

THE IMPACT OF GENERATION Y ON  
EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN A LARGE  
OKLAHOMA AEROSPACE COMPANY

By

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Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to identify and investigate the issues of employee retention in the Oklahoma aerospace industry; specifically, examining if employee retention, as well as turnover, is and will continue to be perpetuated by the Generation Y workforce. In addition, this research study will determine the perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influence of Generation Y regarding employee turnover and retention. To determine if Generation Y turnover is, in fact, generationally related, the researcher will examine dimensions of work environment that possibly influence Generation Y employees' intent to leave their current employment position, and provide approaches (recommendations) to cultivate retention rates of the Generation Y workforce. Private interviews are necessary to determine the perceptions of Generation Y employees currently employed in an Oklahoma aerospace company. It is likely that the strength of this study will come from probing questions to gain insight into the ideas and perspectives of Generation Y aerospace employees.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“The influx of new workers entering the workforce, most of who belong to Generation Y, is not filling the workforce gaps. This is largely due to the Aerospace & Defense (A&D) industry’s difficulty attracting and retaining younger employees” (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3). This is an ever-growing problem, as the number of Generation Y employees, (also known as “Millennials”), is increasing in the workforce while older generations are nearing retirement. It is now almost considered common knowledge that people among different generational categories function and think differently, occasionally disputably.

According to a 2013 research study, 60% of Generation Y will leave their current employment within three years. It is also projected that by the year 2025, 75% of the global workforce will be Millennials (Schawbel, 2013). This research study will identify and investigate the issues of employee retention in the Oklahoma aerospace industry; specifically, examining if employee retention and turnover rates are, or will be, affected by the Generation Y workforce. In addition, this paper will determine the perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influence of Generation Y regarding employee turnover and retention.

## **Statement of the Problem**

According to the 2008 Life After College survey, 70% of new college graduates leave their first jobs within two years of getting hired. Also, 43% of Generation Y graduates were not in the career they had chosen due to lack of available jobs. Of the employed Generation Y workforce, 60% are currently looking for a job with another company, with approximately 10% being hired directly by a competitor (Schawbel, 2013).

As the aerospace industry continuously experiences an increasing volume of employee retirements, a shortage of Generation Y employees, due to retention issues, could have a significant impact on workforce needs for aerospace companies. Therefore, it is imperative that the aerospace industry identify and understand the factors and characteristics that influence employee turnover of this generation. To determine if Generation Y turnover is generationally related, the researcher will examine dimensions of the work environment that possibly influence Generation Y employees' intent to leave their current employment position, and provide approaches (recommendations) to cultivate improved retention rates of the Generation Y workforce.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Oklahoma is home to Tinker Air Force Base (TAFB), the largest industrial operator in the state and a catalyst for the existence of numerous other aerospace companies (City Data, 2009). According to the Department of Labor (2008), the employment region that includes TAFB has the highest rate of voluntary turnover (27.7%) than any other employment region in the United States. With the presence of

TAFB, several additional aerospace companies have located themselves within this employment region, thereby establishing a competitive environment for employment.

Although several generation gap studies and publications have somewhat demystified the Generation Y workforce phenomenon, the impact of generational differences can significantly vary from industry to industry. Unfortunately, there is limited research on the impact of generation gap retention of aerospace employees and whether workforce turnover within the aerospace industry is impacted generationally. Research of the effects of the Generation Y workforce on the aerospace industry turnover and retention rates may reveal an even higher generationally-driven turnover rate and a proportionate number of unsatisfied employees.

### **Significance of the Study**

Retention is not a new area of research for corporate America. The thousands of dollars that companies invest into the future of a new employee is not something they take lightly, especially when they are not provided the opportunity to reap the benefits of their investment in the newly-hired employee. It is estimated that a new employee costs a company approximately \$15,000-\$25,000 during the first year not including salary (Schawbel, 2013). Although this study will not resolve all retention issues, it can provide significant findings to assist companies in identifying and having a better understanding of Generation Y-related turnover, as well as identifying new efforts to secure and retain Generation Y aerospace employees.

### **Research Questions**

The researcher has developed the following research questions to align with the intent of this dissertation:

1. What are the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees and can the Oklahoma aerospace company accept and foster these generational aspirations?
2. Have Generation Y employees adversely affected employment measures (turnover and retention) within the Oklahoma aerospace company?
3. What employment actions can the Oklahoma aerospace company introduce into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce?

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This research study was limited to a small sample of the Generation Y workforce employed full-time in the Oklahoma aerospace industry. The researcher study assumed that the participating Generation Y employees would answer the interview questions honestly and without any influence, actual or perceived. In addition, this research study assumed that the participating employees would answer all questions to the best of their knowledge.

### **Definition of Terms**

Aerospace industry – Any company or individual involved with researching, designing, manufacturing, operating, and maintaining vehicles that travel through air and space.

Baby Boomers – Individuals who were born between the years 1943-1960.

Cohort – Refers to individuals born in the same general time span who share key life experiences.

Cuspers – Refers to individuals who were born within two to three years of the emergent generation. Example: Generation Y individuals born in 1981 are considered to be cuspers as they are “on the cusp” of being Generation X.

Generation X – Refers to individuals who were born between the years 1960-1980.

Generation Y – Refers to individuals who were born between the years 1980-2000.

Generation Y is also known as Millennials.

Generation Z – Refers to individuals born after 2000. Some publications cite Generation Z as those individuals born after 1994. Generation Z is also known as Post-Millennial.

Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) – Involves fixing aircraft and its parts mostly in relation to mechanical or electrical situations. MRO facilities also perform routine actions such as scheduled and preventative maintenance.

Veterans – Refers to individuals who were born between the years 1922-1943.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature on the Generation Y turnover within the Oklahoma aerospace industry involved: (1) examining the importance of the Oklahoma aerospace industry; (2) establishing generational differences and Generation Y roles in the workplace; and (3) examining employee satisfaction and turnover findings. At the time of this research study, there was limited literature available that combined all components of this study.

#### **Importance of the Oklahoma Aerospace Industry**

According to a 2012 study, *The Aerospace and Defense Industry in the U.S.*, Oklahoma employed 23,848 direct, indirect, and induced employees in the aerospace and defense (A&D) industry. Oklahoma was ranked 28 out of 50 U.S. states in highest A&D revenues in 2010 with an average state revenue of \$2.6 billion; Oklahoma collected \$9.7 billion dollars in state business income and gross receipts taxes and \$9.8 billion dollars of state individual income taxes. It was also reported that Oklahoma's average A&D wages were ranked as the 8th lowest in the nation in 2010 with an average salary of \$56,489.

According to the 2004 *Report of the Governor's Aerospace Task Force*, "The aerospace industry is one of the critical economic engines for the Oklahoma economy and has been for many years." *The Strategic Plan for the Growth of Oklahoma's Aerospace Industry* states, "The aerospace industry is a critical sector in Oklahoma's

economy with the largest sector being Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul” (MRO) (2009, p. 9). There are seven MRO facilities in the world. The largest airline MRO facility in the United States is located at TAFB, and the world’s largest commercial MRO facility is located in Tulsa, Oklahoma (Oklahoma Department of Commerce, 2015). With two MRO facilities residing in Oklahoma, a large percentage of the aerospace industry is represented in this state.

The MRO market is expected to grow from \$45 billion in 2009 to more than \$68 billion in 2019 with a large share of this growth expected to take place at TAFB (Oklahoma Aerospace Industry Partners, 2009). The development and recruitment of a sustainable workforce to accommodate this growth is a critical undertaking by Oklahoma MRO facilities, but is crucial for a successful future.

A 2012 report commissioned by the Aerospace Industries Association of America (AIA) showed that Aerospace & Defense (A&D) contributed 2.3% to the 2009 U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) and was the 5<sup>th</sup> highest key American industry. The study also stated that the industry has contributions that are not reflected in the GDP percentage that are worth noting. “The industry’s impact includes contributions to national security, benefits that other sectors in the economy experience due to technological innovations created in the A&D industry, financial benefits and others not quantified in this study” (Deloitte, 2012, p. 22).

This study only accounted for A&D industry skills employed within the 29 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. Employees not included would be:

...those that repair and maintain KC-135 aerial refueling tankers at Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City (or any other airline or other non-manufacturing company providing MRO services), the space scientists at NASA, and the engineers performing advanced aerospace studies at the DARPA. (Deloitte, 2012, pp. 22-23)

There are additional taxes that are also not reflected in the 2009 GDP number.

“Although not quantified in this study, it is a reasonable assumption that A&D employees pay billions in state sales taxes” (AIA Report, 2012, p. 23). In addition, corporate and individual taxes (such as sales, use, and utility taxes) generated by indirect and induced effect A&D employees that were paid to individual states were not reflected in the 2009 GDP percentage. All of these various taxes have a huge impact on the Oklahoma economy.

### **Generational Differences**

In addition to the exploration of workplace dynamics, an investigation of the primary employed generations will be conducted for this study. Each of these generations has their own unique identifiers and characteristics. “Lack of attention to generational differences will make any company less attractive to young recruits, resulting in higher recruiting costs and greater difficulty in finding the right employees” (Ruch, 2000, p. 2).

According to Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak (2000), there are varying criteria and qualities that are said to make up what is considered a generation, thus providing further qualms as to what the specific birth year ranges should be for each generation.

For instance, we define the Baby Boom generation as those born from 1943 to 1960. Others, particularly population demographers, define the Baby Boom as



1946 to 1964. Why the difference? We have factored in the ‘feel’ as well as the ‘face’ of a generational cohort in our definition. For instance, our research finds that people born between 1943 and 1946 have similar values and views as the “true” demographically defined Baby Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964. (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 3)

In addition to birth year coincidences, another layer to the definition of generation we are using assumes common tastes, attitudes, and experiences (Zemke et al., 2000).

