

Generation Y: Why high expectations for pay and promotion

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Introduction

Generation Y is defined as anyone born between 1980 and 1995. They are the children of the baby boomers and as such, have grown up under very interesting circumstances. In their lifetime, they have already experienced unparalleled technological advancements and highs and lows in economic conditions. Previous research has shown that there are many differences between Generation Y and previous generations. One of these differences can be seen in their expectations for pay and promotion. Despite growing up in prosperous times until, very recently, Generation Y has much higher career expectations for pay and promotion than all previous generations (E.S.W. Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons 2010). However, what research has not shown us thus far are potential reasons why their expectations are so high.

Our research question was: "What factors contribute to Generation Y having high career expectations for pay and promotion?" We will attempt to explain this through four specific constructs: socio-economic status and family income, personal attributes (confidence, extraversion, work ethic, and independence), gender and lastly, education. The objective of this research study is to try to provide an explanation for these high expectations.

As the baby boomers slowly leave the workforce, organizations are slowly being forced to rely more heavily on their Generation Y employees. As this continues, they are going to have to begin to adapt and adhere accordingly if they hope to compete and recruit. This will likely have to include taking Generation Y's high expectations for pay and promotion into account. However, if the reasons behind these expectations are uncovered, it will be possible for organizations to attempt to find employees who may have lower expectations which could be extremely beneficial.

Generation Y in the Workplace

Life experiences shape who you are and what you value. Employees who grew up in different time periods would have different views, also known as the cohort effect (Glass, 2007, p.98). This theory can be applied to Generation Y in terms of what they expect. Past research has shown that Generation Y is the generation that "wants it all" and that "wants it now" (E.S.W. Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons 2010). This perception is related to their expectations in the work environment for good pay, benefits, rapid career advancement, work/life balance, interesting and challenging work, and making a contribution to society (E.S.W. Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons 2010). These career goals of Generation Y have also been viewed as being unrealistic in terms of being disconnected between rewards and their actual performance (E.S.W. Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons 2010).

Our research model outlines the relationship between our independent variables and dependent variable (Expectations). The independent variables in our model are family, personal attributes, gender, and education. We believe that these contribute to variations of expectations in the workplace as these factors shape who you are and what you value, based on your life experiences. Each of these factors is discussed below.

Figure 1:

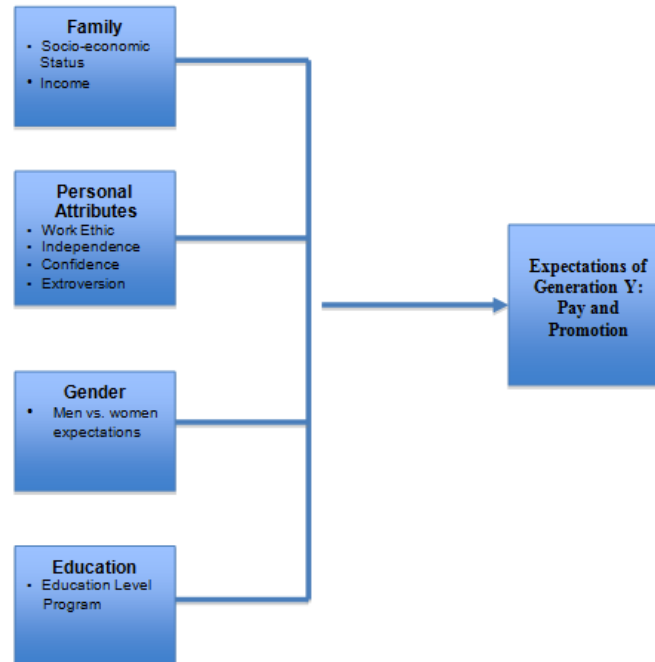


Figure 1 illustrates the factors we believe to be relevant to our dependent variable; expectations. Our literature review will provide reasons why these contributing factors; family, personal attributes, gender, and education affect ones expectations surrounding the workplace.

