
5. Turnover intention	3.50	4.94	3.77	2.17

<sup>a</sup> Generation-X subjects are aged from 25 years to 34 years, *n* = 83

<sup>b</sup> The Older Age Group contains subjects aged 35 years and over, *n* = 151

\* Scale Range = 1 - 7

Table 3 summarises the clusters of employees who were identified through this analysis. The work attitude responses are included for each sub-group. The first Gen-X sub-group (Cluster 1, *n* = 52) reported moderate levels of trust, affective commitment, continuance commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention. Gen-X employees in Cluster 2 (*n* = 31) tended to report low levels of trust, affective commitment and procedural justice, yet had moderate continuance commitment and turnover intention scores. Similar to Gen-X Cluster 2, older employees in Cluster 1 (*n* = 90) had relatively low/moderate trust, affective commitment, continuance commitment and turnover intention. Outward differences were noted between the patterns of response over Gen-X employees and the second sub-group of older employees (*n* = 61). This large group of older employees reported reasonable levels of trust, commitment and procedural justice, yet low turnover intention. However, it cannot be generalized that response patterns differ according to age, as the largest cluster of older employees reported fairly comparable work attitudes to the Gen-X groups. Within groups, the results indicate heterogeneous responding. That is, the sub-groups exhibited varying patterns of organisational attitudes.

## DISCUSSION

Results from the study failed to substantiate the hypotheses that differences in levels of trust and affective commitment would be found when comparing Gen-X employees and older employees. Notwithstanding, Gen-X employees, as predicted, reported significantly lower continuance commitment and a higher turnover intention compared with older employees. Also consistent with predictions, Gen-X employees had lower scores for perceptions of procedural justice within the organisation compared to older employees. No support was obtained for the hypothesis that prominent differences in correlational patterns would be found across groups; a homogeneous pattern of relationships emerged across the two age groups for all variables.

### Workplace Attitudes of Generation-X

Unexpected results indicated that generational category did not impact on respondents' affective bond with their organisation, or their levels of trust at work. To the authors' knowledge, there is little empirical research that looks at age differences in organisational trust that can be used as a benchmark for the 'trust' result. However, trust is commonly enunciated as an antecedent of commitment, and age has been found to affect commitment. The present finding diverges from studies which have demonstrated a positive relationship between increased age and

affective commitment (e.g., Rhodes, 1983). However, the current results for affective commitment are comparable to McGuinnes' (2000) findings, which also did not show a difference in commitment between Gen-X group and older employees. Future studies may also demonstrate that Gen-Xer employees display similar levels of trust and affective commitment to older colleagues.

The results for continuance commitment and turnover intention do provide room for further investigation of the general theme of this paper. It was shown that Gen-X employees had lower levels of continuance commitment and higher intentions to turnover. This is consistent with research into the inverse age-turnover relationship (e.g. Cotton & Tuttle 1986). The results indicated that tenure was unlikely to exert significant influence on turnover intention in this study. Consequently, these findings may highlight to organisations that Gen-X employees are more accepting of a new psychological contract of employment that increases mobility between organisations and positions. Also, experiences in today's ever-changing workforce have arguably made Gen-X employees careful about the concept of continuance commitment. Alternatively, Gen-X employees may feel less continuance commitment and have stronger turnover intentions because they perceive greater job opportunities outside their current organisation. Perhaps the older age group may feel like they have to stay at the organisation due to perceptions of fewer opportunities elsewhere.

The difference in procedural justice scores between the groups indicates that Gen-X employees within the organisation do not believe they are treated as fairly in their jobs, or can influence other organisational outcomes, to the same extent as older employees. While this result was hypothesized, it warrants further investigation. The original hypothesis was based on the assumption that perceived justice is related to trust, and that the Gen-X group would be lower in trust. Despite the high correlation between trust and perceived justice, the study did not find generational differences in trust scores. Consequently, the procedural justice finding cannot be attributed to the expected 'trust-perceived justice relationship'. It may be that generational category itself is an antecedent to perceptions of procedural justice. Additional research should be conducted into this area to determine the validity of this assertion.

### **Implications for Management**

The challenge for organisations will be to hold onto the talented Gen-X employees who may have higher intentions to move from one organisation to another. In response, new models of leadership must acknowledge that fostering mutual trust and respect is a key element to the effective management of Gen-X employees. On an interpersonal level, leaders should be aware of possible generational differences yet adapt their management style, rewards and recognition and development assignments to the individual in order to engender the best work and greatest contribution. Effective managers must respect everyone's motivations and needs, even if they are different from their own, and gain value from diversity and by tapping into each employee's strengths.

An organisational strategy that may help reduce turnover of Gen-X employees within organisations would be to make an improved commitment to human resource development, providing opportunities to develop Gen-X employees' professional skills and qualifications. Another tactic may be to offer flexible work schedules, policies and procedures, so Gen-X employees can obtain the desired balance between work and personal life (Raines 1992). Raines (1992) also states that Gen-Xer employees seek a combination of challenge, autonomy

and encouragement. Also, an essential to building trust with Gen-Xers is to ensure consistency in exchange by following through promises with action.