It is important to note a generation’s defining moments. Zemke et al. (2000) defines “defining moments” as those “events that capture the attention and emotions of thousands—if not millions—of individuals at a formative stage in their lives” (p. 16). There is an old adage that says “people resemble their times more than they resemble their parents” and is particularly significant in defining cohort groups. The four generations have unique work ethics, preferred ways of being managed, and varying reasons of turnover in the work place.

The Veteran generation (born 1922-1943) is characterized by several events, including: the Great Depression, the election and death of F.D. Roosevelt, World War II, Pearl Harbor, D-Day, Hiroshima, and the invention of the radio. This cohort group mainly includes those born prior to World War II whose earliest memories and influences are associated with worldwide war events. Their work ethic is hugely influenced by the manufacturing industry; it is worthy to note that this is the only current working generation that has really experienced and understood a manufacturing economy (Zemke et al., 2000). With almost everyone in this generation qualifying for Social Security benefits, this generation is in significant decline regarding the workforce. In 2015, only

about 6% of the workforce was represented by the Veteran generation (Harrington, 2015).

Table 1 illustrates core values and on-the-job characteristics for the Veteran generation identified by Zemke et al. (2000).

Table 1

*Characteristics for the Veteran Generation Identified by Zemke et al. (2000)*

<b>VETERANS</b>		
<b>Core Values</b>	<b>On the Job</b>	
	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedication/sacrifice</li> <li>• Hard work</li> <li>• Conformity</li> <li>• Law and order</li> <li>• Respect for authority</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Delayed reward</li> <li>• Duty before pleasure</li> <li>• Adherence to rules</li> <li>• Honor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stable</li> <li>• Detail oriented</li> <li>• Thorough</li> <li>• Loyal</li> <li>• Hard working</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inept with ambiguity and change</li> <li>• Reluctant to buck the system</li> <li>• Uncomfortable with conflict</li> <li>• Reticent when they disagree</li> </ul>

The Baby Boomer generation represents the majority of today’s workforce. The Baby Boomer generation (born 1943-1960) was impacted by the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, Kennedy assassination, the Space Race, and the invention of television. This cohort group includes those born during or after World War II and “raised in the era of extreme optimism, opportunity, and progress” (Zemke et al., 2000, p. 3). Baby Boomers have worked their entire lives, but are now retiring from the workforce at an accelerated rate. Baby Boomers held a high level of loyalty and respect for their employer, often staying with the same company until retirement. As this generation starts to retire, the

transfer of knowledge to younger generations is proving to be problematic for companies. In 2015, Baby Boomers represented 41.5% of the workforce (Harrington, 2015).

Table 2 illustrates the core values and on-the-job characteristics of the Baby Boomer generation as identified by Zemke et al. (2000).

Table 2

*Characteristics for the Baby Boomer Generation Identified by Zemke et al. (2000)*

<b>BABY BOOMERS</b>		
<b>Core Values</b>	<b>On the Job</b>	
	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Team orientation</li> <li>• Personal gratification</li> <li>• Health and wellness</li> <li>• Personal growth</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service oriented</li> <li>• Driven</li> <li>• Willing to “go the extra mile”</li> <li>• Good at relationship</li> <li>• Want to please</li> <li>• Good team players</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not naturally “budget minded”</li> <li>• Uncomfortable with conflict</li> <li>• Reluctant to go against peers</li> <li>• May put process ahead of result</li> <li>• Overly sensitive to feedback</li> <li>• Judgmental of those who see things differently</li> <li>• Self-centered</li> </ul>

Generation Xers (born 1960-1980) are one of the more independent generations, formed through single-parent homes, latchkey kids, Space Shuttle Challenger, Watergate, and the invention of computers. Xers are thought to be the most techno-savvy generation in the workforce today. Xers are thought to prefer flexible schedules, individual work (versus group work), and do not acknowledge the traditional process of “working your way up the ladder.” Generation X represented 29% of the workforce in 2015 (Harrington, 2015).

Table 3 illustrates the core values and on-the-job characteristics of Generation X as identified by Zemke et al. (2000).

Table 3

*Characteristics for the Generation X Identified by Zemke et al. (2000)*

<b>GENERATION X</b>		
<b>Core Values</b>	<b>On the Job</b>	
	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Thinking globally</li> <li>• Balance</li> <li>• Techno-literacy</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Informality</li> <li>• Self-reliance</li> <li>• Pragmatism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptable</li> <li>• Techno-literate</li> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Unintimidated by authority</li> <li>• Creative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impatient</li> <li>• Poor people skills</li> <li>• Inexperienced</li> <li>• Cynical</li> </ul>

Generation Y (born 1980-2000) is often referred to as Millennials, Nexters, or Echo Boomers. This generation has been affected by the Oklahoma City bombing, the school shooting at Columbine, and the 9/11 terrorist attack. Their work ethic is thought to combine the teamwork ethic prevalent among the Boomer generation, the can-do attitude of the Veteran generation, and the technological savvy of Generation X (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). As the number of Millennials starts to dominate the workforce, they have already been characterized as misunderstood, unappreciated, and constantly looking for another job. Millennial turnover is high for a number of reasons, including wanting to be challenged, being loyal to people versus a company, and addressing work-life balance (Sujanksy & Ferri-Reed, 2009). In 2015, Generation Y represented 24% of the workforce and is projected to occupy 75% of the workforce by 2025 (Schawbel, 2013).

Table 4 illustrates the core values and on-the-job characteristics of the Millennials (Nexters) as identified by Zemke et al. (2000).

Table 4

*Characteristics for the Millennial (Nexter) Generation (Zemke et al., 2000)*

<b>MILLENNIALS</b>		
<b>Core Values</b>	<b>On the Job</b>	
	<b>Assets</b>	<b>Liabilities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Civic duty</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Achievement</li> <li>• Sociability</li> <li>• Morality</li> <li>• Street smarts</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective action</li> <li>• Optimism</li> <li>• Tenacity</li> <li>• Heroic spirit</li> <li>• Multitasking capabilities</li> <li>• Technological savvy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for supervision and structure</li> <li>• Inexperience, particularly with handling difficult people issues.</li> </ul>

Lastly, a forthcoming Generation Z (born 2000-current) will soon begin entering the workforce, including the aerospace industry. This newest generation will be shaped by Apple products, gender identity, and social media. There are no current studies regarding Generation Z in the workforce.

### **Generation Y in the Workplace**

According to Sujansky & Ferri-Reed (2009), there are several things that Millennials look for in a job or company. Millennials are loyal to people, not to their employers as Baby Boomers are known to be. Work-life balance means just as much, if not more, to the Millennial generation than preceding generations. Millennials want their career paths to move fairly rapidly, with promotions being in the imminent future.

As expected in rapid growth economies, potential workforce problems have been investigated and discussed in company boardrooms. The retirement of Baby Boomers has been a common discussion across all industries. In the aerospace industry, it is an opinion that Baby Boomers held a passion and certain skill set that the younger generations,

including Generation Y, are not enticed by anymore. This younger workforce is currently being targeted for employment through training programs starting in secondary education schools, and continuing through higher education institutions. Additional incentives offered to this potential aerospace workforce includes financial assistance, sponsored mentoring programs, and academic internships (C. Gallaway, personal communication, April 1, 2016).

“The influx of new workers entering the workforce, most of who belong to Generation Y, is not filling the workforce gaps. This is largely due to the A&D industry’s difficulty attracting and retaining younger employees” (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3). The same article states:

As more Generation Y workers join Generation X in the workforce, the generational differences are becoming more apparent in areas such as motivation, ambition, and work styles. Some Boomer and Xer managers feel like they are catering too much to the new generation, while recent college graduate Ys maintain high expectations of work benefits, culture, and career goals from employers. There are distinguishable characteristics between the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Generation Yers in the workforce today and those differences are hindering success in many companies within the A&D industry. (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3)

A 1998 study titled “Generation 2001” conducted by Milwaukee, Wisconsin-based Northwestern Mutual and New York-based Louis Harris revealed the wants and ambitions of Millennials in the workplace. Zemke et al. (2000) says about the study that “almost half plan to enter the workforce right after college” and hoped to “work side by

side with other idealistic, committed coworkers” (pp. 142- 143). The Generation 2001 study also revealed that 88% of Millennials had already established specific work goals for the next five years and were optimistic and confident that they would achieve them. Various marketing studies show that Millennials spend upwards of 18 hours a day communicating through some kind of technological medium (McCarthy, 2014). Lancaster & Stillman (2002) state, “Millennials are a pragmatic generation with a highly developed ability to sort through information” (p. 231). This allows for a new genre of communication and information sharing and often ignores previously known communication network barriers and formal chain of command. “It’s tough to tell a Millennial not to approach a senior vice president directly with a question when he or she has had the ability to e-mail the president of the United States” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 231).

Zemke et al. (2000) offer some basic principles to keep in mind while managing Millennials. The first principle is budgeting plenty of time for orienting a Millennial in the workplace. This includes establishing a clear picture of a Millennial’s work environment expectations and long-term goals. The action plan for this first principle includes developing a strategy for juxtaposing these goals with job performance. The second principle deals with preconceived gender roles, and states that any preconceived notions about traditional gender roles are not applicable with Millennials in the work place. The third principle for managers to keep in mind is to appoint a strong team leader where there are groups or teams of several millennial members. The fourth principle is to be sensitive to potential employee conflicts. The fifth principle is to grow your training department, as Millennials will want to continue their education and develop work skills.

The sixth and final principle is to establish mentor programs to specifically match Millennials with more seasoned employees with whom they resonate.

Bennis and Thomas (2002) share how era and values have shaped modern leadership by focusing on older (Veteran and Baby Boomer generations) leaders, referred to as “Geezers”, and younger leaders (specifically Generation X) referred to as “Geeks”. Though Generation Y and Millennials were never reported in their findings, Table 5 illustrates how Bennis & Thomas (2002) depict in what way generational differences are prevalent and can permeate into the work place.

