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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE EXIT INTERVIEW:  
MILLENNIALS' PERSPECTIVES ON WHY THEY QUIT

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Hannah Bateman

December, 2014

James DellaNeve, Ed.D. — Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to myself. Although I had to travel a long and lonesome road to get here, the journey was worthwhile. I was able to walk a path that God laid out for me and drive my dissertation from conception to completion with purpose and passion.

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## ABSTRACT

Millennials, individuals born approximately between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2000) are on average, quitting their jobs within 3 years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Their short job tenure not only impacts organizations negatively (Phillips & Connell, 2003), but it also influences how the Millennials are portrayed in the media. Public perceptions assert (although not supported by substantial evidence) that Millennials quit their jobs because they lack loyalty and have a poor work ethic (Marston, 2013), have extreme confidence in their abilities (Howe and Strauss, 2000), make inappropriate work demands (Erickson, Alsop, Nicholson, & Miller, 2009), and possess high expectations for work (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009) such as flexibility and rapid career growth. Given these are mere assertions, a qualitative study utilizing a phenomenological approach was undertaken to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective. The purpose of the study was to discover the reasons why Millennials chose to quit their former jobs and subsequently, what it means to them when they leave an organization. Interviews were conducted with 25 Millennial college graduates (Bachelors degree or higher) who have quit one or more jobs within 5 years of being hired. A major finding from the study was that Millennials decided to join an organization for many of the same reasons they decided to leave it. Compensation, location, opportunity to learn and pursue a career that corresponds to their college degree, flexible work schedule, work environment, and job responsibilities were among many of the reasons cited by the research participants regarding their decisions to join and/or leave an organization. There was a gap that existed between what they perceived the organization would offer them before they joined the organization and their actual assessment of and experience in the environment after they began working there. This discrepancy is the primary cause of the voluntary turnover amongst the

Millennials that participated in the study and speaks to the essence of how Millennials are experiencing their organizations.

## **Chapter 1. The Problem**

The Millennial generation is rising (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials, people born between 1982 and 2002, make up over 25% of the total U.S. population and are now the largest population subgroup, with about 79 million members (Hobart & Sendek, 2009), outnumbering about 78 million Baby Boomers (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007) and approximately 48 million Generation Xers (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2000). As a group of technology planners, community shapers, institution builders, and world leaders, Millennials are capable of becoming the next great generation and changing America's future (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to Howe and Strauss (2000), colleges and universities will transform the old Boomer-era campuses to match the Millennial life experience; dating will be revitalized; the term middle class will take on a whole new meaning; and the workplace will undergo a drastic change. For the past few decades, companies have been preparing for the arrival of the Millennials (Smith & Galbraith, 2012). Determining what type of compensation, rewards, recognition, or other incentives Millennials expect their employers to provide in exchange for their services has been placed high on an organization's agenda (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011). Now that Millennials account for approximately 10% to 15% of the U.S. labor force (Bannon et al., 2011), employers realize that additional adjustments are necessary to meet the needs and expectations of a new generation of employees (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Smith & Galbraith, 2012).

The Millennial generation is entering the workplace with needs and expectations that are changing the way organizations conduct business (Bannon et al., 2011; Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Organizations such as Morningstar, Google, and Orbitz have successfully created work environments conducive to Millennials, and as a result of adjusting

their organizational practices to accommodate the needs and expectations of a new generation of workers, Morningstar and Google employ the largest amount of Millennials for the longest period of time (Bannon et al., 2011). While these companies have a proven track record of attracting and retaining Millennials (Bannon et al., 2011), most companies are losing billions of dollars because of the high turnover of workers in the Millennial generation (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

Ever since the first group of college-educated Millennials entered the workplace in 2004 (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), organizations have experienced greater employee turnover (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). The high voluntary turnover of Millennials conveys a message to employers that Millennials are less loyal to organizations than were previous generations (Bannon et al., 2011) and that their loyalty is earned—not inherently given (Hulett, 2006). Companies that make Millennials feel valued, looked after, and appreciated (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010) may be able to lower their turnover of Millennials because Millennials are “loyal to organizations that are loyal to them” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 220). Considering that Millennials will dominate the workforce for the next 20 years or more (Behrens, 2009; Hobart & Sendek, 2009), organizations face the challenge of developing Millennials into long-term employees (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

### **Background of the Problem**

A generational shift is occurring within organizations (Swiggard, 2011). An estimated 77.7 million Baby Boomers (people born between 1943 and 1960; Strauss & Howe, 1991) are approaching retirement, and 79.5 million Millennials are entering the workplace (Hobart & Sendek, 2009). Due to the fact that the number of Generation Xers (people born between 1961 and 1980; Strauss & Howe, 1991) is relatively smaller (Bannon et al., 2011) with only 49 million



members (Carver & Candela, 2008), Millennials are in high demand in the labor force (Bannon et al., 2011). As the demographics in the workplace continue to change, the competition is intensifying among organizations to recruit and *retain* the best-qualified applicants of the Millennial generation to assume positions currently held by Baby Boomers and Generation Xers (Blackman, 2006; Boswell, Roehling, LePine, & Moynihan, 2003; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Leary, Lindholm, Whitford, & Freeman, 2002; Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010; Thomas & Wise, 1999). Given the war for talent (Michaels et al., 2001), emerging as an employer of choice can help a company gain a competitive advantage (Herman & Gioia, 2000). However, when Millennials decide to leave an organization within 3 years of being hired (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012), it is difficult for that organization to stay ahead of the competition. Defining an employer of choice as “any employer of any size in the public, private, or not-for-profit sector that attracts, optimizes, and holds top talent for long tenure . . . because the employees choose to be there” (Herman & Gioia, 2000, p. xi), speaks to the importance of employers identifying what drives Millennials’ decisions to join and stay with an organization.

A study on job-choice decisions suggests that before job seekers decide to join an organization they make a series of decisions throughout the recruitment process based on their level of attraction to the job and organization (Boswell et al., 2003). Research on Millennials’ perception of fit (Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007) supports the claim made by Boswell et al. (2003) that individuals are inclined to pursue and accept jobs at companies where they perceive a strong organizational attraction. Specifically, Millennials choose to work at organizations that provide continuous job development and training, meaningful and challenging work experiences, work-life balance, rapid career advancement opportunities, and social

connections (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fonner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness, Melinsky, Buff, & Seifert, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Millennials also show more interest in working at an organization that supports innovation (Martin, 2005), offers tangible and intangible rewards (Hewlett, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2009), provides open communication and frequent feedback (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010), and utilizes cutting-edge technologies (Bannon et al., 2011; Martin, 2005). Although understanding the factors that influence the decisions of younger applicants can help determine their level of attraction to an organization (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001; Boswell et al., 2003; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Terjesen et al., 2007) and subsequently, their intent to pursue a job or accept a job offer with a particular employer (Boswell et al., 2003; Terjesen et al., 2007), such knowledge does not explain why Millennials choose to quit their jobs.

Little research exists on the role that organizations play in Millennials' decisions to leave. Terjesen et al. (2007) suspect that the way Millennials perceive the presence of job and organizational attributes during recruitment compared to their assessment of the actual attributes during their tenure at a particular organization may impact their perception of fit. Person-organization fit (P-O fit) "offers an explanation of how applicants make decisions about their job choice" (Ng & Burke, 2005, p. 1197). Generally, when individuals perceive a fit between their values and an organization's values, they may choose to apply for a job and/or accept a job offer (Ng & Burke, 2005). A strong P-O fit may help to reduce the high voluntary turnover of Millennials. For example, Van Vianen (2000) found that turnover intentions are low when newcomers to an organization and their supervisors share a similar concern for people. Research suggests that Millennials perceive a fit between themselves and an organization when the job and organizational attributes they desire are present during recruitment (Terjesen et al., 2007), but

additional research is needed to determine how Millennials assess fit after they are hired. Ultimately, employers may improve their organization's stability if they understand why their employees chose to join their organizations instead of their competitors' and why those employees choose to stay even when presented with other opportunities (Herman & Gioia, 2000).

Achieving workplace stability through the long-term employment of Millennials is a challenge for employers (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Since entering the workplace, Millennials have demonstrated significantly less job stability than previous generations (Bannon et al., 2011). For example, 36% of Baby Boomers expect to remain with their current employer for the rest of their working life, and 62% of Generation Xers say it is likely they will never leave their current employers, while nearly 57% of younger workers believe it is not likely that they will remain with their current employer for the rest of their life (Kohut et al., 2010). While Generation Xers are less loyal to organizations than Baby Boomers (Twenge, 2010), both Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are generally more loyal to organizations than Millennials (Bannon et al., 2011). In addition to having a greater propensity to quit their jobs than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, Millennials are more likely to have multiple jobs and careers (Bannon et al., 2011; Hulett, 2006). According to research, Millennials do not expect to remain with one employer for the duration of their careers (Bannon et al., 2011; Hulett, 2006; Oliver, 2006). On average, younger workers age 25-34 remain with the same employer for 3.2 years, less than one-third the time of older workers age 55 and over (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). Similarly, a study conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) found that only 18% of the 4,364 university graduates surveyed expected to stay with their current employer for the long term and that 25% expected to have six or more employers over their life span ("Millennials at Work," 2011). Based on the aforementioned findings, the high voluntary turnover of Millennials

is problematic given that the future success of organizations will depend on the skills and competencies of the Millennial generation (Blackman, 2006; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012; Leary et al., 2002; Ng et al., 2010).

Voluntary turnover of Millennials is distressful for organizations that put a great deal of time, effort, and money into recruiting them (Hobart & Sendek, 2009). For instance, Hobart and Sendek (2009) note that voluntary turnover can cost an organization at least 25% of an employee's annual compensation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics. Research suggests that managers can reduce voluntary turnover of Millennials by utilizing the latest technology; providing adequate training, development, and clear work expectations; offering rewards programs and flexible work schedules; and nurturing open and positive relationships in a team-oriented environment (Gordon, 2010; Martin, 2005; Yeaton, 2008). Additionally, properly utilizing the skills and talents of Millennials can help employers reduce turnover (Martin, 2005). Ultimately, the Millennials' belief in having multiple jobs and careers (Bannon et al., 2011; Hulett, 2006) suggests that their voluntary turnover will persist ("Millennials at Work," 2011) until companies find a way to resolve their short-term job tenure (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

### **The Problem Statement**

Organizations will undergo a drastic shift in employees entering and leaving the workplace; by 2020, most large organizations will have lost 30%-40% of their current workers due to the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation (Orrell, 2008), and Millennials will make up 46% of the workforce (Lynch, 2008). The departure of an aging workforce has created a crisis in organizations striving to recruit *and* retain Millennials (Ng et al., 2010). After spending large sums of money to recruit Millennials, organizations still face the challenge of retaining them

(Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). The main problem is that Millennials have a propensity to quit their jobs shortly after being hired (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Because voluntary turnover of Millennials is costly (Hobart & Sendek, 2009) and likely to increase as economic conditions improve (“Millennials at Work,” 2011), the high voluntary turnover of Millennials is a phenomenon that needs to be explored.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials’ perspective to discover why they chose to quit their former jobs. Additionally, the study will look for ways employers can influence Millennials to remain with their organizations for longer than their current three-year average. Utilizing a phenomenological approach to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials, personal stories, feelings, experiences, and insights of Millennials will be examined with the goal of uncovering trends that have not been widely explored. This exploration of the personal perceptions and lived experiences of Millennials who have voluntarily quit one or more jobs aims to fill a gap in the literature, which has not examined the experience of voluntary turnover from the Millennials’ perspectives. The study also seeks to provide human resources professionals and business leaders with recommendations to help them increase their retention of Millennials, and subsequently, transform their organizations image from a boring place to work to an employer of choice for the Millennial generation (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Lastly, a better understanding of Millennials is needed to inform organizations of the best means to recruit and retain the newest generation entering the workplace (Luscombe, Lewis, & Biggs, 2013).

## **Significance of Topic**

The study is important and timely because exploring the experience of voluntary turnover from the perspective of the Millennials will contribute empirical research on this generation in the workplace, a topic that has garnered a great deal of attention in popular literature and popular press (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Additionally, the study will either support or refute the claims that “Millennials are uninterested in a job for life” (Oliver, 2006, p. 62); “They are not overly loyal to any organization” (Yeaton, 2008, p. 68); “They are interested in how [a] job will help them build immediate skills” (Hulett, 2006, p. 17); and that Millennials view long-term as 1 year (Martin, 2005). Questions to be answered include: “Will the Millennials’ presence in the workplace present strategic challenges for managers?” (Eisner, 2005, p. 1) and “How do the characteristics of Millennials impact leadership strategies?” (Hobart & Sendek, 2009, p. 67). Another reason this study is significant is because research has not fully explored how an organization’s internal factors, such as work environment and job and organizational attributes, impact Millennials and their loyalty to organizations. A greater understanding of Millennials’ perception of loyalty may help organizations reduce their voluntary turnover. Furthermore, this study is significant because managers and professionals in human resources will learn why Millennials quit their jobs and what they can do to increase their retention of a new generation of employees. Having such knowledge enables organizational leaders to effect change within their organizations instead of being affected by change (Hobart & Sendek, 2009). Specifically, employers can develop recruitment and retention strategies that decrease the costs of hiring and training new employees due to voluntary turnover.

## Research Questions

Creswell (2007) recommends that a researcher limit a qualitative study to one overarching question and several subquestions. The overarching central research question that will be answered in the study is: *What does it mean to Millennials when they quit their jobs?* In addition to the central research question, the following subquestions will be answered:

Q1. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers?

Q2. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers?

Q3. What do Millennials think about loyalty to employers?

Q4. To what degree do an organization's attributes influence Millennials perception of fit?

The research questions are designed to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. Ultimately, the aforementioned research questions will serve as a guide for the research methods selected for the study.

## Key Definitions

The definitions below are associated with Millennials and their experiences in the workplace.

*Empirical studies or research.* "The most powerful evidence. These studies are theory-driven and rely on sound social scientific methods. They are either peer-reviewed or were the basis of dissertations or theses, and therefore subject to expert scrutiny. They are the fewest in number" (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 226).

*Employer of choice.* "Any employer of any size in the public, private, or not-for-profit

sector that attracts, optimizes, and holds top talent for long tenure . . . because the employees choose to be there” (Herman & Gioia, 2000, p. xi).

*Employee retention.* “The percentage of employees remaining in the organization” (Phillips & Connell, 2003, p. 2).

*Employee turnover.* “The percentage of employees leaving an organization for whatever reason(s)” (Phillips & Connell, 2003, p. 2). Turnover can also be viewed as “voluntary and involuntary permanent withdrawal from an organization” (Robbins & Judge, 2011, p. 25).

*Generational cohort.* People whose birth years fall within a 20-year span belong to a generational cohort (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

*Baby Boomers.* People born between 1943 and 1960 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

*Generation Xers.* People born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

*Millennials.* People born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

*Involuntary turnover.* Occurs when the organization terminates the agency between an employee by either firing or laying them off (Selden & Moynihan, 2000).

*Job choice.* The decision-making process that prospective applicants engage in at various stages of recruitment (Barber, 1998).

*Organizational attraction.* “An attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the [organization] as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship” (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001, p. 221).

*Person organization fit (P-O fit).* “The compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 2).

*Popular press.* “Online articles and blogs, newspaper articles, and non-expert magazine



columns. While these might allude to surveys or empirical studies, they are primarily entertainment-focused and should not be considered as substantive evidence of differences among the generations . . . These sources are most common, but they are the least reliable” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 226).

*Popular literature.* “Books and articles that are written for trade and other audiences. These works base their claims on secondary research including surveys and even more empirical studies. The credibility of the sources is somewhat suspect because the authors/organizations may not be trained in empirical methods and data interpretation. Furthermore, the authors/organizations are driven by sales of their books, reports, and magazines so their claims and conclusions can be overstated” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 226).

*Popular perception.* “Stereotypes and prejudice based on popular press and popular literature and not supported by substantial evidence” (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 226).

*Recruitment.* “Includes those recruitment practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees” (Barber, 1998, p. 5).

*Retirement.* Occurs when an employee leaves after meeting specific service requirements for retirement (Selden & Moynihan, 2000).

*Voluntary turnover.* Occurs when an employee chooses to leave an organization (Selden & Moynihan, 2000).

## **Key Assumptions**

Given the context of the study, the researcher makes the following assumptions:

- The study will explore the high voluntary turnover of Millennials.
- Millennials who are college graduates (Bachelor’s degree or higher), and who have quit

one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after they completed college and within 5 years of being hired are representative of the sample being studied and can provide insight about the high voluntary turnover of Millennials.

- Millennials who have graduated from college with at least a Bachelor's degree are representative of the Millennials who have been discussed throughout the literature.
- Millennials quit their jobs due to internal factors at work.
- An interview approach is reliable and the most effective means to capture the personal opinions and true feelings of Millennials who experienced the phenomenon being explored in the study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The scope of the study was limited to Millennials a) who are college graduates (Bachelor's degree or higher), and b) who have quit one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after they completed college and within 5 years of being hired. Additionally, a surprisingly high percentage of participants (84%) were female. This is a limitation because men may provide a different perspective on their voluntary turnover. The researcher was also the only person involved in conducting interviews. This is viewed as a limitation because findings may be different if other researchers participate in the data collection process.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is Person Organization fit (P-O fit; Kristof, 1996). P-O fit is defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 2). This theory explains how individuals assess their fit with organizations based on an alignment between their needs and an organization's

attributes. Basically, recruiters can increase their likelihood of attracting the best-qualified candidates by creating a fit between applicants and organizations. To create that fit, recruiters must have prior knowledge of the job and of organizational factors that applicants deem as imperative for organizational attraction (Butler, Sanders, & Whitecotton, 2000; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). For example, P-O fit exists when an individual places a high value on work-life balance and the recruiters mention during recruitment that their organization offers opportunities for work and personal affairs. Ultimately, organizations are more attractive to individuals who perceive a fit between their needs and the organization's attributes.

The P-O fit theory serves as a framework for this study because Millennials' perception of fit may help to provide a rationale for their high voluntary turnover. For example, Westerman and Yamamura (2007) posit that if Millennials find a misfit between their work preferences and the organization's attributes after they are hired "they are more willing to leave if these work environment preferences are not actualized" (p. 153). Westerman and Yamamura (2007) also found that work environment is "significantly predictive of employee outcomes for younger generation employees" (p. 156). Given that Millennials choose to work for organizations that provide continuous job development and training, meaningful and challenging work experiences, work-life balance, rapid career advancement opportunities, and social connections (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fønner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008), research suggests that Millennials are more likely to leave an organization if their work preferences and expectations are unmet (Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

## **The Researcher's Approach to and Experience of the Problem**

The researcher approaches the study through a social constructivist and advocacy/participatory world view. According to Creswell (2007), social constructivism is rooted in the assumption that individuals seek meaning of the world in which they live and work. The advocacy/participatory world view contains a call for action that may change the lives of participants and researchers as well as the institutions where they live and work. Based on Creswell's (2007) perspective on social constructivism and advocacy/participatory inquiry, the researcher views both world views, when combined, as the process of understanding a phenomenon or human issue from the participants' perspectives and then taking action to rectify the problem, subsequently improving the lives of the participants and/or the institutions where they live and work. Essentially, social constructivism and advocacy/participatory world views are the foundational basis for the study.

The researcher is a member of the Millennial generation. At the age of 28, the researcher has already held five full-time jobs, all of which she quit within 2 years. When the researcher assessed the reasons why she quit her former jobs, the following four themes emerged: organization (i.e., lack of fit with company culture, lack of innovation); job (i.e., lack of job training, lack of meaningful and challenging tasks, lack of autonomy); management (i.e., inability to establish a strong and positive relationship, misled during the recruitment process); and personal (i.e., personal desire to achieve more, unhappy with job choice decisions). In performing a further analysis of her experience of voluntary turnover, the researcher found that she keeps applying for the same types of jobs/positions at similar organizations and as a result, she becomes progressively bored and dissatisfied with work. Rather than making generalizations about Millennials based on her own personal experience of quitting a job, the researcher seeks to

understand the phenomenon of voluntary turnover from the Millennials' perspectives. Such knowledge will aid the researcher in helping to improve the workplace for Millennials and subsequently improve the employers' likelihood of attracting and retaining Millennials.

### **Summary**

The Millennial generation is unlike any previous generation in the workplace (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). They are more technologically savvy, socially driven, global in perspective, and team-oriented than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers (Howe & Strauss, 2000). They also bring important new skills, ideas, and energy to the workplace (Hobart & Sendek, 2009) that are bound to take organizations to new heights (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Because employers need an indispensable labor pool for the replacement of a retiring workforce (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Kaifi et al., 2012; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009), they face stiff competition for young workers (Michaels et al., 2001). Although organizations such as Morningstar and Google have learned how to emerge as employers of choice for the Millennial generation (Bannon et al., 2011), other organizations are struggling to recruit and *retain* Millennials (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Several studies suggest that the high voluntary turnover of Millennials is mainly due to their lack of loyalty (Hulett, 2006; Martin, 2005; Yeaton, 2008); however, these claims have yet to be proven or refuted by empirical data.

Through a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach, this research will explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. The purpose of the study is to discover why Millennials perceive they chose to quit their former jobs. The study also aims to discover what employers can do to retain Millennials for longer than an average of 3 years, to fill a gap in the literature that has not explored the experience of voluntary turnover from the Millennials' perspectives, and to inform organizations of the best means to recruit and retain the

newest generation to enter the workplace.

The aim of Chapter 1 is to introduce the reader to the Millennial generation, identify the problem impacting organizations, provide a rationale for why the problem needs to be further explored and the significance of the study, and outline the basic assumptions and limitations. Also included in Chapter 1 is the conceptual framework for the study and a brief description of the researcher's approach to and experience of the problem.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth literature review of the formation of generations, generational cohorts in the workplace, and employee recruitment, retention and turnover.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology and the process for selecting research participants and collecting data through phone and email interviews. Additional topics being covered include reliability and validity, data analysis, and institutional review board.

Chapter 4 reintroduces the details of the study, outlines the bracketing process for phenomenological research, provides a profile of the participants, and presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 summarizes the study, provides practical implications, and provides recommendations to employers to increase their retention of the Millennial generation.

## Chapter 2. Literature Review

### Overview

The literature review examines the formation of generations, differences between generation and cohort, and generational cohorts in the workplace. Then employee recruitment and the Millennials' attraction to organizations and job choice are reviewed. Lastly, employee retention including employee turnover, cost of losing an employee, voluntary turnover, and the high voluntary turnover of Millennials are discussed in this chapter.

### The Formation of Generations

The concept of generations derives from the seminal work of Mannheim (1952). In his essay *The Problems of Generations*, Mannheim examines generations through a sociological lens (Pilcher, 1994) and provides a systematic perspective on the phenomenon of generations (Bengtson, Furlong, & Laufer, 1974). Gilleard and Higgs (2002) summarize Mannheim's theory of generations as having three major elements: "a shared temporal location (*i.e.* generational site or birth cohort), [a] shared historical location (*i.e.* generation as actuality—exposure to a common period or era), and finally a shared socio-cultural location (*i.e.* generational consciousness—or 'entelechy')" (p. 373). Given that location is central to the formation of generations (Mannheim, 1952), localization serves as a means to unify individuals belonging to generations within the same socio-historical context (Cavalli, 2004). Specifically, generations are formed by a similarity of location between individuals within a given society (Mannheim, 1952). To be similarly located within a generation, individuals should be born in the same birth years, affected by similar life experiences, and knowledgeable of their participation in a specific generation (Mannheim, 1952). Without individuals taking part in each of the three major locations, generations may not exist (Mannheim, 1952).

To further elucidate the concept of location, Mannheim (1952) compares generations to social classes within society (Cavalli, 2004; Pilcher, 1994). He argues that class positions and generations are both based on structures that have the potential to drive social change (Biggs, 2007; Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994). Gilleard and Higgs (2002) disagree to some extent with Mannheim's comparison of class to generations. In their work on the third age or aging of the birth cohort known as the Baby Boomer generation, Gilleard and Higgs (2002) concluded that generations are a counterpoint to class because the generational basis of third ageism represents aging in the 21st century as opposed to the class basis of third ageism that uses a hierarchical structure to typify aging of the wealthy. Moreover, the location of generations is the foundation upon which members of a generation create bonds with each other during their formative years. Their bonds are typically based on their exposure to and experience of the same historical events such as a war or the assassination of a president (Mannheim, 1952). These monumental events can shape the perspective of individuals within a generation (Carver & Candela, 2008). Generally, members of a generation act and think in similar ways (Cavalli, 2004; Mannheim, 1952), but there are times when a smaller group of individuals sharing similar reactions to a historical event may form a separate group within a generation called a generational unit (Mannheim, 1952). He offers a specific example of a generational unit:

Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units (Mannheim, 1952, p. 304).

Essentially, a generational unit is created by connections formed between groupings of individuals within a generation (Mannheim, 1952). When the connections are strong, the



members of a generation become social agents within their new society and serve as the driving forces of social change.

Mannheim's theory lays the groundwork for research on generations. Much of the literature that draws upon Mannheim's approach to generations (Cavalli, 2004; Gilleard & Higgs, 2002), as well as subsequent generational analysis (Biggs, 2007; Glenn, 2005; Pilcher, 1994; Ryder, 1965) use the terms generation and cohort interchangeably. However, Glenn (1977) posits that cohort is the more accurate term to use when referring to groups of people born at the same time and who share common life experiences and perspectives. According to Pilcher (1994), the synonymous use of generation and cohort is confounding, and it is difficult to sustain in practice, according to (Gilleard & Higgs, 2002). Given that the misuse of the terms should be avoided (Glenn, 1977), understanding the differences between generation and cohort is critical in developing the foundation for this study.

### **Generation vs. Cohort**

The concept of cohort has received significant attention (Cavalli, 2004; Ryder, 1965; Schewe & Noble, 2000), and in some research, the term generation has been used synonymously with cohort (Biggs, 2007; Glenn, 2005; Pilcher, 1994; Ryder, 1965). Both terms describe people born within a specific time, but several scholars contend that generation and cohort are distinct terms and should be treated as such (Pilcher, 1994; Schewe & Noble, 2000). For example, a generation can be formed by kinship (Glenn, 1977) such as the link between a child, parent, or grandparent (Cavalli, 2004; Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010), whereas a cohort is a group of people who are born at the same time and who experience the same defining events (e.g., the Great Depression or Vietnam War) during their lifetime (Rosow, 1978; Ryder, 1965; Schewe & Noble, 2000). Given that a generation can describe a familial relationship (Biggs, 2007; Pilcher,

1994), the reproduction of life is a defining moment as each generation births subsequent generations (Ryder, 1965; Schewe & Noble, 2000). For example, members of the Depression Generation were born between 1912 and 1921. That generation then gave birth to the Baby Boom Generation between 1946 and 1964, and the Baby Boomers birthed the Millennials between 1982 and 2000 (Schewe & Noble, 2000). These family structures are important because each generation represents the passing and receiving of knowledge and experience from either a previous or subsequent generation (Biggs, 2007). A new generation is created at specific intervals within a birthing cycle; based on the analysis of Schewe and Noble (2000), a new birthing cycle occurs on average about 15 years from the last year in the previous generation's birth cycle. On the other hand, cohorts are not constrained to birthing stages like generations (Schewe & Noble, 2000), but are formed during critical life events, which can happen at any given time (Schewe & Noble, 2000).

