A Work Values Perspective of the Generation Y-
Australian Public Service Employment Relationship

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University by:

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November 2011
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis contains no material, to the best of my knowledge and belief, which has been published or written by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement has been given.

[Signature]

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks are due to the many participants who gave their time to provide data for this study, especially those who volunteered their time during busy working days. Each member of the Supervisory Panel for this project deserves recognition and thanks for the assistance, professionalism and advice they provided in many different ways across all stages of its development and implementation. All members of the Supervisory Panel are listed below, and while some left during the course of the project to pursue various opportunities, all are equally deserving of gratitude: Dr Chris Chan, Dr Janine O’Flynn, Dr Jay Hays, and Professor Juliana Ng. Special recognition is due to the Supervisor of this research project who sacrificed an inordinate amount of time to ensure its completion. His tireless and selfless efforts were the driving force behind the project and it is certain that this study would not have been completed without his influence, guidance, expertise, support and dedication. With the greatest of thanks to Dr Richard Winter.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**SUMMARY OF TABLES** ................................................................................................................. x

**SUMMARY OF FIGURES** ............................................................................................................ xii

**ABSTRACT** ................................................................................................................................. xiii

**CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION** .................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background ............................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Research Context ....................................................................................................................... 3

1.2.1 APS Staffing Levels ............................................................................................................. 4

1.2.2 Values and Employment in the APS .................................................................................. 6

1.2.3 Knowledge Workers in the APS ....................................................................................... 7

1.2.4 Recruitment and Retention in the APS ............................................................................. 8

1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions .................................................................................. 9

1.3.1 Key Concepts and Definitions ............................................................................................ 11

1.4 Motivations and Contributions ............................................................................................... 12

1.4.1 Theoretical Contributions ................................................................................................. 12

1.4.2 Practical Contributions ....................................................................................................... 14

1.5 Summary ................................................................................................................................ 15

1.6 Structure of Thesis ................................................................................................................... 16

**CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW** ....................................................................................... 18

2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 18

2.1.1 Theoretical Overview ........................................................................................................ 18

2.1.2 Approach to Literature Review ....................................................................................... 20

2.2 Generation Y as a Social Phenomenon ................................................................................. 21

2.2.1 Epistemology of Generational Differences .................................................................... 24

2.2.2 Defining a Generation ....................................................................................................... 24

2.2.3 A Working Definition of Generations ............................................................................. 27

2.3 Work Values ............................................................................................................................. 28

2.3.1 Public Service Work Ethics/Values Clusters .................................................................. 32

2.4 Generation Y in the Workplace ............................................................................................... 33

2.4.1 Generation Y Work Characteristics .................................................................................. 34

2.4.2 Generation Y and Work-Life Balance .............................................................................. 34
2.4.3 Generation Y, Technology and Impatience ..............................................36
2.4.4 Generation Y, Teamwork and Consultative Management ......................38
2.4.5 Generation Y and Job Security ...............................................................40
2.4.6 Generation Y and Professional Development .........................................40
2.5 The Employment Relationship .................................................................41
  2.5.1 The Psychological Contract: Introduction ...........................................43
  2.5.2 The Psychological Contract: Socio-Cognitive Dimensions .....................43
  2.5.3 The Psychological Contract: Evaluation ...............................................44
  2.5.4 Public Service Psychological Contracts ..............................................46
  2.5.5 Person-Organisation Fit ..................................................................48
2.6 Summary ...................................................................................................52

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY ....................................................................53

3.1 Introduction .............................................................................................53
  3.1.1 Research Phases ..............................................................................54
  3.1.2 Qualitative Values-Based Approach ................................................55
  3.1.3 Narrative Analysis .........................................................................58
  3.1.4 Charmaz and the Grounded Theory Approach ..................................59
  3.1.5 Triangulation of Methods .................................................................60
3.2 Research Phase One – Generation Y Students ..........................................61
  3.2.1 Scenario Modelling .........................................................................62
  3.2.2 Student Participants .........................................................................66
3.3 Research Phase Two – APS-Employed Generation Y ..................................67
  3.3.1 Sampling Approach .........................................................................67
  3.3.2 Participants ......................................................................................68
  3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews ...............................................................69
  3.3.4 Interview Questions .........................................................................70
3.4 Research Phase Three – APS Managers .................................................76
  3.4.1 Participants ......................................................................................76
  3.4.2 Open-Ended Questionnaires ............................................................78
3.5 Data Coding, Analysis and Presentation ...............................................81
  3.5.1 Data Organisation ...........................................................................82
  3.5.2 Coding Process ...............................................................................82
  3.5.3 Example Transcript Coding Process – General Data Comments/Memos ..84
  3.5.4 Example Transcript Coding Process – In Vivo Coding ......................85
3.5.5 Example Transcript Coding Process – Initial Coding .................................. 86
3.5.6. Example Transcript Coding Process – Focussed Coding .................. 87
3.5.7 Example Transcript Coding Process – Summary Coding ..................... 89
3.5.8 Example Transcript Coding Process – Agglomerative Coding .............. 92

3.6 Summary ......................................................................................... 96

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS ...................................................................... 97

4.1 Generation Y Student Work Values ...................................................... 98
  4.1.1 Scenario Modelling Technique ....................................................... 98
  4.1.2 Personal-Related Values ............................................................... 99
  4.1.3 Career Stage ............................................................................... 100
  4.1.4 Hard Work .................................................................................. 101
  4.1.5 Adaptability ................................................................................ 101
  4.1.6 Ambition ..................................................................................... 103
  4.1.7 Social-Related Values .................................................................. 104
  4.1.8 Belongingness, Inclusion, Cohesion and Collectivism ...................... 105
  4.1.9 Free Communication ................................................................... 106
  4.1.10 Equity and Equality .................................................................... 107
  4.1.11 Work-Life Balance ...................................................................... 108
  4.1.12 Prestige, Recognition and Respect .............................................. 109
  4.1.13 Instancy ..................................................................................... 110
  4.1.14 Commitment-Related Values ...................................................... 111
  4.1.15 Contingent Loyalty ..................................................................... 112
  4.1.16 Long-Term Focus ...................................................................... 113
  4.1.17 Autonomy, Trust, Respect and Creativity ...................................... 114
  4.1.18 Learning and Development ......................................................... 115
  4.1.19 Organisation-Related Values ...................................................... 115
  4.1.20 Mentoring, Recognition, Certainty and Structure .......................... 116
  4.1.21 Mission ..................................................................................... 118
  4.1.22 Equity and Ethics ...................................................................... 119
  4.1.23 Work-Life Balance ...................................................................... 120
  4.1.24 Organisation-Related Values: Growth Sub-Category ...................... 121
  4.1.25 Summary – Generation Y Student Work Values ............................. 122

4.2 Work Values of APS-Employed Generation Y ....................................... 125
  4.2.1 Development-Related Values ....................................................... 125
4.2.2 (Development) Short-Term Focus-Related Values .................................................. 126
4.2.3 Confidence ........................................................................................................... 127
4.2.4 Contingent Loyalty ............................................................................................. 127
4.2.5 Training ............................................................................................................... 128
4.2.6 (Development) Long-Term Focus-Related Values ........................................... 129
4.2.7 Career Stage ....................................................................................................... 130
4.2.8 Mission and Success ........................................................................................... 130
4.2.9 Work-Life Balance ............................................................................................. 132
4.2.10 Social-Related Values ....................................................................................... 133
4.2.11 Identity ............................................................................................................. 134
4.2.12 Confidence and Efficiency ............................................................................... 135
4.2.13 Mentor(s) and Inclusion ................................................................................. 136
4.2.14 Recognition ....................................................................................................... 137
4.2.15 Micro-Organisational-Related Values ............................................................. 138
4.2.16 Performance ..................................................................................................... 139
4.2.17 Work-Life Integration ....................................................................................... 140
4.2.18 Adaptability ....................................................................................................... 141
4.2.19 Pragmatism ....................................................................................................... 142
4.2.20 Variety ............................................................................................................... 143
4.2.21 Summary of APS-Employed Work Values ...................................................... 144

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS II ......................................................................................... 147

5.1 APS Managers ........................................................................................................... 147
    5.1.1 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Expectations ........................................ 148
    5.1.2 Perceptions of Generation Y Communication and Social Skills ................ 151
    5.1.3 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Instant Gratification ....................... 153
    5.1.4 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Ethic .................................................... 154
    5.1.5 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Learning ......................................... 156
    5.1.6 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Inclusive Management ................. 157
    5.1.7 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Technology .................................... 158
    5.1.8 Perceptions of Recruitment and Retention of Generation Y .................... 160
    5.1.9 Foundation of Generations in APS Manager Narratives ............................ 163
    5.1.10 Summary of APS Managers’ Perceptions of Generation Y .................... 165

5.2 The Employment Relationship ................................................................................ 167
    5.2.1 Terms of the Generation Y Psychological Contract .................................. 167
    5.2.2 Psychological Contract Breach: Performance Management ...................... 169
5.2.3 Psychological Contract Breach and Hierarchy/Procedural Terms .................................................. 171
5.2.4 Psychological Contract Breach: Employment and Promotion ......................................................... 174
5.2.5 Person-Organisation Fit .................................................................................................................. 176
5.2.6 Person-Organisation Fit: Managers as Mentor/Inclusive Management ........................................... 177
5.2.7 Person-Organisation Fit: Interactive Communication ...................................................................... 178
5.2.8 Person-Organisation Fit: Long-Term Careers and Ongoing Development ......................................... 179
5.2.9 Person-Organisation Fit: Work-Life Balance .................................................................................... 181
5.2.10 Person-Organisation Fit: Social Contribution .................................................................................. 182
5.2.11 Person-Organisation Fit: Values Preference for Organisational Ethics ........................................... 183
5.2.12 Person-Organisation Fit: Confidence in Workplace Ability and Potential ....................................... 184
5.2.13 Person-Organisation Fit: Pragmatism ............................................................................................. 186
5.2.14 Person-Organisation Fit: Favour Immediacy in Workplace Processes ............................................ 188
5.2.15 Summary of the APS-Generation Y Employment Relationship ...................................................... 189

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ..................................................................................... 191

6.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 191
  6.1.1 Revisiting Aims, Definitions and Research Questions ........................................................................ 193
6.2 Overview of Generation Y Work Values Preferences .......................................................................... 195
   6.2.1 Contrast with Generation Y Literature .......................................................................................... 196
   6.2.2 Job Security ...................................................................................................................................... 198
   6.2.3 Teamwork ....................................................................................................................................... 198
   6.2.4 Scepticism and Distrust toward Organisations .............................................................................. 199
   6.2.5 Ideological Currency ...................................................................................................................... 200
6.3 Overview of APS Managers’ Perceptions of Generation Y ................................................................. 201
   6.3.1 Conceptualisation of Generations among APS Managers ............................................................. 202
   6.3.2 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Expectations ........................................................................... 203
   6.3.3 Recruitment Messages ..................................................................................................................... 203
6.4 The Generation Y-APS Employment Relationship ............................................................................. 204
   6.4.1 The State of the APS-Generation Y Psychological Contract ....................................................... 205
   6.4.2 Breach of the Psychological Contract ............................................................................................ 206
   6.4.3 Person-Organisation Fit: Generation Y in the APS .................................................................... 207
6.5 Theoretical Implications ....................................................................................................................... 208
   6.5.1 Life Stage ....................................................................................................................................... 208
   6.5.2 Definition Issues ............................................................................................................................. 210
   6.5.3 Organisational Commitment ......................................................................................................... 211
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Generation birth-date parameters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>APS employees and Generation Y employees by classification level in 2010</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Generation Y literature search results</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Composite generation birth-date ranges</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Johnson’s (2002) work value reward taxonomy</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Generation Y work characteristics across recent literature</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Research phases and relationship to research questions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Workplace scenarios</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Comparative characteristics of workplace scenarios</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Coding process</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Examples of focussed codes and contributing text</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Examples of summary codes and contributing focussed codes and text</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Examples of agglomerative codes and contributing text</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Examples of social focus within Generation Y student narratives</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Examples of work-life balance centrality in Generation Y student narratives</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Comments alluding to efficiency in APS-employed Generation Y narratives</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Examples alluding to adaptability in APS-employed Generation Y narratives</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Performance management terms in the Generation Y psychological contract</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Contrasting views of hierarchy and procedural terms in the Generation Y</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employment relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Contrasting views of employment and promotion terms in the Generation Y</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>employment relationship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Rating scale for qualitative assessment of person-organisation fit</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Favour inclusive management and</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inclusive workplace processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Interactive communication</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Long-term careers and ongoing</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Work-life balance</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Ability to make a social contribution</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: High value for organisational ethics</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Confidence in workplace ability and</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Pragmatism</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Assessment of person-organisation fit: Immediacy in workplace processes</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Comparison of research findings with work values preferences in literature</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Summary of degree of fit between Generation Y work values and the APS</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1 Review of the Generation Y literature ................................................................. 19

FIGURE 3.1 Methodological relationship between language, values and behaviour .......... 57

FIGURE 3.2 Methodological relationship forming the employment relationship .......... 58

FIGURE 3.3 Example of data comment/memo..................................................................... 85

FIGURE 3.4 Example of in vivo coding process................................................................. 86

FIGURE 3.5 Example of initial coding process................................................................. 87

FIGURE 3.6 Example of focussed coding process.............................................................. 89

FIGURE 3.7 Schematic example of summary coding......................................................... 90

FIGURE 3.8 Schematic example of agglomerative coding.................................................. 95

FIGURE 4.1 Preferred organisation scenario................................................................. 99

FIGURE 4.2 Relationships between values contributing to the 'personal' category .......... 99

FIGURE 4.3 Relationships between values contributing to the 'social' category .......... 104

FIGURE 4.4 Relationships between values contributing to the 'commitment' category .... 111

FIGURE 4.5 Relationships between values contributing to the 'organisation' category .... 116

FIGURE 4.6 Relationships between values contributing to the 'growth' category .......... 121

FIGURE 4.7 Generation Y students' visual data map....................................................... 124

FIGURE 4.8 Relationships between values contributing to the 'short-term focus' category . 126

FIGURE 4.9 Relationships between values contributing to the 'long-term outlook' category 129

FIGURE 4.10 Relationships between values contributing to the 'social' category .......... 133

FIGURE 4.11 Relationships between values contributing to the 'micro-organisational' category .................................................................................................................. 139

FIGURE 4.12 APS-employed Generation Y visual data map........................................... 146

FIGURE 6.1 Components of combined life stage and generational workforce model ....... 220
ABSTRACT

Generation Y, the colloquial term applied to those born from 1980-1998, will become the dominant cohort in the Australian workforce in the current decade, outnumbering both preceding generation cohorts – the Baby Boomers (born 1945-1962) and Generation X (born 1963-1979). Accounts across extant literature suggest Generation Y work values represent a distinct challenge to existing workplace norms and attitudes.

The Australian Public Service (APS), employing over 160,000 people, has identified the recruitment and retention of Generation Y (representing almost one-third of its workforce) as a strategic concern (APSC, 2005). Using the qualitative approaches of scenario modelling, narrative-based semi-structured interviews and open-ended self-report questionnaires, this study examines the work values of Generation Y participants using a student sample ($N = 161$) and a sample of current APS employees ($N = 60$). Generation Y work values data are contrasted with the perceptions of APS managers ($N = 20$) and examined within the theoretical context of the employment relationship, viewed through the lens of the psychological contract and the theory of person-organisation fit. Data analysis is based on Charmaz’s (2006) systematic, grounded theory-based approach.

Data suggest that the APS setting represents a good degree of fit with Generation Y work values preferences for inclusive management and workplace processes; the ability to make a social contribution; organisational ethics; long-term careers and ongoing development; adequate work-life balance; and, interactive communication. Findings suggest a partial fit with the values preference for pragmatism. Misfit between the APS values and Generation Y work values is evident where the APS structure is based on hierarchical processes and Generation Y work values favour immediacy in workplace decisions. Overall findings suggest a positive Generation Y-APS employment relationship. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed with reference to existing literature.
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

“Almost all of the developed world is at the edge of a demographic abyss for which there is no precedent, a huge cohort of workers, the baby boom generation, is about to move from productive work to retirement. There are too few younger workers to replace them...”

Alan Greenspan (2007, p.409)

1.1 Background

The work values of Generation Y have been subject to much discussion and innuendo across various media, often aimed at creating an understanding of a generation that has been variously touted as unique, demanding, and challenging to existing workplace norms and values (Crawford, 2006). Long-term economic conditions are forecast to favour educated, skilled workers seeking employment (e.g. ABS, 2008b; 2008c; Burgess, 2008) suggesting that organisations have considerable motivation to better understand the values of their potential and existing employees (Dychtwald, Erickson & Morison, 2006) and to align these with organisational values and practice. As Nanschild (2008) points out, employees in the public service are both “happier and more productive when their values [are aligned] with those of their organisation” (p.131). The idea that Generation Y is a workplace cohort with distinct work values has gained widespread acceptance over the past few years (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), and many commentators report that Generation Y are more willing than their seniors to leave their current employer and seek other employment (e.g. Sheahan, 2005; Heath, 2006).
However, it is a fair criticism to say that existing examinations of Generation Y in the workplace (or society more broadly) tend to largely ignore historical experience in their tendency to rush to ask ‘what is this new phenomenon?’ rather than the logically less presumptuous ‘is this a new phenomenon?’ Establishing a clear context for any examination of Generation Y appears a necessary step in overcoming this concern, for only through a closely-defined and focussed examination in a specific setting can one hope to cut through the often-confounding morass of social change.

This research examines the work values preferences of Generation Y in the context of the Australian Public Service (APS). The APS is the collective term for Australia’s federal civil service, and Generation Y employees represent slightly over 30 percent of the total APS workforce (see APSC, 2010). The APS invests an average of $20,000 per person for those in its graduate programs (APSC, 2005). Combined with estimates that recruitment costs can total one (Abbott, De Cieri & Iverson, 1998) to two years’ (Atencio, Cohen & Gorenberg, 2003) salary for a typical middle-ranked, skilled position, this highlights the financial impetus for the APS to maximise staff retention.

Understanding and meeting the work values preferences of staff lies at the core of employee retention (e.g. Lester & Kickul, 2001). Without an adequate description of these work values, the APS risks making ill-informed human resources decisions which may act against staff retention. Not surprisingly, much of the Generation Y management literature does not take account of the complex legislative and values environment of the APS (Taylor, 2005). Broadly, public sector employees are said to uphold a ‘public service ethic’ featuring a strong values motivation and emphasising
ideological aspects of their employment such as concerns for making a contribution to society or serving a greater good (Taylor, 2005). This 'ideological currency' (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003) distinguishes the APS from private sector organisations (O'Donohue, Sheehan, Hecker & Holland, 2007) and suggests that a work values perspective of the employment relationship is needed to unlock the true implications of managing Generation Y in a public service context.

With research indicating that Generation Y work values may not directly transfer between cultures (Jackson, 2004), it is prudent for the APS to ensure that the data used to make staff management decisions reflect its own cultural norms and values structures (Yu & Miller, 2003). This study aims to assess the effectiveness of Generation Y staff management by adopting a work values framework grounded in the speech, language and narratives used by Generation Y and their managers in the context of the APS. This interpretive, values-based perspective of the employment relationship places importance on the degree of mutual agreement between what Generation Y values in the APS, and what APS managers in return perceive Generation Y values in the work setting (Shore & Barksdale, 1998).

1.2 Research Context

The ABS (1999) forecast that by 2016, the Baby Boomers will have ceded workplace dominance, not to the generation immediately following (Generation X), but rather to the generational cohort typically referred to as Generation Y, defined in Table 1.1 as those born from 1980 to 1998.
Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERATION</th>
<th>ELIGIBLE BIRTH-DATE RANGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1945 – 1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 'X'</td>
<td>1963 – 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 'Y'</td>
<td>1980 – 1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See Table 2.2, p.23.

A major human resource challenge to the APS is comprehending Generation Y's purported work values, which have been described as distinct from those of Generation X (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2000) and in many cases entirely alien to those of the Baby Boomers (e.g. Hagevik, 1999; O'Reilly, 2000; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Salt, 2003; Eisner, 2005; Sheahan, 2005; McGuire, By & Hutchings, 2007). This generational divergence has been suggested as a precursor to a looming clash of values (Eisner, 2005; Heath, 2006), which if not understood and managed effectively may lead to a dysfunctional employment relationship and increased costs associated with employee turnover (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

1.2.1 APS Staffing Levels

Table 1.2 displays the quantity of APS employees\(^1\) by classification level at 30 June 2010, contrasted against total Generation Y\(^2\) employees in the APS. As can be seen, slightly less than one-third of all APS employees are members of Generation Y. As at 30 June 2010, the APS employed 164,596 people spread across 98 separate agencies

---

\(^1\) Ongoing employees are engaged on a permanent basis and exclude temporary/contract employees.

\(^2\) Due to the overlap of age ranges used in the APSC Statistical Bulletin (2010), some members of Generation X are included. This has the effect of slightly inflating the number of qualifying employees, mostly at senior ranks.
(APSC, 2010). Current staffing numbers represent a compounded growth rate of nearly 20 percent across the last five years (APSC, 2006; 2007; 2008b; 2009b; 2010).

Roles within the APS are defined by a hierarchical structure, containing three broad classification bands: APS 1 to 6, Executive Levels (EL) 1 and 2, and the Senior Executive Service (SES). Middle managers (i.e. those with supervisory responsibility) are typically reported as occupying the APS 5 to EL2 ranks (see APSC, 2005b), with members of the SES considered senior management (APSC, 2005b). As Table 1.2 displays, the majority of Generation Y APS employees (79.1%) occupy positions APS3 to APS6.

Table 1.2
APS employees and Generation Y employees by classification level in 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>GENERATION Y</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APS 1</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 2</td>
<td>4,145</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>925</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 3</td>
<td>20,890</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>7,331</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10,603</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS 5</td>
<td>20,522</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>6,576</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>30,827</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>9,239</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL 1</td>
<td>26,009</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>5,354</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL 2</td>
<td>12,407</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>2,610</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainee</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate APS</td>
<td>1,208</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1,149</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Ongoing</td>
<td>150,871</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>42,674</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Ongoing</td>
<td>13,725</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,927</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 164,596

Source: Adapted from APSC (2010).
1.2.2 Values and Employment in the APS

In 1996, the Australian Government commenced a root-and-branch review of the APS, culminating in the creation of the *Public Service Act 1999*, the legislation that governs APS employment. Previous versions of the Act took a legalistic and rules-based approach to staff management whereas the 1999 version represented a shift to a values-based management structure through inclusion of a codified system of values (APSC, 2003). Examples of these values are provided below and in full in Appendix A:

- The APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit.
- The APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves.
- The APS has the highest ethical standards.
- The APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace.
- The APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia’s democratic system of government.

These APS Values form a legal basis for employment in the APS, and unlike private sector organisations, APS employees can face legal sanction for acting in a manner which is inconsistent with the values of their organisation. Where private organisations may seek a best fit between an employee’s values and the organisation’s values structure (see Ravlin & Ritchie, 2006) the APS makes compliance with each of these values a *sine qua non* of employment. The Public Service Act also gives legal effect to a formal code of conduct (see Appendix B), which defines acceptable behaviour for APS employees and codifies an APS ethical framework (Nanschild, 2008). The APS
ethical framework may act to expand the employment relationship of staff by elevating principles and causes such as universal health-care and fighting poverty to a 'higher value' (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009). In such cases, APS values may provide occupational groups including present and future Generation Y cohorts with a motivating sense of place and legitimacy within a moral order.

1.2.3 Knowledge Workers in the APS

The precise nature of APS work, while largely process driven, is complex and difficult to define (see Nanschild, 2008). However, it is fair to say that the majority of its outcomes are processed via people, their knowledge and their skills. A large proportion of the day-to-day roles of APS employees involves knowledge work (ABS, 2004; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006). Knowledge work involves using information to create and exploit intellectual capital (Yeh, 2007). Knowledge workers are therefore those who "[analyse] information and apply... specialized expertise to solve problems, generate ideas, teach others, or create new products and services" (Jones & Chung, 2006, p.32). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) links knowledge workers with four occupational groups: managers, administrators, professionals, and associate professionals.

The central importance of identifying knowledge workers lies in the suggestion that they require specific management strategies that align with their distinct values and psychological contracts (see O'Donohue et al., 2007). Public sector psychological contracts contain ideological components (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). These components or 'ideological currency' (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p.574) broadly
define the organisation’s commitment to pursue a valued principle or cause (such as the right of citizens to access universal health care regardless of their socio-economic status). Similarly, knowledge worker psychological contracts reflect "a contribution that transcends the organization" (O’Donohue et al., 2007, p.78). This is accompanied by the expectation that organisations will provide an opportunity to make such a contribution (O’Donohue et al., 2007). Thus, knowledge worker psychological contracts must contain terms that the knowledge worker will "appreciate and believe in" to minimise the opportunity for perceptual breach (Redpath, Hurst & Devine, 2009, p.76). Knowledge workers are professionals with a strong ideological belief that their training, skills and values equip them to self-regulate their own job performance (Trice, 1993; Abbott, 1998). Furthermore, membership of a profession may entail a commitment to a system of ethics that places community or societal interests and those of the profession above self-interest (Christensen, 1994). Hence, the APS context of this research with its public sector ideological foundations, combined with the coexisting values of the knowledge worker cohort, provides a central role for values-based aspects of altruism, service, mission and ‘ideological currency’.

1.2.4 Recruitment and Retention in the APS

The recruitment and retention of staff in Australia is a central concern to both public- and private-sector organisations. This is evidenced by the increasing stream of media accounts dedicated to national skills shortages (e.g. Argy, 2006; Bellamy, 2006; Sheedy, 2007; Tasker, 2010), the imminent retirement of older Australians (e.g. Naylor, 2006; Stewart, 2006; Salt, 2011), skilled immigration (e.g. Cooper, 2006; Fricke, Poole & MacLeod, 2011), the exodus of skilled labour from Australia (e.g. Cornell, 2006;
Smith, 2007) and inflationary pressure on public sector wages (e.g. Hepworth & Scott, 2006; Clennell, 2011). Despite the 'global financial crisis' of 2008-09, it is reported that labour shortfalls continue to affect the APS (Burgess, 2008). Far from being an impending concern (e.g. Eisner, 2005) the shrinking labour market is beginning to show its effects here and now in what Dychtwald et al. (2006) forecast as a 'workforce crisis'.

Fundamental to this labour shortage are two factors: Australia's ageing population, compounded by a decreased birth rate (e.g. ABS, 1999; Dowrick, 1999), and the sustained economic growth witnessed in the Australian economy over recent years (see ABS, 2009). As any elementary economics text will attest, increased economic activity generates higher demand for factors of production, including labour. However, in the forecast scenario, a relative disequilibrium will exist between the quantity of workforce entrants vs. the quantity of those retiring from the workforce (ABS, 1999). This will act to further shrink the available pool of labour and compound the difficulties the APS faces in recruiting knowledge workers during periods of economic growth. Thus, organisations such as the APS will have to work increasingly harder to attract and retain their staff (e.g. Grossman, 2005; Henkens, Remery & Schippers, 2005). Particularly important to the APS as a values-based organisation is the alignment between its values aspirations and its day-to-day operations. That is, ensuring that work processes such as recruitment and retention are consistent with its overarching values structure.

1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions

This research study aims to:

1. Describe the nature of Generation Y's work values in the context of the APS, and
2. Explain and evaluate the effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship from a work values perspective.

In addressing research aim one, the study describes the work values of groups of Generation Y students considering employment in the APS, and in addition, examines the work values of Generation Y already employed in the APS. In order to guide the process of data collection and analysis, research questions one and two were formulated:

**Question One:** What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?

**Question Two:** What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?

In addressing research aim two, the study examines the work values managers in the APS perceive Generation Y to hold, and compares these perceptions with both the work values of Generation Y employed in the APS and those considering APS employment. The relative effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship is evaluated in terms of the degree of mutual agreement between what Generation Y values in the APS, and what APS managers in return perceive Generation Y values are at work (Shore & Barksdale, 1998). Questions three, four and five guide the process of data collection and analysis:

**Question Three:** What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?
Question Four: What is the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

Question Five: How effective is the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

1.3.1 Key Concepts and Definitions

Work values refer to:

"...evaluative standards relating to work or the [APS] work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of [their] preferences." (Dose, 1997, pp. 227-228)

This definition of work values recognises that the priority individuals give to their values influences their worldview, and recognises that individual perceptions and actions are defined through their "personal values lens" (Nanschild, 2008, p.132). Evaluative standards in this study equate to this "values lens" and shape Generation Y preferences for particular work settings and conditions, management styles, organisational values structures, work designs, and styles of workplace interaction.

The employment relationship refers to the nature of the interaction (and implicitly, the resulting outcomes or degree of 'fit') between an employer and their employees (Herriot, 2001). In this context the employment relationship is characterised as a psychological contract conceived in terms of an unwritten agreement between Generation Y employees and their employer; in this case the employer is the APS manager. As a representative of the organisation (see Cullinane & Dundon, 2006) it is she/he who hires Generation Y, assigns them work tasks, supervises their work, and acts
as their mentor (or not). As the embodiment of the employer, the manager is primarily responsible for articulating the organisation's policies, rules and values.

The psychological contract is conceptualised broadly to reflect relational (socio-emotional) and ideological (principle or cause) values-based components rather than focusing on transactional (money, working conditions) components. This agreement sets out what potential and existing Generation Y employees expect from and value in the APS, and how APS managers in return perceive what Generation Y values at work.

1.4 Motivations and Contributions

Building on previous research (Jackson, 2004), this study was primarily motivated by a desire to uncover a clear understanding of the work values of Generation Y, grounded in a specific work setting (the APS), and apply this to a specific theoretical framework (the employment relationship). Further motivation was gained from the professional experience of the researcher, a former consultant and APS employee with direct experience managing Generation Y.

1.4.1 Theoretical Contributions

A key contribution of this study is to make explicit Generation Y’s work values from an interpretive perspective. The approach is not to presume values are known from some a priori framework, but to inductively derive a framework based on the narratives and language used by Generation Y themselves. This is Research Aim 1. Aim 2 is to understand and evaluate the employment relationship of Generation Y in a specific workplace context – the APS. Research has been lacking in how ‘values-based
contexts' influence employee preferences for particular organisational structures, decision making processes and management styles (Suddaby, Elsbach, Greenword, Meyer & Zilbur, 2010).

Work values give insights into individuals' evaluative standards, beliefs and preferences (e.g. Dose, 1997). Understanding and meeting the work values preferences of staff lies at the core of employee retention (e.g. Lester & Kickul, 2001) and the majority of relevant management literature does not take account of the complex legislative and values environment of the APS (Taylor, 2005). This will be achieved in this study through exploration of the values of a cohort of Generation Y students and Generation Y APS employees, contrasted with the views of their managers. While empirical attempts at defining the work values of Generation Y have been undertaken, albeit in a limited manner, few of these are applied to a specific theoretical structure (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Deal, Altman & Rogelberg, 2010).

The theoretical framework of this research is based upon the employment relationship, here conceptualised through notions of the psychological contract and theory of person-organisation fit (e.g. Lewin, 1951; Terborg, 1981; Chatman, 1989; Rousseau, 1989; 1995; 2001). A key assumption underpinning both psychological contract and person-organisation fit conceptualisations is that the success of the employment relationship rests on a degree of shared values between employee and employer (Chatman, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Carless, 2005). A work values perspective expands understanding of the psychological contact by including ideological components (see O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009). Today, social values and beliefs are "playing a more influential role than previously in shaping the attitudes and behaviour
of individuals and organisations towards the employment relationship" (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009, p.251). By studying social and ideological components of the psychological contract in the context of the APS, this study recognises the growing significance of the interrelatedness of the psychological contract and the social context. With its focus on work values, this examination predominantly considers relational and 'ideal' aspects of the psychological contract. Ultimately, the worth of the psychological contract to this examination lies in the suggestion that organisations have changed (e.g. Hooper, 2006; Salt, 2006) or ought to change (e.g. Sheahan, 2005) their human resource management strategies to account for the work values of Generation Y. An organisation that considers and accommodates differences in psychological contracts between groups of employees will be better placed to create targeted human resource strategies that will likely have a positive affect on “attendance, productivity, and turnover” (Freese & Schalk, 1996, p.508).

1.4.2 Practical Contributions

The literature suggests that organisations should respond to Generation Y work values through realignment of their respective management processes (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Sheahan, 2005; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Without an accurate picture of the work values of Generation Y in the APS setting, the APS risks adapting existing management practices to match values that may not be relevant to this public sector setting, and as Yu and Miller (2003) succinctly state:

“Management decisions based on valid models of employee characteristics are much more likely to achieve success than those based on wrong or inappropriate assumptions.” (p.38)
This research focuses on a single employer: the APS – an umbrella term for 98 separate employer agencies (APSC, 2010). The APS was chosen due to its demonstrated interest, through publications such as ‘Managing and Sustaining the APS Workforce’ (APSC, 2005), in addressing the workforce implications of an assumed generational work values shift. Additionally, the APS faces significant pressures from an ageing workforce (APSC, 2003b), when compounded with a strong labour market providing prospective employees with a high degree of choice, it becomes important that employee retention rates are as high as possible (APSC, 2003b). To place this problem in a broader context, Australian National Audit Office (2003) data suggest that a mere one percent reduction in turnover in the APS would equate to an annual saving of $60 million, which creates significant financial impetus for improving staff retention. The utility of work values lies in the suggestion that the degree of congruence between an organisation’s work values and those of its staff predict workplace outcomes including staff satisfaction and turnover intention (Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007).

1.5 Summary

This chapter introduces the study’s aims of understanding the nature and effectiveness of the Generation Y employment relationship from a work values perspective. The research context of the Australian Public Service (APS) is described including the key staffing and retention challenges facing the organisation.

Evaluation of the employment relationship is facilitated through an expanded view of the psychological contract that focuses on social values in the APS context. Theory of
the psychological contract is complemented by person-organisation fit theory, suggesting that effective employment outcomes arise from alignment between the work values of an individual and those of their organisation (e.g. Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Research has been lacking in how values-based contexts influence employee preferences for particular work arrangements and management styles, and much of the Generation Y management literature does not take account of the complex legislative and values environment of the APS (Taylor, 2005). The APS has identified retention of Generation Y, almost one-third of its workforce (APSC, 2010), as a strategic concern (APSC, 2005). However, without an adequate description of these needs and values in the unique APS setting, the APS risks making ill-informed human resources decisions which may act against staff retention. This chapter describes how public sector employees are said to uphold a work ethic featuring a strong values motivation (Taylor, 2005), suggesting that a specific APS workplace focus is necessary to unlock a true understanding of Generation Y employee retention and turnover for this values-based public sector organisation.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

Chapter two examines the body of extant theory and literature from diverse theoretical backgrounds to provide a unified picture of Generation Y as a workplace cohort. Generation Y is examined from a work values standpoint grounded in an APS setting. Work values are viewed in the context of the employment relationship, conceptualised using notions of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit.
Chapter three outlines the qualitative research design used to interpret work values and understand the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship. A social constructionist methodology aims to describe how Generation Y and their managers construct systems of meaning and value within the APS context. Specifically, language, as a medium of data collection and analysis, is used to describe work values, and from this infer certain work behaviours characteristic of an effective (or ineffective) Generation Y-APS employment relationship. Chapter three also outlines how elements of Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory method are utilised to collect and analyse data in the context of a work values framework.

Findings in chapter four provide an integrated view of Generation Y work characteristics through exploration of the work values of a cohort of Generation Y participants, comprised of final-year university students ($N = 161$) and APS employees ($N = 60$). In chapter five, data from the APS-employed Generation Y cohort are contrasted with the views of APS managers ($N = 20$) to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship. These findings are discussed with reference to existing theory and literature.

Finally, chapter six discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the findings outlined in chapters four and five and applies these to address the research questions. Implications are grounded in notions of an expanded psychological contract, person-organisation fit and the suitability of specific work values in an APS setting. Chapter six concludes with an examination of the limitations of this research and a discussion of areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an examination of extant theory and literature from diverse theoretical backgrounds to provide a unified picture of Generation Y as a workplace cohort. Generation Y is examined from a work values standpoint grounded in an Australian Public Service (APS) setting. Work values are viewed in the context of the employment relationship, conceptualised using notions of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit.

2.1.1 Theoretical Overview

The central tenet of this research is that each body of literature outlined in Figure 2.1 cannot be viewed in isolation and is essential to a complete understanding of Generation Y as a workplace concept. Similarly, when viewed in isolation, none will provide an adequate account of the human resource implications of managing this generational group.

To understand and evaluate the effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship, it is important to take into account the literature dedicated to work values. Because work values refer to individual and group preferences for particular work and working arrangements, they provide an important lens into contextual factors that shape workplace attitudes and behaviours, such as organisational commitment and turnover intentions (Beyer, 1981; Lester & Kickul, 2001; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).
Attention will be paid to the broader sociological representations of Generation Y in an attempt to understand the social aetiology of the concept. Following from decades of sociological debate (e.g. Mannheim 1952; Berger, 1960; Spitzer, 1973; Kertzer, 1983; Pilcher, 1994), there exists a vast body of critical research that examines the theoretical basis of generations. The body of literature dedicated to work values will also be examined to accurately define the nature of work values and how these relate to work and human resource practices. This will be followed by a review of representations of Generation Y as workforce participants, seeking to uncover their purported work values, with a view to creating a picture of the organisational implications of this nascent workforce cohort. Combined with aspects specific to the public sector setting, this will present a holistic view of Generation Y as APS employees. Finally, the literature review considers the nature of the Generation-APS employment relationship in terms of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit theory.

\[ \text{Figure 2.1} \]
Review of the Generation Y literature.
2.1.2 Approach to Literature Review

To locate the literature relating to Generation Y, their work values and corresponding associations to their employment in the context of the public service, a systematic review was undertaken using the ProQuest Business database. The search included six business-related databases (EconLit; ERIC; OxResearch; ProQuest Australia and New Zealand News Stand; ProQuest Central), including dissertations and theses (ProQuest Dissertations and Theses A&I), for the period 1990-2011. Search results are listed in Table 2.1. The primary body of Generation Y literature used in this study arose from the ‘Generation Y and work values’ literature, despite being a minority in the overall volume of research. This body of literature provided the highest degree of fit with the research aims and questions. A number of theses examining Generation Y were included in this search, although none proved relevant to this study beyond offering a broad review of the workforce implications of generational work values transition.