Table 5

*Generational Differences Between Geezers and Geeks in the Workforce*

<b>GEEZERS’ AND GEEKS’ CONCERNS AT AGE 25-30</b>	
<b>Geezer Concerns</b>	<b>Geek Concerns</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a living</li> <li>• Earning a good salary</li> <li>• Starting and supporting a family</li> <li>• Stability and security</li> <li>• Working hard and getting rewarded by the system</li> <li>• Listening to your elders</li> <li>• Paying dues to the organization</li> <li>• Using retirement to enjoy life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making history</li> <li>• Achieving personal wealth</li> <li>• Launching a career</li> <li>• Change and impermanence</li> <li>• Working hard so you can write your own rules</li> <li>• Wondering if your elders got it wrong</li> <li>• Deciding where loyalty should be</li> <li>• Achieving work/life balance</li> </ul>

Louie, Mulnix, and Nelson (2009) state that there are distinguishable characteristics between each of the generations in the workforce today and those differences are hindering success in many A&D industry companies.

Sujansky & Ferri-Reed state that “Millennials will bring a new style and a new perspective to the workforce, but unless organizations are willing to adapt, they risk losing billions of dollars to unwanted turnover and lost productivity” (2009, p. 3). This



turnover rate can cost corporations billions and can easily range from 50 to 150 percent of an employee's salary. A majority of Generation Y tenure at a corporation only lasts between two to five years. Many decide to go into business for themselves instead of staying with a corporation (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

In a 2008 Life after College Survey conducted by Experience Incorporated, a survey showed that "43% of Generation Y employees are not in the career they expected to be in after college, either because they couldn't find a job, or another opportunity presented itself." Furthermore, the survey emphasized as a part of its results the "need to make career path decisions prior to graduation by interning, job shadowing, networking, finding mentors and getting involved in professional associations on campus" (Huhman, 2008).

### **Employee Satisfaction and Turnover**

Job satisfaction indicators include "the possibility of personal growth in the job, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, opportunity for advancement, and achievement" (Richmond, McCroskey, & McCroskey, 2005, p. 191). Richmond et al. (2005) suggested that these factors directly relate to the "job" and to employee job satisfaction. They also indicate factors that fall on the dissatisfaction continuum can include "salary, interpersonal relations with other subordinates and peers, status, interpersonal relations with your supervisor, working conditions, policy and administration (too many rules or nonsensical policies), job security (lack of it), and technical supervision" (p. 191). These are referred to as factors relating to the work environment and are direct affecters to employee job dissatisfaction (Richmond et al., 2005).

In a 1991 unclassified study titled *Cross-Level Inferences of Job Satisfaction in the Prediction of Intent to Leave*, authors Witt and Hellman, under the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Civil Aeromedical Institute, applied “criteria for aggregation of individual-level data to the group-level using a measure of job satisfaction in the prediction of aggregated group-level of intent to leave” (p. i). The results showed “general implications for the use of individual-level job satisfaction scores as predictors of group-level, intent to leave” (p. i). The idea is that identifying factors leading to employee turnover before they happen could reduce, or provide the opportunity to reduce, unwanted employee turnover. “The level of intent to leave within a particular organization or subsystem may sometimes be an important issue, as it is at this level that predictions of organization or group turnover can be made” (Witt & Hellman, 1991, p. 1).

In the FAA study conducted by Witt and Hellman (1991), 5,586 employee questionnaires were completed and returned. Results showed “it is likely that organizations and organizational subsystems engender different levels of job satisfaction that may affect intent to leave” and that the “aggregation of individual job satisfaction permits prediction of organizational or subsystem intent to leave” (p. 6). Though this study cannot be pivoted by generation, ages of participants were reported as 15.8% 29 and under, 38.2% between the ages of 30 and 39, 33.7% between the ages of 40 and 49, and 12.3% age 50 or over. Since this was a quantitative study reporting data from an aggregate group, individual employee perspectives on job satisfaction and turnover were not shared.

A separate FAA study was conducted by Dollar and Broach (2006) titled “Comparison of Intent-to-Leave with Actual Turnover within the FAA.” Previously,

human resource departments would take historical employee turnover figures to estimate future turnover figures. This, however, always provides a lagging indicator instead of a more proactive attempt to figure out employees' intents on leaving an organization. This study took results of an Employee Attitude Survey (EAS) that included data questions showing intent-to-leave the organization within the next 12 months. These surveys were taken by FAA employees in Fiscal Year (FY) FY1997, FY2000, and FY2003 and the intent-to-leave percentages from these surveys were then compared to actual turnover percentages in FY1998, FY2001, and FY2004. The study shows that the actual turnover percentages were significantly lower than the intent-to-leave percentages reported on the employee EAS surveys. Overall, though they did not find that the survey was a good indicator at predicting future turnover for the FAA, but may prove beneficial when indicating employee disengagement.

There are two notable issues with this study. Firstly, "turnover" is defined as losses due to retirement, transfer, involuntary separation, and voluntary resignation. Because of the anonymity of the employee survey, intent-to-leave responses could not be linked to a specific turnover subset and were therefore reported at the aggregate level. There are no links to show what percentage of actual employee turnover was based on voluntary, non-retirement reasons (such as a work environment issue). Further, it is stated that retirement was cited as the most frequent intention of leaving the agency across all three years the employee survey was conducted.

Secondly, there is a discrepancy when reporting its employment numbers used in the denominator of the employee turnover equation. For example, in FY2000, it reports that 24,469 EAS surveys were calculated as the denominator (numerator being 1,233

employees showing intent-to-leave, yielding a 5% result). However, when reporting the number of “actual turnover” employees, it calculates the total number of employees as being 52,420 (numerator being 1,501 employees of actual turnover, yielding a 2.9% result). The actual turnover denominator includes both new-hire employees (who would not have been present to participate in the employee intent-to-leave survey that would have been administered the prior fiscal year) and employees who did not take the EAS survey the previous fiscal year. In the first calculation, the denominator used to calculate the intent-to-leave percentage is the total number of EAS surveys returned; whereas, the denominator used to calculate the actual turnover percentage is the total number of current employees—a delta of 24,812 unaccounted for employees. This yields a discrepancy in the reported lower actual turnover percentage. To have an accurate result, the same population should be calculated and compared to as the denominator in both intent-to-leave and actual turnover findings.

Dollar and Branch (2006) state, “Analyses by demographic subgroups could aid in the identification of both barriers to, and facilitators of, engagement and organizational commitment specific to those employee sub-populations” (p. 5). This study analyzed two demographic groups (gender and ethnicity) to determine if there were subgroups whose intent to leave predicted actual turnover. Overall, the study showed no significant correlation between the gender and ethnicity subgroups’ intent-to-leave and actual turnover rates. Age or generational cohorts were not used as a subgroup in this study.

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) acknowledge employee turnover causes by stating “too many companies are making a critical mistake by overlooking orientation as a crucial recruitment and retention tool for the generations” (p. 216). They also stated:

By examining the generational perspective of participants, companies can gain a much better understanding of what employees are looking for when they arrive at orientation, what can be done to create the ideal experience, and how to gain a distinct competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining much-needed staff. (p. 218)

In 2011, the A&D industry ranked fourth in job cuts. “Defense contractors have responded to potential Department of Defense (DOD) budget cuts with staff cuts and offers of early retirement” (Deloitte, 2012, p. 44). With involuntary employee turnover and voluntary/involuntary retirements lingering, a look into what makes an employee voluntarily leave their employment becomes even more crucial to the A&D industry.

A case study, *Retention Strategies in Aerospace Turnover*, proposed the following seven actions in preventing aerospace turnover:

- 1) Identify and provide more challenging work
- 2) Provide clear promotion criteria
- 3) Improve training and employee buy-in
- 4) Use a bid and rotation system to move staff through various departments
- 5) Use clearly defined metrics in performance evaluations
- 6) Foster professional growth for managers first
- 7) Increase remuneration to better-than-market rates.

This study focused specifically on aerospace engineer retention; it provides an insight to aerospace employee perceptions of their workplace. This case study also reported high levels of job satisfaction among the aerospace engineers (Applebaum, et al., 2003).

In an article titled *Addressing the Turnover Issue among New Nurses from a Generational Viewpoint*, researchers and authors investigated the relationship between dimensions of the psychosocial work environment and the intent to quit among a new generation of nurses. They concluded that the balance between the level of effort expended and reward received plays an important role in young nurses' intent to leave (Lavoie-Tremblay, O'Brien-Pallas, Gelinias, Desforages, & Marchionni, 2008). Though this research was done specifically within the nursing field, the response of Generation Y employees remain consistent with other research pertaining to Generation Y in the workforce.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate employee retention in the Oklahoma aerospace industry; specifically, examining if employee retention, as well as turnover, is perpetuated by the Generation Y workforce. In addition, this research study has provided detailed perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influences affecting Generation Y employee turnover and retention. To determine if Generation Y turnover is, in fact, generationally related, the researcher has examined different dimensions of the work environment that has possibly influenced Generation Y employees' intent to leave their current employment position.

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design was used in this study to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of current employees at an Oklahoman aviation company. Qualitative studies are descriptive studies; therefore, this research design was most appropriate in identifying generational differences at an Oklahoma aerospace company. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), there are four types of research designs: Descriptive, Correlational, Causal-Comparative, and Experimental. A descriptive design “determines and reports the way things are” (p. 11). A correlational design “involves collecting data to

determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables” (p. 11). A causal-comparative design “attempts to determine the cause, or reason, for existing differences in the behavior or status of groups or individual” (p. 12). Experimental designs occur when “at least one independent variable is manipulated, other relevant variables are controlled, and the effect on one or more dependent variables is observed” (p. 13). This research study utilized the descriptive design.

John Creswell, in *Qualitative Inquiry & Research* (2007) states that:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (p. 37)

There are several subset areas of qualitative research. Creswell defines five qualitative approaches: (1) narrative, (2) phenomenology, (3) grounded theory, (4) ethnography, and (5) case studies. This study will use a phenomenological approach through the identification and collection of personal experiences and perceptions of Generation Y employees at an Oklahoma aerospace company.