Family

Growing up, children are greatly influenced by their parents and can become accustomed to the lifestyle they were brought up in. For example, children who grow up in upper class families will be accustomed to wearing designer clothing, getting all the new gadgets, and enjoying yearly vacations. Although people from lower class families will want these same things, their expectations for achieving them may be lower as they never had them before. Previously, there has been little research done on the effect that family can have on expectations and is an area that needs to be explored more. This is not to say others haven't already theorized that family can have an effect on expectations. Research by Karen Myers and Kamyab Sadaghiani in 2010 have stated that

the parents of Generation Y valued their children's knowledge as consumers and involved them in many purchasing decisions, which has led to high expectations and achievement orientation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

Generation Y has grown up in a period of economic prosperity and only recently have they felt the effects of a recession. According to Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, this period of economic prosperity, in which Generation Y's parents were able to find work that was well paying, has also led to Generation Y's high expectations. Although we may believe that this most recent recession has given Generation Y a reality check and lowered their expectations. A study by Sara Hauw and Ans Vos in 2010 has proven that the most recent recession has not lowered Generation Y's expectations for pay and promotion. We hypothesize that the income of one's family will impact their salary expectations, i.e. one will want to maintain the lifestyle that they had growing up and will want a high paying job in order to maintain that lifestyle.

Personal Attributes

Each individual exposes varying personal attributes that make them who they are. In an organization these personalities will shine and will ultimately determine the expectations that they will have on their expected pay and promotion throughout their career paths. The personal attributes that we researched in our study were inspired by the traits found in the core self evaluation; locus of control, neuroticism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. We expanded on some of these traits by adjoining our logic of what attributes we believe will have a relationship with salary expectations. The attributes we chose to use in our model are; work ethic, independence, confidence, and extraversion. An individual who shows high levels of each personality trait are more likely to have higher expectations within their career endeavours. In contrast, an individual with low levels of each personality trait would essentially have the opposite effect.

Work Ethic - Work ethic refers to the attitudes and beliefs held by an individual towards work (Asaro Gonzalez, 2006). We believe work ethic to be an important attribute to expectations as those with a higher work ethic will have higher expectations than those with a low work ethic. Past research has shown that today's youth is lacking protestant work ethic (PWE). A research study from 1997 has shown that younger students hold PWE but older students are less likely to adopt it (Wentworth & Chell, 1997). One's work ethic can have a negative effect on an entire organization in terms of their behavior, job satisfaction, leadership, work commitment, motivation, and ultimately their career expectations (Wentworth & Chell, 1997). We can conclude that work ethic ultimately affects one's expectations and depending on the age of the student, will determine if those expectations are high or low.

Independence - Avolio et al. (2004, as cited in Twenge, 2002, p. 802) stated that "individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave" and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character "are authentic leaders. Young adults or Generation Y have been told by their elders that they can do anything" (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This has led to individuals rating themselves with higher levels of performance and believing that they deserve higher compensation. From this we can conclude that those with high levels of independence are going to have greater expectations with their career, in regards to pay and promotion.

Confidence - Seeing as a person's confidence has a direct relationship with an individual's self-esteem, for purposes of our study, we have linked them together. Self-esteem is one of the core self-evaluation personalities and is referred to as "the overall affective evaluation of one's own worth, value, or importance" (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991, p. 115, as cited by Twenge 2002). The confidence level that an individual may possess is positively related to their expectations regarding salary. In a previous study, Generation Y College men had significantly higher self-esteem than 86% of College men

in 1968 and the average mid-1990s College women has a higher self-esteem than 71% of Boomer College women (Twenge & Campbell, 2008) This study has shown that confidence is on the rise in Generation Y. It is causing younger workers to believe that they have many skills and talents that they indeed may not. (Twenge & Campbell, 2008) This can be damaging to an organization as this mindset can affect one's self-evaluation because they feel they deserve more than their performance reveals, with respect to pay and promotion. Based on logic and evidence, confidence within the Generation Y population is on the rise, which makes this attribute an important factor to examine for our study.

Extroversion - Extroversion is a personality attribute defined as having the following traits: being social, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Hogan (1986) states that this dimension consists of two components: ambition and social ability (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Extroversion is related to our model in that we believe those that are more assertive, take risks and are more ambitious will be more likely to have high expectations for promotion and pay. Extroverts take a more individualistic approach, meaning they portray a "win at all costs" attitude (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). The employees of today are more likely to take greater risks and want to be known and rewarded for thinking outside of the box in comparison to previous generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). This is causing higher competition, more creativity and innovation within the generation of today (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Extroverts have their minds set on a particular output and are willing to take risks in getting their desired outcome. Our exploratory research will attempt to see if extroverts will push for higher pay and quicker promotions. Ambition is a common attribute that is parallel to extroversion. Those who have a high level of ambition will be more likely to portray extroversion characteristics such as taking initiative, acting more on impulse, and be generally more hot headed (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Extroverts may have more drive to succeed and be "better" than an individual who is more

reserved and withdrawn.