Table 2.1
Generation Y literature search results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Term</th>
<th>Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Values</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Employees</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Workplace</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Employment</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Australia</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Public Sector</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Work Values</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Psychological Contract</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y AND Employment Relationship</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Public Service AND Generation Y</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Generation Y as a Social Phenomenon

The question of how a generation is defined has been the topic of sociological debate for many decades (Jaeger, 1985), resulting in a significant body of critical literature and theory. Generation Y, as a term, is popularly reported (e.g. Huntley 2006) as owing its origins to the title of a book authored by Douglas Coupland in 1996 – *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. That is, Generation Y owes its title to being the generation that follows Generation X\(^3\). Among the first to consider the concept of Generation Y as an entity *per se* (albeit under a different title – ‘Millennials’) were Strauss and Howe (1991) in their detailed historical examination of American generations, although the genesis of Generation Y shares a strong footing with the world of advertising as a demographic marketing demarcation (Martin & Turley, 2004).

In addition to the title ‘Generation Y’, this group is known by a number of titles, including: ‘Echo Boomers’ (e.g. Harris, 2005); ‘Millennials’ (e.g. Howe & Strauss, 2000); the ‘Net Generation’ (e.g. Skiba, 2006); ‘Nexters’ (e.g. Marshall, 2004); ‘Generation Me’ (e.g. Twenge, 2006); the ‘Options Generation’ (Mackay; 2007), and the tongue-in-cheek ‘Generation Why’ (e.g. Allerton, 2001; Chester, 2002). However, as Heath (2006) suggests, the actual members of Generation Y typically neither use nor acknowledge the "*banal and generic*" (p. xvi) title ‘Generation Y’. In this sense Generation Y appears to be a term created by another generation in what may have been an attempt to understand changes to existing thoughts and ideals (Crawford, 2006).

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\(^3\) Authors such as Carruthers (2004), Huntley (2006), and Meier and Crocker (2010) are incorrect in ascribing the term ‘Generation X’ to Coupland (1996) – the expression ‘Generation X’ had been in use for decades prior to Coupland’s espousal. Hamblett and Deverson (1964) were the first to widely use the term to describe the social trends among teenagers of the mid 20th century. Interestingly, Generation X was first used to describe the Baby Boomers, not their children.
Examinations of Generation Y largely overlook the literature and theory underlying the generation concept, instead choosing to rely on simplified notions of generations. For the most part, authors choose to rely upon birth-date ranges to define Generation Y. This approach has lead to major variation in the reported birth dates of this group. From a sample of 20 generation-related articles (see Table 2.2) the ‘average’ birth-date range to qualify for Generation Y membership was calculated as starting in 1977 and ranging to a latest possible qualifying birth date of 1982. The same sample of articles showed a variation of 21 years in the latest possible qualifying year for Generation Y; the latest potential birth date to be considered a member of Generation Y ranged from 1984 to 2005!

Although this method of defining Generation Y is clearly not that robust, it is nonetheless the foundation on which the majority of Generation Y literature is based, and for the purpose of this examination cannot be discounted without severely restricting the body of useable literature. Despite authors such as Chester (2002) and Sheahan (2005) advocating the importance of this group, there remains a limited range of literature dedicated to the work values of Generation Y (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010). Instead, discussions predominantly focus on broad social trends among this group (e.g. Huntley, 2006; Salt, 2006), with occasional inference made as to what these social values imply for workforce behaviour. This assumes that broad generational characteristics and behaviours will necessarily translate to an organisational setting. That is, authors make the presumption that values and behaviours directly translate from one social setting (e.g. family homes) to another (e.g. workplaces). Psychological evidence suggests this is unlikely to be the case given
individuals and groups tend to identify differently with particular referents in the context of different social settings (e.g. Tajfel, Flament, Billig & Bundy, 1971).

Table 2.2
Composite generation birth-date ranges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>BABY BOOMERS</th>
<th>GENERATION X</th>
<th>GENERATION Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**AVERAGE BIRTH DATE RANGE**


\(^4\) Wilson & Foltz (2005) do not define an exact age range *per se*, rather they state that Generation Y "...were born from 1981 to the present..." (p.125). The ‘end date’ for Generation Y is thus taken as 2005, the date of the article’s publication.
2.2.1 Epistemology of Generational Differences

Across history the entrance of new generations has been accompanied by a degree of conflict between the values of the new and the values of the old (Foner, 1984; Strauss & Howe, 1991). For example, Harris (1992) delves into narratives of historical myths to expose generational conflict into antiquity, in this case, ancient Mesopotamia (circa 2000-1000 BCE) showing that the problem of generation change has an ancient lineage.

Hazlett’s (1992) question “Who am I in relation to history, to the present world [and] to others?” (p.81) succinctly exposes the key concepts underlying notions of generations. He describes a generation concept inextricably linked to comparison – comparison to what has passed, what exists now, and comparison to other groups/individuals within society. Hazlett (1992) exposes a central concept of generations: a contrast between the young and the old. As Kertzer (1983) and Hazlett (1992) note, discussions of generational differences are inextricably linked with attempts to reconcile the new and challenging attitudes of youth with the predominant attitudes and norms of their predecessors. Generations are thus founded on the concepts of challenge, change, replacement and renewal (Kertzer, 1983).

2.2.2 Defining a Generation

Jaeger (1985), in his seminal examination of generations in history, poses the questions:

“Are [generations] primary (that is, biologically caused) manifestations, and consequently do they occur at regular intervals? Or are they secondary manifestations based on definite external events and facts, which therefore would have to occur at completely irregular intervals?” (p.273)
These two questions expose a recurrent theme in Generation Y literature: the tendency for researchers to attempt to add validity to the notion of genealogically governed generational groups (defined by birth-date ranges) by intertwining age ranges with significant historical events. However, the two methods of generational definition (time-related and event-related) may not be as complementary as would immediately appear, for each method suggests a fundamentally different basis for the generation; one which is steady and progressive, and the other which is erratic and unpredictable and more likely to create a societal zeitgeist than influence individual age groups (Spitzer, 1973).

The hypothesis that historical events exert causal influence on collective attitudes and behaviour (termed the ‘imprint hypothesis’; see Jaeger, 1985) is frequently cited as a foundation for the values of Generation Y (Jackson, 2004). Howe and Strauss (2000) suggest events such as the murders at Columbine High School, the war in Kosovo, the death of the Princess of Wales and the fall of the Berlin Wall as significant factors underlying the creation of the Generation Y values set. Similarly, Hagevik (1999) affords significant importance to events such as Desert Storm and the Oklahoma City bombing in the formation of Generation Y values. However, if historical events are to exert influence, it stands to reason that such events will influence all members of a society alive at that time, regardless of age (Jackson, 2004), which is incongruent with typical reports of Generation Y, who are said to uphold a distinct set of values compared to preceding generations (e.g. Chester, 2002).
Despite this criticism, the imprint hypothesis may still provide some utility in explaining the values of Generation Y. Jaeger’s (1985) comment that there exists distinct ‘formative years’ in the lives of individuals hints that while significant events inevitably exert influence at a societal level, there is potential for such events to be branded with a different significance depending on one’s stage of life. This follows from Mannheim (1952) who suggests individuals are more responsive to social phenomena occurring during their formative years\(^5\) – as Roberts (1986) states “The more atypical these [social] events, the more likely the youths’ generation will differ from those of their elders” (p.75). Research such as that by Roberts and Lang (1985) suggests qualified support for this hypothesis, while noting the existence of moderating factors such as socio-economic status.

Among those critical of the distinctiveness of Generation Y as a cohort (e.g. Matchett, 2006; 2008), the ‘life stage’ argument is often cited to defend this position. The life stage argument does not reject notions of generations \textit{per se}, but rather suggests differences evident across the age strata of a society are the result of phases of development that affect each individual’s attitudes and values across time. As Abrams (1970) states:

\begin{quote}
"As individuals pass out of the age span they abandon the attitudes, affiliations and roles of the age group. A generation [however] represents a more fundamental freezing of consciousness."
\end{quote}

\(^5\) Mannheim (1952) considers these formative years range from 17-25 years of age.
Following from Abrams’ (1970) statement above, life stages and generations are not mutually exclusive – life stage-based characteristics can exist within generations, but a life stage is not in itself sufficient grounds to define a generation (Spitzer, 1973).

Where Abrams (1970) describes a reserved and broad notion of life stages, Strauss and Howe (1991) are far more prescriptive in their description of four distinct life stages:

"Youth (age 0-21). Central role: dependence (growing, learning, accepting protection and nurture, avoiding harm, acquiring values)."

*Rising Adulthood* (age 22-43). Central role: activity (working, starting families and livelihoods, serving institutions, testing values).

*Midlife* (age 44-65). Central role: leadership (parenting, teaching, directing institutions, using values).

*Elderhood* (age 66-87). Central role: stewardship (supervising, mentoring, channelling endowments, passing on values)." (p.60)

Under Strauss and Howe’s (1991) model, Generation Y currently straddles the ‘youth’ and ‘rising adulthood’ phases of life. Despite a degree of variation in individual context and experience, a generation nonetheless maintains a consistency of belief or attitude over its lifecycle (e.g. Abrams, 1970; Spitzer, 1973; Strauss & Howe, 1991), suggesting a more stable underlying concept of similarity must coexist with life stages to adequately define a generation.

2.2.3 *A Working Definition of Generations*

Providing a comprehensive definition of a generation is fraught with difficulty, as Abrams (1970) notes:
"The more rigorous one tries to be [in defining a generation] the more contrived and unrealistic one's definition is likely to look." (p.175)

While the notion of Generation Y based solely on a single underlying concept (e.g. historical events, a shared birth-date range or a life stage) will not withstand rigorous cross-examination, such definitions are nonetheless used widely across extant literature. Ultimately, any definition of Generation Y appears to be a trade-off between theoretical rigour and practical utility.

As a practical definition, generation in this account refers to a biological and temporal transition of psychological and behavioural tendencies from parent to sibling, moderated by social-environmental factors that affect individuals in a similar enough manner as to create a cluster of comparable work values between members.

2.3 Work Values

The concept of work values is central to an understanding of Generation Y in the workplace, as it is the nature of their work values that purportedly sets them apart as unique (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000). Spates (1983) considers values as "the ultimate rationales of action" (p.28), with values acting as a foundation for an individual's attitudes and behaviour. Work values have intrinsic meaning and importance to all members of an organisation or social group. As core cognitive beliefs, values transcend specific situations and serve as guiding principles in people's lives (Schwartz, 1994). Values not only mould a person's long-term preferences and behaviour, they are also central to defining the identity of a person (Kluckhohn, 1951), organisation (Albert & Whetten, 1985), or social-professional group (Ibarra, 1999).
Various definitions of work values are proffered across the literature. Sagie et al. (1996) offer a succinct definition: "...the importance individuals give to a certain outcome obtained at [a] work context" (p.503). However, this does not acknowledge factors that may accrue directly from work, yet exert influence well beyond the workplace per se, including professional prestige and work-life balance (Jackson, 2004). Lyons et al. (2006) account for this in their definition:

"...generalized beliefs about the desirability of certain attributes of work... and work-related outcomes... work values act as the criteria that an individual uses in selecting appropriate work-related behaviors and goals." (p.607)

Lyons et al.'s (2006) definition cannot wholly account for factors such as work-life balance which are external to work yet only achieved through work activities. Wayne's (1989) definition of work values accounts for these shortfalls, and despite being created over twenty years ago, remains pertinent to a modern context (Jackson, 2004):

"...the usefulness, importance, or general worth that a person assigns to some behavior or conception of work (e.g. physical effort and length of time on task/job) and nonwork activities (e.g. leisure, benefits, and rewards)." (p.793)

Wayne's (1989) definition acknowledges that work values exert influence before employment has commenced, during employment, and also extend to concepts that may prima facie appear external to work.

Ultimately, work values are regarded as valuable frames of reference for understanding the "unique psychodynamic processes individuals introject into work settings" (Rousseau & Tioriwalala, 1998, p.682) as they contain the cognitive reasoning for judging the rights and wrongs of behaviour. Implicit in this argument is the proposition
that individuals and groups act in ways consistent with their cherished beliefs and values, and these in turn can explain what binds groups together and discourages interaction with some other groups (Beyer, 1981). Consistent with the view that work values provide the cognitive reasoning for understanding why individuals and groups prefer certain work settings and structures, work values for the purposes of this study are defined as:

"...evaluative standards relating to work or the [APS] work environment by which individuals discern what is ‘right’ or assess the importance of [their] preferences". (Dose, 1997, pp. 227-228)

Johnson (2002)\(^6\) provides a useful extension to the concept of values through her identification of work rewards that underlie and define superordinate values structures. Johnson (2002) identifies seven types of work rewards, outlined in Table 2.3 below.

The importance of Johnson’s (2002) addition of a rewards structure to the concept of values arises by highlighting that work values are a higher-order reflection of value only realised through achieving certain outcomes, in this sense conceptualised as rewards. That is, rewards become the outcome of the application of values. In addition to providing a framework for operationalising work values, Johnson’s (2002) rewards structure also closely relates to the Generation Y work values and characteristics identified by Jackson (2004), heightening its relevance to this research study.

\(^6\) Based closely on the research of Herzog (1982) and Marini, Fan, Finley and Beutel (1996).
Table 2.3
Johnson’s (2002) work value reward taxonomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REWARD CATEGORY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Extrinsic rewards are classified into two subcategories. Instrumental rewards can be defined as ‘a means to an end’ in that they facilitate other situations or achievements. The nature of status-attainment rewards is self-evident from the title. Extrinsic rewards include factors such as income, career advancement opportunities and prestige.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Instrumental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Status-Attainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td>Intrinsic rewards represent the inherent interest of work and include factors such as learning potential and the opportunity for creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
<td>Security rewards relate to stability in the role and organisation and traditional notions of employment stability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Influence</strong></td>
<td>Influence rewards relate to the opportunity to exercise power through involvement in decision making and can also be provided by challenging work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altruistic</strong></td>
<td>Altruistic rewards arise from doing things for others or making a contribution to society or performing a ‘greater good’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Social rewards arise from interpersonal interaction and positive relations with colleagues and associates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure</strong></td>
<td>Leisure rewards relate to the possibility of free time and holidays. Leisure rewards are also reflected in the ability to earn freedom from supervision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Johnson (2002).

Work values change has been linked to a society’s economic prosperity (Ali, Falcone & Azim, 1995; Jackson, 2004). That is, as a society grows, prospers and develops economically, the importance it places on the various aspects of work changes to meet its new circumstance. It is feasible that the relative wealth of Australian skilled workers has placed them in a position to afford more frequent and expensive leisure pursuits than previous generations, which has seen work values shift from those related to the accumulation of wealth to those related to enjoying this wealth (Ali et al., 1995; Ralston et al., 1999; Jackson, 2004). This displays that along with personal factors, external factors such as a society’s broader prosperity inevitably influence individuals’ work
values\textsuperscript{7}. Thus, the broader social-economic environment interacts with a person’s needs and values to shape their expectations and behaviour (Connor & Becker, 1977).

2.3.1 Public Service Work Ethics/Values Clusters

As core cognitive beliefs, work values underpin a range of work attitudes and behavioural intentions (e.g. Pennings, 1970; Connor & Becker, 1975; Marsh & Mannari, 1977). A series of work values may be synthesised to form what is popularly reported as a ‘work ethic’ or a ‘values cluster’ (Jackson, 2004). Individuals upholding such work ethics have adopted a distinct collection of work values and attitudes which are ultimately expressed as a pattern of behaviour (McCortney & Engels, 2003), as Buchholz’s (1978) definition succinctly states:

"[A work ethic is] a tightly integrated set of beliefs that form[s] a system and fit[s] into a coherent pattern..." (p.451)

The importance of value clusters lies in their predictive utility. That is, values clusters enable employers to predict the likely behaviour of their employees, assuming that individuals act in ways consistent with their underlying beliefs (Furnham, 1997).

Public sector employees and those that actively seek a career in the government sector are reported to uphold a distinct work ethic (e.g. Bellante & Link, 1981; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Taylor, 2005; 2010). Typically described across the literature as a ‘public sector motivation’ or ‘public service ethos’ (e.g. Vandenabeele, 2010), this work ethic is based on principles such as an attraction to policy-making, a dedication to affecting social

\textsuperscript{7} Quiggin (2009) takes a step further by linking the generation debate \textit{per se} with economic fluctuations: "If there is one thing more inevitable than the ups and downs of the business cycle, it is the generalisations about generations that accompany every phase of the cycle" (p.58).
change, serving a greater good, self-sacrifice and impartiality (see Perry, 1996; Vandenabeele, 2010). The importance of this specific public sector motivation arises from the suggestion that (the degree of) its expression is suggested to affect “job choice, job performance, and organizational effectiveness” (Perry, 1996, p.6). However, aside from exploratory examinations where Generation Y is concerned (e.g. Taylor, 2005), the prevalence or relevance of this public service ethic is yet to be explored in detail.

### 2.4 Generation Y in the Workplace

Although employees place differing weight on various work values at different stages of their careers (Gould & Hawkins, 1978; Jans, 1989; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989; Lynn, Cao & Horn, 1996; Super, Savickas & Super, 1996), the career stage approach alone cannot adequately account for the reported value differences between generations (Weiss, 2002; Jackson, 2004; Dychtwald et al., 2006). The central importance of Generation Y as a workplace cohort arises from its purported abandonment of existing workplace values, for as Jackson (2004) states:

> "...if each new generation espoused identical expectations and values to those preceding, [generational] change in workplace composition would hardly rate a mention..." (p.2).

Many commentators report that Generation Y work values are readily distinguishable from Generation X (Zemke et al., 2000), and in some cases the antithesis of work values typical to the Baby Boomers (e.g. Hagevik, 1999; O’Reilly, 2000; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Salt, 2003; Eisner, 2005; Sheahan, 2005; Heath, 2006).
2.4.1 Generation Y Work Characteristics

The literature provides a degree of consistency between the various work characteristics\(^8\) that are ascribed to Generation Y. Table 2.4 summarises work characteristics ascribed to Generation Y across a sample of twenty-five commentaries and journal articles over the last decade.

The significance of these characteristics is summarised frequently in extant literature: organisations failing to meet the needs of Generation Y will find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain these younger workers (e.g. Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010). Indeed, as Arnold and Mackenzie-Davey (1992) suggest, misalignment between an individual’s work expectations and values and their organisation’s values often results in increased staff dissatisfaction and consequent turnover. Heath (2006) puts it more plainly in his scathing critique of Baby Boomer culture when he states that refusing to acknowledge generational values shifts will “...see generational change become generational conflict in our time...” (p.xv).

2.4.2 Generation Y and Work-Life Balance

One of the most commonly discussed work values of Generation Y is their purported desire to achieve an appropriate work-life balance. As Eisner (2005) notes, Generation Y tend to value a career that allows an active and quality social life, and in this sense

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\(^8\) For the purposes of this discussion, work values, expectations, motivations and behaviours will be clustered under the broad title ‘work characteristics’, and referred to individually where specific aspects are being discussed. This stance is adopted as this section examines Generation Y as a broad workplace cohort and does not focus exclusively on work values. This is not unique; London (1983), Lindsay and Knox (1984), and Boyle et al. (1999), for example, use the term ‘characteristics’ to cluster the various components of individuals’ work values and beliefs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>AUTHORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Committed to personal development. | Zemke et al. (2000)  
Hill (2002)  
Jorgensen (2003)  
Jackson (2004)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)  
Hurst & Good (2009)  
Meier & Crocker (2010) |
Sheahan (2005)  
Lowe et al. (2008)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)  
Hershatter & Epstein (2010)  
Ng et al. (2010)  
Twenge (2010) |
| Expect inclusion in workplace decision making (consultative management). | Howe & Strauss (2000)  
O’Reilly (2000)  
Zemke et al. (2000)  
Hill (2002)  
Jorgensen (2003)  
Westerman & Yamamura (2007)  
Lowe et al. (2008)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)  
Hurst & Good (2009)  
Meier & Crocker (2010)  
Ng et al. (2010) |
| Impatience, place a high value on technology, require constant stimulation. | Martin & Tulgan (2001)  
Chester (2002)  
Jorgensen (2003)  
Sheahan (2005)  
Stanton-Smith (2005)  
Huntley (2006)  
Westerman & Yamamura (2007)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)  
Hershatter & Epstein (2010)  
Meier & Crocker (2010)  
Ng et al. (2010) |
Sheahan (2005)  
Hurst & Good (2009)  
Kowske et al. (2010)  
Twenge (2010) |
Zemke et al. (2000)  
Jackson (2004)  
Sheahan (2005)  
Lowe et al. (2008)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008) |
| Sceptical/distrustful towards organisations. | Chester (2002)  
Jackson (2004)  
Sheahan (2005)  
Westerman & Yamamura (2007)  
Lowe et al. (2008) |
Loughlin & Barling (2001)  
Jackson (2004)  
Eisner (2005)  
Sheahan (2005)  
Oliver (2006)  
Cennamo & Gardner (2008)  
Shaw & Fairhurst (2008)  
Hurst & Good (2009)  
Deal et al. (2010)  
Hershatter & Epstein (2010)  
Meier & Crocker (2010)  
Ng et al. (2010)  
Twenge (2010) |

“work-to-live rather than live-to-work” (p.11). It is suggested that this ‘work to live’ drive may lie with their parents’ Baby Boomer generation, and specifically their inability to successfully attain work-life balance during their own careers (Gardyn,
2000; Oliver, 2006). That is, Generation Y workers’ drive to manage their workload to create a better social, non-work life is a response to seeing their parents fail to achieve this end (O’Reilly, 2000; Loughlin & Barling, 2001). However, the primacy of work-life balance as a driving work value has been challenged by some reports. Zemke et al. (2000) provide a contrasting view:

“...Nexters expect to work more than forty hours a week to achieve the lifestyle they want... [they are] ready to sacrifice personal pleasure for the collective good.” (p.144)

Indeed, Zemke et al. (2000) make no mention of a heightened concern for work-life balance at all in their study of generation change in the workplace.

2.4.3 Generation Y, Technology and Impatience

Another commonly reported characteristic of Generation Y is their affinity with technology, although many accounts of this trait appear stereotypical in origin. For example, Saxby (2004) bases his discussion on the notion that:

“[Generation Y] grew up with Nintendo, Palm Pilots and cellular phones. They use the Internet, email and instant messaging every day and they can process colossal amounts of information quickly.” (p.39)

What Saxby (2004) and other workforce commentators largely fail to provide is a meaningful link between this technology use and work values. Many commentaries are based firmly in the realm of anecdote (e.g. Neil, 2008) and contribute to repetition of this supposed work value in the popular media:

“With a skim decaf latte in one hand, [B]lackberry in the other, mobile glued to ear, and iPod in pocket, it is indisputable that Gen Ys are tech savvy and experiencing overstimulation of gastronomic (sic) proportions.” (p.10) (emphasis added)
Stanton-Smith (2005) is one of the few authors that attempts to create any cogent link between frequent technology use – in this case video games – and work characteristics, suggesting that young video gamers’ approach to gaming mirrors their approach to work. That is, Generation Y workers actively seek challenges, are resourceful in solving problems, expect rewards for input (vs. output), and ultimately, aim to win.

Technology has been suggested as the root cause of many Generation Y work traits; for example, their purported impatience (Huntley, 2006) and their requirement for constant challenges, stimulation, and work variety (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). Typically, such commentary is based on the following reasoning: technology (and the information it provides) is constantly changing, creating an environment where transient stimuli predominate. As Generation Y are avid users of technology, and also display traits that approximate the characteristics of this technology, one must cause the other – a classic case of confusing correlation with causation. This reasoning is implicit in many accounts, for example in Sheahan’s (2005) statement:

"When we talk about Generation Y, we are talking about a generation that knows no other world than one filled with... the internet, mobile phones, Sony Playstation, Apple iPods and DVDs.” (p.63)

Sheahan (2005) uses this observation to justify his suggestion that Generation Y craves interactive work environments – a workplace without such high-paced excitement inevitably leads to boredom and thought of leaving. There appears to be no evidential basis to such arguments; they are anecdotal and based largely on the stereotyped information reported to be common in extant literature (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Crawford, 2006). Ultimately, accounts of Generation Y being challenge-seeking,
impatient 'stimulus junkies' (Chester, 2002; Sheahan, 2005) expecting instant
gratification must be taken with caution – there is simply no empirical evidence to
support this notion (Crawford, 2006).

Although it is suggested that the modern rate of technological change is unique to
Generation Y (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000), it can equally be argued preceding generations
have been exposed to much more persistent change than have Generation Y (O’Reilly,
2000; Jackson, 2004; Deal et al., 2010), for most of whom the Internet has always
existed. Without supporting evidence, it appears claims that Generation Y technology
use is driving their work values are tenuous. Accounts of Generation Y (e.g. Sheahan,
2005) have gone so far as to imply direct causal links between the instancy of the
Internet and a supposed Generation Y desire for instant gratification, which Crawford
wryly suggests ‘...[makes] the modern workplace [sound] more like a crèche for two
year-olds than a place for skilled, independent workers’ (p.58).

2.4.4 Generation Y, Teamwork and Consultative Management

A Generation Y preference for teamwork and consultative management has been
suggested to share a common causal basis in family life. Hill (2002) offers the
suggestion that the supposed Generation Y preference for teamwork arises from their
parents’ non-competitive approach to raising children. Hill (2002) goes on to state that
this approach is most evident in the way Generation Y were taught to play sports as
children, that is, in a manner that favoured the collaborative process of participation
over outright victory. In addition to proposing antecedents to the ‘teamwork trait’, Hill
(2002) poses the notion that this characteristic may have negative implications by
creating a tendency for Generation Y to confuse work effort (input) with work achievement (output). The organisational implications of this premise are significant. If Generation Y employees consider that activity itself justifies reward, then this clearly represents a challenge to long-standing organisational practice.

In endeavouring to provide insight into the Generation Y preference for teamwork, O’Reilly (2000) and Howe and Strauss (2000) proffer family life as an antecedent. However, the accounts of these authors are incongruent. For example, O’Reilly (2000) indirectly suggests that a lack of cohesive family bonding and interaction lead to Generation Y children seeking this human interaction via friendship networks. In contrast, Howe and Strauss (2000) infer that more attached and nurturing family relationships have seen Generation Y grow to become comfortable with a higher degree of interpersonal interaction and collaboration. Ultimately, each account maintains a degree of credence in explaining Generation Y preferences for teamwork, although neither can be realistically assessed without reference to a specific social situation or workplace context (Deal et al., 2010). Further, commentary published over ten years ago can realistically provide only very limited insight into (the then) newly emerging work characteristics of Generation Y.

As the literature suggests, this Generation Y preference for consultative management and inclusion in workplace decision-making may find Generation Y disappointed to learn that this nurturing environment does not always exist in the workplace (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000; Hill, 2002; Johnson, 2002).
2.4.5 Generation Y and Job Security

Generation Y are purportedly comfortable with a lack of job security, and this has been linked to their work exploits during younger years (Meyer, Irving & Allen, 1998; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Oliver, 2006), usually jobs undertaken on a casual or temporary basis (Wulff-Pabilonia, 2001). Although this is less persuasive when one considers that for decades prior to the arrival of Generation Y it was commonplace that young people would undertake part-time employment while still attending school (Michael & Tuma, 1984; Schoenhals, Tienda & Schneider, 1998). Finegold, Mohrman and Spreitzer (2002) offer a more compelling argument that younger employees, through market factors and high levels of technical and transferable skill, are able to pick and choose among employment opportunities, leading them "...to focus on employability rather than job security with a particular firm..." (p.659). Paradoxically, this suggests that organisations offering job security may be less desirable than those that do not, as job security may be linked with "seniority-based advancement" (Finegold et al., 2002, p.659), which implies less immediate opportunities for the advancement of younger workers.

2.4.6 Generation Y and Professional Development

Generation Y employees are often reported to hold a strong desire for professional development⁹ (Jackson, 2004). Throughout extant literature, this attribute is often acknowledged (e.g. Zemke et al., 2010; Hill, 2002; Jorgensen, 2003; Hurst & Good, 2009), and to date appears to have gone unchallenged. This is hardly surprising; Maslow (1943) devised seminal theories about the human value for personal betterment

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⁹ For the purpose of this discussion, professional development refers to factors or processes which enhance an individual's opportunities for career or role advancement (Kochanski & Ledford, 2001).
almost seventy years ago. Despite being an undoubtedly obvious and perhaps universal human trait, this supposed value nonetheless remains a central characteristic of Generation Y. Though perhaps it is not the characteristic per se that is important, but rather what it implies: evidence suggests that providing employees with opportunities for professional development creates a more committed workforce less prone to turnover (Scholl, 1981; Taylor & Cosenza, 1998).

2.5 The Employment Relationship

The employment relationship can be defined in terms of three key aspects: economic, legal, and social (e.g. Atchison, 1991). Economic (e.g. financial and remuneration-related aspects) and legal (e.g. contractual) notions of the employment relationship may predominate in general perceptions (Atkinson, 2007) and those relating more specifically to industrial relations matters (see Edwards, 1995). However, it is the social aspects of the relationship that are of most interest to this research through their foundation in psychological and behavioural concepts (Masterson & Stamper, 2003).

The employment relationship refers to the nature of the interaction (and implicitly, the resulting outcomes) between an employer and their employee(s) (Herriot, 2001). The employment relationship is not an organisational metric per se, but is rather a rubric that encompasses a range of psychological and theoretical concepts and meanings (Masterson & Stamper, 2003). Herriot (2001) employs everyday metaphors to describe typical employment relationships (e.g. family, democracy, partnership), which exposes the core concept of employment relationships: an enduring style of social interaction.
The employment relationship is of central importance to understanding Generation Y in the workplace. Much of the relevant literature is dedicated to the theme that Generation Y workers are demanding more from their employers, suggesting a shift in the balance of employment relationships and providing increased impetus for organisations to respond to these demands as a central component of workforce planning (Lavelle, 2007). While employment relationships are underpinned by an expansive range of factors, two constructs have been chosen to reflect and frame the nature of the employment relationship: the psychological contract and person-organisation fit.

The psychological contract has been used widely across relevant research as a window to the internal dynamics of the employment relationship (Atkinson, 2007) through its focus on mutual perceptions, expectations and notions of reciprocity (see Rousseau, 1989; 1995; 2001): each being a valuable psychological mechanism for examining the work values of Generation Y. Work values are embedded in the psychological contract of individuals as they make choices and reflect on their preferences for different types of work and working arrangements (O’Donohue & Nelson, 2009).

Person-organisation fit complements the nature of the psychological contract through providing an approximate model for the likely outcomes of a values-based employment relationship (Carless, 2005). This is based on the understanding that while generations hold specific work values, so too do organisations and managers as organisational agents (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). Person-organisation fit involves the congruence between these two sets of values (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), in this case the ‘person’ is represented by Generation Y, and the ‘organisation’ by APS managers.
2.5.1 The Psychological Contract: Introduction

First described by Argyris (1960), the psychological contract is an exchange agreement (e.g. Rousseau, 2001; Winter & Jackson, 2006; Bellou, 2007) and represents an individual’s beliefs regarding the mutual obligations between themself and their employer (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). As work values are core cognitive beliefs (see Beyer, 1981), the psychological contract, as a cognitive mechanism, represents a good fit with the theoretical structure of this research.

The psychological contract is unwritten, implicit (Argyris, 1960) and subjective (Rousseau, 1989; 1995; 2001), setting it apart from formal workplace contracts (Lester & Kickul, 2001; Sels, Janssens & Van den Brande, 2004). As Cullinane and Dundon (2006) explain:

"[The psychological contract] seeks to go beyond the limitations of the legal contract of employment – which focuses exclusively upon the formalized aspects of work – and, instead, considers some of the subjective and normative elements associated with people management..." (p.115)

2.5.2 The Psychological Contract: Socio-Cognitive Dimensions

The psychological contract is useful to this examination through its recognition of the less legalistic aspects of the employment relationship, described by Cullinane and Dundon (2006) as the "socio-cognitive" (p.125) interactions between employee and employer. Much of the Generation Y literature revolves around the urgency of understanding and meeting the values and expectations of this cohort (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001), which implies the existence of a distinct set of Generation Y psychosocial characteristics. Following from Robinson, Kraatz and Rousseau (1994),
who identified distinct components in the psychological contracts of MBA alumni, it is logical that a group purportedly possessing homogenous work values will uphold similar psychological contracts (Shore & Barksdale, 1998; Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003). Furthermore, it also follows that similar dimensions of the psychological contract at an individual level can also be aggregated to form group-wide observations of Generation Y as a distinct cohort.

The psychological contract can be broadly classified in respect to two polar positions: transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1995; O’Donohue et al., 2007). The transactional contract is predominantly financial/economic in nature, short-term and gives rise to explicit terms of performance (O’Donohue et al., 2007). In contrast, relational contracts are more focussed on emotional and cognitive factors and relate to longer-term commitments, and importantly, the terms of performance are not always made explicit (Rousseau, 1995; O’Donohue, et al., 2007). More recently, the psychological contract has expanded to include social and ethical aspects of the employment relationship (O’Donohue & Nelson, 2009). These include principles and causes that link a broader social context to the immediate work environment. These ideological components satisfy a higher-level purpose than transactional aspects (see Bunderson, 2001).

2.5.3 The Psychological Contract: Evaluation

The importance of the psychological contract lies in the supposed outcome(s) of its terms being either fulfilled or breached (Guest, 1998). That is, the results of an individual’s perception that their employer is or is not meeting its obligations. These
outcomes centre on the notion that breach of the psychological contract results in counterproductive workplace behaviours (e.g. Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003; Bellou, 2007), and ultimately, staff turnover (Lester & Kickul, 2001). Conversely, situations where the terms of the psychological contract are being met result in positive workplace behaviours and increased employee commitment (e.g. Lester & Kickul, 2001; Bellou, 2007).

With some members of Generation Y yet to enter the full-time workforce and become active participants in the employment market (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), this poses unique challenges for psychological contract evaluation. Principally, can work values touted or described prior to employment (i.e. arising from descriptions of a work environment or career) be considered part of the psychological contract? That is, could pre-employment messages of potential employers not only set the scene of a workplace (e.g. through career and employment publicity and imagery in the media), but also constitute psychological contract formation in their own right, thereby providing for formation of a psychological contract before an employee sets foot in a new workplace? The fundamental components of psychological contract formation suggest this is likely to be the case, with research explicitly ascribing a role for pre-employment and recruitment messages in psychological contract formation (e.g. Rousseau, 2001; O’Donohue & Wickham, 2008; De Vos, De Stobbeleir & Meganck, 2009). However, a distinction must be drawn between mere expectations/normative beliefs and development of a psychological contract; psychological contracts are necessarily founded on reciprocity, or more simply, the perception of a promise being made by an employer (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Hence, while Generation Y may uphold a
unique psychological contract, it remains firmly within the purview of the organisation to influence and moderate its perceptual nature.

2.5.4 *Public Service Psychological Contracts*

Alongside transactional and relational psychological contracts, the literature suggests the emergence of a psychological contract containing ideological, values-based terms (O’Donohue, et al., 2007). These ideology-infused contracts (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003) provide a role for broader, social factors relating to established principles or causes such as curing the sick, satisfying the needs of the indigenous community settled on ‘sacred lands’, and providing aid and development funds to African nations in drought and famine (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003; O’Donohue, et al., 2007; O’Donohue & Nelson, 2009; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Integral to the formation of ideological contracts is the assumption that individuals and groups seek out organisations that value some common schema as to what constitutes ‘legitimate’, ‘ethical’ and ‘fulfilling’ work and social-political conduct (Bunderson, 2001). The APS provides a role for this ideological foundation through its governing legislation, the *Public Service Act 1999*. For example, section 10(1) of the Act states: "*the APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia’s democratic system of government... and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves.*"

Where traditional notions of psychological contract violation arise from the organisation failing to meet its perceived terms of employment in terms of time-rewards and employer-employee obligations (e.g. Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998), violation of ideology-infused contracts can also arise from perceptions that the organisation has
failed to meet its broader, values-based obligations (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003; Thompson & Hart, 2006). Hence, public service organisations, variously linked to the values-based notions of service, justice/fairness, altruism and ‘the greater good’ (see Crewson, 1997), can expect their employees to be closely attuned to such values and any subsequent perceptions of their breach.

With the majority of APS work being conducted by knowledge workers (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006), the specific elements of the knowledge worker’s psychological contract need to be considered. Knowledge workers are those employees who work with information to create and exploit intellectual capital (Yeh, 2007). This necessitates a high degree of task autonomy and responsibility, and a commitment to ongoing learning, innovation, autonomy and responsibility (Drucker, 1999), which O’Donohue et al. (2007) suggest translates directly into the terms of the knowledge worker’s psychological contract. Rather than a mere transactional approach to employment, the intellectual involvement and investment of the knowledge worker necessitates that knowledge-based organisations consider their employees as an improvable asset, rather than a cost (O’Donohue et al., 2007).

As public service psychological contracts contain ideological components (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003), so too do those of the knowledge worker, with contracts reflecting “a contribution that transcends the organization” (O’Donohue et al., 2007, p.78). More importantly, this is accompanied by the expectation that the organisation will provide an opportunity to make such a contribution (O’Donohue et al., 2007). Thus, knowledge worker psychological contracts must contain terms that the knowledge worker will
"appreciate and believe in" to minimise the opportunity for perceptual breach (Redpath, Hurst & Devine, 2009, p.76).