Biggs (2007) claims that cohorts exist within generations. His assertions are supported by the seminal work of Rosow (1978), which posits that cohorts fall within a generational framework. These cohorts can be grouped by size, age, race, sex, and birth location (Ryder, 1965). Another type of cohort within a generation can be found in academia. Colleges and universities employ a cohort model for their various degree programs to provide traditional and nontraditional students an opportunity to build a sense of community through common experiences and classes (Basom, 1996).

Based on earlier as well as current research (Biggs, 2007; Mannheim, 1952), a generation is an interdisciplinary phenomenon combining a variety of fields and theoretical perspectives. From a sociological perspective, Mannheim (1952) theorizes that generations are rooted in the centrality of location. Specifically, critical historical and social events situate individuals born at

the same time within a specific location in history (Mannheim, 1952), which predisposes them to a certain way of thinking and behaving. It is not until people grow older that they realize how the events that occurred during their formative years shaped them and their attitude toward life, an attitude that is also shared with members of their generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). When members of a generation have a shared identity and generational consciousness, they can drive social change (Biggs, 2007; Mannheim, 1952) and create their own history (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

From a biological perspective, generations are formed during specific life cycles in which one generation gives birth to the next (Glenn, 2005; Schewe & Noble, 2000). When families speak of first, second, and third generations, they are referring to generational lineage. At the familial level, the first through third generations are reflective of a grandparent, parent, and grandchild relationship (Mannheim, 1952; Schewe & Noble, 2000). However, these familial generations also belong to a larger generation within history, such as Baby Boomers and Millennials. Ultimately, the aforementioned findings suggest there are varying meanings ascribed to the word generation (Mannheim, 1952; Pilcher, 1994) and that *cohort* may be an adequate term for operationalizing the various conceptions of generations (Glenn, 1977) and for describing a group of people encountering significant life events during their impressionable youth.

### **A Holistic Approach for Defining Generations**

Strauss and Howe (1991) integrated Mannheim's (1952) generational theory and Ryder's (1965) conceptualization of cohort in proposing a new holistic approach for defining generations. They define a generation as a "special cohort-group whose length approximately matches that of a basic phase of life" (p. 34). A basic phase of life is approximately 20 years (Strauss & Howe,

1991). Furthermore, Strauss and Howe (1991) build on Mannheim's (1952) notion that historical events shape generations, suggesting that those events also shape the personalities of members within a generation. The extent to which personalities are impacted depends on members' age and current stage in life (Strauss & Howe, 1991), and events may affect older generations differently than younger generations. Whereas one generation sees the Great Depression as the defining event in their lifetimes, the next generation says World War II was the most momentous event of their lifetimes, even though they had lived through the Great Depression as well (Schuman & Scott, 1989). The manner in which these events shape people is consistent with Strauss and Howe's (1991) idea of age location, which is that each generation will attribute varying meanings to the same event depending on their age and phase of life at the time of the event (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Because this theory of generations by Strauss and Howe (1991) is all encompassing, more can be expected from understanding the perspective of generational cohorts in the workplace.

### **Generational Cohorts in the Workplace**

People whose birth years fall within a 20-year span belong to a generational cohort, according to (Strauss & Howe, 1991). McCrindle (2006) argues that definition is too broad "Because cohorts are changing so quickly in response to new technologies, changing career and study options, and because of shifting societal values, two decades is far too broad to contain all the people born within this time span" (p. 8). However, in viewing generations from Strauss and Howe's (1991) perspective, elements other than birth years must be present for a generation to exist, including age location, shared beliefs and behaviors, and a perceived membership in a common generation. Using these characteristics, three generational cohorts can be identified in today's workplace: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials (Crumpacker &

Crumpacker, 2007; Jeffries & Hunte, 2004; Kowske et al., 2010; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007).

Baby Boomers. Catastrophic events such as the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. (Carver & Candela, 2008; Jeffries & Hunte, 2004; Kaifi et al., 2012), and the devastation of the Korean War and Vietnam War (Carver & Candela, 2008) mark significant events in history for the Baby Boomers. Varying years are used to define what Strauss & Howe (1991) call an age location for this generation. Some researchers define Baby Boomers as people born between 1943 and 1960 (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008; Strauss & Howe, 1991), while others use the years 1946 to 1964 to define this group (Hewlett et al., 2009; Kyles, 2005). Clearly, researchers have yet to reach a consensus on the exact birth years of Baby Boomers, although members of the group are assumed to have experienced or witnessed events including the first landing on the moon, student protests, the rise of rock and roll music, and the women's liberation and civil rights movements during their youth or early adulthood (Carver & Candela, 2008; Glass, 2007; Jeffries & Hunte, 2004; Kaifi et al., 2012; Mannheim, 1952; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Because the first Baby Boomers were conceived toward the end of World War II, they are often described as post-war babies (Carver & Candela, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008). Approximately 80 million babies were born in the years typically used to define this generation, hence the name Baby Boomers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Monhollon, 2010). This was the largest influx in births within such a short span in U.S. history, and until Baby Boomers gave birth to their own children, it was the largest generation (Boswell et al., 2003; Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Glass, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). Baby Boomers are typically idealistic, nontraditional, politically savvy, and spiritually driven (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Kaifi et al., 2012;

Strauss & Howe, 1991; Strauss & Howe, 1997). They are also a highly influential and prosperous generation that has impacted all aspects of society, including family, education, and work (Carver & Candela, 2008; Gursoy et al., 2008; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007)

Typical Baby Boomers had a seemingly ideal family environment, growing up in two-parent households in stable living conditions (Gursoy et al., 2008; Monhollon, 2010). Their fathers worked long hours, and their moms stayed at home to bear and take care of their children (Kyles, 2005; Monhollon, 2010). Consequently, Baby Boomers grew closer to their mothers and fostered negative feelings toward their fathers and male authoritative figures (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007). Baby Boomers were taught by their mothers to be thoughtful, reasonable, and kind (Strauss & Howe, 1991). However, as a result of their comfortable family life, many middle-class Baby Boomers came to view poverty, disease, and crime as minor nuisances (Strauss & Howe, 1991). As Baby Boomers grew older, they no longer garnered as much attention from their parents, partly because their parents wanted them to enjoy freedom during their adolescence (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The decline in attention also came because the costs to maintain a home, car, and children became burdensome for families, leading the mothers of Baby Boomers to return to work outside the home (Monhollon, 2010). Despite having two working parents and witnessing steady marriages, Baby Boomers challenged the idea of family once they started bearing their own children (Monhollon, 2010).

In starting their own families, Baby Boomers opted for a more subtle and simple lifestyle as opposed to their parents who were outwardly driven (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Additionally, Baby Boomers were less inclined to view marriage and family as absolutes, but rather as means for acquiring peace (Strauss & Howe, 1991). For example, Strauss and Howe (1991) suggest that Baby Boomers parents' viewed self worth "objectively, by the works they leave to history" (p.

304) whereas Baby Boomers “measure themselves subjectively, by the spiritual strength they see within” (p. 304). Based on the notion that Baby Boomers place a greater value on spirituality than their parents did, Strauss and Howe (1991) believe that Baby Boomers fell short of matching their parents’ achievements in family. Fortunately, disengaging from their parents’ idea of family aided Baby Boomers in establishing their own standards (Kyles, 2005).

The first group of Baby Boomers wed in the 1960s, while the remaining waited longer to get married (Strauss & Howe, 1991). While the last wave of Baby Boomers had their fair share of woes (e.g., educational illiteracy, financial insecurity, and self-destructive behavior; Strauss & Howe, 1991), the first wave made a substantial impact on societal norms, especially with regard to family (Eisner, 2005; Kyles, 2005). Not only did they experience more marital instability and higher divorce rates (Eisner, 2005; Kyles, 2005; Strauss & Howe, 1991), but Baby Boomers were also involved in premarital relationships, living with their mates before marriage and having children out of wedlock, which also led to a larger number of women raising children on their own (Monhollon, 2010). In raising their children, Baby Boomers nurtured, pampered, mentored, and coached their children to be prepared to be the best in all aspects of their lives (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). However, there are mixed findings regarding Baby Boomers and their parental influence. On one hand, Baby Boomers are seen as protective parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000), but on the other hand, they are known for criticizing their children’s attitude and behavior in the workplace. For instance, unlike their parents, Baby Boomers sheltered their children from exposure to violence and drugs, leading to a decline in underage drinking, smoking, and violent crimes in their children’s generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). However, according to Hobart and Sendek (2009), Baby Boomers often perceive their children as spoiled, lazy, self-centered, and whiny. Another finding suggests that Baby Boomers perceive Millennials

as overly confident in their abilities (Howe & Strauss, 2000) when they too are a part of a generation that promotes a culture of narcissism (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Furthermore, Baby Boomers are seen as playing a significant role in the decline of marriage by supporting their children's decisions to delay marriage and family to explore love and work and pursue their passions (Arnett, 2004). Based on how Baby Boomers raise their children, it is evident that Baby Boomers perception of family differs from previous generations and that they do not view two-parent households and stay-at home moms as the ideal (Monhollon, 2010). By challenging traditional family roles and structures within society, Baby Boomers inherited the name "young radicals" (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Their views are also prevalent in their respective societies, specifically in education and business (Glass, 2007; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Many Baby Boomers attended college from the early 1960s to early 1980s, when student protests and college campus rallies were common acts of civic engagement (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Strauss & Howe, 1997). Post-war optimism and drive led Baby Boomers to believe that anything was possible, and as a result, they embarked on a mission to reform the systems within universities their parents had established (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Baby Boomers rebelled against conformity and traditional norms, and despised their parents' efforts at improving education (Kaifi et al., 2012; Kyles, 2005; Strauss & Howe, 1997). Their motto was "You build it up, mother, we gonna tear it down" (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 190). Accordingly, while their parents sought to improve the systems within universities, Baby Boomers fought to revolutionize them (Strauss & Howe, 1991). With clenched fists and picket signs, Baby Boomers from diverse backgrounds joined forces and started violent rallies on campuses to abolish the conditions and



systems their parents had injected in American universities (Strauss & Howe, 1997). By becoming a unified group, Baby Boomers were in a stronger position to effect change, and subsequently, were able to accomplish their goal of overhauling the institutions in which they live, attend school, and work (Glass, 2007; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

To date, Baby Boomers make up 30% to 40% of the current workforce (Orrell, 2008), and remain highly influential in the workplace, where the processes and procedures they established are still in place (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Similar to their approach to education and family, Baby Boomers entered the workplace in the late 1960s and early 1970s with a mindset to change the way organizations conduct business (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Specifically, Baby Boomers wanted organizations to adapt to their needs and expected work to provide independent work, face-to-face interactions, flexibility, challenging projects and growth opportunities (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Moreover, because Baby Boomers had witnessed their parents' resentment toward their careers, they wanted a rewarding profession (Carver & Candela, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Organizations that offered rewards in the form of pay increases, promotions, flexible shifts, seniority, the corner office, and close parking were more likely to attract and retain Baby Boomers, who perceive rewards as a way of distinguishing themselves from their peers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The competitiveness of Baby Boomers is attributed to the fact that they had to compete against 80 million peers for a spot on sports teams, acceptance into overcrowded high schools and elite colleges, and employment opportunities (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Organizational attributes such as flextime, maternity leave, casual Fridays, and work-at-home options were developed and implemented by Baby Boomers (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Even so, Baby Boomers received backlash from their family because they spent more time at work than at home, and

consequently, their offspring (the Millennials) entering the workplace continue to demand work-life balance (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Still, when 77.7 million Baby Boomers retire from the workforce (Hobart & Sendek, 2009), they will leave behind a work environment (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002) that serves as the foundation for subsequent generations (Generation X and the Millennials) to adapt to or change.

**Generation Xers.** Coupland (1991) popularized the term Generation X, also known as the Thirteenth Generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). This generation, consisting of those people born between 1961 and 1981 (Strauss & Howe, 1991) includes only 49 million members, making it the smallest generational cohort (Carver & Candela, 2008). Generation Xers consider themselves “pragmatic, quick, sharp-eyed, able to step outside themselves to understand the game of life as it really gets played” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 320). This generation is also described as being an individualistic, diverse group of people who are self-reliant and risk-takers (Dols, Landrum, & Wieck, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). An opposing description of Generation Xers is that they lack ambition, education, and economic opportunity (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004). Defining events for this generation are Watergate, the energy crisis of the 1970s, and the 1979 taking of American hostages in Iran (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Zemke et al., 2000). Generation Xers were also the first generation to grow up with cable television, pagers, microwaves, video games, cell phones, fax machines, and personal computers, leading to their adeptness in technology, problem solving, and multitasking (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Although emerging technology improved their lives, many Generation Xers had difficult childhoods and developed a survivor’s mentality while facing the upheaval of AIDS, crack cocaine, child molesters, suicides,

and drunk drivers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Specifically, Generation Xers learned to adapt quickly to changing social conditions because “they grew up seeing every major American institution called into question” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 25). Subsequently, Generation Xers are skeptical of social structures and institutions, such as the military, government, and corporate America (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Zemke et al., 2000). Moreover, given their birth years, Bill Gates, President Bill Clinton, and Michael Jordan are leaders of their time (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Due to the prevalence of television and media, Generation Xers regarded their so-called leader as “someone far too human to be a hero” (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002, p. 24). In addition to 24-hour media and tabloid journalism, family and friends, education, and work had a significant impact on Generation Xers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Generation Xers grew up with social, financial, and family insecurities (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Considering their experience of unsteady social and economic conditions, two-career families, high divorce rates among their parents, and single-parent households, Generation Xers had reasons to be skeptical of family (Gentry, Deal, Griggs, Mondore, & Cox, 2011; Gursoy et al., 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Strauss & Howe, 1997). Additionally, Generation Xers were latchkey kids, often walking home from school and caring for themselves and their siblings until their parents arrived home (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Even though children were disappearing from neighborhoods, their parents had to work, leaving Generation Xers to fend for themselves (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). They overcame their parents’ lack of involvement by being less dependent on their parents and more reliant on themselves and/or their peers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sessa et al., 2007; Strauss & Howe, 1991).

In raising their own children, Generation Xers are opposite of their parents, working diligently to keep their marriages stable and their families together (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Strauss & Howe, 1997). When they were growing up, the divorce rates tripled, but when they started getting married, the divorce rate declined (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Essentially, their parents' divorces had an emotional impact on Generation Xers, leaving them feeling vulnerable and defeated (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The reaction of a Generation Xer to her parents' divorce is evident in the following excerpt:

When my dad left in the spring of 1981 and moved five states away with his executive assistant and her four kids, the world as I had known it came to an end. In my 12-year-old eyes, my mother, formerly a regal, erudite figure, was transformed into a phantom in a sweaty nightgown and matted hair, howling on the floor of our gray-carpeted playroom. My brother, a sweet, goofy boy, grew into a sad, glowering giant, barricaded in his room with dark graphic novels and computer games. (Gregory Thomas, 2011)

Ultimately, Generation Xers overcame the pain and grief they felt when their parents divorced but strive to do better than their parents in terms of maintaining their marriages and providing their children with the financial security and attention they may not have experienced as children (Sandeen, 2008; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Even though members of this generation are reducing the divorce rate and spending more time with their children, they fall short of achieving equal or greater success in education and/or their careers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sandeen, 2008; Schrammel, 1998).

Education for Generation Xers was unlike that of preceding generations as the school systems that the Baby Boomers had experienced came to an end when Generation Xers arrived

(Strauss & Howe, 1991). Teachers stopped passing students simply because they attended class; instead, Generation Xers were given grades based more on competency rather than mere effort (Strauss & Howe, 1991). The new approaches to teaching may have been in part due to a lack of public school funding (Sandeen, 2008). For example, when California passed the Proposition 13 tax revolt in the mid-1970s, art, music, and physical education were removed from many schools, leaving Generation Xers unable to experience artistic expression (Sandeen, 2008). In regard to college, Generation Xers represent a significant portion of currently enrolled college students; according to Coomes and DeBard (2004) more than 5.8 million Generation Xers were enrolled in 2002. This number represents, at minimum, 37% of the total number of college students enrolled during that year. Although Generation Xers are represented in the total number of people who are currently or were recently pursuing a college education, they are less college educated than previous generations (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 1993). Contrarily, Ansoorian, Good, and Samuelson (2003) posit that Generation Xers are better educated than Baby Boomers as over 60% of about 49 million members attended college. Similarly, in an unpublished work comparing Generation X in the United States and South Korea, Turner, Mitchell, Hastings, and Mitchell (n.d.) contend that Generation Xers are the best educated.

Even if Generation Xers are the most highly educated generation in history (Carver & Candela, 2008; Tulgan, 2000), they are also “the first generation in America to be likely to have a standard of living below that of its parents” (Ansoorian et al., 2003, p. 35). Based on Schrammel’s (1998) comparison of labor market conditions for Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, Baby Boomers fared better in pay, regardless of their educational level. Specifically, in 1996, Generation Xers earned significantly lower wages than Baby Boomers earned in 1979

(Schrammel, 1998), speaking to the severe economic recession Generation Xers experienced during their formative years (Sandeen, 2008). The severity of the recession impacted Generation Xers' perspective on work (Sandeen, 2008). After watching their parents, who were long-time employees lose their jobs and high wages, Generation Xers entered the workplace with a great deal of skepticism (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sandeen, 2008). As a preventive measure, Generation Xers worked for organizations that provided career security (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Becoming stagnant on a job is their greatest fear; therefore, they desire to work for a company that will help them build transferable skills and experiences (Carver & Candela, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). If a company does not provide Generation Xers with opportunities to build their resumes they will change jobs (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Wilson, Squires, Widger, Cranley, & Tourangeau, 2008) because they are loyal to their own career goals, not the organization or the job (Tulgan, 2000). Previous research on Generation Xers claims they expected to leave their jobs within 3-5 years (Chatzky, 2002). Although Kohut et al. (2010) found that 62% of Generation Xers say it is likely they will never leave their current employers, Shelton and Shelton (2005) and Twenge (2006) assert that members of Generation X are less likely than Baby Boomers to stay in a job that does not fit with their needs or shows no potential for growth. Basically, Generation Xers will resign from a job if they do not see how their current position is going to build them a portable career (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Consequently, Baby Boomers who manage Generation Xers describe them as flaky, unreliable, disloyal, and lacking work ethic and drive (Gursoy et al., 2008).

A counter argument for describing Generation Xers' approach to work is that they are a product of their time (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Specifically, Generation Xers grew up in a society where nothing stayed the same; therefore, their attitudes and behaviors are appropriate

given their experience of constant change and instability (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). For older generations, stability meant long-term employment and pension plans (Sandeen, 2008) whereas stability for Generation Xers is nonexistent given their wavering societal and family conditions (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Another difference between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers is the value they place on work and family; Generation Xers expect their work to provide rewards in the form of autonomy, work-life balance, and transferable retirement and pension plans (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Work environments that value their creativity, talents, and expertise are also more likely to attract and retain Generation Xers (Wilson et al., 2008). Although several authors suggest that Generation Xers and Baby Boomers have disparate approaches to work (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Tulgan, 2000), research on generational differences also found that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers share similar views on Millennials; specifically, neither generation thinks highly of the newest generation to enter the workplace (Gursoy et al., 2008).

Millennials. For decades, older generations have been wishing for a generation of “doers,” and with the Millennials, their wish for a “youth generation that would quit talking and start doing” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 5) is coming true. The new question, then, becomes how will Baby Boomers and Generation Xers handle the changes implemented by the Millennials, people born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe and Strauss, 2000)? According to Sessa et al. (2007), there is little agreement regarding the generation’s label; Millennials are also referred to as Generation Y (Terjesen et al., 2007), Net Generation (Tapscott, 2009), or Generation Me (Twenge, 2006). However, people born in this generation prefer to be called the Millennial Generation or the Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Defining events for Millennials are the presidency of Bill Clinton, the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the Oklahoma City bombing, the

Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, the attack at Columbine High School, and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials have grown up in a society where engaging in acts of violent crimes, deadly drugs, and promiscuous behavior is promoted and encouraged in the media (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Fortunately, Millennials are “less vulgar, less active, less violent than the youth culture adults have created for them” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 19).

According to Howe and Strauss (2000), Millennials are a group of affluent, well-educated, ethnically diverse, sheltered, team-oriented, and conventional individuals. Comparing the traits of Millennials to other generations, Millennials and Baby Boomers share commonalities with respect to their personal values and work values (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000). In the workplace, Millennials and Baby Boomers are recognized for having a shared vision for work that consists of work-life balance, flexible work schedules, opportunities to give back to society, and rewards in forms other than money (Hewlett et al., 2009). Hershatler and Epstein (2010) believe that Millennials may not share values to the same extent with Generation Xers because of their disparate life experiences. On the other hand, Hewlett et al. (2009) found that Millennials and Baby Boomers share similarities in work values because of their close parent-child bonds.

Given that generations have peer personalities (Howe & Strauss, 2000), the Millennials are beginning to form a personality that suits their generation (Kohut et al., 2010). Research suggests that Millennials’ personalities exude confidence, self-expression, optimism and flexibility (Kohut et al., 2010). Additionally, Howe and Strauss (2000) contend that Millennials are “unlike any other youth generation in living memory” (p. 4). A nationwide survey conducted by Kohut et al. (2010) found similar results, with 61% of about 2,000 Millennials surveyed saying they believe their generation has a unique and distinctive identity. While Millennials are



“indeed special” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 17), other findings show that Millennials and Baby Boomers are more alike than different (Hewlett et al., 2009).

Following in the footsteps of their Baby Boomer parents, who believed they could change the world, Millennials feel they have a social responsibility to make the world a better place (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials view themselves as cutting-edge and subsequently demonstrate a fascination for technology (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Although Millennials have confidence in their abilities to change the direction of the country, only one in three adults believe Millennials will be the catalysts for change (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Although there is skepticism about the impact Millennials will have on society, inventions such as Facebook and Tumblr demonstrate the Millennials’ capacity to “become America’s next great generation” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 28). In addition to their drive and motivation to change the world, Millennials also share optimism in common with their Baby Boomer parents, with both generational cohorts feeling they can do anything they set their minds to and believing in the future of America (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). The only difference is that Millennials are behaving and performing better than their parents did as children and as adults (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Moreover, Millennials and Baby Boomers share a similar upbringing as both generations received nurturing and supervision from their parents (Jeffries & Hunte, 2004).

However, Millennials also have experienced a rise in the amount of “kids not living with two parents . . . and with two working parents who don’t have time for them” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 126). Compared to Generation Xers, Millennials are growing up in more single-parent homes, and subsequently, they are more prone to get arrested, do drugs, fail at school, or commit suicide (Howe & Strauss, 2000). For Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, death and divorce led

to single-family homes, whereas a significant portion Millennials have experienced “never married moms” or “child-friendly” divorces (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 130). Essentially, a new type of parenting emerged as a result of the shifts in family life (Howe & Strauss, 2000), giving credibility to the popular saying “it takes a village to raise a child.”

The Millennials have had access to opportunities and resources that were not available to Generation Xers, with their parents arranging flexible work schedules and asking family members to help in child care (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Similarly, schools have offered daycare and child-care programs to accommodate the work schedule of single parents, which speaks to the education restructuring taking place in America (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials have been part of a time in history when schools focus on achievement and character (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials think it is “cool to be smart” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 9), and a record number of Millennials take Advance Placement classes/tests and attend college (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Subsequently, Millennials are described as having more drive to achieve higher education than previous generations (Coomes & DeBard, 2004). Despite being “the most educationally ambitious generation ever” (Coomes & DeBard, 2004, p. 12), recent findings suggest that Millennials are less likely to be employed than Baby Boomers and Generation Xers were at the same age (Kohut et al., 2010).

When college-educated Millennials began entering the workforce in 2004 (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), literature on their generation was scarce (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Strauss & Howe, 1991; Strauss & Howe, 1997; Zemke, 2001). Past literature suggests that Millennials will likely want to build parallel careers rather than lifetime or portable careers like their predecessors (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). A parallel career is one in which Millennials work several jobs simultaneously (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). By offering cross-training to Millennials,

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) suggest that organizations may be able to attract and retain them as long-term employees. Previous literature also predicted that Millennials would experience up to 10 career changes in their lifetime and that rewards for this generation would entail working in a fun, team-oriented environment with a manager who includes them in the company's decision-making process (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Howe and Strauss (2000) note that Millennials' daily lives have been filled with volunteering and after-school activities, and Lancaster & Stillman (2002) believe Millennials will view the workplace as "one of many activities rather than a top priority" (p. 117).

Several years ago, generational scholars posited that the workplace was "going to face some noteworthy problems and some real opportunities with the arrival of the Millennials" (Zemke, 2001, p. 45). Now, more than a decade later, organizations are being impacted by the Millennials (Alsop, 2008). Specifically, Millennials are changing the trajectory of today's workplace (Bannon et al., 2011; Hewlett et al., 2009). Therefore, organizations are faced with the challenge of keeping track of the Millennials (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009) and subsequently altering their rules and policies to meet the expectations of a new generation of employees.

Millennials are shaking up the workplace (Alsop, 2008). According to popular literature and empirical research, Millennials want to work for a company that offers work-life balance, flexibility, casual and progressive cultures, meaningful work experiences, training and development, rewards and recognition (Alsop, 2008; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fønner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Despite having high and often unrealistic expectations for work, Millennials have a better attitude toward work than previous generations (Hewlett et al., 2009; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). A study

examining the work attitudes of about 2,600 U.S. workers found that the Millennials are more positive about work than Generation Xers and Baby Boomers (“People at work survey,” 2002). However, unlike Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, Millennials frequently quit their jobs and/or seek employment opportunities at other companies for reasons that are anecdotally known to others.

There is a great deal of skepticism and conceptions surrounding the Millennial generation in the workplace. For example, a popular perception (although it is not supported by substantial evidence) is that Millennials lack loyalty and a work ethic (Marston, 2013), have extreme confidence and make inappropriate demands (Erickson, Alsop, Nicholson, & Miller, 2009), prefer to work in teams (Alsop, 2008) and possess high expectations for work (e.g., close relationships, frequent feedback, and open communication from supervisors; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). According to Hobart and Sendek (2009), the top five adjectives business leaders from older generations use to describe the Millennials are “slackers/lazy, need instant gratification, self-centered/selfish, disloyal/job jumpers,” and “pampered/spoiled” (p. 19). Hobart and Sendek (2009) believe the many viewpoints about Millennials in the workplace are helpful in proving that “they are different and indeed, something people don’t really understand” (p. 18), but think the even larger number of misconceptions, stereotypes, and myths about Millennials are causing employers to attribute “overwhelmingly negative characteristics to them without knowing all the facts” (p.19). Therefore, a better understanding of Millennials is needed to inform organizations of the best means to recruit and retain the newest generation to enter the workplace (Luscombe et al., 2013).