Gender

We feel that gender is an important part of our model as a lot of previous research supports the fact that men tend to have higher pay expectations than women (Major, 1984). As a result, in our study we think that we will likely also find that women have lower expectations than men. Research completed by Brenda Major in 1984 supports this idea. She investigated differences in personal entitlement in respect to monetary payment for work performed (Major, 1984). The hypothesis was that "women's internal standards of fair pay would be lower than men's" (Major, 1984). Two experiments were conducted to prove this. In the first, both men and women were asked to pay themselves in both private and public situations for a fixed amount of work. In the second, both men and women were asked to do as much work as they thought was fair for a fixed, prepaid amount of money in both public and private work settings (Major, 1984). They were not aware of whether they were monitored or not (Major, 1984). The results found that women paid themselves less than men in private situations, but not with social comparison (Major, 1984).

We also wanted to research reasons why women's standard of pay is lower than men's. Research by Beth-Ann Martin in 1989 investigates this idea. Specifically, she investigated why women have lower initial salary expectations than men (Martin, 1989). The hypothesis was that gender differences in knowledge of current salary levels accounts for gender differences in pay expectations, especially in career fields that have been long dominated by men. There should be no gender difference in their pay expectations when men and women are equally provided current and accurate salary information (Martin, 1989). A four-part questionnaire was administered to a sample of University business students of equal amounts of men and women (Martin, 1989). The results showed that in spite of being provided with current salary information, women still

expected to earn less money (Martin, 1989). Overall, both of these studies prove that gender is a significant factor in pay expectations.

Education

Education is an important factor that causes Generation Y to have higher salary and promotion expectations than older generations. Generation Y are the most education-minded generation in history (Nimon, 2010). The main influence is being raised by Baby Boomer parents who value education and a labour market that demands it to gain well-paying work (Nimon, 2010). Most of Generation Y recognizes that the key to their success is a high level degree (Tulgan & Martin, 2008). Generation Y has been in the education system longer than any prior generation. They have devoted four or more years to studying, pouring thousands and thousands of dollars into their education. Even more than their elders. Generation Y believe that they are talented and their knowledge and skills are worth more money (King, 2010). They have the perception that a higher education will lead them to a better professional situation (Martin, 2010). Earning an educational degree will increase the earning potential; in their lifetime, people who graduate from higher education programs will earn almost twice as much as those with only a high school diploma (Johnson, 2011). A higher educational level is expected to lead to high wages and good quality jobs. Education might also increase expectations for both wages and job features (Albert, 2005).

Generation Y has been inspired by their boomer parents to value education. They have been raised with a high expectation of achievement (Sheahan, 2010). Before graduating from College or University it is common to have several jobs and volunteer projects on ones resume (Hira, 2009). There is no denying they are well trained, however they have come to expect constant learning experiences, new challenges, and a steady diet of meaningful input (Cohen, 2011). Generation Y are known for their ability to multitask. They seek out creative challenges and

view colleagues as vast resources from whom to gain knowledge (Spiro, 2011). It is important for employers to continue giving them challenging projects in order to prevent boredom and attrition (Spiro, 2011). Generation Y is a group of adaptable and fast learners. They are the most educated of all the generations and they enjoy the process of learning, shown in their keenness to master new processes and programs. Workplace training and development is very important and, in fact, often demanded as a part of their work conditions (Gibbs, 2011). This desire for knowledge and ability to adjust makes Generation Y ideal for the ever-changing business environment (Gibbs, 2011).