Hence, the public service context of this research, combined with the coexisting values of the knowledge worker cohort, provides a central role for aspects of altruism, service, mission and ‘ideological currency’; the notion that:

"...employee perceptions about the organization's obligations are not grounded solely in personal entitlements but also in the promotion of a cause they highly value." (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003, p.571)

2.5.5 Person-Organisation Fit

Implicit in the APS-Generation Y employment relationship is the concept that personal and situational factors interact to create workplace actions or outcomes (Lewin, 1951; Terborg, 1981; Chatman, 1989). This relationship is expressed in Lewin's (1951) equation $B = f[P, E]$: behaviour is a function of the person and the environment\(^\text{10}\). This equation suggests that ideal organisational behaviours can be achieved by placing the 'right person' in the 'right environment' (e.g. Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). As Ostroff and Judge (2007) succinctly state: "...when characteristics of people and the work environment are aligned or fit together, positive outcomes result" (p.xiii).

Chatman (1989), who coined the term 'person-organisation fit', explains this is often described in terms of achieving a best fit between an organisation's values and the work values of their respective employees. Carless (2005) expands on this notion by

\(^{10}\text{The unabridged equation is } B = f[P, E] = f[L \times Sp], \text{ where } L \times Sp \text{ represents 'Life Space'.} \)
describing person-organisation (PO) fit in terms of mutual benefit, such that one party provides for the other’s needs and/or they share similar characteristics. Thus, good PO fit, as well as relating to similarity in values structures between the parties, can also infer the existence of a basic exchange relationship whereby the needs of the organisation and the employee are simultaneously met (e.g. the employee provides needed labour, and receives payment in return). This distinction is described as either a supplementary fit, or a complementary fit (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987; Kristof, 1996; Carless, 2005).

Supplementary fit is perhaps the most common concept of PO fit; that which relates to the degree of shared values between an organisation and its employees (Carless, 2005). In contrast, complementary fit “…occurs when the situation and the individual meet each other’s needs” (Carless, 2005, p.412). This can include, for example, the mere filling of a job vacancy or it may expand to include fulfilling the needs of professionals for intrinsically meaningful and challenging work (Oldham, 1976; Baard, Deci & Ryan, 2004). For the purposes of this examination, supplementary fit is of most interest. That is, the degree of congruence between an organisation’s work values and those of its staff (Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007), in this case between the APS and Generation Y.

In the case of the APS, assessing aspects of the organisation side of the values equation is made easier due to the existence of explicit values structures defined in its enabling legislation, the Public Service Act 1999 (see Appendix A). This 1999 version of the Act also provided a significant decentralisation of power providing agency managers with all the rights, duties and powers of an employer (APSC, 2003). When combined with
suggestions that managers’ personal work values share a bi-directional relationship with those of the broader organisation (see Hemingway & Maclagan, 2004; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), and that an organisation’s influential members (i.e. managers) tend to represent the values or culture of the organisation (Schein, 1992; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), the literature suggests that managers’ work values can be considered a reliable representation of those of their overarching organisation.

The importance of PO match arises from the notion that organisational value systems create norms which specify how an organisation’s resources should be allocated and how an organisation’s members ought to behave (Cable & Edwards, 2004). As Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) suggest, a good supplementary fit usually results in “high performance, high satisfaction, and little stress” (p.269). On the other hand, Chatman (1989) suggests three likely scenarios can arise from a low supplementary PO fit:

1. An employee’s values could change to reflect the organisation’s value system.
2. The organisation’s values could change.
3. The employee could leave their organisation.

While these three scenarios are contingent on a raft of psychological and organisational variables, it is the third option that, arguably, should be of most concern to the APS, for outcomes such as staff turnover pose immediate effects on its finances and operations.

An ideal PO fit is founded on a raft of nomothetic (i.e. general) and idiographic (i.e. personal) variables. The majority of literature on Generation Y implies that the key to

11 The concepts of idiographic and nomothetic have their origins in the neo-Kantian philosophy of Wilhelm Windelband and were first applied in the psychological sense (as used here) by Gordon Allport in 1937 (Luthans &
maximising their workplace efficacy lies in organisations’ adaptation to values at a *nomothetic* level due to the purported strength of their congruence between subjects (see Dychtwald et al., 2006). The ‘person’ represented in this notion of PO fit is Generation Y. This is a novel application of PO fit – a theory that typically focuses on the *individual* and their congruence with an organisation’s characteristics (Ostroff & Judge, 2007) with minimal consideration of shared group values or beliefs. While application of nomothetic/group characteristics to a theoretical model of PO fit represents a largely novel adaptation of the theory, the concepts that underlie PO are not alien to this application, with authors such as Kristof-Brown et al. (2007) alluding to a fundamental role for both demographic and idiographic factors in notions of PO fit. Indeed, Chatman (1989) makes a more direct mention of the importance of nomothetic factors:

> "Interactional research in organization settings has generated some concrete findings, but improvements can be made . . . conceptualizations of both persons and situations must be simultaneously idiographic and nomothetic." (p.338)

For Generation Y work values to be applied as a constant factor in the PO fit equation there must be sufficient persisting similarities between cohort members to provide the equation with a predictive pattern. Existing literature suggests this is the case for Generation Y, with commentators (e.g. Sheahan, 2005; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008) reporting a high degree of homogeneity in the work values of Generation Y.

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Davis, 1982; Thomae, 1999). A nomothetic approach is typically represented as focussing on group-wide or generalised approaches, events etc., whereas the idiographic focuses on the individual or a particular event/aspect in/of society or science (Luthans & Davis, 1982).
2.6 Summary

This chapter presents a unified view of Generation Y as a workplace cohort by describing three main streams of research. Firstly, Generation Y work value preferences, secondly Generation Y as a social phenomenon, and finally, the Generation Y employment relationship.

Alignment between an individual’s work values and those of their organisation is crucial to successful employment relationships (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). At the heart of this notion is the ability to accurately identify the values of both an employer and its employees to properly assess the social-relational nature of the employment relationship; operationalised in this study through the theory of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit (e.g. Chatman, 1989; Rousseau, 1989, 1995; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). The utility of these concepts lies in the suggestion that the degree of congruence between an organisation’s work values and those of its staff predict workplace outcomes (Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). Highly skilled, educated APS workers are reported to maintain work values based on making a social contribution or fulfilling a principled cause. Employment contracts based on ‘ideological currency’ (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003) are examined in this chapter in terms of an expanded Generation Y psychological contract.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to interpret work values and understand the nature and effectiveness of the Generation Y-Australian Public Service (APS) employment relationship. Elements of Charmaz’s (2006) grounded theory method are utilised to collect and analyse data in the context of a work values framework. Work values refer to: “...evaluative standards relating to work or the [APS] work environment by which individuals [Generation Y and APS managers] discern what is ‘right’ or assess the importance of [their] preferences” (Dose, 1997, pp.227-228).

3.1 Introduction

A principal aim of this research is to describe how Generation Y constructs their work values preferences in the context of the APS. In addressing this aim, the study employs a social constructionist methodology to infer meaning from words or language using a narrative-based approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Specifically, participants’ language is treated as the medium of analysis since vocabulary, anecdotes and stories provide an authentic means of capturing participants’ values about work, organisation and society more broadly. Language and its construction is not only the basis for deriving Generation Y’s work values, it is also the basis for inferring certain work behaviours associated with an effective employment relationship. This follows the theoretical position that values act as a foundation and guide to an individual’s attitudes and behaviour (Spates, 1983). Or plainly, values infer behaviour (Herbst & Houmanfar, 2009). Therefore, methodologically, this approach considers values as verbal behaviour (Herbst & Houmanfar, 2009).
### 3.1.1 Research Phases

Three research phases are utilised to describe Generation Y’s work values (phase 1, phase 2) and to capture the work values managers in the APS perceive Generation Y to hold (phase 3). Research phases and their associated data collection techniques are shown in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1**
Research phases and relationship to research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH PHASE</th>
<th>RELEVANT RESEARCH QUESTION(S)</th>
<th>OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ONE            | **QUESTION ONE**  
What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?               | Describes the work value preferences for particular working relationships/structural arrangements as reported by a student sample in Canberra (the centre of federal government/APS). Uses a scenario modelling technique. |
| TWO            | **QUESTION TWO**  
What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?                                  | Semi-structured interviews describe the work values of Generation Y employed in the APS at various levels (APS4 to EL1) and contexts (seven APS agencies). |
| THREE          | **QUESTION THREE**  
What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?    | Open-ended responses to a survey completed by APS managers. Questions parallel those of APS-employed Generation Y participants to understand the nature of the employment relationship (Is there balance? Mutuality of understanding? Where are the similarities or differences?). |

All three phases of the research are combined to derive and interpret Generation Y’s work values – from the perspectives of cohorts of Generation Y students considering employment in the APS (phase one), Generation Y employees in the APS (phase two), and APS managers observing Generation Y on a daily basis (phase three). Research phases two and three provide the basis for understanding what constitutes an effective Generation Y-APS employment relationship, thus answering research questions four
Implicit in the definition of an effective employment relationship are the concepts of social exchange, reciprocity and mutual understanding (Rousseau, 1995; Shore & Barksdale, 1998). These concepts infer some common agreement as to what Generation Y expect from and value in an organisation and what they, as perceived by agent managers, value and provide the organisation in return. A level of consistency in espoused work values/Generation Y behaviour is assumed to bind employee (Generation Y) and employer (APS manager) groups together and discourage interaction with other groups (Beyer, 1981). Such consistency is positioned structurally in terms of the key work role demands associated with “fixed and largely taken for granted positions” (Ashforth 2001, p.4) in the APS hierarchy as well as fluid and “negotiable shared understandings” (Ashforth 2001, p.4) of what individual Generation Y and APS managers believe represents acceptable behaviour for a given position.

3.1.2 Qualitative Values-Based Approach

This study follows an interpretive approach rooted in a social constructionist paradigm to draw attention to how Generation Y and APS managers shape social reality around their own work values and work roles. Qualitative methods do not infer adherence to a single research method or tool; instead the research problem shapes the appropriate methods (van Maanen, 1979; Parker & Roffey, 1997; Charmaz, 2006). This research combines three qualitative data collection techniques: scenario modelling, interviews,
and open-ended self-report method. All three techniques create data grounded in participants’ discourse and individual expressive style.

These methods were chosen as they focus on rich personal narrative and language (Douglas, 2003; Charmaz, 2006). As a projective technique, scenario modelling provides a novel means of conveying participants’ values preferences for particular organisational structures and working relationships (Shemmings, 2004). Because participants are forced to give their reasoning for choosing particular structures, properties or ideas, scenario modelling gives valuable insights into the modes of thought and moral meanings individuals assign to particular actions (Sproull, 1981). Assuming individuals and groups act in ways consistent with their underlying beliefs and principles, it is possible to deduce the meanings Generation Y and their managers use to help rationalise and understand their worlds.

Interviews permit detailed questioning of participants which can yield important information about past events and other situations where direct observation is no longer possible (Spradley, 1979). Interviews also afford an opportunity to examine non-verbal cues (i.e. ‘body language’) and voice emphases (Spradley, 1979; Cooper & Schindler, 2006). Moreover, semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires pose no constraints on the type of data that ensue, as participants are free to respond in any manner that best expresses their thoughts. Interviews have the additional benefit of permitting immediate clarification of ambiguity or uncertainty that arises from interviewee accounts (Spradley, 1979; Wengraf, 2001).
As shown in Figure 3.1, language is construed in terms of definitions and experiential meanings conveyed in terms of individual expectations, needs, and responsibilities; language is used to describe work values, and infer work behaviours. Work values are the frames of reference to understand the “unique psychodynamic processes individuals introject into work settings” (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, p. 682). Work values provide the “ultimate rationales of action” (Spates, 1983, p.28) for understanding what is acceptable and effective Generation Y employment behaviour in the context of the APS.

![Figure 3.1](image)

Methodological relationship between language, values and behaviour.

To provide both practical utility and theoretical focus, this research is interpreted through the lens of the employment relationship, referring to the nature of the interaction (and implicitly, the resulting outcomes) between an employer and their employee(s) (Herriot, 2001). Figure 3.2 shows that the employment relationship is predicated on language construction and specifically the extent to which Generation Y and APS managers share similar (or different) perceptual definitions, expectations, and
experiences in regard to working relationships, rewards, and success criteria. The nature and effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship is grounded in the theoretical scope of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit literature.

Figure 3.2
Methodological relationships forming the employment relationship.

3.1.3 Narrative Analysis

The purpose of narrative analysis is to establish how people "impose order on the[ir] flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (Riessman, 1993, p.2). This narrative approach is underpinned by an interpretive stance grounded in work
values. In keeping with this paradigm, narrative analysis is embraced to show how work values govern modes of thought and infuse meaning into the Generation Y employment relationship. Sharing a similar foundation to the discursive approach, this systematic method involves:

"...structured collection of text embodied in the practices of talking and writing... that bring organizationally related objects into being as these objects are produced, disseminated and consumed." (Grant et al. 2004, p.3)

Narrative analysis is founded on a belief that dialogue, language and communication are the primary processes by which people construct the social reality that underpins their sense of identity (Mumby & Clair, 1997; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The narrative approach is a good fit with values-based research as it opens up forms of describing experience drawing on both cultural and linguistic resources in asking "why was the story told that way?" (Riessman, 1993, p.2, emphasis added). In seeking to delve beyond simple linguistic representations of language and explore underlying senses of meaning and complexity (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998), the narrative method represents a good fit with Charmaz's (2006) interpretive approach to grounded theory, outlined below.

3.1.4 Charmaz and the Grounded Theory Approach

While not a grounded theory study, this research nonetheless uses data organisation and analysis aspects of the grounded theory approach of Charmaz (2006), who offers an updated perspective of the pioneering stance of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Grounded theory is an interpretative approach where an understanding of complex qualitative data is inductively derived from a systematic and sequential gathering and analysis process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Parker & Roffey, 1997; Soklaridis,
2009). Grounded theory emphasises emergent themes/theory in data, rather than \textit{a priori} assumptions and preconceptions. Grounded theory has a methodological focus on participants’ own interpretations and meanings (Douglas, 2003), and thus emphasises personal perceptions and interactions (Soklaridis, 2009). The aim of this research is to describe how Generation Y constructs systems of meaning and value, and how this meaning is rooted in participants’ expectations and experiences of a workplace environment. This parallels the grounded theory approach that aims to understand how social and world views are constructed from beliefs and values grounded in the words of respondents (Douglas, 2003; Charmaz, 2006).

\textit{3.1.5 Triangulation of Methods}

While "\textit{all inquiry is laden with values}" (Creswell, 2003, p.183), a number of strategies were employed to heighten the rigour of this research and provide checks and balances across the various research stages. \textit{Triangulation of data} involves employment of data from different sources to verify the robustness and validity of collected data (Morgan & Drury, 2003; Konecki, 2008; Soklaridis, 2009). Aside from qualitative data being cross-checked against a broad body of extant literature, qualitative interview findings were cross-checked against the Australian Public Service Commission’s ongoing \textit{State of the Service} reports. These offer an APS-wide statistical analysis of employee attitudes and workplace metrics, and in many areas provide comparison with results arising from interviews with APS employees. Additionally, participant accounts of APS work values and behaviours are gained from two distinct sources: APS-employed Generation Y participants and APS-employed managers. The sampling of Generation Y student participants across a two-year period also strengthened the validity of work values data.
Triangulation of analysis arises as a by-product of the iterative data analysis and coding method utilised for this research. This analysis is commonly termed ‘negative case analysis’ or ‘negative case methodology’ (see Emigh, 1997), and is defined by re-examination of each case (or individual account) following analysis to establish whether the characteristics of higher-order themes are applicable to all accounts (Bowen, 2005). Such verification eliminates the possibility of conflicting evidence or inaccurate generalisations.

Finally, triangulation of theory refers to “...the employment of various theoretical perspectives to interpret a single set of data” (Konecki, 2008, p.15). Theoretical diversity here arises from data being viewed through the lens of sociological, human resource management and organisational behaviour theory and literature. Each contain a wide array of distinct sub-disciplinary constituents ranging from classical aspects of sociology and generational theory to the more practical considerations of the workplace including the psychological contract, person-organisation fit, and ultimately, the employment relationship.

3.2 Research Phase One – Generation Y Students

Phase one addresses research question one:

**Question One**: What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?

Data from this research phase were gained from student responses to later-year business-related course assignments over a two-year period. While completion of the
assignment was a course requirement, participation in the research was voluntary, and potential participants were advised of this via a project Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix C). Unconditional approval for this research was granted under the Australian National University’s Ethical Protocol for Research Involving Humans (protocol number 2007/0242).

3.2.1 Scenario Modelling

Participants were asked to express their preferences for particular working conditions, structural characteristics, and leadership styles using a scenario-based approach. This involved participants selecting from a list of three organisational settings a workplace scenario that represented a good fit with their own work values preferences. Each of the scenarios contains a range of potentially desirable or undesirable work conditions and structural characteristics typifying a government agency, a large professional services firm, and a small private sector company.

Scenario modelling is a novel means of conveying participants’ values preferences for particular organisations, structures and working relationships. The choice of actual workplaces requires Generation Y participants to justify their choices and thus gives valuable insights into their expectations, needs, and values preferences of organisations. These scenarios are outlined in Table 3.2. As participants and data were drawn from a leadership course, each scenario was grounded in a specific leadership style.

The ‘government agency’ scenario was modelled on descriptions of typical APS working arrangements and associated statistical information taken from the Australian Public Service Commission’s (2007) *State of the Service* report. The ‘large professional
firm’ scenario was modelled on workplace conditions described by Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther (1998), Rubery, Ward, Grimshaw and Beynon (2005), Gstraunthaler and Kaml (2007), van Wanrooy (2007), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008c).

Table 3.2
Workplace scenarios.

SCENARIO ONE (GOVERNMENT AGENCY – EMPLOYEE-CENTRED LEADERSHIP STYLE)

You have joined a well-renowned government agency that administers international aid and development programs. Following completion of a 12-month graduate program, you will progress quickly to the ranks of middle management. Your salary is on par with other agencies and your employer offers paid study leave, professional learning opportunities, and time off in lieu of extra hours worked. Typically, you work about 7.5 hours per day. While you will progress quickly through the lower and middle ranks of the organisation’s hierarchy, it usually takes 20 years before you can enter a senior executive role. You do have a high-degree of job security and you can transfer to other government agencies easily. As this is a government position, there are a lot of processes and procedures that you must follow in your work, and although the organisation does change, this rarely happens quickly.

SCENARIO TWO (LARGE PROFESSIONAL FIRM – DIRECTIVE LEADERSHIP STYLE)

You have joined a large professional firm that offers you a high starting salary that is comparable to a middle manager’s salary in other organisations. You typically work 10-12 hours per day, and sometimes have to work weekends to stay ahead; even though you are not explicitly asked to do so by your managers, this is the company norm. There are opportunities for promotion, and to become a very well paid executive you would have to spend 10-15 years in the organisation. You have a high degree of personal responsibility for your work and can adapt and change existing processes to ensure success. Your organisation is subject to market pressures and client demands and is constantly changing. Your job security is heavily dependent on your performance. The reputation of your employer means that you could easily find other employment, but your salary would be lower than that of your current role.

SCENARIO THREE (SMALL COMPANY – HYBRID LEADERSHIP STYLE)

You have joined a small company that offers a moderate starting salary and a profit-sharing plan. The organisation is quite informal and you have direct access to the CEO and senior staff in a friendly work environment. You are provided with direct involvement in a number of interesting and diverse projects which provide very good opportunities for practical learning that may not be available in larger organisations. While there are only limited opportunities for promotion, the skills and knowledge you gain will be sought after by a number of organisations. Sometimes you have to work long hours, but the pace is generally easy to manage. You are expected to design and implement your own work processes to achieve required outcomes. As a small organisation, your job security is limited and dependent on market demand.
The 'small company' scenario was created to offer benefits, opportunities and shortcomings not contained in either of the two first-described scenarios. Thus, each scenario contained distinct benefits and drawbacks, forcing participants to consider and evaluate unique employment conditions against their personal system of preferences, values and expectations. Table 3.3 provides a structural comparison of the characteristics, benefits and tradeoffs inherent in each workplace scenario.

Table 3.3
Comparative characteristics of workplace scenarios.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>SCENARIO ONE GOVERNMENT AGENCY</th>
<th>SCENARIO TWO LARGE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRM</th>
<th>SCENARIO THREE SMALL COMPANY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability for innovation</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning opportunities</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
<td>High (practical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to managers</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative salary</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Average – Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Performance-Dependent</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-salary benefits</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for promotion</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation structure</td>
<td>Rigid Hierarchical</td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal role responsibility</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contribution</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task structure</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task variety</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hours</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate/Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Moderate/Variable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64
After selecting a preferred workplace scenario, participants were asked to answer two questions:

1. Describe your job/work needs, values and expectations and how and why these are likely to be met in this chosen scenario.

2. Given the needs, values and expectations you have described, discuss which leader characteristics and what style(s) of leadership would be best suited to your chosen scenario. Also, explain why these are appropriate.

Question one enabled participants to provide a detailed narrative of their work values and preferences for intrinsic job characteristics (task variety, task structure) and working conditions (work-life balance, non-salary benefits, promotion opportunities). Such characteristics have been associated with engaged employees and motivating work environments (e.g. Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Extrinsic 'hygiene' factors such as comparative salary, working hours and job security (Haslam, 2001) were also included as a point of contrast. Also included in the government organisation scenario was the inclusion of a social contribution referent (i.e. ‘administers international aid’) as previous studies suggest public sector employees may have a stronger social work ethic compared to their private sector counterparts (e.g. Bellante & Link, 1981; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Taylor, 2005; 2010). Question two attempted to discern how Generation Y expect to be treated in an organisation by asking participants to state their preferences for particular leadership styles. Responses were thought to illustrate preferences for learning-innovation, personal role responsibility, and access to managers for mentoring and career guidance (e.g. Hill, 2002; Marquardt & Loan, 2005; Hurst & Good, 2009).
3.2.2 Student Participants

Participants were 161 undergraduate students enrolled in commerce programs at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia (Canberra is the national capital and the seat of Federal Government and the Australian Public Service). The total cohort was comprised of data collections from two separate student groups over two university semesters spanning 2007 and 2008. The first cohort contained 70 participants and the second contained 91 participants. Data were collected from participants as part of regular course assignments on an 'opt-in' basis. That is, participants were required to answer work value-related questions as part of their course requirement, but were free to submit (or not) their answers for analysis by providing individual written consent. Mean participant age was 21 years ($SD = 2.05$) and participants ranged in age from 18-27 years (all within the Generation Y age-range). 47 percent of participants were female ($N = 76$).

Research utilising student participants (while only one constituent of this research) has attracted criticism that questions the validity of ensuing data (see Smart, 1966; Dobbins, Lane & Steiner, 1988; Gallander-Wintre, North & Sugar, 2001). These objections were considered and ultimately disregarded for this research as students are not treated as surrogates for a wider, more varied population; they themselves are members of the cohort of interest – Generation Y. The views of Dobbins et al. (1988) were particularly influential in this decision:

"...[g]ood [student] research can provide us with an essential element in external validity: an understanding of the processes which underlie behaviour in work settings." (p.282)
3.3 Research Phase Two – APS-Employed Generation Y

Phase two addresses research question two:

**Question Two:** What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?

### 3.3.1 Sampling Approach

Gaining access to Generation Y participants in the APS proved to be a challenging experience. This specifically related to gaining agency-sponsored access to Generation Y participants currently employed in an APS setting. While a range of APS agencies were approached, many expressed reservations about publication and analysis of data, which would technically remain the property of the Commonwealth of Australia who would retain all intellectual property rights over its subsequent use and application. While some agencies consented to providing interview access to Generation Y staff, the conditions of this access were too restrictive and involved veto rights on data publication and/or excessive demands on the researcher’s time (e.g. through unpaid consultation) in return for this access.

To progress the research, a focused sampling approach was adopted restricted to Generation Y (defined as those ranging from age 18-29 years) participants with experience working as an APS employee with tenure of at least six months. Participants were recruited through ‘viral’ or ‘snowball’ sampling methods (e.g. Cooper & Schindler, 2006) using introduction emails sent to former colleagues of the researcher and through advertisement to students currently enrolled in the Australian National University MBA program. Interviewing APS-employed participants outside of a work setting avoids any corporate data ownership issues or related restrictions on use and has
the added advantage of providing participants with free reign to anonymously discuss their personal work experiences without concern for possible workplace repercussions.

While Miles and Huberman (1994) broadly suggest a sample of 15 is sufficient for qualitative investigations, van Rekom, van Riel and Wierenga (2006) consider that a minimum sample of 25 participants is more suitable to research in a values-based work context. These suggested minimums were exceeded with a final cohort of 60 participants.

3.3.2 Participants

Participants were either tertiary qualified ($N = 55$) or currently working towards such qualifications ($N = 5$). Participants ranged in age from 20 to 29 years, with a mean age of 25.2 years ($SD = 2.2$). 53 percent of participants were female ($N = 32$). Participants' APS workplace tenure ranged from 1 to 8 years, with a mean tenure of 3.3 years ($SD = 1.85$). Participants ranged in work classification from APS4 to EL1.

Participants in this phase of the project were paid for their participation with a $45.00 gift voucher from a national retail chain. Additional approval was sought, and granted unconditionally, for payment of participants under the Australian National University's Ethical Protocol for Research Involving Humans using the existing protocol number 2007/0242. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and potential participants were advised of this via a project Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix D).
3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interviews

Prior to conducting Generation Y interviews, pilot studies were undertaken to refine and develop the research questions, and the research methodology more broadly, using a sample of nine Generation Y lawyers and paralegals. Pilot testing confirmed the efficacy of the planned methodology, and the proposed interview structure was upheld using the Interview Protocol (see Appendix E).

Additional approval was sought, and granted unconditionally, for pilot-testing interviews under the Australian National University’s Ethical Protocol for Research Involving Humans using the existing protocol number 2007/0242. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and potential participants were advised of this via a project Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix E).

Interviews were treated as guided conversations to capture the vocabulary, stories, and anecdotes used by participants to convey their feelings and values towards their work, other social groups and organisation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Accordingly, questions were free to vary slightly or be excluded at the interviewer’s discretion depending on the interviewee’s previous responses and the need to clarify or follow new lines of enquiry (see Soklaridis, 2009). Notes were recorded by the interviewer during each interview and outlined observations including participants’ mood, reactions, mannerisms and other non-verbal information that recording would not capture. Interviews ranged in length from 31 to 58 minutes; the mean interview length was 40.1 minutes ($SD = 5.9$). Interviews were conducted in public places and cafés away from the participant’s workplace. This provided participants with more anonymity in that
they were unlikely to encounter work colleagues and managers, aiding their ability to speak openly and honestly without fear of being overheard.

3.3.4 Interview Questions

Among the central purposes of interviewing participants with APS work experience was a desire to uncover the underlying work values upheld by this group, with the aim of understanding both the actual day-to-day work behaviours displayed by this cohort and also the implicit values present in the APS. In order to ensure that reported values are in fact grounded in everyday organisational behaviour, the ‘laddering’ interview technique was adapted from Bourne and Jenkins (2005). The laddering technique has been shown to be successful in similar research (van Rekom et al., 2006) and offers a cost- and time-effective method of exploring values in an organisational setting (Bourne & Jenkins, 2005) as relatively small samples \((N \approx 20)\) can yield valid and interesting information (van Rekom et al., 2006).

Bourne and Jenkins (2005) argue, based on Kelly’s (1955) Personal Construct Theory, that personal constructs (i.e. values) are based upon a series of dichotomous evaluations of past and present stimuli which are applied in everyday life to create “a better means of anticipating future events” (p.411). Thus, Bourne and Jenkins (2005) imply that individuals are constantly rationalising and evaluating stimuli via comparison of polar opposites. Fundamentally, individuals create templates of their values and experience based upon a limited number of hierarchical bipolar constructs (Kelly, 1955), and as Bourne and Jenkins (2005) state:
"...laddering... is based on the assumption that it should be possible to find points of entry into a person's template or construct system and follow a pathway up the hierarchy to the most superordinate constructs." (p.411)

Each of the questions guiding participant interviews are listed below along with a brief description of their rationale and underlying objective(s):

- **Describe your current/former APS role for me. What are/were the key tasks or demands of the job?**

The above question sets the scene and provides the participant with the opportunity to describe salient aspects of their work role beyond notions of job hierarchy or nominal titles.

- **What made you want to work in the APS?**

This question examines the base motivation underlying participants' decision to undertake APS employment. This question seeks to establish the strength of any direct values-based motivation, similar to what Thompson and Bunderson (2003) term 'ideological currency' – the notion that "...employee perceptions about the organization's obligations are not grounded solely in personal entitlements but also in the promotion of a cause they highly value" (p.571). Aside from more abstract values-based motivations, and notions of intrinsic motivation arising from meaningful work, this question also seeks to expose lower-order motivations that may underlie decisions to seek APS employment, including extrinsic factors such as working conditions and remuneration (e.g. Haslam, 2001), or simply geographical location.
• *How do you describe yourself to others, as: An employee? A public servant? A professional?*

Individuals simultaneously maintain a range of social identities defined by characteristics ranging from gender to professional or organisational affiliation (e.g. Avery et al., 2007). The underlying importance of these identities is the concept that acknowledgement of a specific identity in a specific setting implies a distinct set of behavioural norms and characteristics (e.g. Tajfel, 1972; Haslam, 2001; Avery et al., 2007). This question seeks to understand the salient identity in participants’ schema of work, leading to a greater understanding of likely workplace motivations and values and providing insights into how participants construe their employment relationships. Underpinning this question is the assumption that individuals take on certain social identities in a work setting that align with their positions in the organisation and correspond to their membership of a particular social or professional group (Tajfel, 1972; Ibarra, 1999).

• *How do you define success in your work?*

This question provides participants with an opportunity to define success on an individual level, yet also permits the individual to ground notions of success in their day-to-day role responsibilities. Additionally, as the sample cohort for this phase of research is comprised of knowledge workers, it is particularly useful for participants to define success, as the very nature of knowledge work often necessitates work processes that are hard to define and whose outcomes may not be immediately obvious and assessable (Drucker, 1974; Jones & Chung, 2006). This is particularly true of work in the APS that typically lacks many organisational metrics associated with
corporate/personal success such as hours billed, items produced or profit generated (see Perry & Rainey, 1988). This question is underpinned by the suggestion that notions of success provide insight into an individual’s values structure (e.g. Spates, 1983).

- **How would you describe your ideal manager? How do APS managers measure up?**

Following the suggestions of Bourne and Jenkins (2005), this question provides an avenue to explore the characteristics of a hypothetical ideal manager, contrasted with participants’ practical experience in an APS setting. The first part of the question creates an initial extreme of a continuum, where the participant identifies model behaviours and management characteristics. It logically follows that one can now easily identify the opposite end of the continuum, that is, negative or less desirous management characteristics. However, where Bourne and Jenkins (2005) rely on an implied or deduced representation of the remaining polar opposite, the second part of the question seeks further clarification through grounding ideals in everyday practice. That is, through reference to their own workplace experiences, participants overtly explore the implications of ideals, for ultimately, while alternative management practices may not be ideal, they may be both effective and adequate, and indeed liked. Thus, this question seeks to create a practical model and assessment of the role and implications of ideals in participants’ concepts of effective management.

- **What do you think is an acceptable time to stay with an agency? Do you think this is likely to be similar across the APS?**

As the commitment of Generation Y workers has been questioned through criticism of their typical organisational tenure (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000; Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Mackay, 2007), this question examines the realities of
organisational tenure; in doing so, the question serves two purposes. Firstly, it permits participants the opportunity to comment directly on their intentions to remain in or leave the APS. Secondly, it will give participants an opportunity to freely express opinions that may otherwise be constrained by social desirability. Social desirability refers to the unwillingness that individuals may show in answering a question truthfully where doing so would expose their views as contrary to what is subjectively considered normal or desirable on a societal level (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband & Drasgow, 1999; Jackson, 2004) – in this instance a possibility that expectations of a short tenure in an organisation represents a reduced organisational commitment (see Scholl, 1981). This question follows suggestions by Holtzman (1980) that individuals may more readily express their (socially undesirable) views in the form of ascription to others. This technique is not without its flaws; accordingly, answers were extensively explored and cross-checked against other responses to ensure accuracy and rigour.

- **What is good/bad about working in the APS?**

As individuals are said to arrange templates of their values and experience around hierarchical bipolar constructs (Kelly, 1955; Bourne & Jenkins, 2005), this question seeks to define these polar positions in the context of participants' day-to-day experiences in the APS. The question is phrased to elicit emotional and value-based responses, factors closely involved in psychological contract creation and violation (Conway & Briner, 2002) and central to employment relationships (e.g. Herriot, 2001).

- **How would you change the APS?**

While the previous question explores a continuum of desirable to undesirable aspects of APS employment, it does not distinguish between those aspects of the APS that may
nonetheless be necessary despite being considered bad, or *vice versa*. That is, while aspects of APS employment may be considered undesirable, participants may consider these an acceptable trade-off or fundamental part of the employment relationship and thus tolerable. Therefore, this question provides participants with the opportunity to create hypothetical changes to their workplace through application of their personal values, but does so within the practical constraints of an operational context.

- **Do you think that the APS generally meets the needs of staff?**

This question explores participants’ experiences of the attitudes and experiences of their colleagues and co-workers. Again, this question also follows suggestions by Holtzman (1980) that individuals may more readily express personally held socially undesirable views in the form of ascription to others. Again, this notion is not without flaws; accordingly, answers will be predominantly considered as true representations of participants’ views of others, and only used as secondary indicators of potential personal beliefs. With met/unmet needs at work having a close relationship with staff satisfaction (Lester & Kickul, 2001), this question provides fundamental insight into the likely nature of the employment relationship.

- **What do you want from your job? What is important to you? Do you think this will change over time?**

While participants’ work values are largely inferred up until this point, this question provides participants with an opportunity to describe firsthand their work values. This acts as a validity check on inferences drawn from participant accounts and also ensures that participants’ values can be directly assessed where previous questioning may have failed. Additionally, this question explores suggestions that work values may vary as a
product of life/career stage (e.g. Abrams, 1970; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Responses to this question will also directly assist in clarifying a central debate across the Generation Y literature relating to the appropriate organisational response (or indeed whether there is a need to respond) to Generation Y work values.

- *Are/were your needs/expectations being met in your current/former APS role? Why (not)?*

This question examines the core features of the employment relationship grounded in first-hand accounts of person-organisation fit in the APS context and fundamental aspects of the Generation Y-APS psychological contract. This question acts to consolidate previously described aspects of individual work values and apply these to a practical organisational context within the sphere of personal experience.

These central questions provide a foundation for creating dialogue during interviews with APS-employed members of Generation Y. While the interview questions provided a theoretical frame for the discussion, a large component of interviews followed from ‘guided conversation’ (Yin, 2003).

### 3.4 Research Phase Three – APS Managers

Phase three addresses research question three:

**Question Three:** What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?

#### 3.4.1 Participants

A focused sampling approach was adopted that restricted participants to current or former APS employees with at least one year of management or supervisory experience.
Participants were recruited through ‘viral’ or ‘snowball’ sampling methods (e.g., Cooper & Schindler, 2006) using emails sent to former colleagues of the researcher and through advertisement to students currently enrolled in Australian National University postgraduate public policy programs.

The total cohort for this research phase was $N = 20$, all participants except one (a former APS senior executive serving in a state government agency) were currently serving APS managers. Mean participant age was 40.7 years ($SD = 11.3$) and participants ranged in age from 29 to 64 years. 25 percent of participants were female ($N = 5$). Participants’ APS workplace tenure ranged from 18 months to 35 years, with a mean tenure of 12.4 years ($SD = 10.1$), participant comment was focused on this APS experience, and not specifically directed to other organisational settings participants’ may have worked in. Participants ranged in work classification from APS6 to SES Band 2. Five additional questionnaires were completed but excluded from analysis due to missing information or inadequate responses.

Participants in this phase of the project were paid for their participation with a $25.00 gift voucher from a national retail chain. Additional approval was sought, and granted unconditionally, for this research phase under the Australian National University’s Ethical Protocol for Research Involving Humans using the existing protocol number 2007/0242. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, and potential participants were advised of this via a project Information Sheet and Consent Form (see Appendix D).
3.4.2 Open-Ended Questionnaires

Open-ended questionnaires were chosen as the research method for this phase. The questionnaire format was selected to maximise the involvement of APS managers, and arose from feedback during phase two of the research (in attempts to gain access to Generation Y staff for interview) where senior managers were unwilling to commit sufficient time for an interview, yet often expressed a willingness to complete a survey, if one existed. Hence, the open-ended questionnaire designed for this research phase provided managers with an instrument that could be completed at their convenience, and out of work hours, which also provided scope for detailed responses in the participant's own language and expressive style.

In order to focus participants on the broad aim of the research and the specific aim of this phase, detailed cover emails were sent to participants. While interviews allow for immediate queries and clarification of response, questionnaires do not; accordingly, cover emails requested permission to ask follow-up questions should the need arise. All participants agreed to this request.

Many of the questions are parallel versions of those asked to APS-employed Generation Y participants during phase two of the research. This was intentional in order to assess the effectiveness of the Generation Y employment relationship from the perspective of both Generation Y employees and managers in the APS. Each of the questionnaire items that differ in content or purpose from those asked of APS-employed Generation Y participants are listed below along with a brief explanation of their purpose and genesis.
• *What do you think are the key characteristics, good or bad, of Generation Y (roughly those aged 18-29) employees (if any)?*  

This question allows an initial contrast between the work values of Generation Y, gained from phase two, and the perceptions of Generation Y’s work values from their employers – APS managers.