## **Employee Recruitment**

Guion (1976) first introduced research on employee recruitment (Rynes, 1989). He posits that recruitment is an organizational imperative and that organizations are likely to yield a significantly greater profit by focusing on recruitment rather than the selection process. Since the publishing of Guion's (1976) perspective on recruitment (Rynes, 1989), research on employee recruitment has increased (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Over the last 30 years, several authors have made considerable contributions to the existing body of knowledge (Barber, 1998; Billsberry, 2007; Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1989; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Taylor & Collins, 2000). Rynes (1989) provides a comprehensive overview on the progression of recruitment or lack thereof, often citing the major gaps in theory and research. Rynes et al. (1991) focus on the effects of recruitment on job choice decisions. Additionally, Barber (1998) establishes a foundational definition of recruitment, asserting that "recruitment includes those recruitment practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees" (p. 5). Taylor & Collins (2000) introduce strategies for bridging the gap between recruitment research and practice. Similarly, Breaugh and Starke (2000) offer a framework for recruitment that encompasses specific aspects of recruitment research carried out by earlier scholars (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1992; Rynes, 1991). Central components of Breaugh & Starke's (2000) recruitment framework are objectives, strategy development, activities, intervening/process variables, and results. Recruitment activities such as online applications, job fairs, and interviews (Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012) and practices such as recruiter behavior and communication of job and organizational attributes (Butler et al., 2000; Goltz & Giannantonio, 1995) are known to impact pre-hire and post-hire outcomes (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Pre-hire outcomes include perceived job and organizational

attraction and job-choice decisions of potential applicants (Breugh, 2013; Rynes, 1989). On the other hand, post-hire outcomes are linked to turnover and retention of new employees (Breugh, 2013; Breugh & Starke, 2000; Moser, 2005). Earlier research (Rynes, 1989) found that recruitment literature focused primarily on pre-hire outcomes. However, current research (Breugh, 2013) suggests that post-hire outcomes have become the main focus of recruitment research with limited attention given to pre-hire outcomes. These two disparate views on the availability of research supports both Rynes (1989) claim that there are major gaps in theory and research and Breugh and Starke's (2000) belief that more attention needs to be given to the entire recruitment process.

“Our people are our biggest asset” (Blackman, 2006, p.367) is a phrase that guides the recruitment efforts of organizations (Blackman, 2006). Given that the success of an organization relies on its employees, organizations spend millions of dollars on efforts to recruit the best talent (Blackman, 2006; Dineen & Soltis, 2011). At one time, organizations were concerned with the quantity rather than the quality of applicants (Wanous, 1992). In fact, a primary goal of earlier scholars was to determine how to attract the most applicants (Wanous, 1992), which is evident in earlier definitions of recruitment. According to Rynes (1991), recruitment encompasses “all organizational practices and decisions that affect either the number, or types, of individuals who are willing to apply for, or to accept, a given vacancy” (p. 429). Similarly, Breugh (1992) views recruitment as “those organizational activities that (1) influence the number and/or types of applicants who apply for a position and/or (2) affect whether a job offer is accepted” (p. 4). Given that recruitment is a multistage process (Barber, 1998; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992), current research suggests that recruitment undertaken by employers has a purpose (Uggerslev et al., 2012) and intention (Taylor & Collins, 2000). For example, Barber

(1998) believes that the purpose of recruitment is to generate applicants, maintain applicant status, and influence job-choice decisions. Similarly, Taylor and Collins (2000) define recruitment as an organization's intention to identify a desirable group of applicants, attract them into its employee ranks, and retain them at least for the short term. Additionally, Breugh (2008) offers a current perspective on recruitment, describing external recruitment as a process where employers

1) bring a job opening to the attention of potential job candidates who do not currently work for the organization, (2) influence whether these individuals apply for the opening, (3) affect whether they maintain interest in the position until a job offer is extended, and (4) influence whether a job offer is accepted. (Breugh, 2008, p. 104)

Essentially, by combining former and current recruitment research, the concept of recruitment may be broadly defined as the process of identifying, locating, and attracting prospective applicants (Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992) and retaining new employees at least for the short-term (Taylor & Collins, 2000). The process of identifying (i.e., what type of individual does the organization want to recruit?) and locating (i.e., where should the organization recruit?) prospective applicants lays the groundwork for subsequent recruitment stages (Breugh & Starke, 2000). Establishing criterion for prospective applicants is the key to addressing recruitment concerns (i.e., what message should it convey to prospective applicants?) and progressing through the various stages of recruitment (Breugh & Starke, 2000). The latter two stages, attracting prospective applicants (Turban, 2001) and retaining new employees (Taylor & Collins, 2000) have received considerable attention in recent years. According to Thomas and Wise (1999), "attracting *and retaining* employees is the goal of most organizational recruitment

efforts” (p. 378).

One of the aims of recruitment is to attract prospective employees (Connerley, Carlson, & Ross, 2003). From an organizational perspective, “organizational attraction is the way in which employers strategically attempt to exploit their strengths in order to attract applicants to apply to a job vacancy” (Gomes & Neves, 2011, p. 684). Prospective applicants, however, view organizational attraction as “an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the [organization] as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship” (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001, p. 221). Generally, applicants’ initial impressions of an organization are influenced by job and organizational attributes such as pay, challenging work, and company image (Turban, 2001). Therefore, a key to attracting prospective employees is for the organization to know which factors applicants deem imperative for organizational attraction (Harold & Ployhart, 2008).

While there is some evidence to suggest that an organization’s attractiveness is influenced by an applicant’s perception of the job and organization (Butler et al., 2000; Carless & Imber, 2007a; Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004), little is known about the factors that may influence organizational attractiveness (Barber, 1998). Employers are tasked with the responsibility of learning how to attract applicants by viewing organizational factors from the applicants’ perspective (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Uggerslev et al., 2012). In a study examining which job and organizational factors are important to college graduates, Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) found employers can improve their attraction of graduates to sales positions through accurate knowledge of applicants’ ranking of attributes. Specifically, Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) found that recruiters misjudged the importance students placed on certain job and organizational



attributes. Their study revealed that students considered job satisfaction, job fit with their goals, recruiter morale during interview, financial stability, and the company image as their five most important attributes, but recruiters perceived training programs, advancement opportunities, recruiter morale, company reputation, and job fit with students' goals as the five attributes that would be most important to students. Furthermore, a re-examination of Weilbaker and Merritt (1992) study by Wiles and Spiro (2004) found that recruiters still had poor knowledge of the job and organizational attributes that students perceived as important when evaluating a job.

During early recruitment stages, the roles of recruiters are to provide applicants with important information about the organization and the job (Butler et al., 2000; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). However, recruitment efforts are often ineffective because recruiters do not accurately perceive what is important to younger applicants (Wiles & Spiro, 2004). Despite previous research providing a framework for understanding recruitment from the applicant's perspective (Behling, Labovitz, & Gainer, 1968) recent studies found significant differences remain between what factors students and recruiters perceive as most important (Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004). This lack of understanding on the part of employers speaks to a gap in the recruitment literature that has failed to address what factors are attractive to applicants (Robertson & Smith, 2001). The lack of research on organizational attraction is an impediment to organizational success as employers have limited empirical evidence to guide them through the process of attracting applicants (Turban, 2001). Ultimately, applicants are attracted to an organization by the perceived presence of job and organizational attributes (Turban et al., 1998; Weilbaker & Merritt, 1992; Wiles & Spiro, 2004), and subsequently, job and organizational attributes influence job choice (Boswell et al., 2003).

Research examining the impact of job and organizational attributes on job choice (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Boswell et al., 2003) such as job pursuit intentions (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Carless & Imber, 2007b) and job acceptance or rejection (Boswell et al., 2003; Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993) found that the job and organizational attributes important for organizational attraction may differ from the job and organizational attributes that influence applicants' job choices (Boswell et al., 2003). Prospective applicants engage in the job choice decision-making process at various stages of recruitment (Barber, 1998). In their study, Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) discovered that factors, which attract prospective applicants to organizations, are not identical to the factors that influence job pursuit intentions. Specifically, Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) found that students ranked ecological systems, pay, layoff policy, and promotional opportunities as important for organizational attraction but that pay emerged as a predictor of job pursuit intentions. Further, Boswell et al. (2003) hypothesized and subsequently discovered that a variety of job and organizational attributes are attractive to applicants at the onset of recruitment. However, as job seekers progress through recruitment and learn more about specific job and organizational characteristics and their own work preferences, their decision to pursue a job and/or accept/reject an offer may not be based on the same attributes perceived as important at the beginning of the process. For example, college students ranked company culture, advancement opportunities, nature of work, job training, and work-life balance as the most important job and organizational attributes. However, when asked about the factors that influence their job acceptance/rejection, the nature of work and company culture remained top-ranked factors, while job training and work-life balance plummeted significantly. Job location and monetary compensation emerged as two of the top five reasons students accept or reject job offers (Boswell et al., 2003). Just as Boswell et al. (2003) and Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) posited,

the results of the studies show that job and organizational attributes have varying influences on organizational attraction, job pursuit intentions, and job acceptance/rejection. Likewise, in an earlier work, Turban et al. (1993) found the nature of work to be a predictor of job acceptance and job location to be a determining factor of job rejection. Collectively, research findings of Turban et al. (1993) and Boswell et al. (2003) show that factors imperative for organizational attraction are more closely related to job acceptance rather than job rejection and that job choices are a result of several variables.

In addition to job and organizational attributes, person organization fit is another variable that may influence job choice as prospective employees choose to work at organizations where they perceive a fit (Cable & Judge, 1996). Person organization fit (P-O fit) is defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 2). The underlying premise of P-O fit is based on Schneider (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model that proposes that people are attracted to and seek employment at organizations where there is a match between their personality and values and the organization’s attributes and values. For example, when individuals are applying for a job, they go through a process in which they assess their work preferences and the job and organizational attributes to determine if a match exists (Carless, 2005). If there is congruence between their personality and work preferences and the organization’s characteristics, applicants will be attracted to an organization and may also choose to pursue a job and/or accept a job offer (Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005). In Cable and Judge’s (1996) study, job seekers were asked to rank the importance of P-O fit on job choice, and the results showed applicants’ perceptions of fit significantly impacted job choice. Cable and Judge (1996) also found that applicants with a high

level of P-O fit had greater job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. Contradictory findings by Carless (2005) and Cable and DeRue (2002) suggest that P-O fit is not a key determinant of job pursuit intentions or job acceptance. Although there is debate over the relative influence of person organization fit on job choice, “the fit between an individual’s values, beliefs and personal characteristics and those of the organization can shed light on the process in which job applicants find organizations attractive and make job-choice decisions” (Ng & Burke, 2005, p. 1197).

### **Millennials’ Attraction to Organizations and Job Choice**

Millennials are the newest generation to enter the workplace (Bell & Griffin, 2010; Gursoy et al., 2008; Luscombe et al., 2013). Millennials possess work values that affect what they seek in a job; consequently, the process of recruiting Millennials is difficult for employers (Behrens, 2009). Recruiters who use a one-size-fits-all approach ignore the unique characteristics of each generation (Kovary & Buahene, 2005). Given that each generation’s life experiences shape their attitudes, values, and employment perspectives (Kovary & Buahene, 2005), recruitment tactics and strategies that were effective for Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are likely to be ineffective for Millennials (Lindquist, 2008). Although Millennials are more similar to Baby Boomers than to Generation Xers, Millennials have distinct needs and preferences for work (“What really matters most to generation y employees?,” 2008). Therefore, to successfully attract Millennials, organizations must create recruitment strategies that speak directly to members of this generation (Kovary & Buahene, 2005).

Employers seeking to attract Millennials should know what factors drive their employment decisions and influence their job choice (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Lindquist, 2008). Research by Terjesen et al. (2007) found that job and organizational attributes influence

Millennials' decision to join and/or leave an organization, and further review of the literature suggests Millennials are attracted to organizations with a variety of job and organizational characteristics (Bell & Griffin, 2010; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Gursoy et al., 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Terjesen et al., 2007; Yeaton, 2008). While scholars do not agree on the specific job and organizational attributes Millennials find imperative for organizational attraction, there is a broad consensus on what Millennials seek from the organizations in which they join. Specifically, Millennials choose to work at companies with the following job and organizational attributes: work-life balance, cutting-edge technology, social/team environment, job promotions and training, and meaningful and challenging work assignments (Behrens, 2009; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Ehrhart, Mayer, & Ziegert, 2012; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

- Work-life balance. This organizational factor has been found by a number of researchers to be attractive to Millennials (Behrens, 2009; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Ehrhart et al., 2012; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). After spending long days in day care (Howe & Strauss, 2000) and witnessing their Baby Boomer parents' get laid off from work, even after dedicating the vast majority of their time to work (Bannon et al., 2011), Millennials seek a balance between work and their personal lives. They are adamant about not repeating the mistakes their parents made such as spending more time at work than with family (Bannon et al., 2011). Research suggests that when Millennials entered the workplace, the need for work-life balance increased (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). For example, in a recent survey by Deloitte, three-quarters of 500 Millennials

surveyed found work-life balance to be an important factor (“Generation y: Changing with the times,” 2011). Therefore, employee benefits such as “onsite day care, scholarships for employees’ children, adequate vacation time, maternity and parental leave, and adoption assistance would clearly be attractive to employees” (Bannon et al., 2011, p. 64). Organizations such as Google successfully attract Millennials because they offer the aforementioned employee benefits as well as “mothers’ rooms, domestic partnership programs, and transgender and transitioning workplace support” (Bannon et al., 2011, p. 64). Moreover, Millennials do not view work as their life but rather as a means to fund their lifestyles (“Generation Y: Changing with the Times, 2011). Millennials often adjust their work schedules to accommodate their busy lives (“Generation Y: Changing with the times, 2011). Accordingly, work is not considered a place to go, but rather something to do (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Companies such as Google, Orbitz, and Morningstar are leaders in attracting Millennials because their organizational practices demonstrate their commitment to allowing their employees free time (Bannon et al., 2011). Despite not wanting their work life to trickle into their personal lives (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009), the oldest Millennials (age 25-31) are somewhat dedicated to work with 34.5 percent working 45 hours or more per week (“Generation y: Changing with the times,” 2011). However, the office is not the only place Millennials would like to work. A study by Hewlett et al. (2009) discovered that 89% percent of about 5,000 Millennials surveyed would like flexible work options. Having the option to work remotely at least once a week is a motivator for Millennials because they can work at a time and place that is convenient for them (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009).

- Cutting-edge technology. Millennials expect up-to-date technology in their workplaces (Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2007). Millennials, who are also referred to as “digital natives” (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010, p. 212) grew up with technology at their fingertips (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennials are adept with technology and likely to be consumed with it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). For example, if Millennials are asked to research a topic or problem, they search the Internet before using other alternatives and are likely to take search results at face value without conducting additional research (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Hershatter and Epstein (2010) criticize Millennials for relying on technology for all aspects of their lives, but other scholars believe Millennials’ adeptness with technology can benefit organizations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Not only are Millennials likely to utilize communication and information technologies such as instant messaging to communicate with their co-workers and cloud computing and virtualization to analyze and solve problems, (Bannon et al., 2011) but they are also likely to teach their older co-workers (i.e. Baby Boomers) how to utilize the latest technology (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Ultimately, organizations desiring to attract Millennials should have an Internet presence that is cutting edge and highly functional (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).
- Social/team environment. Millennials do not want to work in isolation (Behrens, 2009; Bell & Griffin, 2010; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). When Millennials arrive to work they expect human interaction, which can be in the form of face-to-face contact, email, instant messaging, text messaging, or social networking (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Given Millennials strong desire for

socialization, organizations assume they want to use solely online mediums for communication at work (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). However, although Millennials believe technology makes it easier and faster to communicate with others and is the preferred method of communication, like the generations before them, they are interested in having face-face interactions (Luscombe et al., 2013; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Therefore, to attract Millennials, organizations should create environments that promote and encourage social interactions and teamwork (Gursoy et al., 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Martin, 2005; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Given that Millennials place a high value on collaboration, organizations should consider hosting social events to allow Millennials to network and build relationships with other employees (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). While maintaining a strong relationship with their coworkers is important to Millennials, several scholars contend that the relationship with their immediate managers is the key to attracting, motivating, and retaining Millennials (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Martin, 2005; Ng et al., 2010). Because Millennials are used to receiving feedback, praise, and guidance from their parents, they want open, consistent, and instant feedback from their direct supervisors (Gursoy et al., 2008; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Martin, 2005; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). According to popular literature, managers will have to give feedback to Millennials at least once a month (Zeiger, 2011). Further research by Thompson and Gregory (2012) posits that if managers view the Millennials' need for feedback as a positive trait, such as a willingness to learn, they may increase their likelihood of attracting and retaining Millennials. Essentially, managers who are able to provide clear expectations while promoting relationships and meeting individual needs



may find the negative stereotypes about Millennials being lazy, disloyal, needy, and entitled to be untrue (Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

- Job promotions and training. Career advancement and job training and development opportunities are also attractive job and organizational attributes to Millennials (Behrens, 2009; Bell & Griffin, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2007). Millennials have been reported to expect rapid career advancement, and critics say they are not interested in climbing the corporate ladder like preceding generations (Ng et al., 2010). Research suggests Millennials want to move into a new position by their sixth month on a job (Terjesen et al., 2007). Moreover, Millennials want to work at an organization where they are rewarded based on their performance rather than on age, length of service, or position (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). To Millennials, the availability of advancement opportunities is an indication that their employer values good performance (Luscombe et al., 2013). While there is a great deal of criticism of Millennials' expectations for work (Thompson & Gregory, 2012), Luscombe et al. (2013) views the Millennials' need for rapid advancement as a benefit rather than a hindrance. Instead of employers entertaining the stereotypes that Millennials are high maintenance and needy (Thompson & Gregory, 2012), Luscombe et al. (2013) suggest that organizations consider the Millennials' desire for instantaneous career growth as an opportunity to re-examine their training and development programs; and if organizations want to attract and retain Millennials, they should design programs that are specifically targeted at them. Furthermore, in a study by Terjesen et al. (2007), three of the top five organizational attributes that Millennials desired were "invest heavily in the training and development of their employees," "care about their employees as individuals," "clear

opportunities for long-term career progression”(p. 517). Ultimately, these job and organizational attributes should not be underestimated by employers because Millennials are more likely to join an organization where job promotions and training opportunities are immediately available to them (Terjesen et al., 2007); subsequently, they are also more likely to quit a job if better opportunities are available elsewhere (Ng et al., 2010).

- Meaningful and challenging work assignments. An opportunity to work for an organization that provides meaningful and/or challenging experiences is attractive to Millennials (Hauw & Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Terjesen et al., 2007). Meaningful work affords Millennials the opportunity to make a contribution to society; therefore, Millennials are constantly assessing an organization’s values and mission to determine if a company strives to accomplish more than making money (Ng et al., 2010). A recent study by Pew Research found that corporate responsibility is important to Millennials (Kohut et al., 2010). Similarly, Millennials want to be a part of larger projects at work and within the community that are rewarding; yet challenging (Kohut et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010). Given that Millennials place a high value on professional growth, they seek high-impact assignments from work (Behrens, 2009; Bell & Griffin, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2007). To demonstrate their commitment to social change, Millennials believe employers should offer them paid time off or sabbatical for community service or charitable work on behalf of the company (Kohut et al., 2010).

To attract Millennials, employers need to be creative in their recruitment approaches as Millennials are interested in organizations that seemingly possess the *cool factor* (Kovary & Buahene, 2005; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). While determining what makes an organization

cool is no easy task (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009), several scholars offer insight on the job and organizational attributes that Millennials consider attractive. As mentioned above, work-life balance, cutting-edge technology, social/team environment, job promotions and training, and meaningful/challenging work experiences are among the attributes Millennials find imperative for organizational attraction. Other attractive attributes include fun work environment, compensation and benefits, and redesigned workspaces (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Considering that Millennials will dominate the workforce for the next 20 years or more (Behrens, 2009; Hobart & Sendek, 2009), it may behoove employers to adjust their work environments to accommodate the needs of Millennials (Bannon et al., 2011). If employers are unable to furnish the necessary job and organizational attributes that Millennials desire in the workplace, they run the risk of losing prospective employees to organizations that are establishing Millennial-friendly work environments (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009).

Similarly, according to research, unrealistic job previews are known to influence Millennials' job choice (Terjesen et al., 2007). In their study, Terjesen et al. (2007) found that Millennials are attracted to and subsequently, choose to work at organizations if they perceive the organization has similar characteristics/values as their own (P-O fit). If Millennials discover after they are hired that an organization does not offer the attributes advertised during recruitment, they will quit their jobs to pursue opportunities at other organizations where they perceive a stronger fit (Terjesen et al., 2007). Essentially, it is becoming extremely difficult for employers to retain younger employees (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009). Because post-hire outcomes such as employee retention (Breaugh & Starke, 2000) and employee turnover (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009; Moser, 2005) are major organizational concerns (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005, 2009) this study seeks to examine those areas further.

## **Employee Retention**

Over the last decade, the concept of employee retention has emerged as an organizational imperative (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Branham, 2000; Phillips & Connell, 2003). Employee retention is a main priority for most organizations because failing to retain top talent is detrimental for organizations seeking to remain competitive (Hausknecht, Rodda, & Howard, 2009). The Harvard Business Essentials (2002) defines retention as the opposite of turnover; however, Waldman and Arora (2004) claim that retention is not merely the opposite of turnover but rather the measurement of what an organization desires. Specifically, Waldman and Arora (2004) believe employers should focus their attention on employee retention (i.e., who goes, when they leave, how long they stayed, how much knowledge they take with them, and how it impacts an organization). Smith (2001) offers a more encompassing concept for retaining employees, which he calls retentionship. According to Smith (2001), retentionship is the “process of attracting, selecting, caring about, training, developing, and keeping a workforce so that it can perform its job within an organization” (p. 19). Research suggests that employee retention, which Phillips and Connell (2003) define as “the percentage of employees remaining in the organization” (p. 2) is a critical factor in determining organizational success (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005; Branham, 2000).

Although organizations believe employee retention is important, employers are having difficulty keeping their employees. Considering the demographic changes taking place in the workplace (i.e., the retirement of Baby Boomers and the entry of the Millennials), retaining the right talent during economic downturns is extremely important (Phillips & Connell, 2003; Steel, Griffeth, & Hom, 2002; Uggerslev et al., 2012). In tight labor markets, the demand for skilled and qualified workers is greater than the available supply, and because Baby Boomers are

retiring, there is a limited availability of experienced workers (Dohm, 2000; Rappaport, Bancroft, & Okum, 2003). Without a skilled and proficient workplace, an organization may suffer a loss of knowledge capital and productivity (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002; Smart, 2008). For example, organizations with low retention of high performers may wind up operating their businesses with a mediocre workforce, and maintaining a workplace of low-skilled employees hinders an organization's ability to remain competitive (Rappaport et al., 2003). In today's economy, knowledge is a valuable company asset (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002). In order to retain high-performing workers, employers need to understand what makes employees stay with a particular company (Hausknecht et al., 2009).

A significant retention factor is training (Olesen, 1999). Employees are constantly seeking ways to develop their skills, and training in technical and interpersonal skills are in high demand, especially for new graduates (Olesen, 1999). New graduates view training as an opportunity to enhance their skills, and subsequently, increase their employability (Olesen, 1999). Unlike their parents, who mainly focused on developing knowledge and skills for a specific job, younger employees desire to receive training in areas such as interpersonal communication, parenting, weight management, customer service, conflict resolution, and teamwork (Olesen, 1999). Olesen (1999) also found that new graduates consider training as a means to an end. Specifically, younger employees are seeking jobs that will prepare them for the next job (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Olesen, 1999). Moreover, when employers provide training opportunities, employees feel valued and respected. For example, during an interview about what makes employees stay, a young employee expressed how she felt about the training program at her new job. She stated, "Just that the company is willing to invest in me motivates

me to give back. I feel that a lot of people want a company to really value them. Training and development are one way a company shows that” (Olesen, 1999, p.51).

Additionally, from an organizational perspective, training allows employers to develop the type of employees they need (Olesen, 1999). Due to the shortage of skilled workers, employers are unable to find candidates with high-levels of expertise; therefore, training aids employers to equip their employees with the tools necessary for meeting future organizational goals (Olesen, 1999). In addition to skills training, opportunities for career advancement, educational training, mentoring, autonomy, and greater responsibilities are motivators for 60,000 employees who quit their jobs in 1998, Olesen (1999) notes. With the Baby Boomers retiring there is a huge learning curve in the workplace and as a result, training is emerging as an organizational imperative (Olesen, 1999). By the time the Baby Boomers depart from the workplace, Millennials need to be trained and proficient in the areas that have been dominated by the older generations (Dohm, 2000). Considering that organizations are comprised of individuals whose levels of expertise vary (Hausknecht et al., 2009), knowledge of why employees at different levels within an organization choose to stay may help an organization increase the retention of high-performers (Hausknecht et al., 2009).

In their study, Hausknecht et al. (2009) hypothesize that employees at different performance levels (i.e., high performers and low performers) and varying job levels (i.e., hourly employees and manager/professional employees) will have disparate expectations for work. Their hypothesis is supported by the results of their study, which suggest that “high performers were more likely than low performers to report staying because of advancement opportunities, constituent attachments, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and organizational prestige” (Hausknecht et al., 2009, p. 284). Low performers reported they are more likely to stay because

of pay and benefits, whereas high performers are more likely to stay if they feel fairly treated, enjoy their work, and believe a future exists with the organization (Hausknecht et al., 2009). Due to the disparate results of the study, Hausknecht et al. (2009) believe that low performers appear marginalized at work while high performers may feel more valued. For that reason, Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2008) argue that an organization's most critical employees are the solid performers who are reliable, dependable, and steady, although any employee contributing to the bottom line is valuable regardless of title and position (Smith, 2001). For example, "a customer service person in a laundromat or a server in a restaurant is a key employee, especially if she makes each customer's experience as pleasant and productive as possible" (Smith, 2001, p. 19).

The challenge for employers is to keep good employees while simultaneously, ridding themselves of employees who do not fit with the organization (Smith, 2001). Essentially, when nonperformers leave and solid performers remain, organization retention is functional (Smart, 2008). Functional retention can result in greater overall performance of an organization (Johnson, Griffeth, & Griffin, 2000). Conversely, retention is dysfunctional when solid performers leave and nonperformers remain with the organization (Smart, 2008). Dysfunctional retention can lead to lower performance of an organization (Johnson et al., 2000). Essentially, retaining solid performers is a critical management concern (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2008).

Managers need their solid performers to choose to remain with their organization even when other opportunities are available (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2008). In their survey, Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2008) asked more than 17,000 people why they stayed in an organization for a while, and the 10 most common reasons (in order of frequency and as of October 2007) are as follows:

1. Exciting work and challenge

2. Career growth, learning, and development
3. Working with great people
4. Fair pay
5. Supportive management/good boss
6. Being recognized, valued, and respected
7. Benefits
8. Meaningful work and making a difference
9. Pride in the organization, its mission, and its products
10. Great work environment and culture

Similarly, Smith (2001) found that while money is an important factor, the work environment, management, and the quality of the job are the most important factors for employee retention. To retain talent, Siegfried (2008) suggests that managers create an employee referral program, provide employees with challenging work assignments and exposure within the organization, and promote a culture of adaptability and flexibility. Companies that remain opposed to creating a work environment conducive for their business and employees will lag significantly behind their competitors (Siegfried, 2008). Therefore, innovative retention strategies are preferred over standard retention strategies (Phillips & Connell, 2003). According to Phillips & Connell (2003) there are six distinct problems with implementing outdated retention policies:

- Proactive versus reactive. Many organizations are reactive to retention issues rather than proactive. By being proactive, employers can prevent the issue from arising.
- Developing too many preventive programs. Implementing too many preventive programs can be costly for employers. Before spending money, employers should forecast whether



or not the program will generate sufficient funds to offset the cost for establishing the program.

- Searching for solutions. Countless times managers and human resource professionals seek solutions to their retention issue by attending seminars, workshops, and conferences. While these activities are helpful in discerning broad retention issues, employers should be careful not to rely heavily on the information because it may not directly address their retention concern.
- Too many solutions. Organizations base their employee retention strategies on a broad range of solutions, which do not necessarily address the need or problem. Implementing too many solutions can lead to an excessive number of programs, initiatives, plans, and policies.
- Mismatch between need and solution. Organizations implementing retention strategies often fail to address the issue at hand. Given the array of solutions available to employers, it is sometimes difficult to select the appropriate solution. Steel et al. (2002) posit that there are two types of strategies: blanket strategies and focused strategies. In short, blanket strategies reach a broader audience whereas focused strategies are tailored for a specific audience, such as Millennials (Steel et al., 2002). To successfully increase the retention of a certain demographic of employees, employers should gather data from that population because blank retention strategies appeal to the masses (Hausknecht et al., 2009) whereas focused retention strategies speaks to a particular group of employees.
- Lack of payoff. During the development phase of a retention strategy, employers should build in a process for measuring the impact of their retention strategy.