### **Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

While some of the research hypotheses were supported, several methodological considerations may help explain the divergent results. It is possible that the computer-based delivery of the questionnaire skewed the sample towards those who are computer-literate, reducing the generalisability of results. A lack of agreement on the definition and measurement of commitment and trust across studies may be a contributing factor to inconsistent findings. Further research into the trust area should also implement a measure of dispositional trust in addition to a workplace trust scale. This may serve as a control for possible sampling error (i.e. selecting a lot of people predisposed to trusting or not trusting). Future studies should also incorporate equal samples for experimental groups; the disproportionate sample sizes used in the study reduced the power of the statistical analysis. Another concern involved single method variance of self-report data; random responding could have impacted on results due to the use of just one Likert scale for all but the demographic questions. Heterogeneity within groups was also a limitation of the research; there was a wider age range within the non Gen-X population and varying response patterns within groups.

Discrepancies of some of the results to previous literature may have also arisen due to divergent categorisation of experimental groups across research. That is, most research does not separate age groups by generation (e.g. 'commitment is greater in Generation-X employees compared to Generation-Y employees'). Instead, most studies use age as a continuous variable (e.g. 'commitment increases with age'). Upcoming research needs to divide samples into generational categories to gather pertinent information related to differences across the generations.

Alternatively, perhaps it is an inaccuracy to attach too much importance to generational differences. Future studies may determine if there are as many differences within a group as there are between two groups. Ultimately, it is important to look at differences on an individual basis within organisations.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The present study found that elements of the psychological contract varied across generation in one Australian organisation. Similar research must further investigate the impact of generational influences on work attitudes and contextual factors. This will lead to further theoretical development and improved people-management strategies.

Organisations will continue to go through fundamental change. Given that trust and commitment are important factors in determining employee attitudes to change (Tan & Tan 2000; Tyler & DeGoe 1996), future studies may further highlight the central role played by trust and commitment, irrespective of generational differences. The ability of any organisation to succeed in meeting its objectives, to a large extent, is becoming increasingly dependent on the formation and development of positive attitudes and behaviours amongst *all* employees in pursuit of clearly defined, quality objectives (Travaglione & Jordan 2000).

---

**REFERENCES**

- Albrecht, S & Travaglione, A 2000, 'Trust in public sector senior management during times of turbulent change', in J Connell & R Zeffane (eds.), *Proceedings of the Inaugural Newcastle Conference 'Trust in the Workplace—Beyond the Quick Fix*, The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, pp. 103-104).
- Allen, NJ & Meyer, IP 1990, 'The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organisation', *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 91, 1-18.
- Angle, HL & Perry, JL 1981, 'An empirical assessment of organisational commitment and organisational effectiveness', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21, 1-14.
- Bull, A 2000, 'The effects of trust in management and employee individual differences on the efficacy of incentive programs', in J Connell & R. Zeffane (eds.), *Trust in the workplace—Beyond the quick fix*, Proceedings of the Inaugural Newcastle Conference, Newcastle, Australia, November, pp. 51-53).
- Burke, RJ 1994, 'Generation-X: Measures, sex and age differences', *Psychological Reports*, 74 (2), 555-663.
- Cammann, C, Fichman, M, Jenkins, D & Klesh, J 1979, *The Michigan Organisational Assessment Questionnaire*, unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Clark, MC & Payne, RL 1997, 'The nature and structure of workers' trust in management', *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 18, 205-224.
- Cook, J & Wall, T 1980, 'New work attitude measures of trust, organisational commitment and personal need non-fulfillment', *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 53, 39-52.
- Cordery, JL, Mueller, WS & Smith, LM 1991, 'Attitudinal and behavioural effects of autonomous group working: A longitudinal field study', *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (2), 464-476.
- Cotton, JL & Tuttle, JM 1986, 'Employee turnover: A meta-analysis and review with implications for research', *Academy of Management Review*, 55, 55-70.
- Creed, W & Miles, R 1996, 'Trust in organisations: A conceptual framework linking organisation's forms, managerial philosophies, and the opportunity costs of controls', in R Kramer & T Tyler (eds.), *Trust in organisations: Frontiers of theory and research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 16-38.
- De Meuse, K, Bergmann, T & Lester, S 2001, 'An investigation of the relational component of the psychological contract across time, generation and employment status', *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 13 (1), 102-118.
- Fairholm, GW 1994, *Leadership and the culture of trust*, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut.
-

---

Folger, R & Konovsky, M 1989, 'Effects of procedural and distributive justice on reactions to pay raise decisions', *Academy of Management Journal*, 32(1), 115-130.

Francis, G 1999, *SPSS for Windows*, Prentice-Hall, Sydney.

Hom, PW, Katerberg, R & Hulin, CL 1979, 'Comparative examination of three approaches to the prediction of turnover', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 64 (3), 280-290.

Konovsky, M & Cropanzano, R 1991, 'Perceived fairness of employee drug testing as a predictor of employee attitudes and job performance', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76 (5), 698-707.

Konovsky, M & Pugh, S 1994, 'Citizenship behaviour and social exchange', *Academy of Management Journal*, 37 (3), 656-669.

Kramer, RM 1999, 'Trust and distrust: Emerging questions, enduring questions', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 569-598.

Kramer, RM & Tyler, TR 1996, *Trust in organisations: Frontiers of theory and research*, Sage, London.

Lind, EA & Tyler, TR 1988, *The social psychology of procedural justice*, Plenum Press, New York.

Mathieu, I & Zajac, D 1990, 'A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organisational commitment', *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 171-194.

Mayer, RC & Davis, JH 1999. 'The effect of the performance appraisal system on trust for management: A field quasi-experiment', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 123-136.

McGuinness, SV 2000, 'The effect of generation group identification on organisational commitment: A study of Baby Boomers and Generation X', unpublished dissertation manuscript, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 60, 11A.

McShane, S, & Von Glinow, MA 2000, *Organisational behaviour: Emerging realities for the workplace revolution*, Irwin/McGraw-Hill, Boston.

Meyer, J & Allen, N 1991, 'A three-component conceptualization of organisational commitment', *Human Resource Management Review*, 1, 61-89.

Meyer, J & Allen, N 1997, 'Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application', Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Meyer, JP, Allen, NJ & Smith, CA 1997, 'Commitment in the workplace: Theory, research, and application', Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

Meyer, JP, Paunonen, SV, Gellatly, IR, Goffin, RD & Jackson, DN 1989, 'Organisational commitment and job performance: It's the nature of the commitment that counts', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74, 152-156.

---

Mishra, AK 1996, 'Organisational responses to crisis: The centrality of trust', R Kramer & T Tyler (eds.), *Trust in organisations: Frontiers of theory and research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 261-287.

Moorman, RH 1991, 'Relationship between organisational justice and organisation citizenship behaviours: Do fairness perceptions influence employee citizenship?', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 845-855.

Mowday, R, Porter, L, & Steers, R 1982, *Employee-organisation linkages: The psychology of commitment, absenteeism, and turnover*, Academic Press, New York.

Payne, RL 2000, 'Measures of trust: An analytical framework', in J Connell & R Zeffane (eds.), *Proceedings of the Inaugural Newcastle Conference 'Trust in the Workplace—Beyond the Quick Fix'*, The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, pp. 107-109.

Porter, LW, Steers, RM, Mowday, RT & Boulian, PV 1974, 'Organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59, 603-609.

Raines, C 1992, *Managing and motivating today's new workforce*, Mastermedia, New York.

Rhodes, SR 1983, 'Age-related differences in work attitudes and behaviours: A review and conceptual analysis', *Psychological Bulletin*, 93 (2), 328-367.

Rotter, JB 1967, 'A new scale for the measurement of interpersonal trust', *Journal of Personality*, 35, 651-655.

Shaw, RB 1997, *Trust in the balance: Building successful organisations on results, integrity and concern*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Smith, PC, Kendall, LM & Hulin 1969, *The measurement of satisfaction in work and retirement*, Rand McNally, Chicago.

Steers, RM 1977, 'Antecedents and outcomes of organisational commitment', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 22, 46-56.

Sweeney, PD & McFarlin, DB 1997, 'Process and outcome: Gender differences in the assessment of justice', *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 18, 83-98.

Tan, H & Tan, CSF 2000, 'Toward the differentiation of trust in supervisor and trust in organisation', *Genetic, Social, & General Psychology Monographs*, 126 (2), 241-260.

Travaglione, A 2000, 'Human resource strategy during turbulent change: Managing organisational downsizing', in A Travaglione & V Marshall (eds.), *Human resource strategies: An applied approach*, Irwin/McGraw-Hill, Roseville NSW, pp. 231-263.

Travaglione, A & Jordan, C 2000, 'An application of effective downsizing strategies: A case study of Westrail', in A Travaglione & V Marshall (eds.), *Human resource strategies: An applied approach*, McGraw-Hill, Sydney, 249-256.

---

Tyler, TR & DeGoey, P 1996, 'Trust in organisational authorities: The influence of motive attributions on willingness to accept decisions', in RM Kramer & TR Tyler (eds.), *Trust in organisations: Frontiers of theory and research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 331-350.

### **Biographical Notes**

Natalie Ferres is a Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour. Her research interests include trust and emotional intelligence. She also consults at an Organisational Psychologists' firm in Sydney.

Anthony Travaglione is a Professor of Management and the Dean of the Adelaide Graduate School of Management. Tony is well published in his areas of academic interest: Human Resource Management and Organisational Behaviour.

Ian Firms is a consultant, researcher and lecturer in management. Ian has previously taught Organisational Development and Change and Organisational Behaviour. Currently, he teaches Business Performance at Curtin. He has previously worked as a full-time researcher at Curtin University's Institute for Research into International Competitiveness and has been involved in various significant research projects.

---

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to acknowledge Catherine Jordan for her hard work in the preparation, collection and synthesis of data. Also, sincere thanks to Les Ozdolay for his support and input throughout the research.