• *Do you think the work characteristics (i.e. values) of younger people have changed over recent years? If so, why?*  

This question arose from data gained from research phases one and two where participants raised the notion that their work values and expectations were likely to change over time (see sections 4.1.3 and 4.2.7). Where cross-generational management is concerned, the APS tends to treat the values of each generational group as distinct (see APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b). This implies that Generation Y work values are likely to be stable over time. However, if managers consider that work values *change* over time, combined with suggestions from Generation Y of evolving work values, this would represent a challenge to the espoused assumptions of APS workforce planning. Evolving work values would also lend credence to the life stage theory of generations (see section 2.2.2) which relies upon the notion that work values (etc.) are likely to change as each cohort ages (e.g. Braungart & Braungart, 1986).

• *Have you or your agency faced challenges in recruiting and retaining younger staff (please describe)?*  

This question attempts to examine the issue of recruitment and retention of younger employees, and specifically the operational implications and challenges associated with employee turnover. This also complements questions asked of Generation Y
participants examining their personal views of workplace tenure and turnover, thus examining the issue from an additional perspective.

The three remaining questions are each closely related in theme and mirror those asked of APS-employed Generation Y participants. These also relate closely to both the underlying theory of this examination and to data generated during phases one and two.

- **What do you think younger employees need and expect from employment in the APS?**

Data arising from Generation Y during earlier phases collectively showed that participants held high expectations of work; both in terms of what workplaces would provide and also in terms of what they could achieve at, and from, work (see sections 4.1 and 4.2). The simple purpose of this question is to compare the reported work values preferences of Generation Y with the perception of these expectations held by their employers – a basic indication of the likely nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship.

While some commentators have suggested that Generation Y work values/expectations are unrealistically high (e.g. Twenge, 2006), the literature has yet to explore this assertion in a practical setting. That is, irrespective of the actual nature of Generation Y’s work expectations, the absence of an examination of prevailing employment conditions precludes judgement of how reasonable these expectations actually are. On a basic level, the remaining two questions aim to garner an understanding of the organisation’s perceptions and experiences of Generation Y work values, and in doing so, provide a picture of the other side of the employment relationship. Without this
perspective, assessing the nature and effectiveness of the Generation Y employment relationship is fraught with difficulty (Tekleab & Taylor, 2003).

- **Do you think the work expectations of younger people match the work they are required to perform? Why / Why not?**

- **Do you think that the APS is generally meeting the needs and expectations of younger employees? Why / Why not?**

In order to maximise the utility of the open-ended questionnaire format, participants were also asked to provide any additional comments, views or opinions they wished to volunteer regarding APS practices with specific regard to the management/employment of younger employees and generational issues more broadly.

### 3.5 Data Coding, Analysis and Presentation

Qualitative analysis of data arising from each phase of this research was performed manually without computer-based qualitative analysis tools. This was a personal preference of the researcher, with the benefit of allowing text to be interpreted and constructed as a narrative ( Riessman, 1993). The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) ensured key work values and employment relationship concepts were embedded in the words and language of participants. The manual process necessitates close data scrutiny and permits a close working knowledge of the data and their characteristics (see Charmaz, 2006), and assists in the interpretation of implicit meanings or non-standard use of words and phrases (Kelle, Prein & Bird, 1995). As the research questions focus on description and explanation, manual analysis also provided close familiarity with the data which aided greatly in the negative case analysis; a
characteristic of the systematic and iterative framework that examines inconsistencies in data in the context of broad, emerging themes (Charmaz, 2006). This section provides a detailed overview of the data coding and analysis process and outlines examples of the analysis process in operation.

3.5.1 Data Organisation

Following completion of each recorded interview, discussions were transcribed from MP3 format into Microsoft Word files and subsequently converted to Adobe Acrobat PDF files. This occurred within 12 hours of interviews being recorded, complying with the 24-hour rule espoused by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) "...that detailed interview notes and impressions be completed within one day of the interview" (p.741). Data from student participants and APS managers were received in raw format as written responses and these were each electronically scanned and converted to Adobe Acrobat PDF format. Although not designed as such, Acrobat is a useful analysis tool in that it allows users the option of inserting customisable comment boxes and annotations alongside written data without altering or interfering with original text. This permits various levels of coding to be allocated a uniquely coloured and named category of text box that can be displayed and altered electronically directly on the transcript. Each box contains a range of information including time and date of coding, name of coder and the type/category of code being used, and comment boxes can be automatically compiled and displayed in an aggregate table format.

3.5.2 Coding Process

All data were analysed using an approach adapted from Charmaz (2006) and the theoretical coding approach of Flick (2003); both are closely based on the inductive
grounded theory method of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Coding involves "...attach[ing] labels to segments of data that depict what each segment is about" (Charmaz, 2006, p.3). Coding involves six distinct processes, as outlined in Table 3.4 below.

**Table 3.4**
Coding process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CODING PROCESS</th>
<th>OVERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Comments/Memos</td>
<td>This ongoing process recorded the researcher’s comments, observations and notes that arose during examination of the transcript. Such notes prove useful in the data refinement processes through exposing questions and concepts that may be clarified during higher-level analyses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>In Vivo</em> Coding</td>
<td><em>In vivo</em> coding captures terms used by a participant that may be unique to the individual or used in an unusual sense. <em>In vivo</em> codes assist in uncovering implicit meaning in language use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Initial Coding</td>
<td>Data are broken into small segments of meaningful text, typically in language very similar to the participant’s own words (or indeed verbatim).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Focussed Coding</td>
<td>Focussed codes are more conceptual and refined than initial codes and are created by synthesising the broader meaning of initial codes. Broad categories and consistencies in the data begin to emerge forming a more coherent picture of concepts and themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Summary Coding</td>
<td>Summary coding acts to conceptualise lower-level codes and meanings to form a refined and simplified picture of the participant’s broad meanings and comments. This stage is where a unified theory of the individual becomes evident, and broader, meaningful categories of data are created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Agglomerative Coding</td>
<td>Here, the codes arising from individual transcripts are combined to form a collective view of cohort-wide data. This final stage of coding generates a cohesive conceptual picture of the data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following from this coding process, theory was generated via an iterative process of crosschecking and re-evaluation between the various levels of coding. This constant
comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) ensured that final conceptualisations were consistent across lower-level codes and higher-level, abstract codes.

The following sections provide examples taken from a coded transcript containing the six iterative levels of analysis/coding outlined above. As this coding method is iterative, the various coding levels are not typically performed in a progressive manner. Instead, previous codes are often revisited and reassessed following the discovery of subsequent data or newly clarified meaning. However, the following coding examples are presented in the approximate order in which they were created.

3.5.3 Example Transcript Coding Process – General Data Comments/Memos

To simplify cross referencing and analysis, any observations or comments on data were recorded directly on the transcript. These comments or memos contain the researcher’s observations of the data and any information that may prove useful in later analysis or understanding of the data. While not technically part of the coding process, these memos nonetheless greatly aid the holistic understanding of the data. An extract from a transcript is provided in Figure 3.3 which displays an example comment/memo.

In this example, it was noted that the participant conceptualised their job security as a factor outside of their sphere of influence. This early observation suggested that the participant may have maintained an external locus of control (i.e. a mindset suggesting perceptions of a lessened ability to influence the external environment; e.g. McShane &
Travaglione, 2003). Additionally, it was noted that the participant considered that the ability to transfer between jobs heightened their job security, which was considered a salient point and a novel interpretation of job security (i.e. that which depends on the easy availability of other jobs). The recording and understanding of individual conceptualisations such as this are useful as they provide a key to unlocking the participant’s work values schema or system of interpretation. For this example, initial comments were particularly useful as they provided a reference point marking a potentially unique mindset, or a tendency for this participant to interpret ‘traditional’ organisational concepts, like job security, in a novel manner – a theme evident in many participants’ accounts. Hence, initial comments provide early suggestions that re-examination/reiteration of data and coding may be required.

3.5.4 Example Transcript Coding Process – In Vivo Coding

In vivo codes are markers of participants’ implicit meanings. In vivo coding acts to reveal meanings inherent in participants’ use of condensed or metaphorical words and
phrases that refer to a specific situation or concept. Participants use such terms in the understanding that they are commonly known and shared by the greater population (Charmaz, 2006). For example, the extract outlined in Figure 3.4 explains that the participant uses the term ‘stability’ to refer to purely external circumstances; this is an important point as the participant reveals a key work value to be the product of the external environment.

Following crosschecking with data comments/memos, this coding stage also refined previous notions of locus of control through a deeper understanding of the participant’s underlying work values schema.

![Image of a coding process]

**Figure 3.4**
Example of *in vivo* coding process.

3.5.5 *Example Transcript Coding Process – Initial Coding*

Initial coding is represented by Charmaz (2006) as ‘line-by-line’ coding, which alludes to its role as the first point of analysis, or sense-making, of the data. Initial coding is
focussed on the participant’s own narrative account and closely reflects their own words and phrases.

In the example in Figure 3.5, an initial code was created that described the participant’s central values and also grounded these values in personal worth, in this sense their ability to facilitate organizational and social cohesion. Again, in order to confirm the strength of this code, reiteration with previous *in vivo* codes revealed that the participant used ‘team’ as a surrogate term for the social arrangement of their organisation as a whole (as opposed to typical representations of ‘team’ as a small functional unit; Mohrman & Quam, 2000), this observation suggests the centrality of social/interpersonal aspects in the participant’s work values structure.

**Figure 3.5**
Example of initial coding process.

3.5.6. *Example Transcript Coding Process – Focussed Coding*

Focussed coding represents the second major step in the coding process. Focussed codes are more conceptual and refined than initial codes and are created through a synthesis of their broader meaning (Charmaz, 2006). Here, broad categories and consistencies in the data begin to emerge forming a more coherent picture of concepts
and themes. Table 3.5 provides examples of focussed codes and contributing excerpts from the same participant’s transcript.

**Table 3.5**
Examples of focussed codes and contributing text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUSED CODE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF CONTRIBUTING TEXT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High need for job security.</td>
<td>“… the stability that I am looking for by having a high degree of job security.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… keeping the status quo…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security external factor.</td>
<td>“Provide me with the stability…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… needs from a job… stability… security…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External locus of control.</td>
<td>“It is in the agency’s best interest to motivate me…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… diluting decision ownership at lower and middle levels…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… management cannot be played out in full due to levels of hierarchy and the lack of ownership at lower levels…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… people feel more anonymous and distance themselves from the organisation…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… government agency would accommodate my expectation…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for ongoing development.</td>
<td>“… personal growth and a clear view of the career progression I may undertake in the workplace…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Professional learning opportunities will also mean I am less likely to change jobs to satisfy personal growth requirements…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… I can pursue extra study…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“By providing study leave…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.6 provides an example of focussed coding as it is undertaken on an actual body of raw data. In this example, the participant’s preference/need for job security persisted through their entire account giving rise to a distinct data category. Similarly, the notion that this security was the product of external factors was consistent with the participant’s wider view that some things, while being within the individual’s sphere of
influence, were nonetheless considered the organisation’s responsibility. The attribution of external factors to job security suggests an abrogation of individual responsibility of sorts. While this suggested a lesser fit with traditional notions of locus of control, data could not be wholly explained without invoking the concept, hence its eventual inclusion as a distinct data category. Finally, this participant attached a high overt value to ongoing learning and development, which was augmented by frequent allusion to the underlying worth and instrumental value attached to the concept, thus justifying its inclusion as a distinct data category.

recognise that the people within the organisation possesses. From this flows an expectations, the organisation is a culture that promotes work/life balance. communication from myself to superiors, from the organisation on wider issues.

How will my needs, values and expectations be met by Scenario One
This government agency will provide me with the stability I am looking for by having a high degree of job security. Stability is also enhanced by being able to transfer between agencies. The level of differences between agencies is not likely to be as high as moving between industries in the private sector for example. The professional learning opportunities will also mean that I am less likely to change jobs to satisfy personal growth requirements which adds further still to the stability provided by the government agency scenario.

Figure 3.6
Example of focussed coding process.

3.5.7 Example Transcript Coding Process – Summary Coding

Summary coding acts to conceptualise lower-level codes and meanings to form a refined picture of the participant’s broad meanings and comments. This stage is where a unified theory of the individual becomes evident and broader meaningful categories of data are created. Figure 3.7 provides a schematic example of four contributing focussed
codes from a participant's transcript and how these translate to the abstract summary codes.

In the example above, where discussing personal performance, it became clear that previous indications of an external locus of control did not provide enough nuance to account for the participant's views, which saw a clear divide in perceptions of personal versus organisational responsibility, and a clear distinction between 'can(not) influence' and 'should (not) influence' workplace processes and outcomes. While the locus of control concept adequately accounts for an individual's perceived ability to influence
events, it falls short in its ability to account for perceptions of what should or should not be in the participant’s realm of responsibility. With the participant’s account yielding a recurrent theme of low personal responsibility for workplace outcomes – that saw personal performance linked to provision of supportive management and colleagues (etc.) rather than her own effort – attribution to locus of control had to be revised.

However, the participant also provided evidence throughout her account that organisational performance was simply beyond her control (but stopping short of describing a total diffusion of responsibility), suggesting that completely discounting the application of the locus of control concept was not possible. Hence, final summary codes accounted for these differences by including concepts of task ownership and responsibility (i.e. *should* not influence) and also the existence of an external locus of control (i.e. *could* not influence) for specific factors. Aside from nuanced concepts such as locus of control, the participant’s account consistently raised social aspects of work and often related work processes and outcomes in social (interpersonal) terms. Inclusion of the ‘social focus’ summary code adequately accounted for this conspicuous and broad theme, while inclusion of codes such as ‘need for certainty’ accounted for factors related to, yet not wholly describing, this social focus.

Table 3.6 provides examples of a range of summary codes and how these relate to subordinate focussed codes and contributing excerpts from the participant’s transcript.
Table 3.6
Examples of summary codes and contributing focussed codes and text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY CODE</th>
<th>FOCUSED CODE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF CONTRIBUTING TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation of professional and private life.</td>
<td>Distinction between work and private life.</td>
<td>&quot;I need to be able to have down time from work and to clearly separate it from my personal life...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...not require me to be on call...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...difficulty creating boundaries around work and leaving it there...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work as facilitator of private life.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...eight hour day gives me time to stay fit, which is important to me.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...study leave and time off in lieu...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...balancing needs and values within, and external to, the workplace.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...part of a broader life...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...key value held by the organisation is a culture that promotes work-life balance.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...cause and effect relationship with other parts of life.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values social interaction.</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...events such as barbeques, sports teams...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;...effective team environment...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.8 Example Transcript Coding Process – Agglomerative Coding

Agglomerative coding is the final stage of data analysis where summary codes from each transcript are brought together to create higher-level abstract codes that summarise cohort-wide data. Agglomerative coding is highly iterative, necessitating constant
crosschecking between emerging agglomerative codes and summary codes to ensure that parsimonious abstractions are consistent with the meaning of individual accounts, while recognising that some meaning is diluted by higher-order generalisation.

Table 3.7 provides a range of agglomerative codes and examples of how these relate to supporting text. Following this, Figure 3.8 provides a schematic illustration of the agglomerative coding process, using the summary codes from four individual transcripts. Here, visual links are drawn between contributing summary codes and the final group-wide codes. This linking process, repeated across each of the emergent agglomerative codes, ensures that individual meaning is not lost in translation yet also directly identifies any situations where individual (lower-level) data are inconsistent with group representations and thus require crosschecking and revision. In the instance below, summary codes are used to create the 'social' data category, defined by references to human interaction and interpersonal dynamics.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGGLOMERATIVE CODES 'SOCIAL' CATEGORY</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF CONTRIBUTING TEXT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FREE COMMUNICATION.</strong> Characterised by a desire for quick and efficient communication, irrespective of rank, or personal position or characteristics. Encompasses notions of limited social barriers, ease of knowledge transfer, openness, honesty, efficiency, sociability, camaraderie, friendship, equality, and groups.</td>
<td>“I expect effective two-way communication from myself to superiors, from superiors to myself, and from the organisation…” “… I have a moderate–high need for social interaction…” “…contributions made by all individuals have an impact on the business…” “…able to share my opinions openly to both peers and superiors.” “… look for a company with an open-plan office…” “…allow me to interact with my colleagues including the senior staff.” “I value a company where my opinion and suggestions will be heard.” “Management should facilitate open discussion…” “… what I value and would like most within my professional career is communication amongst employees and the chance to develop friendships.” “…embracing different opinions and view points are expected…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCLUSION</strong> Characterised by a sense of participating in a meaningful manner with colleagues and within workplace groups. Encompasses notions of being listened to, being cared for, reciprocity, affiliation, membership, trust, legitimacy, and friendship.</td>
<td>“…direct involvement in projects…” “I am a team player.” “…with direct involvement I have a better chance of influencing outcomes…” “…allows me to feel a true member of the group…” “…creates a wonderful sense of involvement.” “It is important to me that I feel as though I fit in with the company’s culture and have a sense of acceptance with my fellow colleagues.” “…acceptance through continuous social interaction…” “…colleagues are more likely to be considered as friends…” “…having time to be an integral part of the lives of those around me…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EQUITY</strong> Characterised by a sense of fairness and transparency. Encompasses notions of openness, accountability, ethics, morality, standards, procedures, honesty, probity, and good conduct.</td>
<td>“…move through the ranks based on merit…” “…what you achieve not who you know…” “I want to work in a company that promotes goodwill and moral reasoning at a principled level.” “…non-discriminatory recruitment programs, task delegation and promotional policies.” “…fairness is essential in any good work place.” “I value an organisation that… holds high ethical standards… I value an organisation that is fair…” “…having high ethical standards and moral fibre…”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.8
Schematic example of agglomerative coding.
3.6 Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the study’s narrative-based, qualitative research design that is applied to interpret work values and understand the nature of the Generation Y-Australian Public Service (APS) employment relationship.

The research design utilises three concurrent phases. Phase one describes the work value preferences of a Generation Y student sample using a projective scenario modelling technique. Generation Y student participants expressed their values preferences in terms of particular working relationships depicted in three contrasting organisational structures. Phase two seeks to establish the work values of Generation Y employed in the APS using semi-structured interviews. Phase three uses a sample of APS managers to examine perceived Generation Y work values from an organisation’s point-of-view. APS managers completed open-ended surveys containing questions parallel to those asked of APS-employed Generation Y participants. Data are examined to assess the nature and effectiveness of the APS-Generation Y employment relationship using notions of the psychological contract and person-organisation fit.

The study’s qualitative methods each use language as the medium of analysis; language is used to describe work values, and from this infer work behaviours. This follows the theoretical position that values act as a foundation and guide for an individual’s attitudes and behaviour (Spates, 1983), or plainly, values infer behaviour. Therefore, this approach considers values as verbal behaviour (Herbst & Houmanfar, 2009). Data are analysed with a coding framework adapted from the inductive grounded-theory approach of Charmaz (2006) and Flick (2003) to create a profile of the work values of this generational cohort grounded in an APS workplace setting.
CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS I

This chapter provides details of the findings addressing research questions one and two:

**Question One:** What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?

**Question Two:** What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?

Generation Y work values are examined using a cohort of Generation Y final-year university students \( N = 161 \) and a cohort of APS Generation Y employees \( N = 60 \). These two Generation Y cohorts are components of the same purposeful sampling approach, and each cohort is used to address a specific research question that examines possible work values congruence, not reasons for differences between the two Generation Y samples.

As this study uses a narrative-based methodology, findings are presented alongside supporting data comprised of participant accounts, reproduced in their own language and expressive style. The narrative approach necessitates thick descriptions of data and its meaning, which are contrasted with representations from relevant theory and literature. Associations between work values clusters are presented in visual data maps and their assumed associations described in the text. Individual comments with organisation referents are presented throughout the findings. To protect anonymity, Generation Y student participants are identified by codes that contain a unique personal tag and their preferred organisational structure (e.g. B24, large private firm).
4.1 Generation Y Student Work Values

Findings from this section address research question one:

**Question One:** What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?

Findings are presented in subsections each titled to reflect an overarching values similarity or theme. These themes broadly relate to the agglomerative coding stage of data analysis, and are presented so that the title of each values category reflects the topic to which each of the underlying data codes relate.\(^\text{12}\)

4.1.1 Scenario Modelling Technique

Participants were asked to list and describe their job/work needs, values and expectations, and asked to select from a list of three organisational structures a workplace scenario that represented the best fit with these values preferences. Each of the scenarios contains a range of potentially desirable or undesirable work conditions and organisational characteristics (see section 3.2.1).

The majority of respondents \(N = 77; 48\%\) selected scenario three (a small private-sector organisation) as their preferred workplace, as Figure 4.1 shows. While the majority of participants preferred the small organisation for its focus on learning, development and free communication, there were no work values differences evident between participants in terms of their preferred organisational structure. That is,

\(^{12}\) *N.B.* Participant quotations are used here as an example only. Individual quotations are not used as sole justification for *any* data category, nor as the basis for *any* theoretical assumptions. Quotations are treated as merely representative of an overarching theme in the data, despite in some cases relating closely to overarching participant sentiment. Causal links have *not* been drawn from individual accounts alone.
preference for a specific workplace structure did not suggest a distinct set of work values in itself.

![Pie Chart](image)

*Figure 4.1*
Preferred organisation scenario.

### 4.1.2 Personal-Related Values

Figure 4.2 is a visual map that displays the relationships between the work values preferences that are clustered together to form the 'personal' category. This data map shows some associations between work values clustered under the 'personal' category. Arrows indicate the assumed direction of influence; for example, ambition shares a relationship with career stage through hard work, and adaptability influences both ambition and career stage.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4.2*
Relationships between values contributing to the 'personal' category.
Work values preferences clustered within this category are characterised by values that are subject to variation in meaning and salience at an individual level (i.e. depending on an individual’s circumstance or environmental influence) yet whose outward expression nonetheless remains similar across the Generation Y cohort (i.e. a concept of individual differences).

4.1.3 Career Stage

A prominent concept evident in participant work values is the concept of career stage, reflecting the notion that an individual’s work values change to reflect their age, stage in life, and evolving personal priorities. As participants state:

“After several years, I would obviously take different values into account during job selection...” (B10, large private firm);

“At my age, and given my current circumstances, job security is not an issue for me.” (B24, large private firm);

and,

“I am confident that my work values and expectations will change during the course of my career to reflect the changes in my life...” (A22, government agency)

This finding has important theoretical implications as it provides support for the life stage theory of generations. Generation thus becomes a concept of “...similarity [based on] both life-cycle development and historical experiences.” (Braungart & Braunagert, 1986, pp.205-206), and suggests Generation Y work values are likely to change over time. This supports the notion that current Generation Y work values may be, at least in part, a temporary phase (e.g. Matchett, 2006), and represent one of many transitions

4.1.4 Hard Work

Participants’ narratives often reflected a high personal value for hard work, for example:

"An individual is hired to complete a job to the best of their ability, not to merely show up from nine till five for a paycheque." (B29, large private firm);

and,

"My belief [is] that an employee should always give 110% [and this is] the reason why I don’t mind the expectation of working extra hours and weekends." (A43, government)

Hard work was consistently represented and referred to as a workforce norm, irrespective of what type of organisation (i.e. government, small private or large private) the participant preferred. This has obvious implications for the employment relationship, particularly in an organisation’s approach to motivation and management.

4.1.5 Adaptability

Clustered within the ‘personal’ data category is the concept of adaptability. Anecdotal accounts of Generation Y frequently link heightened adaptability to a ubiquitous affinity for new technology, which is itself frequently changing and evolving to meet the challenges of new applications and solutions (Sheahan, 2005). This concept often results in Generation Y being tagged with the term ‘stimulus junkies’ (Chester, 2002; Sheahan, 2005) with an insatiable appetite for novel stimuli. However, no participant mentioned, or even alluded to, technology being related to their work values. Instead, this adaptability is an entirely different concept more related to confidence in their
ability to apply existing knowledge and experience to a variety of situations. In this sense, Generation Y consider they possess core skills that act as a foundation for learning and enable quick appraisal and assimilation of new situations and information. This mode of thought suggests a heuristic model which favours learning and problem solving:

“I must be given a high degree of freedom to accomplish work... my abilities should be used completely by my role so I can learn to fit in easily to new environments and role[s].”
(C49, small private firm);

“I require complex assignments, which involve creativity and problem solving... [t]his also implies my need for variety...” (A13, government agency);

and,

“The most attractive feature of [a role] is the potential for creative thinking and challenging tasks.” (C26, small private firm)

While this concept of adaptability was implicit in participant accounts, they also expressed more overt reference to notions of adaptability in terms of an ability or willingness to make the best of a bad situation. Specifically, participants overtly recognised that any professional role is unlikely to provide a perfect fit with their work values, and it was they who would have to adapt to this situation, for example:

“...[although] I want considerable money and need flexibility and time off [etc.], I know it is not realistic to expect all of these things from any [one] job. There is compromise involved in a job and fitting in is necessary in any job...” (A4, government agency)

This is an interesting view that paints a picture of Generation Y as accommodating and resilient, representing a challenge to some representations of Generation Y that portray
them as unaccommodating and fickle in their need for the perfect job (see Salt, 2006; Quiggin, 2009).

4.1.6 Ambition

Ambition is the final concept to arise from the ‘personal’ data category. While it is unsurprising that young people about to embark on their careers display ambition, it is the type of ambition that they display that is of interest. There is disagreement in extant literature as to whether Generation Y are motivated by a desire to climb corporate hierarchies (e.g. Pitt, 2006), or more motivated by less overt ambitions such as learning and growth (e.g. Macken, 2006). Interestingly, data revealed support for both points of view, with statements such as “One of my personal ambitions is to be a team leader and manager before I am 30...” (A36, government agency) being common, yet notions of ambition being less tied to traditional hierarchical progression, and instead to professional development, were equally common:

“The fulfilment of my learning values will facilitate my personal growth and also help me escalate to reach my full potential.” (C1, small private firm);

“...the public sector recognises the value of human capital and is well known for ‘hanging onto’ skilled people... this will help [me] develop into a position where I can progress and reach my potential.” (A17, government agency);

and,

“...as I am likely to move around a lot [career] progression will not be linear, so having that knowledge and building expertise becomes my measure of achievement.” (A38, government agency)
4.1.7 Social-Related Values

Figure 4.3 is a visual data map that shows associations between work values clustered under the 'social' category. Links have been drawn to show how data are related. Arrows indicate the assumed direction of influence, for example, concepts of free communication share an interactive relationship with notions of instancy. Categories clustered in a blue-shaded box are interdependent and interact closely.

For Generation Y work is consistently couched in terms of a series of social exchanges and interactions, emphasising Johnson’s (2002) notion of social rewards. Data place social factors at the core of Generation Y work characteristics and support the notion that to Generation Y, work is a social process (e.g. Huntley, 2006). Table 4.1 provides
a broad range of excerpts from participant narratives that allude to the centrality of social focus within Generation Y students.

**Table 4.1**
Examples of social focus within Generation Y student narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Source (ID, Type of Organisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I like to have strong relationships to my colleagues that do not necessarily stay within the workplace.&quot;</td>
<td>(C3, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I greatly enjoy social interaction in the workplace ... and tend to conform to social norms.&quot;</td>
<td>(B32, large private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;[I have a] need for belonging [and] constant communication...&quot;</td>
<td>(A40, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I value my peers, our relationships and their input to the organisation.&quot;</td>
<td>(C19, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;[I like to] feel a sense of belongingness... I like to share life with other people in the [workplace].&quot;</td>
<td>(A9, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I have a need for social affection and interaction with my colleagues...&quot;</td>
<td>(A3, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...what I value... is communication amongst employees and the chance to develop friendships.&quot;</td>
<td>(A27, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I like a friendly working environment [where] it is a lot easier to know people at a personal level... as staff can interact easily [and] on a more frequent basis giving the opportunity for a harmonious environment.&quot;</td>
<td>(C41, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;My personality requires [a] participative... relationship oriented environment to maximise my potential in the workplace...&quot;</td>
<td>(A1, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I personally have a strong need for affiliation. I believe that the people you work alongside have a strong impact on the way you feel about your job...&quot;</td>
<td>(C37, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...my desire for social fulfilment would create a fun working environment...&quot;</td>
<td>(A29, government agency)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.8 Belongingness, Inclusion, Cohesion and Collectivism

An interesting aspect of this social focus is that Generation Y student participants tend to define their work values in terms more akin to the collectivist model typically ascribed to non-Western societies (Hofstede, 1991), with strong reference to group-level outcomes and overt recognition that individual sacrifice may be necessary to achieve these ends, for example:
“...good employees, or leaders, must be positive thinkers and make decisions in the best interests of the organisation, even if this is against [their] own best interests.” (C9, small private firm)

Social-based work values also revealed a more subtle undercurrent of collectivism through the interrelated concepts of group cohesion, social inclusion and belongingness. Consistent with Hill (2002), there was a common representation of workplaces as family-like units, for example:

“...there is a need for me to form relationships with people. Forming relationships also creates a sense of belonging for me which I need [in order] to work comfortably and reasonably stress-free. If those around me do not accept or appreciate me I feel alienated and find it difficult to complete my tasks to the highest quality.” (B4, large private firm)

Sociological (i.e. not work-specific) views of Generation Y (e.g. Crawford, 2006; Huntley, 2006) consistently highlight the importance of social networks, group identity and interaction to Generation Y. Data suggest that this sociological phenomenon may provide relevance to the more specific workplace setting.

4.1.9 Free Communication

The free communication that social networks provide is also reflected in the high value that participants placed on effective and constant communication between both managers and colleagues. Thus, intra-hierarchical communication was represented as a continual process, far removed from the traditional command and control concept of formal performance reviews and feedback sessions conducted at lengthy intervals, for example:
"I would like to have my opinions expressed freely and completely to senior staff. I also need an immediate response so that I can make adjustments to my [work] style as soon as possible." (A27, government agency)

Interestingly, participants' willingness to communicate across age and hierarchical barriers does not relate to findings that suggest a psychological preference for communication within one's own demographic group (Zenger & Lawrence, 1989). In this sense Generation Y is true to its principles of equality (outlined below), with participants blurring the boundaries of demographics and hierarchy. Participants' expectations surrounding communication remain consistent with the representation of Generation Y as willing to proactively question management decisions as embodied in Chester's (2002) notion of 'Generation Why?'

4.1.10 Equity and Equality

Consistent with suggestions by Eisner (2005), participants expressed strong notions of respect, basing this on the principle of reciprocity. That is, while participants expected to be treated with respect by colleagues and managers, they recognised that displaying respect was the best way to guarantee this. Closely related to respect were the similar values themes of equity and equality. Where previous generations fought against inequitable and discriminatory treatment in the workplace (Strauss & Howe, 1991), discrimination and workplace equality tended to be a 'non-issue' for Generation Y. That is, participants consider equality and equity issues as a given, and assume that achievement/promotion etc. will be founded on merit alone:

"I expect a workplace that is free from bullying harassment and discrimination... [and] specific policies in place to discourage these behaviours, and is also an equal opportunity
employer... not hindered in career progression by age or gender... and move through the ranks based on merit...” (A18, government agency);

“I value equality in the workplace, and promotion and rewards based on merits, not other factors. Bias due to ethnicity or gender is in opposition to my moral beliefs.” (C69, small private firm);

and,

“I expect to be treated fairly and with respect... I believe in equality and expect that even though I am a woman, in today’s society I will not be discriminated against.” (C37, small private firm)

4.1.11 Work-Life Balance

Within the broader social focus evident among Generation Y students, the role and centrality assigned to work-life balance was ubiquitous and required little interpretation. Table 4.2 outlines a range of excerpts from participant narratives that allude to the centrality of work-life balance among Generation Y students.

**Table 4.2**

Examples of work-life balance centrality within Generation Y student narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“...flexible hours allows me to choose how to divide my time upon my other responsibilities which allows me to live my life according to my own schedule.”</td>
<td>(A28, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I like flexible and informal structures as they suit my lifestyle... I also expect my employer [to] have the ability to be flexible in terms of leave and overtime...”</td>
<td>(C26, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Work-life balance is very important to me and is something that the public sector encourages...”</td>
<td>(A18, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I value a reasonable work/life balance, which means that working 10-12 hour days and possibly weekends does not appeal to me at all.”</td>
<td>(C69, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that my need for balance in my work and social life will still be met by a large firm... even though I work hard, I would have to make time to enjoy my friendships and social group interaction.”</td>
<td>(B14, large private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I need to be able to have down time from work and to clearly separate it from my personal life.”</td>
<td>(A2, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think people like me desire to spend more time with family, feeling that corporate success has not brought the happiness which I desire in my life, and I generally want more time to do as I please.”</td>
<td>(C31, small private firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Personal time is extremely important to me in order to maintain work/life balance.”</td>
<td>(A17, government agency)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While data strongly support the centrality of work-life balance, participants remained realistic in their recognition that an enhanced work-life balance may require trade-offs:

"... money is an important aspect of where I intend to work... when I have my own children I want them to grow up in less stressful environment. But this need is a trade-off against leading an active and healthy lifestyle, which as a young adult, I currently value more."

(A15, government agency);

and,

"A work-life balance is much more important to me than any dollar figure." (A38, government agency)

Participants' concept of work-life balance realistically recognised the underlying requirements of 'balance': greater access to leisure and social activities may require sacrifices in other areas such as remuneration.

4.1.12 Prestige, Recognition and Respect

The 'social' category also revealed interesting data exposing the motivation that Generation Y derive from such factors. For example, notions of prestige (described by Johnson's (2002) concept of status-attainment rewards) - arising from working within renowned organisations or sought after roles - were commonly expressed as a desire driving employment choices and work efforts, as the following account attests:

"I value feeling that I am part of a well known and respected organisation, which would offer me social status and acceptance." (A22, government agency)

Similarly, recognition (e.g. praise from supervisors) was a valued aspect of work for participants, and its inclusion in the 'social' category connotes its underlying worth as a reinforcement of social status and comparative achievement.
"My need for ... advancement in status through a new job title or congratulations and recognition of achievement..." (A28, government agency)

This focus on prestige and recognition again represents a values set akin to the collectivist model of Hofstede (1991) in that recognition and prestige are valued more for the appearance and social standing that they project to a wider group, and less for their potential to build self-esteem and self-worth – an assumption evident in extant literature (Twenge, 2006).

4.1.13 Instancy

The final characteristic in the 'social’ category is instancy. This is a nuanced concept differing from instant gratification; a term often used in a pejorative sense when discussing Generation Y (Crawford, 2006). Where anecdotal accounts of Generation Y workers portray them as capricious and flippant in their desire for instant gratification – evident in Neil’s (2008) “I want it all and I want it now” (p.10) portrayal – data here revealed a far more mature and pragmatic sense of instancy in Generation Y, related to getting things done as quickly and straightforwardly as possible. ‘Why wait if you don’t have to?’ succinctly describes participants’ notions of instancy, and despite the similarity, the concept differs remarkably from representations of Generation Y as merely impatient (e.g. Chester, 2002; Sheahan, 2005). Instead, the concept relates to a willingness to establish the most efficient path to an objective. Instancy is also closely linked to open communication:

“Because I feel that work is such a significant part of one’s life I also think that one should take control of it through open communication... Communicating with management about thoughts and expectations, one is able to quickly resolve problems and improve working conditions.” (C74, small private firm) (emphasis added)
However, this desire to 'get to the point' does not imply a disregard for procedure nor a diminished regard for authority; it simply suggests that Generation Y are motivated by a desire for efficiency.

4.1.14 Commitment-Related Values

Data clustered in the 'commitment' category reflect work values related to organisational commitment, here describing an employment relationship based on the organisation providing favourable conditions prior to any employee commitment being enacted (contingent loyalty). The visual data map in Figure 4.4 displays relationships between the work values preferences that are clustered together to form the 'commitment' category. Links have been drawn to show possible relationships between data and arrows indicate potential influence between categories. For example, concepts of development and learning suggest a relationship with notions of contingent loyalty. Categories clustered in a blue-shaded box interact closely and may be interdependent.

![Figure 4.4]

Figure 4.4
Relationships between values contributing to the 'commitment' category.
4.1.15 Contingent Loyalty

Participants expressed that while they were willing to show loyalty to their employer, this was dependent on the employer, in turn, providing a workplace that met their needs and expectations. The following participant accounts reflect this contingent loyalty:

"I believe that loyalty to the organisation is an important part of any job, and that if the organisation has given me an opportunity by giving me a job then I owe it to the business to give 100% for as long as the workplace remains fair and fulfilling." (C9, small private firm);

and,

"...ten to fifteen years required for significant promotion is not an issue because I would expect that with a sufficiently challenging work environment, I would possess a high degree of company loyalty." (B23, large private firm)

This recognition that employers must provide appropriate conditions to engender loyalty in their employees is an explicit description of the psychological contract, which describes mutual expectations based on perceived promises and/or obligations (Rousseau, 1995). More specifically, these findings reflect relational aspects of the contract that "...involve broad, long-term obligations, and may be also based on the exchange of socioemotional elements (e.g. commitment, trust." (Cavanaugh & Noe, 1999, p.324). However, participants were far less principled in their description of socioemotional elements, often describing lower-order, transient conditions in their notions of commitment. For example, participants described boredom as sufficient grounds for breach of the psychological contract and subsequently for leaving an organisation, for example: "...in Government I can easily transfer to another agency if I get bored" (A16, government agency).
While this may appear to paint Generation Y in a bad light, it must be said that Generation Y still express commitment and have not abrogated the principle of loyalty. Instead they appear to have displayed a shift in the characterisation of loyalty in the employment relationship to one more focused on the principle of reciprocity.