Creswell (1998) states, “Whereas a biography reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon” (p. 51). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), the purpose of phenomenological research is to investigate lived experiences of people in order to identify and understand the basic principles of human experience as described by research participants. Creswell states that, “Whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (pp. 57-58). Also, “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 58).

The data collection process provided insight employing a phenomenological approach using personal responses from each interviewed Generation Y employee to develop them into common meanings of their individual personal and professional experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In this phase, interview questions were developed by the researcher to explore and understand the meaning of each employee’s individualized experiences (Creswell, 1998). In addition, a subset phenomenological approach, psychological phenomenology was used in this research study. Moustakas (1994) states that researchers collect data from persons who have experienced a common phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience, consisting of the “what” and “how” they experienced it. Psychological phenomenology is focused less on the researchers’ interpretations and more on describing the experiences of participants involved (Moustakas, 1994).

A specific concept called “epoche” is an ancient Greek term describing a theoretical moment in which all human judgments about what is known about the external world are suspended; subsequently allowing one’s own consciousness to be subjected to immanent critique. “Phenomenological epoche”, or bracketing, is attributed to the late German philosopher, Edmund Gustar Albrecht Husserl. This concept allows investigators to set aside their experiences and take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. Phenomenology, when used in qualitative research, emphasizes a contrasting delivery from Husserl in that it “aims to identify and describe the subjective experiences of respondents” and “is a matter of studying everyday experience from the point of views of the subject” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 226). To placate Husserls’ concept of psychological phenomenology and the phenomenological epoche, triangulation was used in this research study. When a researcher chooses a topic to explore, to some extent, a theoretical assumption has already been made. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to use and present multiple lines of sight to provide a more substantive picture of reality.

Triangulation is a technique that validates data through cross verification from two or more sources; it specifically combines several research methods and applies them to study the same phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). According to Berg (2007),

Every method is a different line of sight directed toward the same point, observing social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbol and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these

elements. The use of multiple lines of sight is frequently called triangulation. (p. 5)

A theory triangulation method was used by gaining employee perspectives via interviews and by reviewing current literature regarding both employee turnover and generational differences.

### **Target Population and Participant Selection**

“A population is a group that has a similar set of characteristics and is the group to which the researcher would like the results of the study to be generalized” (Gay, 1987, pp.102-103). Full-time employees at a large Oklahoma aerospace company were selected to participate in this research study. The two employee groups interviewed by the researcher included current Generation Y employees hired less than five years ago, and current Generation Y employees that have been employed with the company for more than five years. These employees were selected by purposeful sampling and based on availability and the willingness of each employee. “Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study; in such a way, they represent the larger group from which they are selected” (Gay & Airasian, 2001, p. 121). Patton (2015) states that all types of sampling in qualitative research can be classified under the broader term “purposeful sampling”. Patton emphasized that homogenous sampling is especially conducive when dealing with a small group of participants to have a comparable background (for example, occupational experiences).

Eight Generation Y employees were interviewed to ensure sufficient data was collected to analyze and answer the research questions. Sample size depends on the questions, why the questions are important, how the findings will be addressed, and what

resources are available for the study (Patton, 2002). Though Patton (2002) states there are no specific rules for a sample size in a qualitative inquiry, Creswell (2014) states that anywhere between two and ten participants are adequate to satisfy a comprehensible saturation point; and Dukes (2008) recommends studying three to ten subjects in a phenomenology study.

The sampling logic used by the researcher was a theoretical or purposive strategy. In the logic of sampling based on a theoretical strategy, participants are chosen based on their relevance to the research question (Schwandt, 2007). Creswell (2007) states that “criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 128). Hence, only Generation Y employees born between 1980 and 2000 were interviewed for this study. These employees were initially selected by the snowball method to determine Generation Y employees and tenure of employment. The snowball method or type of sampling identifies cases of interest from people who have contacts of people who know what cases are information-rich (Creswell, 2007). A social media search was used as an aid to identify and select Generation Y employees as prospective interviewees (employer, age, years of employment, personal email account and other contact information, peers and coworkers).

Lastly, a convenience sampling, or availability sample was used—that is, the final eight Generation Y participants were selected based upon their response time and availability to schedule interview appointments. The first eight employee responses received by the researcher were chosen to be interviewed for this study. Convenience sampling can be risky, especially if the participants are not equipped to offer information

regarding the research topic (Berg, 2007). However, because other sampling methods were used first to narrow the pool of potential aviation employees, the convenience sampling at this point was considered to be appropriate and acceptable.

### **Procedures and Ethical Assurances**

Each Generation Y employee interview consisted of twelve open-ended questions designed to explore the interviewees' perceptions and personal observations as a Generation Y employee; specifically, regarding their work experiences in an aerospace company and how their generational characteristics may have affected the overall employee turnover and retention measures within the company. These twelve interview questions were validated by a panel of academic and aerospace industry experts prior to the interviews. The interview method, consisting of seeking responses to a predetermined set of questions, remained constant for all participating employees. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recording system and the records of all interviews were kept private. All data results were reported as group findings only and did not include information that will identify the employees associated with the study. The interview questions are located in Appendix A.

Human subjects were an integral part of this study; therefore, this research study was conducted in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements established by the OSU Office of University Research Compliance (URC) and is filed and approved as IRB Application #ED-16-104. The researcher obtained IRB approval from the URC before conducting any research and gathering of data from the participants. Furthermore, the anonymity of all Generation Y participants was maintained during the duration of the research study.

All participants were emailed an informed consent letter to review before their scheduled interviews with the researcher. The consent letter clearly stated the purpose of the study and the rights of the employees to participate on a voluntary basis. In addition, the letter included information regarding the researcher, purpose for collecting the information from the employee, confidentiality of responses and measures taken to ensure confidentiality, compensation for participation, risks and benefits of the interview, and contact information of the researcher, faculty advisor, and IRB. The consent letter was sent to each participant via personal email and signed prior to the interview process. Participants were also verbally reminded that their interview responses would be recorded by the researcher. The consent letter is located in Appendix B.

Interviews were conducted privately, within a public establishment, and considered neutral to both the Generation Y participant and the researcher. After the conclusion of each interview, all participants were coded with an assigning number and de-identified by personal name. The master key linking participant names to the assignment number was destroyed once transcription was completed by the researcher. Once transcribed, the audio voice recordings were also deleted and destroyed by the researcher.

### **Instruments**

The research instrument used in this study was a list of twelve open-ended interview questions designed to elicit the beliefs, experiences, perceptions, or attitudes of the employee participants regarding the Generation Y environment. The rationale behind selecting this instrument is the high-validity, reliability, and depth of data that can be produced in the one-on-one interview environment. Validity is the degree in which a test

measures what it is intended to measure. “Validity is the most important quality of any test” (Gay, 1987, p. 127). The three main types of validity are construct, content, and criterion-related.

Construct validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended hypothetical construct or non-observable trait that explains behaviors. To satisfy construct validity, the open-ended questions asked during the interviews were diligently constructed by the researcher. All interview questions were reviewed and approved by four faculty experts, as well as the IRB, to validate that all open-ended questions would initiate an engaging dialogue needed to successfully respond to the research questions of this study. Each participant interview followed an unstructured, standardized, and open-ended process.

Content validity measures content area and requires item and sampling validity. Content validity was established for the interview process by grouping the open-ended interview questions in subsets. The purpose of creating this type of interview format was to elicit stories of experience. Schwandt (2007) states these types of interviews are used when seeking knowledge of authenticating accounts of lived (subjective), inner experiences and emotions. These types of interviews “generate ‘in-depth’ data that are the product of the empathetic relationship between interviewee and interviewer as peers, companions, conversational partners, etc.” (p. 164). The interview questions asked by the researcher were categorized as demographic, Generation Y open responses, response to Generation Y statistics, Generation Y workplace background information, summation of interview, and what can be introduced in the workplace to acknowledge Generation Y perspectives.

Criterion-related validity is external criteria that relates to what is measured (Conti, 2008). Criterion-related validity was established by thorough research in generationally-related subjects as well as employee retention and turnover. The researcher has completed over twelve years of generational research and investigations, specifically relating to issues in the workplace and generational communications.

Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures what it is supposed to measure (Conti, 2008). “An account is judged to be reliable if it is capable of being replicated by another inquirer” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 262). In this study, the researcher also utilized data triangulation to improve the dependability of the data and the reliability of the study. Data triangulation and investigator triangulation were specific triangulation categories reflected in this research. Data triangulation was further subcategorized with time, space, and person. Investigator triangulation “consists of using multiple rather than single observers of the same object” (Berg, 2007, p. 7).

### **Research Questions**

As the United States aerospace industry continuously experiences an increasing volume of employee retirements, a shortage of Generation Y employees, due to retention issues, may have a significant impact on workforce needs for aerospace companies, including those companies located in Oklahoma. This qualitative research study, through the personal interviews of aerospace employees, aims to identify and understand the factors and characteristics that influence employee turnover of the Generation Y generation.

The researcher has developed the following research questions to align with the intent of this research study:



1. What are the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees and can the Oklahoma aerospace company accept and foster these generational aspirations?
2. Have Generation Y employees adversely affected employment measures (turnover and retention) within the Oklahoma aerospace company?
3. What employment actions can the Oklahoma aerospace company introduce into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce?

### **Data Collection and Analyses**

All employee data collected for this study occurred during summer 2016. The personal interviews were conducted in June 2016 and the transcription of each interview was completed in July 2016. This collection of data was analyzed and organized by the researcher to support Chapter IV findings. Access to the recorded interviews was limited to the researcher, and all data was stored and protected in the researcher's locked home office. Electronic data was stored on the researcher's personal laptop via secure password access, and all paper data was stored in a locked, fireproof safe. Paper and electronic files will be protected and kept for three (3) years and only the primary researcher will have access to this data. Any reference to the names or identities of the eight employee participants, including all digital voice recordings, were destroyed by the researcher after transcription and converted into a number identifying (assignment) system.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate the issues of employee retention in the Oklahoma aerospace industry; specifically, examining if employee retention and turnover are perpetuated by the Generation Y workforce. In addition, this research study has provided detailed perceptions of Generation Y employees regarding their aerospace employers and co-workers, and the influence of Generation Y regarding employee turnover and retention. The demographic data is organized and presented in sequential order by individual participant interviews divided by years of employment service with an Oklahoma aerospace company. The researcher utilized an explanatory and narrative design to assess the viewpoints and perspectives of the eight Generation Y employees at an Oklahoma aerospace company.