Methodology

Sample

Data was collected from current University students, the majority being from University of Guelph, and ranging from first to fourth year. University students were recruited through convenience sampling; family, friends, peers, and fellow classmates. Students were approached to participate in the study through Facebook, email (Hotmail, Gryph mail), as well as word of mouth from friends whom had completed the survey. Quota sampling was used in attempt to have equal participation rate between both genders (50 males and 50 females). There were 160 participants in the study but 5 were eliminated due to not attending university, as it was required for research purposes since the focus was on higher expectations among university students only. The outcome of the 155 participants was 56 males and 99 females; although this number is not even this is a representative sample of the female dominant population at the University of Guelph.

Measures

A survey was constructed consisting of 24 questions. Questions were based on a five-point likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree) or in multiple-choice form. Questions in the survey revolved around our four relevant constructs; family, personal attributes,

gender, and education

Family was measured with three questions. The first pertaining to socio-economic status growing up, "which of the following best describes your family's socio-economic status when you were growing up?" This question was as we hypothesized that family income affected one's salary expectation. Father and mother's average annual income, "what is your mother/father's approximate yearly income?" was asked in the form of salary range: below \$ 20 000, 20 000 ó 39 999, \$ 40 000 ó 59 999, \$ 60 000 ó 79 999, \$ 80 000 ó 99 999, above \$ 100 000 or no answer.

Personal Attributes were measured using eight, 5-point likert scale questions (1 being strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree). Questions were based around work ethic, independence, confidence, and extroversion. Such questions included rating one's initiative to start assignments at work and at school, independence, confidence, social abilities, working in groups, and group contribution.

Gender was measured with the simple question of selecting one's gender. One's gender would be compared based on answers such as initial salary, salary at 2-5 years, and at peak. Predicting that women would have lower expectations than men made it necessary to ask one's gender in order to compare responses for salary questions.

Education was measured by splitting respondents up by major. Participants were also asked to select from a range what their estimated overall academic average, or GPA was. The final question to measure education was future plans for education; none, grad school, masters, PHD, or other.

Procedure

The survey was prepared online through Lime Survey, which allowed for our participants to complete the survey on their own time when convenient. An online survey was also used in

attempt to have the highest number of respondents and to avoid losing any results. Data were cleaned; respondents who answered no to attending University were removed. Data were then analyzed using a Pearson correlation matrix. The matrix outlined significant findings using a coefficient 0.05 and 0.01, with 0.01 being more statistically significant and was two-tailed.

Results

Family

There was a positive significant correlation between socio-economic status and Generation Y's expected starting salary ($r=.21, p<.01$), expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=.273, p<.01$), and expected peak salary ($r=.232, p<.01$ level). There was no significant correlation between family socio-economic status and Generation Y's expectations for promotion. There was a positive significant correlation between mother's yearly income and Generation Y's expected starting salary ($r=.245, p<.01$), expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=.584, p<.01$), and expected peak salary ($r=.247, p<.01$). There was also a positive significant correlation between father's yearly income and Generation Y's expected starting salary ($r=.184, p<.05$), expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=.209, p<.01$), and expected peak salary ($r=.230, p<.01$). Mother's yearly income had a stronger correlation with each question. There was no significant correlation between mother or father's wage and Generation Y's expectations for promotion.

Personal Attributes

Expected peak salary was significantly correlated with work ethic in school for a positive correlation of ($r=.215, p<.01$). There was a positive significant correlation between work ethic at work and expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=.429, p<.01$), and expected peak salary ($r=.258, p<.01$). There was no significant correlation between work ethic and Generation Y's expectations for promotion. There was a positive significant correlation between independence and expected

salary after 2-5 years ($r=.193, p<.05$), and expected peak salary ($r=.274, p<.01$). No significant correlation between independence and Generation Y's expectations for promotion. There was a positive significant correlation between confidence and expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=.178, p<.05$), and expected peak salary ($r=.293, p<.05$). No significant correlation between confidence and Generation Y's expectations for promotion. Extroversion had a positive significant correlation with expected peak salary ($r=.176, p<.05$). There was no significant correlation between extroversion and Generation Y's expectations for promotion.

Gender

There was a negative significant correlation between gender; female, and expected salary after 2-5 years ($r=-.229, p<.05$), and expected peak salary ($r=-.274, p<.05$), indicating that females have lower expectations than males. There was no significant correlation between gender and Generation Y's expectations for promotion.

Education

For the expected starting salary, majority of Arts students (31.25%) choose \$30,000-\$39,999. The respondents from the Commerce major (36.54%) choose \$40,000-\$49,999. There was 20% of Social Science students, expecting \$30,000-\$39,999, and another 20% expecting \$40,000-\$49,999. Most students from the Humanities major (36.36%) choose \$30,000-\$39,999. Physical Science students (30.77%) expected \$30,000-\$39,999. There were 25% Engineering students that choose \$20,000-\$29,999, 25% choose \$30,000-\$39,999, 25% choose \$50,000-\$59,999, and another 25% of choose \$80,000-\$89,999. These results showed that students from Commerce and Engineering have higher starting salary expectations than students from other majors.

For the expected salary after 2-5 years, Arts students (25%) expected \$40,000-\$49,999.

Majority of Commerce students (28.85%) choose \$60,000-\$69,999. The respondents from Social Science (24%) expect \$50,000-\$59,999. The choice that most students in Humanities (36.36%) expect is \$40,000-\$49,999. Most Physical Science students (26.92%) expect \$50,000-\$59,999. There were 25% of Engineering students who choose \$30,000-\$39,999, 25% choose \$40,000-\$49,999, 25% choose \$60,000-\$69,999, and another 25% choose \$100,000-\$109,999. These results showed that students from Commerce and Engineering have higher expectations for salary after 2-5 years.

For the expected peak salary, Arts students (31.25%) choose \$80,000-\$89,999. Commerce students (25%) expected above \$120,000. There were 16% of Social Science students that choose \$70,000-\$79,999, and another 16% choose \$90,000-\$99,999. There were 18.18% of Humanities students expect \$50,000-\$59,999, 18.18% expect \$60,000-\$69,999, 18.18% expect \$70,000-\$79,999, 18.18% expect \$80,000-\$89,999, and another 18.18% of students in Humanities expect \$90,000-\$99,999. There were 23.08% of Physical Science students that choose \$80,000-\$89,999, and another 23.08% choose \$100,000-\$109,999. Most Engineering students (50%) expect above \$120,000. These results showed that Commerce and Engineering students expected higher peak salary than students in other majors. There was a positive significant correlation between academic average and Generation Y's expected starting salary (0.280, significant to the 0.01 level), expected salary after 2-5 years (0.334, significant to the 0.01 level), and expected peak salary (0.233, significant to the 0.01 level).

Discussion

We can conclude that family, gender, education, and personal attributes (confidence, independence, work ethic and extroversion) are contributing factors to Generation Y's high expectations for pay. The results from our survey indicate that all of our constructs do contribute to

high expectations in salary and pay, but not promotion. As expected, we found significant correlations between our constructs and entry salary expectations, salary after 2.5 years, and peak salary. However, there was no indication that any of our constructs contribute to high expectations in promotion.

Family

Our survey allows us to conclude that the higher that your socio-economic status is growing up, the higher your salary expectations will be throughout your career. For managers, this means that a person who has a low socio-economic status growing up could likely be hired on and retained for less money than a similar person who has a higher socio-economic status growing up, as they would have lower expectations. Our results also let us conclude that the higher your parents' salaries are, the higher your salary expectations will be throughout your career. Again, for managers this means that a person whose parents had lower salaries growing up could likely be hired and kept content throughout their career for less money than someone whose parents had higher salaries growing up, as they have lower expectations. Lastly, we found that the mother's salary has a significantly higher impact on pay expectations than the father's for starting salary, salary after 2.5 years, and also peak salary. This simply means that managers could ultimately spend less money to hire and retain an employee whose mother had a higher salary growing up versus an employee whose father had a higher salary growing up, as they would have lower expectations. Most of these results were as we expected, as it proved that family does have an effect on pay expectations. However, one very interesting piece of information gained was that the mother's salary has more of an impact on expectations than the father's. We found no indication of an effect on promotion.

Personal Attributes

Our results let us conclude that people who work very hard in school and have a good work ethic have higher expectations for pay after 2-5 years and at the peak in their career vs. people with a poor work ethic. For managers, this means that a person with a high work ethic costs more to hire and retain throughout their careers as they have higher expectations. Our survey also tells us that independent people have higher expectations for pay after 2-5 years and at the peak in their career vs. dependent people. This means that independent people ultimately cost organizations more to hire and retain as they have higher expectations. We also discovered that confident people will expect higher salaries after 2-5 years and at the peak in their career vs. unconfident people. Again, for managers this means that a confident person will ultimately cost more to hire and retain throughout their careers because of higher expectations. Lastly, our survey showed that extroversion causes higher expectations at the peak of their career. This implies that extroverts will cost more for an organization to retain during the peak of their career than introverts as they have higher expectations. These results were expected as it proves that all of these personal attributes cause higher pay expectations. None of these attributes had a significant effect on promotion.

Gender

From our results, we can also conclude that women have lower expectations for pay after 2-5 years and at peak salary. For managers, this means that males will cost more to retain throughout their careers than females as they have higher expectations. These results were as expected, as it proves that males do have higher expectations for pay. Gender did not have a significant impact on promotion.

Education

Our survey tells us that Humanities graduates have the lowest expectations for pay throughout their entire careers compared to other University graduates. Therefore, these students

will cost less to hire and retain throughout their careers as they have lower expectations. We also discovered that graduates with Bachelor of Arts, Social or Physical Science degrees will have relatively low salary expectations throughout their entire careers compared to other University graduates. Again, this tells us that these students will cost less for organizations to hire and retain throughout their careers because of low expectations. We also concluded that Commerce graduates will have the highest expectations for pay throughout their entire careers than any other University graduate. This implies that commerce students will be the most expensive University graduates to hire and retain throughout their careers due to very high expectations. Students currently completing Engineering degrees all had vastly different salary expectations and this made it extremely difficult to make any solid conclusions. Overall, these results were relatively unsurprising. However, we did expect that Engineering students would potentially have salary expectations closer to Commerce students. No significant connections could be made between academic majors and promotion.

Limitations and Conclusions

Previous research has concluded that there are higher expectations for pay and promotion within the Generation Y population. The main objective in this study was to explore the factors that contribute to Generation Y having higher expectations. We focused on what may have caused these higher expectations seeing as it is important for employers and human resource departments to understand these factors; how they can account for them in the workplace, and make a smooth working environment. In general, the factors that we predicted to have a significant effect on Generation Y having higher expectations for pay and promotion were proven to.

First off, family socio-economic status has a direct correlation with Generation Y's expectations, because those individuals will have expectations based on their past lifestyle they

have been provided with. Personal attributes play an important role in one's expectations, in that individuals with stronger personality traits will have higher expectations for themselves and within their careers, specifically on pay and promotion. Generation Y individuals are generally a more educated population, and education showed to be an important factor on pay throughout one's entire career. Our research backs up previous research highlighting that women still have lower pay expectations than men within the Generation Y population. Employers and human resource departments are able to use this information in order to create evaluation procedures and retain employees.

Although our study did gather some useful conclusions there were some limitations due to time constraints and limited resources. Our study found many findings regarding Generation Y's high expectations for pay, however, it lacked findings concerning Generation Y's promotion expectations. Since the factors that we chose for our study had a poor correlation to promotion, a suggestion for future research would be studying other factors that may have a better explanation for higher promotion expectations.

Another goal of our study was to look at the varying expectations within different academic majors. Due to the limited time given to complete this study we used convenience sampling and this made it difficult to gather an even amount of participants from each academic major category. Since there were such uneven amounts of people within each major it made it difficult to draw accurate and useful conclusions. A proposal for future research would be to put emphasis on gathering a specific quota of participants within each academic major and to research if there is a difference in pay and promotion expectations between individuals in each (i.e. do engineers have higher expectations than commerce students).

In our study, majority of the participants were University of Guelph students. Recruiting

Guelph students was easier; we were able to recruit individuals from our classes as well as our own friends. This placed a limitation on our research in that it is not representative of the University population as a whole. It may be a good idea for future research to expand to other Universities and draw conclusions from a larger student population. Another limitation that we ran into with our study was the female to male ratio; with our sample size of 155 participants 99 were female and 56 were male. This is very representative of the University population, being female dominated. If future research were to expand to other Universities, they may be able to reach the quota of more balanced male and female participants.

Our study strictly included Generation Y University students. We believe with more time and resources it would also be useful to look at Generation Y College students. Universities and Colleges are becoming close ties with one another and are competitors in the job market. Comparing expectations of College students to what we found would be a beneficial study to conduct.

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