4.1.16 Long-Term Focus

Reinforcing the fact that loyalty is not absent from the Generation Y psychological contract, participant accounts commonly exposed a long-term view of expected employment relationships, even with a single employer, providing evidence that Generation Y has not abandoned the thought of an organisation-based career. Notions of long-term focus in the work values of Generation Y students are related closely to the value they place on learning and development (described below). That is, descriptions of learning and development are often linked to long-term notions of career progression, and often with the same employer:

"The training and development programs will allow me to expand my knowledge base and up-skill myself for future career movements within the agency." (A18, government agency);

"...though the company is too small to give me any real hope of an early promotion... in the longer term my career will benefit from this early sacrifice for learning and training..." (C71, small private firm);

and,

"[Government employment] provides me with excellent security... if I still want to stick in the same department for life I would be able to." (A2, government agency)

Hence, data cannot exclude the possibility that Generation Y students are open to long-term commitment, even to a single employer.
4.1.17 Autonomy, Trust, Respect and Creativity

The concepts of autonomy and trust were described in similar contexts and both were strongly related to Generation Y commitment. Not only did participants describe trust as important, they also described why it was important and how it could be created through provision of autonomy in the workplace. For example,

"Being able to demonstrate initiative and be responsible for my work is important as it demonstrates a level of trust between me and my superiors which is an important part of a working relationship." (B20, large private firm);

and,

"I enjoy coming up with my own solutions to problems, and enjoy the challenge provided by unstructured situations. I value the trust that is implicit in such a set-up, and the degree of autonomy that results." (C11, small private firm)

Similarly, participants frequently linked lack of autonomy (and low task variety) with boredom and likely turnover intention, what Johnson (2002) would consider a lack of ‘intrinsic rewards’. In addition to trust, autonomy was also conceptualised as fostering creativity, another important aspect of participants’ work values. Participants frequently conceptualised the importance of creativity in terms of being free and able to design processes, make mistakes, and adapt accordingly:

"It is important that I have the ability to be creative at work. I enjoy creating systems, processes and presentations, I feel it allows me to express and improve myself." (C61, small private firm)

Thus, creativity is conceptualised as a facilitator of personal growth, learning, and development.
4.1.18 Learning and Development

The concepts of learning and development are here instrumental to the employment relationship insofar as learning and development underpin the notion that their availability or provision engenders commitment, for example:

"...[when] an employer provides the opportunity to learn new skills it shows [a] commitment to staff that will make me more willing to stay longer and devote myself to my [employer]." (A39, government agency);

and,

"As [an IT specialist] I expect continuous training to keep pace [therefore] further skill development is necessary and required for me to stay within the one job." (A17, government agency)

Learning and development are perhaps important for what they imply if absent, that is, if an employer does not accommodate their provision Generation Y are likely to consider this adequate grounds to consider leaving their current employer. Or vice versa; employee commitment is likely to follow provision of adequate learning and development opportunities. While a basic element of Generation Y student work values, it should be noted that this aspect of learning and development is not automatically related to psychological contract creation or breach, as it operates independently of perceptions of any promise by an employer.

4.1.19 Organisation-Related Values

Generation Y expects that these ‘organisation’ factors or outcomes can be influenced by the employee, but on the whole, employers are expected to be responsible for facilitating these. The central question arising from ‘organisation’ data is not ‘could Generation Y take responsibility for these factors/outcomes?’ but rather ‘should
Generation Y take responsibility for these factors/outcomes? The visual data map in Figure 4.5 shows associations between work values clustered under the ‘organisation’ category. Links have been drawn to show how data are related and arrows indicate possible influence. For example, concepts of equity and ethics influence the concept of mission. Values clustered in blue-shaded boxes interact closely and may be interdependent.

Figure 4.5
Relationships between values contributing to the ‘organisation’ category.

4.1.20 Mentoring, Recognition, Certainty and Structure

The four themes of mentoring, recognition, certainty and structure were closely related throughout participant accounts. Representations of leadership and senior management were portrayed in terms of a mentor relationship that participants considered would not only provide support, but also provide access to the intrinsic rewards of knowledge, feedback, and acknowledgement of high quality work:
"Being able to support me emotionally on the job by offering praise for my good work and guidance in areas where I need help without being overly critical are essential [for a manager]." (B1, large private firm);

"In addition to [providing guidance] good managers should also undertake daily on-the-job training with their employees and offer regular encouragement..." (A18, government agency);

and,

"...most importantly, I expect recognition from my employer, whether this be verbal, monetary or in another form." (C26, small private firm)

While providing an avenue for growth and development, the mentor relationship was also viewed as a social referencing tool of sorts. That is, the 'manager as mentor' (Marquardt & Loan, 2005) model assists in defining organisational norms, providing certainty to employees. Notions of certainty were described both in terms of role certainty (i.e. performance and duty requirements) and social certainty (i.e. how to behave as a member of an organisation):

"Learning from [managers'] experience and knowledge would be a valuable contribution to my professional development. The guidance, support and consultation [that] a manager provides is an essential part of work..." (C5, small private firm)

Participants also valued structure in the workplace, and while closely related to the need for certainty, structure was defined more specifically. The notion of structure was concerned less with social mores and norms and instead described as a desire to avoid role ambiguity (a situation where the employee's tasks and responsibilities are ill-defined). Participants described an ideal workplace as one where the organisation's expectations are clearly enunciated; a circumstance that would reduce the likelihood of psychological contract violation (see Rousseau, 1989; 1995; 2001), and additionally,
provide the role definition and stability evident in Johnson’s (2002) concept of security rewards. The following participant accounts reflect the importance of structure:

“A large professional firm is most likely to provide the efficiency in decision making that I need because it could be expected to be highly structure[d] and hierarchical.” (B13, large private firm);

and,

“... I like the fact that the job is structured and that you have to follow set processes and procedures in order to get the job completed, this just means that you are more protected in your position.” (B4, government agency)

When viewed in context of the career stage of Generation Y, many of whom are currently in the early stage of their working lives, it is not surprising that certainty and structure are viewed as desirable. After all, the precepts of social psychology state that new members of a group seek certainty through clarification of behavioural norms and values, and strive to emulate prototypical group behaviours (Hogg & Mullin, 1999).

4.1.21 Mission

Among the factors reported as central to an organisation’s responsibilities was the concept of mission. Organisational mission, an organisation’s vision and raison d’être, is portrayed as a concept of strong values importance to Generation Y:

“For me to be able to properly dedicate so much of my time towards performing a task it must serve some greater purpose than to be just a source of income... my work must benefit society in some way or another.” (A41, government agency);

and,

“...work is worth doing only when it makes a meaningful contribution to society.” (C73, small private firm)
Interestingly, this sense of mission was not reflected through accounts of role or profession-specific characteristics. That is, mission was considered as an aspect of an organisation’s make-up and not linked to any sense-of-purpose that performance of a specific role or membership of a specific profession could create. Positively for the APS, findings such as this suggest that government agencies, frequently linked to notions of altruism and performing a public good (Frank & Lewis, 2004), should adequately meet this need for a clearly defined mission.

4.1.22 Equity and Ethics

Closely related to notions of mission, participants often counted ethical considerations among their system of work values. For example:

“My primary need is based on my belief of a contribution to society. I will never associate myself with an organisation that conducts itself in a manner that I feel causes subsequent harm to either a community or society as a whole.” (C5, small private firm);

“I won’t work for a business that is self serving and not aware of its larger responsibility...” (C22, small private firm);

and,

“Corporate citizenship is very important, even for the public service. [While] the government [agencies] are bound by rules and regulations, they must also be seen to practice these high standards.” (A11, government agency)

Although Sheahan (2005) suggests Generation Y’s ethical focus is consistent and clearly defined, data here revealed a more vaguely defined concept. That is, while participants described an attraction to ethical organisations, data did not reveal a clear description of exactly what constitutes ethical or unethical behaviour, aside from broad
descriptions of ‘not causing harm to others’. While data suggest a consistent ethics values preference, this does not imply a consistent set of ethical beliefs.

4.1.23 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance was also described as a value that workplaces should facilitate. Work-life balance was also included in the ‘social’ category for what it implied for the individual – social interaction. Here, work-life balance is viewed as a value arising from structural aspects of work (directly represented by Johnson’s (2002) concept of ‘leisure rewards’), and assumed to be a readily attainable situation, for example:

“...hard work and long hours are necessary, but [this] should not come at the cost of your health [and] wellbeing. Businesses that operate on this basis are unattractive to me; [employers] must provide balance and recognize that recreation time is not wasted money.” (C44, small private firm);

and,

“...there is nothing gained from driving workers to the edge, day after day. My parents’ generation worked too hard without [employers] considering the impact on their family lives. People in my generation want a better home-work life...” (A12, government)

While it has been implied that reports of a heightened awareness of work-life balance in Generation Y is representative of an inherent greed or idleness (see Heath, 2006), these findings do not support such extreme conclusions. Emphasis needs to be placed on the ‘balance’ aspect of work-life balance; data do not suggest that Generation Y are advocating that employers provide recreation and sociable working hours at the cost of performance and effort. Rather, Generation Y are stating that effective performance should not be defined by excessive and intrusive working hours, and it is an employer’s responsibility to ensure this is the case.
4.1.24 Organisation-Related Values: Growth Sub-Category

Data revealed four closely related values clustered in the broader ‘organisational’ data category under the sub-category ‘growth’. These relate to a value for learning and practical learning, development and self-actualisation. The visual data map outlined in Figure 4.6 shows associations between work values clustered under the ‘growth’ category. Links have been drawn to show relationships between data and arrows indicate possible influence, for example, self-actualisation shares an interactive relationship with development (noting though that it is beyond the scope of this project to completely ascertain the nature of this influence).

![Figure 4.6](image)

*Figure 4.6*
Relationships between values contributing to the ‘growth’ category.

Couched in terms of Johnson’s (2002) rewards structure, growth values can be paradoxically classified as both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. For example, the following participants describe learning and development as a tool that enhances their professional value through being up-to-date, relating to Johnson’s (2002) notion of instrumental extrinsic rewards, in that learning and development facilitates career growth and progression:
"I think that if you stop developing and progressing you will get out of touch with work practices, and for an organisation to offer learning and development opportunities, it is a big incentive and advantage for me – personally and professionally." (A38, government agency);

and,

"...[in] a competitive [labour] market graduates cannot afford to slip behind, so I will look for opportunities, from an employer point of view, that allows (sic) me to continue to learn and expand my skill base." (B34, large private firm)

In contrast, the following participant narratives relate more closely to the notion of intrinsic reward (Johnson, 2002) insofar as they describes a situation where learning is valued or undertaken on the basis that it is intellectually interesting and satisfying:

"Offering me the opportunity for paid study leave and other professional learning opportunities not only fulfils my need to gain more knowledge, but also offers me the opportunity to further distract myself instead of drowning me in tasks that are familiar, and after a few years, will become repetitive." (A23, government agency);

and,

"[F]urther training and education [is] very rewarding aside from any career benefits..." (B6, large private firm)

Hence, while it is correct to consider growth as a Generation Y work value, it is clear that concepts of growth can imply different underlying motivations.

4.1.25 Summary – Generation Y Student Work Values

Participants consistently defined their work values in terms of social, interactive processes, and had a values preference for aspects of work relating to social considerations. This is reflected in the high value ascribed to social standing achieved
through prestige and overt recognition at work. Participants also placed a high value on an adequate work-life balance, and put the responsibility on their employers to recognise and facilitate this. Notions of commitment frequently arose in participant accounts, and these were based on the concept of reciprocity and were not considered an automatic outcome of employment. Participants evaluate commitment to an organisation through aspects including autonomy, trust, respect and the provision of adequate opportunity for ongoing learning and growth. Participants' value preferences strongly favour the expectation that workplace processes will be equitable and ethical.

Participants' notion of effective management revolved around a preference for 'managers as mentors' and included the expectation that they would be involved in workplace decision-making through inclusive/consultative management. Similarly, findings suggest that Generation Y student participants place a high value on unfettered intra-organisational communication and evaluate interactions with organisations on this basis. Aspects of the value of free communication are also reflected in their value for instancy, preferring efficient paths to work objectives. Values preferences also support the notion that they are comfortable in the possibility of undertaking long-term careers and pursuing long-term goals, even within a single organisation. Participants' preferences also placed a high value on work-life balance and the expectation that employers should facilitate this.

Generation Y student participants explicitly suggested that their work values are expected to change over time, influenced by transition through career and life stages. This implies an evolving psychological contract, suggesting that conceptualisations of the employment relationship are also likely to evolve over time. This finding has a
bearing on the fourth research question (what is the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?) and will be examined in detail in subsequent sections.

The visual data map in Figure 4.7 displays overarching value categories and the contributing values themes which emerged from the data. Links are drawn where categories are related, share similar meaning, or where the relationship to other categories is potentially influential or interactive. Arrows indicate the direction of any possible influence.

![Diagram](Image)

**Figure 4.7**
Generation Y students' visual data map.
4.2 Work Values of APS-Employed Generation Y

Findings from this section address research question two:

**Question Two:** What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?

Findings in this section were gained from semi-structured interviews with APS-employed Generation Y participants. These interviews were treated as guided conversations to capture the vocabulary, stories and anecdotes used by participants to convey their feelings and values towards their work, other social groups and their employer organisation: the APS. The values emerging from participant narratives are also used to assess the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship by contrast with the views and perceptions of their managers.

Findings are presented in a narrative style using thick descriptions of participant accounts, reproduced in their own language and expressive style. Individual comments with organisation referents are presented throughout the findings. To protect anonymity, participants are identified by their gender, their workplace level/rank, and their age (e.g. male, APS5, 24).

4.2.1 Development-Related Values

Values preferences categorised under ‘development’ broadly relate to situations which enhance an individual’s opportunities for career or role advancement (Kochanski & Ledford, 2001). Values categorised under ‘development’ contained two time-based categories: one showing participants place a strong value on short-term matters immediately material to their workplace development, and a second underlying data
stream that reveals a coexisting orientation towards long-term processes and wider career development. These two themes were evident within individuals, with the same participant simultaneously upholding seemingly contradictory schemata of professional development, each based on a divergent chronological orientation. These have been labelled 'short-term focus' and 'long-term focus'.

4.2.2 (Development) Short-Term Focus-Related Values

Data clustered in the 'short-term focus' category reflect values related to personal and professional development of participants that are specifically material to immediate professional development and their immediate job or workplace. These work value preferences are distinct from long-term career and professional development values and describe a sense of immediate change or implied evolution. They also express a 'means-to-an-end' or facilitation of future success or goals. The visual data map in Figure 4.8 displays associations between work values clustered under the 'short-term focus' category. Links have been drawn to show relationships between data, and arrows indicate the possible direction of influence. For example, training influences contingent loyalty and confidence.

![Figure 4.8](image-url)

*Figure 4.8*

Relationships between values contributing to the 'short-term focus' category.
4.2.3 Confidence

Participants expressed a strong sense of confidence in themselves and their abilities, translating to high expectations of their employability and organisational utility:

"...the skill set [graduates have] can be applied anywhere." (male, APS5, 24);

"Honestly, I don't have tickets on myself, but I'd have no drama getting another job if I wanted to. It's pretty easy getting a public service job..." (male, EL1, 28);

and,

"...the G[lobal] F[inancial] C[risis] doesn't bother me. Even outside government I can easily get another job. I mean, I've got two good degrees and my experience here..." (female, APS6, 25)

This salient self-confidence was frequently expressed in accounts of frustration arising from the perception that organisational processes were inefficient and closed to suggested alternatives. This confidence was also expressed in reflections of participants’ ability to secure other employment, should they so choose.

4.2.4 Contingent Loyalty

The notion of contingent loyalty was expressed by APS student participants, and this work value finding was repeated across APS-employed Generation Y. Contingent loyalty is that which depends entirely on the employer providing a workplace that meets participants’ needs and expectations (i.e. dependent on reciprocity and mutuality of understanding). APS-employed participants expressed near identical sentiment to their student counterparts, yet understandably grounded this in specific workplace experience. As one participant put it clearly "...it's not rewarded, so why be loyal?" (female, EL1, 28). Expression of loyalty was commonly attached to provision of
opportunities for growth (e.g. professional development, skills development, promotion), for example:

“There’s (sic) definitely areas or agencies where skill-sets and tasks are very limited, so there’s not a lot of room to grow. There are also places that have a varied workload and a lot of succession planning, I think when teams do that you can stay for a really long time, but some teams don’t plan for that so they can’t really expect someone to hang around for very long.” (female, APS4, 23);

and,

“I think that most people think that young people want to just get out and move on, but I don’t feel that way. I’d stay in an agency, or even a team, as long as I could grow and develop. I don’t really see the point [in] sitting somewhere [where you are] limited and bored, that’s not going to benefit me... so I’m not going to sit there and waste everybody’s time.” (female, APS6, 25)

This finding does not suggest that Generation Y APS employees have abandoned the principle of loyalty. They appear instead to have adopted a more pragmatic conceptualisation based on the principle of *quid pro quo*.

4.2.5 Training

Opportunities for training and development were evident considerations in the work values of APS-employed Generation Y participants, and the APS was often upheld as particularly good at providing such opportunities – a notion supported by the Australian Public Service Commission’s (APSC, 2009) *Employee Survey* – as the following participant narratives describe:

“Doing study and training is very important. I think the APS is very good at that. I’d recommend it for that.” (female, APS4, 25);
“It’s just basic commonsense. If you want to get better at your job you should take up on these training offers... [my agency] offers dozens of them...” (male, APS6, 26);

and,

“Why not go through training? It costs me nothing and I can basically do what I please, and I come out of it smarter... hopefully... and more employable... also hopefully.”

(female, EL1, 27)

Thus, training opportunities were valued as they were both readily accessible and perceived as instrumental in building skill and human capital (i.e. enhancing participants’ workplace effectiveness and worth).

4.2.6 (Development) Long-Term Focus-Related Values

Work value preferences clustered under ‘long-term outlook’ relate to notions of an individual’s career and focus on future outcomes and evolution. The visual data map in Figure 4.9 shows associations between work values clustered under the ‘long-term outlook’ category. Links have been drawn to show relationships between data, and arrows indicate possible influence. For example, work-life balance has an interactive relationship with career stage.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.9**

Relationships between values contributing to the ‘long-term outlook’ category.
4.2.7 Career Stage

Echoing the views of Generation Y student participants, APS-employed Generation Y universally reported an expectation that their work values will evolve as they traverse various stages of their careers and personal lives, for example:

"I can see the shift from my own experiences – wanting to be everything to everyone, putting in the hours – even [in] just over five years it has changed for me personally. With family and personal circumstance, I need to make sure that I keep my job, so I can’t be destroying everything now... I have a longer-term view than four or five years ago."
(female, EL1, 28);

and,

"At the stage I’m at now, I turn up to work for money; I want to go home and spend time with my family. Go back three years, and it was very much ‘I want to be here for the good of [the agency]’. Maybe a different stage of life, or less naive?"
(male, APS6, 25)

This finding provides further support for the life stage theory of generations (see Braungart & Braungart, 1986), suggesting Generation Y work values are likely to change as this cohort ages. Indeed, many participants had already reported transition through various career or life stages and had forecast additional transitions as they age, challenging the idea that current Generation Y work values are chronic and immutable (e.g. Chester, 2002; Sheahan, 2005).

4.2.8 Mission and Success

Again consistent with Generation Y student participants, for APS-employed participants, the value of ‘mission’ was closely linked to notions of success. That is, achieving an outcome based on serving the public good and making a positive difference to society was frequently reported as a strong factor in participants’ concept
of achievement and success. Despite claims that Generation Y constantly seek instant gratification (Sheahan, 2005), this success was recognised as a long-term outcome and in many cases the result of career-long effort, for example:

"I suppose what I mean is that there’s another pay-off for [APS] work that you don’t get in [the] private [sector]... it’s like the nation-building buzzword... I think you can make the place far better for the next generation. It’s a warm, fuzzy feeling that it might be truly be (sic) down to the choices I make... maybe not right now, but eventually.” (male, APS5, 25)

Interestingly, this altruistic value did not arise from any sense-of-purpose associated with membership of a specific professional group (e.g. lawyer, economist, accountant), despite many participants specifically invoking identification with their professional group at the cost of identification as a public servant (described under the ‘social’ category, below).

While achieving a sense of mission was closely linked to long-term success, the nexus between success and mission was not always immediately evident from day-to-day work. The results of work effort were often difficult for participants to enunciate or demonstrate, especially those involved in policy formulation roles where outcomes were often at arm’s length from central bureaucracy:

"It was good to go to the [Northern] Territory and actually do something for someone... and see that I was actually doing what I signed up to do... really making a difference to concrete problems.” (female, APS4, 24);

and,

"I think also, I wanted to do something a bit more useful... I felt like I wanted to do something that made a difference, with a bit more purpose. Ideally, I’d like to be working for AusAid or something like that where I could see that a bit more directly. Although, I
still feel I'm making a bit more of a contribution than I did [in the private sector]." (female, APS6, 25)

These findings allude to the existence of 'ideological currency' in participants' work values. Results of the APSC (2009) Employee Survey similarly allude to the existence of ideological currency where findings expose the "ability to contribute to making a difference" (p.25) as a central factor in attracting employees to the APS. Data suggest that the APS provides Generation Y employees with an outlet for the expression of ideological values, providing what Johnson (2002) terms 'altruistic rewards'.

4.2.9 Work-Life Balance

The value for work-life balance in Generation Y has been couched in terms of a desire to see the balance tipped in favour of the 'life' side of the equation via an enhanced desire for leisure time over work time (Eisner, 2005). However, APS-employed participants held a very realistic notion of work-life balance that considered balance to be an active process that ebbs and flows depending on workload or career stage, for example. Additionally, while participants value balance and strive to achieve it, situations typically described as 'imbalance' (i.e. more work than leisure) were not viewed as wholly negative in themselves, participants instead recognised this as a necessary aspect of work:

"[In a central agency] you do have to sacrifice your work-life balance a little bit... working longer hours. We don't get overtime or that sort of stuff here. People do burn out, but it's good to be here." (male, APS6, 26);

and,
"You've got to expect some... a bit... of give and take. Weekends occasionally suffer, and budget time is a nightmare, but it's just part of the job. I mean it's not every week or anything." (male, EL1, 28)

However, evidence does not support the suggestion that this seeming acceptance of work-life imbalance can be considered as a carte blanche espousal of intrusive work practices; participants clearly considered imbalance as the exception rather than the norm.

4.2.10 Social-Related Values

Closely consistent with Generation Y students work value preferences, APS-employed participants ascribed a strong value to social aspects of work, which extend beyond the concept of socialisation or personal interaction; data were less concerned with appearance and more concerned with facilitation and achievement. Figure 4.10 visually displays the relationships between these work values preferences.

![Figure 4.10](image)

Figure 4.10
Relationships between values contributing to the 'social' category.
4.2.11 Identity

Identity was also a component of APS-employed Generation Y participant work values and relates to a number of concepts. Notably, participants did not refer to themselves or their contemporaries using ‘Generation Y’ or its synonyms (e.g. Heath, 2006). Interestingly, it was only a very small group of participants that referred to themselves as public servants or admitted doing so to other people. The majority of participants associated the term ‘public servant’ with negative connotations. This typically related to perceived social stereotypes of a poor public service work ethic, employment of lesser-quality staff, and perpetuation of inefficient workplace performance through low accountability. As participants describe:

“If I was to say ‘public servant’, people would automatically think a.) get paid to do nothing; and b.) you’re pretty much lazy. They know that the work is just... you actually do nothing. The work is where you don’t have to know any skills. As long as you can talk (sic) English you can get the job.” (male, APS4, 22);

and,

“I think there is a bit [of stigma] attached to the APS. If I’m talking to my friends in Sydney or meet someone new I say I’m a marketing strategist, or I work for [my agency], but I probably wouldn’t say I’m a public servant. People would say ‘you just sit at a desk all day and don’t do anything’.” (female, APS5, 25)

This lack of overt identification stands at odds with wider APS employee views, for example the APSC Employee Survey (APSC, 2009) reports that the majority of respondents proudly identify as public servants. While hesitancy to identify as a public servant was the majority position, there were examples of contrary views, with some participants openly identifying as public servants, albeit with some qualification:
"I just say I’m a public servant... I normally also say ‘in one of the central agencies’, though. Reputation is important to me. People have the impression that public servants are lazy and take long lunches. That’s more of an old-school public service... I don’t think we’re there anymore, that doesn’t happen here.” (male, APS6, 26)

While there was a notable tendency among participants to avoid identification as a public servant, participants valued affiliation with their relevant professional/occupational group. Participants used this referent identity to highlight that they held specific expertise and were suitably qualified to perform specialist roles beyond a ‘generalist’ concept of public service work:

"[I was] very determined to not become a public servant. I spent four years of my time and money to become an economist, not a bureaucrat. So, yeah, I see myself as an economist rather than a public servant. I suppose it’s a technical thing. The technical merit and the ability to think through complex problems was what distinguished me from the rest of the public service.” (male, EL1, 29)

4.2.12 Confidence and Efficiency

The narrative accounts outlined within ‘identity’, above, also allude to a sense of efficiency among participants, supported by underlying self-confidence to complete tasks unilaterally. This encompasses a desire for high performance and achievement, and also a desire to complete tasks in a straightforward and direct manner with minimum bureaucratic delays. This is a concept not readily explained by Generation Y literature, although synthesising purported characteristics of Generation Y (e.g. impatience, instant gratification, high-paced stimulation, direct communication) would approximate the underlying concepts yet do not provide a complete picture. Table 4.3
outlines a range of excerpts from participant narratives that allude to the concept of efficiency evident across APS-employed Generation Y participants.

Table 4.3
Comments alluding to efficiency within APS-employed Generation Y narratives.

“...it takes so long to change anything in the public service. By the time the change happens, the people that need it have moved on, like they’ve moved past needing that change, and then there’s a new problem, and they’re always struggling to catch up. We’re always chasing our tail... it’s slow and not responsive.” (female, APS4, 23)

“...you had to raise a ticket for the replacement [keyboard] – there’s one team that deals with keyboards and one [team] that deals with computers, that’s two calls. No new keyboards... just a whole computer. They had to contact OH&S cause they have to bring them in on a trolley, and someone [else] has the trolley. Then the power lead wasn’t tested, so we’ve got to go and get a friggin’ tested power lead, then the day cuts over ‘oh I’ll find you a tested power lead tomorrow’. So I’m sitting there with a computer I can’t turn on. So I just walk into the store room and steal one. How hard does it have to be?” (male, EL1, 28)

“[Managers] just will never get to the point. They’re so tied up in bureaucratic process that they never, ever say what they mean. I mean, just tell me already! I’m a professional I can take it, stop messing around...” (male, APS6, 25)

“I suppose I’m lucky with my supervisor. She’s really supportive and lets me change my work to make improvements... you know, like making things more efficient. That’s really important...” (female, APS4, 23)

“I’ve got to get five people to sign a bloody form to approve a draft media statement... this is before I’ve even written it... the concept needs to be signed off! Can you believe it? It shits me right off...what a total waste of time!” (male, APS6, 27)

“I find the rigidity a bit difficult sometimes. Most of the time the good performers just go around the rules so that something actually happens on time for a change.” (female, APS5, 25)

“...all the public service jobs you go for have these six selection criteria: one about OH&S, one about inclusion of others and diversity, and then you’ve got your three standard questions about the position... I mean I’ve got a canned response for three of them, it’s just wasting people’s time. You’re culling people straight away on stupid things like that – why waste your time?” (male, EL1, 28)

“I wish [senior managers] would just say what they mean instead of dressing everything up in nice ‘brochure language’...” (female, EL1, 25)

4.2.13 Mentor(s) and Inclusion

Consistent with the narrative of Generation Y students, APS-employed participants depicted the relationship between their managers as that of a mentor:
"I'd say a [good] manager is kind of like a mentor. Like you want [managers] to provide you with guidance or direction." (female, APS4, 23);

and,

"In my last [graduate job] rotation, I had a supervisor that was just so hands off and barely even talked to you. [My new supervisor] is great, like she takes a real interest and has taught me a lot... there's a sense of involvement." (female, APS4, 24)

Similarly, the 'manager as mentor' (Marquardt & Loan, 2005) assisted participants in definition of behavioural norms and provision of support and knowledge useful to their career development. Participants also valued their managers as facilitators of career growth or agents of change:

"It's also particularly handy if [managers] can identify development opportunities. Sometimes people don't necessarily have a 'road map' of how to navigate the APS system. I guess managers, where they can take on a sort of mentor role, where appropriate, can be a fantastic advantage; especially for people who are looking to stay here." (male, APS5, 24)

This desire to foster close working relationships with managers fits with the high value participants placed on consultative management processes. Widely described in Generation Y literature (e.g. Howe & Strauss, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000; Hill, 2002; Jackson, 2004; Sheahan, 2005), participants placed a high value on inclusion in workplace processes, reflecting Johnson's (2002) notion of 'influence rewards'.

4.2.14 Recognition

APS-employed Generation Y data also revealed a formal role for recognition (here synonymous with status or prestige) in participants' values schema, for example:
"[success is]... meeting expectations of my peers, getting positive feedback from above and below... being seen to be doing a good job..." (male, EL1, 29) (emphasis is participant's own)

Participant accounts uncovered an underlying worth attached to workplace recognition through its role as a reinforcement of social status and comparative achievement:

"...there's a role for status or self-importance in [success]. But I mean it's not all vanity, it's more about your standing in the agency... knowing that you're able to deliver the goods..." (male, EL1, 28);

and,

"You've got to be seen to be good. Nobody's going to take notice [of you] if you're name's not in front of the decision-makers." (male, APS6, 26)

In this sense, recognition here is readily accounted for by Johnson's (2002) concept of rewards arising from status attainment.

4.2.15 Micro-Organisational-Related Values

Values described in the 'micro-organisational' category refer to aspects of participant narratives relevant to their immediate workplace or agency, and are considered distinct from APS-wide concerns. When amalgamated, data ensuing from the 'micro-organisational' category liken APS-employed Generation Y participants to 'proto organisational specialists' in that they are willing to explore various roles within an organisation and value this ability highly. Combined with suggestions that APS-employed participants are not averse to expressing organisational commitment, data suggest an ongoing role for the organisation-based career despite this often being upheld as anachronistic (e.g. Salt, 2006) in generational literature. Figure 4.11 displays the relationships between these work values preferences. Visual links have been drawn
to show how data are related. Work-life integration is represented distinctly as it shares no direct relationship with other factors but is nonetheless represented as issue immediately relevant to the employer agency.

![Figure 4.11](image)

*Figure 4.11*

Relationships between values contributing to the 'micro-organisational category.'

### 4.2.16 Performance

Participants consistently displayed a strong awareness of their workplace performance and productivity, displaying what could be considered a norm of high performance. This is characterised by a strong awareness of workplace goals, personal goals and organisational outputs, supported by ongoing introspection and monitoring of task and career progress against values and long-term goals. The majority of participants described a close familiarity with the role competencies outlined in the APS professional development guide – the *Integrated Leadership System* – and undertook self-monitoring of their performance against these defined standards. While participants valued high performance standards, this also created a high degree of
awareness and scrutiny of the performance of their colleagues and co-workers, and participants described many prominent failures in their agency’s management of employee performance.

As notions of performance were raised by participants in interactive terms that relate directly to the terms of the employment relationship, this aspect of APS-employed Generation Y work value preferences is described in detail in section 5.2 ‘The Employment Relationship’.

4.2.17 Work-Life Integration

Where concepts of work-life (im)balance are evident in other data categories and within Generation Y literature (e.g. Eisner, 2005), participant data also suggested a coexistent sense of work-life integration. A relatively abstruse concept, work-life integration is linked to a sense of values congruency and purpose between participants, their colleagues and their organisations.

Although distinct from concepts of identity, identity nonetheless remains a component factor of this concept of integration. The concept is multifaceted and only evident through synthesis of group-wide data and it encompasses issues as simple as location (of the workplace), provision and facilitation of leisure and social opportunities, and the ability to undertake philosophical and intellectual deliberation\(^ \text{13} \). The central point is that participants’ attitudes to APS employment were not far-removed from their

\(^ {13} \) Similar concepts are also evident in the wider APS population, with survey data from APS employees (APSC, 2009) associating concepts such as workplace location and congruence between personal interests and role activities with notions of job satisfaction.
attitudes to day-to-day life, and work-life integration alludes to the notion that participants placed a high value on the ability to seamlessly transfer between organisational and personal modes of thought.

While undoubtedly esoteric and difficult to define, the concept of work-life integration can be likened to aspects of what Csíkszentmihályi (1975) terms ‘flow’ – loosely, a state of strong task engagement characterised by deep involvement (Keller & Bless, 2008). While not discussed across Generation Y literature, similar findings have been described in the broader literature of management theory. For example Carlson, Derr and Wadsworth (2003) have observed that the “...spheres between [work and non-work life] are becoming increasingly and inseparably intertwined...” (p.100), and themselves suggest parallels between Csíkszentmihályi’s (1975) conceptualisations and individuals with a similar sense of work-life integration.

4.2.18 Adaptability

Similar to a previously described sense of self-confidence, participants maintained a general sense of adaptability and belief in the marketability of their own skills sets. This is reflected in their representations of an organisational career couched in terms of their immediate employer agency, and participants ascribed a high value to their ability to adapt and transfer to new roles, and also to their organisation’s ability to facilitate this.

Table 4.4 outlines a range of excerpts from participant narratives that allude to the concept of adaptability.
Table 4.4
Examples alluding to adaptability within APS-employed Generation Y narratives.

"Even outside government I can easily get another job. I mean, I’ve got two good degrees and my experience here..." (female, APS6, 25)

"[My agency] is its own industry... I can use my skills and transfer across any agency. It's a lot bigger than the manufacturing industry... its massive and the diversity comes with that, that's why I'm here..." (female, EL1, 28)

"I can fit in anywhere, and [I] can pretty much move anywhere in [my agency]." (male, APS4, 23)

"I've got plenty of options, so no, the [economic] downturn doesn't worry me." (male, 27, APS6)

"Once I come out of that transition phase, and the kids are in school and settled, then I can pick up my career and make that change." (female, EL1, 28)

"I think the old days of the career man are over. You've got to be able to move around and fit into new jobs now. The APS promotes this with the [Senior Executive Service] who aren't specialists anymore. I like it though... if I've got [the] skills to move around and adapt to new ideas and jobs, I'm going to make the most of it." (male, EL1, 29)

"I hate being pigeonholed and stuck in one job... it's just a waste of education and talent." (male, APS5, 24)

4.2.19 Pragmatism

While data revealed a strong values focus among APS-employed Generation Y, participants nonetheless maintained a pragmatic attitude towards these work values. This pragmatism tempered any notions of naïveté associated with the values schema of youth (see Strauss & Howe, 1991) and suggested that Generation Y participants took a very practical approach to the application of their work values, rather than a rigid or dogmatic adherence to ideological principles.

This concept was particularly evident in participant accounts of the day-to-day operation of the APS and its organisational values, where participants reported an acceptance of manipulating or discarding organisational ideology (e.g. APS value of procedural equity) where an improved sense of efficiency made practical sense:
“I find the rigidity a bit difficult sometimes. Most of the time the good performers just go around the rules so that something actually happens on time for a change.” (female, APS5, 25);

and,

“I’d just prefer [my] manager to just tell me if there’s a problem. Going through all the paperwork and APS code-of-conduct drama might be a nice idea, but it just wastes time at the end of the day.” (male, EL1, 29)

This sentiment was particularly evident in participants’ descriptions of agency recruitment processes which were reported as cumbersome and inefficient, a factor arising from agencies’ rigid observance of APS values-based procedures; for example:

“In terms of recruitment, I don’t like the fact that you have to go through a so-called merit-based selection process in a lot of instances. So, it’s got to be merit-based... seen to be. So, you might get 50 people apply; that’s 50 people wasting resources to apply for a position. And the person that’s been doing it for a year, and management wants to promote, is going to get the job anyway. Everybody knows what’s going on – it makes sense. Why waste so much time on lip service to rules? You’re getting the right person anyway.” (male, APS5, 26)

4.2.20 Variety

Variety in its simplest form refers to task diversity – a desire that has been described elsewhere in Generation Y literature (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Chester, 2002; Jackson, 2004; Sheahan, 2005; McCrindle & Hooper, 2006). While participants valued diversity in their work, the majority considered that their current employer agency adequately provided this:

“[My agency] markets itself as a bit of a one-stop-shop for career choice. It’s good ‘cause I can easily change areas if I get bored with policy.” (male, APS6, 25);

and,
"The graduate rotation was good, and it gave you the opportunity to go across the variety of jobs that we actually do at [the agency] and try them out for yourself." (female, APS5, 25)

Interestingly, the scope for variety was couched in terms of role (i.e. intra-agency) processes, rather than wider APS career processes (i.e. inter-agency), and the touted ability for APS employees to easily transfer between agencies (see APSC, 2007) was largely overlooked as an outlet for this variety.

The true value of workplace variety was most often expressed by participants who had formerly worked within the private sector, with APS agencies (reported in distinct terms from the APS as a holistic body) lauded for their ability to provide role variety, for example:

"I had the ability to do both [preferred] jobs here in [my APS agency], where before in [my previous private sector role] you couldn't really move like that." (male, EL1, 26)

4.2.21 Summary of APS-Employed Work Values

APS-employed Generation Y tend to evaluate work value preferences in social terms, evident in representations of managers as mentors and an expectation of inclusive management practices and close involvement in organisational processes. Data also revealed a cohort with a strong values orientation, leading to an enhanced perception of organisational ethics, values, promises and commitments.

Along with this values orientation, participants frequently gained motivation through serving a greater good or making a contribution to positive societal outcomes; a sense of mission that was implicated in notions of success. While aware of higher-order ethical
principles, their day-to-day work was evaluated on a pragmatic sense of efficiency and a norm of high performance, reflected in a desire for success, career progression and self-development.

While participant accounts did not preclude career-long commitment to a single organisation, notions of loyalty were often couched in terms of a relationship of reciprocity with their employer. That is, a notion of contingent loyalty.

Work value preferences suggested a highly confident group with strong faith in their professional resilience. APS-employed participants strive to achieve a work-life balance, yet acknowledge practical limitations on this desire. While participants placed a high value on immediacy and efficiency in work performance and organisational processes, they remain strongly motivated by career success and long-term aspirations.