An antidote of poor retention strategies is the formation of a high-retention organization

(Smith, 2001). To establish a high-retention organization, the following eight elements must be present:

1. A clear sense of direction. People want to be part of an organization that stands for something and gives them personal fulfillment and meaning. When an organization means something, people are willing to give more.
2. Caring management. Interpersonal skills are an essential element of the high-retention culture.
3. Flexible benefits and schedules adapted to the needs of the individual. In today's workplace, flexibility rules. One-size-fits-all approaches to benefits have long since lost their effectiveness. Workers will migrate to companies whose benefit packages and schedules help them meet the demands of their life, whether they are single parents, adults who care for aging parents, older workers, younger workers, part-time workers, or telecommuters.
4. Open communication. In our technological age, people have a large appetite for information, and they want it instantly. High-retention workplaces place a high priority on delivering the right information to the right people at the right time using the right methodology.
5. A charged work environment. People want to enjoy their work. They shun boring, bureaucratic, lifeless work environments.
6. Performance management. Many employers believe it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find competent, motivated workers who have good attitudes and work ethics. Because of this, knowing how to manage performance is more important in creating a high-retention workplace.

7. Reward and recognition. All humans need to feel appreciated. Reward and recognition programs help meet that need.
8. Training and development. Today's workers want opportunity. They want to develop their skills and potential and enhance their ability to contribute and succeed.

Likewise, Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2008) suggest strategy for retention that includes building careers, being transparent with staff, listening to employee issues and concerns, providing recognition in forms other than pay, and helping staff align their work values with organizational values. Ultimately, retention is crucial (Siegfried, 2008), and employers who successfully implement retention strategies will notice an increase in productivity and lower cost associated with losing an employee (Smith, 2001).

### **Employer Turnover and The Cost of Losing An Employee**

The process of an employee leaving an organization is called employee turnover (Mobley, 1982). Despite Mobley's (1982) suggestion that managers need to analyze, understand, and effectively manage the amount of employees leaving an organization, employee turnover still remains a challenge for employers (Proudfoot, Corr, Guest, & Dunn, 2009). While some organizations consider employee turnover as the "necessary evil" (Hinkin & Bruce, 2000, p. 17), managers are realizing the serious impact of turnover on organizations (Phillips & Connell, 2003). Several scholars agree that the cost associated with losing, and subsequently replacing, an employee is high (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001; Preenen, De Pater, Van Vianen, & Keijzer, 2011). According to Phillips & Connell (2003), employee turnover impacts an organization's knowledge capital, productivity, service quality, administrative effort, work relationships, job satisfaction, and company image. Additionally, when employees leave, companies lose the time they invested in their employees (Smart, 2008), and time has a direct

effect on money (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008).

Employee turnover also affects an organization's financial position (Phillips & Connell, 2003). When employees leave an organization, employers must pay separation, replacement, training, and loss of productivity costs (Hinkin & Bruce, 2000; Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008). Consequently, when replacing an employee, managers can expect to accrue cost in the following categories:

- Predeparture. Employers accrue costs for the amount of time they spend preparing and conducting exit interviews.
- Recruitment. The direct costs associated with recruitment efforts such as promotional materials, advertising, and recruiting sources.
- Selection. The selection process is one of the most expensive components. Employers typically accrue costs for interviewing, background and reference checks, and travel expenses.
- Orientation and training. Orienting and training new employees is time-consuming, and the primary costs are associated with the amount of time it takes for employers to formally train their employees.
- Productivity loss. Although productivity is difficult to assess and monitor, productivity loss accounts for the largest percentage of total costs (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008).

Knowing the actual costs of turnover, defined as “the percentage of employees leaving an organization for whatever reason(s)” (Phillips & Connell, 2003, p. 2) is an essential step in managing, and subsequently, reducing turnover (Phillips & Connell, 2003). Essentially, knowing how much turnover costs an organization would provide employers incentives to manage

retention (Phillips & Connell, 2003) and alleviate turnover (Hinkin & Bruce, 2000). Typically, turnover costs are expressed in terms of percentages (Phillips & Connell, 2003) and/or the sum total of an employee's annual salary. For example, according to David Morris of Morris and Associates, "the average cost to replace a professional employee making \$15 an hour is \$5,190" (Buck & Watson, 2002, p.177). Similarly, Hobart and Sendek (2009) note that the voluntary turnover can cost an organization at least 25% of the employee's annual compensation, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics. Furthermore, Vernon and Commander (1998) report that replacing an employee can "cost 50 to 60% of the first year's salary, and up to 100% for certain specialized, high skill positions" (p. 5). Ultimately, there are high costs associated with replacing an employee (Preenen et al., 2011) and as a result, managers are primarily concerned with costs incurred when employees elect to voluntarily leave their organization (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2005).

### **Voluntary Turnover**

Voluntary turnover is one of three types of turnover; the other two are retirement and involuntary (Caillier, 2011). Retirement occurs when an employee leaves after meeting specific service requirements; involuntary turnover occurs when the organization terminates the agency with an employee through firing or layoffs, and voluntary turnover occurs when an employee quits (Selden & Moynihan, 2000). Employees voluntarily quit their jobs for many reasons, including bad hiring decisions, poor management, lack of rewards and recognition, lack of competitive pay, and negative work environments (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000), all factors that managers directly control (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008). Employees also quit because of such factors as relationships with supervisors, job content, and working conditions (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Given the nature and costs of employee turnover, losing a quality employee to

voluntary turnover impacts the organization (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008). Employees who choose to remain with the company during periods of turnover may have to spend additional hours working on projects originally assigned to former employees, and the resulting overexertion may cause those employees to perform poorly on their own tasks and subsequently seek employment opportunities elsewhere (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008).

Although an employee's intention to quit a job stems from dissatisfaction, that dissatisfaction is only one of several steps people experience before deciding to quit a job (Mobley, 1977). According to Mobley (1977), the next step after experiencing job dissatisfaction is the intention to leave and following several additional steps may be an employee's actual decision to leave an organization. Another factor that may influence an employee's decision to quit is their perception of fit (Cable & Judge, 1996). In their study, Cable and Judge (1996) found employees with a high level of person organization fit (P-O fit) were more satisfied with their job and subsequently, less likely to have turnover intentions. Likewise, Tracey and Hinkin (2008) insist that fitting the right person to the job reduces employee turnover. Furthermore, the relationships that employees have with their managers are known to predict turnover (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008). Employees are less likely to leave an organization if they have a positive, open, and supportive relationship with their managers (Tracey & Hinkin, 2008) because "people leave managers, not organizations" (Tate, 2005, p. 2). Managers also play a key role in reducing turnover of Millennials (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Ng et al., 2010). For example, Millennials, like Generation Xers, expect frequent and open feedback from their immediate supervisors and also expect managers to adapt to their needs (Martin, 2005; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). According to research, managers must adjust their practices to accommodate the needs of a new generation of employees or run

the risk of experiencing high turnover of Millennials (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009)

### **High Voluntary Turnover of Millennials**

While research has sought to understand why employees leave an organization (Moynihan & Landuyt, 2008), the high voluntary turnover of Millennials remains a major concern for employers seeking to overhaul their aging workforce (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Even after gaining a better understanding of the Millennials, organizations are having difficulty recruiting and retaining them (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). On average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), Millennials are quitting their jobs in 3.2 years. A study by ModernSurvey shows a slight increase in job tenure for Millennials, with Millennials expecting to stay at their jobs for 5.74 years (“The impact of the new long-term employee,” 2013). To make matters worse, a study by PwC found that only 18% of the 4,364 university graduates surveyed expect to stay with their current employer for the long term and that 25% expect to have six or more employers over their life span (“Millennials at Work,” 2011). Additionally, an astounding 57% of younger workers believe it is not likely that they will remain with their current employer for the rest of their life (Kohut et al., 2010). Similarly, a study by ModernSurvey on employee engagement found that 39% of Millennials are seeking jobs at other companies (“The impact of the new long-term employee,” 2013). Lastly, a study by Swiggard (2011) found that when compared to Baby Boomers and Generation Xers, Millennials are half as likely to stay more than 5 years on a job and twice as likely to leave a job within a year. Although these findings highlight the Millennials’ tendency to quit their jobs shortly after they are hired (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009), Swiggard (2011) believes that his study does not capture why Millennials are more likely to leave within 1 year, speaking to the need to investigate why Millennials quit their jobs. Based on the average turnover rates of Millennials,

several authors contend that Millennials “are uninterested in a job for life” (Oliver, 2006, p. 62); “are not overly loyal to any organization” (Yeaton, 2008, p. 68); “are interested in how [a] job will help them build immediate skills” (Hulett, 2006, p. 17), and view long-term as 1 year (Martin, 2005). Given these assertions, the voluntary turnover of Millennials appears to be an unavoidable situation. However, Abbasi and Hollman (2000) believe that managers can prevent employee turnover by understanding the causes of employee departures. Research from several authors shows Millennials *may* quit their jobs for any of the following reasons:

- Lack of perceived fit (Terjesen et al., 2007)
- Poor relationships with managers (Martin, 2005)
- A search for greater opportunities (Ng et al., 2010)
- Lack of inherent loyalty (Hulett, 2006)
- Unmet needs (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009)

Although Millennials have a propensity to quit their jobs shortly after they hired (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009), the reasons given for this voluntary turnover (see above) are mere assumptions and/or narrow in scope because there is sparse research that explores the high voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. Current research on Millennials provides answers to the following questions: Who are the Millennials? (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Strauss & Howe, 1991); What do Millennials look for in a job/organization? (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fonner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008); and when do Millennials quit their jobs? (Bannon et al., 2011; Hulett, 2006; “The impact of the new long-term employee,” 2013). There is a limited body of knowledge that explores the reasons Millennials say they quit their jobs. To fill the gap, the present study builds on current research by discovering what Millennials



perceive are the reasons they quit their jobs and looks at how managers can improve their retention of Millennials. Ultimately, the Millennials' responses to these questions will aid further understanding of the overarching central research question: What does it mean to Millennials when they quit their jobs?

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

In this chapter, the research methodology for the study is described. Choosing a research approach, identifying a population and sample, developing an instrument, checking validity and reliability, collecting data, identifying biases, minimizing ethical issues, and performing data analysis are among the processes described in this chapter. The purpose of the study was to discover the reasons why Millennials perceive they chose to quit their former jobs and subsequently, what it means to them when they decide to leave an organization.

#### **Restatement of Research Questions**

The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

- Q1. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers?
- Q2. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers?
- Q3. What do Millennials think about loyalty to employers?
- Q4. To what degree do an organization's attributes influence Millennials perception of fit?

#### **Description of the Research Methodology**

A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was undertaken to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective. Qualitative research is a form of inquiry in which researchers seek to interpret and make sense of the meaning individuals ascribe to phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers seek to explore and understand multiple meanings and realities given to a specific phenomenon for the purpose of demonstrating how multiple views of a

phenomenon can emerge through interpretive inquiry. Phenomenon is a human experience or problem that can be better understood by exploring the lived experiences and personal perceptions of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Studying phenomenon from a qualitative perspective consists of developing research questions, collecting data in a natural setting, and analyzing data inductively to find patterns and themes (Creswell, 2007). To ensure that appropriate information was gathered for the study under examination, qualitative researchers must choose between one of five approaches of qualitative inquiry: narrative, case study, grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology. Given the nature of the study, a phenomenological approach was selected as the strategy for inquiry.

As stated earlier, phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that seeks understanding of the common or shared experiences of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative researchers typically use a phenomenological lens to view an issue or problem because knowledge of individuals' experiences with a particular phenomenon can aid researchers in developing and implementing policies and practices (Creswell, 2007). In viewing phenomenology as a means to capture an individual's true feelings, insights, emotions, and perceptions, the researcher considered the high voluntary turnover a phenomenon that could be better understood and subsequently alleviated by exploring the experience of quitting a job from the Millennials' perspective. Considering that quantitative research on Millennials is plentiful, utilizing a phenomenological approach helped the researcher discover the reasons Millennials choose to quit their jobs and contributed qualitative data to research on Millennials. Prior research on Millennials relies heavily on statistical data to inform research and practitioners about members of the Millennial generation; therefore, qualitative research using a phenomenological approach was ideal for this study

because it is focused on translating the participants' words into meaning rather than quantifying their responses. Lastly, the researcher believes qualitative study is imperative given the limited availability of qualitative research on Millennials.

As an investigative form of research, qualitative studies using a phenomenological approach consists of the researcher conducting in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007). There are three types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semistructured interviews. Structured interviews occur when the qualitative researcher administers standard interview questions to all participants in the study (Firmin, 2008a). Unstructured and semistructured interviews, on the other hand, share similar traits. An unstructured interview consists of the researcher asking open-ended questions to gather the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon in question (Firmin, 2008b), while a semistructured interview incorporates aspects of both structured and unstructured interviews. According to Salmons (2010), semistructured interviews "endeavor to balance the organization and framework of the structured approach with the spontaneity and flexibility of the unstructured interview" (p. 51). The present study used semistructured interviews to gather data from a sample of people who are representative of Millennials.

### **Process for Selection of Data Sources**

The study's research methodology employed three types of sampling: purposeful criterion, and snowball sampling.

**Purposeful sampling.** According to Creswell (2007), in purposeful sampling the researcher solicits the participation of individuals who represent the population under examination and can inform the researcher about the research problem. Data was collected from Millennials who experienced the phenomenon and were willing to share their personal perceptions and lived experiences regarding the phenomenon.

Criterion sampling. Prior to soliciting participants, the researcher decided who should be sampled and what form of sampling would take place (Creswell, 2007). To ensure all participants experienced the phenomenon, the researcher employed the criterion sampling strategy. This strategy is most often used in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to establish specific requirements and guidelines (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) believe criteria sampling is used by researchers who can find representatives of the demographic being studied.

Snowball sampling. Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher solicits the participation of individuals who in return find other individuals who fit the criteria to participate in the study (Creswell, 2007). Six prospective participants were obtained through this method.

After determining the most appropriate strategies for selecting participants, the target number of participants for the study was identified. Typically, the sample size for qualitative research is relatively small compared to other research methods (Keegan, 2009; Swiggard, 2011), although Creswell (2007) has seen a narrative study with one or two samples and phenomenological studies ranging from one to 325 participants. Studies similar to the research being undertaken in this study used a sample of size of 15 (Smart, 2008) and 24 (Swiggard, 2011), which aligns with the perspective of Miles and Huberman (1994) who believe that:

qualitative research usually works with small samples of people, nestled in their context and studied in depth, unlike quantitative research which aims for large numbers of contextual-stripped cases and seeks statistical significance. (p. 27)

Due to the intricacies of qualitative research, a sample size of 10-15 was initially expected. However, through targeted recruitment efforts, 52 people were found and 25 of them decided to participate. That sample size was deemed sufficient because according to Kvale (1996),

qualitative studies collecting data through interviews usually consists of 5-25 participants.

To meet the sampling criteria, participants had to be Millennials who graduated from college (Bachelor's degree or higher) and who quit one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after they graduated from college and within 5 years of being hired. Given the sampling criteria, recruitment efforts were aimed toward graduate students at a large Christian University in the West. After receiving permission from the university's Dean and subsequently, approval from the Institutional Review Board, a recruitment strategy was implemented to solicit graduate students to participate in the study. The recruitment strategy consisted of the researcher performing the following tasks:

- Obtaining approval from faculty teaching graduate courses at the university to visit their classes to inform students about the study and invite them to participate. Classroom visits are necessary because it affords the researcher the opportunity to reach a larger pool of prospective participants in a group setting. Additionally, in a classroom, the students may be more observant, attentive, and therefore, more interested and willing to participate in the study.
- Engaging in a conversation with students while on campus and in passing to solicit their participation in my study
- Asking program directors to inform students of the study via email solicitation
- Reaching out to officers of graduate student groups for access to their student members/events
- Asking participants to find other individuals who fit the criteria to participate in the study.

## **Data Collection Process**

The main source of recruitment was classroom solicitation; however, other strategies, as outlined above also yielded a significant number of participants. As previously stated, approval was obtained from select faculty at the university to visit their classes to make an announcement to students (Appendix A). The classroom announcement informed the prospective participants of the purpose and goals of the study. Next, an email with a consent form attached (Appendix B) was sent to invite all interested students who met the sampling criteria to participate in an in-depth, semistructured phone interview. During phone interviews, participants are relaxed and open to talking freely and disclosing confidential information (Novick, 2008). Another way to collect data is by email interviewing. Although not the preferred method for the study, seven of the 25 participants, all of whom were referrals from another participant, were allowed to submit their interview responses via email. Six of the seven participants who submitted their responses via email participated in a follow-up phone interview. Email interviewing was an effective strategy for this study because it allowed the researcher to fulfill the request of participants who preferred this method. Benefits of email interviewing include but are not limited to decreased cost in transcription and increased participation of individuals located geographically across the United States (Meho, 2006).

In regards to data recording methods, a tape recorder was used to record the interviews. To begin recording using the audio recorder, consent was obtained from the participants and record was clicked on the tape recorder. Moreover, the speaker phone function was employed for the interviews and to ensure the highest quality of data was captured from the participants, the researcher placed the tape recorder near the phone in an upright position. The researcher also took short-hand notes during the interview for backup purposes. Given that audio recordings and

transcriptions were used as the primary sources of data collection, handwritten notes were an alternative source of data in the event there was a malfunction with audio recording. Lastly, journaling was employed to note and reflect on the participant's voice tone as well as the common themes throughout each interview.

### **Interview Process**

The researcher sent the graduate students an email to arrange the interviews. In the body of the email was an overview of the study's purpose, goals, and potential risks. If the students agreed to be a part of the study, an interview was arranged on the date and time most convenient for them. If students were slow to respond to the email, they were sent two reminder notices, with the first reminder yielding the greatest number of participants. Before the interview took place, the researcher also provided the participants with a copy of the interview questions (Appendix C), which ensured they were aware of and prepared for the types of questions to be answered.

The interviews took place over the phone and via email. Studies show that qualitative researchers collect data in a natural setting such as an office, home, or cyberspace (Creswell, 2007; Lichtman, 2012). In these settings, utilizing a phone or email is a practical communication medium in qualitative research. To understand the high voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspectives, the researcher utilized an interview guide for the entire the duration of the interview. An interview guide ensured the same general information was collected from each participant (Herbst & Coldwell, 2004). The researcher carefully crafted interview questions that provide answers to the research questions that were explored in the study. Those questions were then reviewed and organized in a logical manner. According to Herbst and Coldwell (2004), researchers should approach the interview objectively and with the



intent to obtain the participants' personal perceptions and lived experiences of a particular problem. A strategy for capturing data with rich descriptions and deep insights is to build a trusting relationship with the participant. One way to develop trust and increase the participants' comfort level is to ask broader questions in the beginning of the interview. Therefore, specific questions about the phenomenon that was explored were asked after the participants responded to general questions about Millennials in the workplace. Essentially, the interview guide served as the foundational basis for structuring and conducting the interviews, which lasted between 30 minutes to 90 minutes. After the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed each one and uploaded the transcripts to HyperResearch, a qualitative data analysis software, for coding purposes.

### **Reliability of Interview Protocol**

Prior to using the interview guide, the researcher had to prove that the instrument was reliable. According to Roberts (2010), reliability is the degree in which an instrument consistently measures the same information each time it is used. An instrument is also considered reliable when descriptions are ascribed to the same experience by different individuals or one individual on several occasions (Silverman, 2005). A field test was conducted to determine the reliability of the instrument used for the study. Roberts (2010) believes "any time you create your own instrument or modify an existing one, it must be field tested" (p. 154). For the field test, the researcher selected three individuals who were similar to the population being investigated in the study to pretest the instrument (interview guide). The individuals who participated in the field test provided their feedback on the clarity of instructions and questions, length of interview, continuity, accuracy of wording, technical difficulties experienced, and their level of engagement. Lastly, the reliability of the data was enhanced by using a quality audio

recording device. The purpose of using a quality audio recording device was to capture the crucial pauses and overlaps that occur during qualitative interviews which in return, helped make certain the researcher obtained the most reliable information from the participants.

### **Validity of Interview Protocol and Findings**

Validity of an interview protocol is described as the degree to which an instrument measures what is supposed to be measured (Roberts, 2010). For this study, the interview guide was designed to measure the voluntary turnover of Millennials. To ensure the participants' voices were heard and truly reflected in the findings, the researcher avoided using leading questions during the interview and consequently, influencing the participants' perspective on the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher also asked Millennials (similar to the population being explored) to provide feedback on the interview questions. Given that the purpose of an interview is to understand a particular issue from the participants' points of view (Herbst & Coldwell, 2004), obtaining feedback from individuals who were not participating in the study, but who also represented the population under examination helped the researcher determine the effectiveness of the interview guide and establish an appropriate structure for the interview. In addition to validating the study's instrument, validation in qualitative research is the researcher's attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2007). To determine if the findings are accurate, researchers need to employ validity strategies (Creswell, 2009). Strategies for checking validity in qualitative research include member checking, peer debriefing, and bias minimization (Creswell, 2009). The researcher employed member checking of the interpretations of their stories (Appendix D). Soliciting the opinions of the participants is important for qualitative research because an assessment of the accuracy of the findings is best described by the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, this validity strategy allows the

participants to strike any information they feel is not a true representation of their experience. Moreover, to help with the interpretation of data, the researcher implemented a peer debriefing session with a colleague who is a member of Generation Xers and former manager of Millennials at a large organization. During the peer debriefing session, the researcher asked the peer reviewer to review the coded data and provide feedback on the meanings and interpretations. To document the findings from the review sessions with the peer reviewer, the researcher kept a journal and created a spreadsheet to track their progress toward reaching a general consensus on the findings. Furthermore, in an effort to validate the findings, the researcher remained objective, avoided generalizations, and clarified any biases. Maintaining objectivity increases the quality of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Researchers should convey the overall experience of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Creswell, 2007) and protect readers and the study's participants from their biases. According to Malterud (2001), biases are undesirable and hidden misrepresentations of information that should be accounted for by the researcher in qualitative studies. In this present study, the researcher shares her experience with and perspective on the topic. The researcher also disclosed desired outcomes for employers and the motivation behind the study. The continuous iteration of the researcher's motives, perceptions, and experiences is called reflexivity (Malterud, 2001). According to Roberts (2010), collecting and reporting accurate data is imperative for research. The researcher plans to also minimize biases by reporting multiple perspectives rather than generalizing the findings and skewing the data.

### **Description of Data Analysis Process**

In the simplest form, data analysis is described by Boeije (2009) as the “processing of data in order to answer the research questions” (p. 75). The research questions for this study were

as follows:

Q1. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers?

Q2. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers?

Q3. What do Millennials think about loyalty to employers?

Q4. To what degree do an organization's attributes influence Millennials perception of fit?

Answers to the aforementioned questions helped to define what it means to Millennials when they quit their jobs. Research findings are determined according to Creswell (2007) after the researcher has implemented a series of data analysis strategies such as the following:

- Describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. Not only did the researcher practice reflexivity throughout the study, but she also bracketed any assumptions, personal experiences, and interests that could influence how she viewed, interpreted, and reported the data.
- Transcribe the data. Of the 25 interviews, 18 were transcribed manually, meaning no software was used to help with the transcription process. Since the remaining seven interviews were conducted via email it was not necessary to transcribe them. The transcribed interviews were then uploaded in HyperResearch, and the researcher began organizing, analyzing, and coding the data.
- Organize the data. HyperResearch was utilized to organize and group the data into relevant categories based on the research questions. After grouping the data, the categories were filtered so that the data for each research question could be analyzed

independently of the others. Through this process, significant statements were identified to help describe how the participants experienced the phenomenon.

- Develop a list of significant statements. Significant statements were extracted from the transcripts for further analysis called horizontalization of the data. Horizontalization requires the researcher to list the significant statements horizontally on a document to ensure each statement is provided equal worth (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, an Excel spreadsheet was created to list the significant statements extracted from the interview transcripts in a horizontal manner. There were over 300 significant statements, and each one was listed according to the research questions being answered. Given the large number of significant statements, the researcher sifted through each one and reduced the statements to themes through a process known as coding. To effectively locate the themes and patterns, the researcher utilized a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis helps to identify, analyze, and report patterns and themes across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, to protect against the misinterpretation and falsification of data, a peer reviewer was asked to look at the data objectively and assess the codes assigned to the data. The peer reviewer was sent a copy of the participants' responses to the interview questions and a list of the significant statements/codes. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by using an alphanumeric code rather than the participants' legal names. The peer reviewer examined the information and determined whether he agreed or disagreed with the researcher's interpretation. The researcher and the peer reviewer engaged in several conversations to discuss the coded data. If there were any discrepancies, the coding was discussed until a general consensus was reached. After reaching a consensus on the coded data, *what* the participants in the study

experienced in quitting their former employers and *how* they experienced it was determined (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*Example of Codes and Textural and/or Structural Descriptions*

Code	Textural and/or or Structural Statements (i.e., what was experienced and/or how it was experienced)
Opportunity	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they expressed that (a) they discovered after joining the organization that the opportunity for growth was not available; (b) they never considered the job a long-term opportunity; and (c) they quit at least in part to pursue another job opportunity. Some participants were told during job interviews that growth opportunities would be available but later learned there were limited or no growth opportunities and decided to seek opportunities elsewhere
Work environment	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they described experiencing difficulty “fitting” into the environment. Based on interactions with coworkers and involvement within the organization, the participants realized they did not fit with the organization’s culture.
Management issues	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they spoke of having issues with management, including lack of respect, support/training, and recognition; excessive criticism; high expectations; and management style. These issues surfaced when they had conversations with their supervisors regarding completion of tasks, job responsibilities, and career advancement opportunities.
Job responsibilities	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they said their job responsibilities were not challenging, not fulfilling, not aligned with their career goals, and limited.
Physical, emotional health	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they expressed having experienced physical and emotional health issues primarily due to the work environment and their ongoing issues with management.
Location	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they expressed desires to work for an organization located close to their homes, schools, and leisure activities.
Compensation	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they said they left to seek higher pay
Family obligation	When the participants talked about voluntarily quitting their jobs, they described quitting to stay at home with their child(ren).

*Note.* The codes are not ranked in order of importance

## **Institutional Review Board**

Approval from the Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University was obtained to conduct research activities such as soliciting participants, conducting interviews, and waiving the written informed consent requirement (Appendix E). To comply with the IRB standards for protecting human subjects, the researcher did the following:

- Obtained consent from the participants to audio record their interviews
- Informed the participants their participation was voluntary and of any possible risks
- Assured the participants their responses were going to be kept confidential
- Provided the participants with a copy of the interview questions to review beforehand
- Provide the participants with an option to request a copy of their interpreted stories
- Informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time

To protect the participants' data and personal information, the researcher coded the data using an alphanumeric code rather than the participants' legal name for any transcripts imported into the analysis software. Because the researcher transcribed the interviews, the participants' personal information (i.e., name, address, company name, phone number, email address, Skype username, written transcripts, recordings, and email correspondences) were kept in a private, secure, and password-protected folder on a separate computer drive than the one used for transcript analysis. Additionally, the researcher minimized the risks for participants in the study by: (a) electing not to discuss or report data on the sample's current place of employment or citing the name of their

former and/or current employer(s), (b) conducting the interviews in a setting outside of their work environment, and (c) keeping their personal information private and secure.

### **Summary**

In all, the research methodology outlined in this chapter aided the researcher in addressing the study's research questions. Through in-depth, semistructured interviews the researcher was able to elicit the personal stories, feelings, experiences, and true insight of Millennials who experienced the phenomenon. Moreover, conducting a thorough analysis of the data collected from the participants and identifying and analyzing patterns and themes in the data enabled the researcher to derive a meaning about the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. Additionally, using a phenomenological lens to view the issue under examination afforded the researcher the opportunity to contribute rich, empirical data to an existing body of knowledge that is narrow in scope with regards to the Millennials' voluntary turnover. Findings from the study will be presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.



## Chapter 4. Data Analysis and Findings

This study explores the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective to discover why Millennials quit their former jobs and, subsequently, what it means to Millennials when they voluntarily leave an organization. The conceptual framework for this study is Person Organization fit (P-O fit; Kristof, 1996). P-O fit is defined as "the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (Kristof, 1996, p. 2). Based on the forthcoming report of the findings for the study, P-O fit or lack thereof provides a rationale for the high voluntary turnover of Millennials.

### Bracketing Process

In a phenomenological study such as this one, the first step in the data analysis process is called bracketing or epoche (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing is a necessary step because it "typically refers to an investigator's identification of vested interests, personal experience, cultural factors, assumptions, and hunches that could influence how he or she views the study's data. For the sake of viewing data freshly, these involvements are placed in 'brackets' and 'shelved' for the time being as much as is possible" (Fischer, 2009, p. 583). A sample list of the researcher's assumptions, personal experiences, and interests follows:

- Assumptions. The researcher approached the study assuming that (a) Millennials want to share their experience of voluntarily leaving an organization; (b) the workplace needs to be improved for Millennials; (c) Millennials will not remain at any organization for a long time; (d) Millennials are angry or mad at their previous employers; (e) Millennials are quitting and moving back home or they already reside at home; (f) Millennials' perception of "fit" played a role in their decision to quit; (g)

Millennials are misunderstood by previous generations; and (h) something occurred within their organizations to make Millennials seek employment elsewhere.

- Personal experiences. The researcher is a Millennial who (a) has more than once experienced work environments that do not match the way they were described in job interviews; (b) has usually held a job while simultaneously going to school or running a business; (c) and has never looked at a job from a career perspective; has never seen her jobs as merely a means to advance along a particular career path;
- Interests. The researcher is interested in (a) improving the college-to-work transition and/or employment outcomes for college students and recent graduates; (b) improving the workplace for Millennials; (c) helping organizations recruit and retain Millennials; (d) educating Millennials on employers' needs and expectations; and (e) educating employers on Millennials' needs and expectations in hopes of finding a happy medium.

In addition to identifying and temporarily setting aside any assumptions, personal experiences, and interests that could influence the way the data was interpreted, the researcher was mindful not to quickly make assumptions and draw conclusions based on her own personal work experiences and challenges.

### **Profile of Participants**

There were 21 female and four male participants for a total of 25 participants. Of the 21 female participants, 18 were single and had no children, while the remaining three were married, and two of them had children. Of the four male participants, three were single and had no children, and one was married with one child. To be eligible to participate in the study, respondents had to be born between approximately 1982 and 2002 to be classified as a

Millennial. The average age of the participants was 28.96. The age range was between 24 and 35, which indicates the participants were born between 1979 and 1990.

Moreover, the participants were representative of racially diverse backgrounds. When asked about their ethnicity, eight of the participants identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino(a); seven stated they were Caucasian or White; three classified themselves as African American; three were mixed with two or more races; two identified themselves as Asian or Japanese; and two were classified by the researcher as “Other” primarily because their ethnicity is not reflected on the U.S. Census Bureau. Even though the participants provided their race to the interview question that asked about ethnicity, the researcher acknowledges that she should have asked a question about race as opposed to ethnicity. In regards to their living situation, 16 participants indicated they rent, six stated they own, and three were living rent-free. Most of the participants (64%) resided in urban areas, and 36% percent resided in suburban areas. Additionally, the participants’ annual household income varied significantly. For example, one individual’s household income was between \$100,000 and \$115,000, while another participant’s income was between \$20,000 and \$40,000. In addition to being bachelor degree holders, at the time of the study, 20 of the 25 research participants were pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from a large Christian University in the West while four of the remaining five participants were MBA degree holders or in pursuit of one. (See Table 2.)

Table 2  
*Demographics of the Participants*

Demographic Attributes	Number of participants (%)
Gender	
Female	21 (84%)
Male	4 (16%)
Marital status	
Single	21 (84%)
Married	4 (16%)
Age range	
20-24	1 (4%)
25-29	7 (28%)
30-34	15 (60%)
35+	1 (4%)
Unknown	1 (4%)
Race	
Hispanic/Latina(o)	8 (32%)
Caucasian/White	7 (28%)
African American	3 (12%)
Asian/Japanese	2 (8%)
Two or more races	3 (12%)
Other	2 (8%)
Living Situation	
Rent	16 (64%)
Own	6 (24%)
Rent-free	3 (12%)
Annual household income	
\$0–\$49,999	6 (24%)
\$50,000–\$100,000	15 (60%)
\$100,000+	4 (16%)
Education	
Earned bachelor’s degree	25 (100%)
Earned advanced degree	2 (8%)
Pursuing MBA degree	23 (92%)

*Note.* Percentages are based on the total number of participants in the study, which is 25.

Table 3 displays a list of the participants’ college majors, which is worth mentioning because the subsequent findings reveal that some of the participants obtained—and later quit—jobs that were not aligned with their career goals/college degree.

Table 3  
*List of College Majors Studied by the Participants*

Undergraduate Major	Number of Participants
American studies and theatre	1
Biopsychology	1
Business administration/management/marketing	9
Communication studies	2
Education	1
English	1
Ethnic studies	1
History	1
International development studies/Spanish literature	1
Marketing	2
Psychology	1
Sociology	1
Real estate	1
Two or more majors	2

*Note.* All the participants earned a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college/university

In regards to their current employment status, 23 participants were employed by an employer, and two were self-employed. Based on their job titles, 15 were professionals (nonmanagers), seven were managers, two were self-employed (one freelancer and one business owner), and the current profession of one participant was unknown (see Figure 1 and Table 4).

Figure 1 displays the current employment information for the participants. Slightly less than a third of the participants (31%) who are employed by an employer were managers, leaving slightly more than two thirds (60%) as nonmanagers.

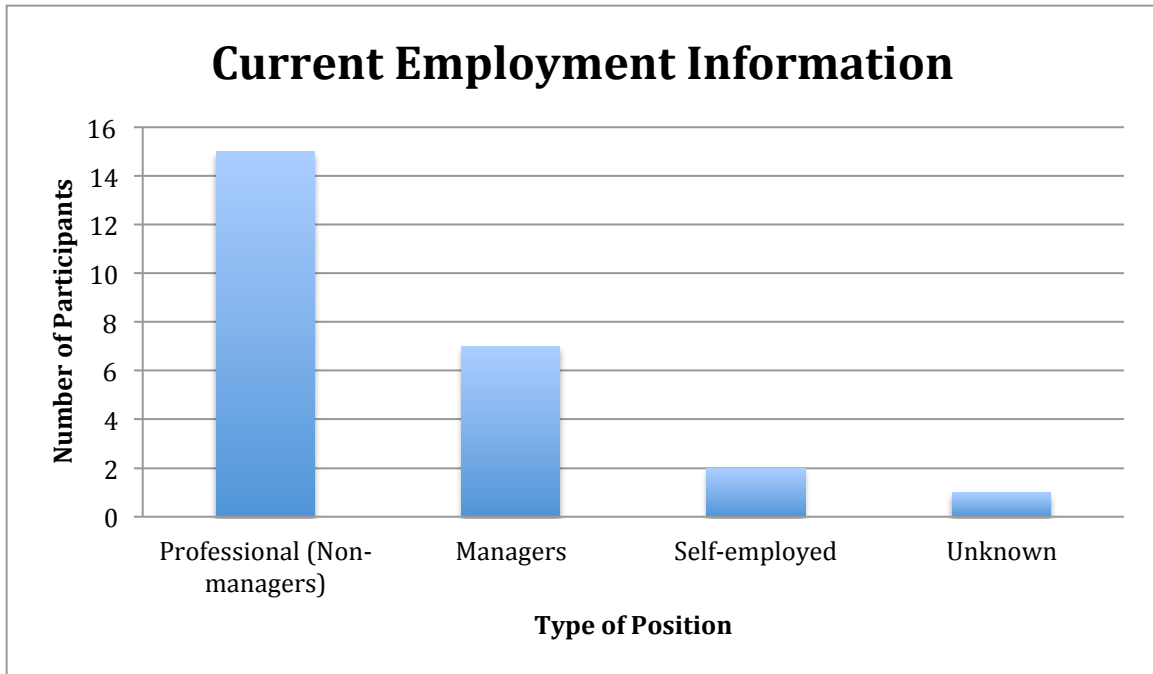


Figure 1. Number of participants in managerial/non-managerial roles.

Table 4 is a detailed list of the job titles of the participants. This is worth mentioning because it helps to demonstrate whether the participants have advanced in their professional careers since quitting the jobs discussed in the study.

After graduating from college but prior to obtaining their current positions, the research participants held on average a total of 2.24 jobs, all of which they quit within 5 years of being hired. One of the participants reported quitting six jobs from the time she graduated from college in 2004 until the date of the study in 2014. Most of the participants who stated they had only quit one job after graduating from a 4-year college/university and within 5 years of being hired were recent graduates who had obtained their undergraduate degrees between 2010 and 2012. For the interview, participants were asked to select and discuss only one of the jobs they had quit after college graduation and within 5 years of being hired.

Table 4  
*List of the Participants' Current Job Titles*

Job Titles	Number of Participants
Account manager	1
Analyst	1
Assistant compliance officer	1
Business analyst manager	1
Buyer	1
Broadcast operations coordinator	1
Consultant	1
Director	1
Freelance	1
Home mortgage consultant	1
Loan officer	1
Marketing assistant	1
Marketing associate	1
Product manager	1
Project manager	1
Sales representative	1
Senior financial analyst	1
Senior loan coordinator	1
Support manager	1
Teaching assistant	2
Vice president	1
Unknown	1

*Note.* Some uniquely identifiable job titles were slightly altered to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Focusing on the participants' attitudes about former jobs allowed the researcher to protect their current employability and capture the true essence of their experience of quitting a job.

Figure 2 displays the job history of the participants, most of whom have quit between one and three jobs since graduating from college and within 5 years of being hired. The total number of jobs for two of the participants is unknown, but to participate in the interview they had to have quit at least one job.

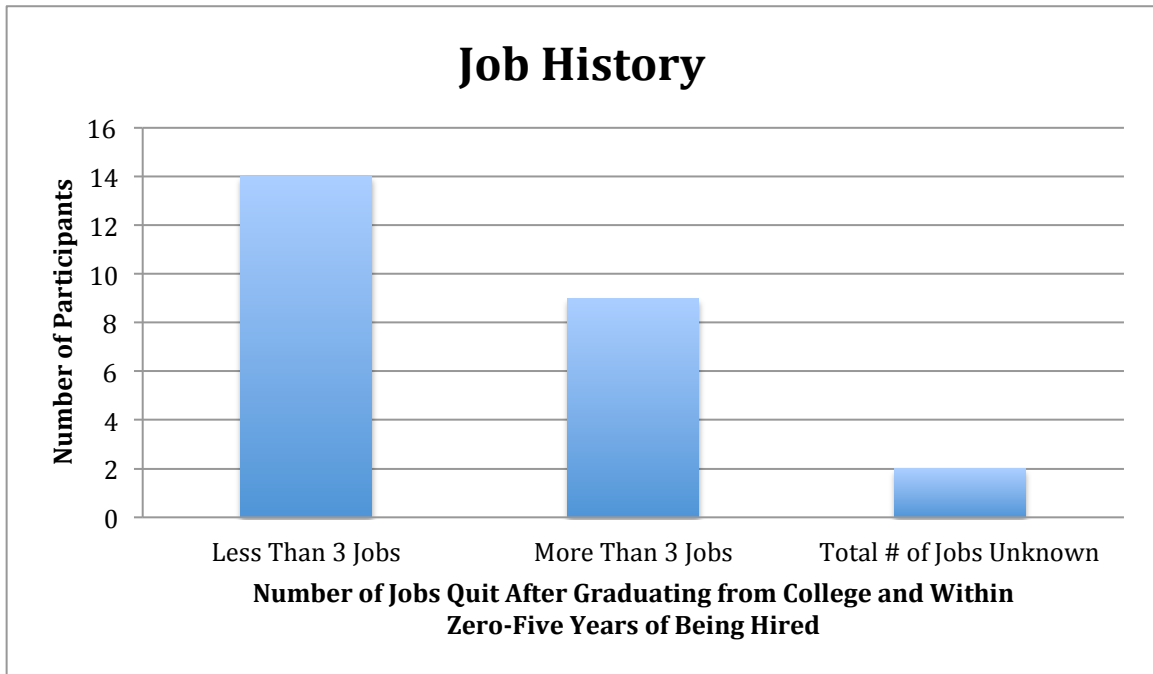


Figure 2. Job history of the participants.

The former jobs selected for discussion by the Millennials who participated in the study varied by type of sector, industry, and position. Seventeen participants' former jobs were in the private sector, seven were in the public sector, and one was in the not-for-profit sector. Additionally, the top three industries the participants previously worked in were retail, banking, and finance; almost half of the 25 participants' former jobs were entry-level (48% or 12 people), and the same number (48% or 12 people) held midlevel positions. One participant held a senior-level role. Moreover, when the participants were asked if their former jobs aligned with their career goals and/or college degree, 14 participants (56%) said "yes"; 10 participants (40%) said "no"; and one response was unknown. The length of time participants spent at their previous job ranged from 4 months to 5 years. Essentially, the average time the Millennials in the study stayed at their former job was 30.04 months, which is slightly less than the national 3.2 year average for members of this generation (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012) and more than 2 years shorter than the 5.74 years Millennials expect to stay on their jobs, according to a study conducted by Modern



Survey (“The impact of the new long-term employee,” 2013). Lastly, the majority of the Millennials in the study stated they were one of “many” Millennials at their former employer as opposed to a “few,” but even so, they said their former work environments were comprised mostly of Generation Xers or Baby Boomers and Generations Xers. Slightly less than 20% of the participants worked in an organization that consisted mostly of Millennials. Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 depict details of the jobs discussed by the participants in the study. As a reminder, the participants’ were asked by the researcher to talk about their experience of quitting their former employer; therefore, the remaining data analysis and display of findings will focus on their previous jobs.

Figure 3 depicts the participants’ previous jobs by sector and type of position. As seen in this figure, more participants left jobs in the private sector than in other areas.

Figure 4 depicts the participants’ previous jobs by industry. As can be seen in the figure, the retail industry experienced the most turnover from the participants.

Figure 5 shows the length of time the participants stayed at their previous jobs. As shown in the figure, most of the participants stayed at their former employers for up to 12 months or between 49-60 months. Considering that on average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), Millennials are quitting their jobs in 3.2 years, this figure shows that the participants worked significantly less or more than the national average.

Figure 6 highlights the circumstances in which each participant left their previous employers. Nine of them, more than in any other category, quit their jobs without having another one lined up, while seven were actively seeking and obtained a new job. Moreover, a fifth of the participants were recruited by another employer.

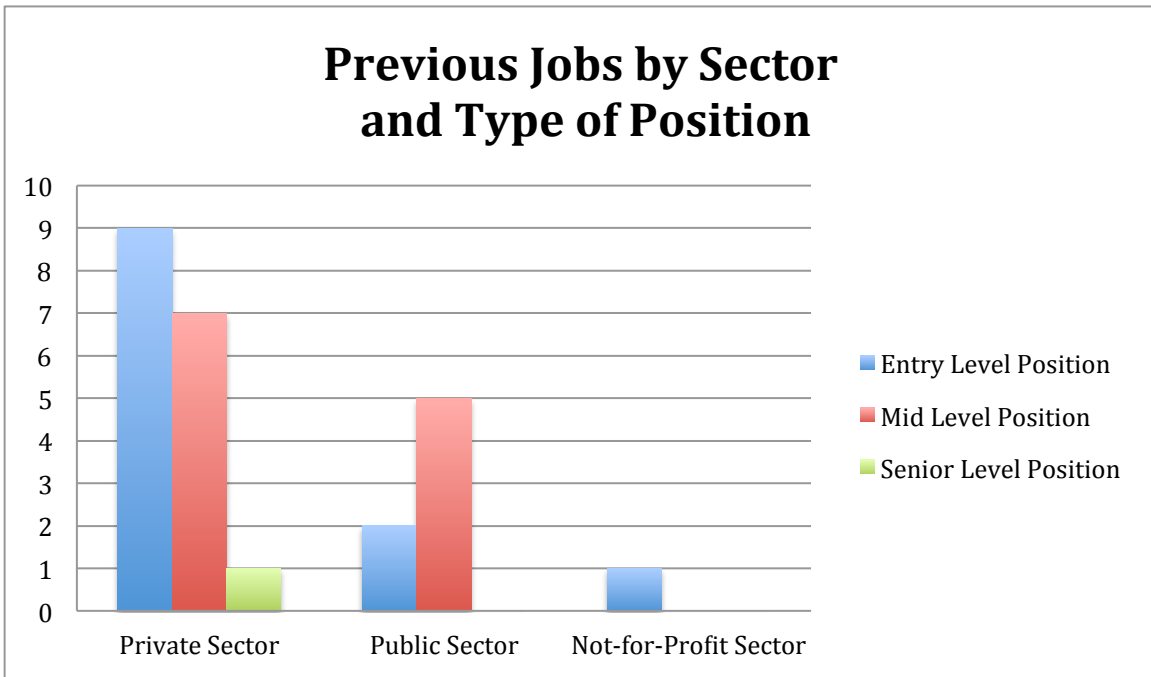


Figure 3. Display of the participants' previous jobs by sector and type of position.

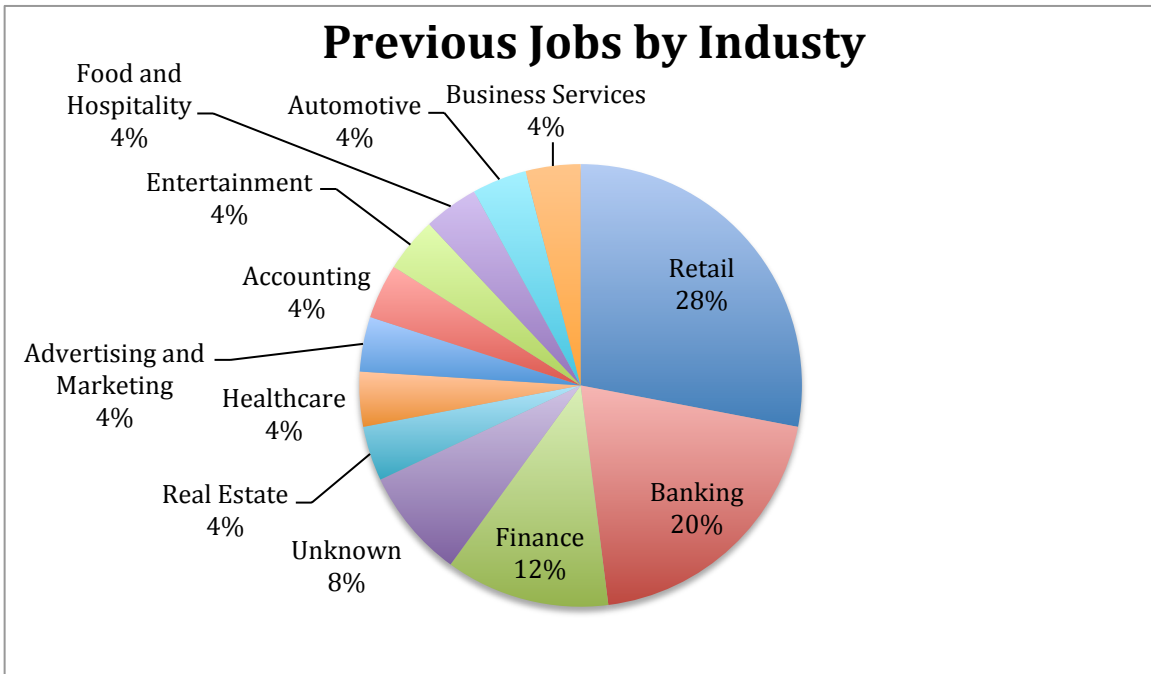


Figure 4. Participants' previous job by industry.

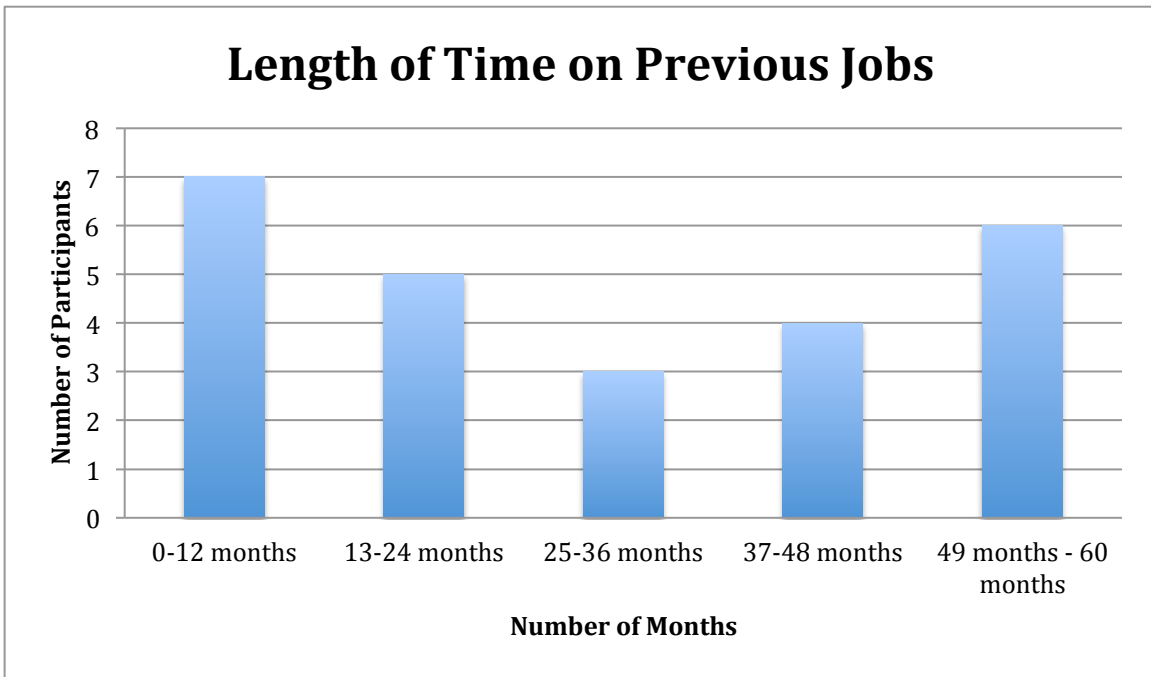


Figure 5. Length of time the participants stayed at their previous job before quitting.



Figure 6. The circumstances in which the participants left their previous employers.

Figure 7 shows which age groups (Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, or Millennials) dominated the workplaces where the participants previously worked. This is worth mentioning because research on generational differences suggests that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers share similar views on Millennials; specifically, neither generation thinks highly of the newest generation to enter the workplace (Gursoy et al., 2008). A better understanding of Millennials is needed to help organizations learn the best means to recruit and retain the newest generation entering the workplace (Luscombe et al., 2013), and who is better to tell their story than the Millennials themselves?

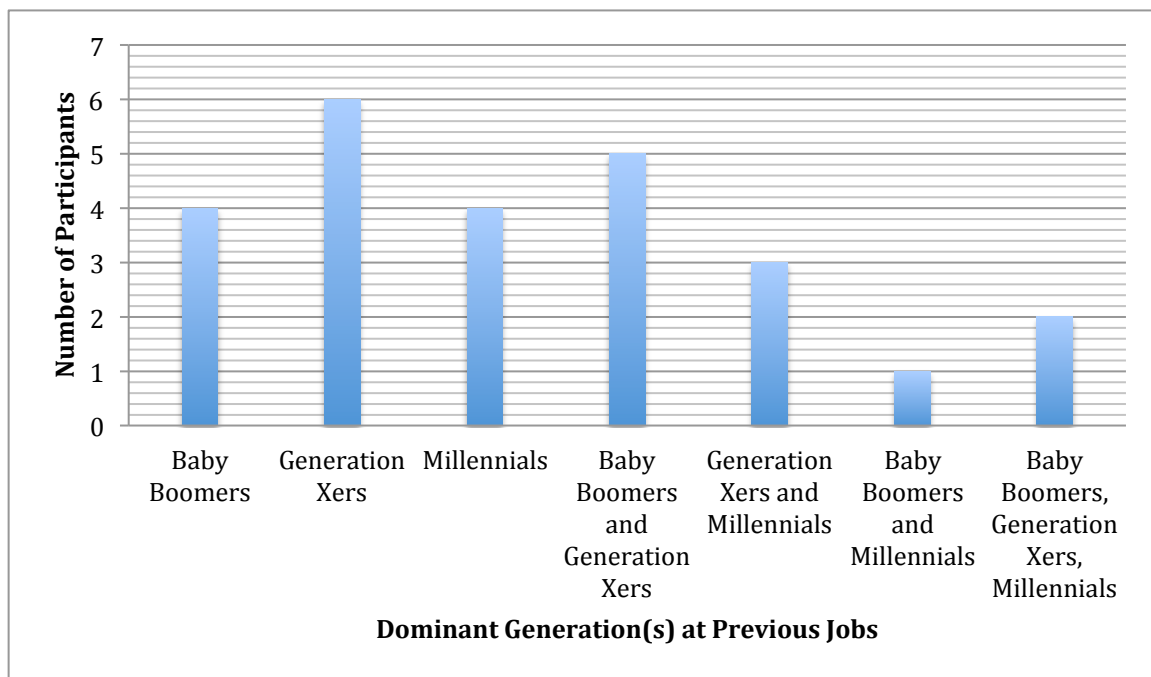


Figure 7. Dominant generation(s) at participants' previous jobs.

Participants' reaction to the interview/study. The researcher implemented several recruitment strategies to solicit the participation of Millennials who fit the criteria for the study (see Chapter 3). The recruitment tactic that yielded the greatest number of interested participants was class visits. Specifically, the researcher visited 10 graduate-level classes and made an announcement about the study to MBA students. A total of 52 people expressed interest in the

study, and 42 of them were students the researcher recruited during class visits and who provided contact information to arrange an interview at a later date. Six of the remaining 10 prospective participants were snowballed by another participant, and the other four responded to email requests. Of the 52 people who either directly expressed interest in the study or responded to email solicitation from a friend or colleague, 25 of them actually went through with the interview process.

Not only does this show that a significant number of Millennials were interested in the study, but it also indicates that slightly less than half of the initial respondents (48%) wanted to share their experience of quitting a job and, subsequently, help improve the workplace for Millennials and the HR professionals and managers who recruit, hire, train, and manage them. Additionally, several of the participants said they were happy to assist with the research, while others demonstrated their enthusiasm for the study by speaking candidly and energetically. One participant even asked the researcher to excuse any frustrations he expressed toward his previous employer during the interview because he felt the employer provided him an opportunity to gain valuable experience, but he said his reasons for quitting trumped the benefits of working for that particular organization.

Lastly, more than half (64%) of the participants requested a copy of the researcher's interpretation of their story and/or the research findings, which demonstrates the participants' desires for an accurately reported account of their story and interest in knowing how their experience corresponds to or differs from other Millennials.

## **Findings**

Before reporting the findings, a restatement of the research questions is necessary as each individual subquestion served as guide for analyzing the data and answering the overarching

central research question: *What does it mean to Millennials when they quit their jobs?* The following subquestions helped to explore the phenomenon under examination:

Q1. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers?

Q2. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers?

Q3. What do Millennials think about loyalty to employers?

Q4. To what degree do an organization's attributes influence Millennials perception of fit?

The findings were arranged by research questions, utilizing a storytelling approach to share the personal stories, feelings, experiences, and true insight of Millennials who voluntarily quit their former employers. By the end of the research, a meaning for the voluntary turnover of Millennials was discovered. Quotes from the participants will be utilized below to illustrate responses to each of the research questions and other aspects of the study; what is included are excerpts from interview responses. Each participant was given a number, and their quotes will be identified only by those numbers; all quotes from participants included in the remainder of this study were personal communications offered during the research interviews. The dates of those interviews are shown with each quote.

Q1. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers?

The participants applied for a job at their former employers because they found certain aspects of the job and organization attractive. As seen in Table 5, benefits, compensation, location, opportunity to learn and pursue a career that corresponds to their college degree, career growth, flexible work schedule, work environment, company reputation/brand, job training,

diversity, ease of obtaining a position, need for employment, and the idea that a company was willing to take a risk on a less-experienced candidate were all factors that attracted the participants to their former employers.

Table 5  
*What Attracted Participants to the Job/Organization*

What Attracted Participants to the Job/Organization	Number of participants
Work environment	6
Company reputation/brand	6
Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, grow with company	5
Benefits	4
Location	4
Compensation	3
Need for employment	3
Diversity	2
Flexible work schedule	2
Ease of obtaining a position	2
Job training	1
Job responsibilities	1
Company willing to take risk on a less experienced	1

*Note.* Themes are ranked by number of participants who cited them

Significant statements that illustrate the participants' attraction to the job and organizational attributes noted above are as follows:

“Opportunity to make money and balance work and school . . .” (P13, April 11, 2014).

“Strong reputation for great benefits and fun environment to work in” (P15, April 12, 2014).

“The opportunity to work in a new field . . . It gave me an opportunity to apply my degree to my career” (P2, March 23, 2014).

“Well in this situation I was referred by a friend who was working there as a manager. But also what attracted me was things like the location, good work corporate environment, also it's near my home, I was customer of the restaurant over the years and so I thought it was a

good place to work. So those were the things that attracted me to it” (P20, May 1, 2014).

“Large corporate name, benefits, location to home (proximity to home), and I liked the people that interviewed me. I thought they were good people to work for. We got along well” (P21, May 2, 2014).

“I think the things that still attracted me to them were the ability to be in a challenging work environment, a quantitative environment, [and] also just good people. I saw the person that interviewed me was African American, I think the receptionist was African American...I had seen that there were some African American people in pretty good positions and there was actually a lot of diversity there” (P23, May 24, 2014).

“What really attracted me was the fact that they had the possibility of tuition reimbursement. Education is very important to me . . . so my educational goals were very high, and it seemed like they had stock in their employees and would provide that (P3, March 24, 2014).

“I was definitely attracted to the income that I’d be getting. I mean it was very, very awesome at that time to be able to have a job like that” (P4, March 24, 2014).

“They were a startup and so they were growing and upward mobility was something that was discussed at my interview. Like okay, we are hiring for this entry-level position, but we are growing so we have opportunities for you to grow within our organization, and that was something that really appealed to me at the time” (P6, March 26, 2014).

“So they appealed to me because there weren’t a whole lot of barriers for hiring. They offer a flexible schedule, so that would give me time to look for other opportunities” (P9, April 2, 2014).



“I [was interested] in the banking industry, and I had no experience, and they were willing to hire me in, so yeah, I wanted to learn about the banking industry” (P8, April 1, 2014).

“I just needed a job during school; I didn’t really care where I worked” (P17, April 9, 2014).

In addition to being attracted to specific job and organizational attributes, the participants considered a number of factors prior to deciding to join their former employers. They considered benefits, pay, culture, location, opportunity to learn, a chance to pursue a career corresponding to their college degree, job responsibilities, flexible schedule, company reputation/brand, treatment and success of employees, challenging assignments, career growth potential, their need for employment, and who their managers/leaders would be. Below are some examples of what participants said they considered.

“I definitely thought it was in line with what I had studied in my undergrad so I definitely thought that it would give me the experience I need and it was a good entry-level position where the responsibilities were not too [difficult] that I would not be able to handle it” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

“Would they be okay with me going to school?” (P13, April 11, 2014).

“What employees say about it, what is the commitment of the company with sustainability, where ex-employees work after they left the company” (P16, April 7, 2014)

“Commute. Definitely here in L. A. we have a lot of traffic. How close it is to me. The money. Can I survive off the pay I am getting? The people like when I went to the interview. Like what is it like? It is kind of difficult to be stuck in an office from 8 to 5 or in a branch. Can I do that? . . . And then can I do what’s best for these people? (P19, May 1, 2014).

“The actual job, of course. The job description matched something that I was interested in” (P2, March 23, 2014).

“Definitely earning potential” (P20, May 1, 2014).

“It was all about necessity at that time for me in terms of being at that company” (P23, May 24, 2014).

“Room for growth and improvement, which is where that training program seemed appealing” (P24, May 5, 2014).

“Definitely loved that they were an up and coming company. They were a private company so I wanted to make sure that it wasn’t a company that would go bankrupt in the next couple of years because I wanted to make a career out of this company and out of a job that I knew I eventually wanted to move up, so I looked at definitely that” (P25, May 5, 2014).

“The biggest thing was that it would require me to move” (P22, May 4, 2014).

“So in my mind it was like okay this is just temporary” (P9, April 2, 2014).

“It was definitely not money let me tell you that. . . . It was more so about the possibility that there could be more for me there than it was the compensation. So like I was getting paid very minimally, but I took the job because I knew there was greater opportunities down the road for me, both financially and for me like professionally” (P6, March 26, 2014).

While the participants considered a number of factors, they ultimately made the decision to join the company for reasons displayed in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Reasons for Joining the Company*

Reasons for Joining the Company	Number of Participants
Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company	8
Job responsibilities	6
Compensation	5
Work environment	5
Company reputation/brand	5
Location	5
Need for employment	4
Benefits	2
Flexible work schedule	2
Job training	1
Diversity	1
Stable position	1
Autonomy	1

*Note.* The themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them

Through further analysis of the data, the researcher discovered that some of the participants were attracted to the job for certain reasons and subsequently decided to join the organization because of those reasons, while others made their decisions based on reasons other than the ones that initially attracted them to the employer. Research on how job and organizational attributes influence job choice (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Boswell et al., 2003), job acceptance, or job rejection (Boswell et al., 2003; Turban et al., 1993) found that the attributes important for organizational attraction may influence job choice (Boswell et al., 2003), or they may not (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). Table 7 shows the similarities and differences between organizational attraction and the participants' job choices.

As seen in Table 7, the participants in this study said the job and organizational attributes that influenced them to accept their jobs were somewhat different from the attributes that initially attracted them to their former employers. Table 7 displays a breakdown of the themes that emerged from research question number 1.

Table 7

*Similarities and Differences Between Organizational Attraction and Job Choice*

What Attracted Participants to Job/Organization	Number of participants	Reasons for Joining the Company	Number of Participants
Work environment	6	Work environment	5
Company reputation/brand	6	Company reputation/brand	5
Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company	5	Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company	8
Benefits	4	Benefits	2
Location	4	Location	5
Compensation	3	Compensation	5
Need for employment	3	Need for employment	4
Diversity	2	Diversity	1
Flexible work schedule	2	Flexible work schedule	2
Ease of obtaining a position	2	None	0
Job training	1	Job training	1
Job responsibilities	1	Job responsibilities	6
Company willing to take risk on a less experienced	1	None	0
		Stable position	1
		Autonomy	1

*Note.* Two additional themes emerged for reasons to join the company: stable position and autonomy; for comparison purposes themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them as attractive

Work environment. Six participants identified work environment as an attractive aspect of the job/organization; however, only five participants identified work environment as the reason they chose to join their former employer. Words such as *fun*, *creative*, and *people-oriented* were used to describe how the participants thought their work environment would be. Additionally, the participants thought it would be fun to work with the people who interviewed them.

“It seemed like a good energy environment” (P23, May 24, 2014).

“I thought it was going to be what I actually experienced. So just fun, very people oriented and focused on leadership and development” (P11, March 26, 2014).

Company reputation/brand. Six participants identified company reputation/brand as an attractive aspect of the job/organization; however, only five participants identified company reputation/brand as the reason they chose to join their former employer. One participant stated she chose to work for her former employer because “I liked the company product” (P15, April 12, 2014). Additionally, as can be seen in Table 5, the top reasons Millennials decided to join their former employers are job responsibilities, opportunity to learn, desire to pursue a career that corresponds to their college degree, a chance to grow with company, compensation, location, company reputation/brand, and need for employment.

Opportunity. Five participants identified opportunity to learn and pursue a career that corresponds to their college degree as an attractive aspect of the job/organization; however, eight participants identified opportunity as the reason why they chose to join their former employer.

“Thought I could gain good experience from working there” (P21, May 2, 2014).

Benefits. Four participants identified benefits as an attractive aspect of the job/organization; however, only two participants identified benefits as the reason why they chose to join their former employer.

“They made the best offer just overall package, salary-wise and benefits-wise” (P24, May 5, 2014).

Q2. What do Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers?

Shortly after joining the company, the participants realized they no longer wanted to work for their former employers, and the participants all experienced a series of events that led them to make the decision to quit their jobs. P22 describes the series of events as:

“I would basically have status meetings with a lot of different senior executives throughout the week, and in every single one I was getting hammered by all of these executives, and I think it kind of just worn down on me to always go in there and say this is what I am doing and for it to never be good enough. And I realized I was crying all the time at work. I felt like it wasn’t healthy for me. I didn’t even see it as a long-term job to begin with because of a lot of the limitations with even with the tools that they used, it wouldn’t allow me to grow in the Web analytics and optimization field. So I felt like my growth potential was limited. I was crying at work every day, and it was just kind of realizing all these things that this job doesn’t really have a long-term future for me that I realized it’s better just to quit now than to just keep dragging it out until I find the next job” (May 4, 2014).

P23 describes the series of events as:

“There was a position that was open for promotion. There were several people that were in my position at that time. So several of my colleagues we were kind of all pursuing a specific position. So we were all practicing and even started interviewing for it. And I felt that it was at least informally understood by most of the people there that I was probably most qualified for it. In some categories. I can attest that the person that ended up getting the job was definitely more qualified for it in two categories that were definitely relevant, but I think that overall I felt like I was much more qualified. I had more experience than the person that got the job. And there were other types of situations that it happened prior to that where other people got positions or they hired someone for a position that for me didn’t follow the logic of who’s the best person for the job. There was a couple of times it happened [and] I was still pretty new to the company although I felt that both those times I was highly competent to take on those new roles that they filled externally, and then the last time that it happened I had already been at the company about two

maybe 2 and a half years going on 3 years, and at that point I was like okay I have much more confidence about who I am at this company and my talents and competencies and for them to overlook it this time I can no longer in good conscience stand for that. It kind of came after a third situation where there was a promotion that I did not receive” (May 24, 2014).

Additionally, P11 shares similar sentiments. Her experience is as follows:

“It was about at the 2-year mark. Again, the way the promotions work at the company was also very structured. It was very structured career path at the company, and when I was up for that promotion I was told that I needed to wait another year because the person in that position currently was not leaving for another year so there was no room to really go anywhere else or kind of drive a way from that path it was that or nothing basically. So I knew I couldn’t wait another year for that position to open, so at that time I began to look for other employment” (March 26, 2014).

Management issues were also cited as impacting the participants’ decisions to quit. One participant stated:

“My aha moment was that this is not how I want to live my life. Like I think I probably had my breaking point when my supervisor assigned others supervisors to look over my work, and she was horrible because she was constantly calling me like every other day and trying to follow up with my work, and she would report back to my main manager, and my main manager would call me into her office. And when that supervisor was assigned to me, I was like ‘that’s it I am leaving’” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

Similarly, P3 stated the following:

“So I was working on a brochure, and [my manager] was not happy with what the outcome was, so we kept drafting it until finally I was like,

‘well I will work on it tomorrow and then I’ll get it back to you,’ and when I went back the next day he was nitpicking at the language . . . So I thought I really don’t have to put up with someone criticizing me that severely. I [also] worked on creating artwork for some of their bags and I felt like I had presented myself well, and I had done the job that they expected, and for him to nitpick over something because of a frustrating review process, I thought, this isn’t the kind of company I want to work and grow with if I am going to have this type of relationship with the President/CEO. And if right now our level of comfort isn’t that great, and he is that critical, what is going to happen when I’ve been working for 10 years, and he thinks he can get away with so much more? (March 24, 2014).

While internal factors within the organization impacted the participants’ decisions to quit, some participants were influenced by external factors such as family, physical appearance, and health. For example, P5 stated:

“The main factor for me was when we had our daughter . . . So I decided to leave my position, and I decided to stay at home with her for a few months while we starting transitioning.[Basically] I went into graduate school and I stayed home with [my daughter]” (P5, March 25, 2014).

Moreover, P4 believed that being in that particular work environment started taking a toll on her health. She stated:

“When I started having the anxiety attacks real bad, and you know I had like insomnia and depression, and so I said you know this is not good for me. I can’t keep putting myself through this” (March 24, 2014).

Another participant decided it was time to go when:

“I was 200 pounds, significantly less hair and less friends” (P14, April 9, 2014).

Other internal and external factors they took into consideration are evident in Table 8.



Table 8  
*What Participants Considered Before Deciding to Quit*

What Participants Considered Before Deciding to Leave	Number of participants
Personal and/or professional happiness	8
Ability to grow within the organization	6
Long-term career goals	6
Educational goals	6
Compensation	6
Mental and physical health	5
Finances	5
Potential for greater benefits at new job	4
Location	4
Work environment	3
Relationship with management	3
Family	3
Ability to learn	2
Likelihood of finding a job after quitting	2
Relationship with co-workers	2
Reputation	1
Need for employment	1

*Note.* The themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them

Significant statements that illustrate what the participants took into consideration as noted above are listed below.

Happiness. “I think I had been thinking about it for a while because I wasn’t happy anymore or comfortable in that position any more” (P25, May 5, 2014).

Educational goals. “I had the pressure of school so it was a matter of prioritizing what was important to me” (P10, April 3, 2014).

Ability to learn. “I felt like I wasn’t being challenged so this new opportunity was exciting and something I thought was fun” (P2, March 23, 2014).

Ability to grow within the organization. “Was there an opportunity for me to grow in that workplace?” (P10, April 3, 2014)?

Long-term career goals. “I just really had to think about what I wanted for myself and my future goals. I did want to return to school, but I also

wanted, you know, that next level of responsibility in the company, which I didn't foresee at my last employer" (P11, March 26, 2014).

Mental and physical health. "So I started to look for other jobs, but ultimately it just came to defining what was good for my mental and physical health" (P12, April, 7, 2014).

Reputation. "I needed a way to quit my job that made me look like I cared about my career" (P14, April 9, 2014).

Family. "I just had my second baby, and my company was requiring a lot of attention, so going back to work after my maternity leave just didn't seem feasible" (P15, April 12, 2014).

Finances. "I was so unhappy at that job, and I had to evaluate can I afford not to get a paycheck even though I don't have another job lined up? And it came down to no, I can't do another Monday morning waking up knowing I have to go sit at that desk again" (P24, May 5, 2014).

Compensation. "I saw the dollar sign, and I went to my current employer and said this is what I've been offered; can you come anywhere close to it, and they said no, and I said well, I got to do what I go to do" (P19, May 1, 2014).

Potential for greater benefits at new job. "My decision was basically I weighed out the facts and the benefits that the other employer was offering me, and I compared what they were offering versus what I currently had" (P21, May 2, 2014).

Likelihood of finding a job after quitting. "I started looking at my debt, school, the job market" (P25, May 5, 2014).

Need for employment. "I needed a full-time job, so I started applying for full-time jobs" (P17, April 9, 2014).

Location. "I started looking for a new job. Ideally, I wanted to move back to Orange County, but I couldn't find anything in Orange County, so then I decided I would just quit all together" (P22, May 4, 2014).

Co-workers. “I did feel very guilty because as I mentioned I liked my co-workers” (P9, April 2, 2014).

Relationship with management. “No point in working for someone who is not supporting you” P13, April 11, 2014).

Work environment. “And just the idea that the job itself wasn’t going to change because I think I was under the delusion within the first few months maybe if I do a different position at that company it wouldn’t feel so corporate or perhaps if I did another lateral move that would be better and umm that just wasn’t going to be enough so I just decided to move on” (P24, May 5, 2014).

Based on the findings above, the participants made conscious decisions to quit their former employers. Their decision-making process entailed re-examining the availability of the job and organizational attributes that attracted them to the job/organization and ultimately led them to join the company. When the participants discovered that certain attributes were not available within the organization, they decided to quit. Table 9 shows why they decided to quit their former employers.

Table 9  
*Reasons for Leaving the Company*

Reason for Leaving the Company	Number of participants
Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, grow with company	11
Management	7
Work environment	5
Never was a long-term opportunity	5
Job responsibilities	4
Physical and emotional health	3
Compensation	3
Focus on education	2
Location	2
Unhappy with job	2
Family obligation	1
Need for a new job	1
Company ethics	1
Started own company	1

*Note.* The themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them

As seen in Table 9, the participants showed consistency in their liking of certain aspects of the job and organization. Many of the factors that attracted them to the job/organization were also the reasons why they decided to join and/or quit their former employers. Management issues, focus on education, company ethics, physical and emotional health, short-term job opportunity, and family obligation were additional themes that emerged from the data. Below is a list of commonly discussed reasons for why the participants quit their jobs along with a detailed explanation of what they disliked about it.

Management issues. The participants described how they did not like the way their supervisors talked to them in a *condescending tone* or *yelled at them*. They also complained that management had high expectations, rarely recognized their contribution(s) to the organization, scrutinized their work, abused their power, constantly changed roles/positions, practiced favoritism, and did not support them. Below are some excerpts from the data.

“There was also a lot of abuse coming from the higher ups because there was no boundaries; there was a lot of abuse in crossing over; I guess it just didn’t seem like respect was an important factor in the culture” (P10, April 3, 2014).

“I think that the output expectation was very high for someone who was entry level . . . I also didn’t necessarily like the approach of the president/CEO when it came to talking to subordinates. It was condescending and not conducive to growth. So, what I noticed was that he would nitpick at small things” (P3, March 24, 2014).

“I started thinking if that’s the type of company I wanted to be in where employees were replaceable or they didn’t value their employees as they did when I first started” (P25, May 5, 2014).

“Like for me, personally, if I did more hours of work or if I worked harder or got more completed, I saw no end results for that. I was just, you know, one of many cogs in a wheel, and it was really demotivating, and it was very corporate, very hard to see the end result of the work that you did” (P24, May 5, 2014).

“I saw a lot of weird things going on and favoritism with management” (P17, April 9, 2014).

“There were also changes in upper management often, so I had three different managers while I was there, and that was a struggle sometimes” (P2, March 23, 2014).

The participants also did not like:

“The way they treated people” (P10, April 3, 2014).

“The level of structure that was in the company, so there was procedures for everything single thing that we did” (P11, March 26, 2014).

“The management style of my department,” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

“I would say that in addition to the lack of support, the management style” (P20, May 1, 2014).

“The least I liked was that [my manager], I mean things were okay, but I think that at some point she was a little bit more difficult to work with because of the way maybe she presented the work that she needed to get done sometimes. And it seemed like if mistakes were ever made, she would get really upset about them in a way that she liked kind of took control of things that she needed to get done. And she wasn’t as maybe accepting when issues came about” (P21, May 2, 2014).

“I think the worst part was the fact that there was no real hierarchy in terms of who my manager was” (P3, March 24, 2014).

“The fact that they didn’t like change. That they weren’t willing to change a lot of the procedures and processes and the way they treated their employees” (P25, May 5, 2014).

“How my manager always wanted things her way, and there was very little room for change. She wasn’t a huge advocate for change” (P25, May 5, 2014).

Work environment. The participants felt they no longer fit or wanted to fit into the organization’s culture. They also thought the environment was *too structured*, *bureaucratic*, and *unhealthy*. Excerpts from the data are below:

“Like all of sudden we had people with very bureaucratic backgrounds and saying this is how it should be. This is how the national company is, and we were a small local company and bringing that mindset into our organization effectively stopped us from being able to be dynamic, and I started to notice once we had a few of those people in the organization, that trying to do anything client-oriented was not going to happen, and that was were I was like, ‘this isn’t working for me anymore’” (P6, March 26, 2014).

“I think that while I was there, I was successful for a time. I just think that it eventually got to a point where I didn’t feel like I wanted to fit into

that anymore because it took a lot of work for the type of person that I am” (P4, March 24, 2014).

“Because of the bureaucracy and the lack of boundaries toward the employees, it sort of just changed my perception of everything. It just made it not a healthy environment to work in” (P10, April 3, 2014).

Physical and emotional health. The participants expressed that they experienced physical and emotional health issues within their former positions primarily due to the type of environment they were working in and their ongoing issues with management. One participant stated:

“I wasn’t happy and fulfilled in my position. I did not have a positive feeling when I was at work the majority of the time” (P20, May 1, 2014).

Similarly, P24 stated she “was so unhappy at that job” (May 5, 2014); P25 said she “had been thinking about it for a while because I wasn’t happy anymore or comfortable in that position any more” (May 5, 2014); and P4 expressed that:

“Toward the end I had major anxiety. Likely literally I would have anxiety attacks about going to work because I hated it so much. I hated like the way people treated me like I was stupid” (March 24, 2014).

Ultimately, the participants’ physical and emotional health was affected because of management and/or challenges with the work environment; as a result of their experiences, the participants decided to quit their former employers.

Opportunity. The participants spoke of not having the opportunity to grow with the company, viewing the job as a short-term job opportunity to fill an immediate need, and finding a new job opportunity. They used words such as *stuck* and *pigeonholed* to describe how they felt about the lack of growth opportunities. Below are some excerpts from the data.

“Well my company offered to pay for my schooling, and then once I graduate there is a contract that states I’ll stay for two more years or I will have to pay all that funding back for schooling, so I feel stuck” (P1, March 22, 2014).

“I would like the availability of positions to advance to because that was one of the other things; all of the Baby Boomers, as far as seniority, they were all I guess static. You know they were content in their positions, and they weren’t really going anywhere. And the company wasn’t really expanding, and I was sort of stuck in my position too” (P5, March 25, 2014).

“I didn’t want to be pigeonholed in that department, and it kind of ended up happening that way where I got pigeonholed in that department” (P10, April 3, 2014).

“It was basically that—not having that opportunity for growth. I mean that was the main consideration. I knew that that wasn’t happening, so I automatically made the decision to go elsewhere” (P11, March 26, 2014).

“There wasn’t anywhere for me to move up in the department I was working. You couldn’t really move up unless the supervisor left” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

“It was just kind of realizing all these things that this job doesn’t really have a long-term future for me that I realized it’s better just to quit” (P22, May 4, 2014).

“I’d had also come to point where I had realized that industry is not the industry I want to be in long term” (P23, May 24, 2014).

“I quit because I got a new job” (P1, March 22, 2014).

Given the reasons why the participants said they quit their former employers, it is evident that a gap existed between what they perceived the job/organization would have before they joined the organization and how they assessed the availability of certain job/organizational



attributes after they began work there. Dealings with management also played a significant role in participants' decisions to quit their former employers. While some participants expressed they had decent relationships with their managers, most described experiences in which they felt they were disrespected, overlooked, and expected to meet unrealistic expectations by their managers. If management wanted to keep them longer, according to the participants, they should have done the following:

“Treated me with respect, provided opportunity to move up or switch departments, and give my own office” (P10, April 3, 2014).

“Provided more opportunity, more responsibility” (P11, March 26, 2014).

“As far as the fit of the company, I don't think there is something they could have done; the only thing would probably be job training” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

“Teach me what needs to be done instead of being condescending” (P13, April 11, 2014).

“Nothing” (P17, April 9, 2014).

“Paid me what the market paid or at least within the company. Didn't have such a big discrepancy between internals and externals” (P19, May 1, 2014).

“I would say again back to the flexibility thing. Being a little bit more relaxed on that wouldn't make it feel so confined. That would have helped, and they would have known that was a problem if they would have asked people's opinions more. And again making that more of a conversation with their employees versus a dictation and saying 'here's how it is'” (P24, May 5, 2014).

Table 10 shows a comprehensive list of the factors that had an impact on the participants' decision-making from the time they decided to join the company to the time they decided to quit.

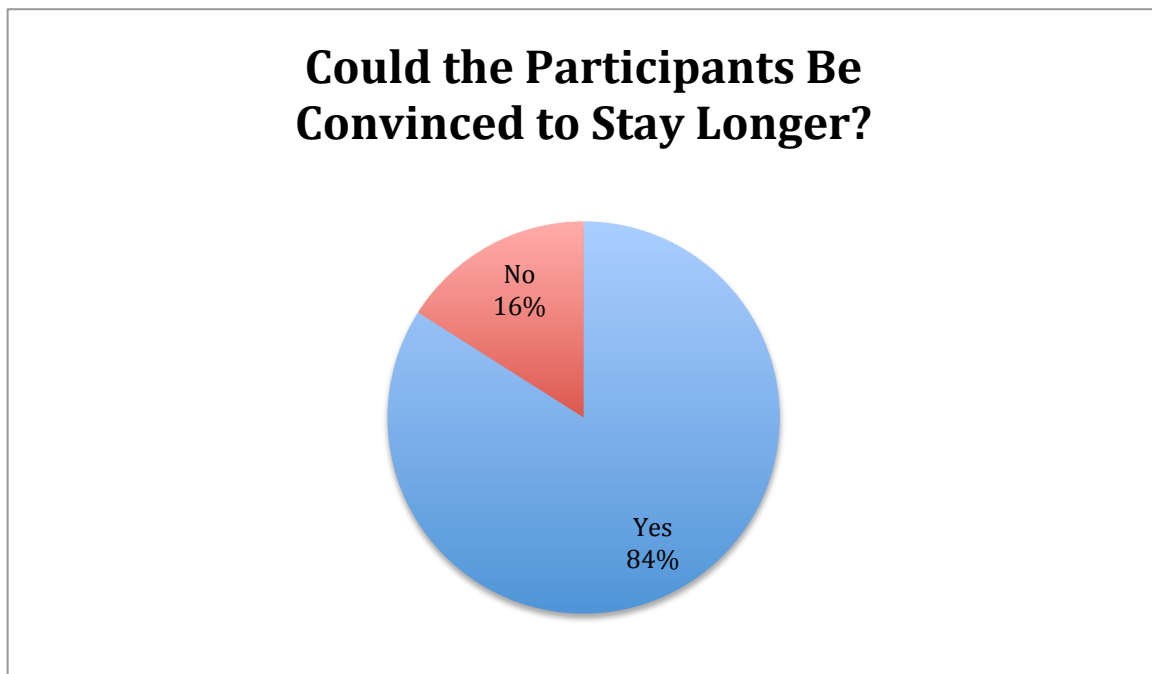
Table 10

*What Attracted Participants, Why They Joined, Decided to Leave, and Quit*

What Attracted Participants to the Job/Organization	Reasons for Joining the Organization	What They Considered Before Deciding to Leave	Reasons for Quitting Former Employers
Work environment	Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company	Personal and/or professional happiness	Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company
Company reputation/brand	Job responsibilities	Ability to grow within the organization, long-term career goals	Management
Opportunity to learn, pursue career that corresponds to college degree, and grow with company	Compensation	Educational goals	Work environment
Benefits	Work environment	Compensation, mental and physical health, finances, potential for greater benefits at new job	Never was a long-term opportunity
Location	Company reputation/brand	Location	Job responsibilities
Compensation	Location	Work environment	Physical and emotional health
Need for employment	Need for employment	Relationship with management	Compensation
Diversity	Benefits	Family	Focus on education
Need for employment	Flexible work schedule	Ability to learn	Location
Location	Job training	Likelihood of finding a job after quitting	Unhappy with job
Job responsibilities	Diversity	Relationship with co-workers	Family obligation
Company willing to take risk on a less experienced candidate	Stable position	Reputation	Need for a new job
Ease of obtaining a position	Autonomy	Need for employment	Company ethics, started own company

*Note.* The themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them

Figure 8 shows the percentage of participants who were or weren't willing to stay longer at their former employers. This is worth mentioning because the participants' former employers could have convinced the majority of them to stay longer if they had provided growth opportunities, more job responsibilities, support, job training, flexibility, and higher pay, to name a few desired features.



*Figure 8.* Percentage of participants who could/couldn't be convinced to stay.

Many of the participants in this study said they would have been willing to stay in their jobs longer if their former employers had made the appropriate adjustments. This finding is in contrast to several studies that suggest the high voluntary turnover of Millennials is mainly due to their lack of loyalty (Hulett, 2006; Martin, 2005; Yeaton, 2008). Research question 3 shows evidence of this discovery.

Q3. What do Millennials think about loyalty to employers?

According to the research data, loyalty to employers either did not exist or was expressed as maintaining integrity, making ethical decisions, maintaining confidentiality, doing the best you can for the company, doing the best you can for your co-workers, keeping lines of communication open, staying with the company despite the challenges or offers from competing organizations, giving notice before leaving the position and the company a chance to change, and staying with company until retirement. The following are excerpts from the data to support the aforementioned findings.

Maintaining integrity. “I think that loyalty means you come in and you do your job” (P6, March 26, 2014).

Making ethical decisions. “Don’t do any stuff that is against the company policy” (P8, April 1, 2014).

Maintaining confidentiality. “You are not speaking to a competitor or releasing any of their information” (P25, May 5, 2014).

Doing the best you can for the company. “Doing the best job that you can. Not short-cutting anything. Just really giving your best and showing them that you are dedicated and there for the company” (P12, April, 7, 2014).

Doing the best you can for your co-workers. “Loyalty to your team” (P14, April 9, 2014).

Maintaining positive relationships with fellow employees after you transition to a new company. “I feel like loyalty just means even after you leave you maintain those relationships” (P11, March 26, 2014).

Keeping lines of communication open. “Being honest and being able to communicate and to discuss any issues or problems that arise” (P2, March 23, 2014).

Staying with the company despite the challenges or offers from competing organizations. “Staying with the company through thick and thin” (P19, May 1, 2014).

Giving notice before leaving the position and the company a chance to change. “If you are looking to leave the job, at least give them a heads up or two-weeks notice . . . [and an] opportunity to change.” (P25, May 5, 2014).

Staying with company until retirement. “Staying with same job and function until retirement” (P1, March 22, 2014).

Contrarily, some of the other participants expressed that they did not “think loyalty to a company is a real thing” (P4, March 24, 2014). Another participant stated “ I don’t think that loyalty exists with my generation” (P3, March 24, 2014). In addition to providing their thoughts on loyalty to employers, the participants were asked if they felt any sense of loyalty to their former employer; 21 responded “yes,” and four responded “no.” The reasons the participants stated they felt a sense of loyalty to their employers is reflective of what they think that loyalty means. Examples of their responses follow.

“Yes, I did. I felt like I was loyal to them and I gave them the opportunity to be able to help me with what I was seeking from an employer, and I felt like they did help, but I just [wasn’t] patient enough to wait until they had something that was perfect for me. Ultimately, I got bored and left” (P2, March 23, 2014).

“I did, but that was just because of the friendships that evolved while I was there and also because it was my first job straight out of college. So I felt like, you know they are putting this stock in me; they believe in me, and I am a new person just entering the workforce” (P3, March 24, 2014).

“I have sense of loyalty to every employer to an extent” (P10, April 3, 2014).

“I would say I did at least on a small scale. They had a pretty intensive training program when you started, and they did invest time and money into training me so I did feel some guilt in leaving because I left only after six months, and so there was a little bit of loyalty there, but obviously there wasn’t enough to actually make me stay” (P24, May 5, 2014).

Of those participants who did not feel any sense of loyalty to their former employers, they felt (a) the employers viewed them as just a number so there was no need to be loyal to the organization; (b) they were not planning to be at the organization for the long-term; or (c) the employers did not care if they stayed or not.

Q4. To what degree do an organization’s attributes influence Millennials perception of fit?

According to Kristof (1996), Person Organization fit (P-O fit) is defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (p. 2).

Based on the findings from research questions 1 and 2, an organization’s attributes significantly impacted the participants’ perception of fit. Prior to deciding to join their former employers, the participants perceived there was an alignment between their needs and the job/organization’s attributes, and thus perceived they fit with the job/organization. However, shortly after joining the organization, many of the participants perceived a misfit between their work preferences and the organization’s attributes, and when their former employer did not address their concerns or meet their needs, they decided to quit.

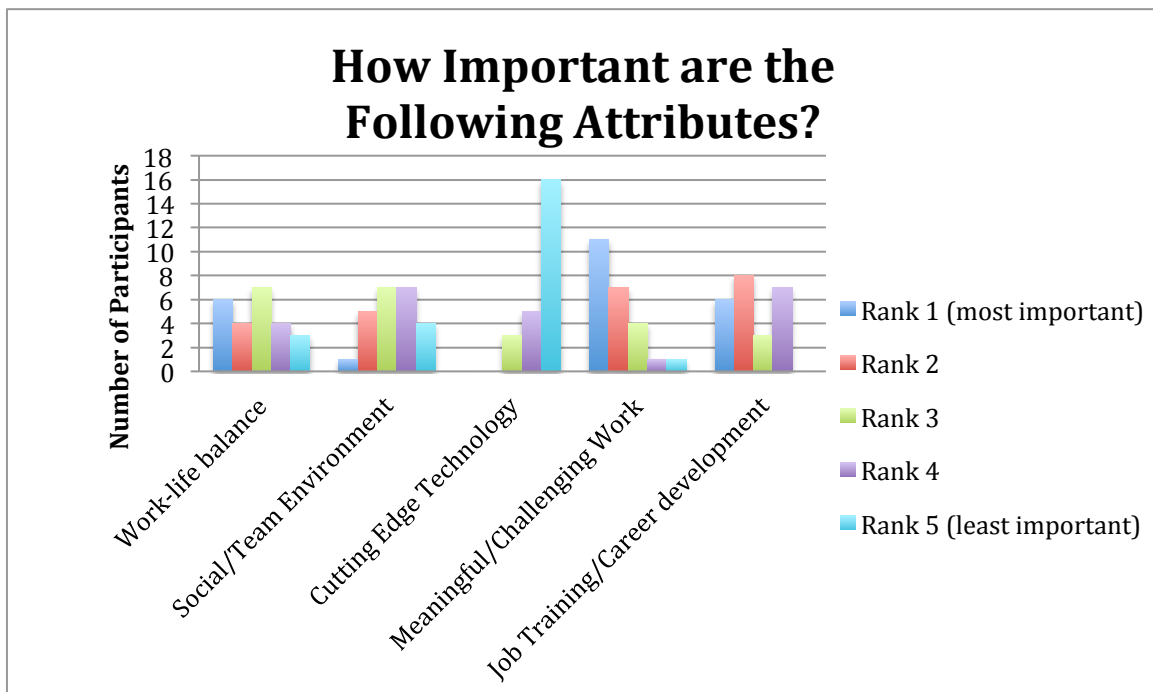
When deciding whether they fit with an organization, the participants considered the availability of the job/organizational attributes they found imperative for joining and/or leaving an organization. During the interview, participants were asked to rank work/life balance,

social/team environment, cutting-edge technology, meaningful and challenging work experiences, and job training/career development in order of importance for assessing fit (see Figure 9).

With 1 = *most important* and 5 = *least important*, the participants ranked these factors in the following ways:

- Meaningful and challenging work experiences was ranked 1, most important, by most of the participants.
- Job training/career development was ranked second by most of the participants.
- Work/life balance was ranked either 1 or 3 by most of the participants.
- Social/team environment was ranked either 3 or 4 by most of the participants.
- Cutting-edge technology was ranked number 5, least important, by most of the participants.

Figure 9 shows there was some consistency between this research and the job/organizational attributes that emerged from prior research (Behrens, 2009; Carless & Wintle, 2007; Ehrhart et al., 2012; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002) regarding the attributes believed to be most important to perception of fit and subsequently, a person's likelihood of deciding to join and/or voluntarily quit employers. Some consistencies included perceptions of the importance of work/life balance, job training/career development, meaningful and challenging work experiences, and social/team environment. However, the participants in this study also considered compensation, benefits, rewards and recognition, work environment, company reputation/brand, organizational structure, company mission/values, job title, job security, diversity, availability of affinity groups, company loyalty, company ethics, management, and average term of employment when they decided whether or not they fit with their former employers.



*Figure 9.* The participants' ranking of job/organizational attributes.

Central Research Question: What does it mean to Millennials when they quit their jobs?

Based on the findings from research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4, the following factors can be gleaned from this study regarding what it means to Millennials when they quit their jobs.

- Management failed to address Millennials' concerns and meet their needs and expectations.
- Millennials realized there was no room for growth and/or their career advancement was dependent on whether or not their direct supervisor would leave the company, and they did not want to give their employer power/control over their career.
- External factors such as family, education, location, and physical/emotional well-being were more important to Millennials than the job they decided to quit.
- When Millennials quit their job shortly after they are hired, it does not necessarily mean they were not loyal to their former employers. They just showed loyalty in their own unique ways.



- Organizations have been slow to adapt to the mentality that Baby Boomers are encouraging their Millennial children to do and be better than they have been. Millennials have greater aspirations than previous generations, and they are being encouraged by their parents to follow their dreams. As a result, they are more likely than previous generations to quit their jobs to achieve their personal and professional goals.
- The Millennials knew they did not have a long-term future with the company; therefore, it was not necessary for them to continue working for their former employers. Basically, they quit what they viewed as their temporary job to pursue permanent work that aligned with their career goals/education. The job also served its purpose while they were either in school or figuring out their desired career path.
- The Millennials did not perceive they fit with the organization's culture. Basically, they believed the organization's culture was quite different from the environment that had been described to them during the interview process, and therefore, they did not perceive they fit into the culture they experienced.
- The Millennials were no longer willing to accept and/or deal with their superiors' condescending, demeaning, critical, disrespectful, and micromanaging attitudes and behaviors. It is old thinking for management to believe that yelling at their subordinates will not lead to an undesirable outcome such as voluntary turnover.
- The Millennials no longer wanted to work under certain conditions and were optimistic about the likelihood that they would find a better work opportunity.
- The Millennials no longer wanted to work for a company that did not recognize what they had accomplished because the boss was too busy nitpicking over small things.

- The Millennials were not happy at work and left to seek happiness elsewhere.
- The Millennials were freeing themselves from the misery and restraints they experienced at work.
- The Millennials realized the work environment was not changing, their boss wasn't changing, the organizational practices were not changing, the availability of advancement opportunities were not changing, the workload was not changing; and therefore, they changed and removed themselves from that particular situation

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 presents the Millennials' perspective on their voluntary turnover. They provided vivid details and personal reflections of their experiences of quitting their former employers. Based on the findings, the Millennials quit their jobs for reasons having to do with work (internal factors) and their lives outside of work such as family (external factors). Among the internal factors that impacted the Millennials' decision to quit were management issues such as lack of respect and support, lack of fit with work environment, and lack of growth opportunity. Other reasons that emerged from the data, which have been sparingly discussed in prior research, were company ethics, location, and physical and emotional health. Ultimately, the findings shed light on the reasons Millennials perceive they quit their jobs. A discussion about the findings, implications of the study, and recommendations for employers and future researchers are discussed in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5. Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion**

More than a decade ago, Zemke (2001) predicted organizations would face some challenges and opportunities as result of the Millennials entering the workplace. Among the challenges organizations are facing is retaining Millennials and developing them into long-term employees (Hobart & Sendek, 2009; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). On average, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012), Millennials are quitting their jobs in 3.2 years, and based on current research (Bannon et al., 2011; Hulett, 2006; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002), this phenomenon is expected to continue until organizations make the necessary adjustments to recruit *and* retain Millennials. There is evidence to show that employers are using recruitment efforts that speak directly to Millennials by highlighting the job and organizational attributes that are attractive to them (Kovary & Buahene, 2005; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Lindquist, 2008); however, limited research has been done to explain the high voluntary turnover of Millennials that organizations are experiencing rather quickly after members of this generation are hired.

One strategy of inquiry for understanding a problem is to speak to individuals experiencing the issue and obtain their perspective on the matter (Creswell, 2007). Several reports attempt to make sense of the voluntary turnover of Millennials (Hulett, 2006; Martin, 2005; Ng et al., 2010; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Terjesen et al., 2007), but these reports are narrow in scope and do not explore in depth the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspectives.

### **Problem Statement, Statement of Purpose, and Significance of Topic**

The problem this study addressed is the high voluntary turnover of Millennials. Their turnover is an issue for organizations because Millennials are expected to dominate the workforce in the coming years, and if employers are unable to retain Millennials for longer than

their current 3-year average, they stand a chance of losing a great deal of money due to the costs of replacing employees, and companies could be jeopardizing their competitive edge as Millennials could seek employment with a competitor. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective to discover why they chose to quit their former jobs.

This study is significant because it expanded on current research to provide a more in-depth rationale for the voluntary turnover of Millennials. By examining the perception of Millennials who voluntarily quit a job within 5 years of beginning it, this study provided concrete examples of what led Millennials to make the decision to quit and insight to answer the questions of whether the Millennials' "presence in the workplace presents strategic challenges for managers?" (Eisner, 2005, p. 1) and "how do the characteristics of Millennials impact leadership strategies?" (Hobart & Sendek, 2009, p. 67).

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used Person Organization fit (P-O fit; Kristof, 1996) as a theoretical framework for exploring the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspectives. P-O fit is rooted in the belief that congruence between an organization's attributes and an individual's values, work preferences, and needs establishes fit between an organization and prospective/current employees. In organizations where there is strong P-O fit, turnover intentions are lower (Van Vianen, 2000). Based on the findings for this study, lack of fit between organizations and Millennials is a factor impacting employers' ability to retain Millennials.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective. The researcher conducted 25

interviews with Millennials who voluntarily quit one or more job (full-time or part-time) after they graduated from college and within 5 years of being hired. The participants were solicited through student groups, email distribution, referrals, and class visits, with the latter yielding the largest number of participants. Of the people who agreed to participate in the study, 5 were asked by another participant to take part in the study via email. Phone interviews were conducted with the 20 remaining participants between March 2014 and May 2014, and their audio-recorded interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

The researcher manually transcribed the interviews, meaning no software was used to help with the transcription process. Afterward, the transcribed interviews were uploaded in HyperResearch, and the researcher began organizing, analyzing, and coding the data. To check against any researcher bias and ensure an accurate interpretation of the data, the researcher elicited the help of a peer reviewer to review the transcripts and assess the coded data. Before reporting any findings, a general consensus was reached between the researcher and peer reviewer on the themes that emerged from the research.

### **Summary of Findings**

The experience of Millennials who voluntarily quit their former jobs is reported in the study's findings. Several discoveries were made and these findings are described below.

Research question 1 sought to discover what the Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to join their former employers. The participants decided to join their former employers because they were attracted to certain aspects of the job/organization such as a fun work environment, opportunity for growth, tuition reimbursement and health benefits, flexible work schedule, and company values/reputation. Prior to making the decision to join the company, Millennials considered their former employers' job/organizational attributes as well as their

immediate needs and/or long-term goals. Moreover, Millennials chose to work for their former employers because they perceived a fit between their work preferences/needs and the job and organization's attributes. They perceived a fit with the job/organization because of the information about the company given to them by people who worked at the organization during the interview and through the organization's recruitment process.

Research question 2 sought to discover what the Millennials perceive as the reasons they chose to quit their former employers. The participants decided to quit their former employers because they did not perceive they experienced the environment that the company promoted during the recruitment process. Additionally, Millennials experienced a series of events in the workplace (e.g., disrespect from management, lack of growth) and/or in their lives outside of work (e.g., birth of a child) that influenced or led them to quit their former employers.

Research question 3 sought to discover what the Millennials thought about loyalty to employers. The participants held mixed views about loyalty to employers. Some participants perceived loyalty to an employer did not exist, while others perceived loyalty to employers could mean a variety of things, such as staying with company until retirement, maintaining integrity, maintaining confidentiality, doing what was best for the company and/or team, making ethical decisions, and giving two weeks notice, to name a few.

Research question 4 sought to discover to what degree an organization's attributes influence the Millennials' perception of fit? The participants perceived they would fit with the organization based on what they learned about the job/organization company during the recruitment process. However, after joining the company, the participants realized there was a discrepancy between how they perceived the job/organization would be before they decided to accept the job and what they actually saw and experienced in the workplace. Because of this

mismatch, the participants no longer perceived they fit with the organization. As a result, they decided to quit.

The central research question sought to answer what it means to Millennials when they quit their jobs. According to the data, it means that their (a) issues with management were not resolved before Millennials decided to quit; (b) physical and emotional health (e.g., happiness, stress, weight) was more important to them than the job itself; (c) former employers did not provide the job/organizational attributes that they said would be available to their employees. Basically, Millennials have work expectations and a strong perception of fit based on the information they receive during the recruitment process, and they may decide to quit the job if they feel the information they received was false. Prior to making the decision to quit, Millennials engaged in a decision-making process where they assessed a number of factors having to do with the organization and their individual values, goals, and characteristics. Millennials make the decision to quit based on the results of their assessment.

Making sense of the data from the participants' perspectives aided in interpreting the findings and understanding how this study relates to current and/or previous research. In order to better understand and interpret the data, the following step-by-step narrative was created to serve as a summary of the experiences of the participants who discussed quitting their former jobs.

1. Approaching the job. The Millennials who participated in this research study approached their former employers with excitement and optimism. For some, it was their first job after college, so they were excited about certain aspects of the job/organization, such as the benefits, compensation, opportunity for growth, company reputation/brand, and a fun and challenging work environment. Others took their jobs out of desperation because they had bills to pay (i.e., student loans, living expenses). Those who went into

their new jobs believing they offered ample opportunities had some goal in mind that they thought the organization would be able to help them accomplish based on the messages they received during the recruitment process.

2. Assessing the job. After joining the organization, the participants assessed the work environment and made a comparison of what had been described to them during the recruitment process to what they actually experienced in the workplace. Based on the results of the assessment, the participants determined there was a discrepancy between their expectation of the environment and the reality of the workplace.

3. Deciding what to do about the job. Despite the mismatch and realization that they may not fit with the company's culture, the participants were not impulsive when making a decision about their jobs. Instead, they initiated a decision-making process in which they assessed their fit with the organization. Factors such as their relationships with management, availability of growth opportunities, alignment of the job/organization with their career and personal goals, job offers from competitors, and current job market were considered. While most of the participants relied on their own intuition, some of them also sought advice from their family before making the decision to quit.

4. Exiting the job. The Millennial participants were extremely committed to their team. Therefore, if they were working on a project, they would complete the project and then quit. Or they might stay long enough to help their former employer train a new hire. Regardless of how and when they quit their former employers, the Millennials who participated in this study experienced a series of events at work and in their lives outside of work that eventually influenced their decision to quit their former employers.



## **Interpretations of the Findings and Relationship of Findings to Research**

Analysis of the study's finding, led to an answer for the following question: What does the data say? Answering this question was not an easy task given that multiple interpretations and meanings can be attributed to a single study (Creswell, 2007). To make an informed decision about key points that emerged through the research, the researcher stepped away from the data and reflected on the findings from the study. Additionally, several discussions were held with a peer reviewer to ensure the interpretations of the findings were not biased and, consequently, reflective of what the researcher wanted the data to say as opposed to what the data actually says. At the end of the discussions with the peer reviewer, the following was determined:

The reasons Millennials decided to join the company are the same reasons they decided to quit it. Based on the information Millennials received during the recruitment process, they perceived the organization as a desirable place to work. As current research suggest, Millennials are attracted to certain job and organizational characteristics (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fonner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). For this particular study, benefits; compensation; opportunities to learn, gain work experience, and apply college degrees to career; work environment, company reputation/brand, and location were most often identified by participants as the job/organizational attributes that *attracted* Millennials to their former employers. However, just like Boswell et al. (2003) suggest, not all Millennials who identified certain aspects of job/organization as attractive cited those same attributes as the reasons they decided to join the organization.

Among the attributes identified in Table 6, opportunities to learn, gain work experience and apply college degrees to career; job responsibilities; compensation; location; and need for

employment were identified by more participants as the reasons they decided to join their former employers. In their study, Terjesen et al. (2007) suspected that once Millennials joined the organization, they would assess the availability of the attributes that were advertised during recruitment to determine whether a fit still existed between their work preferences/needs and the organization's attributes. If there is a lack of fit, Millennials may choose to quit their jobs to seek employment opportunities where they perceive a stronger fit.

Findings from this study suggest that Millennials enter organizations thinking their employers are going to fulfill all or some of their wants/needs based on what they were told during the recruitment process. After experiencing the actual work environment, Millennials may perceive their employers are not going to deliver on their promises. As a result of the misalignment between their perception of the organization and the reality of the workplace, Millennials no longer perceive they fit with the organization.

So, when the participants were asked why they decided to quit their former employers, they cited many of the same reasons they had identified as the reasons they had decided to join the company. For example, if they perceived there would be opportunities for growth that could fulfill one of their career goals of moving up in a specific company, they would decide to join the company. Likewise, if Millennials discover their manager has been in the same role for the past 10+ years with no plans of leaving the position anytime soon, the Millennials will view the company as having limited or no growth opportunities; as a result, they feel *pigeonholed* or *stuck* in their roles. To rid themselves of those feelings, they decide to quit their jobs to seek advancement opportunities elsewhere.

Management has not taken the time to understand Millennials. According to Abbasi and Hollman (2000), managers can prevent employee turnover by understanding the causes of

employee departures. One of the main causes of the Millennials' turnover that emerged from the data was management issues. Although current literature on employee turnover posits that individuals leave managers and not organizations (Tate, 2005), the reasons they leave managers has been narrowly explored. Martin (2005) believes Millennials quit their jobs because of their poor relationships with their managers, and the data from this study supports that claim and expands on it. The issues that negatively affected the Millennials' relationship with their managers had mainly to do with how their managers communicated, managed, supported, and acknowledged them.

The Millennials did not like being yelled at or talked to in a condescending tone or disrespectful manner. They also complained about being micromanaged and not having the freedom to complete work in their own fashion. Additionally, the Millennials did not feel their managers supported their educational and professional goals because they did not take steps such as allowing them to leave work early to attend school or devising a career development plan for them to grow with the company. Another complaint from the study participants was that when they brought issues to management, their managers either downplayed the severity of the problem or ignored the issues, instead of addressing them. The Millennials also complained about their managers not acknowledging their efforts. Specifically, they felt management spent more time criticizing their work instead of helping them figure out how to make it better. For example, one participant stated that management should "teach me what needs to be done instead of being condescending" (P13, April 11, 2014). Clearly, management's lack of developmental focus impacted their ability to retain the Millennials. These issues appear to be resolvable given that many of them have to do with generational differences.

Times have changed, but the people who are responsible for recruiting, hiring, and managing Millennials have not changed their thinking. Luscombe et al., (2013) suggest that organizations develop a better understanding of Millennials in order to recruit and retain them. The findings from this study convey a similar message to employers. Despite the generational shift that is occurring in the workplace (Swiggard, 2011), employers have been slow to adapt their organizational practices to recruit and retain Millennials, the newest generation of employees. In the past, employers were able to retain Baby Boomers for a longer period of time without having to make too many adjustments because Baby Boomers had the mindset that if you got a good job at a reputable company then why would you quit it? If employers were expecting Millennials to also have this mindset, that may explain why they had difficulty retaining those Millennials. Just as employers are tasked with the responsibility of approaching recruitment from the perspective of the applicants (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Uggerslev et al., 2012), viewing retention from the perspective of the Millennials can help organizations keep them.

According to the data, company reputation/brand was attractive to Millennials and ranked high among the reasons they decided to join their former employers, but having a reputable brand was not enough to make the Millennials stay in a job. Millennials seek more out of organizations, and, unlike previous generations, they are not staying around for the long haul and waiting for the company to meet their needs/expectations. Instead, they give the company a certain amount of time to change but then quit because they believe there are other jobs available and they believe in their ability to obtain one. Additionally, popular perception is that Millennials are “slackers/lazy, need instant gratification, self-centered/selfish, disloyal/job jumpers,” and “pampered/spoiled” (Hobart & Sendek, 2009, p. 19), but the findings from this study suggests otherwise. These participants were excited about work and wanted greater responsibilities within

their roles and the organization. They also recognized that change was not going to happen instantaneously, so they gave their former employers time to address their issues/concerns. They had also been willing to stay longer if they had seen a clearly defined career development path and had been guided by their managers through the process until completion. Perhaps their short job tenure does come across as selfish, but Millennials do not feel obligated to stay at a company for the long term if they perceive employers have not given them any reasons to stay. If their former employers would have provided them with the opportunities they promoted during the recruitment process, then the Millennials would have stayed longer. Additionally, Millennials have shorter-term career goals as opposed to the longer-term career goals developed by previous generations.

Another cultural shift has to do with Millennials' valuing happiness and education more than previous generations. So if organizations desire to recruit and retain Millennials, it is imperative for them to understand what would lead Millennials to feel happy and unhappy in their jobs as well as provide more opportunities for them to learn within the organization. The concept of establishing a learning and development culture is not new, but if organizations desire of retain Millennials they will have to place a stronger emphasis on learning and development and adjust their practices to meet the learning and development needs of Millennials.

Moreover, based on the findings from this study, Millennials become unhappy and unfulfilled at work when they are not constantly learning and being challenged and intellectually stimulated. So, being asked to repeatedly perform the same tasks may lead Millennials to quit their jobs, especially if employers expect them to perform those tasks for an extended period of time. Essentially, Millennials desire to be a part of larger projects and expect meaningful and challenging work assignments. Therefore, if members of the previous generations continue to

think that Millennials need to earn their stripes to climb the corporate ladder because that is what has always been done, then employers may continue experiencing turnover from the Millennials.

The Millennials expectations for work are influenced by employers and their parents. As it stands, the overarching issue has less to do with expectations, and more to do with the origins of the expectations. Indeed, Millennials expect to work for a company that offers work-life balance, flexibility, casual and progressive cultures, meaningful and challenging work experiences, training and development, and rewards and recognition, just as research suggests (Alsop, 2008; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Fonner & Roloff, 2008; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Hewlett et al., 2009; Josiam et al., 2009; Ness et al., 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Polach, 2004; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). However, Millennials established their expectations from prospective employers and their Baby Boomer parents. From an organizational perspective, Millennials' expectations are based on the information they received during the recruitment process. Perhaps a company brochure described a company's culture in a way that was attractive to Millennials, so quite naturally, Millennials enter the workplace expecting the organization's culture to be similar to the one they read about in the company's recruitment brochure.

Another expectation that stems from an organization's recruitment efforts is the opportunity to learn about the job/industry and grow with the company. For example, one participant based her expectation for growth opportunities on the company's reputation/brand.

“It was a large corporate name, and I thought I could gain good experience from working there and potentially even move around with the company once I learned skills” (P21, May 2, 2014).

While the timeframe in which this particular participant expected to grow with the company was not identified, based on the above citation, she understood that she needed to develop skills before advancing. This is worth mentioning because it has been reported that

Millennials expect rapid career advancement opportunities, but clearly that is not always the case because the participants in this study expected their former employers to provide opportunities for growth *before* they decided to quit, which on average, was within 30 months. The question then arises for organizational leaders, managers, and HR professionals to ponder: Is expecting to see some form of career progression within two and a half years unrealistic?

In addition to employers being responsible for shaping Millennials workplace expectations, the Millennials' Baby Boomer parents have also helped to shape their attitude towards work. Baby Boomers have told their children not to follow in their same footsteps because they were loyal to their organizations, but when companies were impacted by the recession, they lost their jobs and high wages (Sandeem, 2008). Consequently, they do not want their Millennial children to be overly loyal to organizations because their loyalty to companies did not reap the rewards they had expected. Specifically, Baby Boomers are encouraging their Millennial children to explore possibilities in life and follow their dreams (Arnett, 2004), pursue higher education, find a career that makes them happy, and to continuously seek out new employment opportunities. For example, one of the participants stated:

“I am always in the look for a new job (my father taught us that). As good as you think it is, be sure there is always a better company out there. My father has no aversion to change whatsoever” (P16, April 7, 2014).

Essentially, Baby Boomer parents are teaching their Millennial children to do and be better than them. They do not want Millennials to get complacent in an organization like they did because they believe company loyalty cease to exist.

As a result, Millennials enter the workplace with high and often unrealistic expectations. They want the best the company has to offer, and when they discover the company's best does

not meet their standards, they may decide to leave. Despite being misled during the recruitment process and told in so many ways by their Baby Boomer parents that work should fulfill their wants/needs or they should find another job, Millennials are accountable for managing their own work expectations. By familiarizing themselves with the landscape of the economy and its impact on organizational practices and by viewing the world of work from an organizational perspective, Millennials may give their employers additional time to meet their expectations. For those who took a job out of necessity, it might also be somewhat unrealistic for them to expect a company to invest in an employee who is not interested in being with the company long-term.

Millennials are not prepared to deal with the challenges of the current work environment. Most of the participants were less-experienced workers at the time they held the positions they discussed in the research interviews. They had limited exposure to the workplace, and as a result they had difficulty dealing with the challenges of the workplace. Some of the Millennials' issues with work would not have resulted in them quitting their jobs if they had received training. The following is an excerpt showing how the participant's inexperience affected her experience in the workplace:

“I was very young and had to work with partners that were like much older than me. They had so much experience, and me coming straight out of college it was kind of hard to build that relationship with them and have them trust me because I felt like they just looked at me like this young person who doesn't know what she is doing . . . I was young when I got this position, so if I were to have that same position now I think I would approach it differently because I have more experience. So I think back then I just maybe wasn't mature enough to make some of the decisions that I might have made” (P12, April, 7, 2014).



Additionally, because of the Millennials' optimism, they sought to find an ideal work environment. However, over time, the Millennials realized that a perfect job/organization does not exist. For example, one participant stated:

“Ideal is perfect coworkers, perfect boss, perfect salary, perfect title, perfect everything. I've come to realize that that is not really possible. So I think now it's just kind of more about finding what is most important and kind of settling with that” (P22, May 4, 2014).

To better prepare Millennials who are just graduating from college and approaching the world of work to face the challenges of the workplace, it is imperative for universities and employers to continue working together. Career services staff and/or members of an employer's college relations team should consider providing college students and alumni workshops on the following topics:

- Ways to resolve issues with management
- Ways to handle work-related stress
- Ways to help you help your manager lead you better
- Ways to navigate the workplace
- Ways to manage your work expectations

To summarize the interpretation of the findings and the relationship of the findings to current research, the Millennials quit their former employers for reasons similar to why they decided to join them. This finding is consistent with current research (Terjesen et al., 2007; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007), which predicts Millennials are more inclined to leave an organization once they realize the employer does not provide the job/organizational attributes that were advertised during the recruitment process.

Additionally, the Millennials had issues with their managers because their managers did not understand them and, as a result, were unable to meet their needs and expectations. Tate (2005) asserts that “people leave managers, not organizations” (p. 2), and the findings from this study support his claim. Moreover, there is a generational shift taking place in the workplace (Swiggard, 2011), and according to the data, organizations have been slow to adapt to the generational differences that exist between Millennials and the previous generations. Subsequently, employers’ perception of Millennials is based on the information purported in the media and popular press, which based on findings from this research, does not accurately portray most Millennials.

Another important discovery that emerged is that Millennials have overly optimistic expectations that often do not match the reality of the workplace. This finding is similar to previous research that has suggested Millennials develop their work expectations based on an organization’s recruitment efforts (Terjesen et al., 2007; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007) and their Baby Boomer parents’ experience with work (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Lastly, data from this study suggest Millennials are often not prepared to deal with the challenges of the workplace considering they are less-experienced employees who are more inclined to quit if the organization does not meet their expectations.

### **Implications**

Exploring voluntary job turnover of Millennials through their own perspectives sheds light on issues in the workplace that have been unintentionally overlooked by business leaders, managers, and HR professionals. Given that the current study relates closely to existing literature, it is reasonable to think that employers have more work to do to make their work environments a place where Millennials can thrive. There is a great deal of literature on what Millennials seek in

the workplace, and the findings from this study show that employers during the recruitment process were successful in *promoting* certain aspects of the job/organization that are attractive to Millennials.

Unfortunately, after hiring Millennials, employers are having difficulty retaining them because they are not *providing* the attributes and incentives that were advertised during their recruitment process. When this happens, employers communicate a message that Millennials see as misleading. Millennials often believe a company will meet their needs/expectations until they actually experience the workplace and soon begin to think the company falsely advertised the job/organization's attributes. Most organizations are not intentionally misleading Millennials as they perceive they are planning for the arrival of Millennials. In actuality, the employers are setting up plans for Millennials' departure. Fairly quick ones too. Essentially, employers can increase their retention of Millennials if they provide them with a realistic job preview.

The study also reveals that employers have to do a better job recruiting Millennials in order to retain Millennials. The participants in this study were more interested in what employers can do for them as opposed to what they can do for the employer. There was not much discussion about their skills and how they aligned with the job they were applying for. In fact, the participants sometimes acknowledged they did not have the necessary skills and experience for the job but hoped the organization would provide them with opportunities to gain the skills and experience they were lacking.

Therefore, to create a stronger fit and subsequently, longer retention of Millennials, it may behoove employers to be more strategic in their efforts to recruit Millennials as this may yield a greater retention. Essentially, the Millennials' approach to work implies they are looking for specific attributes and incentives from an organization. Likewise, employers have to be

explicit in their recruitment efforts about the type of employee they are seeking. Conducting an assessment during the recruitment process to identify the Millennials' job intentions may help employers find candidates who not only are better-suited for the job but also more likely to stay. For example, asking more questions about the Millennials' short-term goals may help them weed out applicants who are only seeking the job out of necessity, which eventually leads to turnover. If the employer is not filling a short-term or temporary job, then identifying candidates' job intentions can help create mutually beneficial employment opportunities and, subsequently, establish a stronger fit between the organization and its employees.

Another implication is that Millennials' approach to work may be different, but the issues they are acting on are not unique to their generation. A bad boss, lack of growth opportunities, and lack of work-life balance have been longstanding organizational issues. Previous generations may have chosen to tolerate these issues and stay with a company, while Millennials are not accepting these issues as norms that have to be accepted. If Millennials perceive their issues are not being resolved in a timely manner, they often quit and seek employment elsewhere.

Additionally, the effect of the job on the Millennials' physical and emotional health is another issue they choose not to ignore. Many Baby Boomers worked long hours throughout their careers only to be left feeling unhappy and unfulfilled when they reached retirement—or feeling betrayed when companies laid them off or passed them over for promotions. Many of these Baby Boomers have urged their Millennial children to not follow in their footsteps; therefore, Millennials are being proactive in their careers and choosing to look for work environments where they feel happy and fulfilled so they don't end up like their Baby Boomer parents.

## Recommendations for Employers from the Millennials' Perspective

Retaining Millennials is no easy task. Several authors speculate that organizations will continue to experience a high turnover rate of Millennials, regardless of their efforts, because Millennials are not looking for a long-term career. However, this study found there are steps employers can take to retain Millennials for longer than their 3-year average. Because this study explored the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective, it was possible to obtain their thoughts on what former employers could have done to get them to stay longer (see Table 11).

Table 11  
*What Millennials' Former Employers Could Have Done To Retain Them*

The Essentials to Retain Millennials	Number of participants
Opportunity to move up and/or around in the organization	8
Greater job responsibility	6
Competitive compensation	5
None	5
Address concerns timely	4
Job training	4
Healthy work environment	3
Respect	2
Flexibility	2
Better treatment and recognition	2
Get to know them and seek their input	2
Trust	1
Management support	1
Virtual work	1
Tuition reimbursement	1

*Note.* The themes are ranked by the number of participants who cited them

As shown in Table 11, there are several ways to retain Millennials. Their recommendations for employers can be summarized as follows.

- Address their issues and concerns in a timely manner (e.g., before they make the decision to quit).
- Treat them with respect and talk to them in a respectful manner.

- Even though they've only been in the organization a short while, don't overlook them when it comes time to job promotions.
- Give them more challenging and meaningful tasks. They get bored quickly so you have to keep them stimulated.
- Trust them to get the job done even if it is not the way that you prefer.
- Stay competitive in terms of salaries, titles, and growth opportunities.
- Practice good company ethics.
- Acknowledge their efforts.
- Show them company loyalty.
- Provide them with greater responsibility and the opportunity to be a part of larger organizational projects.
- Help them realize and achieve their potential within your organization.
- Seek their input and opinions.
- Encourage them to move around or up in the company.

### **Recommendations for Employers from the Researcher's Perspective**

By employing the Start-Stop-Continue technique, the researcher came up with the following action steps for employers seeking to make immediate changes.

Start focusing recruitment efforts on identifying the job pursuit intentions of Millennials' that you are seeking to hire. Ask questions such as, "What are your short-term goals? What are you looking to get out of this job/organization? And when do you plan on leaving the organization?"

Stop marketing certain aspects of the job/organization to Millennials that are not currently available within your organization.

Continue building great teams of friendly, competent, and hard-working people.

The same technique was utilized to identify changes that require more time and effort to implement. These changes are listed here.

Start assessing and evaluating the Millennials' experience in the workplace before they decide to quit, and start transforming your work environment into the place you are promoting to Millennials during recruitment efforts.

Stop wasting money and time on ineffective recruitment and retention practices.

Continue providing internship/externship opportunities so that Millennials can preview the workplace environment and experience it first-hand to determine if they fit into it.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study viewed the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. Although the research was timely, there are additional studies that can be undertaken by future researchers to provide context for this phenomenon. Examples of future studies include, but are not limited to:

- Expanding on the study to include more participants (total number and number of males)
- Expanding on the study to include Millennials who quit their jobs in specific industries/professions (e.g., education) and then comparing the findings to this study to determine if the reasons Millennials attribute to their voluntary turnover differ across industries
- Conducting a longitudinal study of a group Millennials to see how the reasons they attribute to their turnover may change over time

- Investigating the work experiences of Millennials from different socioeconomic backgrounds
- Conducting a comparative study to investigate the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the perspective of employers and Millennials
- Conducting a comparative study to understand differences/similarities in how employers perceive they should manage/lead Millennials and how Millennials prefer to be managed/led
- Assessing the best practices of organizations who have successfully recruited and retained Millennials
- Investigating the challenges organizations perceive they face/faced in recruiting and retaining Millennials
- Investigating college-educated Millennials' preparedness for the world of work and the impact of career education on employment outcomes

## **Conclusion**

A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach explored the voluntary turnover of Millennials from their perspective. Through their comments, business leaders and professionals in human resources can gain awareness of why 25 Millennials decided to join and leave their former employers. Although the participants worked in different industries and organizations, they reported similar experiences in their work environments. As a result of their experiences, over 300 significant statements were extracted from the data and utilized to determine dominant themes. Collectively, the themes that emerged from each subquestion provided the context for what it means when Millennials quit their jobs.



Overall, the Millennials' voluntary turnover results from their experiences at work from the time they are hired to the time they decide to quit. Their experience played a significant role in their decisions to quit because the reality of the workplace was often different than what they expected it to be from the recruiting process. Therefore, turnover can be reduced if employers help manage the Millennials' expectations. By giving them a realistic preview of the job and organization during the recruitment process, employers will help Millennials make an informed decision about whether to join their organization. The more realistic information Millennials receive up front about the job/organization, the less likely they are to discover a discrepancy between what they perceived the organization would be and their actual experience of it, which in this study, is at the root of employment turnover for Millennials.

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## APPENDIX A

### Class Announcement

Greetings Class:

My name is Hannah Bateman and I am doctoral candidate in Pepperdine's Organizational Leadership program. I am here today to invite anyone who fits the criteria, which I will describe momentarily to participate in my research study titled, *The Exit Interview: An Exploration of the Voluntary Turnover of Millennials from the Millennials Perspective*.

I am seeking the participation of Millennials who graduated from college (Bachelor's degree or higher) and who have quit one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after they graduated from college and within zero to five years of being hired. The purpose of the study is to discover the reasons Millennials perceive they chose to quit their former jobs, and subsequently, what it means to Millennials when they voluntarily leave an organization. The study is also being conducted to discover what employers can do to influence the Millennials' decisions to remain with their organization for longer than their current three-year average.

Your participation is voluntarily and any personal information disclosed to me during the interview will remain confidential and be used for research purposes only. You may be subject to minimal risks for participating in the study (i.e. boredom and fatigue) and although you will not benefit directly from the study, the data collected from you during the interview may help to make a positive contribution to society by providing knowledge on the Millennials and subsequently, improving the workplace for members of this generation and the business leaders and HR professionals who hire, train, and manage them.

If you fit the criteria and are interested in participating in my study, please write your name, cell phone number, and email address on the contact form and I will contact you to provide you more details about the study and to arrange the interview.

Thank you for your time.

Hannah Bateman



## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

My name is Hannah Bateman and I am a doctoral candidate in Pepperdine University's Organizational Leadership program who is currently in the process of recruiting individuals for my study entitled, "The Exit Interview: An Exploration of the Voluntary Turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' Perspective." The professor supervising my work is Dr. James Dellaneve.

The purpose of the study is to explore the voluntary turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' perspective to discover the reasons Millennials perceive they chose to quit their former jobs, and subsequently, what it means when Millennials voluntarily leave an organization. The study is also being conducted to discover what employers can do to influence the Millennials' decisions to remain with their organization for longer than their current three-year average.

I am seeking your participation because the study aims to explore the experience of quitting a job from the Millennials' perspective. Specifically, I am seeking the participation of Millennials who graduated from college (Bachelor's degree or higher) and who have quit one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after they graduated from college and within zero to five years of being hired. Please understand that your participation in my study is strictly voluntary. The following is a description of what your study participation entails, the terms for participating in the study, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not you wish to participate.

If you should decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to conduct an interview via Skype or by phone. It should take approximately an hour to complete the interview. The researcher will also audio record the interview for research purposes and the recording will be maintained for the duration of the study and deleted immediately thereafter. Additionally, the researcher may contact you to review my transcribed interview and her interpretation of your experience of voluntarily leaving an organization. Please be advised that reviewing the researcher's interpretation of the data is voluntary and will not affect your initial responses.

Although minimal, there are potential risks that you should consider before deciding to participate in this study. These risks include but are not limited to reliving past experiences, sharing confidential information about your former employers, boredom, and fatigue. Considering that your participation is voluntary, please understand that you have the right to withdraw from the study or bypass an interview question at anytime without penalty and further questioning about your decision to discontinue the interview. Furthermore, in the event you are having difficulty with reliving past experiences or sharing confidential information or if you experience any discomfort in the interview such as boredom or fatigue you will be allotted a break for as much time as needed and may resume the interview if/when you feel relaxed and comfortable. Please also understand that the researcher has the right to terminate your participation in the study without regard to your consent. You may also discuss your concerns by contacting the researcher's faculty supervisor or the Chair of Pepperdine Institutional Review Board at the numbers/email addresses indicated below.

Although there are no direct or immediate benefits for participating in the study, you may indirectly benefit from the study. Indirect benefits includes making a positive contribution to society by helping to provide knowledge on the Millennials and subsequently, improving the workplace for members of this generation and the business leaders and HR professionals who hire, train, and manage them.

If you should decide to participate and find you are not interested in completing the interview in its entirety, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also do not have to answer any of the questions during the interview that you prefer not to answer.

If the findings of the study are presented to professional audiences or published, no information that identifies you personally will be released. The researcher will take all precautionary measures to protect the confidentiality of your personal information. Moreover, your identity will not be revealed in any manner and your information will be kept private and secure. Essentially, no information gathered from your study will be released to others without your permission, unless required by law. Please also note that your interview on Skype or by phone will be audio recorded, but rest assured the confidentiality of your personal records (i.e., name, address, company name, phone number, email address, Skype username, written transcripts, recordings, and email correspondences) will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. Specifically, all personal information in an electronic format will be stored for five years on a password protected folder on a separate computer drive than the one used for transcript analysis and deleted thereafter; and all hard copies of information will be kept securely by the researcher's faculty supervisor in a locked file cabinet for five years and destroyed thereafter.

If you have any questions regarding the information that I have provided above, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [Hannah.Bateman@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Hannah.Bateman@pepperdine.edu). If you have further questions or do not feel I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. James Dellaneve at [James.r.dellaneve@boeing.com](mailto:James.r.dellaneve@boeing.com). Additionally, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Chairperson of the Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University, by phone at (310) 568-5600 or by email at [Thema.S.Bryant-Davis@pepperdine.edu](mailto:Thema.S.Bryant-Davis@pepperdine.edu).

By completing the interview, you are acknowledging that you have read and understand what your study participation entails, and are consenting to participate in the study. Please note that a reminder notice will be sent to anyone who has not notified the researcher of his/her decision. Whether you decide to participate or not, please notify the researcher of your decision.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and I hope you decide to complete the interview. Also, if you know any graduate students at Pepperdine's Graduate School of Business and Management who fit the criteria and may be interested in participating in the study, please provide them with my contact information.

Sincerely,

Hannah Bateman, Principal Investigator

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions

Do you agree to the consent form that you received via email?

Do you provide consent for me to audio record this interview?

Do you have any further questions? If not, I will begin recording the interview now.

#### I. Prequalifying Questions

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:

Were you born between 1982-2002?

Have you graduated from a 4-year college/university?

Have you quit one or more jobs (full-time or part-time) after you graduated from college and within zero - five years of being hired?

#### II. Demographics

What is your gender? Male or Female?

What is your ethnicity?

What is your marital status? (single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed)

Do you have any children? If yes, how many?

What is your family's annual income? (example: \$30,000-\$50,000)

At your current residence, do you own, rent, or live rent-free?

Which of the following best describes the area in which you live? (Urban, Suburban, Rural)

When did you graduate from college?

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

What major did you complete to earn your college degree?

Are you currently employed or unemployed?

If you answered yes to the above question, how long have you been working at your current employer and what is your current position?

### III. Background

Was the last job you quit full-time or part-time?

Was the last job you quit in the public, private, or not-for-profit sector?

Was the last job you quit an entry level, mid-level, or a senior level position?

Was the last you quit in alignment with your career goals and/or college degree? Please explain.

Upon graduating from undergrad, what were your career plans?

What were your primary responsibilities?

How many employees worked at your previous employer?

Where is your previous employer located? (city and state)

How long (years and months) did you work for your previous employer?

Were you one of many Millennials in the workplace or one of few?

Was the last job that you quit comprised of more Baby Boomers (people born between 1943-1960), Generation Xers (people born between 1961-1981) or Millennials (people born between 1982-2002)?

What was the organization's culture at your previous job? *Organizational culture*—values, beliefs, and attitudes of an organization and its employees. It defines what the company considers important and what it considers unimportant (Case, 1996).

In three words, describe the environment at your previous employer?

What was the best/worst part(s) about working in this environment that is not easily discernable?

What do you think it takes for someone to be successful at your previous employer?

What skills and characteristics do you think the company values?

### IV. General Questions

Tell me anything you have *heard* about your generation (aka the Millennials).

How would you describe your generation (aka the Millennials)?

Based on your own experience or that of your Millennial friends, describe your generation's overall experience in the workplace? (e.g. What issues do Millennials experience in the workplace?)

What is the greatest misconception you feel employers have about Millennials?

In general, how do you feel about employers?

#### V. Specific Questions

What attracted you to your former employer?

Why did you choose to work for your former employer?

Provide some thoughts on the things you considered prior to making the decision to join the company?

Based on your last response, which of them had the greatest impact on your decision to join the company?

Describe your experience at work from the time you were hired to the time you decided to quit.

What did you like most about your former employer?

What did you like least about your former employer?

When did you realize that it was time to quit your previous employer?

Why did you quit your previous employer?

Under which circumstances did you leave your previous employer? Please check one.

\_\_\_\_\_ I was recruited by another employer

\_\_\_\_\_ I was actively seeking a new job

\_\_\_\_\_ I didn't have any job prospects, but I quit anyway

\_\_\_\_\_ I quit anyway and moved back home or with family

\_\_\_\_\_ I was forced to quit

\_\_\_\_\_ Other, please describe \_\_\_\_\_

What did your decision making process look like?

Provide some thoughts on the things that influenced your decision to quit?

Based on your last response, which of them had the greatest impact on your decision to quit?

If you could change three things about your last job what would you change and why?

What is the longest time you will remain employed with any employer and why?

Define loyalty to an employer.

Did you feel any sense of loyalty to your previous employer? Why or why not?

Provide some thoughts on ways your previous employer could have earned your loyalty.

Do you believe that Millennials can be loyal to an organization for longer than their three-year average? If yes, why? If no, why not?

When deciding whether you fit with an organization, how important are the following attributes?

Please rank 1 through 5 with 1 being the least important and 5 being most important.

\_\_\_\_\_ Work life balance

\_\_\_\_\_ Social/team environment

\_\_\_\_\_ Cutting edge technology

\_\_\_\_\_ Meaningful and challenging work experiences

\_\_\_\_\_ Job training/career development

What other attributes do you consider when deciding if you fit with an organization?

What role did the above attributes play in your decision to join your previous employer?

What did the above attributes play in your decision to leave your previous employer?

How important is fit when deciding whether to join or leave an organization? Examples of fit include an alignment between your values and the organization's values or the attributes you

seek/want in a job and the attributes the organization offers.

What do you think your previous employer could have done to make you stay longer than the time you stated in the previous question?

Describe the type of employee that you think is the best fit for your previous employer?

What is your ultimate/long-term career goal? What is your ideal position?

What else would you like to say about your experience of quitting your previous job?

Would you like to receive a copy of the transcript and/or my interpretation of your story? If yes, you will be able to review the data and strike any information that you feel does not represent your opinion.

Well, this concludes the interview. Thank you again for participating in my study. I truly appreciate it. Best of luck to you with all of your future endeavors.

## APPENDIX D

### A Sample of the Researcher's Interpretation of a Participant's Story

Greetings:

Thank you again for participating in my dissertation research. Below you will find my interpretation of your story as it relates to the central research question: *What does it mean to Millennials when they quit their jobs?* Please consider this an opportunity to review my interpretation of your story and strike any information you feel does not represent your opinion. If any of the information does not reflect your opinion, please let me know so it can be removed.

- Upon graduating from college, you planned on pursuing a career in technical writing; however, when you started looking for jobs in that field, you learned that you needed a computer science background. You ended up obtaining a position as a Sales Administrator, despite not having any sales or marketing experience. You were responsible for assisting with sales and creating metrics and marketing materials. You also took the initiative to create manuals for the company and codified its processes. These duties were closely aligned with your career interest in technical writing and therefore, you spent the last three or four months at work doing some technical writing for the company.
- Prior to actually joining the company, you made a concerted effort to learn about the company by asking the hiring committee specific questions about advancement and tuition reimbursement. Based on their responses you were under the impression that such opportunities would be available to you after you joined the company, but shortly after being hired, you discovered that these organizational attributes were merely ideas because there was not a laid out plan for career advancement or tuition reimbursement. The company did have opportunities for you do lateral career moves, but upward mobility was not an option. As a result of the limited availability of opportunities for upward growth, you felt “pigeonholed” because there was not any position for you to develop into, even if you had decided to stay longer than you did. You also discussed pay and benefits during your interviews and were able to negotiate a higher pay. You considered, pay, benefits, tuition reimbursement, location (proximity to home) and growth opportunities prior to actually joining the company. Although pay had the greatest influence on your decision to join the company, you ultimately decided to accept the job because you considered it an opportunity to learn about sales/marketing and develop new skills.
- Your experience at work from the time you were hired to the time you decided to quit was pleasant initially. As you got acclimated to your job you noticed that in the short time that you were there you were being given assignments others had been working on for a year. This made you feel a bit overwhelmed. Although you enjoyed the challenging assignments, you felt you employer's expectations were too high mainly because your position was entry level. In addition to having high work expectations, you noticed that



upper management did not speak to their staff in the most appropriate tone. Specifically, you did not like how the President/CEO talked to you. He was condescending and critical of your work and ultimately his critical demeanor led to your decision to resign from that company. Despite not having a job lined up, you quit anyway. Although you enjoyed the people that you worked with, you were unhappy at work and therefore, viewed quitting as an opportunity to seek long-term happiness elsewhere. Happiness for you is a supportive employer who treats its staff equally and respectfully.

So what did it mean when you quit your job?

It meant that you no longer were willing to accept and/or deal with your superiors condescending, demeaning, critical, and disrespectful attitude and behavior.

It meant that you no longer wanted to work for a company that does not recognize the work you accomplished because the boss is too busy “nitpicking” over small things.

It meant you could not foresee yourself working at that company for the long-term because of your poor relationship with the President/CEO.

It meant you noticed there was no plan for upward growth and/or tuition reimbursement, despite having been told during the interview that these organizational attributes were available. Basically, the organization’s culture was quite different from the environment that was described to you during the interview process and therefore, you did not see yourself fitting into that particular culture.

It meant you did not envision that job at that particular company bringing you long-term happiness.

*The participant stated, “I agree with the statement as outlined.”*

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

February 14, 2014

Hannah Bateman

Protocol #: E0114D02

Project Title: The Exit Interview: An Exploration of the Voluntary Turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' Perspective

Dear Ms. Bateman:

Thank you for submitting your application, *The Exit Interview: An Exploration of the Voluntary Turnover of Millennials from the Millennials' Perspective*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Dellaneve, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by

the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

In addition, your application to waive documentation of consent, as indicated in your **Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures** form has been **approved**.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the

*Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to “policy material” at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Kevin Collins, Manager of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu). On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Mr. Brett Leach, Compliance Attorney  
Dr. James Dellaneve, Faculty Advisor