Table 6

*Generation Y Participant Demographics and Tenure*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Birth Year</b>	<b>Years of Employment (Oklahoma Aerospace Company)</b>
1	1982	8
2	1983	8
3	1981	10.5
4	1980	6
5	1985	4
6	1990	4
7	1987	4.5
8	1980	4.5

**Generation Y Participant Responses**

*Question 1. In what year were you born?*

Participant #1 was born in 1982. Participant #2 was born in 1983. Participant #3 was born in 1981. Participant #4 was born in 1980. Participant #5 was born in 1985. Participant #6 was born in 1990. Participant #7 was born in 1987. Participant #8 was born in 1986. Participant #4 was born in 1980.

*Question 2. Is this your first full-time employment? If no, how many other full-time jobs have you had?*

This is not the first job for Participant #1. Participant #1 has held two additional full-time jobs.

This was not Participant #2's first full-time employment and has held three other full-time jobs.

This was not Participant #3's first full-time employment. Participant #3 has held three other full-time jobs.

This was not Participant #4's first full-time employment; Participant #4 has held three other full-time jobs.

This was not Participant #5's first full-time employment; Participant #5 has held six other full-time jobs.

This is Participant #6's first full-time employment.

This was not Participant #7's first full-time employment and has held one other full-time job.

This was not Participant #8's first full-time employment and has held two other full-time jobs.

*Question 3. How would you describe the Generation Y employee? And what are the personal/professional aspirations (job satisfaction, money, power, etc.) of the Generation Y employee?*

Participant #1 describes the Generation Y employee as very work-driven and motivated, primarily works for incentive, and strives to be recognized by management. The personal and professional aspirations of a Generation Y employee are to achieve job satisfaction, money, and power.

Participant #2 describes the Generation Y employee as smart, efficient, needy, and lacking social interaction skills. The personal and professional aspirations of a Generation Y employee are to be able to run an entire company or reach executive level with as minimal tenure on the job as possible—highest power within the least amount of buy-in time.

Participant #3 describes the Generation Y employee as self-motivated, driven, goal-oriented, and very social and believes that Generation Y employees have the “work to live, rather than live to work” mentality (personal communication, June 22, 2016).

Participant #4 describes the Generation Y employee as lazy, but productive, and believes that the personal and professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee are desiring job satisfaction and ample free time.

Participant #5 describes the Generation Y employee as wanting a quick turnaround for promotions, more dedicated and harder working than older generations, and more willing to learn and adapt compared to older generations. Participant #5 believes that the personal and professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee are mostly money; however, in some cases, job satisfaction could be an underlying Generation Y aspiration.

Participant #6 describes the Generation Y employee as having different levels of engagement, and believes that the personal and professional aspiration of the Generation Y employee is to rise to power quickly but to do as little as it takes to get that power.

Participant #7 describes the Generation Y employee as tech-savvy and not as conceited and self-centered as other generations may think. Participant #7 believes that the personal and professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee are money and job security.

Participant #8 describes the Generation Y employee as technologically advanced and driven to complete higher levels of education. Participant #8 believes that the personal and professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee are to “create a business or business ideas to be able to make it on their own, and not rely on an employer

or a 9 to 5 job until retirement- we are the generation of entrepreneurs” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 4. Do you believe your generation (Generation Y) is misunderstood and/or unappreciated as an employee or co-worker?*

Participant #1 does believe that Generation Y is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker. In the workplace, Participant #1 often feels “that other generations look down on Generation Y employees as if they don’t know enough and are dumb” (personal communication, June 16, 2016).

Participant #2 does not believe that Generation Y is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker.

Participant #3 does believe that Generation Y is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker.

Participant #4 does believe that their generation, Generation Y, is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker, especially within specific departments within this company.

Participant #5 does believe that Generation Y is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker, and explains, “The older generations have a harder time handing the reigns over. They want to just get their stuff done without handing over any knowledge” (personal communication, June 18, 2016).

Participant #6 does believe that Generation Y is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker.

Depending on whom you are working with, you can often be talked down to like a child. It is common to feel like you are lacking respect from others, which makes

you want to prove yourself to them more. But you shouldn't have to put in the same time that it took everyone else to achieve if you can already do their job.

(Personal communication, June 23, 2016)

Participant #7 does believe that their generation, Generation Y, is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker. "The main misunderstanding I see is that we can only think for ourselves, and not for others" (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

Participant #8 does believe that their generation is misunderstood and unappreciated as an employee or co-worker and explains, "It is really easy to be stereotyped as a Generation Y employee. I often feel that we are viewed as not hard-working because we don't use traditional forms of communication such as writing letters, posting ads, or making phone calls" (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 5. Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?*

Participant #1 believes the reason is the lack of respect they are given in the workplace and Generation Y, inevitably, wants a higher salary.

Participant #2 believes that Generation Y employees, in general, are not able to acquire the skills needed to reach the higher ranks in the shorter timeframe and that they seek employment elsewhere, where they can start again to see if they can reach the "top ranks" (personal communication, June 18, 2016). This frustration and disappointment is something that is newly felt for the new Generation Y employee. Participant #2 believes that other Generation Y employees need to "work entry-level jobs for a while and not get frustrated so quickly (personal communication, June 18, 2016)."

Participant #3 believes Generation Y are not receiving promotions fast enough and that Generation Y does not feel engaged in the workplace or think that they are making a difference.

Participant #4 believes Generation Y employees feel that they are not appreciated enough and want to be paid more.

Participant #5 believes it is because Generation Y employees are not recognized or promoted in the timeframe that they expect.

Participant #6 believes that 60 percent of Generation Y leaves their current employment within three years after hire date because they feel that the work environment is often better somewhere else or that other companies may align more with their personal philosophies. Participant #6 believes that Generation Y does not have a commitment to a company and that there is no need to sit around and wait for opportunities when they are prevalent at other companies.

Participant #7 believes that 60 percent of Generation Y leaves their current employment within three years after hire date because there are not as many growth opportunities at this particular aerospace company compared to other companies. “Career progression is slower than what our generation has grown accustomed to” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

Participant #8 believes that 60 percent of Generation Y are enticed to leave their current company because of new concepts other businesses are starting to develop and portray. There is also “diversity in other companies and we see other Gen Y employees being successful elsewhere” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).



*Question 6. How long have you worked for your current aerospace employer? Is this the first time you have worked in the aerospace industry?*

Participants #1 and 2 have each worked for their respective aerospace employers for 8 years, and this is the first job each has held in the aerospace industry.

Participant #3 has worked for their current aerospace employer for 10.5 years, and this is the first job Participant #3 has had in the aerospace industry.

Participant #4 has worked for this current aerospace employer for 6 years, and this is the first job Participant #4 has held in the aerospace industry.

Participant #5 has worked for this current aerospace employer for 3.5 years, and this is not the first job Participant #5 has held in the aerospace industry.

Participant #6 has worked for their current aerospace employer for 4 years, and this is the first job they have held in the aerospace industry.

Participant #7 has worked for their current aerospace employer for 4.5 years, and this is not the first job they have held in the aerospace industry.

Participant #8 has worked for their current aerospace employer for 4.5 years, and this is the first job they have held in the aerospace industry.

*Question 7. What influenced you to seek employment in the aerospace industry?*

Participant #1 sought employment in the aerospace industry after receiving salary information at a college career fair.

Participant #2 sought employment with this specific aerospace company because it was/is seen as an innovative, world-class, and prestigious company.

Participant #3 sought employment in the aerospace industry after a colleague's referral.

Participant #4 sought employment for better health benefits. Participant #4 came from owning a business where there was no time off and benefits were not provided. Participant #4 explained that the particular type of industry was not of importance, but knew this particular company was a stable company with good benefits.

Participant #5 sought employment with the aerospace industry because it was a good opportunity and offered the thrill of working in aerospace.

Participant #6 sought employment in the aerospace industry due to familial influences.

Participant #7 sought employment with this aerospace company after completing a senior year Capstone program at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) through a local university.

Participant #8 sought employment with this aerospace company because a job opportunity arose that was relevant to their college degree.

*Question 8. Do you believe there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry? If so, is this bias primarily coming from co-workers or your employer (supervisor/management)?*

Participant #1 believes that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry, and that this bias primarily comes from co-workers of older generations who are “set in their ways, do not want to learn anything new, and do not want to be passed up for promotions by the younger generation” (personal communication, June 16, 2016).

Participant #2 does not believe that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry.

Participant #3 believes that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry and also an industry focus on non-work-related socializing and networking groups. “I would say it’s a flow down from corporate, and not necessarily specific to this industry” (personal communication, June 22, 2016). Participant #3 believes that other generations are biased about Generation Y employees and that they believe the only thing Generation Y cares about are “creating groups and lounging in beanbag chairs” (personal communication, June 22, 2016).

Participant #4 believes that there is bias towards Generation Y employees primarily from management regarding how Generation Y should act in the workplace.

Participant #5 does not believe that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry.

Participant #6 believes that the bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry is not as prominent of an issue as it is at this particular aerospace company. Participant #6 feels that there is bias primarily coming from co-workers of older generations, especially those that relocated from other sites, and that the older generations do not like to share their knowledge or experiences with younger generations; they hold onto a “you are never going to be as good as I ever was” mentality (personal communication, June 23, 2016). Participant #6 also describes older co-workers as being “snobbish” in their demeanor when interacting with Generation Y employees. “It really makes Generation Y move away from the quality of their work and the passion of why we started working here. Now it is all a political game. We are looked down upon by older generations” (personal communication, June 23, 2016). Participant #6 suggests that

older generations may exhibit this attitude because they see the cliquishness Generation Y has with each other.