While participant accounts yielded a rich view of the work values preferences of APS-employed Generation Y, the likelihood that these values are enduring is limited. Participants consistently described both an expectation that their work values would change over time and frequent examples of how their values had changed to-date. This echoes findings from Generation Y student participants, and provides support for the notion that Generation Y work values are not chronic and immutable, but are instead subject to change over time in line with changes to personal and professional circumstance. This finding holds implications for the nature of the employment relationship, and is discussed in detail in subsequent sections. The work values preferences described in this section, and the relationships between them, are displayed in the visual data map in Figure 4.12, below. The map displays overarching values
categories and the contributing themes which emerged from the data. Links have been drawn where categories are related or share similar meaning.

**Figure 4.12**
APS-employed Generation Y visual data map.
CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS II

The findings outlined in this chapter address the three remaining research questions:

**Question Three:** What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?

**Question Four:** What is the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

**Question Five:** How effective is the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

5.1 APS Managers

APS managers' \((N = 20)\) narratives provide an experiential view of the organisation’s perspective of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship, specifically addressing research question three:

**Question Three:** What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?

Managers' data provide an account of how Generation Y work values translate to workplace behaviour, and create a picture of how the APS is adapting to the challenge of recruitment and retention of Generation Y. Data suggest that Generation Y is not a wholly cohesive concept in the mind of APS managers, who commonly conflated concepts of life stage (that which changes with age) with notions of Generation Y being defined by an immutable set of enduring traits; the two concepts suggesting different theoretical constructs and workforce implications.
Findings are presented alongside supporting data comprised of participant accounts, reproduced in their own language and expressive style. To protect anonymity, participants are identified by their gender, their workplace level/rank, and their age (e.g. male, EL2, 29).

5.1.1 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Expectations

Expectations were raised as a central negative aspect of Generation Y employees, with participants describing an ‘expectation of entitlement’ among Generation Y, and many considering Generation Y work values to be unrealistic. Indeed, these high expectations were the dominant theme in managers’ accounts of Generation Y employees, with many other workplace factors being related back to their lofty values. For example:

“*I think there is some element of graduates having unreasonably high expectations.*” (male, EL2, 29);

“*I think this expectation or sense of entitlement drives a lot of the negative press about Gen Y. Its not that they even physically ask for a lot, its (sic) just this ingrained expectation that lots of money, responsibility, variety of work, high level access to executives etc is going to be automatically provided.*” (male, EL2, 30);

and,

“*I think some Gen Y’ers have a sense of entitlement, and where a new APS employee wouldn’t dream of applying for promotion for at least a year once upon a time, I have seen Gen Y employees applying for promotion after a few months in the job...”* (male, EL2, 34)

A tendency for high expectations has also been noted across anecdotal literature, for example Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay (2007) notes Generation Y are frequently charged by older colleagues as having “*unrealistic expectations*” (p.96).
Even Heath (2006), in his scathing anti-Baby Boomer, pro-Generation Y polemic, tackles the notion that "our expectations are too high" (p.72).

However, examination of managers’ data reveals a more textured picture of Generation Y expectations, and one that is more complex than that offered in the literature. For example, the manager account below describes a clear indication of unrealistic expectations, in this instance grounded in a mismatch between ambition and skill. However, the manager’s second sentence is perhaps of most interest:

"...it seems that Gen Y expect more without perhaps having the necessary background or experience to compliment (sic) their ambitions. It seems at present, perhaps due more so to a strong employment market (i.e. short supply), that these expectations are largely facilitated." (male, SES1, 46)

Here, the manager provides an important description of workplace reality, namely that "these expectations are largely facilitated." A number of other managers also suggested that Generation Y expectations are being accommodated, for example:

"…flashy titles are on the increase at the lower levels of the APS, quite possibly as a direct reply to Gen Y expectations." (male, EL2, 34);

and,

"...the organisation will be flexible for them [and] be understanding of their work-life situations." (male, EL2, 44)

Paradoxically, these managers’ accounts suggested divergent views, often from the same individual. On the one hand, Generation Y work expectations were viewed as unrealistic, but on the other hand, accounts of organisations meeting these expectations were common, suggesting alignment with organisational reality. As Generation Y
expectations are the central theme in managers’ accounts, this seemingly contradictory finding is worth dwelling upon.

The answer to this puzzle may lie partially in semantics; not so much with the meanings of specific words, but rather with their contextual use. Narratives revealed that managers often used the term ‘unrealistic’ synonymously with ‘excessive’, which in the absence of any notions of organisational context, would prima facie imply a mismatch between Generation Y expectations and the work environment. However, it is clear that many statements of unrealistic expectations are not relayed as excessive strictly in terms of organisational reality, but rather also excessive in relation to the manager’s personal value system. In this sense Generation Y expectations become unreasonable by comparison to a manager’s own individual expectations (i.e. at a similar age or career stage). Therefore, findings suggest that Generation Y values may be conceptualised in terms of a comparison to managers’ personal beliefs or experiences (a subjective assessment of reasonableness) and also in relation to absolute organisational reality (an objective assessment of reasonableness)\textsuperscript{14}.

Where Generation Y expectations are concerned, managers also described a tension between promises made at an organisational level and their ability to deliver on these at an operational level. The notion of organisational promises, both implicit and explicit, sits at the core of the psychological contract (e.g. Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998) and suggestions that managers are unable to implement explicit promises made by their

\textsuperscript{14} As the literature foreshadowed the issue of high expectations among Generation Y, the likelihood of distinctions between subjective and objective representations of reality was accounted for in the composition of the APS manager questionnaire by specifically asking respondents to describe how/if the APS directly meets the needs of Generation Y – an inbuilt validity check on participant responses.
organisation does not bode well for the relationship between an organisation and its staff (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). The following participant accounts highlight this point clearly:

"I think the university system and HR managers set up the expectation that Gen Y graduates are far above this basic work and should be employed just to write policy and high level intellectual staff. Obviously this is nothing like reality but its (sic) what the grads are told their job will be and it reminds me of those army TV ads where nobody ever goes to war but just plays football and travels across the world having fun for a career." (male, EL2, 30);

and,

"...in fairness to [Generation Y] I think the graduate programs and HR people do tend to advertise this sort of thing [varied and challenging work] as the 'norm' when the actual managers have no way of ever delivering on these promises." (male, SES1, 54)

5.1.2 Perceptions of Generation Y Communication and Social Skills

While Generation Y work values revealed a strong social focus, APS manager data suggested that these values did not necessarily translate into positive workplace behaviours. Managers often characterised Generation Y as poor communicators whose social values frequently hampered workplace operation and efficacy. Manager narratives commonly reflected opinions from anecdotal media of a Generation Y placing too high a value on technology (e.g. Sheahan, 2005). However, where Generation Y commentary typically considers this ‘tech savvy’ a positive force for organisational change (Zemke et al., 2000; Sheahan, 2005; Health, 2006), APS managers instead described a tendency for socially-focused technology to impede workplace potential. For example, through inappropriate use of communications or
social media tools: "...social media such as [F]acebook etc. can be seen as a priority over workload" (male, EL2, 36), or through an excessive "...reliance on technology... [that] hinders language skills" (female, EL1, 61). Participant views are perhaps best summarised by the following account:

"I get a feeling that Gen Y are not as socially adept as the 1 to 2 generations prior where a lot of value is placed on electronic media and interacting with themselves and it seems that certainly within the workplace, Gen Y people are less able to socially interact directly with others." (male, SES1, 46)

Hence, valued communications processes and media are thought to hamper the development of effective communication, implied at both a societal and organisational level. The central message being that the Generation Y preference for social pursuits and interaction has not translated to any heightened degree of effectiveness in the work domain; indeed, APS managers suggest quite the opposite:

"Their view of the world seems to be based on their social life... [work] decisions seem to be a consultative [process] through their peer group over their management or leadership..." (male, EL2, 36)

If, as APS managers suggest here, technology use has contributed to a decline in the social skills of Generation Y, then this is a rare instance in which a trend in the broad sociological ambit of Generation Y has concrete implications for their workplace performance. As outlined in chapter two, some accounts of Generation Y as a workplace cohort (e.g. Huntley, 2006; Salt, 2006) can be challenged by their assumption that broad social generational characteristics and behaviours directly infer workplace relevance. Authors typically offer no cogent link between the relevance of this affinity for technology and actual workplace performance. Hence, these findings,
in suggesting a link between evolved sociological values trends and workforce performance, provide an association largely absent from Generation Y literature.

While the perception of poor communications skills was a strong theme in managers’ accounts, this must be taken with a degree of caution, principally because Generation Y employees are more likely to be recent workforce entrants (by virtue of their age), and therefore less likely to be fully socialised to the norms and intricacies of working life (see van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Hence, it is feasible that APS managers, in describing communications deficiencies, are implying a deficiency in a domain-specific behaviour. That is, communication deficiencies based on simple ignorance of the appropriate norms, values, and behaviours of a certain workplace or organisation. In doing so, managers could be referring to employees who are yet to be socialised into their organisation and whose behaviour is likely to moderate or change over time (van Maanen & Schein, 1979; McMillan & Lopez, 2001; Polach, 2004; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2006).

5.1.3 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Instant Gratification

Aside from suggesting a relationship between technology and social values, the literature often implies a link between technology use and a desire for instant gratification among Generation Y (see Crawford, 2006). A range of APS managers also suggested this link, for example:

"[Generation Y] are not patient, [they] want everything now... I believe this is the result of our increasing communications age. TV, the internet and our communication gadgets have brought an expectation of receiving things instantly and easily. Difficult tasks which cannot be resolved at the 'click of a button' are often beyond Gen Y." (male, EL2, 49);
and,

“Maybe also there's an element and certain need for immediate gratification in Gen Y. I'm sympathetic to the view that this is a parallel to their [F]acebook and instant messenger usage where they get instant replies and immediate outcomes, but I'm not sure that's the whole picture.” (male, EL2, 30)

This exposes a common thread in managers' attempts to rationalise the underlying cause of the value of instant gratification through the influence of technology. While managers' perceptions of the value are important and valid, their musings on the cause of the phenomenon have much in common with anecdotal accounts. Most anecdotal attempts to link the Generation Y value for constant challenges, stimulation, work variety and gratification (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001) with technological factors fall victim to confusion between correlation and causation. That is, the instancy of modern technology causes the desire for instant gratification in Generation Y, who are supposedly avid users of technology.

5.1.4 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Ethic

Managers near-universally, and directly, reported Generation Y staff as hardworking:

“[Generation Y show] a willingness to get ahead and to get through [their] workload.”
(male, EL2, 44);

“[Generation Y] are hardworking and smart and know how to apply their knowledge to get better productivity.” (female, EL1, 61);

“[Generation Y] are hardworking, usually well educated and expect to do the 'hard slog' before the reward...” (female, APS6, 34);

and,
") I think younger people are as eager to work as hard for things as in previous [generations]." (female, EL2, 36)

While reports of a hard-work ethic among Generation Y were the majority, there were some minority dissenting views, for example:

") I would say that there is a reluctance among Gen Y'ers to 'do the hard yards'..." (male, EL2, 34)

Irrespective of any dissenting views, is there utility or theoretical validity in consideration of a generation-based propensity for hard work? After all, employee performance, and its close relative productivity, have been the central tenet of management theory from the groundbreaking scientific management approach of Taylor (1911) to modern multi-faceted approaches (Haslam, 2001), and is underpinned by a plethora of environmental factors which apply irrespective of generation. Realistically, as with many traits associated with Generation Y, expression of a 'hard-work ethic' cannot be considered a solely Generation Y characteristic. Its importance here is twofold. Firstly, and simply, descriptions of Generation Y as hardworking provide contrast to less than complimentary anecdotal accounts of Generation Y as workplace loafers (see Heath, 2006), and dispelling this myth from a workplace perspective is an important finding in itself. Secondly, while a tendency for hard work can ultimately be confounded with a range of external variables, it nonetheless carries basic theoretical importance; this finding offers suggestion that the APS environment provides a good fit with Generation Y values and expectations. The notion of how or if this 'fit' actually results in increased workplace productivity is less clear cut. That is, a propensity for hard work implies increased activity or underlying motivation, but not necessarily increased productivity or workplace output. While a propensity for hard work is
ostensibly a positive workplace characteristic, it must be recognised that findings presented here provide no tangible proof of any relationship between hard work and heightened output per se.

5.1.5 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Learning

It was clear from Generation Y data gained in earlier research phases that the desire to learn, and the ability for organisations to facilitate this, was a salient value among this cohort, and APS managers’ accounts concurred with this view:

"...the willingness to learn seems to be quite good from Gen Y people generally."

(male, SES1, 46);

and,

"I think younger people are far more open to learning than older people. Formal education is a part of this but not the whole case. They’re always the first to sign up for training courses, and they’re always asking questions and seeking to build their knowledge. I think they’re keen to apply their knowledge too, so departments get a good return on investment from younger people.” (male, EL1, 30)

This finding, reported across both Generation Y and their managers, has also been reported on an organisation-wide level by the Australian Public Service Commission’s (2009) Employee Survey, where the opportunity for learning and development ranked highly among APS employees’ values and expectations. Furthermore, Generation Y literature commonly reports that Generation Y individuals place a high value on ongoing learning opportunities (e.g. Laabs, 1998; Gardyn, 2000; Finegold et al., 2002; Moodie, 2004), which also supports these findings.
5.1.6 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Inclusive Management

Along with the willingness to learn described above, managers also described Generation Y as being keen contributors to workplace processes and discourse, for example:

"[Generation Y has] a keenness to participate in work..." (male, EL2, 44);

and,

"...[Generation Y] seem to be enthusiastic to be involved and are willing to participate, provided they believe they can contribute to the outcome or the advice sought." (male, EL2, 36)

While the above accounts suggest a one-way communication process, other managers couched this willingness to contribute as more of a bi-directional process. Such reports harkened to Generation Y accounts that revealed the high value of consultative and inclusive management practices, for example:

"I've found that Gen Y on the whole tend to very much operate on a two-way basis as far as they expect to be involved in decision making but they're also very willing to contribute to improving processes or procedures in their area. They're always keen to get involved and volunteer [their] thoughts and ideas." (female, EL1, 30)

The value that Generation Y place on inclusion in day-to-day workplaces processes and events was also clearly evident across their own accounts of work values where participants reported a strong desire to be involved in day-to-day decision-making processes. In addition to being reported by APS managers, this value has also has been widely ascribed to Generation Y across relevant literature (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000; Hill, 2002; Johnson; 2002; Sheahan, 2005). However, in this sense, the desire to be involved in workplace activities is best characterised as a motivation to perform, rather than a
condition of performance, as Generation Y commentators such as Zemke et al. (2000) imply. This is consistent with what Johnson (2002) classifies as an ‘influence reward’, or that relating to the opportunity to exercise power through involvement in workplace decision making. Although the motivation could also be more instrumental, as one APS manager put it:

"[Generation Y] want involvement and experience to further their career and to help get where they want to be..." (female, APS6, 34)

Thus, involvement in workplace processes can also be considered an instrument to gain experience and knowledge, or a pathway to learning and development. In the context of the life stage approach to generations¹⁵ this finding is unsurprising, as the life stages associated with youth are defined by an eagerness to develop and learn through experience of diverse opinions, views and settings, and via collaboration and involvement (see Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

5.1.7 Perceptions of Generation Y Value of Technology

While technology use was implicated in managers’ reports of Generation Y having inadequate interpersonal communication skills, familiarity with technology and its application (‘tech savvy’) was also paradoxically considered a positive value of Generation Y. This is consistent with Generation Y literature which is replete with reports placing technology at the centre of this generation’s values set (e.g. O’Reilly, 2000; Zarowin, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000; Saxby, 2004; Eisner, 2005; Sheahan, 2005; Stanton-Smith, 2005; Neil, 2008).

¹⁵ The life stage argument suggests differences evident across the age strata of a society are the result of phases of development that affect each individual’s attitudes and behaviours similarly across time (Abrams, 1970).
"...Gen Y is very technology aware..." (male, EL2, 28);

"Younger people tend to be more attuned and aware of the possibilities of new technology. I think the real differences (sic) is only seen with comparison to older generations who are less open to novel applications of existing technology.” (female, EL1, 30);

"...[Generation Y] are very good with computers..." (male, EL1, 31);

and,

"I know that magazines always portray Gen Y as IT geeks, I think they’re very aware of technology and its possibilities but in my opinion this is more related to youth as I think we get less open to new ideas and innovation as we get older.” (male, EL2, 30)

Despite featuring frequently in manager accounts, being au fait with technology was not a Generation Y value, nor was it a topic that featured in their accounts of workplace activity, which provided a notable contrast to managers’ perceptions. Accounts of Generation Y and (heightened) technology use are contentious, and most commonly based on untested stereotypes and anecdotes. While the literature offers little cogent insight into this issue, APS manager accounts tend to resemble the views of Martin and Tulgan (2001), who suggest that Generation Y differ not in their use of technology per se, but rather in their elevated expectations of technology.

The organisational relevance of this purported affinity with technology remains unclear as managers uniformly reported the characteristic as positive, yet failed to place this in any identifiable work context. That is, reports were broad sociological comments rather than observations linked to specific workplace outcomes or processes.
5.1.8 Perceptions of Recruitment and Retention of Generation Y

The ultimate test of the employment relationship is, arguably, the ability to retain employees, and this is underpinned by the ability to recruit suitable staff. In order to assess this aspect of the Generation Y and APS employment relationship, APS managers were asked to comment on any challenges they or their agency had faced in the recruitment and retention of younger staff.

Few APS managers reported problems in recruitment of younger people. Where problems were identified, these typically related to perceptions that the agency itself was broadly less attractive relative to others, and not a product of any inherent generational characteristics, for example:

"For the last five years I have been responsible for the recruitment of specialist graduates for my agency. We have difficulty attracting graduates because we are a second tier agency so we often miss out on the best applicants..." (male, SES1, 53);

and,

"Each department appears to battle each other through graduate programs... there are a limited range of people that want to take public sector work..." (male, EL2, 36)

While recruitment was not identified as a pressing concern, retention of younger workers was typically considered in a contrary light. Many respondents reported specific concerns with retention of their Generation Y employees, and many provided specific reasoning for why this was the case. Here, APS managers were clear in their belief that increased turnover was the organisational outcome of unrealistic expectations among Generation Y, providing the practical implications for what managers considered a negative aspect of Generation Y:
"Staff retention is an issue. This is very much a case of wanting it all now, so staff will leave at the drop of a hat to have new opportunities." (male, EL1, 31);

"...when the reality of their first job sinks in, and how quickly they expect to climb the ladder up to higher levels, then [Generation Y] tend to leave within 8-12 months, looking for higher opportunities." (female, EL2, 36);

and,

"I think if we have a problem its (sic) with turnover, which anecdotally seems to be quite high. Again this comes back to expectations of younger people that may not come to fruition in quite the way or timeframes that they’ve been lead to expect. It seems that a lot of these people go on to other APS jobs so it may not be a concern for the overall APS but still has some sort of negative impact." (male, EL1, 30)

Despite managers linking Generation Y turnover rates to high expectations, this suggestion must be taken in the context of Australia’s very strong labour market (see ABS, 2011) that provides a more attractive environment for individuals to change roles through enhanced role availability, increased market competition and resulting pressure on wages and employment conditions (see Carsten & Spector, 1987).

While there were limited examples of recruitment problems, and more frequent reports of high turnover among Generation Y, a range of managers provided evidence that their agency recruitment and retention practices had evolved to meet the needs of Generation Y. This is an interesting finding that provides an APS-specific context to the four possible organisational positions on Generation Y; that is:

1. Organisations need to change to accommodate generational value shifts in the modern workforce (e.g. APSC; 2005b; Sheahan, 2005; Huntley, 2006).
2. Organisations *should not change* their existing practices to accommodate the needs of the modern workforce (i.e. as generational differences are overstated, e.g. King, 2006; Matchett, 2006).

3. Organisations *are changing* to meet the needs of the modern workforce (e.g. Hooper, 2006; Salt 2006).

4. Organisations *are not changing* to meet the needs of the modern workforce (e.g. Heath, 2006; Macken, 2006).

Manager accounts confirm the APS view that there is indeed a need to change in response to Generation Y (APSC, 2005b), and also describe that action has been taken to address this need. The following accounts provide examples of how APS agencies have adapted their practices to meet the demands of Generation Y:

"[My previous department] created the 'career starter' programme directly designed to attract Gen Y... and was an 18-month programme aimed at providing corporate training, career monitoring and social networking opportunities." (male, EL2, 36);

"We have had to encourage a work-life balance and offer more generous leave provisions. On top of that [the agency] has also moved to improve training opportunities and tried to give younger staff more interesting tasks..." (male, EL2, 49);

and,

"From my perspective we've adapted [to Generation Y] quite well. There's a really good graduate program that now provides a lot of one to one mentoring and far more social interaction for graduates. I think our salary ranges and leave entitlements have been made very attractive to graduates..." (female, EL1, 30)

These findings support broad claims (APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b) that there is a need for Generation Y-specific changes to recruitment and retention across the APS. Managers' accounts also provide evidence that APS-wide strategic *dicta* have
translated into actions at a micro-organisational or tactical level. However, manager accounts of agencies adapting to Generation Y needs and demands did not always paint a positive picture, with some managers revealing their preference to focus recruitment and retention strategies on other generation groups to avoid problems perceived to be inherent in a Generation Y workforce. The following manager’s account expresses this concern clearly, and is reproduced in full:

“The main challenges [in recruitment and retention of Generation Y] have been around managing attitudes and own expectations suffice to say that we are backing away from partaking in graduate programs and the like with a preference to recruiting people who have a demonstrated background and a capability to work in the best interests of the organisation as opposed to themselves (i.e. avoiding Gen Y). The investment in training/retraining older generations appears to outweigh the costs generally speaking, of recruiting Gen Y people.” (male, SES1, 46)

The account above describes a situation where the costs of adapting to Generation Y needs and expectations represent too great a burden for an organisation. This is a story largely unexplored in the literature, and is a startling finding in light of the broad and public APS commitment to adapting its workplace to meet the needs of Generation Y (see APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b).

5.1.9 Foundation of Generations in APS Manager Narratives

There is significant debate across sociological literature regarding the nature and definition of generations (Jaeger, 1985), and it was clear from APS managers’ accounts that the generation concept is no clearer in a practical context. Data revealed an interesting dichotomy in manager accounts, suggesting that Generation Y was not a wholly cohesive concept in the mind of APS managers. This is based on the fact that it
was common for individual managers to simultaneously discuss Generation Y values in terms of both a life stage (that which changes with age) and also in terms of an immutable set of enduring traits. These two concepts are based on fundamentally different theoretical constructs and assumptions, and individually hold different implications for workforce strategy.

The following accounts are from an individual manager (female, EL1, 42) discussing various aspects of Generation Y that she couches in terms of a life stage:

"They usually do not have children and at times no partners so have capacity and desire to work longer and at times irregular hours."

"...generation Y are attracted to APS conditions for leave provisions and superannuation and also maternity and paternity leave which many in their mid to late 20s are considering. I have one case of a graduate employee in late 20s who worked in the private sector and tried for some time to get into the APS to have security and benefits to start a family."

These excerpts identify Generation Y characteristics as age-related and transient, rather than enduring and representative of a distinct generational psyche or values set. However, the excerpts below from the same participant are couched in entirely different terms and portray Generation Y characteristics as enduring and distinct:

"[Generation Y] have a sense of entitlement that other generations never had..."

"There also tends to be a limited sense of loyalty among the younger generation who in my experience will leave a job as soon as it doesn't suit their immediate needs at that moment."
The views above underpin the majority of Generation Y literature and consider Generation Y values and attitudes to be distinct from their seniors, as described by Chester (2002):

"[Generation Y] are entering the workforce... with a new set of attitudes, values and beliefs." (p.8); and "...[Generation Y] do not see life – much less a job – like you or anyone else from a previous generation does." (p.10)

5.1.10 Summary of APS Managers' Perceptions of Generation Y

APS managers’ perceptions of Generation Y employees describe a group that values instant gratification, a suggestion outlined across the literature (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Huntley, 2006). Managers frequently described Generation Y work values and expectations as unrealistic, also described across the literature (e.g. Heath, 2006; Mackay, 2007). Where portrayals of Generation Y in the literature typically uphold them as skilled communicators (e.g. Sheahan, 2005; Huntley, 2006), APS managers suggested otherwise, considering this group to be poor interpersonal communicators, revealing a novel finding.

APS managers also reported that this cohort maintains a hard-work ethic, echoed by findings from Generation Y data. Managers also uphold Generation Y employees as committed to ongoing learning and willing and keen participants in workplace processes; both concepts are supported by the literature (e.g. Laabs, 1998; Gardyn, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000; Finegold et al., 2002) and Generation Y participant accounts. Although not a value or characteristic reported by Generation Y themselves, managers reported a perceived affinity for technology as a positive Generation Y characteristic; a
Noting few problems in recruiting Generation Y, APS managers described instances of how their respective organisations had adapted their recruitment and retention practices to meet the perceived work values of this group. This finding addressed one of the questions in popular Generation Y literature, that is, how or should organisations respond to this nascent workplace cohort (e.g. APSC, 2005b; Sheahan, 2005; Huntley, 2006; King, 2006; Matchett, 2006)? While recruitment was not considered a major concern, retention of Generation Y employees was considered problematic, with many APS managers relating this to perceptions of their inflated work values and expectations.

APS Managers often used generation-based and life-stage-based characterisations of Generation Y traits interchangeably. Generation-based representations consider generation cohorts are defined by their members holding unique and enduring values compared to those preceding (see Strauss & Howe, 1991), while life-stage protagonists claim that differences between generations are the result of transition through various points in an individual’s life cycle, suggesting current generational values and beliefs are transient (see Jaeger, 1985). Each of these viewpoints hold different implications for workforce strategy and represents an interesting finding considering that published APS strategies predominantly consider Generation Y characteristics as enduring and unique compared to their predecessors (see APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b).
5.2 The Employment Relationship

This section contrasts findings from APS-Employed Generation Y and APS managers to form a holistic view of the APS employment relationship and its effectiveness, answering research questions four and five:

**Question Four:** What is the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

**Question Five:** How effective is the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

The employment relationship is characterised using notions of the psychological contract and person-organisation (PO) fit. The nature of the relationship will be described in terms of psychological contract and PO fit/misfit. Breach/violation of the psychological contract and poor PO fit are both taken to represent instances of an ineffective employment relationship (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

The sections below firstly outline the likely terms of the psychological contracts of Generation Y APS employees. Following this, three situations are described where Generation Y narratives suggest a direct breach of these terms, broadly relating to performance management, bureaucratic hierarchy/procedure, and employment and promotion.

5.2.1 Terms of the Generation Y Psychological Contract

The psychological contract is an exchange agreement (e.g. Rousseau, 2001; Winter & Jackson, 2006; Bellou, 2007) and represents an individual’s beliefs regarding the mutual obligations between themself and their employer (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998).
Despite the work values preferences of Generation Y implying a range of core cognitive beliefs, the psychological contract still relies on promises being perceived and acknowledged by both parties to the contract. Hence, the likely terms of the Generation Y psychological contract can only act as a lens through which the terms of the contract are ultimately viewed and interpreted; they are not an end in themselves.

Psychological contract breach is a subjective experience based on an individual’s perception that the organisation has failed to meet some perceived obligation such as merit-based pay or mentoring opportunities (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). It provides a useful conceptual lens within which to explain why Generation Y and their managers may have different conceptions and understandings about the employment relationship and the overall effectiveness of the APS as an employer. The greater the perception of psychological contract breach, the greater the distance or separation the individual perceives in relation to the beliefs, values and practices of the organisation (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). That is, psychological contract breach is considered a sign of an ineffective/weak employment relationship as it signifies work values incongruence (e.g. Cennamo & Gardner, 2008).

Frustration and discontent are each characteristics of psychological contract breach or violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). As distinct from contract violation which is an emotional experience, contract breach “arises from an interpretation process that is cognitive in nature” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 230). According to Morrison and Robinson (1997), two conditions account for contract breach and contract violation:

1. Reneging (i.e. when an agent of the organisation knowingly breaks a promise to an employee); and
2. Incongruence (i.e. when the agent and employee have different understandings about the nature of a promise).

Under this second condition, cognitive schemata such as core beliefs and values preferences idiosyncratic to the person holding them take centre stage in framing the nature of a given promise, and determining whether a given promise was actually made (Klatzky, 1980).

5.2.2 Psychological Contract Breach: Performance Management

APS employees described work value preferences that suggested a norm of high performance, which was underpinned by a desire for efficiency. APS managers also identified a 'hard work ethic' among their Generation Y staff. The expression and subsequent acknowledgment of this performance drive suggests a central role for employee performance and its management in the Generation Y psychological contract.

The centrality of performance and its management in the work values preferences of Generation Y means they are highly attuned to both their own performance and that of their colleagues. The existence of underperforming colleagues was consistently and strongly implicated in dissatisfaction and frustration by APS-employed Generation Y participants, and was viewed as an abrogation by management of its responsibilities.

However, this was not identified as a concern by APS managers, who did not conceptualise the 'hard work ethic' and drive of Generation Y employees in terms beyond individual performance. That is, managers did not consider how this high-performance drive could interact with the wider workplace. This has led to creation of
a very one-sided psychological contract where Generation Y perceives managers are not
upholding and managing performance standards fairly across all employees. Table 5.1
outlines performance management terms evident in the Generation Y psychological
contract.

Table 5.1
Performance management terms in the Generation Y psychological contract.

“There’s a lot of old wood, and it’s pretty dead wood, and pretty useless wood. They’ll not manage
staff very well, staff will get upset, they end up leaving, and very rarely do I ever see the situation
reversed where the manager or staff are told to improve. They’re just left to continue their
disfunctionality within the team.” (male, EL1, 29)

“It’s very, very, very frustrating. Very frustrating. I’ve had very close experiences with [colleagues’
derunderperformance], and no matter how much you try talk to your manager about it, there’s only so
much they do because of the processes that exist to make sure that there’s no unfair dismissal or
anything like that, but it just becomes management by process.” (female, APS4, 23)

“To be honest I do notice a difference, I used to work for [a private company], but the management
structure is different. They don’t deal with those problem staff very well; they’re not very good with
that. It seems that they choose to ignore it, or move that person elsewhere. They don’t like to tackle
problems head on. It becomes everyone’s problem ‘cause these people do half the work of everyone
else for [the] same – more – money.” (female APS6, 25)

“There’s just underperforming staff, on multiple levels [and in] in many respects, whether it be from
their standard or delivery of work, the way that they interact with others, actually turning up to work;
the whole bit. I’ve been in situations where performance needs attention on so many levels but
[managers] just don’t get it. It’s really damaging… these [underperformers] are never at work, you
can never rely on them. I mean, if something’s not getting fixed immediately, it damages the team.
I’ve approached the manager and she said ’I can’t do much… my hands are tied’ well, that’s just not
acceptable anywhere outside [the APS].” (female, APS4, 23)

“It’s like these [underperformers] aren’t actually managed. It’s all about positive feedback and being
your friend. They get a pat on the back, but look at who’s really doing the work here for these
people.” (male, EL1, 28)

“I’ve worked with a lot of government departments with my [agency] experience, some areas work
incredibly hard… [but] it’s a public sector thing, I think that people find it hard to performance-
manage the under achievers out – to get rid of the under-achievers – it’s divorced from reality…”
(female, APS5, 25)

“There are a lot of time-wasters; you get that a lot. I don’t think it will change, though. It’ll take a
strong culture [to] come through. It will take a lot more younger people coming through and pushing
– people retiring – the old attitudes out. I’ll miss [out on] it, though; it’ll take too long to happen.”
(male, APS4, 23)

“There never seems to be that feedback loop saying ‘you need to lift your game’ in the APS. People
get so frustrated [that] they start looking for another job.” (female, EL1, 28)
Generation Y participants consistently observed that they judged colleagues' performance against their own, although many noted an inherent difficulty in identifying objective work performance standards in light of the intellectual and abstract notion of their work. The lack of acknowledgement and management of underperformance was consistently implicated in turnover intention, with participants citing this situation and the inequity it created as a potential turnover trigger.

While failure to address underperformance was considered a management failure, it was also viewed on a higher level as the agency breaching its obligations. That is, through a departure from the ideals and values of the public service, and therefore a breach of the contract between the agency and its superordinate values structure (clause 10(1)(k) of the Public Service Act 1999 states that "the APS focuses on achieving results and managing performance"). This echoes Nanschild's (2008) observation of a "...gap in perception between the rhetoric and the reality of the APS Values..." (p.131). These findings are also reflected in a wider APS sample through the APSC Employee Survey (APSC, 2009) that reports only 25 percent of surveyed APS employees consider underperformance to be managed appropriately at an agency level, suggesting this concern stretches beyond Generation Y.

5.2.3 Psychological Contract Breach and Hierarchy/Procedural Terms

Where issues of performance management were implicated in participants’ negative reviews of efficiency, the rigid hierarchical nature of the APS was similarly perceived very negatively by Generation Y participants through its role as a barrier to efficiency and improvement.
Although participants did not consider the hierarchical structure negative in itself, many conveyed the opinion that organisational processes were often hampered by ‘red tape’ that stifled progress. In particular, participants reported feelings that workplace approvals and sign-off procedures reflected ‘process for the sake of process’ rather than the more accepted role of acting as a check or balance on agency activities. This view is consistent with Bozeman’s (1993) concise definition of ‘red tape’ and is represented by Generation Y as strongly detrimental to the APS by reducing motivation and increasing turnover intention. Many participants were particularly damning in their criticisms of bureaucratic processes, citing perceptions that progress of certain issues and processes are commonly stifled through misuse of the hierarchical approval procedure in order to preserve individual views or integrity.

APS managers made a number of observations regarding their awareness that Generation Y disliked procedure and hierarchical processes (outlined in Table 5.2). Managers did not perceive this dislike in a positive light, linking Generation Y’s dislike of bureaucratic procedure with limited understanding, inexperience and impulsiveness.

However, it must be noted that the rule intensity of bureaucracy (Rainey, Pandey & Bozeman, 1995) was not viewed as incompatible with Generation Y work values preferences per se. Indeed, the structure and transparency associated with APS processes were associated with positive perceptions of the APS. Instead, it was participants’ perceptions that bureaucratic accountability processes were being misused by managers that created negative perceptions of bureaucracy.

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16 “...rules, regulations, and procedures that remain in force and entail a compliance burden for the organization but have no efficacy for the rules’ functional object” (p.193).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERATION Y VIEWS</th>
<th>APS MANAGERS PERCEPTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Everything just seems to go so slow, and you get caught up in ridiculous... just process. They’re just so obsessed with process. It’s not pegged to anything... just this self-serving process.” (male, APS5, 25)</td>
<td>“The problem with [Generation] Y is a frustration [with] or ignorance of established hierarchies or systems in working environments. This leads to a simplistic view of complex situations.” (male, EL1, 29)</td>
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<td>“It was the bureaucratic process that got me in the end. It just went around in circles... more of a political process than anything, no value-add at all in the [APS] process and methods. Most of your work is just meaningless.” (female, APS6, 25)</td>
<td>“[Generation Y] hasn’t yet got the runs on the board to properly see the bigger picture. I have a view that they don’t appreciate the reasons why we do what we do... I know that bureaucratic approvals can be seen as unnecessary or inefficient, [but] they serve an important governance [role] that can’t just be dismissed out of hand.” (male, SES1, 46)</td>
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<td>“Everyone is so fearful of providing bad news that it’s about covering your own arse. Eventually when four or five layers [of hierarchy] have covered, nothing [useful] is left.” (female, EL1, 28)</td>
<td>“I think younger employees... become frustrated by the rigidity in process for which the APS is renowned. If the APS could become a more flexible, responsive beast, I think younger people would be less likely to become disillusioned in response to reactive, wasteful activities. Gen Y’s, like most other people, can recognise when a task is sheer ‘arse covering’ rather than meaningful in any ‘public service’ type of way.” (male, EL2, 34)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“It’s frustrating, you provide... the frank and fearless advice that is touted from the [prime minister] and those above... and then the way it gets crushed by layer upon layer of [hierarchy] with ‘fluffy’ words. By the end of any process our advice just says nothing. It’s the seniors that are doing this, too. They make all these rules and then just end up diluting the purpose straight away...” (female, APS6, 28)</td>
<td>“…there’s perhaps a tendency [among Generation Y] to discount things too quickly. Efficiency is a good thing, but I’ve noticed that they often judge too soon without a real understanding of why/how we do the things we do. I’m talking about sign offs and things [where approval processes are integral to our [APS] way of doing things...” (female, EL2, 36)</td>
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<td>“It’s very structured, very rules-based. Things have to be signed-off by ten different people for things to happen, if they ever happen. It’s very stagnant... I feel [the] private sector is far better at making decisions and changing... really changing, not just talking about it.” (female, APS5, 26)</td>
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Hence, findings revealed that both Generation Y employees and their managers recognised concerns with bureaucratic processes, yet each party to the psychological contract attributed both different causes and effects to this concern. That is, based on their inherent sense of efficiency, Generation Y perceived a misuse and overuse of bureaucratic process. In contrast APS managers perceived that Generation Y misunderstood the function/purpose of these processes, associating this with inexperience and rashness. Clearly the terms of the contract and how these are perceived differ between the two parties. That is, Generation Y APS employees evaluate their judgements in terms of a work values preference for efficiency, where APS managers conceptualise processes in terms of favouring deference to procedure and with respect for the established order.

5.2.4 Psychological Contract Breach: Employment and Promotion

APS-employed Generation Y participants held a close familiarity with the APS values and Code of Conduct, which align with their work values preferences for matters of equity and ethics. Participants displayed a high degree of sensitivity to situations where these standards were breached and were quick to attribute this to a failing of the APS and its managers. Worryingly for the APS, as an organisation seeking to strengthen its engagement with younger employees (APSC, 2005), participants described an APS attitude that favoured organisational tenure and age over its codified commitment to base employment decisions on merit alone, as Table 5.3 displays.
Table 5.3
Contrasting views of employment and promotion terms in the Generation Y employment relationship.

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<tr>
<th>GENERATION Y VIEWS</th>
<th>APS MANAGERS PERCEPTIONS</th>
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<tr>
<td>“Even though you can demonstrate that you have the skills or experiences, or…the [necessary] characteristics, it's just that you haven't been there long enough... that sort of thing is quite big. It's going to be a problem, especially if the public service is getting older; if we're not... experienced, it's not going to work if you don't give us the opportunity.” (male, APS6, 25)</td>
<td>“I would point out would be an unhealthy level of expectation [among Generation Y] in terms of opportunity and particularly promotion. Disappointment and disenchantment is often a consequence of this... “ (male, EL2, 34)</td>
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<td>“There's a problem with the whole merit-based system here... people get to a certain level, maybe like a [APS]6 on merit and then become useless. You only have to earn it, or prove yourself, once. It's a joke to say that [some] people have earned their position when they earn twice as much and do absolutely nothing.” (female, EL1, 29)</td>
<td>“…younger employees, especially those who have come through a graduate program, can have a sense of 'entitlement'. That they are somehow the 'cream of the crop'. That they are going to rocket up the ladder to a high position quickly and with little effort.” (female, EL1, 42)</td>
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<td>“…I've had experiences where experience, or merit, doesn't fit with reality. I've literally been told that I have all of the skills for this job, but you need more time in the [agency]. Meaning: you're too young. It's hard to reconcile this with values, equal opportunity and all that. I think reality [in the APS] is a bit different.” (female, APS6, 25)</td>
<td>“[Generation Y] expect too much, too soon...” (female, EL2, 36)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I think... there's this mentality that you need 'time in the chair' to get somewhere, as opposed to experience. I think it's supposed to be experience, as opposed to just the length of time you've been somewhere. Quite often some managers, not all, will say 'oh, you're this age, therefore you're not capable of doing this' regardless of whether [or not] I have the skills and experience -- my age becomes a factor. There's (sic) not really allowances for young people to go very far, when they're young. It's all about X number of years in the public service.” (female, APS5, 25)</td>
<td>“[Generation Y] scream for promotion but I just can't justify it unless they're the 1% that are truly brilliant and outstanding, but chances are they're not. It's tough to explain this to a kid who's never faced stiff competition before...” (male, SES1, 51)</td>
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<td>“There's a lot of people that sit there and wait; think they're owed something. And they'll get [promoted], too. It just doesn't gel with me. It's just hard sitting there and seeing [those] people get promoted on time only... just years” (male, APS6, 27)</td>
<td>“I think this expectation or sense of entitlement drives a lot of the negative press about Gen Y. Its not that they even physically ask for a lot, its (sic) just this ingrained expectation that lots of money, responsibility, variety of work, high level access to executives etc is going to be automatically provided.” (male, EL2, 30)</td>
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<td>“I think some Gen Y’ers have a sense of entitlement, and where a new APS employee wouldn’t dream of applying for promotion for at least a year once upon a time, I have seen Gen Y employees applying for promotion after a few months in the job...” (male, EL2, 34)</td>
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175
While accounts like the above are clearly negative, this goes beyond a mere mismatch between organisational rhetoric (e.g. APSC, 2005) and organisational practice. This suggests a far more serious and fundamental charge: a breach of the foundation law underpinning the APS structure. Hence, this implicates, but goes well beyond, the implicit promises that form the psychological contract (e.g. Rousseau, 1989).

Generation Y attributed this failure of merit-based employment to the broad APS structure, and not to their immediate managers or agency. *Prima facie*, there appeared to be little comparative commentary on this perception from APS managers, suggesting a one-sided psychological contract. However, this position rests on the notion that Generation Y perceptions are actually accurate. APS managers – those supposedly making employment decisions on factors other than merit – may have a compelling argument that merit was indeed the basis for employment.

5.2.5 Person-Organisation Fit

A ranking system was devised to answer research question five (how effective is the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?). These rankings represent the likely person-organisation (PO) fit based on the degree of congruence between Generation Y work values preferences, the perceptions of APS managers, and codified APS policies, legislation and organisational practices. Where the literature/secondary data provides strong theoretical support for a particular aspect, this is also included for contrast. Table 5.4 outlines the evaluation basis for PO fit assessments.
Table 5.4
Rating scale for qualitative assessment of person-organisation fit.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY DEGREE OF PO FIT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Demonstrated fit between Generation Y work values preferences, APS structure/values, and/or perceptions of APS managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Evidence of partial fit between Generation Y work values preferences, APS structure/values and/or APS managers’ perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Demonstrated misfit between Generation Y work values preferences, APS structure/values and/or APS managers’ perceptions.</td>
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5.2.6 Person-Organisation Fit: Managers as Mentor/Inclusive Management

Generation Y work values preferences suggested a central role for inclusion in management and workplace decision making processes. This preference was supported by reports from APS-employed Generation Y participants that their respective agencies facilitated this involvement, with managers frequently acting as mentors.

Similarly, APS managers acknowledged this work value in their Generation Y employees and suggested a general willingness to accommodate this request. Additionally, the *Public Service Act 1999* provides a formal role for inclusive management and employee involvement. When combined, Table 5.5 shows this evidence suggests a high degree of fit between Generation Y and APS work values.
Table 5.5
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Favour inclusive management and inclusive workplace processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>A Generation Y Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation Y participants consistently placed a high value on inclusion in the day-to-day decision-making processes of their agency, and expressed a preference for inclusive management that provides for this involvement and consultation, frequently conceptualising managers as mentors, for example:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Learning from [managers’] experience and knowledge would be a valuable contribution to my professional development. The guidance, support and consultation [that] a manager provides is an essential part of work...” (CS, small private firm)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In my last [graduate job] rotation, I had a supervisor that was just so hands off and barely even talked to you. [My new supervisor] is great, like she takes a real interest and has taught me a lot... there’s a sense of involvement.” (female, APS4, 24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of APS Managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS managers acknowledge the value that Generation Y places on inclusive management, and suggested that this was largely accommodated:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve found that Gen Y on the whole tend to very much operate on a two-way basis as far as they expect to be involved in decision making but they’re also very willing to contribute to improving processes or procedures in their area. They’re always keen to get involved and volunteer [their] thoughts and ideas.” (female, EL1, 30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal APS Policies or Legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Public Service Act 1999 provides a formal role for inclusive management and employee involvement in section 10(1)(i): “the APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, cooperation and input from employees...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.7 Person-Organisation Fit: Interactive Communication.

Supported by a strong social focus, Generation Y participants placed a high degree of value on interactive communication with their peer groups, colleagues and managers. Despite considering that the actual communication ability of Generation Y was lacking, APS managers nonetheless recognised the value of interactive communication in Generation Y and provided no suggestion that their preferences were not accommodated.

With the APS values also providing an explicit role for communication within the workplace, this suggests that there exists a good degree of fit between the APS and the
Generation Y work values preference for interactive communication. Evidence supporting this conclusion is summarised in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Interactive communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Generation Y consistently couched work in terms of a social process. Central to this is a value preference for free communication and interpersonal interaction within the workplace, irrespective of hierarchy or positional considerations:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I would like to have my opinions expressed freely and completely to senior staff. I also need an immediate response so that I can make adjustments to my [work] style as soon as possible.” (A27, government agency);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[I have a] need for belonging [and] constant communication...” (A40, government agency); and,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I have a need for social affection and interaction with my colleagues...” (A3, government agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of APS Managers</td>
<td>While APS managers acknowledged that Generation Y were willing communicators, their perceptions suggested that this did not translate to more effective communications, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Facebook, social media and mobile’s (sic) have blunted [Generation Y’s] ability to communicate in depth or quality. I get the feeling that the[y] might well talk or chat more but not more effectively...” (female, EL2, 42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hence, APS managers’ narratives do not preclude a role for free communication so much as suggest that Generation Y abilities in this area do not match their ideals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal APS Policies or Legislation</td>
<td>The importance of communication in APS workplace processes is outlined in the APS values. Section 10(1)(i) of the Public Service Act 1999 states that “the APS establishes workplace relations that value communication...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.8 Person-Organisation Fit: Long-Term Careers and Ongoing Development

Generation Y participants expressed a strong desire for ongoing learning and growth opportunities, and expected their organisation to facilitate this. The APS was consistently considered as an effective facilitator of both learning and development activities, and as a facilitator of career opportunities. Long-term considerations in
Generation Y work values preferences also suggest a central role for the organisational career, which is supported by both APS legislation and human resources policies. Table 5.7 provides an overview of evidence contributing to the high degree of fit between Generation Y and the APS for learning, development and notions of career.

Table 5.7
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Long-term careers and ongoing development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
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</table>

**Generation Y**

Generation Y participants' work values preferences strongly favoured ongoing learning and development opportunities, and they valued the ability to structure their development around career goals. The APS was frequently upheld as an exemplar of the organisational career, with participants often highlighting opportunities for growth and development within their respective APS agencies:

"I think that most people think that young people want to just get out and move on, but I don't feel that way. I'd stay in an agency, or even a team, as long as I could grow and develop." (female, APS6, 25);

"[Government employment] provides me with excellent security... if I still want to stick in the same department for life I would be able to." (A2, government agency)

**Perceptions of APS Managers**

APS managers acknowledged the Generation Y value for ongoing learning and development, suggesting that this generation cohort provided a particularly good return on investment from training and development activities, for example:

"...the willingness to learn seems to be quite good from Gen Y people generally." (male, SES1, 46);

"I think younger people are far more open to learning than older people. Formal education is a part of this but not the whole case. They're always the first to sign up for training courses, and they're always asking questions and seeking to build their knowledge. I think they're keen to apply their knowledge too, so departments get a good return on investment from younger people." (male, EL1, 30)

**Formal APS Policies or Legislation**

The Public Service Act 1999 provides a clear role for long-term careers in section 10(1)(n): "the APS is a career-based service...." This values statement is supported by recruitment strategies that promote intra-APS progression and career opportunities (e.g. "One APS, thousands of opportunities").

Furthermore, the APS professional development framework, the Integrated Leadership System, provides clear development and career pathways to enable employees to objectively assess their development needs and career progress across all hierarchical levels.
5.2.9 Person-Organisation Fit: Work-Life Balance

Viewed in terms of a socially-motivated work value, one of the central preferences evident across Generation Y participants was a desire to maintain a suitable work-life balance. While APS managers made no observation on work-life balance and the APS values only allude to flexibility in employment, APS-employed Generation Y reported that the APS successfully accommodated their needs in this area. As Table 5.8 outlines, this suggests a good degree of fit between the APS and Generation Y work values preferences.

Table 5.8
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Work-life balance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Generation Y</td>
<td>Generation Y work values preferences aligned strongly with a desire to achieve an adequate work-life balance:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;Work-life balance is very important to me and is something that the public sector encourages...&quot; (A18, government agency);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I value a reasonable work/life balance, which means that working 10-12 hour days and possibly weekends does not appeal to me at all.&quot; (C69, small private firm)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>APS-employed Generation Y echoed these sentiments and considered that the APS typically accommodated this need for balance, for example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I've got a pretty cruisey job. Very secure job... flexible... no pressure and I can take time off when I need it.&quot; (male APS6, 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal APS Policies or Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In section 10(1)(j), the Public Service Act 1999 alludes to a role for adapting to individual work-life balance needs through provision of a &quot;...fair, flexible... workplace.&quot; While codified evidence is limited, APS human resource practices are arguably aligned to favour balance through flex-time (i.e. time off in lieu of extra hours worked), and a standard working week of less than 38 hours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.10 Person-Organisation Fit: Social Contribution

The work values preferences of Generation Y participants consistently described a desire to serve a greater purpose or provide a societal contribution through their work. This sense of mission provided the perception that work efforts created outcomes that transcended their organisation or immediate workplace.

While APS manager narratives revealed no perceptions of this sense of mission among their Generation Y staff, the APS structure strongly suggests an outlet for contribution to broader societal outcomes. This is evident both in terms of its underlying legislative base and in terms of its areas of operation. For example, the Public Service Act 1999 provides for a higher-order service role through its dedication to “enhanc[ing] the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia’s democratic system of government.” Furthermore, the formal role of many APS agencies is directly related to human or humanitarian services, and provision of services that involve considerable sacrifice on behalf of their employees, involving what Perry (1996) terms a “sense of public morality” (p.5). Similarly, public sector values literature strongly suggests that organisations such as the APS provide a good fit with those holding a strong public service motivation (e.g. Taylor, 2010).

Hence, Generation Y narratives and accounts of workplace reality, combined with the operational domain and values structure of the APS suggest a high degree of fit between Generation Y work values preferences and the APS environment in this area. Table 5.9 summarises the relevant evidence supporting this conclusion.
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Ability to make a social contribution.

**Summary of Supporting Evidence**

**Generation Y Participants**

Through a desire to make a contribution to society that transcended their immediate organisation or workplace, Generation Y work values suggested a high degree of 'ideological currency' (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). This was reflected in participant narratives through a desire to serve a greater purpose, and accounts of undertaking work tasks that actually contributed to these higher, societal outcomes, for example:

"...work is worth doing only when it makes a meaningful contribution to society." (C73, small private firm)

"It was good to... do something for someone... and see that I was actually doing what I signed up to do... really making a difference to concrete problems." (female, APS4, 24)

**Formal APS Policies or Legislation**

Social contribution is evident in mission statements of many APS agencies, for example the Treasury: "...to improve the wellbeing of the Australian people..." and the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency: "...helping to shape a global solution [to climate change]."

**Literature**

The literature clearly suggests that public sector organisations such as the APS are viewed favourably by those seeking an outlet for ideological contribution or serving a higher good (e.g. Bunderson, 2001; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003; Taylor, 2005; O'Donohue, et al., 2007; O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

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5.2.11 Person-Organisation Fit: Values Preference for Organisational Ethics

There was a clear commitment to ethical standards and ethical employers among Generation Y participants. Generation Y student participants explicitly stated this commitment to ethical employers, while APS-employed Generation Y participants implied their commitment to ethics through a close awareness of, and support for, the ethical standards outlined in the *Public Service Act 1999*. Hence, evidence suggests a good fit between Generation Y work values and those of the APS, as summarised in Table 5.10.
Table 5.10
Assessment of person-organisation fit: High value for organisational ethics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Generation Y</td>
<td>Generation Y student participants maintained the clear expectation that organisations would uphold high ethical standards:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;My primary need is based on my belief of a contribution to society. I will never associate myself with an organisation that conducts itself in a manner that I feel causes subsequent harm to either a community or society as a whole.&quot; (C5, small private firm);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I won't work for a business that is self serving and not aware of its larger responsibility...&quot; (C22, small private firm);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarly, the work values preferences of APS-employed Generation Y participants implicitly suggested a strong role for ethical matters through their awareness and support for the APS values framework and corresponding awareness of perceived breaches of these ethical standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal APS Policies or Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Public Service Act 1999 concisely expresses the centrality of ethics in the APS through section 10(1)(d): &quot;the APS has the highest ethical standards.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.12 Person-Organisation Fit: Confidence in Workplace Ability and Potential

Generation Y narratives reveal a high degree of confidence in their professional abilities and resilience. This was reflected by Generation Y students in their accounts of ambition, adaptability to novel situations, and their approach to uncertainty. Similarly, APS-employed Generation Y participants expressed a high degree of confidence in their workplace ability and potential. However, this confidence was often implicated in perceptions that APS merit-based employee selection processes were not fairly applied in instances where they or others were unsuccessful job applicants. Specifically, this led to perceptions among Generation Y APS employees that their expertise and ability were overlooked due to their age or limited APS experience. *Prima facie*, this would represent a breach of foundation APS legislation including the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Age Discrimination Act 2004*.
As Table 5.11 outlines, APS managers’ narratives revealed an interesting contrast with the views of Generation Y employees on this matter by suggesting that Generation Y held unrealistic expectations of their abilities and current potential. In this sense, APS

### Table 5.11
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Confidence in workplace ability and potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likely Partial Fit</th>
<th>Summary of Supporting Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Generation Y Participants**

Generation Y confidence was expressed in terms of a heightened belief in their ability to undertake complex and higher-level tasks, and a general view of resilience, for example:

“One of my personal ambitions is to be a team leader and manager before I am 30…” (A36, government agency)

“I can fit in anywhere, and I can pretty much move anywhere…” (male, APS4, 23)

For APS-employed participants, this confidence was implicated in perceptions that employment decisions (not in their favour) were made on factors other than merit (e.g. in favour of organisational tenure or age). This led to perceptions of breaches of the legislation underpinning the APS structure, for example:

“Even though you can demonstrate that you have the skills or experiences, or ...the [necessary] characteristics, it’s just that you haven’t been there long enough…” (male, APS6, 25)

“... I’ve had experiences where experience, or merit, doesn’t fit with reality. I’ve literally been told that I have all of the skills for this job, but you need more time in the [agency]. Meaning: you’re too young. It’s hard to reconcile this with values, equal opportunity and all that.” (female, APS6, 25)

**Formal APS Policies or Legislation**

Section 10(1)(b) of The Public Service Act 1999 clearly states that “...employment decisions are based on merit.” The APS is also subject to the requirements of the Age Discrimination Act 2004, section 2(3)(a) of which outlines “The objects of this Act are to eliminate... discrimination against persons on the ground of age in the areas of work...” Hence, work promotion being denied purely on terms of age would breach at least two APS legislative requirements.

**Perceptions of APS Managers**

APS managers perceive that Generation Y hold unrealistic expectations of their workplace abilities and potential. Hence, where Generation Y employees perceive confidence in their abilities, APS managers perceive this to be unrealistic and impetuous, for example:

“[Generation Y] scream for promotion but I just can’t justify it unless they’re the 1% that are truly brilliant and outstanding, but chances are they’re not. It’s tough to explain this to a kid who’s never faced stiff competition before...” (male, SES1, 51)

“[Generation Y] can express an assumed knowledge when it doesn’t exist.” (female, EL1, 42)
managers associated this confidence not with workplace ability or potential, but with impetuosity and unrealistic self-worth. Hence, there exists a clear disparity between the perceptions of Generation Y and those of their managers, suggesting a low degree of PO fit. Despite this divergence between the accounts of Generation Y APS employees and those of their managers, the APS formally provides for merit-based promotion, irrespective of age. Accordingly, despite suggestions of misalignment between theory and practice, their remains at least a partial fit between Generation Y work values preferences and those of the APS.

5.2.13 Person-Organisation Fit: Pragmatism

The sense of pragmatism evident in Generation Y work values preferences could also be considered as flexibility, adaptability, and in some cases, comfort with bending the rules. Hence, this sense of pragmatism not only implied a willingness to adapt workplace rules to suit immediate needs, but also a recognition by Generation Y that their own values preferences may, from time to time, need to adapt to prevailing work conditions or demands (i.e. by temporary acceptance of a work-life imbalance).

While there was no direct mention of a heightened sense of pragmatism among Generation Y in APS managers’ narratives, perceptions of brashness associated with unrealistic expectations and efficiency approximate some of the sentiment from Generation Y associated with their pragmatic approach to rules and values. However, the Public Service Act 1999 is clear that compliance with the APS values cannot vary according to circumstance.
While Generation Y employees consider that their situational judgement may justify overriding compliance with these values, this represents a direct conflict with APS employment conditions. The Generation Y pragmatic approach to work values does not deny the importance of the APS values, nor represent a wholesale conflict with their intent. However, the suggestion that Generation Y may waver in their compliance with these values suggests the possibility of a reduced degree of fit. Table 5.12 summarises the evidence contributing to this assessment of partial fit.

Table 5.12
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Pragmatism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY PARTIAL FIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B Generation Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation Y work values preferences suggested a strong sense of pragmatism that avoided dogmatic dedication to ideals and values. While nonetheless dedicated to ethics and the APS values, Generation Y recognised that their own values and preferences may sometimes have to adapt to unique circumstance, for example in terms of sacrificing work-life balance to achieve an immediate objective:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“[In a central agency] you do have to sacrifice your work-life balance a little bit... working longer hours. We don’t get overtime or that sort of stuff here... but it’s good to be here.” (male, APS6, 26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, this pragmatic outlook was occasionally expressed in terms suggesting a tendency to ignore formalised APS policies to aid perceived efficiency. This suggests a willingness to ignore formal role requirements, suggesting a potential legislative breach, and a reduced degree of fit with the APS values and broader environment, for example:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“I find the rigidity a bit difficult sometimes. Most of the time the good performers just go around the rules so that something actually happens on time for a change.” (female, APS5, 25);</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’d just prefer [my] manager to just tell me if there’s a problem. Going through all the paperwork and APS code-of-conduct drama might be a nice idea, but it just wastes time at the end of the day.” (male, EL1, 29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal APS Policies or Legislation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to the APS values is a sine qua non of employment and compliance with each of its values is a legal requirement for APS employees.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5.2.14 Person-Organisation Fit: Favour Immediacy in Workplace Processes

Generation Y work values narratives revealed a preference for immediacy in workplace processes. This relates to an ability to quickly facilitate workplace decisions and efficiently implement changes to work design, focus and outputs. While both Generation Y students and employees placed a high value on the ability to efficiently enact workplace change, APS-employed Generation Y participants described the APS workplace as unconducive to this sense of immediacy. That is, APS processes were considered to be unnecessarily slow and cumbersome.

APS managers’ perceptions revealed that this desire for immediacy was underpinned by a lack of experience with APS processes and a misunderstanding of the purposes that APS processes serve. Hence, where Generation Y perceived processes hampered by ‘red tape’, APS managers perceived legitimate hierarchical approval and governance procedures.

While mentioning a requirement for responsive and timely advice to government, neither the Public Service Act 1999 nor formalised APS processes provide guidance on the efficiency of operational aspects of the APS. In the absence of this formalised guidance, conflict between the work values preferences of Generation Y and the perceptions of their managers does not suggest alignment in the employment relationship, suggesting a low degree of PO fit in this area. Table 5.13 outlines the evidence supporting this conclusion.
Table 5.13
Assessment of person-organisation fit: Immediacy in workplace processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKELY MISFIT</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation Y Participants</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation Y participants’ work values preferences support efficiency and immediacy in workplace processes. APS-employed Generation Y consistently reported frustration at the slow pace of these processes, for example:</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Everything just seems to go so slow, and you get caught up in ridiculous... just process. They're just so obsessed with process. It’s not pegged to anything... just this self-serving process.” (male, APS5, 25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It’s very structured, very rules-based. Things have to be signed-off by ten different people for things to happen, if they ever happen. It’s very stagnant... I feel [the] private sector is far better at making decisions and changing...” (female, APS5, 26)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions of APS Managers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APS managers considered workplace hierarchical approval processes as a necessary part of the workplace, despite acknowledging these as slow at times. APS managers considered that Generation Y frustration with the pace of work processes was born from misunderstanding and limited experience, for example:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“The problem with [Generation] Y is a frustration [with] or ignorance of established hierarchies or systems in working environments. This leads [to] a simplistic view of complex situations.” (male, EL1, 29)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“...there’s perhaps a tendency [among Generation Y] to discount things too quickly. Efficiency is a good thing, but I’ve noticed that they often judge too soon without a real understanding of why/how we do the things we do. I’m talking about sign offs and things where approval processes are integral to our [APS] way of doing things...” (female, EL2, 36)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.15 Summary of the APS-Generation Y Employment Relationship

The APS-Generation Y employment relationship is characterised in terms of the psychological contract and notions of person-organisation (PO) fit. The work values preferences of Generation Y suggested a public service psychological contract that favoured terms relating to:

- Efficiency, hard work and pragmatism.
- Ethics, equity, and values-based mission.
- Inclusion and free communication.
- Learning, development and success.
• Reciprocity and mutual commitment.
• Social interaction, social relationships and social contribution.

APS employed participants reported breach of their psychological contracts in areas relating to ineffective management of under-performing staff, the inefficiency and misuse of hierarchical and procedural aspects of APS work design, and perceptions that employment decisions favoured organisational tenure over merit.

To assess the likely PO fit between Generation Y and the APS, Generation Y’s work values preferences were contrasted with both the values of the APS and its codified policies, and perceptions APS managers held of Generation Y employees. Findings suggested a high degree of PO fit between Generation Y work values preferences in areas relating to:
• Preferences for managers as mentors and inclusive management.
• Interactive communication.
• Notions of long-term careers and ongoing development.
• Work-life balance.
• Social contribution (ideological currency).
• Organisational ethics.

Findings suggested a partial fit between the APS and a Generation Y values preference for pragmatism, and similarly for their heightened sense of self-confidence. Findings suggested a misfit between the APS values and structure and the Generation Y work values preference favouring immediacy in workplace processes.
CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter explores the theoretical and practical implications of the findings and applies these to answer the research questions. Implications will be grounded in notions of the employment relationship and explored in relation to an Australian Public Service (APS) setting. The chapter concludes with an examination of the limitations of this research and a discussion of areas for future research.

6.1 Introduction

Accounts of Generation Y work values such as those offered by Sheahan (2005) and Chester (2002) have been ascendant over recent years. Such authors portray the work values and behaviours of this cohort of workers in terms of a generational crisis likely to have far-reaching and indelible effects on the work practices of organisations across the globe. Indeed, suggestions of an impending wave of change spawned a micro-industry of workplace consultants and a raft of associated popular literature, each offering a particular insight into the psychological mindset of the newest members of our workforce (Crawford, 2006).

Despite calls for further scholarly examination of Generation Y in the workplace (e.g. Smola & Sutton, 2002), research studies of this phenomenon remain limited (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010). This is perhaps unsurprising given that the issue of generations in the workplace has considerable cross-disciplinary overlap, and a detailed examination sits outside the purview of any single profession or research approach.
Only recently have critical examinations of Generation Y have come to the fore (e.g. King, 2006; Matchett, 2006; Mackay, 2007; Harley, 2008; Matchett, 2008; Pryor 2008; Quiggin, 2009), and it has largely been the popular press driving this critique. However, the relative paucity of scholarly material examining Generation Y does not represent an insurmountable hurdle to a rigorous critique of the phenomenon (Twenge, 2010). Indeed, as this research suggests, a significant and critical view of Generation Y can be obtained by simply bringing together disparate pieces of an existing theoretical puzzle. Analysis of decades of historical and sociological data show that the generation problem is perennial, and that its effects have been repeatedly over-estimated across history (see Strauss & Howe, 1991; Quiggin, 2009).

The true worth of any examination of Generation Y work values lays in the meaning ascribed to these values, and through this their application. That is, what these work values mean for the people who hold and apply them, and importantly, what they mean for employers in terms of understanding the nature of the Generation Y employment relationship. In this research study the meaning arises from the study context: the Australian Public Service.

Understanding and meeting the work values preferences of staff lies at the core of employee retention (e.g. Lester & Kickul, 2001) and the majority of relevant management literature does not take account of the complex legislative and values environment of the APS (Taylor, 2005). Without an accurate picture of the work values of Generation Y in the APS setting, the APS risks adapting existing management practices to match values that may not be relevant to this public sector context. This
was accounted for in this study through exploration of the values of a cohort of Generation Y students and Generation Y APS employees, contrasted with the views of their managers.

The theoretical framework of this research is based upon the employment relationship, conceptualised through notions of the psychological contract and theory of person-organisation (PO) fit (e.g. Lewin, 1951; Terborg, 1981; Chatman, 1989; Rousseau, 1989; 1995; 2001). By studying social and ideological components of the psychological contract in the context of the APS, this study recognises the growing significance of the interrelatedness of the psychological contract and the social context.

6.1.1 Revisiting Aims, Definitions and Research Questions

This research study aims to:

1. Describe the nature of Generation Y’s work values in the context of the APS, and
2. Explain and evaluate the effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship from a work values perspective.

In addressing research aim one, the study describes the work values of groups of Generation Y students considering employment in the APS, and in addition, examines the work values of Generation Y already employed in the APS. In addressing research aim two, the study examines the work values managers in the APS perceive Generation Y to hold, and compares these work values perceptions with the work values of Generation Y employed in the APS and those considering APS employment. The relative effectiveness of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship is evaluated in
terms of the degree of mutual agreement between what Generation Y values in the APS, and what APS managers in return perceive Generation Y values are at work (Shore & Barksdale, 1998).

Consistent with the view that work values provide the cognitive reasoning for understanding why individuals and groups prefer certain work settings and structures, work values for the purposes of this study are defined as:

"...evaluative standards relating to work or the [APS] work environment by which individuals discern what is 'right' or assess the importance of [their] preferences." (Dose, 1997, pp. 227-228)

Work values are regarded as valuable frames of reference for understanding the "unique psychodynamic processes individuals introject into work settings" as they evaluate the rights and wrongs of behaviour (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998, p.682). Implicit in this definition is the proposition individuals and groups act in ways consistent with their cherished beliefs and values and these in turn can explain what binds groups together and discourages interaction with other groups (Beyer, 1981):

**Question One:** What are the work values of Generation Y considering employment in the APS?

**Question Two:** What work values do Generation Y employed in the APS hold?

**Question Three:** What work values do APS managers, in various positions, perceive Generation Y to hold?

Question three provides an organisation's view of the work values preferences of Generation Y, and provides insight into how these translate to a workplace setting.
Work values are treated as windows into the inferred behaviours of both Generation Y (employees) and their APS managers (employers). Comparing the work values of each group is the basis for evaluating the nature and effectiveness of the employment relationship.

The employment relationship refers to the nature of the interaction (and implicitly, the resulting outcomes) between an employer and their employees (Herriot, 2001). In this context the employment relationship is specifically characterised as a psychological contract conceived in terms of an unwritten agreement between Generation Y employees and their employer, the APS. This agreement sets out what potential and existing Generation Y employees expect from and value in the APS, and how APS managers in return perceive Generation Y values at work:

**Question Four:** What is the nature of the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

**Question Five:** How effective is the Generation Y-APS employment relationship?

### 6.2 Overview of Generation Y Work Values Preferences

Findings revealed that Generation Y tend to frame work values preferences in social terms, evident in representations of managers as mentors and an expectation of inclusive management practices and close involvement in organisational processes. Data also revealed a cohort with a strong values orientation, leading to an enhanced perception of organisational ethics, values, promises and commitments. It was evident that Generation Y gained motivation through serving a greater good or making a contribution to positive societal outcomes; a sense of mission that was implicated in
notions of success and 'ideological currency' (Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). A sense of pragmatism was also evident in the work values preferences of APS-employed Generation Y in suggestions that their day-to-day work should be evaluated on a pragmatic sense of efficiency and a norm of high performance. Further, Generation Y work values preferences reflected a desire for success, career progression and self-development.

While participant accounts did not preclude career-long commitment to a single organisation, notions of loyalty were often couched in terms of a relationship of reciprocity with their employer. That is, a notion of contingent loyalty. Work value preferences suggested a highly confident group with strong faith in their professional resilience. Participants placed a high value on achieving an appropriate work-life balance, and while APS employed participants strive to achieve this work-life balance, they acknowledge practical limitations on this desire. While participants placed a high value on immediacy and efficiency in work performance and organisational processes, they remain strongly motivated by career success and long-term value aspirations. In historical terms, this harkens to the commitment characteristics typically attributed to the Baby Boomers (e.g. Zemke et al. 2000), and suggests less common ground with their Generation X predecessors, by whom the 'job for life' mindset was purportedly waning (see Twenge, 2010).

6.2.1 Contrast with Generation Y Literature

While Generation Y literature has been criticised for its close reliance on anecdotal material (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Crawford, 2006), the majority of its conclusions are in fact supported by findings from this study. Table 6.1 summarises the key areas
where Generation Y work values preferences highlighted in the literature are **supported**, **partially supported**, or **not supported** by findings based on the relative balance, strength and consistency of data ensuing from the three phases of this study.

**Table 6.1**
Comparison of research findings with work values preferences in literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GENERATION Y WORK VALUES</strong></th>
<th><strong>RELATIONSHIP TO FINDINGS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREFERENCES IN LITERATURE</strong></td>
<td><strong>GENERATION Y WORK VALUES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committed to personal development.</td>
<td>Findings <strong>strongly support</strong> this work values preference. Both Generation Y students and APS employees placed a high value on ongoing personal and professional development. This was often reflected in the high value placed on learning and training activities, and also in terms of long-term career aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very concerned with achieving an appropriate work-life balance.</td>
<td>Findings <strong>strongly support</strong> the notion that work-life balance is a central Generation Y work values preference, and this was uniformly reported across both Generation Y students and APS employees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinct notions of organisational commitment/loyalty.</td>
<td>Findings <strong>support</strong> this suggestion to the extent that Generation Y displays contingent loyalty. Contingent loyalty is based on the concept of <em>quid pro quo</em> and is not an automatic outcome of employment. Rather, Generation Y seek a range of commitments from their employer prior to offering commitment in return. Hence, commitment in Generation Y is highly dependent on reciprocity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect inclusion in workplace decision making (consultative management).</td>
<td>Both Generation Y students and APS employees attached a high value to inclusion in workplace decision-making processes. This was also confirmed by APS managers. Hence, findings provide <strong>support</strong> for this work values preference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatience, place a high value on technology, require constant stimulation.</td>
<td>Findings <strong>partially support</strong> the existence of impatience in Generation Y work values, but only in the sense that they value immediacy and efficiency. Findings provide no support for a heightened value of technology among Generation Y, despite APS managers reporting this value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less concerned with job security.</td>
<td>Generation Y work values preferences reveal a group confident in their employability and skill, yet still maintain a concern for job security. Findings <strong>do not support</strong> suggestions in the literature that Generation Y is less concerned with job security.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork-oriented.</td>
<td>Findings provide <strong>no support</strong> for this claim. Despite revealing a strong social focus, Generation Y work values preferences did not translate to a desire for either teamwork or team-based work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sceptical/distrustful towards organisations.</td>
<td>Findings provide <strong>no support</strong> for this claim. Generation Y narratives provided no suggestion of scepticism or distrust towards organisations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While many of the findings of this research are broadly supported by the literature, findings diverge from the literature on four central aspects which are detailed, along with areas of agreement, in the following sections.

6.2.2 Job Security

The literature suggests that Generation Y is comfortable with a lack of job security (e.g. Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Oliver, 2006; Twenge, 2010), or at least less concerned with security than their predecessor generations (e.g. Sheahan, 2005). It has been suggested that this comfort with less job security arises not from any changed importance placed on security *per se*, but rather from the nature of modern employment and the multiple employer career (Twenge, 2010), which advocates a strong need for mobility and change. However, findings here do not support either position, with Generation Y participants attaching some importance to notions of job security. The importance of job security was evident in many participant accounts, and related to aspects such as certainty, structure and notions of long-term careers. Indeed, the APS was often raised as particularly attractive via perceptions of high employment security. This finding suggests the concept of ‘employability’ may have less attraction to Generation Y in a public service context where formalised practices of recruitment, tenure and ongoing employment are highly salient (e.g. APSC, 2005).

6.2.3 Teamwork

Findings departed from the literature on the concept of teamwork, often described as a central Generation Y work values preference (e.g. Howe & Strauss, 2000; Sheahan, 2005; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). The literature tends to link this ‘teamwork desire’ to a
learned need for collaboration (e.g. Hill, 2002) gained through early family life (e.g. Howe & Strauss, 2000). While Generation Y work values preferences suggested a central role for social interaction in the work environment, this did not translate to any need or desire for teamwork. That is, while social interaction was highly valued, it did not imply any tendency toward collective achievement nor provide evidence of a desire to synchronise group efforts to achieve workplace outcomes.

6.2.4 Scepticism and Distrust toward Organisations

Findings provided no evidence of any heightened sense of scepticism or distrust toward organisations among Generation Y. Authors often link this purported distrust among Generation Y to vicarious experience. In this sense scepticism and distrust are seen as a vestige of the large scale redundancies witnessed in the late 20th century (e.g. Zemke et al., 2000; Eisner, 2005; Dychtwald et al., 2006; Oliver, 2006; Mackay, 2007; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007) which saw the parents of Generation Y facing a heightened possibility of retrenchment. It appears a valid proposition that a group of people who witnessed their parents’ trust betrayed would be wary of exhibiting the same trust to organisations (Zemke et al., 2000); as Quiggin wryly states:

"Most strikingly, employers complained that [Generation Y] were disloyal. This from a group that has spent much of the last two decades sacking loyal employees en masse whenever they thought it would improve the bottom line." (p.58)

As compelling as this argument may be, it nonetheless has no grounding in the Generation Y work values findings reported here. Again, although participants were highly attuned to organisational promises and policies, and highly critical when these
standards were breached, this did not result in the disillusionment or organisational
distrust broadly suggested by the Generation Y literature.

6.2.5 Ideological Currency

Public sector employees and those that actively seek a career in the government sector
are reported to uphold a distinct work ethic (e.g. Bellante & Link, 1981; Frank & Lewis,
2004; Taylor, 2005, 2010). Typically described across the literature as a ‘public sector
motivation’ or ‘public service ethos’ (e.g. Vandenabeele, 2010), this work ethic is based
on principles such as an attraction to policy-making, a dedication to affecting social
change, serving a greater good, self-sacrifice and impartiality (see Perry, 1996;
Vandenabeele, 2010). Also termed ‘ideological currency’ (Thompson & Bunderson,
2003) as they refer to higher principles or valued causes, associated work values provide
a central role for aspects of altruism, service, and mission; that is, through work, making
“a contribution that transcends the organization” (O’Donohue et al., 2007, p.78).