Participant #7 does believe that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry. Participant #7 feels that there is bias primarily coming from co-workers of an older generation.

Participant #8 does believe that there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry. Participant #8 feels that there is bias primarily coming from co-workers of older generations. “I’ve been called ‘kid’ several times. It’s frustrating. They are older but they won’t ever view you as an equal. I know it’s not purposeful but it still occurs” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 9. As a Generation Y employee, do you believe professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this aerospace company?*

Participant #1 does not believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this particular aerospace company, and explains:

There are too many corrupt employees and managers who choose personal favors in order to gain advancement. There is a lot of misconduct that happens behind closed doors. There are a lot of employees who suck up and receive promotions without being deserving. (Personal communication, June 16, 2016)

Participant #1 also believes that corrupt management is to blame for promoting employees that are not deserving.

Participant #2 believes that there are professional growth and promotional opportunities possible with this particular aerospace company. Participant #2 applied for and received a management position after six years with the company.

Participant #3 does believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this particular aerospace company.

Participant #4 does not believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this particular aerospace company. Although Participant #4 was promoted after three years of working in the same position, Participant #4 states that it took the manager two or three promotional cycles before the promotion could take place.

My manager pushed for my promotion with the skill team every time, but never got approval. I kept getting passed up, not because of my skill set, but because my salary range was not high enough to be considered for a promotion. (Personal communication, June 24, 2016)

Participant #4 believes that the quickest way to get promoted in this company is to apply for higher job requisitions when they become available, and not necessarily by working on the same skill set in the same position.

Participant #5 does believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity are possible with this particular aerospace company. "I hesitate to say yes. But yes, it is possible. You just have to try really, really, really hard" (personal communication, June 18, 2016).

Participant #6 does not believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this particular aerospace company.

There is absolutely no growth or promotional opportunities for me here. This company just paid for my MBA so I am just staying until I do not have to pay it back. I hate to say that. But it is common knowledge that this company is

constricted on a budget and has made it clear that there are hiring freezes and no opportunities. There is no new hiring and no promotions. They can't afford it.

There is no sense of security here. (Personal communication, June 23, 2016)

Participant #7 does believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity are possible with this particular aerospace company but are limited to the very high achievers willing to stay with the company. Participant #7 believes that the opportunities are not as good at this particular aerospace company compared to if the employee were to leave and seek employment elsewhere.

Participant #8 does not believe that professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this particular aerospace company. "There are so many opportunities for Generation Y people to break out on their own, but there is no advancement here. Managers need to stop hiring people that they know and promote within, instead" (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 10. Overall, has this aerospace job fulfilled your professional and personal expectations?*

Participant #1 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has not fulfilled professional and personal expectations. Participant #1 explains:

I felt that I would be farther along in my career by now after dedicating eight years with the same company. It took six years to advance from a Level 2 to a Level 3, and that was after accepting a lateral move previously. (Personal communication, June 16, 2016)

Participant #2 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has fulfilled professional and personal expectations.

Participant #3 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has not fulfilled professional and personal expectations. “I believe that the salary is comparable to other competitors; however, the benefits package has drastically changed in the past year or so. There is also no camaraderie in the workplace and not enough focus on family life” (personal communication, June 22, 2016).

Participant #4 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has not fulfilled professional and personal expectations. “However, after five years of working here, I feel it is better because I am in a different department” (personal communication, June 24, 2016).

Participant #5 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has fulfilled professional and personal expectations.

Participant #6 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has not fulfilled professional and personal expectations. Participant #6 adds:

It is really disappointing. This was my first job and I was really excited. However, after I started, I noticed a lot of my co-workers were pessimistic about the job market. I started right when the Department of Defense cut spending and that transitional period was a really weird time. (Personal communication, June 23, 2016)

Participant #7 believes that this current job in the aerospace industry has fulfilled professional and personal expectations:

As of right now, my answer is yes because I just found out that I got accepted into a work program that I’ve been trying to get into. My answer would have been

different if you would have asked me last week. (Personal communication, June 30, 2016)

Participant #8 believes that the current job in the aerospace industry has fulfilled professional and personal expectations. “My only expectations were that I would work 40 hours a week and make money” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 11. Do you believe there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company? If so, what concerns or issues are causing this high turnover rate?*

Participant #1 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company. Participant #1 believes that the concerns or issues that are causing this high turnover rate are archaic practices and work environment, low salaries compared to competitors, radical decrease in benefits, and little to no room for growth opportunities.

Participant #2 does not believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company.

Participant #3 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees because jobs are not measuring up to employee expectations.

Participant #4 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees because they are underpaid and unappreciated. Participant #4 adds:

Also, people are constantly worried about getting laid off because of lingering optimization goals throughout the whole company. The company seems less stable than when I originally started. Everyone is trying to move into other



positions out of [certain departments] that seem more stable. (Personal communication, June 24, 2016).

Participant #5 does not believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company, but that there is some turnover.

Participant #6 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees due to favoritism within this company, artificial networking between “friends and buddies”, and a “socially hazardous environment” (personal communication, June 23, 2016).

Participant #7 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company because career progression is not as fast as expected and promotional opportunities are not as prevalent as other companies.

Participant #8 does believe that there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company because there are other higher paying jobs available, and Generation Y wants to move to a different region of the United States. “We do not want to live in Oklahoma” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

*Question 12. Have you entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company? Would you consider working for another company within the aerospace industry?*

Participant #1 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company, and has been actively submitting applications elsewhere.

Participant #1 would not consider working for another company within the aerospace industry.

Participant #2 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and would consider working for another company within the aerospace industry. Participant #2 has actively applied to aerospace competitors.

Participant #3 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company, and has been actively submitting applications to both competing aerospace companies and non-aerospace companies.

Participant #4 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and is considering working for another company in the aerospace industry.

Participant #5 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and is considering working for another company in the aerospace industry.

Participant #6 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and is considering working for another company in the aerospace industry.

Participant #7 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and would consider working for another company in the aerospace industry.

Participant #8 has entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company and would consider working for another company in the aerospace industry “as long as the responsibilities were different” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

## Summary of Findings

The participants' birth years range from 1980 to 1990; the approximate ages of the eight participants at the time of interview were between 26-36 years old. All participants are within the birth year range to be considered Generation Y (1980-2000).

Participants who have held other full-time positions had employment history that ranged from one to six previous full-time positions. Eighty-eight percent (88%) have held prior full-time employment positions and only one participant stated that this was their first full-time employment position. Table 7 lists how many of the Generation Y participants have held other full-time positions prior to working at this Oklahoma aerospace company.

Table 7

### *Question 2- Full-Time Employment History*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>First full-time employment?</b>	<b>If no, how many other full-time employment positions?</b>
1	No	2
2	No	3
3	No	3
4	No	3
5	No	6
6	Yes	0
7	No	1
8	No	2

Research Question 3 asked, "How would you describe the Generation Y employee? And what are the personal/ professional aspirations of the Generation Y employee?" Table 8 summarizes the eight responses from the Generation Y employees.

Table 8

*Question 3- Generation Y Employee Description & Aspirations*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Employee Description</b>	<b>Personal/Professional Aspirations</b>
1	Work-driven Motivated Works for incentives Strives to be recognized	Job satisfaction Money Power
2	Smart Efficient Needy Lacking social skills	Highest level of power in the lowest time
3	Self-motivated Driven Goal-oriented Very social	Work to live, not live to work
4	Lazy Productive	Desires job satisfaction Ample free time
5	Need quick turnaround on promotions More dedicated than other generations Hard working Dedicated More willing to learn and adapt	Money
6	Different levels of engagement	Rise to power quickly but do little
7	Tech-savvy	Money Job security
8	Technologically advanced Driven Highly educated	Create business ideals Not have to rely on an employer Entrepreneurship

Eighty-eight percent of participants believed that Generation Y is misunderstood and/or unappreciated as employees or co-workers. Participant #1 stated that other generations look down on Generation Y employees as if they “don’t know enough and are dumb” (personal communication, June 16, 2016). Participant #5 felt unappreciated as a co-worker because there is a strong lack of knowledge transfer from older generations. Participant #6 stated that Generation Y employees are often talked down to, like children,

and that Generation Y employees lack a level of respect from others in the workplace. There is a misunderstanding that Generation Y employees only “think for themselves”, which Participant #7 believed to be a false assumption made by older employees (personal communication, June 30, 2016). Participant #8 stated they are misunderstood and not viewed as hard-working because of the methods of communication popular among Generation Y. If a Generation Y employee chooses to communicate via email versus a more traditional means such as telephone, they may be seen as less productive, or taking a shortcut.

Research Question 5 asked, “Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?” Table 9 provides a summary of the participant’s responses.

Table 9

*Question 5- Generation Y Employee Turnover*

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?</b>
1	Lack of respect Seeking higher salary
2	Not getting promoted Not able to acquire desired skills
3	Not getting promoted Do not feel engaged Do not feel like they are making a difference
4	Not appreciated/recognized Seeking higher salary
5	Not appreciated/recognized Not getting promoted
6	Better opportunities elsewhere Want to work for better companies
7	Not enough growth opportunities Not getting promoted
8	New businesses overseas seem more appealing Lack of diversity

As indicated in Table 9, the primary response from all participants centered around promotional and growth opportunities. Fifty percent of the participants believed that Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date because they are not getting promoted quickly enough and that there is a lack of promotional opportunities. Secondary responses included leaving to seek a higher salary or because they do not feel appreciated or recognized as an employee.

Question 6 revealed that 75% of participants indicated this was their first time to work for an aerospace company. Two Generation Y participants reported they had interned or had been employed with another aerospace company.

There were various responses to Research Question 7, “What influenced you to seek employment in the aerospace industry?” but there was not a single dominant reply. Approximately 40% of participants referenced college in their responses.

Question 8 showed that 75% of participants perceived a bias toward Generation Y employees within the aerospace industry. Participant #1 believed the older generations are more biased toward Generation Y because they are “set in their ways and do not want to learn anything new” and that the older generations do not want to be “passed up” [on promotions] by younger generations (personal communication, June 16, 2016).

Participant #3 stated that there is a bias from the industry but it is not directed toward the work environment. Instead, the bias from co-workers relates back to the misunderstanding that older generations have about Generation Y; for example, that “all we care about are creating groups and beanbag chairs” (personal communication, June 22, 2016). Participant #4 believed there is a bias toward Generation Y employees regarding how they should act in the workplace. Participant #6 thought a bias exists

among the co-workers of older generations because of their unwillingness to share their professional knowledge, and that they may come off as snobbish when asked questions by their Generation Y co-workers. Participant #8 stated that co-workers have specifically referred to them as a kid and that there is a lot of frustration revolving around this culture. Participant #8 added that Generation Y will “never be viewed as an equal” in the workplace (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

Question 9 revealed that only 50% of the interviewed participants believed there are professional growth opportunities at this aerospace company. Participants #2, 3, 5, and 7 provided additional thoughts that supported their beliefs. Participant #2 stated that if you “do your buy-in”, then promotions and opportunities will ensue (personal communication, June 18, 2016), and advised fellow Generation Y employees to not get frustrated so quickly. Participant #2 received a management position after six years with the company. Participant #3 stated that opportunities are available for diligent and hard-working Generation Y employees, and was promoted to a management position. Participant #5 agreed that professional growth opportunities are available, “but are really, really, really hard to get” (personal communication, June 18, 2016). Although opportunities are present, Participant #7 believed they are only available to the “really high achievers” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

Four participants (50%) believed that there are no professional growth opportunities. Participants #1, 4, 6, and 8 provided additional comments supporting their beliefs. Participant #1 stated there are corruption and personal favors among management when it comes to professional advancement and believed there is too much misconduct involved around promotions. Participant #4 thought it is too difficult to receive

promotions at this company, and Participant #6 stated that there are no professional growth opportunities because there is a current hiring freeze that includes promotions. Participant #6 also believed this hiring freeze shows a lack of company security. Participant #8 agreed there are no professional growth opportunities because corrupt managers find opportunities to hire their friends outside of the company, which does not allow the company to hire within; hence, no advancement.

Question 10 indicates that only half (50%) of the participants believed their current aerospace job has fulfilled their professional and personal expectations. Participants #2 and 5 believed their current employer has fulfilled their expectations. Participant #7 felt fulfilled “as of right now, but not last week” (personal communication, June 30, 2016); Participant #7 would have answered no a week prior, but recently received news of being accepted for an internal business training opportunity and announced, “I’ve been trying to get in for a while and I finally found out right before this interview that I got it” ((personal communication, June 30, 2016). Participant #8 stated their expectations prior to receiving their current employment was to “only find a job working 40 hours a week making money”, and “so with that said, yes, my expectations are met with my current job” (personal communication, June 30, 2016).

The remaining four participants (Participants #1, 3, 4, and 6) were not convinced their current aerospace employment had fulfilled their expectations. Participant #1 stated they hoped they would be further along in their career by now, reporting they had only received one promotion and one lateral move after six years of employment. Participant #3 believed their professional expectations were not currently being met due to a recent decrease in health and company retirement benefits. Also, Participant #3 stated there is



no camaraderie in the workplace and their current aerospace job responsibilities “do not allow for focusing on family” (personal communication, June 22, 2016). Participant #4 agreed they are not fulfilled completely, but that it has recently become better. Participant #6 strongly believed their current aerospace job is “a disappointment and a let-down” (personal communication, June 23, 2016).

Seventy-five percent of participants agreed that there is a large turnover of employees at their companies. They cited various reasons that members of Generation Y leave their jobs.

Participant #1 cited an archaic work environment with archaic practices, low salaries compared to competitors, radical decrease in health benefits package, and no growth opportunities. Participant #3 acknowledged that Generation Y employees were leaving because these particular jobs/job environments were not “measuring up” to employee expectations (personal communication, June 22, 2016). Participant #4 stated that employees were underpaid and not appreciated, and there was constant worry about job security and layoffs because the company had become less stable. Participant #6 stated Generation Y employees were leaving because there is “too much favoritism and artificial networking” to receive a fair promotion opportunity (personal communication, June 23, 2016). Participant #7 stated career progression was not as fast as they originally expected and also believed there is a lack of promotion opportunities. Participant #8 believed Generation Y employees were leaving because there were better paying jobs elsewhere, and that Generation Y prefers to live in a different geographic region (not Oklahoma).

All eight participants had entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this particular aerospace company. Moreover, all participants stated they have recently or are currently seeking other employment opportunities and available positions.

The final interview question indicated that 88% of participants would work for another company within the aerospace industry; however, one participant confirmed they would not want to work in the aerospace industry again.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

The findings of this research study provided various responses and perceptions of Generation Y employees at an Oklahoma aerospace company. As both the Generation Y employee population and the Oklahoma aerospace industry grow and expand, the need to understand Generation Y employee turnover within the Oklahoma aerospace industry is essential for the future success of both aerospace employee and employer. As Generation Y employee turnover steadily increases, Oklahoma aerospace companies must address and assess this employee turnover situation. This study gathered perceptions of eight Generation Y employees and analyzed the similarities and differences of their responses to the research questions. This chapter will summarize the employee responses and provide recommendations and suggestions for further research.

#### **Summation of Generation Y Employee Responses**

*Question 1. What are the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees and can the Oklahoma aerospace company accept and foster these generational aspirations?*

There were various responses related to the personal and professional aspirations of Generation Y employees; however, there was a prominent underlying theme—an increase in salary (more money). Inversely, in combination with Generation Y workplace

research and the interview responses regarding Generation Y turnover; the overarching theme was that Generation Y sought more recognition from their employer (including monetary recognition). Other responses from the employees included: (1) power, (2) achieving the highest power in the quickest amount of time, and (3) rise to power quickly. These responses were all variations regarding recognition.

Furthermore, in addition to the pursuit of recognition, Generation Y employees expect this recognition to occur as quickly as possible. According to a survey conducted by the Addison Group and Kelton, 40% of Millennials expect a promotion every one to two years (Maurer, 2015). This timeframe is faster than what other generations reported in this survey. The results from this Addison Group and Kelton survey are aligned with the promotional expectations and sentiment of Generation Y employed at the Oklahoma aerospace company.

*Question 2. Have Generation Y employees adversely affected employment measures (turnover and retention) within the Oklahoma aerospace company?*

The analyzed findings of Generation Y responses indicated this employee group adversely affected retention within this Oklahoma aerospace company. The majority of the interviewed employees agreed there is a significant amount of Generation Y employee turnover at this company. Moreover, 100% of participating employees had entertained the thought of seeking employment elsewhere; while the majority of respondents had actively applied at other companies.

*Question 3. What employment actions can the Oklahoma aerospace company introduce into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce?*

The Oklahoma aerospace company implements employment actions into the work environment to ensure and maintain a sufficient and productive Generation Y workforce by understanding generational aspirations and fostering issues relating to Generation Y employee turnover. The first step toward any solution is to identify and understand the problem. The findings of this study provide the employer with opportunities to guide that first step. Proposed recommendations for this Oklahoma aerospace company to aid in understanding and fostering the Generation Y employee-employer relationship are described below.

### **Recommendations**

After an analysis of the research findings, the following recommendations have been generated to address some of the underlying issues regarding Generation Y turnover in the workplace: (1) implementing an effective employee recognition system, and (2) educating and defining specific employee's expectations.

#### **Effective employee recognition system**

Recognition is defined by the Oxford University Press as “appreciation or acclaim for an achievement, service, or ability” (Recognition, n.d.). There is a significant difference in meaning between “recognition” and “incentives”. Incentives are defined by the Oxford University Press as “a thing that motivates or encourages one to do something” (Incentive, n.d.). Although this aerospace company did offer a variety of employee incentives, none of the interview participants commented on their effectiveness even though employee incentives and a recognition system were not included in the research questions. Nevertheless, to encourage top performance and productivity of Generation Y employees, this Oklahoma aerospace company must take a concerted look

at the effectiveness of their current incentive and recognition programs they offer to ensure they meet the needs of this generation. Bernstein (2011) states “people are pulled towards behaviors that offer positive incentives and pushed away from behaviors associated with negative incentives” and that these “differences in behavior from one person to another or from one situation to another can be traced to the incentives available and the value a person places on those incentives at the time” (p. 17).

The majority of responses given by Generation Y employees at this particular aerospace company related to expectations of a higher salary and promotion opportunities. This particular Oklahoma aerospace company did not have standardized promotion criteria for their employees, which resulted in Generation Y employee frustration regarding unfair promotions and management bias toward employees. A recommendation for this aerospace company would be to consider smaller, and more frequent, tier-level promotions and title changes, similar to the civilian step pay scale program utilized by the US Government; instead of the fixed, full-level pay scale and promotion option currently being used by the company. Ross (2013) states promotions are the most rewarding when the next step up does not seem too far out of reach. Studies also show that it is far less costly to promote from within, thus avoiding individual employee turnover and having to hire a new candidate to fill the same position (Sweeney, 2013). The latter scenario could cost a company as much as half of the employee’s salary after advertising, interviewing, and training are complete. By absorbing employee turnover instead of promoting from within, companies also lose several months of productivity. In addition to rebuilding the current promotion options, this aerospace company should utilize clear and concise criteria required for employee wage increases

and promotions. Lastly, the company must clearly define company and management expectations to eliminate all subjectivity related to wage increases and promotions.

In an interview conducted for the Harvard Business Review, sabbaticals were referred to as *Odyssey*. *Odyssey* stems from Generation Y's craving of new life experiences (hbr.com, 2016). Bennis & Thomas (2002) state that "employees cannot fully participate in organizational life if their most urgent needs are not being met" (p. 174). Sabbaticals affiliated with employee development are recognized as life needs of Generation Y. "People's lives have trajectories that don't always match those of the organizations they are in. The smartest institutions make accommodations" (Bennis & Thomas, 2002, p. 174). Often, sabbaticals prevent employee turnover, and in turn, develop leadership attributes. They also allow Generation Y employees the opportunity to explore other life aspirations such as entrepreneurship, community service and involvement, travel, and family.

### **Educate at all levels**

Regarding employee expectations, employers must be upfront during employee interviews and orientation about the competitive nature of promotion opportunities at this aerospace company. Even though this may dissuade many applicants from securing employment, the employees that accept a position will have clearly defined expectations, and possibly a higher level of company loyalty. When employers effectively communicate and educate their new workforce, it can prevent unnecessary employee turnover due to generational issues.

Furthermore, the aerospace company should consider developing and implementing an unpaid internship program for prospective employees. The company

will not be committed financially, and the intern employee benefits by earning college credit. Hence, the aerospace company assumes minimal risk regarding their payroll, especially if the intern does not meet company expectations for full-time employment, and a new generation of employees will gain work experience and an understanding of an aerospace company. Understandably, this is not a new business concept; however, this particular aerospace company was not utilizing the internship program while the researcher was conducting employee interviews.

The aerospace company must be consistent in explaining and enlightening Generation Y employees concerning feedback protocol and procedures and the value in productive feedback from the employer. Also, the company will need to respect and support Generation Y employees when they request employer feedback at regular interviews and demonstrate how Generation Y employees can better understand feedback and successfully use it to benefit their work performance (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009).

Furthermore, company management must clearly define that performance ratings do not translate to school grades. A satisfactory rating cannot and should not be translated to receiving a 'C' in school (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009). However, do share with employees that a small percentage of them will receive exceptional performance ratings because they were able to identify critical business goals and possibly provide business solutions that impacted the company's productivity and profitability. Lastly, management already expects their employees to perform their work duties diligently and consistently prior to receiving a promotion; therefore, the Generation Y employee cannot simply



perform their work responsibilities with minimal effort and, in return, expect an increase in salary or a promotion.

In an effort to further reduce attrition of Generation Y employees, it is important to educate the company's first-line managers regarding how Generation Y employees will process feedback, and propose that managers provide consistent, detailed, yet informal feedback more frequently. "Informal feedback is a key mechanism for a young worker's development and highly important to Gen Yers" (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009, p. 3).

BusinessInsider.com (2013) describes an "expectation gap" between managers and their employees, and found Generation Y employees had an overall positive view of their managers and believed they brought experience and wisdom to their workplaces. Contrarily, the managers in the same organization had an overall negative view of their Generation Y employees, saying they had unrealistic compensation expectations, a poor work ethic, and were easily distracted (Giang, 2013). Only half of all employees strongly agree to know what is realistically expected of them in the workplace (Hall, 2016).

Secondly, management should be willing to communicate the basic business and profit/loss lessons to their employees because these principles are not well understood by Generation Y. Managers are properly positioned to teach their Generation Y employees the broader contexts of business concerns, and the fact that companies exist to make a profit for shareholders, not merely to further employee development (Louie, Mulnix, & Nelson, 2009).

Lastly, most of the managers at this Oklahoma aerospace company began their career as a leveled-employee, so professional development of managing is an essential

step for an employee's professional growth. Many companies have employed working managers and a common complaint was they rarely had sufficient time to manage, and they often lose their passion to inspire other employees. Companies must be equipped to foster the professional growth of their managers, first by allowing managers time to engage and motivate employees and to continue to enhance their roles as successful managers. In addition, the company must be willing to provide management training seminars and educational resources.

### **Suggestions for further research**

Employees cannot be fully engaged in the workplace if their most urgent needs or aspirations are not being met by their employer (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). Companies need to constantly assess the objectives of their workforce, as well as utilize exit interviews to assess turnover reasons. From a research perspective, it would be beneficial to retain current company data in quantitative form and conduct periodic employee interviews. Any found similarities between employee aspirations and turnover reasons should be regarded as direct indicators of a failure point and require immediate company action. For example, if the overwhelming response (50% or higher) from Generation Y employee goals is to "make enough money to support my family", and the overwhelming response (50% or higher) of Generation Y employees as to why they left the company is "did not make enough money to support my family" (and found employment with satisfactory salaries at competing companies), then this defines a failure point of the company.

There were several contradictory responses from participating Generation Y employees regarding employee turnover and employee aspirations. One would infer that

the turnover and aspirations are relatable in a cause and effect correlation. For example, a reason an employee would terminate his employment (turnover) is because the job or company no longer satisfied his expectations; primarily, the lack of securing a higher salary. In turn, it could be assumed that this same employee would leave the company because a higher salary was not obtained or the employee was offered the higher salary at another company. However, the study showed that the responses to turnover and aspirations were not as causally related. Overall, the list of Generation Y turnover stated in the findings did not reflect or match item-to-item in the list of Generation Y aspirations. There was a sufficient amount of Generation Y turnover reasons that were not listed as a Generation Y personal or professional aspirations, such as: lack of respect, acquiring new skills, not feeling engaged, seeking employment at companies with new concepts, and seeking a diverse work environment. Therefore, additional research studies are needed to review and possibly redefine Generation Y personal characteristics and employee aspirations in the workplace to ensure accuracy and consistency to identify reasons for the increase in turnover of Generation Y employees. This exploration will simultaneously evaluate whether workplace issues are fundamentally Generation Y-driven or if they are actually company-driven issues (outdated company policies, managerial issues, etc.).

It would benefit companies to not only research their competitors in the same field, but to also research competitors that are attracting Generation Y. In a US News and World report titled “Best Companies for Generation Y Workers”, two technology companies, Qualcomm and Google, are ranked #1 and #2; however, three aerospace

companies—Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), Lockheed Martin Corporation, and Rockwell Collins Incorporated—are also on the list (Kurtzleben, 2012).

## **Conclusions**

An Oklahoma aerospace company is losing Generation Y employees due to unnecessary and preventable turnover. The majority of Generation Y employees interviewed for this study were dissatisfied and actively seeking employment opportunities elsewhere; several had recently submitted resumes to other companies and aerospace competitors. It will be ultimately up to the aerospace company as to how they react.

Generation Y has brought a new attitude to the workplace and created a major stir in the way employers hire and manage their workers. Conventional practices for hiring and retaining good employees doesn't work for this generation of job-hoppers whose criteria for selecting a job is so unique that employers are adopting a concierge mentality to appeal to them. (Fields, Wilder, Bunch, & Newbold, 2008, p. 203)

The Oklahoma aerospace company can indeed accept and foster these generational aspirations, mainly to acknowledge that Generation Y needs to be recognized (via promotion or a higher salary). The first step, like any other problem, is to identify and understand the problem. I believe this study can aid in understanding and preventing the turnover of Generation Y employees.

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## APPENDIX A

### Generation Y Workforce: *Interview Questions*

1. In what year were you born?
2. Is this your first full-time employment? If no, how many other full-time jobs have you had?
3. How would you describe the Generation Y employee? And what are the personal/professional aspirations (job satisfaction, money, power, etc.) of the Generation Y employee?
4. Do you believe your generation (Generation Y) is misunderstood and/or unappreciated as an employee or co-worker?
5. Why do you think 60 percent of Generation Y employees leave their current employment within three years after hire date?
6. How long have you worked for your current aerospace employer? Is this the first time you have worked in the aerospace industry?
7. What influenced you to seek employment in the aerospace industry?
8. Do you believe there is a bias towards Generation Y employees in the aerospace industry? If so, is this bias primarily coming from co-workers or your employer (supervisor/management)?
9. As a Generation Y employee, do you believe professional growth and promotional opportunity is possible with this aerospace company?

10. Overall, has this aerospace job fulfilled your professional and personal expectations?
11. Do you believe there is a large turnover of Generation Y employees within this aerospace company? If so, what concerns or issues are causing this high turnover rate?
12. Have you entertained the thought of looking for another job opportunity outside of this company? Would you consider working for another company within the aerospace industry?

## APPENDIX B

### Generational Differences in the Workplace - Interview

#### Consent to Participate

**Investigator:** Angela M. Thomas (B.A. Philosophy; M.S. Administration).

This interview is associated with named investigators' research dissertation in partial fulfillment to obtaining Doctorate of Education degree at Oklahoma State University.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to provide the airline industry informative data to better understand generational differences in the workplace. This is part of graduate-level research study. You are being asked to provide your experiences in the workplace as a Generation Y (born 1980-2000) employee.

**Procedures:** You are being asked to participate in an interview that should not last longer than 60 minutes. A series of questions will be asked to gather perspectives pertaining to working in the aerospace industry as a Generation Y employee. Interviews will be audio recorded.

**Risks to Participation:** It is not anticipated that you will suffer any risks of discomfort or inconvenience from this participation.

**Benefits:** No incentives will be provided for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:** If you consent to participate in this study, your name will not be asked during the interview and will not be associated with this project in any way.

All records from this study (including audio recordings and electronic documents) will be

kept private. Any written findings and results will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only the researcher overseeing the study will have access to these records. Audio recordings will be stored in a locked safe and destroyed 30 days after interview. All other data will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed. The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only the researcher responsible for research oversight will have access to the records.

**Participant Rights:** Your participation in this project is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your consent to participate in this project at any time. Any information you provide will remain confidential.

If you have any questions about this project, you may contact Angela M. Thomas at [burden10@hotmail.com](mailto:burden10@hotmail.com) or (405) 590-4108. In addition, you may contact the Advisor of this study, Dr. Timm Bliss, Professor of Aviation, Oklahoma State University at [timm.bliss@okstate.edu](mailto:timm.bliss@okstate.edu) or (405) 744-8062. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or [irb@okstate.edu](mailto:irb@okstate.edu).

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

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Print Name

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Signature of Participant

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Date

---

Signature

I certify that I personally explained this document before requesting that the prospective participant sign it.

---

Print Name

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature

VITA

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