This ideological currency was broadly evident across all Generation Y participants, not
only those employed in the APS or those identifying a preference for public sector
employment. In terms of a public service ethic, this is an interesting finding. However,
in terms of participants also being knowledge workers, this finding is unsurprising as
knowledge workers’ psychological contracts share many similarities with those of
public sector employees in terms of ideological currency (O’Donohue et al., 2007).
That is, if contracts are to provide motivational currency they must contain terms that
the knowledge worker will “appreciate and believe in” (Redpath, Hurst & Devine,
2009, p.76). Importantly, as findings here suggest, this ideological currency in
knowledge workers is accompanied by the expectation that the organisation will provide an opportunity to make this societal contribution (O’Donohue et al., 2007).

6.3 Overview of APS Managers’ Perceptions of Generation Y

APS managers’ perceptions of Generation Y were often consistent with portrayals in the literature. They describe a group that values instant gratification (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Huntley, 2006), holds unrealistic work expectations (e.g. Heath, 2006; Mackay, 2007), that is committed to ongoing learning, and also willing and keen participants in workplace processes (e.g. Laabs, 1998; Gardyn, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000; Finegold et al., 2002). Although not a value or characteristic reported by Generation Y themselves, managers reported a perceived affinity for technology as a positive Generation Y characteristic; a notion also raised by Generation Y literature (e.g. O’Reilly, 2000; Zarowin, 2000; Zemke et al., 2000; Eisner, 2005; Sheahan, 2005).

While the Generation Y literature typically reports Generation Y to be skilled communicators (e.g. Sheahan, 2005; Huntley, 2006), APS managers provided contrary evidence, viewing Generation Y as poor communicators. Further incongruence with the literature was evident in relation to the Generation Y (poor) work ethic. While the work ethic of Generation Y has been questioned across the literature (see Heath, 2006), APS managers instead perceived a hard-work ethic among Generation Y staff, corroborating similar evidence among the work value preferences of Generation Y.
6.3.1 Conceptualisation of Generations among APS Managers

APS Managers typically used generation-based and life-stage-based characterisations of Generation Y traits interchangeably. Generation-based representations consider generation cohorts are defined by their members holding unique and enduring values compared to those preceding (see Strauss & Howe, 1991). In contrast, life-stage protagonists claim that differences between generations are the result of transition through various points in an individual’s life cycle, suggesting current generational values and beliefs are transient (see Jaeger, 1985). Each of these concepts holds different implications for workforce strategy and this is an interesting finding considering that published APS strategies predominantly consider Generation Y characteristics as enduring and unique compared to their predecessors (see APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b).

While the life-stage theory and the unique generation theory may currently coexist comfortably, if Generation Y work values were to change according to life stage transition, those enacting management strategies based on a unique and enduring set of values would likely find their strategies less effective following this transition. Similarly, those expecting the work values of Generation Y employees to change according to life stage would be challenged should this transition not occur. This has clear implications for the future nature of the employment relationship, and is discussed in detail in subsequent sections.
6.3.2 Perceptions of Generation Y Work Expectations

APS managers reported perceptions that Generation Y employees held unrealistic work expectations. Two concepts underlie this perception, the first being internal to the psychology of managers, and the other being external and based on APS processes. Narratives revealed that managers often used the term ‘unrealistic’ synonymously with ‘excessive’. However, it was clear that many accounts of unrealistic expectations were not relayed as excessive strictly in terms of organisational reality or any ability to meet these expectations, but rather excessive in relation to the manager’s personal value system. Hence, in this sense Generation Y expectations were considered unreasonable by comparison to a manager’s own individual expectations (i.e. at a similar age or career stage). Prima facie, this may suggest that APS managers were unlikely to adapt workplace processes to meet these inflated expectations; however, the opposite was true. APS managers described many instances where they had adapted processes to meet the needs of Generation Y. Hence, it appears that while managers may consider Generation Y demands to be excessive, they nonetheless make allowances for, and accommodate, these work expectations, suggesting minimal effect on the employment relationship.

6.3.3 Recruitment Messages

In addition to APS managers’ personal expectations contributing to perceptions of unrealistic expectations, they frequently suggested a role for unrealistic agency recruitment messages in creating these heightened expectations among Generation Y. The issue of realistic recruitment marketing has attracted a wide range of attention across management literature (Phillips, 1998; Breaugh & Starke, 2000) and the
implications of unrealistic job previews are stated clearly by Phillips (1998) in her suggestion that:

"... [realistic job previews] are related to lower levels of attrition... voluntary turnover, and all turnover, and to higher performance." (p.684)

This situation is presaged by psychological contract theory, and as the literature notes, these findings add both credence and organisational relevance to notions of the psychological contract (see Sims, 1994). However, the importance of providing realistic job previews lies in the assumption that potential recruits are actually aware of recruitment messages and that these are deemed important and relevant (Colarelli, 1984; Phillips, 1998; Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Herein lies a problem; while APS-employed Generation Y participants described perceived breaches of the psychological contract, Generation Y narratives offered no suggestion that these perceived breaches or their underlying work values and expectations had their genesis in the recruitment experience. Therefore, while APS managers suggest a central role for unrealistic job previews in creating inflated work expectations and values, data here cannot corroborate this view.

### 6.4 The Generation Y-APS Employment Relationship

Findings suggest an overall balance in the Generation Y-APS employment relationship. Despite Generation Y participants describing three specific areas of possible psychological contract breach, the general terms of the Generation Y psychological contract remain in line with the work environment described by APS managers. Similarly, assessment of the degree of person-organisation (PO) fit between Generation Y and the APS suggested that the majority of Generation Y work values preferences
aligned well with the APS values and formal workplace policies. However, only a partial fit was evident between the APS and the Generation Y work values preference for pragmatism. Findings also suggested a low degree of fit between the APS and the Generation Y preference for immediacy in organisational procedures and decision making processes.

6.4.1 The State of the APS-Generation Y Psychological Contract

The psychological contract represents an individual’s beliefs regarding the mutual obligations between themself and their employer organisation (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). The worth of the psychological contract to this examination lies in the suggestion that organisations have changed (e.g. Hooper, 2006; Salt 2006) or ought to change (e.g. Sheahan, 2005) their human resource management strategies to account for the distinct work values of Generation Y. As Freese and Schalk (1996) state, an organisation that considers and accommodates differences in psychological contracts between groups of employees will be better placed to create targeted human resource strategies which will likely have a positive affect on “...attendance, productivity, and turnover” (p.508). Much of the Generation Y literature revolves around the urgency of understanding and meeting the values, needs and expectations of this cohort (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001), which implies the existence of a distinct set of Generation Y psychosocial characteristics, and logically, a distinct psychological contract.

Literature accounts critical of Generation Y work values often portray a very one-sided psychological contract, suggesting that Generation Y seek to take more than they give in the employment relationship, for example:
Findings do not support this conclusion, with Generation Y work values preferences suggesting psychological contracts favouring relational terms relating to:

- Efficiency, hard work and pragmatism.
- Ethics, equity and values-based mission.
- Inclusion and free communication.
- Learning, development and success.
- Reciprocity and mutual commitment.
- Social interaction, social relationships and social contribution.

Based on the accounts of both Generation Y APS employees and their managers, combined with the formalised values and workplace policies of the APS, findings suggest that the terms of this psychological contract are likely to be broadly aligned with the APS environment. That is, far from being the one-sided relationship portrayed in the literature (e.g. Mackay, 2007), reciprocity is a central element of the Generation Y psychological contract.

6.4.2 Breach of the Psychological Contract

APS employed participants reported breach of their psychological contracts in three distinct areas: ineffective management of under-performing staff; inefficiency and misuse of APS hierarchical procedures; and, perceptions of employment decisions favouring organisational tenure (i.e. length of employment) over merit. This is a worrying finding for the APS, as each of these perceived breaches related not only to
implicit organisational responsibilities, but also *explicit* legislative requirements of the Public Service Act 1999, the legislation underpinning all APS activities. That is, these concerns move beyond psychological contract breach and also suggest formal/legal contract breach, for each of the three terms of breach (performance management, ethical behaviour and merit-based employment) are legal requirements of APS employees. Hence, if perceptions of these breaches are accurate, Generation Y concerns are legitimate and have serious implications for the effective management of staff.

6.4.3 Person-Organisation Fit: Generation Y in the APS

Table 6.2 summarises the likely degree of PO fit between Generation Y work values and the APS. Assessment of the degree of fit suggested that the majority of Generation Y work values preferences aligned well with the APS values and formal workplace policies.

*Table 6.2*

Summary of degree of fit between Generation Y work values and the APS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERATION Y WORK VALUES</th>
<th>LIKELY DEGREE OF FIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value inclusive management and inclusive workplace processes.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value interactive communication.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value long-term careers and ongoing development.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value work-life balance.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to make a social contribution.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High value for organisational ethics.</td>
<td>A Demonstrated Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in workplace ability and potential.</td>
<td>B Partial Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour pragmatism.</td>
<td>B Partial Fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favour immediacy in workplace processes.</td>
<td>C Demonstrated Misfit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, only a partial fit was evident between the APS and the Generation Y work values preference for pragmatism as this implied a tendency to disregard formal rules and policies should this suit prevailing circumstances. Findings suggested a misfit between the APS values and structure and the Generation Y preference for immediacy in workplace decision making processes. Both Generation Y APS employees and their managers reported that immediacy is not indicative of typical APS workplace procedures and operation.

6.5 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study suggest a number of theoretical implications, particularly with regard to the debate surrounding generational definition. These implications are outlined under separate headings below.

6.5.1 Life Stage

One of the core findings of this research has consequences for the way the generation debate is played out and conceptualised: the likelihood that Generation Y may imply an entirely different set of work values in a decade’s time. This suggestion may seem profound when viewed in the isolated context of recent anecdotal and popular discourse asserting the unique and immutable nature of Generation Y work values (e.g. Sheahan, 2005). However, when viewed through the far broader lens of decades-old sociological literature, the finding is well described and predicted (see Abrams, 1970; Lorence & Mortimer, 1985; Braungart & Braungart, 1986; Jans, 1989; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989).
The life stage approach to work characteristics posits that differences evident across the age strata of a society (or in this instance a workforce) arise from developmental phases that affect each individual's values and behaviours to a similar extent across time (Abrams, 1970). While Abrams (1970) considers that life stages and distinct generational groups can coexist, his view remains that the two concepts are not fundamentally related, and each can maintain a distinct, yet parallel, influence. Thus, the existence of one does not deny the existence of another (Spitzer, 1973).

However, must the influence of life stages equally affect all members of the same generation in the same manner to justify categorisation as a generation? Would variation in the effects of life-stage progression at an individual level affect the group-wide cohesion that defines generational identification? The definition of a generation devised for this study accommodates a degree of individual difference: 'A biological and temporal transition of psychological and behavioural tendencies from parent to sibling, moderated by external, societal factors that affect individuals in a similar enough manner as to create a cluster of comparable values between subjects'.

While attempts to overcome the effects of life stage variation have been made through generational definitions such as that by Strauss and Howe (1991) – ‘...a cohort group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality’ (p.60) – there still remains the fact that external events, whether they be society-wide or individual, have differing effects on the range of psychosocial and demographic groups in a society. While it is plausible that the collective similarities among Generation Y at a single point in time (i.e. in their nascent
professional lives) could be legitimately ascribed to the existence of a generational psyche (see Strauss & Howe, 1991; Howe & Strauss, 2000), the same cannot be said of Generation Y into the future until the role of variables such as life stage and psychosocial demographics are fully identified. While retrospective accounts easily overcome this shortfall (e.g. Strauss & Howe, 1991), the predictive utility of generations per se will be hampered until the effects of these life stages and their interaction with demographic variables move beyond generalisations based on past patterns.

6.5.2 Definition Issues

Ultimately, it may be that attempts to clearly define the characteristics of a group as demographically diverse as a generation, in any predictive sense (i.e. beyond extant description and retrospective comparison), are folly; a position that is marbled throughout decades of literature. For example, Abrams (1970) struggles with the reality of reconciling a:

"...babel of tongues, a chaos of competing rubrics and prescriptions for the new social order, springing from the mass of more specific social interests and identities contained explosively within the chimera of the younger generation." (p.179)

Abrams (1970) concerns can be compared with similar, notably more prosaic, commentary from Australian psychologist and social researcher Hugh Mackay (2007), who notes that:

"...there is no single trend in [Generation Y] attitudes to work: this is after all the generation that has already increased the demand for apprenticeships, created a spate of high-flying entrepreneurs, and insisted on a more flexible approach to work than any previous generation." (p.98)
Therefore, it may be that notions of 'generational ideology' (e.g. Salt, 2006) are only useful in coming to terms with the present in comparison to attitudes and experiences of the past – the future defines generations rather than generations defining the future. On a less abstract level, the existence of life stages holds interesting implications for organisational theory. Prime among these is the notion that personal development factors arising from life/career stage may have a significant role in defining the employee relationship and likely employee retention and turnover.

6.5.3 Organisational Commitment

The concept of organisational commitment has changed in meaning over the years as the nature of work has changed to more contingent and temporary working relationships. Traditionally, commitment has been defined as an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in a particular organisation (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). This definition stresses affective commitment and the emotional attachment or feelings of loyalty a person feels towards an organisation. In more recent years, commitment has taken on more calculative and continuance forms as an employee works out if it is in her/his interests to stay or leave the organisation. In calculative forms of commitment, notions of a balanced psychological contract and PO fit come into play and less emphasis is given to whether the employee identifies with the organisation in the long-term (Meyer, 1997).

This seems to be the case with Generation Y participants in this study, whose organisational commitment appears to have taken on a more contingent form. That is, Generation Y may be asking more from their employers in return for commitment.
(Sheahan, 2005; Mackay, 2007). Even then, the commitment that they display may only be to their role rather than to their organisation (Dychtwald et al., 2006). This infers that a commitment to professional development may not automatically infer a commitment that is beneficial to the organisation. Instead, Generation Y may be seeking ongoing personal development opportunities purely to secure future professional opportunities for themselves. Thus, providing Generation Y with learning and development opportunities could well make them more likely to depart an organisation. This presents an interesting paradox to organisational structures where staff training and development underpin organisational growth and development (Eaglen, Lashley & Thomas, 2000), yet their provision may risk making staff more marketable and therefore potentially more prone to turnover (Forrier & Sels, 2003).

If Generation Y were using personal development opportunities to better market themselves outside their existing organisation, this may lead to a workforce where frequent turnover becomes the norm. If this is correct, it caries implications for organisations wherein promotion is undertaken on a length-of-service basis (Marshall & Zarkin, 1987). While the APS utilises a merit-based promotion system, findings from Generation Y participants alluded to the notion that this does not always translate to organisational practice. These Generation Y work values preferences support suggestions by Heath (2006), who describes the concept of tenure-based promotion as anathema to Generation Y.

However, frustration with tenure-based promotion is neither new nor confined to Generation Y. For example, Taylor, Audia and Gupta (1996) describe the discontent
present in the Baby Boomer generation due to the long employment tenure of previous generations decreasing the opportunities for career advancement. Fortunately for the APS, findings suggest that Generation Y have not abandoned the notion of the organisation-based career altogether, and often view a strong role for the APS in their career and professional development. Although, with Generation Y commitment taking on a more contingent form, agencies will need to carefully monitor instances of possible psychological contract breach.

6.5.4 Procedural Equality and Procedural Equity Issues

The majority of commentators suggest that it is the degree to which Generation Y uphold certain values that sets them apart from other generational groups (Raines, 2003). However, this moderate view conflicts with those who consider that Generation Y work values are unique (e.g. Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Chester, 2002; Sheahan, 2005). What these commentators are suggesting is that maximising the productivity and return from Generation Y necessitates an entirely new management ethos. Essentially, Generation Y needs to be treated differently to other generational groups (Crawford, 2006). The problems with this stance are manifold, and its implications for procedural equity and equality in a public service setting seems a significant concern.

Procedural equity is the notion that organisational processes must be fair and just, or more correctly, perceived to be fair and just (Morgan & Sawyer, 1979; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman & Taylor, 2000). The absence of procedural equity in an organisational setting can have significant implications including staff dissatisfaction and increased potential for turnover (see Aquino et al., 1997). Procedural equality, on
the other hand, suggests that all organisational processes provide for equal opportunity and treatment for all members of an organisation, regardless of their status or other such distinguishing characteristics (Morgan & Sawyer, 1979). On this front, data revealed perceptions among Generation Y APS employees of procedural inequality, here relating to the view that promotion decisions were biased against younger, comparatively inexperienced employees, irrespective of their skill or ability. Importantly, this was accompanied by evidence suggesting that this perceived inequality led to psychological contract breach.

Unlike private sector organisations, the APS is governed by a codified set of values. As such, the related notions of equity and equality take on a far more central role. That is, these concepts carry a legislative significance, with terms such as impartiality, merit, ethics, accountability, opportunity and fairness outlined not only in APS vision and mission statements, but in law. Despite the existence of legislation and other organisational dicta, findings clearly suggest it is the perception of organisational members that ultimately decides what is equitable. The concept is one based on belief and subjective judgement, not clearly defined fact (Morgan & Sawyer, 1979). Hence, the APS must be cautious to not only behave in an equitable way when considering the workplace values of Generation Y, but also to pay attention to the way in which this action is perceived by the wider employee group.

6.5.5 Knowledge Work

Knowledge work represents a large proportion of the day-to-day activities of government organisations such as the APS (Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006).
Knowledge workers, a phrase coined by Peter Drucker (1959), are those employees who work with information to create and exploit intellectual capital (Yeh, 2007) or workers that "... [analyse] information and apply... specialized expertise to solve problems, generate ideas, teach others, or create new products and services" (Jones & Chung, 2006, p.32). The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) links knowledge workers with four occupational groups: managers, administrators, professionals, and associate professionals. Interestingly, the characteristics, values and debate surrounding Generation Y share some common ground with issues discussed in relation to knowledge workers.

For example, APS managers’ perceptions that Generation Y are beyond doing the ‘hard yards’ or menial tasks in their day-to-day roles is reflected in Drucker’s (1957) early observations on knowledge workers:

"Young people with a high school education do not want to work as human machine tools... to use people with that degree of education for the semiskilled and unskilled manual jobs... would be a gross waste of valuable, expensive and scarce resources." (p. 121)

Clearly, Drucker is here talking of people far less-qualified than the cohort included in this study, yet he clearly enunciates the pitfalls of employing skilled knowledge workers to do basic or menial tasks. Indeed, Drucker foreshadows many other issues raised by APS-employed Generation Y and their managers in this research:

- Generation Y frustration with the lack of innovation in the APS: "...continuous innovation has to be built into the knowledge worker's job" (Drucker, 1999, p.146).
• APS managers’ perception of reduced commitment/tendency for more frequent
turnover in Generation Y: “Because knowledge workers own their means of
production, they are mobile” (Drucker, 1999, p.149).

• Uncertainty/inconsistency in identifying the work values of Generation Y
employees: “[Only] the knowledge worker himself can come to grips with the
question of what in work, job performance, social status, and pride constitutes
the[ir] personal satisfaction…” (Drucker, 1974, p.177).

• Generation Y desire for ongoing learning and development: “...education...
learning and teaching... will become the central concerns of the [knowledge

There is clearly some overlap between the central values preferences and desires of
knowledge workers and those of Generation Y. While the wide range of other issues
raised by this research suggest a role for factors beyond those of knowledge work in
Generation Y work values preferences, it is clear that knowledge-intensive
organisations such as the APS must remain mindful that their Generation Y workforce
is also defined by characteristics over and above those arising from a generation cohort.

6.6 Human Resource Management Implications for the APS

While this research suggests a number of areas where Generation Y perceives
psychological contract breach, it provides no evidence of a broad lack of fit between the
APS and Generation Y work values. Indeed, nor does it suggest any major structural
deficiencies in the APS that would suggest a reduced return on investment from
Generation Y employees. Nonetheless, findings do suggest a number of practical implications for human resource management strategies in the APS.

6.6.1 Tensions in APS Considerations of Generations

Generation Y participants commonly and directly stated that they expected their work values and priorities to shift over time. If these suggestions are accurate, in years to come Generation Y will perhaps have different work values, expectations and motivations. In contrast, APS literature largely treats the work characteristics of Generation Y as chronic and immutable, requiring specific human resource and management strategies (see APSC, 2003b; 2005; 2005b; 2007; 2008b). This implies that Generation Y work characteristics are unique, and not related to life stage transition. Thus, where the APS looks to generation-specific factors to define the behaviours of its newest cohort of employees, this research also suggests a role for life stage.

This has considerable implications for management strategies in the APS, particularly if these are tailored towards the purported needs and values of Generation Y at one point in time. Any such strategy, whether it be focused on recruitment, retention or otherwise, risks redundancy when members of Generation Y transition through their current life stage and their work values change accordingly. Aside from the direct monetary costs of designing and implementing generation-specific processes, there arises the less tangible costs (e.g. reduced employee motivation and client service) that can follow from misalignment of organisational strategies/management practices and the work values of employees. These costs arguably represent a greater long-term threat
to a human service organisation such as the APS which delivers a range of vital health, education, and social security services to millions of Australian citizens every day (APSC, 2010).

Interestingly, the rhetoric of generation-specific management vs. processes actually implemented in the APS is quite different. That is, actual APS human resources strategies are typically more representative of the life stage approach to generations. A prime example of this is the significant emphasis on hierarchical progression and professional development which is clearly evident in the Integrated Leadership System (ILS) – the APS professional and career development framework. The ILS is a virtual archetype of the life stage approach to work characteristics in that it openly recognises a range of transition points in an individual’s career and links these with particular developmental, behavioural and values milestones (see APSC, 2008). These are based not only on the functional requirements of increasing role seniority, but also on the changing development needs of employees at various career stages (Podger et al., 2004; APSC, 2008). Similarly, the landmark APS Management Advisory Committee (2003) report into organisational renewal directly acknowledges that different age groups (i.e. entirely separate from generational considerations) have different work characteristics and requirements, suggesting that APS management practices will have to focus more on the “...influence of life stage...on career development and working patterns” (p.2).

Therefore, there is a tension present in APS rhetoric, in that it advocates two distinct bases for Generation Y work values: one based on life stage, and the other based on the existence of a unique, chronic and immutable Generation Y values set. This is
compounded by similar tension in the structural design of APS management processes which rely closely on notions of transition, progression and age/seniority distinctions. Therefore, proposed APS responses to Generation Y – and generation change more broadly – are not wholly cohesive. This lack of cohesion is also evident in APS managers’ accounts of Generation Y employees, who commonly conflated concepts of life stage (work values which change with age) with notions of Generation Y being defined by an immutable set of enduring traits.

However, are these two positions mutually exclusive? That is, can a management strategy simultaneously address employee needs arising from life stage and also address distinct generation-based needs and values?

While life stage and generational approaches to work values are based on fundamentally different theoretical foundations, the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Spitzer, 1973). In order to effectively design a workforce strategy that accommodates life stage and generational approaches, three questions must be answered:

1. What is the nature of cross-generational values systems?
2. At what stage do life stages occur and what are their effects?
3. Do life stages affect each generation in the same manner, and if not what are the differences (i.e. how do they interact)?

Figure 6.1 shows that in order to create a workforce strategy that simultaneously addresses both the effects of life stage and generation-based variation on work values,
three factors must be defined. Firstly, the ‘x’ axis must be defined, here represented by the nature and implications of life stages. Secondly, the ‘y’ axis must be defined by the various work values. Thirdly, any interaction between the two must be defined; this is ascertained by the relative movement on the ‘x’ and ‘y’ axes.

![Graph showing life stages and work values for Generation X and Y cohorts.]

**Figure 6.1** Components of combined life stage and generational workforce model.

6.6.2 *APS Recruitment and Retention of Generation Y*

Irrespective of whether Generation Y work values are the result of life stage or generation-specific characteristics, there are many which are adequately accounted for by existing APS management strategies. For example, participants’ preparedness to depart their positions should their needs or expectations be unmet could paradoxically provide opportunities for APS retention. With the cost of graduate training estimated at approximately $20,000 (APSC, 2005), rapid organisational turnover represents a significant cost to individual agencies. However, if as Lavelle (2007) suggests, having
a successful career now means holding multiple roles across multiple organisations, then the APS, as an umbrella term for 98 separate employer agencies (APSC, 2010), is well placed to capitalise on this new reality. Despite reflecting a cost to a single agency, a graduate transferring between APS agencies ultimately represents a revenue-neutral effect on whole-of-government accounts through redeployment, rather than loss, of human capital. This is recognised through the APS Management Advisory Committee (2003) recommendation that the APS adopt a strategic approach to manage the purported tendency for comparatively more frequent turnover among younger workers:

"...[the APS should consider] mobility as a managed strategy, perhaps in collaboration with other agencies. The APS should take advantage of its capacity to provide a broad range of employment and skill development opportunities." (p.7)

Through the adoption in 2007 of its recruitment slogan 'One APS... thousands of opportunities' the APS aimed to highlight the diverse range of distinct employment opportunities available as part of a broader APS career (APSC, 2007), thus improving the likelihood of retaining employees in the broader organisation despite movement between agencies.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of an employment relationship can be judged by its outcomes, including for example, staff turnover and retention rates. For the APS, the message is clear; retention is increasing, with the overall separation rate in 2009-10 at 6.4 percent; its lowest rate since 2003-04 (APSC, 2010). Supporting this rate was a falling rate of resignations, a falling rate of retrenchments and a falling rate of

17 The Management Advisory Committee bases its assumption of increased job turnover among younger employees on the commentary of Zemke et al. (2000).
retirements (APSC, 2010). These statistics support the suggestion that there is indeed a good degree of fit between the Generation Y and the APS environment, being mindful that Generation Y represents nearly one third of the total APS workforce (APSC, 2010).

6.7 Summary

The findings presented in this study comprehensively displayed the work values preferences of Generation Y using a combined student and APS-employed Generation Y cohort. This addressed research questions one and two which aimed to uncover the work values preferences of potential and existing APS employees. When contrasted with the perceptions of APS managers, a clear picture of the nature and effectiveness of the APS-Generation Y employment relationship emerged, thus addressing research questions three, four and five.

Findings suggest that the APS workplace represents a broad fit with Generation Y psychological contracts, despite evidence of potential breaches in specific areas. Similarly, applying notions of person-organisation fit suggested that Generation Y work values preferences represent a high degree of fit with the APS values and structure. Overall, findings suggest a balanced employment relationship conducive to long-term engagement with, and participation from, Generation Y.

6.8 Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal a positive employment relationship between Generation Y and the APS. Providing the APS can monitor and harness the evolving nature of the Generation Y psychological contract, findings suggest an optimistic future
for this relationship. While the findings do not imply a radical departure from either the Generation Y literature or the broader body of work dedicated to work values, they subtly suggest significant implications for public sector management theory and practice. Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is the suggestion that Generation Y work values are likely to change over time, providing support for the 'life stage' theory of generations (see Abrams, 1970; Braungart & Braungart, 1986; Ornstein, Cron & Slocum, 1989) and suggesting that current Generation Y work values are unlikely to be chronic and immutable. Until the nature and extent of this forecast work values evolution can be ascertained, it appears likely that Generation Y work values will remain an issue of some conjecture for management scholars and practitioners alike.

In conclusion, the words of Jaeger (1985) are prescient:

"One might say that there exists a uniform generational context in the sense of a shared problem community, but not a generational unity whose members could offer uniform solutions to these problems." (p.289)

Jaeger’s (1985) suggestion is fitting in as much as he recognises that Generation Y poses a potential problem, but not one that appears solvable through a focus on the isolated values or behavioural characteristics of this cohort. When placed in the broader context of decades of sociological examination and centuries of human history, it becomes clear that the emergence of tomorrow’s generation will almost inevitably pose problems for today’s generation.
While the revelations of the industrial revolution and introduction of the concept of industrial management have forever changed the lens through which we view generations and their importance to society, the fundamental problem remains one of change:

"Each generation's job is to question what parents accept on faith, to explore possibilities, and adapt the last generation's systems of values for a new age." (Pittman, 1994, p.46)

As the issue of generations and generational change has an ancient lineage (Harris, 1992), one must be cautious to not overstate the likely immediate effects of this change, as Robins and Webster (1999) state: "...it is a common conceit to imagine that one's own times are of unprecedented historical importance..." (p. 63)

6.9 Limitations of Study

Firstly, as this study utilised only participants belonging to Generation Y it is not possible to establish whether participants' work values represent a taxonomic profile unique to Generation Y (although inclusion of APS managers exposed how they are perceived by others). While this was not a defined aim of the study, it must nonetheless be acknowledged.

Similarly, while participants described an expectation that their work values preferences would change over time, it is not possible to ascertain to what degree participants' work values were the product of their current life stage, versus the possibility that Generation Y work characteristics are unique compared to other generations at the same stage. This could have been overcome by the adoption of a long-term longitudinal design
containing a diverse generational profile. However, this approach was unfeasible given the time constraints of this study.

Limitations may arise from the narrow background of the participant cohort who were APS-employees or students, somewhat reducing the ability to generalise the findings of this research. Although research has suggested the existence of a public service work ethic suggesting a uniform set of work values (e.g. Bellante & Link, 1981; Frank & Lewis, 2004; Taylor, 2005), the use of a combined student and APS-employed cohort acted to reduce the possibility that this work ethic was the sole influence on work values observed among Generation Y participants. Similarly, identification as a student does not typically imply a single value or belief system (Gaertner et al., 1989).

Nonetheless, despite the mitigating factors contained in the research design, decades of social-psychological research into personal and social identity has shown that group membership, or more correctly its salience, can influence a range of behavioural and attitudinal outcomes (see Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Oakes, 2007). Without detailed statistical analysis of interaction effects arising from various demographic and group memberships, the extent to which participant accounts varied by virtue of non-generational factors could not be ascertained through this research design.

**6.10 Further Research**

The findings and limitations of this research suggest several areas for future research. This research has provided a focused examination of Generation Y work values within
the APS context. A more comprehensive understanding of Generation Y work values could be obtained by conducting research with a more diverse participant cohort including participants from other values-based organisations and knowledge-intensive firms (Von Nordenflycht, 2010) This would permit an analysis of the role of professional identity in the aetiology of Generation Y work values.

While ongoing historical and societal changes make a definitive and long-lasting answer to the ‘generation problem’ unlikely, it remains possible to accurately define and track the values of an existing cohort using a longitudinal methodology, thus exposing how the characteristics of a cohort may change over time. However, while ensuing data would undoubtedly provide a valuable historical record, the predictive utility of such data would be questionable until it can be firmly established that the behaviour and values of one generation/age cohort across life can accurately be used to predict those of subsequent cohorts at a comparative stage of life. Thus, future research employing a longitudinal design tracking the work values of multiple generation cohorts over time would have the potential to more conclusively account for the perennial problem of generational difference. As Strauss and Howe (1991) state:

"...unless you are willing to wait many years, you cannot rule out that what you see is simply due to aging or to historical trends affecting all age brackets." (p.51)

While the research designs described above allude to descriptive qualitative designs, data ensuing from these designs could form the foundation of quantitative instruments, enabling detailed statistical profiling of generational characteristics, and removing concerns about the application of existing work profiling tools to a pan-generational cohort (see McMurray & Scott, 2003).
REFERENCES


Pryor, L. (2008). Ours is not to reason Y, but if we don’t we won’t survive. *Sydney Morning Herald, April 5*, 37.


APPENDIX A – APS VALUES

Public Service Act 1999, section 10 (1)

(a) the APS is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner.

(b) the APS is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit.

(c) the APS provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves.

(d) the APS has the highest ethical standards.

(e) the APS is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian public.

(f) the APS is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government’s policies and programs.

(g) the APS delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public.

(h) the APS has leadership of the highest quality.

(i) the APS establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, cooperation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace.

(j) the APS provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace.

(k) the APS focuses on achieving results and managing performance.

(l) the APS promotes equity in employment.

(m) the APS provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment.

(n) the APS is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia’s democratic system of government.

(o) the APS provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of APS employees.
## APPENDIX B – APS CODE OF CONDUCT

**Public Service Act 1999, section 13**

1. An APS employee must behave honestly and with integrity in the course of APS employment.

2. An APS employee must act with care and diligence in the course of APS employment.

3. An APS employee, when acting in the course of APS employment, must treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.

4. An APS employee, when acting in the course of APS employment, must comply with all applicable Australian laws. For this purpose, *Australian law* means:
   - (a) any Act (including this Act), or any instrument made under an Act; or
   - (b) any law of a State or Territory, including any instrument made under such a law.

5. An APS employee must comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by someone in the employee’s Agency who has authority to give the direction.

6. An APS employee must maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the employee has with any Minister or Minister’s member of staff.

7. An APS employee must disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with APS employment.

8. An APS employee must use Commonwealth resources in a proper manner.

9. An APS employee must not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the employee’s APS employment.

10. An APS employee must not make improper use of:
    - (a) inside information; or
    - (b) the employee’s duties, status, power or authority; in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the employee or for any other person.

11. An APS employee must at all times behave in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS.

12. An APS employee on duty overseas must at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of Australia.

13. An APS employee must comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the regulations.
APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(STUDENT WORK VALUES PROJECT)

By providing your voluntary consent below, your responses will be included as part of a PhD research project examining modern work values.

Your consent is entirely voluntary, and will not affect your mark for this assignment in any way should you choose not to participate.

Only your age and sex will be recorded. No data that could identify any individual will be retained.

All responses you provide in this survey will remain confidential. No information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any report on the project, or to any other party. All surveys will be stored within the School of Management, Marketing & IB in the secure offices of Dr Richard Winter. No copies will be made available to any third parties to the extent allowable by law.

If you have any queries regarding the project, please contact Dr. Richard Winter at The Australian National University, School of Management, Marketing and International Business on (+61) 2 6125 4721 or by email Richard.Winter@anu.edu.au.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, you may wish to contact The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at the following address:

Ms Yolanda Shave
Human Ethics Research Officer
The Australian National University
Research Service Office
Chancery 10b
Canberra ACT 0200

Tel: + 61 2 6125 7945
Fax: + 61 2 6125 4807
E-mail: human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au

I consent to completing the work values survey and attaching the survey with my assignment. I agree to my assignment and survey responses being used for PhD research purposes including reports and publications. I understand that no information that reveals my identity and/or course affiliation will be revealed as part of this PhD research.

Signature: Date:
APPENDIX D – INFORMATION SHEET & PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
(APS-EMPLOYED PARTICIPANTS)

INFORMATION SHEET
APS Work Values Project

Study Description and Purpose
Hello, my name is Brent Jackson. I am conducting research into the work expectations and values held by Generation Y and their employers, specifically, the Australian Public Service. My research supervisor is Dr Richard Winter, a Senior Lecturer in the ANU School of Management, Marketing and International Business.

The aim of this research is to examine what work values and expectations are important to you as a person who works within the Australian Public Service. This research will help organisations provide an environment that meets your needs as an employee, or will help you, as a manager, discover what the newest generation of Australian workers expects from their organisations.

Data Protection and Confidentiality
Maintaining individual confidentiality is important to me. If you choose not to participate in the research, you will not be required to give a reason. The information provided in the tape-recorded interviews will not contain any identifying information. A summary of the interview will be made available to you on request. A copy of the final project report will be stored for at least 5 years, as prescribed by university regulations.

Consent
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to consent to the interview at any time without providing any reason or comment.

Contacts
If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate project findings, please email Brent Jackson Brent.Jackson@anu.edu.au, or alternatively, Dr Richard Winter at the School of Management, Marketing and International Business on (02) 6125 4721 or by email Richard.Winter@anu.edu.au.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, you may wish to contact The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at the following address:

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Fax: + 61 2 6125 4807
E-mail: human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

APS Work Values Project

I agree to take part in the APS Work Values Project. I have had the project explained to me and read the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have kept for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- Be interviewed by the researcher; and
- Allow the interviews to be recorded and transcribed.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any report on the project, or to any other party, to the extent permitted by law.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that a summary of findings will be made available to me if I so choose. I also understand that the researchers may use interview and questionnaire findings for analysis and publication purposes. In providing consent to this interview, I acknowledge that I have received payment of $45.00 via a JB HiFi gift voucher for my participation. I understand that the ANU College of Business and Economics administrators will be provided with a copy of this receipt for audit purposes.

Name: ____________________________

Signature: __________________________

Date: ____________________________
APPENDIX E – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APS Interview Guide

Hi __________________ thanks for taking the time to have a chat with me.

I’m interested in your opinions, not whether something is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, so please be as open as you can – there are no wrong answers. I’d just like to remind you that neither your name nor your position will be disclosed as part of this research.

Demographics

• Would you mind giving me some personal details to make comparisons, please?
  • Gender: __________________________
  • Age in years: ______________________
  • Length of time in APS: ______________
  • Job rank/classification: ______________
  • Level of education: __________________

Current Role

• Describe your current/former APS role for me. What are/were the key tasks or demands of the job?

• What do you want from your job? What is important to you? Do you think this will change over time?
History and Identity

- What made you want to work in the APS?

  **Probe:** work expectations (work-life balance, public service, money, training, parents worked in the APS, location, internal/professional contacts).

- How do you describe yourself to others, as: An employee? A public servant? A professional?

  **Probe:** professional ideals (higher purpose, or public service cause), connotations.

- How do you define success in your work?

  **Probe:** personal orientation (the ‘me’; concern for growth of the self; outcomes).

Relationships with Others

- How would you describe your ideal manager? How do APS managers measure up?

  **Probe:** similar/different values and work expectations?

- What is good/bad about working in the APS?

- Do you think that the APS generally meets the needs of staff?
Moving On / Reflections on the APS

- Are/were your needs/expectations being met in your current/former APS role? Why (not)?
  
  **Probe:** reasons for leaving.

- What do you think is an acceptable time to stay with an agency? Do you think this is likely to be similar across the APS?

- How would you **change** the APS?
  
  **Probe:** structure, leadership, ways of working (encourage description of ideal work environment after response – ask for unrealistic and then ask why not possible).

Thanks for helping with this research. Would it be possible to talk again to follow up on questions after I’ve transcribed the interview? (exchange cards)

Participant’s mood during the Interview (circle one).

- Friendly and interested.
- Cooperative but not particularly interested.
- Impatient and restless.
- Hostile.

Other observations: