GENERATIONAL SUB-CULTURES

by

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SUPERVISOR: PROF N MARTINS

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FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE READER

SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION

For this master's dissertation of limited scope (50% of the total master's degree) the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology recommends a limit of approximately 60 to 80 pages. The department prescribes an article format that involves four chapters – introductory and literature chapters (chapters 1 and 2), a research article (chapter 3), and a chapter containing the conclusion, limitations and recommendations (chapter 4).

TECHNICAL AND REFERENCE STYLE

I have chosen the publication guidelines of the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* to structure this dissertation and article. Therefore, the APA referencing style was followed in terms of the technical editing and referencing.

DECLARATION

I, **Michelle Joan Moss**, student number **35978090**, declare that this dissertation of limited scope titled "**Generational sub-cultures**", is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

(signature)

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MICHELLE JOAN MOSS

28 APRIL 2014

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SUMMARY

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SUPVERIVISOR : Prof N. Martins

DEPARTMENT : Industrial and Organisational Psychology

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The objective of this study was to determine (1) if there is a difference between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture and if so, (2) to determine if generational sub-cultures are formed within an organisation as a result of these different perceptions. A quantitative research design was chosen, and employees (n = 455) in a large South African information and communication technologies (ICT) sector company, selected through proportionate, random, stratified sampling, completed the South African Culture Instrument (SACI). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data, and the results of this study indicate that generational sub-cultures can be identified in the organisation, based on significantly different perceptions of five of the seven dimensions of organisational culture examined. This study therefore contributes to the body of knowledge on organisational culture and the formation of sub-cultures at a generational level and can be used to enhance organisational talent and management strategies.

Keywords: Baby Boomers, generational diversity, Generation X, Generation Y, organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures

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CHAPTER 1
SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

This study sought to investigate generational sub-cultures within a large South African information and communication technologies (ICT) sector company, in order to determine if generational cohorts hold different perceptions of organisational culture and if these different perceptions lead to the formation of generational sub-cultures. The background and motivation for the study, the problem statement and the subsequent literary and empirical aims of the study are detailed below. The paradigm perspective is then discussed in terms of the psychological and research paradigm, and meta-theoretical concepts. A description of the research design which was structured according to the research approach is followed by an account of the research methods which includes the participants, the measuring instrument, research procedure and statistical analysis. Ethical research principles and behaviour are subsequently considered and, lastly, a layout of the chapters of this research study is provided.

1.2. Background and motivation

Characteristics of the 21st-century world of work are rapidly changing and organisations increasingly face new challenges such as globalisation, profitability through growth, technology, intellectual and human capital management and constant change (Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2011). As organisations grow and evolve, they form functional, geographical, ethnic and other kinds of groups, each of which exists in its own specific environment, and organisations thus begin to form their own sub-cultures (Martins & Von de Ohe, 2006; Schein, 1990).

Diversity and the integration of diverse viewpoints into organisations are also pertinent in the 21st-century world of shifting demographic patterns (Simons & Rowland, 2011). This includes generational diversity, and today, many organisations have up to four generations of employees working alongside each other (Lester, Standifer, Schultz, & Windsor, 2012). Furthermore, dealing with a diverse workforce, in terms of attraction, management and retention, in the context of this ever-

changing global, dynamic and competitive world of work, is among the many challenges facing managers today (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

1.2.1. Organisational culture

The field of organisational culture has been characterised by competing definitions, epistemologies and research paradigms and the literature reveals that this continues to be a challenge (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004; Fink & Mayrhofer, 2009). A plethora of different theories, models and frameworks has been developed to explain organisational culture as well as its impact on and relevance for organisations (Beyer & Trice, 1987; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990; Dauber, Fink, & Yolles, 2012). More recently, however, criticism has been expressed that management theories have failed to keep pace with changes in the size, complexity and influence of modern organisations and that the significance of organisations in modern life has been underestimated (Suddaby, Hardy, & Huy, 2011).

At a time when the external environment is changing evermore swiftly, organisations as open systems that exist in multiple environments, can ill afford not to learn, adapt and adjust in order to survive and grow (Schein, 1990; Shih & Allen, 2007). Similarly, management theorists can ill afford not to continue to empirically explore and explain the external and internal complexity that organisations face today (Dauber et al., 2012).

1.2.2. Sub-cultures

The relationship between the organisational whole and its constituent parts has long been raised and debated in organisational culture literature (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). Organisational cultures are composed of various interlocking, nested and sometimes conflicting sub-cultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and organisational sub-cultures are recognised as existing independently of organisational culture and groups within the organisation and thus may have their own distinct set of values, beliefs and attributes (Lok & Crawford, 1999).

The study of organisational sub-cultures is necessary because despite the existence of different sub-cultures and the subsequent potential for misunderstandings and conflict, it is the particular mix of sub-cultural differences within an organisation's boundaries that make its culture unique (Gregory, 1983; Petkoon & Roodt, 2004). In addition, managers, consultants and practitioners can only develop and implement relevant interventions in response to internal and external pressures, such as improving effectiveness, change management and performance, once they truly understand an organisation's unique culture and its sub-cultures (Jermier, Slocum, Fry, & Gaines, 1991).

1.2.3. Generational diversity

There is a perception that employees from different generations have varying expectations of the workplace, varying work ethics and varying values. They may therefore approach work differently, communicate differently and prefer to be motivated differently. The 21st-century work environment places increasing pressure on leaders to attract, engage and retain a diverse group of employees locally and often globally (Lundby, Lee, & Macey, 2012) and how to effectively lead and manage a multi-generational workforce is seen as one of the main challenges currently facing managers (Lester et al., 2012; Lundby et al., 2012).

There is more popular literature available on generations today, but also a paucity of published, empirical research, the results of which are "confusing at best and contradictory at worst" (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). Distinguishing between perceptions and truth, and understanding the similarities and differences in what employees value, what contributes to their engagement and in which organisational culture they will flourish have therefore become critical strategic business objectives (Lundby et al., 2012).

1.3. Problem statement

Changes in the 21st-century world of work have influenced the dynamics of organisational culture as well as the characteristics of workers within this new world of work (Luthans, 2008). Ongoing scientific and objective research is needed to

understand the implications and effects of this new world of work at an organisation, group and individual level.

1.3.1. Organisational culture and sub-cultures

Organisational values, along with beliefs, assumptions, expectations, attitudes, philosophies and norms form the basis of organisational culture and are integral to the distinct identity that every organisation has (Schein, 1990). The possible presence of multiple sub-cultures suggests that behavioural norms and practices are prone to differences across organisational sub-units and are not necessarily common to all employees involved (Bellou, 2010).

Sub-cultures include aspects of the main culture, such as core values, practices and behaviours, but also have idiosyncratic features, reflecting the specific values of sub-units (Bellou, 2010). Since sub-cultures are frequently more powerful than the main culture, they can influence the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of employees to a greater degree than the main culture (Lok & Crawford, 1999). Conflict between the main culture and sub-cultures or between different sub-cultures may bring about problems in strategy execution as well as in effective human resources management (Bellou, 2010).

Some of the variables researched that play a role in the formation of sub-cultures are departmental groupings, geographical distribution, occupational categories, race groups or the influence of a specific manager (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2002). It is therefore important to determine if the perceptions of employees differ with respect to their experiences of the organisation. The consequences of the relationship between culture and sub-cultures based on generational cohorts as well as other possible overlapping sub-cultures such as race, gender, and ethnicity remain a research need.

1.3.2. Multiple generational workforces

Many of the perceptions that generational cohorts hold of others align to stereotypical profiles that have been perpetuated through commonly held biases (Lester et al., 2012) and the findings paint a familiar picture in which shared

perceptions are, for example, that "older" workers are rigid and inflexible; "younger" workers are irresponsible and entitled; and the workers in the "middle" are misunderstood by both younger and older generations (Lester et al., 2012).

These mistaken beliefs or perceptions are problematic because they reduce the ability of cross-generational colleagues to function together at the highest level possible and have implications for effective talent management (Lester et al., 2012). Furthermore, many previous studies have focused on subjective perceptions or anecdotal evidence reported in interviews rather than empirical data (Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010).

There is therefore a need to determine scientifically and objectively if there are indeed differences in the generations' perceptions of organisational culture and if so, to explore if generational sub-cultures are formed on the basis of these different perceptions. This is valuable in terms of improving our understanding of the role of generational sub-cultures in organisations (Murphy, 2011) and accordingly adapting talent management practices at the generational level.

1.3.3. General research question

Against this background, the general research questions that require further research were formulated as follows.

1.3.3.1.   Research questions with regard to the literature review

(1)   How is organisational culture conceptualised in the literature?

(2)   How are sub-cultures and the formation of sub-cultures conceptualised in the literature?

(3)   How are generational similarities and differences conceptualised in the literature?

1.3.3.2.   Research questions with regard to the empirical study

(1)   Are there any significant differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of their organisational culture?

(2)   Is there evidence that generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on these three generations' perceptions of organisational culture?

(3)   What future areas of research for the field of industrial and organisational psychology regarding generational cohorts can be recommended?

(4)   What recommendations can be proposed to organisations regarding the management of generational cohorts?

1.4. Aims of the research

The general aim of this research was to investigate the perceptions of organisational culture held by three generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) and to determine if generational sub-cultures are evident in a South African ICT sector company.

The following aims were formulated for the literature review and empirical study.

1.4.1. Literature review aims

The following aims were formulated for the literature review:

(1)   Conceptualise organisational culture from a theoretical perspective.

(2)   Conceptualise organisational sub-cultures and the formation of organisational sub-cultures from a theoretical perspective.

(3)   Conceptualise and compare cross-generational similarities and differences from a theoretical perspective.

1.4.2. Empirical study aims

The following aims were formulated for the empirical study:

(1)   Determine if there are any significant differences in Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of the organisational culture, within an ICT sector company.

(2)   Determine if there is evidence that generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' perceptions of organisational culture.

(3)   Recommend future areas of research for the field of industrial and organisational psychology regarding generational cohorts.

(4)   Make recommendations for organisations regarding the management of generational cohorts.

1.5.   The paradigm perspective

Paradigms are all-encompassing systems of interrelated practices and thinking that define the nature of researchers' enquiry along three dimensions (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The ontology specifies the nature of the reality that is to be studied, the epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known, or acquiring knowledge and understanding (Solem, 2003) and the methodology specifies how researchers may go about practically studying whatever they believe can be known (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

According to Barton, Stephens and Haslett (2009), the positivist approach is a traditional scientific method that focuses on the replication of results. Conditionals of the hypotheses are known and controllable, and the dominant mode of inference is deduction whereby the researcher appears as an independent, objective observer (Barton et al., 2009). Since this research project sought to determine objective facts rather than the meaning of those facts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), a positivist approach was more applicable than an interpretive approach.

1.5.1. The psychological and research paradigm

The psychological paradigm for this study was that of systems theory. In contrast to the old linear, status quo preserving, predictive kinds of systems thinking, the "new" systems theory encompasses culture, fluidity and systemic ordering in relation to whole or large systems, organic systems and complex living systems as emergent (Muse & Wadsworth, 2012). Because the focus of this study was on the possible organisation of generational groups within a larger organisation, and as the research

was conducted against the background of the changing 21st-century environment which is dynamic, interconnected and a living system requiring change and development from its inhabitants, systems theory was chosen as an appropriate paradigm for the study.

1.5.2. Meta-theoretical concepts

The paradigm perspective in this study was based on a set of meta-theoretical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and human behaviour in a particular organisational setting (Cunliffe, 2011).

According to Abrams and Hogg (2004), the meta-theory provides parameters for the class of phenomena scientists and academics try to understand. The level of analysis used, whether macro or micro, contributes towards keeping the evidence relevant in determined situations and contributes towards preventing ungeneralisable research (Abrams & Hogg, 2004). Within broader social sciences research, industrial and organisational psychology was the disciplinary field within which this study fell and the study of organisational behaviour is categorised within the organisational psychology sub-category. The following meta-theoretical statements were therefore relevant to this study.

1.5.2.1.   Industrial and organisational psychology (IOP)

Coetzee and van Zyl (2013) refer to industrial and organisational psychology as a discipline in which psychological theories, models and methodologies are applied in order to understand, predict and describe human behaviour within organisational contexts. Van Vuuren (2010) identifies personnel psychology, organisational psychology, career psychology, psychometrics and ergonomics and consumer psychology as six major subfields of industrial psychology.

1.5.2.2.   Organisational psychology

One of the main acts that fall within the scope of practice of industrial and organisational psychologists is planning, developing and applying paradigms, theories, models, constructs and principles of psychology in the workplace in order to

understand, modify and enhance individual, group and organisational behaviour effectively (The South African Government Gazette, 2 September 2011).

1.5.2.3. Theoretical models

Since this study focused specifically on the perceptions of three generations, generational cohort theory was useful. Eyerman and Turner (1998) outlined a theory of generations in which generations are viewed as a social construction and are defined as a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture that serve to differentiate one generational cohort from another (Eyerman & Turner,1998).

Organisational culture influences the perception and behaviour of all individuals and groups within the organisation and therefore the level of organisational culture applicable for this study was intra-organisational (Eckenhofer & Ershova, 2011).

This study adopted the theoretical organisational culture model developed by Martins (1989). It provided a convenient and valid method of identifying and explaining various key organisational phenomena that affect the organisation's performance and overall effectiveness and is applicable to the South African context (Martins & Coetzee, 2009). This model is comprehensive in that it is based on the interaction between organisational sub-systems, the two survival functions (external environment and internal systems) and the dimensions of culture (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006).

1.5.2.4. Conceptual descriptions

A brief working definition of the variables is detailed below.

Organisational culture: This construct is viewed as encompassing a system, or many systems, of deeply-rooted values and norms that are shared by employees and that direct their behaviour (Kinicki & Kreitner 2009; Martins & Martins, 2004; Odendaal & Roodt, 1998).

Sub-culture: This is a small work group embedded within the overall organisational culture with its own distinct set of values, norms, beliefs, attributes and behaviours (Crough 2012; Lok & Crawford, 1999; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006).

Generations: Members of a cohort who have experienced and shared social perspectives, values and practices within a given period that influence and shape the outlook of those who were at a formative age at the time (Nimon, 2007). In this study, the four generational cohorts were delineated, as classified by Reynolds, Bush, and Geist (2008):

(1)   Generation Y – those born between 1982 and 2000

(2)   Generation X – those born between 1965 and 1981

(3)   Baby boomers – those born between 1946 and 1964

(4)   Veterans or Traditionalists – those born before 1946

Although Traditionalists are still present in the workforce, the majority have reached or are about to reach retirement age (Lester et al., 2012) – hence the exclusion of this generational cohort from the study.

1.5.2.5.   Central hypotheses

The central hypotheses of the study were formulated as follows:

> H1: There are significant differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture.

> H2: Generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' different perceptions of organisational culture.

1.6.   Research design

The research design detailed below includes the research approach, variables, methods utilised to ensure reliability and validity and well as the unit of study. The ethical research principles relating to this study are also discussed.

1.6.1. Research approach

The positivist approach is suitable for those who want objective facts, and it aims to provide an accurate description of the laws and mechanisms that operate in social

life (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In this approach, theory building takes place through the testing of hypotheses and supports data collection methods such as valid and reliable surveys and structured interviews so that facts can form the basis for generalisation and prediction (Cunliffe, 2011).

System studies address the effectiveness and functionality of organisational systems and/or the relationship with the environment (Cunliffe, 2011). In addition and also relevant to this study is a descriptive group differences research approach, which describes phenomena precisely and finds statistical significance among groups on a variable of interest. This design makes use of classification and/or measuring relationships (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

An organisational culture survey was used because the core method of surveys is aligned to the positivist approach, surveys have become a standard data collection tool and they provide a relatively cost effective approach to large-scale data collection (Singh, 2011).

1.6.2. Research variables

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006) define a variable as a concept that can take on two or more values. An independent variable is the hypothesised causal variable and the dependent variable is the variable whose value depends on the value of the independent variable (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In this study, the three generations of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees were regarded as the independent variables. The dependent variables were the organisational cultural dimensions derived from the South African Culture Instrument (SACI) and linked to Martin's (1999) model of organisational culture.

1.6.3. Methods to ensure reliability and validity

According to Golafshani (2003), the definitions of reliability and validity in quantitative research reveal two strands: firstly, with regard to reliability, whether the result is replicable, and secondly, with regard to validity, whether the means of measurement are accurate and whether they are actually measuring what they are

intended to measure (Golafshani, 2003). The measures described below were used to promote a reliable and valid research process.

1.6.3.1. *Reliability*

Reliability for the process of this study was addressed through data collection, data management and data analysis.

(1)   Data collection – only employees within the targeted South African ICT company were electronically invited to participate in the survey. The survey was electronically completed by employees via the organisation's private network which was accessible only to its employees. This contributed towards effective sample control and disallowed employees from forwarding the survey to external persons to complete (Simsek & Veiga, 2001). There was also no method of verifying identity which was a benefit, because the anonymity of the individuals participating in the survey was not compromised. These are important considerations according to Simsek and Veiga (2001).

(2)   Data management – data was stored electronically and was only available to the researchers involved in this study.

(3)   Data analysis – SPSS version 20 was the statistical package used to analyse the data. Reliability statistics for the instrument used range from 0 to 1 and an internal reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher was deemed acceptable (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The reliability of the instrument was also revalidated by factor analysis. Factor analysis identifies patterns of relationship in a dataset and attempts to identify dimensions which are hypothesised to underlie the patterns (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

1.6.3.2. *Validity*

(1)   To promote the validity of a study, internal validity (the extent to which causal conclusions can be drawn) and external validity (the extent to which it is possible to generalise from the data and context of the research study to the broader populations and settings) are important considerations (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

(2)   The measuring instrument used in this study provided an effective operational definition of the constructs and was suited to the purpose of the research, as stated in the research question, aim and problem statement (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The properties of the instrument were also proven valid and unbiased (Martins & Coetzee, 2007).

(3)   The theoretical paradigms underpinning the study and the context in which the study was conducted were clearly conceptualised and defined (Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

(4)   The selection of a sample contributed towards ensuring external validity and the survey used representative samples to ensure the descriptions of samples could be used to describe populations (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). Furthermore, considering and eliminating the impact of possible conflicting hypotheses were taken into account to ensure validity (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

1.6.3.3.   *Methods to ensure ethical research principles*

The ethical guidelines of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), the University of South Africa, and the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology were strictly adhered to. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was applied for through the University's departmental Research Committee as well as the ICT organisation's Research Committee. Written consent to conduct the research was obtained from the ICT company's authorised representative. The ICT company's Business Code of Ethics dictates that data collected using surveys in the organisation should be used only for the intended purpose and this was adhered to.

In addition, informed consent was obtained from all research participants. Informed consent information and instructions to complete the survey were included in each e-mail invitation. The consent statement clearly introduced the researchers, stipulated the purpose of the study, the risks and the benefits associated with participating in the study, a description of how the results would be used and the contact details of the researchers should participants have any questions. Participants were also reassured that participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the process at any time. The participants were not coerced in any way, and the risks

associated with participating in the study were minimal as responses remained anonymous and could not be traced back to any particular individual.

1.6.4. Research method

According to Singh (2011), empirical research and the subsequent conclusions drawn are only as good as the quality of the data that is entered into the process and the quality is largely defined by the accuracy and reliability of the data collected (Singh, 2011). Therefore the methodological approaches selected for this study were chosen to ensure data quality at every step of the data collection process (Singh, 2011). The study comprised two phases. The first phase was the literature review and the second the empirical study.

1.6.4.1.   Phase I: literature review

The following steps were followed during the literature review phase:

(1)   conceptualising organisational culture from a theoretical perspective

(2)   conceptualising sub-cultures from a theoretical perspective

(3)   conceptualising and comparing generational similarities and differences from a theoretical perspective

(4)   integrating the variables and conceptualising the theoretical relationships between the variables, if any

1.6.4.2.   Phase II: empirical study

The following steps were followed during the empirical study phase:

(1)   Invitations to be sent electronically via the company's electronic communication system were prepared. The online survey was designed, developed and distributed by the company's web-based solution division in the name of the researchers. This email included the universal resource locator (URL) address of the online electronic survey. The questionnaire was available only in English, the official business language of the ICT company.

(2) The survey link was tested on a pilot study of 50 employees initially in the target population, to obtain an indication of any problems that might arise during the roll out to the entire target sample.

(3) Invitations to participate in the survey were then sent electronically via the company's electronic communication system to all full-time employees as per the sample identified.

(4) When the participant accepted the invitation, they opened the online electronic survey by clicking on the URL, signing in, and commenced answering the items of the instrument.

(5) Biographical and demographic data needed for each participant was collected from a section in the survey requesting such information. They were not requested to divulge any identifying information, such as name or salary number at any time during completion of the questionnaire. Of particular importance is the fact that participants were requested to self-select the generational category into which they fell.

(6) Because the questionnaires were completed online, they were collated electronically. The data was downloaded from the SQL database into an Excel spreadsheet and it was cleaned in terms of removing all incomplete records as well as the outlier scores that were extremely high or extremely low.

(7) The data then underwent statistical analysis and processing.

1.6.4.3. Research setting

An organisation culture survey was used because the core method of surveys is aligned to the positivist approach, has long become a standard data collection tool and provides a relatively cost-effective approach to large scale data collection (Singh, 2011).

This study was conducted in a large South African ICT sector company. One of the main reasons for the selection of this ICT company is its large heterogeneous and diverse permanent workforce (N = 21 224). Most employees were highly skilled and technically trained, working in predominantly customer-facing roles or had customer-

facing responsibilities. All employees had direct access to the company's intranet network, with a self-help portal on which many HR functions were managed and via which internal communication was disseminated.

The research method is discussed further in terms of sampling, the measuring instrument and data analysis.

1.6.4.4. Target population and sampling

Owing to cost, time and operational restrictions, only permanent employees from middle management levels and below were targeted (N = 20 771) and comprised the population. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), the minimum representative sample size required from a population of ± 20 000, at a 95% confidence level, is between 370 and 383 (assuming that data are collected from all cases in the sample). Hence to obtain a minimum sample size of ± 383, and given the possibility of non-responses, a sample of 3 000 participants was likely to yield the required results. The researcher then independently selected a sample from each stratum to obtain a final sample of 3 000 employees.

1.6.5. Research procedure

1.6.5.1. Unit of study

The unit of analysis has an impact on sample selection, data collection and the types of conclusions that can be drawn from the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In this study the generational cohort (different groups) was the unit of analysis.

1.6.5.2. Measuring instrument

The South African Culture Instrument (SACI) was the primary measuring instrument used in this study. The SACI was locally developed for the South African context and measures the extent to which employees identify with the various elements of the organisation's existing and ideal culture (Martins & Coetzee, 2007). The overall reliability (Cronbach coefficient alpha) of the SACI was measured at 0.933 and the internal consistency of the dimensions between 0.655 and 0.932 (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006). Respondents make use of a five-point Likert scale to rate each statement. A low rating (1) specifies that the respondents strongly disagree and a

high rating (5) that they strongly agree. The questionnaire is then scored for each of the numerous dimensions. All factors are scored such that a low score indicates non-acceptance of the cultural dimension, while a high score indicates acceptance (Martins & Coetzee, 2007).

This instrument is a South African developed instrument and has been scientifically and objectively proven valid and reliable (Martins & Coetzee, 2007; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006). It is often used in the South African context and was thus deemed appropriate for use in this study.

1.6.5.3. Sampling procedure

Proportionate random stratified sampling is a probability sampling technique in which the researcher divides the total population into different subgroups or strata and proceeds to randomly select the final subjects proportionally from the different strata (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Proportionate random stratified sampling was therefore selected as the most appropriate sampling method for this study.

Random sampling occurs when every member of a clearly defined population has an equal chance of being selected (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Stratified random sampling combines stratified sampling with random sampling and is used when the researcher wants to focus on a specific sub-group in the population and thus ensure the presence of the key sub-group within the sample (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). It also allows a researcher to sample the rare extremes of the given population and leads to higher statistical precision compared to random sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

In proportional random stratified sampling, the sample size of each stratum is proportionate to the population size of the stratum when viewed against the entire population and therefore each stratum has the same sampling fraction (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Since the strata used in this process were based on generational cohorts, there were no overlapping sub-groups.

For this study, the ICT company's human resource system allowed the researcher to separate the target population into three groups or strata based on generational cohort. The researcher then independently selected a random sample from each stratum to obtain a final sample.

The sample population received the survey electronically with a cover letter from the Executive of Talent Management and Development encouraging them to participate in the study.

1.6.6. Statistical analysis

Descriptive statistics and factor and reliability analysis were measured. In addition, because the study aimed to compare the means of three generations on a selection of dependent variables, the Kruskal-Wallis test provided the inferential statistics to identify possible significant differences between generational perceptions of the dimensions of organisation culture and to identify the presence of generational sub-cultures.

1.6.7. Ethical execution of the study

The ethical guidelines of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), the University of South Africa, and the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology were strictly adhered to. Ethical clearance to conduct the study was applied for through the University's departmental Research Committee as well as the ICT sector company's Research Committee. Written consent to conduct the research was obtained from the ICT company's authorised representative. The ICT sector company's Business Code of Ethics dictates that data collected using surveys in the organisation should be used only for the intended purpose and this was adhered to. In addition, informed consent was obtained from all research participants.

1.7. Chapter division

The research study is structured as follows:

> Chapter 1: Scientific orientation to the research
> Chapter 2: Literature review
> Chapter 3: Research article
> Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

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1.8. Chapter summary

This chapter commenced with a discussion of the background and motivation for the study. Flowing from that, the problem statement and the subsequent literary and empirical aims of the study were detailed. The paradigm perspective in terms of the psychological and research paradigm, and the meta-theoretical concepts that framed the research study were then stated. This was followed by a description of the research design which was structured according to the research approach, the research methods which included the participants, the measuring instrument, research procedure and the statistical analysis. Ethical research principles were detailed and, lastly, a layout of the proposed chapters of this research study was provided.

In the next chapter, a review of the literature on organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures and generational cohorts is provided.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the literature on organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures and different generations is examined. In the first section, the background to organisational culture research is discussed and then the complexity in conceptualising and defining the concept is introduced by providing a number of definitions. A description of the characteristics of organisational culture and some key models of organisational culture follow. A brief discussion of the debate regarding organisational culture and organisational climate is followed by a short investigation of the methods for measuring, assessing and analysing organisational culture, another contentious issue amongst scholars, theorists and practitioners.

The second section of the chapter examines the concept of organisational sub-cultures, and some of the factors that contribute to the formation of organisational sub-cultures are summarised. This section concludes with a brief discussion on the importance of organisational sub-cultures.

The final section of the chapter begins with an examination of generational cohort theory and introduces the difficulties and challenges this theory poses. A description of the make-up and characteristics of the three generations then lays the foundation for a discussion on the perceived similarities and differences in the workplace between the generations as found in the literature. This section concludes with a brief consideration of the implications of the perceived similarities and differences for employees.

The literature review will show that the concepts of organisational culture, sub-culture and generations are difficult to define and measure. Discretion is therefore left to the researcher and practitioner to interpret these concepts as best suits their purposes.

2.2. Conceptualising organisational culture from a theoretical perspective

2.2.1. Background to organisational culture research

In 1979, Pettigrew introduced concepts such as beliefs, ideology, language, rituals and myths which were widely used in sociology and anthropology and illustrated their applicability to organisational behaviour. He believed that these concepts were useful in understanding how organisational cultures are created and how entrepreneurs and leaders give energy, purpose and commitment to the organisation they are creating.

Hofstede (1986) credits the ensuing interest and dominant status that organisational culture gained over the next few years to firstly the success of Japanese and other Asian businesses that were using different management methods to the USA and the relative business crisis that the USA was facing in comparison to Asia. Secondly, Hofstede (1986) noted that at an academic level, theorists needed to adopt a holistic approach to management and focus on the strengths and weakness of the organisation as a human institution. Thirdly, organisational sociology or the desire to understand the subjective side of organisations was also a contributing factor to "the rise of the culture concept" (Hofstede, 1986).

Both the September 1983 issue of the US journal, *Administrative Science Quarterly,* and the Autumn 1983 issue of the US journal, *Organizational Dynamics,* were dedicated to developing and analysing the concept of organisational culture.

Pettigrew (1979) did not claim that the concepts of beliefs, ideology, language, rituals and myths were universally applicable across all organisations in differing industries. Gregory (1983) supported Pettigrew's view and illustrated that by applying an anthropological approach in organisations, one can study the participant's views about all aspects of corporate experience such as the work itself, the technology, the formal organisational structure and language, and not only myths, stories and special jargon.

Organisational culture research and theory was seen as a fad that would pass among managers, consultants and academics (Beyer & Trice, 1987; Hofstede et al., 1990), and by 1986, Hofstede posed the questions "so what?" For the practising

manager, he asked: "What help does insight into organisational culture give in terms of control and how can this insight be obtained?" For the academic, he questioned: "What help does insight into organisational culture give that cannot be explained by other existing concepts?". Hofstede (1986), amongst others, therefore called for more empirical research on organisational culture and less speculation.

2.2.2. Definitions of organisational culture

There are enormous variations in the definitions of organisational culture, especially since the concept lends itself to a broad variation of disciplines and research orientations such as anthropology, sociology, management studies, political science and industrial psychology (Alvesson, 2013). There are also widely differing views on whether culture refers to real, objective phenomena "out there" or if it is a framework for thinking about certain aspects of the social world (Alvesson, 2013), and this influences the way in which organisational culture is defined.

Peters and Waterman (1982) published a management book, *In Search of Excellence*, which also propelled organisational culture to the forefront of organisational research. They comment that in the organisations they studied, without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of excellent companies. They emphasise the importance of shared values that are crystal clear and guide the behaviour of employees.

A sense of shared values and norms is a common thread in many definitions of organisational culture. Siehl and Martin (1983, p.52) apply an anthropological perspective and define organisational culture as "a normative glue and a set of values, social ideals or beliefs that organisation members share". Similarly, Koberg and Chusmir (1987) define organisational culture as a system of shared values and beliefs that produce norms of behaviour and establish an organisational way of life.

Admitting that it is not a particularly rich conceptualisation of culture, Alvesson (1987) later proposed that rather than defining culture as "shared values" it might be viewed as a common instrumental sets of attitudes toward the activities and the setting people are engaged in, thus guiding individuals in what they are expected to do and say and how to behave. Cooke and Rousseau (1988, p.245) expand on the concept

of attitude and define organisational culture as "the ways of thinking, behaving and believing that members of a social unit have in common".

Denison (1990, p.620) integrated the concepts of values, attitudes and behaviour and defined organisational culture as "the term that refers to the underlying values, beliefs and principles that serve as a foundation for an organisation's management system as well as the set of management practices and behaviours that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles". He explains that the principles and practices have meaning for the members of the organisation and that is why they endure. The values, beliefs and meanings that underlie a social system are the primary source of motivated and co-ordinated activity (Denison, 1990).

It was also emphasised that organisational culture comprises shared perceptions and practices and is not only based on the values held by individual members (Hofstede et al., 1990). Schein (1990, p.111) formulated one of the most comprehensive and widely accepted definitions of organisational culture and explained that when bringing culture to the level of the organisation and even down to groups within the organisation, it can be formally defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems".

Geertz (2003) adopted a slightly different anthropological perspective and postulated that culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions or processes can be casually attributed, but is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly, or "thickly" described.

Martins' (1989, p.92) definition draws attention to the relationship between behaviour and the creation of organisational culture more clearly and defines it as "an integrated pattern of human behaviour which is unique to a particular organisation and which originated as a result of the organisation's survival processes and interaction with its environment. Culture directs the organisation to goal attainment. Newly appointed employees must be taught what is regarded as the correct way of behaving".

Hofstede (1998) takes a more cognitive perspective and defines organisational culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organisation from another. He emphasises that an organisation's culture is assumed to reside in the minds of all the organisation's members and not only in the minds of its managers and chief executives (Hofstede, 1998).

A more recent contribution came from Moon, Quigly, and Carson-Marr (2012), who base their definition of organisational culture on Hofstede (1998) as described above, but adapt it to include the words "strategic" and "interpersonally". Their understanding is that "organisational culture is an emergent strategic system of shared values and norms that define the interpersonally appropriate attitudes and behaviours for organisational members" (Moon et al. 2012, p.111). They insert the word "strategic" to argue that organisational culture can emerge as the outcome of either volitional or unintended strategic decisions detailing how leadership, or strategic human resource management functions, expect organisational members to interact (Moon et al., 2012).

Organisational culture is therefore viewed in this study as encompassing a system, or many systems, of deeply-rooted values and norms that are shared by employees and that direct their behaviour (Kinicki & Kreitner 2009; Martins & Martins 2004; Odendaal & Roodt 1998). The concept of organisational sub-cultures as a system within a system is suggested in this definition, but is discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

2.2.3. Characteristics of organisational culture

Although there is no consensus, Hofstede et al., (1990) state that most authors likely agree on the characteristics of organisational culture as:

(1)   holistic
(2)   historically determined
(3)   related to anthropological concepts
(4)   socially constructed
(5)   soft
(6)   difficult to change

According to Hofstede et al. (1990), all of these characteristics had been separately recognised in literature in the previous decades, but integrating them into one construct of organisational culture was new.

Smircich (1983) and later Dauber et al. (2012), point out that there is a plethora of cultural frameworks, sometimes tied to specific contexts or phenomena, and these differences give rise to different research questions and interests. This places the onus on the researcher to be informed on the concepts of organisational culture and to define it appropriately in line with research questions and interests.

2.3. Models of organisational culture

The single greatest challenge in organisational culture research has been the difficulty in establishing a single orienting paradigm by which research findings can be accumulated (Moon et al., 2012). Table 2.1 below summarises the theorists and elements of organisational culture that will be discussed in this study.

Table 2.1: Elements of organisational culture by each theorist

Theorist	Elements of organisational culture
Pettigrew (1970)	Beliefs, ideology, language, ritual and myth
Hofstede et al. (1990)	Symbols, heroes, rituals and values
Schein (1990)	Artefacts, values, underlying assumptions
Hatch (1993)	Artefacts, values, assumptions, symbols linked by symbolisation, interpretation, manifestation and realisation
Deal and Kennedy (1982)	History, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, stories, heroic figures, the cultural network, corporate tribes
Martins (1989)	Organisational system, survival functions and dimensions of culture

2.3.1. Pettigrew

In 1979, Pettigrew published a paper that examined some of the concepts and processes he believed were associated with the creation of organisational cultures

based on his longitudinal-processual study. He focused on studying a sequence of social dramas to gain a transparent view of the growth, evolution, transformation and decay of an organisation over time (Pettigrew, 1979). He saw organisational culture as the social tissue around us that gives everyday tasks meaning and in order for people to function in any given setting, they must have a continuing sense of what that reality is all about. Pettigrew (1979) preferred to view culture as "the source of a family of concepts" which included symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual and myth.

Symbols: Symbols are the organisation's vocabulary, the design of the organisation's buildings, the beliefs about the use and distribution of power and privilege, and the rituals and myths which legitimate those distributions have significant functional consequences for the organisation (Pettigrew, 1979).

Language: Pettigrew (1970) saw language as vocal signs that are socially built and maintained. He wrote that language creates and provides the structured "ways" of groups and the value implications of these ways. Language therefore plays a role in expressing communal values, evoking past experiences, providing seed beds for human action and legitimising current and evolving distributions of power (Pettigrew, 1979).

Ideology and belief: These provide a link between broad, moral diagnoses of situations and actions at a specific level. Ideology and belief therefore play a significant role in the processes of organisational creation because they have the potential to link attitude and action (Pettigrew, 1979).

Ritual and myth: Pettigrew (1970) believed that rituals are used to show there are central or peripheral values, dominant or marginal people and highly prized or less important goals and activities in the organisation. He wrote that it is partly through ritual that social relationships become stylised, conventionalised and prescribed and rituals may provide a shared experience of belonging and express and reinforce what is valued (Pettigrew, 1979). He (1970) believed that myths play a crucial role in the continuous processes of establishing and maintaining what is legitimate and what is labelled unacceptable in an organisational culture. Myths therefore contain

levels of meaning that deal simultaneously with the socially and psychologically significant in any culture (Pettigrew, 1979).

In critiquing his own work, Pettigrew (1979) acknowledges that the various forms and functions of symbols, languages, ideologies, beliefs, rituals and myths are to varying degrees interdependent and in some ways convergent in the ways they relate to functional problems of integration, control and commitment to an organisational culture.

2.3.2. Hofstede

In their study on measuring organisational cultures across 20 cases, Hofstede et al. (1990) modelled their research on Hofstede's previous project that examined national cultures. In that original research, Hofstede identified four largely independent dimensions of differences between national value systems. These included "power distance" (large vs small), "uncertainty avoidance" (strong vs weak), "individualism" versus "collectivism" and "masculinity" versus "femininity".
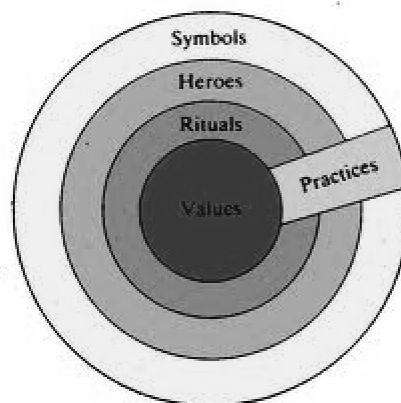
Figure 2.1: Manifestation of culture: From shallow to deep (Hofstede et al.,1990, p.291)

Based on a survey of the literature at the time, Hofstede et al. (1990) also classified manifestations of organisational culture into four categories, namely symbols; heroes; rituals; and values. They defined symbols as words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning within a culture. Heroes were classified as people, alive or dead, real or imaginary, that serve as models for behaviour. Rituals were seen as collective activities that were technically superfluous but socially essential. These manifestations are pictured as the layers of an onion, as seen in

figure 2.1, from shallow superficial symbols to deeper rituals. The core of culture is formed by values and, unlike the other layers, cannot be observed, but instead, is manifested in alternatives of behaviour.

Hofstede et al. (1990) concluded their research article by distinguishing between national cultures and organisational cultures as phenomena of different orders and using the term "culture" for both is misleading. This again highlights the difficulty in defining culture and the importance of determining upfront what is to be the focus of the study. Although this model allows for classifications of organisations, it is considered fairly static, provides limited conclusions about organisational processes related to organisational values and does not provide for changes of organisational culture (Dauber et al., 2012).

2.3.3. Schein

Another prolific writer on organisational culture is Schein (1990) who proposed that organisational stories, rituals, rites and symbolic manifestations and other cultural elements could be taken as valid surrogates for the cultural whole. He believed a culture's strength and degree of internal consistency is a function of the stability of the group, the length of time the group has existed, the intensity of the group's experiences of learning, the mechanisms by which learning has taken place and the strength and clarity of the assumptions held by the founders and leaders of the group (Schein, 1990). Schein (1990) saw the value of distinguishing between three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: observable artefacts; values; and underlying assumptions; as seen in figure 2.2 below.
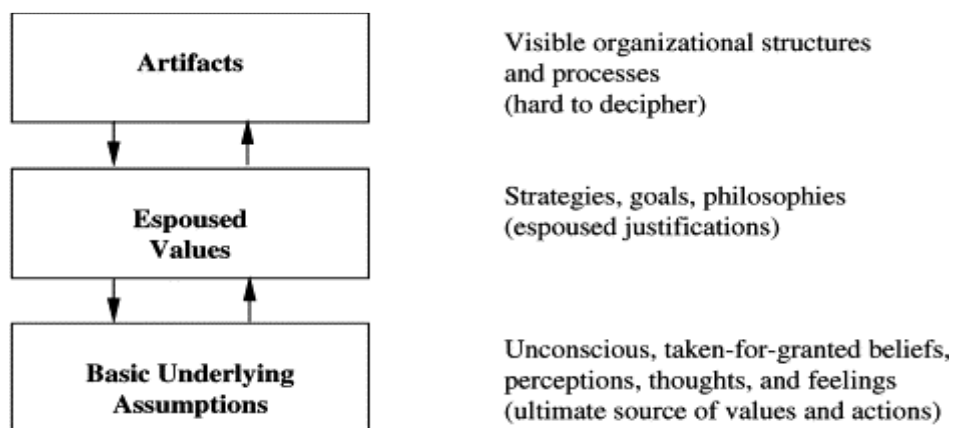
Figure 2.2 Schein's (1990, p.41) levels of culture

Artefacts include everything one feels and sees when entering the organisation. They include the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, including the emotional intensity and other phenomena (Schein, 1990). According to Schein (1990), artefacts also include organisational symbols, stories and myths, all elements identified and discussed by Pettigrew in 1970. They are easy to observe but not always easy to decipher. They are generally not a reliable indicator of how members of an organisation react, and they do not reveal the meanings of such things to the organisation's members (Schein, 1990).

Schein (1990) believed that through interviews, questionnaires or survey instruments, one can study a culture's values, norms, ideologies, charters and philosophies. Values at this conscious level will predict much of the behaviour that can be observed at the artefactual level, but if the values are not based on prior learning they may reflect espoused values (Schein, 1990). According to Schein (1990), these values predict what people will say but may be out of line with what they will actually do.

Schein's (1990) final level is the underlying assumptions. He describes these as usually unconscious, taken-for-granted and underlying assumptions that determine the perceptions, thought processes, feelings and behaviour of the members. Schein wrote that once a researcher or consultant understands some of these assumptions, it becomes easier to decipher the meanings implicit in the behavioural and artefactual phenomena that are observed (Schein, 1990).

2.3.4. Hatch

Hatch (1993) acknowledged the value of Schein's model but indicated that it leaves gaps in the appreciation of organisational culture as symbols and processes. She therefore developed a new model called cultural dynamics that conveys a process of manifestation, realisation, symbolisation and interpretation. The value of Schein's (1990) model is not undermined, but Hatch (1993) promoted a more complex, process-based understanding of organisational culture.

As indicated in figure 2.3 below, Hatch (1993) introduced symbols as a new element in her first adaptation of Schein's (1990) model. Secondly, she reduced the importance of the elements of assumptions, values, artefacts and symbols so that they are less central to the model and the linking of the elements becomes more significant.

Rather than follow Schein's (1990) linear model, Hatch (1993) explained the circularity of her model and as there is no starting or finishing point - one can start anywhere and move in a clockwise or anticlockwise direction. Hatch (1993) also explained that each process in her dynamic model co-occurs in a continuous production and reproduction of culture in both its stable and changing forms and conditions. None of the processes can therefore stand on their own as each needs the perspective provided by the others (Hatch, 1993).
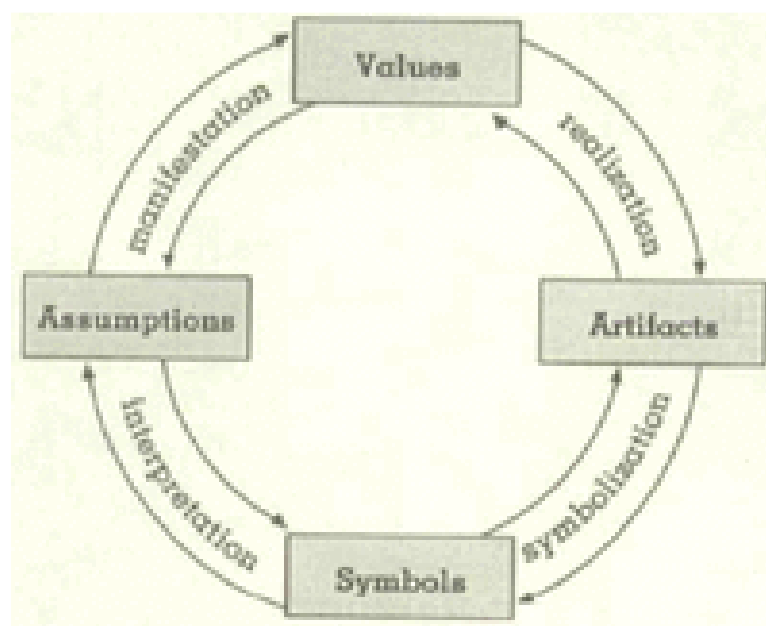
Figure 2.3: The cultural dynamics model (Hatch, 1993, p.660)

Hatch (1993) acknowledges that some criticisms of her model are that the level of analysis is ambiguous as it is unclear if the processes described in the model occur within individuals or among them and whether the processes are cognitive or social. In addition, it is unclear under which conditions such processes take place and which factors determine the path from transformation of assumptions into artefacts (Dauber et al., 2012). Hatch (1993) defends her model by describing the processes as simultaneously cognitive and social and states that individuals cannot be

conceptualised separately from their cultures. The model is useful as an "either/or" framework (Hatch, 1993).

Hatch (1993) viewed the model as a collage of some of the most compelling ideas about organisational culture found in the literature. It is a useful, if somewhat effusive model, because it offers flexibility with no predetermined starting and finishing point. It can therefore be used according to the researcher's needs.

Both of the models proposed by Schein (1990) and Hatch (1993) are seen to explain cultural dynamics and provide a meaningful basis for the development of an internal environment of an organisation but their high level of abstraction confines the explanatory power regarding interdependencies between organisational culture and other domains of an organisation such as strategy, structure and operations (Dauber et al., 2012).

2.3.5. Deal and Kennedy

Deal and Kennedy (1982) introduced the concept of an organisation with strong organisational culture as one that exhibits strength, a cohesiveness within and among groups, and a sense of organisational identity and commitment. Deal and Kennedy's (1982) framework is based on six interlocking cultural elements. This includes the following:

(1)   *History* is conceptualised as a shared narrative of the past.

(2)   As far as *values and beliefs* are concerned, cultural identity is formed around the shared beliefs of what is important and the values that determine what the organisation stands for.

(3)   *Rituals and ceremonies* are the things that employees do every day that bring them together.

(4)   *Corporate stories* exemplify company values and capture the exploits of employees to personify these values in action. Stories allow employees to learn what is expected of them and better understand what the business stands for.

(5) *Heroic figures* are employees and managers whose status is elevated because they embody organisational values. The heroes serve as role models and their words and actions signal the ideal to aspire to.

(6) The *cultural network* is the informal network in an organisation where often the most important information is learnt.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) also identified the degree of risk associated with a company's key activities and the speed at which companies learn whether their actions and strategies are successful. They believed these factors influence cultural patterns and practices and displayed the factors in a matrix that identifies four distinct cultural types.

According to Deal and Kennedy's (1982) typology, shown in figure 2.4, tough-guy, macho is a culture that contains a world of individuals who enjoy risk and who get quick feedback on their decisions.
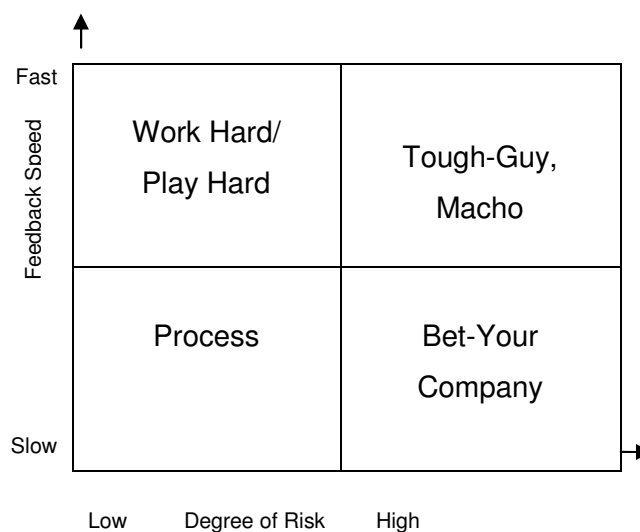
Figure 2.4: Deal and Kennedy's (1982, p.107) cultural type

The work hard/play hard culture is one in which employees take few risks, but the feedback on how well they are performing is almost immediate. Employees need to maintain high levels of energy. The culture recognises that one person cannot make the company and through team effort everyone is driven to excel. The bet-your-company culture is one in which decisions are high risk, but employees may wait

years before they know whether their actions actually paid off, while a process culture is one where feedback is slow and the risks are low (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

This model does not promote one type of culture over the other and its value lies in using it to understand how culture evolves and how to manage the various elements that influence it (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

In critiquing models of organisational culture however, Deal and Kennedy's (1982) model was considered a "strong culture" study and was grouped with other similar models into a so-called "trait-strength framework" and discussed by Staffold (1988). This framework related positive cultural trait profiles to enhanced organisational performance in proportion to the strength with which particular cultural traits are manifested (Staffold, 1988).

Staffold (1988) identified five weaknesses in the trait-strength models. They included the assumption of unitary culture, the ambiguity of strength as a measure of culture, dependence upon composite culture profiles, insufficient attention to culture-performance links and the use of inadequate methodologies (Staffold, 1988).

In addition, because Deal and Kennedy's (1982) model is one that defines and clusters organisations into certain categories, and it is unlikely that an entire organisation will fit exactly into only one category, the allocation of organisations into these categories is not clear cut. There are no specified empirical referents and cut-off points, which makes the typology approach difficult to use empirically (Meyer, Tsui, & Hinings, 1993; Dauber et al., 2012).

2.3.6. Martins

Martins' (1987) model of organisational culture, unlike the models of organisational culture discussed above, incorporates dimensions of culture rather than a set typology and considers the impact of the external environment. This is a critical consideration as the environment in which organisations operate is increasingly becoming more global, dynamic, competitive, and contradictory and these influences need to be acknowledged and provided for (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Martins' model, shown in figure 2.5 below, is based on the interaction between organisational subsystems, the two survival functions comprised of the external environment and the internal system and the dimensions of culture (Martins, 1989).
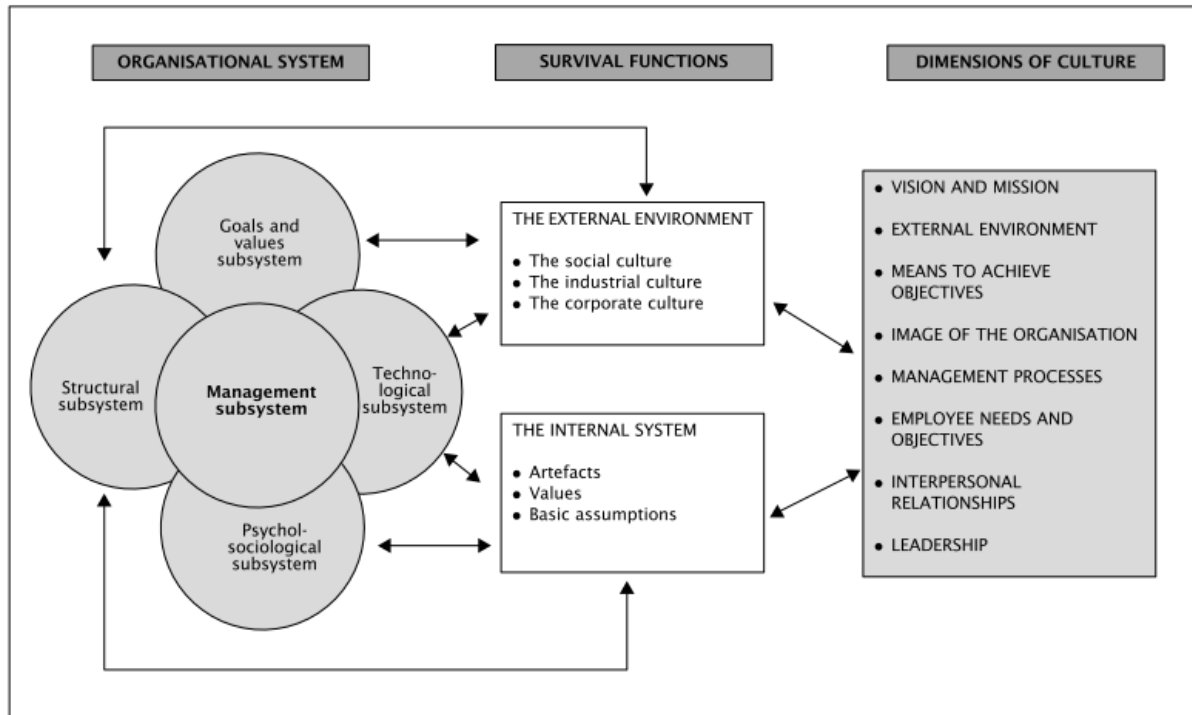
Figure 2.5 Martins' model of organisational culture (Adapted from Martins (1987, p.92); as adapted in 1997)

The organisational system consists of five sub-systems, namely goals and values, technological, psychosocial, structural and management sub-systems (Martins, 1989).

(1)   *Goals and values* as a subsystem consist of various objectives that can be linked to the mission and strategy of the organisation. This is why the organisation exists - it usually exists because of a need in the broader community (Martins, 1989).

(2)   *The technological subsystem* refers to the specialised knowledge, skills, machines, equipment and layout of the facilities that are used in the transformation from inputs to outputs. This can also be seen as a subsystem of artefacts and creations (Martins, 1989).

(3)   *The psycho-sociological subsystem* comprises groups and individuals in the organisation and refers to the relationships between them as well as the motivation for individual needs and goals to be integrated with those of the organisation in a common goal (Martins, 1989).

(4)   *The structural subsystem* refers to the task expectations and the technology that has a significant influence on the structure of an organisation. Structures of authority are formed and systems of workflow are designed based on how the tasks are grouped. Other structural aspects include reporting lines, work rules and communication flow (Martins, 1989).

(5)   *The management subsystem* relates to how the organisation is related to its environment, goal setting and objectives, developing comprehensive strategies and operational plans, designing structures and establishing control processes and managing human resources (Martins, 1989).

Martins' (1989) model is based on the work of Edgar Schein, describes organisational culture and draws on open systems theory. The organisational systems model explains the interaction between organisational subsystems, the complex interaction that takes place on different levels between individuals and groups, and the external environment, which can be seen as the primary determinants of behaviour in the workplace (Martins & Martins, 2002). The model therefore encompasses all aspects of an organisation upon which organisational culture can have an influence, and vice versa (Martins, 2003). In addition, because Martins' (1989) model focuses on the dimensions of organisational culture rather than typologies, it is applicable to the South African context, and is aligned to this research study's overall paradigm perspective - hence the researcher's choice of this model to form the foundation upon to base this research study.

2.3.7. Three-perspective framework

From the short discussion above of a few key models of organisational culture, it is clear why ambiguity as a central feature of organisational culture was proposed and researchers were urged not to equate culture with solutions, clarity and consensus (Alvesson, 1993). Martin (2004) suggested a three-perspective framework that does

not attempt to combine all theories into one unifying meta-theory. The three major perspectives that have therefore come to dominate research on organisational culture are as follows:

(1) *Integration perspective:* This perspective portrays culture predominantly in terms of consistency (across the various manifestations of a culture), organisation-wide consensus about the appropriate interpretation of those manifestations and clarity. From an integration perspective, cultural members agree on what they are supposed to do and why it is worthwhile to do it. In this realm of clarity there is no room for ambiguity (Martin, 2004).

(2) *Differentiation perspective:* By contrast, studies congruent with the differentiation perspective portray cultural manifestations as predominantly inconsistent with each other. According to these studies, to the extent that consensus emerges it does so only within the boundaries of a sub-culture. At the organisational level of analysis, differentiated sub-cultures may co-exist in harmony, conflict or indifference to each other. From a differentiation point of view, sub-cultures are islands of clarity, and ambiguity is channelled outside their boundaries (Martin, 2004).

(3) *Fragmentation perspective:* The perspective views ambiguity as an inevitable and pervasive aspect of contemporary life. These studies therefore focus predominantly on the experience and expression of ambiguity within organisational cultures. Clear consistencies, like clear inconsistencies, are rare. According to this viewpoint, consensus and dissensus co-exist in a constantly fluctuating pattern influenced by changes. Any cultural manifestation can be and is interpreted in a myriad of ways. No clear organisation-wide or sub-cultural consensus stabilises when a culture is viewed from a fragmentation point of view (Martin, 2004).

2.3.8. Other models of organisational culture

Many other models, frameworks and studies of organisational culture have been developed and conducted over the last two decades. They will not be discussed in this study because they are beyond the scope of this research and tend to focus on

specific aspects of organisations and organisational culture. These include but are not limited to

(1)   a communication-rules approach which seeks to apply a rules approach for developing descriptions of organisational culture (Schall, 1983)

(2)   a cultural theory of information bias which distinguishes between different types of organisational culture based on the information bias tendencies of the organisation's leaders and members (Thompson & Wildavsky, 1986)

(3)   a culture-performance framework (Staffold, 1988)

(4)   the organisation culture profile (OCP) which examines person-organisation fit in terms of individual and organisational values (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991)

(5)   the Burke-Litwin model of transformational and transactional dynamics in organisational performance (Burke & Litwin,1992)

(6)   organisational cultural change (Sathe & Davidson, 2000)

(7)   the linkage research model which examines organisational climate and work performance (Wiley & Brooks, 2000)

(8)   The Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI) which is an instrument that was designed on the basis of a conceptual framework, to understand the operating cultures of organisations (Cook & Szumal, 2000)

(9)   Levin's five-window framework and approach, which provides a framework and techniques for facilitating organisation members' interpretation of common organisational events, routines and preferred ways of doing things (Levin, 2000)

(10)   the Multiple-layer Model of Market Orientated Organisational Culture (Homburg & Pflesser, 2000) which draws an explicit distinction among values, norms and artefacts that support market orientation and behaviours.

(11)   the Competing values Framework (CVF) which examines organisational effectiveness (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Hartnell, Ou, & Kinicki, 2011)

(12)   the eight-step integrated post-merged organisational culture creation model, which is based on South African research and supports the establishment of

an organisational culture which is conducive to effective performance management in a post-merged environment (Paul & Berry, 2013)

2.4. Dimensions of culture

The vision and mission determines employees' understanding of the vision, mission and values of the organisation and how these can be transformed into measurable, individual and team goals and objectives (Martins, 2003). The external environment refers to the degree of focus on external and internal customers and employees' perceptions of the effectiveness of community involvement (Martins, 2003).

Means to achieving objectives refers to the way in which organisational support and structural mechanisms contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation (Martins, 2003). Image of the organisation explores the image of the organisation to the outside world and whether it is a sought-after employer (Martins, 2003). Employee needs and objectives determine the integration of employee needs and objectives with those of the organisation as perceived by employees (Martins, 2003).

Interpersonal relationships focus on the relationship between managers and employees and on the management of conflict (Martins, 2003). Leadership involves specific areas that strengthen leadership as perceived by employees (Martins, 2003). Management processes focus on the way in which management processes take place in the organisation, including elements such as decision making, formulating goals, innovation processes, control processes and communication (Martins, 2003).

2.4.1. Survival functions

The organisation operates in the external environment, and to ensure the survival of the organisation, leaders and managers need to continually gather and interpret data from this environment (Martins, 1989). Stakeholders, competitors, the community and political, statutory, economic and ecological factors need to be considered as external factors and the way in which these factors are dealt with could have a significant impact on the organisation's adaptation and success (Martins, 1989).

In the same way as the organisation has to continually respond and adapt to the external environment, so too does the internal system of artefacts, values and basic assumptions have to be interpreted and constantly adapted (Martins, 1989).

2.5.   Contemporary theories of organisational culture

Suddaby et al. (2011) have more recently posed the following questions: "Where are the new theories of organisation?" They believe there is an over-reliance on the founding fathers of the discipline and that current management theories have failed to keep pace with changes in the size, complexity and influence of modern organisations. They also suggest that the significance of organisations in modern life has been underestimated and there is a lack of attention to their complexity, influence and power (Suddaby et al., 2011).

Although, the response to their call for papers did not result in any new theories, suggestions were made about how to generate new theory, and two in particular will briefly be discussed (Suddaby et al., 2011).

Smith and Lewis (2011) proposed the use of paradox theory as a tool for theorising because it presumes that tensions are integral to complex systems and that sustainability depends on attending to contradictory yet interwoven demands simultaneously. They posited that their model, which integrated the paradox perspective within a dynamic equilibrium model of organising, attends to the dynamic and persistent nature of organisational paradoxes, depicting how paradoxical tensions and their management might interact in an ongoing, cyclical process. Their model is relevant because this virtuous cycle makes sustainability possible by fostering creativity and learning, enabling flexibility and resilience and unleashing human potential (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Dauber et al. (2012) proposed a configuration model of organisational culture which explores dynamic relationships between the organisational culture, strategy, structure, and operations of an organisation, and maps interactions with the external environment. The model builds on other widely recognised models in the field of organisation and culture theory, but focuses on change and reciprocal relationships between constructs (Daubner et al., 2012).

While the authors of the two above-mentioned models and approaches acknowledge that their work can only be labelled as "promising evidence" for heading in the right direction of extending knowledge about organisational cultures, strategies and structures, their work does give one some insight into mapping organisational culture change over time (Dauber et al., 2012). This addresses a criticism that theoretical models of organisational culture should be able to explain or at least indicate how and when certain variables change over time (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010), as well as consider the impact of the complex, dynamic and contradictory internal and external environments in which organisations are required to function (Dauber et al., 2012; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

2.6.   Organisational culture and organisational climate

Another source of debate between theorists, researchers and consultants is the difference or similarity between organisational culture and organisational climate. Cooke and Rousseau (1988) distinguish between organisational culture and organisational climate by providing a list of culture and of climate definitions. In a nutshell, they contend that climate reflects perceptions of organisational structures and how it feels to be a member of the organisation, whereas beliefs on how to behave are aspects of organisational culture.

Also supporting the view that culture and climate should be conceptualised as different are Castro and Martins (2010). They write that organisational culture is viewed as being more deeply rooted in the organisation and is based on employees' values, beliefs and assumptions (Castro & Martins, 2010). This is in contrast to organisational climate, which is a "snapshot" of a particular time in an organisation and is measured by a range of dimensions (Castro & Martins, 2010).

Ott (1989) understood organisational climate to mean an amalgamation of feeling tones, or a transient organisational mood. He therefore saw organisational climate not as an element of organisational culture, but rather as a related but separate phenomenon. Denison (1996) examined the definitions, epistemologies, methodologies and theoretical foundations of organisational culture and organisational climate. He analysed the possibility that culture and climate are either two entirely separate phenomena or the possibility that they represent closely related

phenomena that are examined from different perspectives (Denison, 1996). He concluded that the two research traditions should be viewed as differences in interpretation rather than differences in phenomena. He acknowledges that different research will generate different forms of evidence and different ways of interpreting results, but considers this a benefit because it sustains a rich source of diversity (Denison, 1996).

In the same vein as Ott (1989), Luthans (2010) defines organisational climate as a "feeling" that is conveyed, and while he acknowledges the controversy in academic literature over the similarities and differences between organisational culture and organisational climate, he simply lists organisational climate as one of six important characteristics of organisational culture, thus equating organisational climate to an element of organisational culture.

More recently, Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013) presented ways in which organisational climate and organisational culture complement each other and can be mutually useful in practice. They explain that climate researchers assess policies, practices and procedures and have not assessed values and basic assumptions, viewing them perhaps as "soft" and therefore not immediately under management control. At the same time culture researchers have avoided a focus on specific criteria such as strategic or process issues (Schneider et al., 2013).

Schneider et al. (2013) conclude that while executives have little concern for the distinctions which theorists make between culture and climate, organisational climate and culture can be seen to offer overlapping perspectives for understanding the kinds of integrative experiences people have in organisational settings.

In this research study, the opinions of Denison (1996) are adopted and organisational culture and organisational climate are viewed as different interpretations of the same phenomenon.

2.7. Organisational sub-cultures

The relationship between the organisational whole and its constituent parts has long been raised and debated in organisational culture literature (Joyce & Slocum, 1982).

Lok and Crawford (1999, p.365) observed that "several writers have emphasised that organisational subcultures may exist independently of organisational culture and that a small work group may have its own distinct set of values, beliefs and attributes". Bellou (2008) adds that sub-cultures contain elements of the main culture, such as core values, practices and behaviours, but also have distinctive characteristics reflecting the particular values of the sub-culture. Martin and Siehl (1983) propose that cultures can serve differentiating rather than integrating functions, and instead of being monolithic phenomena, organisational cultures are composed of various interlocking, nested and sometimes conflicting sub-cultures.

From an anthropological perspective, Gregory (1983) highlights the divisive potential of culture and explains that sub-groups with different occupational, divisional, ethnic or other cultures approach organisational interactions with their own meanings and sense of priorities. Ethnocentrism or the tendency to take for granted one's own cultural view and to evaluate others' behaviour in terms of it, increases the tendency for misunderstandings and conflict (Gregory, 1983).

Despite the existence of different sub-cultures and the potential for conflict, as mentioned above, Petkoon and Roodt (2004) suggest that it is the particular mix of sub-cultural differences within an organisation's boundaries that make the organisation's culture unique. Lok, Westwood, and Crawford (2005) recognise that organisational culture as a construct applied to the whole of an organisation is useful in differentiating one organisation from another in inter-organisational studies, but it has limitations when trying to explain people's intra-organisational behaviour because of the complexity of the sub-cultures that exist.

According to Martin and Siehl (1983), at least three types of subcultures are conceivable:

(1)   *The first is enhancing*, whereby adherence to the core values of the dominant culture would be more fervent in this unit than in the rest of the organisation (Martin & Siehl, 1983). This sub-culture supports the status quo (Bloor & Dawson, 1994).

(2)   *The second is orthogonal*, whereby the group members simultaneously accept the core values of the dominant culture and a separate, un-conflicting set of values particular to themselves (Martin & Siehl, 1983).

(3)   *The third is a counterculture*, whereby some core values of a counterculture present a direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture. A dominant culture and a counterculture should therefore exist in an 'uneasy symbiosis' taking opposite positions on value issues that are critically important to each of them (Martin & Siehl, 1983).

A counterculture does have some valuable functions for a dominant culture in that it can articulate the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and provide a safe haven for the development of innovative ideas (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Such a culture also advocates alternative methods and work practices for achieving the core values of an organisation (Bloor & Dawson, 1994).

In their study, Martin and Siehl (1983) discuss the organisational conditions that are likely to give rise to a counterculture. These include organisations that are strongly centralised, but permit a decentralised diffusion of power. The counterculture is likely to emerge within a structural boundary and may well have a charismatic leader (Martin & Siehl, 1983). While they do not accredit a manager alone as being able to create or manage a culture, they do propose that they can have a detectable impact on the trajectory of a culture or sub-culture's development. The debate about the power and influence of the leader on creating organisational culture continues in the literature and research on sub-cultures.

South African research on sub-cultures is scarce and has focused either on unique contexts such as contact centres (Abramowitz, 2010), the implementation of a strategy of quality initiatives in the higher education context (Naidoo, 2002) and management values within a specific hotel group (Thomas & Turpin, 2002), or investigating the discriminant validity of organisational culture instruments to identify sub-cultures (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006). The need for further South African research in this area is thus highlighted by the paucity of research to date.

Despite the conceptualisation and research to date on sub-cultures, Simons and Rowland (2011) point out that regardless of the presence or absence of sub-cultures, the organisation itself still serves as a point of connection for individuals and groups, despite any differences in their socio-demographic or other characteristics.

2.7.1. The formation of organisational sub-cultures

Lok et al. (2005) emphasise that organisational sub-cultures do not destroy or impair the notion of organisational culture, but conceptually they are a subset of culture and as such are similarly constituted and functionally equivalent, the difference merely being one of scale.

In their study, Jermier et al. (1991) list many possible sources of organisational sub-cultures. These include employees' personal characteristics such as age, gender, race and ethnic identity; personal biographies and social histories such as family background, education and social class membership; positional characteristics such as occupational specialty, departmental assignment, or time of day worked; and task exigencies. They explain that the technical requirements of the work or managerial demands for efficiency can produce subcultures that replace rituals and ceremonial rules of production transmitted through rationalised myths (Jermier et al., 1991).

There seems to be some agreement on the sources of organisational sub-cultures, as Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) also list the variables that play a role in their formation as departmental groupings, geographical distribution, occupational categories, race groups or the influence of a specific manager. In addition, Trice and Beyer (1993) and Crough (2012) list sources such as shared experiences, occupations, geographical locations and the setup of the organisation.

2.7.2. Regional cultures

In a recent study, Van Reine and Dankbaar (2011) examined the interaction between corporate cultures and regional cultures in seven different European regions. Although they focused on a virtuous circle model, they identified patterns in the interaction between corporate and regional sub-cultures which provided a different perspective on the relationship between group and sub-cultures.

2.7.3. Departmental sub-cultures

Alvesson (2013) discussed technological innovation as a factor that can create new group formations. Ogbonna and Harris (2007) also note that although the study of organisational culture was sparked by changes in the economic and competitive landscape, the changes resulting from the development of technology and the internet specifically did not generate as much interest. In their exploratory study on internet operations and sub-cultural dynamics, Ogbonna and Harris (2007) found a range of implications for this departmental sub-culture including power inequality, the ability to acquire resources, the ability to influence organisational efficiency and isolation from mainstream organisational beliefs.

2.7.4. Professional subcultures

Trice and Beyer (1993) discussed the banding together of members of particular occupations as an attempt to seek autonomy and control over their work. Bloor and Dawson (1994) used a case study to investigate how professional sub-cultures were created and maintained, and how they co-existed in a single organisation. In so doing, they found that professionals entering an organisation bring with them a large repertoire of cultural knowledge gained both from wider society and from their professional training schools and previous work experiences.

Bloor and Dawson (1994) explain that when professionals join an organisation they either meet like professionals or continue to interact with peers outside the organisation. This sharing of experiences and beliefs results in the development and maintenance of professional sub-cultures which compliment, conflict and counter-balance the main organisational culture (Bloor & Dawson, 1994).

2.7.5. The relevance of sub-cultures

In their study, Lok et al. (2005) found that sub-cultures can be assessed and typologised in the same manner as main cultures. The same models of organisational culture that provide the framework for qualitative and quantitative assessment are therefore also applicable for sub-cultural analysis.

Jermier et al. (1991) believe that subculture studies suggest that groups within organisations develop their own values, assumptions, interpretations, and even their own perspectives on the organisation's mission and appropriate patterns of conduct. Thus, it seems that the appearance of a singular mission and uniform conduct is reserved for the external publics, while the reality for organisations is divergent missions and varied practices. The implication is that it would be important for consultants and practitioners to discover the reality of the organisation's divergent missions and practices in order to truly understand its culture and assist with relevant interventions such as improving effectiveness, change and performance.

In their survey to measure the perceptions of organisational sub-cultures, Lok et al. (2005) found that organisational sub-cultures have a strong relationship with commitment that is even more significant than the main culture, because they provide a more salient, intimate and informal reference group. Because commitments and possibly other work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction are impacted more by things occurring in the immediate context of organisational sub-cultures, a monolithic organisation-wide approach may not always be the most viable strategy (Lok, Rhodes, & Westwood, 2011). This further justifies the importance and benefit of analysis at the sub-cultural level for research and management practice.

Although Alvesson (2013) commented that the idea of culture as engineered and controlled by top management is somewhat idealistic, Lok et al.'s (2005) study suggests that leadership helps shape and determine sub-culture. They suggest that if organisations genuinely want to impact employee commitment, and its associated attitudes and behaviours, the onus is on the leaders of the organisational subunits to attend to their mode of leadership and the interaction of sub-cultures with the main culture.

Ogbonna and Harris (2007) suggest that an internet operations departmental sub-culture is likely to maintain and control a critical dimension of organisational culture (e-culture). Their study found this sub-culture to be powerful, although peripheral to existing core cultural beliefs. The implications are that organisational culture changes and managing culture control becomes even more challenging for those responsible for culture management.

In addition, clashes between the culture and sub-cultures or between sub-cultures may cause problems in strategy implementation (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and in overall effective human resources management (Palthe & Kossek, 2003). Sub-cultures in the same organisation can be subjected to different human resource practices and by understanding the role of sub-cultures, the translation of HR strategies into HR practice and management can be more effective (Palthe & Kossek, 2003; De Bruyn & Grobler, 2011). Petkoon and Roodt (2004) reiterate that consistency, consensus, harmony and integration may occur, but within the midst of inconsistencies, ambiguities, conflicts, disruption and dissolution.

Age has frequently and continues to be examined as a variable in industrial psychology studies, including in South African research (Barnard, 2013; Harry & Coetzee, 2013; Du Plooy & Roodt, 2011; Martins & Coetzee, 2011). Age has also been identified and studied as a personal characteristic that can contribute to the formation of sub-cultures (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006), but the study of organisational culture and sub-cultures from the perspective of generational cohorts, which is a different concept to age, has not been fully examined, and thus the motivation for a study such as this one gains potential.

2.8.   Measuring organisational culture

The need to measure organisational culture is still relevant in the business world today and should not be underestimated, including in South Africa. A recent review of research published in three leading South African business management journals shows that the most influential and cited article in the *South African Journal of Business Management* was one by Van der Post, De Coning, and Smit (1997) that provided a measurement instrument for organisational culture (Botha, Lilford, & Pitt, 2011).

An extension of this, which has led to some debate, seems to be how organisational culture should be measured, assessed and analysed - that is, qualitatively or quantitatively? Although the debate started a few decades ago, there is still disagreement on the best way to measure an organisation's culture and what particular outcomes one can reasonably expect to predict (O'Reilly et al., 1991;

Ashkanasy, Broadfoot, & Falkus, 2000; Moon et al., 2012). The dilemma of what to measure and how to measure it, is briefly discussed below.

2.8.1. What to measure?

Furnham and Gunter (1993) attribute this uncertainty to the difficulty in deciding what to assess. They claim that distinctions between culture as objective versus subjective, superficial versus deep, accessible versus inaccessible and conscious versus unconscious have not been helpful because the one pole is usually perceived as good and the other bad (Furnham & Gunter, 1993).

In 1990, Schein wrote that we should not rush to measure things until we understand better what we are measuring. He felt it was not yet clear whether something as abstract as culture could be measured with survey instruments at all. He felt that the problem with using questionnaires that produce a Likert-type profile is that it assumes knowledge of the relevant dimensions to be studied. Even if these dimensions were statistically derived from large samples of items, it was not clear whether the initial item set was broad enough or relevant enough to capture the critical cultural themes for each organisation (Schein, 1990).

Schein (1990) therefore promoted a more clinical, qualitative approach whereby a consultant gathers data while actively helping the client system work on problems and where the consultant is given access to categories of information about the company. Unfortunately, however, Schein (1990) does not sufficiently address the limitations of generalisability to other organisations, as well as the time consuming methods required by the qualitative approach (Bellot, 2011).

2.8.2. How to measure?

Smircich (1983) stated that the benefit of conducting a cultural analysis moves us in the direction of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of context and meaning and bringing to the surface underlying values.

The assessment of organisational culture seems to fall within one of two categories: either researchers adopt a typing framework that classifies organisations into a taxonomy or they adopt a profiling approach which is likely to focus on a variety of

beliefs and values resulting in separate scores on a number of dimensions (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006).

Schein (1990) warned against the dangers of over-generalising by adopting a typology rather than a dimensional approach to measuring culture. Schein (1990) writes that one has to start more inductively to find out which of the dimensions is the most pertinent on the basis of the organisation's history. He suggests the combination of insider knowledge with outsider questions to bring assumptions to the surface, but qualifies that the process has to be interactive with the outsider continuing to probe until assumptions have really been teased out and lead to a feeling of greater understanding on the part of both the insider and outsider (Schein, 1990).

Cooke and Rousseau (1998) acknowledge the use of the focal unit's own terms to describe itself and view the intensive and in-depth information obtained by qualitative methods as an advantage. However, they also propose that quantitative approaches such as culture surveys offer important advantages for both cross-sectional organisational research and data-based cultural change programmes (Cooke & Rousseau, 1998).

Tucker, McCoy, and Evans (2007) also acknowledge that qualitative methods provide an opportunity to maximise the values of heurism, flexibility, adaptability, depth and realism. However, they tend to favour a quantitative approach, which provides the opportunity to maximise the values of precision, systematisation, repeatability, comparability, convenience, greater scale, unobtrusiveness and cost-effectiveness (Tucker et al., 2007).

Smircich (1983) and Bellot (2011) both highlight the significance of the concept of culture for organisational analysis and discuss how the varying conceptions of culture, either as a critical variable (something that the organisation possesses) or as a root metaphor (something that the organisation is) are important. This is significant when considering organisational culture analysis as these different conceptions give rise to different research questions and interests (Smircich, 1983).

According to Bellot (2011), by using solely quantitative or qualitative methods to assess organisational culture, the risk of omitting crucial elements of culture is

present. She endorses a mixed methods approach and comments that most recent studies have shown a preference for and involved some combination of both (Bellot, 2011).

Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) aptly point out that researchers define their own approaches to culture assessment and conceptualise organisational culture in a way that is useful for a specific environment or organisational need. The importance of psychometrically testing the quantitative methods cannot be understated. Tucker et al. (2007) also raise a vital point that both a qualitative and a quantitative approach can be spoiled or impaired by weak implementation.

2.9. Generations

Newspaper stories, consultant press releases, magazine articles and increasingly books are exhorting that there are different generational cohorts in the workforce that differ from each other in ways that are important for leaders and managers (Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008). Often such reports seem overly generalised and based either on anecdotal evidence or data not open to critical peer review (Macky et al., 2008).

2.9.1. Generational cohort theory

In 1974, Buss wrote about the importance of describing and explaining the theories around generational differences in order to gain an adequate understanding of generation-related social issues and problems. Combining various elements of definitions of generations, a working definition could be considered "a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus, hexis and culture; a function of which is to provide them with a collective memory that serves to integrate the cohort, and translates into a somewhat permanent mind-set that has different emotions, attitudes, beliefs, preferences and embodied activities that creates a distinct generational group over a finite period of time" (Eyerman & Turner, 1998; Arsenault, 2004; Cavalli, 2004; Parry & Urwin, 2011).

The formation of generations has been attributed to the following dimensions (Wyatt, 1993 in Eyerman & Turner, 1998):

(1)   a "traumatic" event (such as a civil war, natural catastrophe or assassination of a political leader)

(2)   a set of cultural or political mentors which stands in an adversarial relation to the dominant culture and which gives articulation to the traumatic event

(3)   a dramatic shift in demography which influences the distribution of resources in a society

(4)   a "privileged interval" which connects a generation into a cycle of success and failure (e.g. from the progressive era to the depression)

(5)   The creation of sacred space in which sacred places (such as Greenwich Village, Paris or Woodstock) sustain a collective memory of utopia

(6)   the notion of a "happy few" who provide mutual support for individuals who are accepted as bona fide members of the cohort

Eyerman and Turner (1998) explain that a generational cohort survives by maintaining a collective memory of its origins, its historical struggles, its primary historical and political events and its leading characters and ideologists. They predict that with the globalisation of popular culture, generations will exist more easily across social space because they will be able to share more easily a collective culture and thus experience a greater fluidity in generational identity and memory (Eyerman & Turner, 1998).

Modern-day sociologists have widened their focus from consideration of the impact that historical events may have had in defining a generation, to an examination of cultural elements such as affinities with music or other types of popular culture (Parry & Urwin, 2011). The difference between a cohort and a generation is that a cohort first defines the cut-off points of birth date for those being studied, and when this group exhibits particular differences from other cohorts, owing to social, economic and political events, they can then be considered a generation (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

The concept of generations is complex and, as Arsenault (2004) points out, there is a lack of mutual exclusivity between generations because, firstly, there are people born at the beginning and end of the generation or on the cusp, and secondly, there is the crossover effect which refers to highly significant events that affect every generation.

The probability of differences within generations with regard to race, gender and education also makes the distinctions between generations more complex (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

The writer adopts the view of Foster (2013) that despite the ongoing debate over how to draw the boundaries and describe their contents, most social scientific studies and theories of generation conceptualise it as a way of categorising people, even if only provisionally.

2.9.2. Who are the generations?

The three generations classified by Reynolds et al., (2008) are

(1)   Generation Y – those born between 1982 and 2000

(2)   Generation X – those born between 1965 and 1981

(3)   Baby Boomers – those born between1946 and 1964

By identifying the historical location of each generation, Howe and Strauss (2000) describe baby Boomers as a post-crisis generation because they were born during an "American high" following the Great Depression and World War II. They describe Generation X as an awakening-era generation because they were born during the "consciousness revolution". Finally, they (2000) describe Generation Y as a post-awakening generation, because they were born during the "culture wars and roaring nineties".

Each generation is said to have social, economic, political and other contextual factors that shaped their values and beliefs about work (Real, Mitnick, & Maloney, 2010). It is also said that every generation has an element of the belief that their generation is the most unique, advanced and capable compared to preceding generations (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). Generational cohorts reportedly hold different perceptions of each other, which may result in conflict and misunderstandings in the workplace (Meriac et al., 2010).

There is mixed support for the existence of significant differences, and more empirical research is required to substantiate or refute popular perceptions. Howe

and Strauss (2000) explain that all generations rebel and do not ultimately turn out as they first appear. By examining three basic principles, they show that each generation distinguishes itself from or rebels against the previous generations by

(1)   solving a problem facing the prior youth generation, whose style has become dysfunctional in the new era

(2)   correcting for behavioural excess it perceives in the current mid-life generation

(3)   filling the social role being vacated by the departing elder generation

In her review of the empirical evidence on generational differences, Twenge (2010) discusses one of the primary challenges in research on generational differences. She points out that most studies are cross-sectional with data on workers of different ages collected at one point in time (Twenge, 2010). Therefore any differences could be due to age/career stage or generation. She recommends time-lag studies as the best design for determining generational differences. This design examines people of the same age at different points in time and thus isolates generational differences. However, according to Twenge (2010), time-lag studies are rare because they require similar samples of the same age and ask the same questions in different years.

Although cross-sectional studies do not allow a perfect model for examining whether any generational differences are linked to age or actual generational differences, it is useful as an indication of whether there are differences in the three generations at work, as they currently exist (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008).

Ng, Lyons, and Schweitzer (2012) discuss the continuing challenge of separating fact from fiction especially when research is contradictory and generally inconclusive. They point out that the construct of generational differences, however fuzzy, resonates with the public and with business practitioners and policy makers. For example, anecdotal evidence continues to amass suggesting that Generation Y is different – that they approach their working lives in a way that is novel and often at odds with the expectations placed on them by their Baby Boomer and Generation X bosses (Ng et al., 2012).

Table 2.2 below highlights some of the perceived differences between generations that are relevant to the workplace as discussed in the media, popular literature and some academic articles.

Table 2.2: Commonly held perceptions of generational characteristics

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Technology	Technologically conservative but open to change	Computer savvy	Technological experts
Work ethic and values	Relationship and results oriented	Entrepreneurial	Self-centred
	Professionalism	Do not enjoy hierarchical environments	Collaborative
	Optimistic	Cynical/sceptical	Confident
		Fun in the workplace	Questioning
			Understand the big picture and how their work fits into it
Loyalty to the employer	Loyal to company	Lack of loyalty	Contract mentality
			Expect to change jobs frequently
Personal goals and objectives	Competitive	Maximising individual goals	Civic minded
	Materialistic		Seek socially responsible organisations
			Volunteers
			Supersized and unrealistic goals
Work/life attitude	Workaholic	Work/life balance	Demand work/life balance
			Flexitime
Leadership and supervision	Wary of authority	Independent	Crave continuous feedback
	Expect managers to provide leadership	Focused on preserving autonomy	Extreme sensitivity to criticism or negative feedback
	Expect feedback once a year	Seek fast feedback	Expect competent managers
	Good mentors	Expect participation in decision making	
Training styles and needs	Strive for training and self-fulfilment	Life-long learning	Seek to build and maintain marketable skills
			Expect employer to make a significant contribution
Measure of success	Status and pay entitlement	Meaningful work	Reward for effort rather than performance
		Career advancement	Promotions based on merit not longevity
		Reward productivity not longevity	Meaningful work
			Career advancement

2.9.3. Characteristics of the three generations

A discussion on the characteristics of the three generations follows below.

2.9.3.1. *Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964)*

Baby Boomers are viewed as consensus seekers who are competitive micro-managers and possess a moderate level of disrespect for authority. They were raised by their parents as cherished during a time of educational and economic expansion and experienced the psychology of entitlement (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

Baby Boomers are seen as valuing collaboration and maintaining a somewhat formal organisational structure. They are seen as placing workplace priorities over all non-work life, including family (Lester et al., 2012). Kupperschmidt (2000) describes Baby Boomers as having radical individualism in that they challenged, protested and rejected social norms. Baby boomers see authority as untrustworthy and view rewards and recognition as deserved (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are currently the largest generation cohort in the workplace, they are optimistic and value job security and a stable working environment (Wong et al., 2008).

2.9.3.2. *Generation X (1965 – 1981)*

Generation X are considered so-called "latchkey kids" who grew up with financial, family and societal insecurity, rapid change, great diversity and a lack of solid traditions (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Generally they are cynical, entrepreneurial and self-reliant (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Generation X bring to the workplace well-honed, practical approaches to problem solving and they are perceived to crave higher salaries, flexible work arrangements and more financial leverage (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Generation X are seen as preferring technology-based interactions and avoiding unnecessary face-to-face meetings (Lester et al., 2012). They are free agents and hesitant to commit to long-term relationships (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Generation X disdain hierarchy and the word "boss" (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They demand managers who are competent and both value and demand rewards and recognition.

2.9.3.3.   Generation Y (1982 – 2000)

Also known as the Millennials, Generation Me, Generation Whine, the Net Generation, Echo Boomers, iGeneration, Generation Why and Nexters, there is more popular literature available on this generation than any preceding generation (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). This generation is seen to have an entirely different work ethic, attitude and set of values shaking the foundation of workplaces (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009).

Taking a global perspective, Ng et al. (2012) edited a book called *Managing the new workforce,* which incorporated papers from Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Germany, Singapore, South Africa and Turkey. Among others, the authors covered topics such as public service motivation, work values, work-related attitudes, diversity, intention to stay, career counselling, career success and leadership.

According to Ng et al. (2012), a growing body of evidence from around the world suggests the emergence of a youth culture that pervades national borders. There is evidence of a global youth consciousness that is spurred by social media technology. Whereas the formative influences that shaped previous generations were largely experienced locally and were transmitted to people in different countries by their local media, historical events are now simultaneously experienced globally through communication channels that are instantaneous and direct (Ng et al., 2012). The generation Y youth culture therefore seems to pervade national borders and is more global in nature (Ng et al., 2012).

Generation Y in the popular literature is seen as "want it all" and "want it now" in terms of good pay and benefits, rapid advancement, work/life balance, interesting and challenging work and making a contribution to society (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). They have been labelled self-centred, unmotivated, disrespectful, disloyal and contributing to widespread concern about how their communication will affect organisations and their relationships with other organisational members (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

However, generation Y has also been described as working well in teams, motivated to have an impact on the organisation, favouring open and frequent communication with supervisors and at ease with communication technology (Myers & Sadaghiani,

2010). They are highly creative and think like entrepreneurs but value relationships over money (Weyland, 2011). The speed of communication has resulted in Generation Y being able to process information quickly, but they become bored easily (Weyland, 2011).

Generation Y are attracted to strong brands including companies and their reputation for how they respect and lead their staff (Weyland, 2011). In addition, they are particularly attracted to companies with strong values, social ethics, distinctive brands and non-hierarchical environments.

Lipkin and Perrymore (2009) published a book on *Y in the workplace, managing the "Me First" generation,* to shed some light on the differences between this generation and preceding generations. Their book shares their insights, guidance, appreciations and frustrations about this generation in order to mould them in the necessary areas and appreciate them for who they are and what they can contribute in the workplace. Although mainly anecdotal, their book covers, inter alia, the characteristics of upbringing and parental involvement, self-esteem, motivation, communication, work ethic and relationships.

South African research on Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y has focused on the workplace, for example, studies conducted by Martins and Martins (2012), which include employee satisfaction and knowledge retention behaviours, with one objective being to determine the perceptions of the various biographical groups, including age groups. The results of the study indicated significant differences between the three generation groups.

A study, aligned to retention in the ICT industry, and thus relevant to this study, investigated specific retention factors that induced the organisational commitment of high technology employees mostly between the ages of 25 and 29 (and therefore classified as Generation Y) found that the most relevant explanatory factors were compensation, job characteristics, supervisor support and work/life policies, which appeared to have a statistically significant influence on the development of organisational commitment in these high technology employees (Döckel, Basson, & Coetzee, 2006).

In South African psychological assessment practice, an advanced computerised assessment technique has been designed to measure intellectual preferences and capabilities, learning potential, strengths and weaknesses in the thinking of Generation Y school and university leavers (Prinsloo, 2012). The Learning Orientation Index (LOI) tool is aimed specifically at meeting the unique needs of Generation Y, who are characterised as more flexible in thinking, more open minded, curious and learning oriented, more counter intuitive and better at systems thinking (Prinsloo, 2012). This can be seen as an example of adapting practices to suit the needs of a specific generation.

2.9.4. Generational similarities and differences

Similarities and differences in many characteristics, both work-related and not, have been proposed and researched in recent years. It is therefore useful to identify quantifiable differences and to separate those differences from possibly inaccurate perceptions (Lester et al., 2012).

In their study of actual versus perceived generational differences Lester et al. (2012) explored the extent to which generations believe they are different and to what extent they are actually different. Their study considered 15 work-related concepts. The results identified five actual differences of which three, continuous learning, fun at work and professionalism, were classified within the formal authority/work culture category.

They found that perceived generational differences significantly outnumbered the actual differences individuals reported (Lester et al., 2012). This leads to generational misconceptions based on stereotypical profiles that have been perpetuated in media and culture (Lester et al., 2012).

Twenge and Campbell (2008) used a longitudinal research methodology to examine personality, attitude, psychopathology and behavioural scales. They found that Generation Y demonstrate high self-esteem, narcissism, anxiety and depression, a lower need for social approval and a more external locus of control, all of which have implications for the workplace.

2.9.4.1.   Attitudes towards work ethics and values

Twenge (2010) reports that in terms of intrinsic work values, or finding meaning and interest in work, there were no differences between Boomers and Generation X and a small decline in intrinsic values from Boomers to Generation Y. The theories that the younger generations seek meaning in work are therefore not supported (Twenge, 2010). In terms of extrinsic work values such as status, respect and a high salary, Twenge (2010) found that Generation X was significantly more likely to value money, status and prestige than Boomers. These values decreased between Generation X and Generation Y, but were still significantly higher among Generation Y than Boomers (Twenge, 2010).

In contrast to the American cross-sectional studies, Cennamo and Gardner's (2008) research investigated the differences between three generations in New Zealand. They found that significant generational differences were reported for individual work values involving status and freedom in that Generation Y placed more importance on status and valued freedom-related items more than Generation X and Baby Boomers. No significant differences were found for extrinsic, intrinsic, social and altruism-related values.

Meriac et al. (2010) also examined the differences across three generational cohorts, Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, and found that there were significant differences in work ethic across the generations. However, they attributed the differences to the possibility that respondents interpreted the content of the questionnaire in different ways rather than genuine differences in work ethic between the generations.

Contrary to most American studies that focused mainly on college students or white collar workers, Real et al., (2010) studied skilled trade workers in the American building trades. They also found few meaningful quantitative differences between the generations and in fact Generation Y was more similar than different from other generations in work beliefs, job values and gender beliefs. Any differences raised in focus groups were attributed to experience, position or age rather than generation (Real et al., 2010).

Smola and Sutton (2002) investigated whether an individual's work values were influenced more by generational experiences or if they change over time with maturity by comparing the results of surveys conducted in 1974 and in 2002. Their results suggested that although Generation X was seen as "me" oriented, they felt more strongly than Baby Boomers that working hard is an indication of one's worth and one should work hard even if a supervisor is not around. Smola and Sutton (2002) felt this may be an indication that they seek balance in doing a good job and in maximising their own individual goals.

Lester et al. (2012) found that Baby Boomers value professionalism in the workplace to a greater degree than Generation X. They propose that this could be because Baby boomers and Generation Y appear to group together in their desire to operate in collaborative settings whereas Generation X is more independent and focused on preserving their autonomy. Generation X therefore places less importance on professionalism in the work context because this relates to styles of interactions with others (Lester et al., 2012).

2.9.4.2. Loyalty towards the employer

According to Twenge (2010), Generation Y, compared to Generation X, report higher job satisfaction with career development and more confidence in job security - hence Generation Y express less desire to leave their jobs. This is in contrast to a number of cross-sectional studies which show different results, such as D'Amato and Herzfeld's (2008) study of European managers in which Generation X were less willing to remain with their employers than Boomers and scored lower in organisational commitment. They attribute this to the changing psychological contact between employers and employees and indicate that retention becomes an implication.

Dries, Pepermans, and De Kerpel's (2008) cross-sectional study of European managers found that Generation Y reported a higher need for security in their jobs than Boomers or Generation X. In contrast, Ng et al.'s (2010) study of college students found that half did not want or were not sure if they wanted to find an organisation in which they could stay long term. They explain that this represents a

significant shift away from the career norms of the past. Lipkin and Perrymore (2009) discuss Generation Y as loyal but to friends and co-workers and not to the company.

De Hauw and De Vos (2010) suggest that Generation Y realises that lifelong employment and organisational security are rare in today's workplace and they thus adopt a more proactive approach towards their security by enhancing their employability in the labour market.

2.9.4.3.   Goals and objectives

Starting from the stereotype that the career goals and expectations of Generation Y are "supersized", unrealistic and disconnected between reward and performance, Ng et al.'s (2010) empirical study supports the perception that Generation Y do have great expectations for their careers, but they found that generation Y are more realistic when it comes to their initial pay and first job after graduation. In addition, they found that most generation Y college students accepted that their first job may not fulfil all of their wants and needs. These attitudes are attributed mainly to the economic recession which has prompted Generation Y to adjust their short-term expectations downwards (Wong et al., 2008; Ng et al., 2010).

Following on these observations on reward and performance, Generation Y's perceived attitude of entitlement and lack of taking personal responsibility for failure has also draw attention. Twenge and Campbell (2008) found that because self-esteem and narcissism for Generation Y were higher than for preceding generations, they have higher expectations. However, because their locus of control is more external than both Generation X and Baby Boomers, they are not likely to take responsibility for failures and find it difficult to be held accountable for performance. Similarly, Ng et al. (2010) found that the Generation Y college students they studied, placed opportunity for advancement as a top priority but there was no indication of a relationship between performance and expectations for promotion. Lipkin and Perrymore (2009) also comment on the extreme and unexpected sensitivity of Generation Y regarding constructive criticism, feedback and perceived failure which could be seen to relate to their elevated self-esteem and narcissism.

2.9.4.4. Desire for a better work/life balance

Studies that use the time-lag method have found that Generation X and Generation Y express a weaker work ethic and believe that work is less central to their lives. They value leisure and seek more freedom and work-life balance than their Boomer counterparts. The younger generations are more likely to value time off and less likely to value work for work's sake (Twenge, 2010).

Tamborini and Iams (2011) investigated the perception that professional Generation X women were opting out of the paid labour force to focus on family and childbearing. Their approach focused on a life course analysis of longitudinal data and was not a cross-sectional study which controlled for life stage implications. Their research suggested that Generation X women reflected similar family and earnings behaviour to late baby boomers. When studies find there is a fairly consistent generational trend toward leisure values and a greater drive for achievement in generation X and generation Y they are cross-sectional and may be tapping differences based on age/career stage rather than generation (Twenge, 2010).

One should also consider the fact that workers are not working longer hours than they did a few decades ago. It is therefore possible that the decline in work ethic could be because either workers do not want to work more hours but are required to by their employers or perhaps working overtime means working even more hours over and above what are already long hours (Twenge, 2010). De Hauw and De Vos (2010) found evidence that Generation Y are prepared to lower their psychological contract expectations regarding work/life balance during times of economic recession and are prepared to work extra hours for the success of the organisation. They suggest that contextual variables instead of generational influences could therefore be significant in this dimension.

2.9.4.5. Leadership and attitudes towards supervision

According to Twenge (2010), Generation X score higher on traits such as self-reliance, competitiveness and preferring to work alone and Generation Y have continued these trends. Thus a new model for teamwork may be necessary (Twenge, 2010). In contrast, Hershatter and Epstein (2010) discuss the need that Generation Y have for structure and reassurance and their reluctance to work with

ambiguity, without clarity and detail when given task instructions. The researchers explain that the angst experienced by Generation Y in such circumstances is because they have not had much practice producing without explicit instructions, well defined criteria for success, and specific deadlines set by others. The implications are clear that leaders and managers may find this need for structure and reassurance draining and time consuming (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Hershatter and Epstein (2010) posit that throughout their lives, Generation Y have been encouraged to have close relationships with parents, teachers, mentors and advisors and as a result are more likely than Generation X to want their supervisors to take an interest in them. Weyland (2011) explains Generation Y's preference for a less bureaucratic organisation where seniority outweighs contribution and a more collaborative, mutually respectful leadership and management team. Generation Y like to understand the bigger picture and understand how their work contributes to the external impact and overall success of the organisation (Weyland, 2011).

Hershatter and Epstein (2010) found that Generation Y expect a flat hierarchy and access to senior leadership. Their tendency to move freely across levels and circumvent organisational structures is seen by older generations to dilute accountability and protection for more senior management so they can focus on higher-level issues. Reynolds et al.'s (2008) study supports this and they highlight Generation Y's desire for more transparent and authentic communication from leadership. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) suggest a proactive approach to managing this is to build opportunities for hierarchy-skipping interactions or to introduce mentoring programmes. Reynolds et al. (2008) recommend identifying young high performers and giving them the autonomy and responsibility of developing a special project to improve communication, in addition to their normal work.

Lester et al.'s (2012) study showed that individuals from the three generations appeared to value formal authority equally. They believe, however, that this has to do with the conceptualisation of formal authority and what it means to each generation. The manner in which authority is wielded coupled with the fact that it is unlikely that each generation equates authority with leadership, could produce perceptual differences in other ways.

2.9.4.6.   Training styles and training needs

Generation Y have high expectations for training and development in organisations and De Hauw and De Vos (2010) found that despite the economic recession, Generation Y's expectations for job content, training, and career development remain high. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) comment on the value of programmes such as reverse mentoring that pairs technologically proficient Generation Y with senior manager Boomers, both of whom not only learn from, but also greatly value the connection.

According to Weyland (2011), Generation Y are hungry for stimulation, challenge and development and expect significant contributions from their employers in terms of training and development. Apart from training courses and workshops, they appreciate new career path opportunities, teamwork and cross-functional project work, global assignments, sabbaticals with leadership development objectives, mentorships and a continuous learning environment where skills are developed at a steady pace (Weyland, 2011). D'Amato and Herzfeldt (2008) found that Generation X showed a higher learning orientation than Baby Boomers which they believe stems from their need for life-long learning.

2.9.5. Implications for employers

Implications for employers have been discussed and strategies proposed to deal effectively with the perceived differences between generations in the workplace. Kupperschmidt (2000) encourages the managers of today's workforce to bring all multi-generational employees together in ways that provide fair and equitable opportunities for each individual to contribute their best and achieve their personal goals in alignment with organisational goals. She adds that accomplishing these tasks mandates generationally savvy strategies.

2.9.6. Integration of culture, sub-culture and generations

Joyce and Slocum (1984) underscore the fit between an individual's psychological climate and the prevailing organisational culture because it represents the extent to which the individual's perceptions differ from, or are consistent with, the perceptions

of the organisation held by other members. These similarities or differences can influence the formation of sub-cultures (Joyce & Slocum, 1984). Dealing with a diverse workforce is among the many challenges facing managers today and such diversity is not limited to gender, religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds but also relates to the various generational values found in the workplace today (Gibson et al., 2009).

Hofstede (1998) commented that top managers may not even be aware of the cultural map of their organisation, or if they perceive diversity, they may try and repress it. He proposes that culture consciousness, achieved through a culture survey, can provide the opportunity for discussions on how much variety is present and how much variety is desirable. This, in turn, can help them to avoid parts of the organisation inadvertently getting crushed because company-wide solutions conflict with their sub-cultural needs (Hofstede, 1998). This further highlights the benefit of analysis at the generational sub-cultural level and its importance for research and management practice.

Martin and Von der Ohe (2006) maintain that differences in perceptions often reflect the unique needs, problems and experiences of these sub-cultures. Clashes between the organisational culture and sub-cultures, however, or between sub-cultures, may cause problems in strategy implementation and in overall effective human resources management (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Palthe & Kossek, 2003). Sub-cultures in the same organisation can be subjected to different human resource practices and by understanding the role of sub-cultures and identifying the possibility of generational sub-cultures present in the organisation, the translation of human resources strategies into human resources practice can be more effective (Palthe & Kossek, 2003). At the same time, organisations need to take note of the similarities between the generations and maintain strategies for focusing on these (Martins & Martins, 2012). This reiterates the complex, open-ended context in which managers are expected to navigate to attract, retain and manage talent.

2.10. Chapter summary

This chapter examined the literature available on organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures and generational differences and similarities. Each

concept was dealt with separately in this review and there appear to be no preceding studies that examine all three concepts. It is clear, however, that the concepts of organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures and generational similarities and differences are contentious issues that have been hotly debated in literature in the case of organisational culture and sub-cultures and in the popular media and management books in the case of generational differences. When studying any or all three of these concepts, the onus is therefore on the researcher to define organisational culture, recognise the existence of sub-cultures or not and understand the limitations of generational delineation, when planning and executing a research project.

The next chapter is presented in the format of a research article and will explain the key focus and background of the study, highlight trends from research literature, clarify the research objectives and suggest the potential value add of the study. The research design, methodology and results of the empirical study will follow and the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for practice, and the limitations and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 3
*RESEARCH ARTICLE: CROSS-GENERATIONAL SUB-CULTURES

ABSTRACT

Orientation: In the 21st-century workplace, it is common for organisations to have up to four generations working alongside each other. For organisations to effectively attract, manage and retain generationally diverse employees, it is helpful to understand if there are differences between the generations' perceptions of organisational culture and if generational sub-cultures are formed within the organisation as a result of these different generational perceptions.

Research purpose: The objective of this study was to determine (1) if there is a difference between Baby Boomers', Generation X's and Generation Y's perceptions of organisational culture and if so, (2) to determine if generational sub-cultures are formed within an organisation as a result of these different perceptions.

Motivation for the study: Identifying, understanding and addressing generational sub-cultures amongst employees in the 21st century world of work is becoming increasingly important if organisations wish to effectively attract, manage and retain talent, and compete on a global level.

Research design, approach and method: A qualitative research design was utilised that sampled employees (n = 455) within a large South African ICT sector company by proportionate, random, stratified sampling, who completed the South African Culture Instrument (SACI). The data was then statistically analysed to determine employees' perceptions of organisational culture and to establish if generational sub-cultures exist within the organisation.

Main findings: This study indicates that generational sub-cultures can be identified within the organisation based on significantly different perceptions of five of the seven dimensions of organisational culture examined.

Managerial/practical implications: Identifying the existence of generational sub-cultures within an organisation can lead to the development of an organisational

talent management strategy for effectively attracting, managing and retaining generationally-diverse employees.

Contribution/value-add: This study contributes to the body of knowledge on organisational culture and the formation of sub-cultures at a generational level which can be used to enhance organisational talent and management strategies.

Keywords: Baby Boomers, generational diversity, Generation X, Generation Y, organisational culture, organisational sub-cultures.

*Note: The guidelines provided by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* are used as a broad framework for this chapter.

3.1. Introduction

The next sections aim to explain the key focus of and background to the study, to highlight trends from research literature, to clarify the research objectives and to suggest the potential value add of the study. The research design, methodology and results of the empirical study conducted will then follow, and the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of the implications for practice, and the limitations and recommendations for future research.

3.1.1. Key focus of the study

There is a perception that employees from different generational cohorts have varying expectations of the workplace (Lester, Standifer, & Schultz, 2012). Understanding the similarities and differences in what employees value, what contributes to their engagement and in which organisational culture they will flourish has therefore become a critical strategic business objective (Lundby, Lee, & Macey, 2012) and one of the principal challenges facing managers today (Lester et al., 2012).

An organisation's culture, directly or indirectly, influences how individuals and groups think, act and respond within it (Shih & Allen, 2007). Organisational culture may be made more complex by the presence of sub-cultures that exist independently of it and have their own distinct set of values, beliefs and attributes (Lok & Crawford, 1999).

The key focus of this study is therefore to determine if there are indeed differences in the perceptions of organisational culture between three generational cohorts and, if so, to determine if this results in the formation of generational sub-cultures in the organisation.

3.1.2. Background to the study

Characteristics of the 21st-century world of work have rapidly advanced and organisations face new challenges such as globalisation, profitability through growth, technology, intellectual capital management and constant change (Savaneviciene & Stankeviciute, 2011). As organisations grow and evolve, they form functional, geographical, ethnic and other kinds of groups, each of which exists in its own specific environment, and thus they begin to build their own sub-cultures (Martins & Von de Ohe, 2006; Schein, 1990).

Diversity and the integration of diverse viewpoints into organisations are also pertinent in the 21st-century world of shifting demographic patterns (Simons & Rowland, 2011). This includes generational diversity, and today many organisations have up to four generations of employees working alongside each other (Lester et al., 2012). For organisations to effectively attract, manage and retain generationally diverse employees, it is helpful to understand if there are differences between the generations' perceptions of organisational culture and if generational sub-cultures are formed within the organisation as a result of these different perceptions.

3.1.3. Research objectives

The objective of this study was to determine

(1)   if there is a difference between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture, and if so

(2)   to determine if generational sub-cultures are formed within an organisation as a result of the different perceptions

3.1.4. Potential value-add of the study

This study contributes academically to the body of knowledge on organisational culture and the formation of sub-cultures at generational level. This knowledge can also add practical value in the workplace to enhance organisational talent management strategies.

3.1.5. Literature review

The next section provides a brief review of the literature on organisational culture, sub-cultures and the perceived similarities and differences between generations in the workplace.

3.1.5.1. Background to organisational culture research

In 1979, Pettigrew introduced concepts such as beliefs, ideology, language, rituals and myths which were widely used in sociology and anthropology and illustrated their applicability to organisational behaviour. He believed that these concepts were useful in understanding how organisational cultures are created. This sparked the interest of many academics and practitioners and the ensuing interest and dominant status that the "concept of culture" gained over the next few years was seen as a fad that would pass among managers, consultants and academics (Beyer & Trice, 1987; Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders, 1990). Interest did not wane, however, and instead led to the development of a plethora of different theories, models and frameworks aimed at explaining organisational culture as well as its impact on and relevance to organisations (Dauber, Fink, & Yolles, 2012).

3.1.5.2. Definitions of organisational culture

There are enormous variations in the definitions of organisational culture, especially since the concept lends itself to a broad variation of disciplines and research orientations such as anthropology, sociology, management studies, political science and industrial psychology (Alvesson, 2013). There are also widely differing views on whether culture refers to real, objective phenomena "out there" or if it is a framework for thinking about certain aspects of the social world (Alvesson, 2013) and this influences the way in which organisational culture is defined, measured and studied.

A sense of shared values and norms is a common thread in many definitions of organisational culture (Siehl & Martin, 1983; Koberg & Chusmir, 1987), but admitting that this is not a particularly rich conceptualisation of culture, other researchers have expanded the concept to include a common instrumental set of attitudes towards the activities and the settings people are engaged in, which serve as a foundation for an organisation's management system as well as the set of management practices and behaviours that both exemplify and reinforce those basic principles (Alvesson,1987; Denison, 1990).

Schein (1990, p.111) offered one of the most comprehensive and widely accepted definitions of organisational culture and explained that when bringing culture to the level of the organisation and even down to groups within the organisation, it can be formally defined as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems".

Martins' (1989, 2006 p.92) definition is based on Schein's work and draws attention to the relationship between behaviour and the creation of organisational culture more clearly. He defined organisational culture as "an integrated pattern of human behaviour which is unique to a particular organisation and which originated as a result of the organisation's survival processes and interaction with its environment. Culture directs the organisation to goal attainment. Newly appointed employees must be taught what is regarded as the correct way of behaving".

Hofstede (1998) and subsequently Moon, Quigly, and Carson-Marr (2012) adopted a more cognitive and strategic perspective and emphasised that an organisation's culture is assumed to reside in the minds of all its members and not only in the minds of its managers and chief executives and can emerge as the outcome of either volitional or unintended strategic decisions.

Organisational culture is therefore viewed in this study as encompassing a system, or many systems, of deeply-rooted values and norms that are shared by employees and that direct their behaviour (Kinicki & Kreitner 2009; Martins & Martins 2004; Odendaal & Roodt 1998). The concept of organisational sub-cultures as a system

within a system is inferred in this definition, but is discussed in more detail further on in this article.

Smircich (1983) and later Dauber et al., (2012), pointed out that there is a plethora of cultural frameworks, sometimes tied to specific contexts or phenomena and these differences give rise to different research questions and interests. This places the onus on researchers to be informed on the concepts of organisational culture and to define it appropriately in line with their research questions and interests.

3.1.5.3. *Models of organisational culture*

The single greatest challenge regarding organisational culture research has been the difficulty in establishing a single orienting paradigm by which research findings can be accumulated (Dauber et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2012).

Based on authors' definitions of organisational culture, various models have been developed and include elements such as beliefs, ideology, language, ritual and myth (Pettigrew,1970); symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Hofstede et al., 1990); artefacts, values and underlying assumptions (Schein, 1990); artefacts, values, assumptions, symbols linked by symbolisation, interpretation, manifestation and realisation (Hatch, 1993); history, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, stories, heroic figures, the cultural network and corporate tribes (Deal & Kennedy, 1982); and the organisational system, survival functions and dimensions of culture (Martins, 1989).

Table 3.1 below provides an overview of some theories and organisational elements previously discussed in the literature. Martins' (1989) model encompasses all aspects of an organisation upon which organisational culture can have an influence, and vice versa (Martins, 2003). In addition, because Martins' (1989) model focuses on the dimensions of organisational culture rather than typologies, is applicable to the South African context and is aligned to this research study's overall paradigm perspective, it was chosen to form the foundation upon which this research study was based.

Table 3.1: Elements of organisational culture by theorist

Theorist	Elements of organisational culture
Pettigrew (1970)	Beliefs, ideology, language, ritual and myth
Deal & Kennedy (1982)	History, values and beliefs, rituals and ceremonies, stories, heroic figures, the cultural network, corporate tribes
Martins (1989)	Organisational system, survival functions and dimensions of culture
Hofstede et al. (1990)	Symbols, heroes, rituals and values
Schein (1990)	Artefacts, values and underlying assumptions
Hatch (1993)	Artefacts, values, assumptions and symbols linked by symbolisation, interpretation, manifestation and realisation

3.1.5.4. *Methods for assessing and analysing organisational culture*

An extension of the questions surrounding organisational culture seems to be whether it should be measured, assessed and analysed qualitatively or quantitatively.

Although the debate started a few decades ago, there is still little consensus on how to effectively measure an organisation's culture and what particular outcomes one can reasonably expect to predict (Furnham & Gunter, 1993; Moon et al., 2012). The assessment of organisational culture seems to fall within one of two categories; either researchers adopt a typing framework that classifies organisations into a taxonomy, for example, Deal and Kennedy (1982) or they adopt a profiling approach which is likely to focus on a variety of beliefs and values resulting in separate scores on a number of dimensions, for example, Martins and Von der Ohe (2006). Some therefore advocate a qualitative approach, others a quantitative approach, while others again promote a mixed methods approach (Bellot, 2011; Schein, 1990; Tucker, McCoy, & Evans, 2007).

There seems to be some agreement that different conceptions of organisational culture give rise to different research questions and interests (Bellot, 2011; Smircich, 1983) and Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) aptly point out that researchers define

their own approaches to culture assessment and conceptualise organisational culture in a way that is useful for a specific environment or organisational need.

For this research study, a quantitative approach was adopted because of the ease with which large samples could be surveyed, time constraints, minimum intrusiveness, human resources and organisational policy.

3.1.5.5. Sub-cultures

The relationship between the organisational whole and its constituent parts has long been raised and debated in the organisational culture literature (Joyce & Slocum, 1982).

The possibility that sub-cultures exist independently of organisational culture and that small groups within the organisation may have their own distinct set of values, beliefs, attributes, practices and behaviours has also been raised by many scholars and practitioners (Bellou, 2010; Lok & Crawford, 1999).

According to Martin and Siehl (1983), at least three types of subcultures are conceivable. The first is enhancing, whereby the status quo is supported (Bloor & Dawson, 1994; Martin & Siehl, 1983); the second is orthogonal, whereby the group members simultaneously accept the core values of the dominant culture and a separate, un-conflicting set of values particular to themselves; and the third is a counter-culture, whereby some core values of a counter-culture present a direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture. A dominant culture and a counter-culture should therefore exist in an "uneasy symbiosis" taking opposite positions on value issues that are critically important to each of them (Martin & Siehl, 1983).

Although there is some debate about the power and influence of the leader on creating organisational culture and sub-cultures (Schein, 1992; Martin & Siehl, 1983) there is some agreement amongst researchers and practitioners regarding the sources of organisational sub-cultures. Suggestions include personal characteristics, personal biographies, positional characteristics, and task exigencies (Jermier, Slocum, Fry, & Gaines, 1991); departmental groupings, geographical distribution, and the influence of a specific manager (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006); and shared

experiences and the set-up of the organisation (Crough, 2012). Not all of these sources will necessarily form sub-cultures within an organisation, and Simons and Rowland (2011) make an important point that despite the presence or absence of sub-cultures, the organisation itself still serves as a point of connection for individuals and groups.

It is helpful to put the relationship between organisational culture and sub-cultures in perspective. Some scholars propose that the appearance of a singular organisational culture is reserved for the external publics, while the internal reality of organisations is various interlocking, nested and sometimes conflicting sub-cultures (Jermier et al., 1991; Martin & Siehl, 1983).

Lok, Westwood, and Crawford (2005) support this notion and comment that organisational culture as a construct applied to the whole of an organisation is useful in differentiating one organisation from another in inter-organisational studies, but it has limitations when trying to explain people's intra-organisational behaviour because of the complexity of sub-cultures present. This again highlights the need for researchers and practitioners to be clear on their area of focus, be it external or internal, when dealing with organisational culture and sub-cultures, and to adapt their approach accordingly in order to achieve optimal results. This research study adopts an intra-organisational focus.

3.1.6. Background to generations research

3.1.6.1. Introduction

Newspaper stories, consultant press releases, magazine articles and increasingly books are exhorting that there are different generational cohorts in the workforce that differ from each other in ways that are important for leaders and managers (Kowske, Rasch, & Wiley, 2010; Macky, Gardner, & Forsyth, 2008; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). However, often such reports seem overly generalised and based either on anecdotal evidence or data not open to critical peer review (Macky et al., 2008).

3.1.6.2.   Generational cohort theory

In 1974, Buss wrote about the importance of describing and explaining the theories around generational differences in order to gain an adequate understanding of generation-related social issues and problems. With four generations represented in the workplace for the first time, the study of generational dynamics in the workplace is taking on new significance and can be seen as one of the primary challenges currently facing managers (Dencker, Joshi, & Martocchio, 2007; Lester et al., 2012; Lundby et al., 2012).

The concept of generational cohorts is complex because there is a lack of mutual exclusivity between generations, for example, people can be born on the cusp of two generations or there is a cross-over effect which refers to highly significant events that affect every generation (Arsenault, 2004). The probability of differences within generations with regard to race, gender and education also makes the distinctions between generations more complex (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

The view of Foster (2013) is adopted in this study, namely that despite the ongoing debate over how to draw the boundaries and describe their contents, generations are conceptualised as a way of categorising people, even if only provisionally. In addition, members of a cohort can be expected to display the same response pattern to the same thing, which allows for a measure of predictability without attempting to resolve the questions on the conceptualisation of generations or the contradictions in popular literature and empirical research (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010; Lamm & Meeks, 2009).

3.1.6.3.   Who are the generations?

The three generations classified by Reynolds, Bush and Geist (2008) and used in this study are Baby Boomers (those born between1946 and 1964), Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1981) and Generation Y (those born between 1982 and 2000). This is relevant to the field of industrial psychology because each generation is said to have social, economic, political and other contextual factors that shaped their values and beliefs about work (Real, Mitnick, & Maloney, 2010). A brief description of the perceived characteristics of the three generations follows.

(1) **Baby Boomers** are viewed as consensus seekers who are competitive micro-managers and possess a moderate level of disrespect for authority. (Kupperschmidt, 2000). They are seen as valuing collaboration and maintaining a somewhat formal organisational structure, placing workplace priorities over all non-work life, including family (Lester et al., 2012). Baby Boomers are currently the largest generational cohort in the workplace and they are optimistic and value job security and a stable working environment (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008).

(2) **Generation X** are considered "latchkey kids" who grew up with financial, family and societal insecurity, rapid change, great diversity and a lack of solid traditions (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Generally, they are seen as cynical, entrepreneurial and self-reliant (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Generation X bring to the workplace well-honed, practical approaches to problem solving (Smola & Sutton, 2002) and they are perceived to crave higher salaries, flexible work arrangements and more financial leverage (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Generation X are seen as preferring technology-based interactions and avoiding unnecessary face-to-face meetings (Lester et al., 2012). They are disdainful of hierarchy and the word "boss" and they demand managers who are competent and both value and demand rewards and recognition (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

(3) **Generation Y** are also known Millennials, Generation Me, Generation Whine, the Net Generation, Echo Boomers, iGeneration, Generation Why and Nexters. This generation are seen to have an entirely different work ethic, attitude and set of values shaking the foundation of workplaces and a growing body of evidence from around the world suggests the emergence of a youth culture that pervades national borders and is spurred by social media technology and communication advances (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Ng, Lyons, & Schweitzer, 2012). They have been labelled self-centred, unmotivated, disrespectful, disloyal and contributing to widespread concern about how their communication will affect organisations and their relationships with other organisational members (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). However, Generation Y have also been described as working well in teams, motivated to have an impact on the organisation,

favouring open and frequent communication with their supervisors and at ease with communication technology (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

There is more popular literature available on this generation than any preceding generation (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009), but there is a paucity of empirical research published on Generation Y, the results of which are "confusing at best and contradictory at worst" (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg, 2010, p.198).

South African research on Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y has also focused on the workplace. For example, the study conducted by Martins and Martins (2012) indicates significant differences between the three generations with regard to employee satisfaction and knowledge retention behaviours. While anecdotal evidence continues to amass suggesting that Generation Y are different, that they approach their working lives in a way that is novel and often at odds with the expectations placed on them by their Baby Boomer and Generation X bosses (Ng et al., 2012), some empirical research seems to indicate that there are few or no significant differences, and the need to conduct further research, especially in an organisational context, is clear (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Deal et al., 2010; Real et al., 2010).

3.1.6.4.   Cross-generational misperceptions

The potentially negative impact of misperceptions that generations may have of each other, which results in conflict, lack of co-operation and poor performance in the workplace at an individual and team level, as well as on the overall organisational talent management level should be a concern that is appropriately addressed by leadership (Dencker et al.,2007; Meriac, Woehr, & Banister, 2010).

3.1.6.5.   Integration of culture, sub-culture and generations

Joyce and Slocum (1982) underlined the importance of the fit between an individual's psychological climate and the prevailing organisational culture because it represents the extent to which the individual's perceptions differ from or are consistent with the perceptions of the organisation held by other members. These

similarities or differences can influence the formation of sub-cultures (Joyce & Slocum, 1982).

Dealing with a diverse workforce is one of the many challenges facing managers today, and such diversity is not only limited to gender, religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds, but also relates to the various generational values found in the workplace (Gibson, Greenwood, & Murphy, 2009). Top managers may not even be aware of the cultural map of their organisation, or if they perceive diversity, they may try and repress it (Hofstede, 1998). An open discussion on the desirable amount of variety can help to avoid parts of the organisation inadvertently being crushed because of company-wide solutions that conflict with sub-cultural needs (Hofstede, 1998). This further highlights the benefit of analysis at the generational sub-cultural level and its importance for research and management practices.

In addition, clashes between the organisational culture and sub-cultures or between sub-cultures may cause problems in strategy implementation and in overall effective human resources management (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Palthe & Kossek, 2003). Sub-cultures within the same organisation can be subjected to different human resource practices, and by understanding the role of sub-cultures and identifying the possibility of generational sub-cultures present in the organisation, the translation of human resources strategies into human resources practices can be more effective (Palthe & Kossek, 2003). Emanating from the evidence presented, the following hypotheses were formulated:

> H1: There are significant differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture.

> H2: Generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' different perceptions of organisational culture.

The research design, which includes the research approach and research method, follows below. The results are then provided and interpreted in light of previous research conducted on the variables. A conclusion and discussion of the limitations and recommendations will then conclude this chapter.

3.2. Research design

A research design is the strategic framework for action that links the research question and the execution of the actual research (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). The next section describes the research approach and research method used in this study and includes a discussion of the participants and sampling technique, the measuring instrument, the research procedure and the data analysis.

3.2.1. Research approach

The positivist approach was adopted because it is suitable for those who want objective facts, and it aims to provide an accurate description of the laws and mechanisms that operate in social life (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). In this approach, theory building takes place through the testing of hypotheses and supports data collection methods such as valid and reliable surveys and structured interviews so that facts can form the basis for generalisation and prediction (Cunliffe, 2011).

System studies also provide an appropriate framework for this study because they address the effectiveness and functionality of organisational systems and/or the relationship with the environment (Cunliffe, 2011). Lastly, in addition and also relevant to this study, is a descriptive, group-differences research approach which describes phenomena precisely and finds statistical significance between groups on a variable of interest. This design makes use of a classification and/or measuring of relationships (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.2.2. Research method

The next section describes the method used to gather and analyse data which contributed towards the validity and reliability of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.2.2.1. Research setting and variables

This study was conducted within a large South African ICT company. The three generations of Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees were

defined and regarded as the independent variables. The dependent variables were the organisational cultural dimensions derived from the SACI and linked to Martins' (1999) model of organisational culture.

3.2.2.2. Sampling procedure

Proportionate random stratified sampling was selected as the most appropriate sampling method for this study. This is a probability sampling technique whereby the researcher divides the total population into different sub-groups or strata and proceeds to randomly select the final subjects proportionately from the different strata (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Random sampling occurs when every member of the clearly defined population has an equal chance of being selected (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Stratified sampling was combined with random sampling because the researcher wanted to focus on specific sub-groups, namely generational cohorts, within the population and thus ensure the presence of the key generations within the sample (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). It also allowed the researcher to sample the rare extremes of the given population and this technique led to higher statistical precision compared to random sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

In proportionate random stratified sampling, the sample size of each stratum was proportionate to the population size of the stratum when viewed against the entire population and therefore each stratum had the same sampling fraction (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Since the strata used in this process were based on pre-specified generational groups, there were no overlapping strata.

3.2.2.3. Research participants

Owing to cost, time and operational restrictions, only permanent employees from middle management levels and below were targeted (N = 20 771) and made up the population.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009) the minimum representative sample size required from a population of ± 20 000, at a 95% confidence level, is between 370 and 383 (assuming that data are collected from all cases in the

sample). Hence, to obtain a minimum sample size of ± 383, and given the possibility of non-responses, a random sample from each generational stratum was selected to obtain a final sample of 3 000 employees.

The response rate was ultimately 15.14% which yielded a total of 455 research participants with usable questionnaires. The majority of the respondents were male, with 29.2% of the respondents being female. Indians were the smallest race group at 9.2%, with coloureds being the second smallest at 13.2%. Whites were the largest race group among the respondents at 39.6%, and African's were the second largest at 38%. The majority of respondents were at an operational level in the organisation, and management were the minority, representing only 7.7% of respondents. The majority of the respondents were also from the corporate region.

Of the respondents, Generation X was the most represented at 54.5% of respondents, while 33.4% and 12.5% of respondents comprised Baby Boomers and Generation Y respectively. Table 3.2 below provides a summary of the descriptive statistics in terms of the biographical and demographical profile of the respondents.

Table 3.2: Biographical and demographical profile of the respondents (*n* = 455)

Variable	Category	Frequency (*f*)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	322	70.8
	Female	133	29.2
Race	African	173	38.0
	Coloured	60	13.2
	Indian	42	9.2
	White	180	39.6
Generation	Baby Boomers	152	33.4
	Generation X	248	54.5
	Generation Y	55	12.1
Level	Management	35	7.7
	Operational	284	62.4
	Specialist	99	21.8
	Supervisor	37	8.1
Region	Central	25	5.5
	Corporate	122	26.8
	Eastern	47	10.3
	Gauteng Central	75	16.5
	North Eastern	80	17.6
	Southern	34	7.5
	Western	72	15.8

3.2.2.4.   The measuring instrument

The South African Organisational Culture Instrument (SACI), developed by Martins 1989), was the primary measuring instrument used in this study. The SACI is a locally developed survey for the South African context and measures the extent to which employees identify with the various elements of the organisation's existing and ideal culture (Martins & Coetzee, 2007). It has been scientifically and objectively proven valid and reliable (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006; Martins & Coetzee, 2007) and was therefore appropriate for use in this study.

The instrument consisted of 89 items, but owing to operational time constraints imposed by the organisation, the questionnaire was shortened to the 60 items that were ultimately used in this study. These 60 items were representative of the seven dimensions of the original questionnaire. Respondents made use of a five-point Likert scale to rate each statement. A low rating (1) specified that the respondents strongly disagreed, and a high rating (5) that they strongly agreed. All factors were scored such that a low score indicated non-acceptance of the cultural dimension, while a high score indicated acceptance (Martins & Coetzee, 2007).

In addition, biographical and demographic data was requested from each participant and was collected from a section within the survey. No identifying information was requested apart from age, race, gender, region and level in the organisation. Of particular importance to this study, participants were also requested to self-select the generational category, delineated by birth years, into which they fell.

3.2.2.5.   Research procedure

Ethical permission to conduct the research was obtained from the University's Research Committee as well as the ICT company's Research Committee.

Informed consent was also obtained from all the research participants. Informed consent information and instructions to complete the survey were included in the invitation to participate in the survey that was emailed to the sample group. The consent statement clearly introduced the researchers, stipulated the purpose of the study, provided a short description of how the results would be used and the contact details of the researches should participants have any questions.

Participants were reassured that participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the process at any time. The participants were not coerced in any way. It was explained that the risks associated with partaking in the study were minimal as participants remained anonymous and responses could not be traced back to any particular individual.

According to Singh (2011), empirical research and the subsequent conclusions drawn are only as good as the quality of the data that is entered into the process. The quality is largely defined by the accuracy and reliability of the data collected (Singh, 2011). The methodological approaches selected for this study were therefore chosen to ensure data quality at every step of the data collection process. The following procedures were followed:

(1) Invitations were prepared for the target sample and included the universal resource locator (URL) address of the online electronic survey. The online survey was designed, developed and distributed by the company's web-based solution division in the name of the researchers. The questionnaire was available only in English, the official business language of the ICT company.

(2) The survey link was tested in a pilot study of 50 employees drawn from the sample, to obtain an indication of any problems that could arise during roll-out to the entire target sample. They reported no concerns completing the survey.

(3) Invitations to participate in the survey with the questionnaires were then distributed electronically via the company's electronic communication system to all full-time employees as per the sample identified.

(4) The survey was electronically completed by participants via the organisation's private network which was accessible only to its employees. This contributed towards effective sample control and disallowed employees from forwarding the survey to external persons to complete (Simsek & Veiga, 2001).

(5) Since the questionnaires were completed online, they were collated electronically. The data was downloaded from the structured query language (SQL) database management system into an Excel spread sheet for processing.

(6)   The data was then analysed and cleaned by removing incomplete responses. In addition outliers determined by extreme high and extreme low scores were identified and removed. The data was then statistically analysed and processed.

3.2.2.6.   Data analysis

The statistical package SPSS version 20 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics, factor and reliability analysis, and inferential statistics were measured. The Kruskal Wallis test was used to identify possible significant differences between generational perceptions of the dimensions of organisational culture and to identify the presence of generational sub-cultures.

3.3.   Results

The section below indicates the results of the descriptive and inferential statistics of the study including the reliabilities of the dimensions of the SACI. The inferential statistics are displayed in terms of the means by generation per dimension and per item.

3.3.1. Descriptive and reliability statistics for the SACI

Descriptive statistics, used to describe the data by investigating the distribution of scores on each dimension (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), including skewness and kurtosis as well as reliabilities in terms of Cronbach's alphas of the SACI are displayed in table 3.4 below.

3.3.1.1.   Skewness

As can be seen in table 3.4 below, the distribution is negatively skewed which indicates that most of the sample gave high scores on the dimensions of organisational culture and therefore view organisational culture in a positive light.

3.3.1.2.   Kurtosis

Kurtosis describes the peakedness of the distribution (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2005), and in this case the distribution is unimodal and peaked slightly to the right of the centre, indicating a greater frequency of the positive scores of "3" and "4".

3.3.2. Factor and reliability analysis for the SACI

Because the SACI instrument used in this study was shortened to 60 items for operational reasons, a factor analysis was conducted to identify and confirm the dimensions which comprise organisational culture.

Table 3.3: The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) and Bartlett's test of sphericity of the SACI

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.9523
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	18352.356
	Df	1770
	Sig.	0.000

The suitability for factor analysis was assessed using SPSS Version 20. As displayed in table 3.3 above, The Kaiser-Myer-Olkin value was 0.952, therefore exceeding the recommended value of 0.6 (SPSS Version 20). Bartlett's test of sphericity reached statistical significance (p = 0.000) supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

Ten factors were postulated according to Kaiser's criterion and extracted by means of a principal component analysis, also called principal axis factoring. All components with an eigenvalue of less than 1 were eliminated, which resulted in a total of ten components.

The factor matrix obtained was rotated to simple structure by means of Varimax rotation. Factors with fewer than three items were eliminated because a factor with fewer than three items is generally considered weak and unstable (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Factor 10, which comprised only two items was therefore eliminated.

To further reduce the number of factors, factors 7 and 8, which comprised two items each, were combined into one factor and renamed "external and internal environment". An item correlation analysis indicated that the Cronbach's alpha was 0.79 - hence this combination was acceptable.

Lastly, factor 9 was eliminated owing to cross-loading with factor 1 (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Factor 2 was separated into two different factors and accordingly renamed "strategy and change management" and "goals and objectives" to reflect more accurately the determinants that were being measured. It was decided to retain the following seven factors for further investigation and analysis:

(1) leadership (determinants included setting an example; people management; managing the work; competence/skills)

(2) strategy and change management (determinants included management of change; understanding the vision and mission; informed regarding strategy; integration of core values; measurable standards)

(3) employee needs (determinants included remuneration; equal opportunities; openness/trust, participation in decision making)

(4) means to achieve objectives (determinants included conflict management; work distribution and coordination; organisational structure; performance evaluation; retention)

(5) management processes (determinants included commitment to change; rules and regulations; work procedures and methods; setting and implementing goals)

(6) organisational goals and objectives (determinants included understanding the organisation's goals; aligning one's own goals to the goals, objectives and mission of the organisation)

(7) external and internal environment (determinants included the company's involvement in the community, and the company's employment equity diversity strategy)

Table 3.4 below also provides reliability statistics for the questionnaire in terms of the Cronbach alphas for each dimension of organisational culture. Reliability statistics range from 0 to 1, and an internal reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is deemed acceptable (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The reliability coefficients for the seven dimensions ranged between 0.727 and 0.944 which is acceptable. In addition, the overall reliability (Cronbach coefficient alpha) of the 60-item instrument was 0.967, which is well within the recommended range.

3.3.3. Inferential statistics

3.3.3.1. The organisational culture

The questions of the SACI can be found in annexure A3. The organisational culture is described through the mean scores of the dimensions of organisational culture as displayed in table 3.4 below. In this study, an average of 3.2 is the reasonable cut-off point chosen to differentiate between positive and negative perceptions as demonstrated by research by the HSRC (1994) and cited by Odendaal and Roodt (1998).

Table 3.4: Descriptive statistics and reliabilities for the dimensions of the South African Culture Instrument (SACI)

Dimension	N	Mean	Std deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach alphas
Leadership	455	3.54	0.84670	-0.649	-0.036	0.944
Strategy and change Management	455	3.06	0.81108	-0.358	-0.411	0.914
Employee needs	455	2.83	0.86572	-0.105	-0.807	0.889
Means to achieve objectives	455	3.02	0.77416	-0.248	-0.514	0.862
Management processes	455	3.30	0.71433	-0.388	-0.195	0.860
Organisational goals and objectives	455	3.99	0.65500	-0.697	1.360	0.727
External and internal environment	455	3.60	0.75434	-0.442	0.184	0.790

The majority of the dimensions have a mean of above 3.2, including leadership (3.54), management processes (3.30), goals and objectives (3.99) and external and internal environment (3.60). These dimensions of organisational culture were therefore perceived positively by the respondents.

The dimensions of strategy and change management (3.06), employee needs (2.83), and means to achieve objectives (3.02) have means of below 3.2, and therefore it can be interpreted that respondents viewed these dimensions of organisational culture more negatively than the aforementioned dimensions.

Inferential statistics allow one to use information obtained from samples to draw conclusions about populations (Terre Blanche et al., 2006) and the next section details the results of the Kruskal Wallis test calculated firstly at the dimension level and then at the item level of the SACI.

3.3.3.2.   *Kruskal Wallis test: dimensions of organisational culture*

Table 3.5 below provides a summary of the results of the means by generation per dimension of organisational culture. The dependent variables were not normally distributed, expect for one, and therefore a Kruskal-Wallis test, which is a non-parametric test, was used to identify possible significant differences between the three generations and the dimensions of organisation culture.

Table 3.5: Results of Kruskal-Wallis test for dimensions of organisational culture

Dimension	Mean			Chi-square	df	Asymp. sig.
	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y			
Leadership	3.50	3.44	3.96	15.799	2	0.000*
Strategy and change management	3.09	2.97	3.41	15.584	2	0.000*
Employee needs	2.95	2.67	3.20	20.833	2	0.000*
Means to achieve objectives	3.04	2.95	3.29	8.2575	2	0.016*
Management processes	3.33	3.24	3.49	7.436	2	0.024*
Organisational goals and objectives	3.94	4.00	4.09	5.698	2	0.058
External and internal environment	3.59	3.58	3.72	2.453	2	0.293

* $P < 0.05$

As reflected in table 3.5 above, the significance level is less than 0.05 for five of the seven dimensions. There is thus a statistically significant difference between the three generational groups with regard to the organisational culture dimensions of leadership, strategy and change management, employee needs, means to achieve objectives and management processes. There is no statistically significant difference between the three generational cohorts with regard to the organisational culture dimensions of organisational goals and objectives, and external environment and internal environment.

Based on the results above, the first hypothesis (there are significant differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture) is accepted as the three generations do view most of the dimensions of organisational culture differently. It can also be concluded that generational sub-cultures are created within the organisation based on differing perceptions of leadership, strategy and change management, employee needs, means to achieve objectives, and management processes, and in terms of these dimensions, the second hypothesis (generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' different perceptions of organisational culture) can be accepted. Generational sub-cultures are not formed

within the organisation based on differing perceptions of organisational goals and objectives and external environment and internal relations.

Furthermore, an inspection of the mean ranks of the three generations suggests that Generation Y (n = 55) consistently gave the highest scores for all seven dimensions of organisational culture and that Generation X (n = 248) had the lowest scores for six of the seven dimensions. This suggests that Generation Y consistently perceive organisational culture in a more positive light than Generation X and Baby Boomers.

3.3.3.3.   *Kruskal Wallis Test: Items of organisational culture*

Probing further, a comparison of the generational responses to each item of the SACI provides more insight into the organisational culture than simply examining the similarities and differences between the dimensions of organisational culture. Table 3.6 below indicates the items where statistically significant differences (where the significance level is less than 0.05) were found between generations. This amounted to their responses to 52% of the items of the SACI.

Table 3.6: Kruskal-Wallis test: Comparison between generational cohorts and the items of organisational culture

Dimension	Statement	Generation cohort means			Chi-square	Df	Asymp sig
		Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y			
Leadership	My promoter treats staff consistently irrespective of who you are	3.64	3.56	4.09	9.357	2	.009*
Leadership	My promoter sets an example everyone can follow – walks the talk	3.56	3.48	3.98	8.312	2	.016*
Leadership	My promoter does a good job at people management	3.56	3.52	3.93	6.735	2	.034*
Leadership	My promoter is competent and knows his/her job	3.83	3.75	4.24	8.760	2	.013*
Leadership	My promoter tries to remove obstacles that occur in the work environment	3.65	3.52	4.07	11.442	2	.003*
Leadership	My promoter encourages subordinates to give their opinion regarding work matters	3.72	3.63	4.22	14.642	2	.001*
Leadership	My promoter does a good job of managing the work	3.78	3.55	4.02	11.184	2	.004*
Leadership	Managers have the necessary leadership skills	3.30	3.21	3.87	16.926	2	.000*
Leadership	Management takes purposeful action to make contact with employees on lower levels	3.09	2.94	3.85	26.522	2	.000*
Leadership	Management in my division have informed us timeously how new plans and changes will affect our work	3.22	3.02	3.85	21.333	2	.000*
Strategy and change management	I believe our executive management has the vision and knowledge to lead the company successfully	3.16	3.13	3.65	11.333	2	.003*
Strategy and change management	Executive management keeps employees informed about the strategy of the company	3.22	3.09	3.67	12.443	2	.002*
Strategy and change management	The company takes purposeful action to integrate core values with all activities and results	3.37	3.27	3.65	6.340	2	.042*
Strategy and change	The company is managed effectively	2.80	2.69	3.31	14.085	2	.001*

management

Strategy and change management	When decisions are made at higher levels those affected most by these decisions are consulted	2.82	2.59	3.15	13.058	2	.001*
Employee needs	Our remuneration (salary, fringe benefits, etc.) is fair	3.05	2.55	3.07	18.208	2	.000*
Employee needs	Equal opportunities for all people in the company have become a reality	2.80	2.34	2.80	16.109	2	.000*
Employee needs	The company is doing what it says regarding equal opportunities for all employees	2.76	2.41	2.82	10.803	2	.005*
Employee needs	The company cares for its employees	3.19	2.96	3.55	12.281	2	.002*
Employee needs	A visible trust relationship exists between employees and management	2.91	2.67	3.29	15.370	2	.000*
Employee needs	Employees are given the opportunity to make a contribution in identifying the outputs of their own division	3.09	2.79	3.31	12.909	2	.002*
Employee needs	Recruitment takes place without discrimination in terms of gender, race or language	2.78	2.71	3.49	19.594	2	.000*
Means to achieve objectives	Activities of the various divisions are coordinated and aligned	2.93	2.84	3.29	7.864	2	.020*
Means to achieve objectives	Work is equally distributed among employees, staff are not overloaded while others are underutilised	3.01	2.80	3.35	9.370	2	.009*
Means to achieve objectives	Performance/achievement is evaluated objectively according to actual results	3.02	2.87	3.45	14.062	2	.001*
Management processes	Management does their best to ensure the success of change	3.22	3.12	3.58	10.714	2	.005*
Management processes	We retain our best workers	2.70	2.54	3.00	8.992	2	.011*
Management processes	In the company those in positions of authority delegate as much power as is required to complete tasks successfully	3.24	3.18	3.58	8.555	2	.014*
External and internal environment	I am satisfied with the company's involvement in the community	3.56	3.69	3.91	6.469	2	.039*
External and internal environment	The company shares its success with the community	3.53	3.56	3.89	8.013	2	.018*

*P < 0.05

(1) Leadership

In terms of leadership, the results indicate that all three generations overall have a positive perception of leadership in the organisation. There were significant differences in the degree of positivity between the generations however as Generation Y indicated greater agreement than Generation X or Baby Boomers that leadership in the organisation treats staff consistently, sets an example that can be followed, takes purposeful action to make contact with employees at lower levels, is competent and that managers know their jobs, try to remove obstacles that occur in the work environment, have the necessary leadership skills, inform employees timeously of how new plans and changes will affect their work, and encourage subordinates to give their opinion about work matters.

There were no significant differences between the generations in their perception that they are afforded the opportunity to present their ideas to leadership, that there is sufficient personal discussion of significant matters between employees and leadership and that they solve their differences.

(2) Strategy and change management

Overall, strategy and change management was viewed negatively by Generation X and Baby Boomers, but positively by Generation Y. Generation Y gave the highest ratings of the three generations in terms of their perceptions and were alone in their view that the organisation's executive management has the vision and knowledge to lead the company successfully, that the company is managed effectively and that employees are kept informed about the strategy of the company.

All three generations concurred that the company takes purposeful action to integrate core values with all activities and results.

Although all three generations had a negative perception that when decisions are made at higher levels those most affected by these decisions are consulted, there was a significant difference in the degree of negativity with which they rated this item.

However, there were no significant differences between the generational cohorts in their perception that change is a well-planned process in the organisation and their negative view that the company does not respond quickly to changes in the environment.

(3) *Employee needs*

This dimension was viewed overall in a negative light by all three generational cohorts, although there were significant differences between the generations' responses on seven of the eight items of the employee needs dimension.

Although viewed negatively, the three generations had significantly different perceptions that remuneration is fair, equal opportunities for all people in the company have become a reality; the company is doing what it says about equal opportunities for all employees; a visible trust relationship exists between employees and management; and recruitment takes places without discrimination in terms of gender, race or language.

Generation Y had a significantly different perception that the company cares for its employees and that employees are afforded the opportunity to make a contribution in identifying the outputs of their own division, whereas Generation X and Baby Boomers viewed these items more negatively.

There was no significant difference between the three generations' perception that there is openness in the company on matters that are important to employees.

(4) *Means to achieve objectives*

Baby Boomers and Generation X had a negative perception of means to achieve objectives and there were significant differences between three of the nine responses to the items of this dimension.

The significant differences between the three generations was evident in their perception that activities of the various divisions are coordinated and aligned, work is equally distributed among employees and staff are not overloaded while others are underutilised, and performance/achievement is evaluated objectively according to

actual results. In all these instances, Generation Y was the most positive generation with mean scores above the 3.2 cut-off point.

There were no significant differences between the generational cohorts in terms of their negative perception that the system is overloaded with unnecessary paperwork, duplication of work occurs, conflict between divisions in the organisation causes a waste of resources, conflict is not resolved by those involved, and management does not believe that subordinates are self-motivated and have the ability to control their own work.

(5) Management processes

This dimension was viewed positively overall by all three generational cohorts although there were significant differences between their perceptions of three of the eight items of this dimension.

There were significant differences between the generations' perceptions that management does their best to ensure the success of change, the organisation retains its best workers and those in positions of authority delegate as much power as is required to complete tasks successfully.

There were no significant differences in the generations' perceptions that rules and regulations are continuously reviewed and upgraded to cope with change; employees are encouraged to develop better work procedures and methods; the achievement of goals is considered important and therefore enough time is spent on implementation; employees are committed to change and that this will improve the company; and that management and employees collectively formulate objectives.

(6) Organisational goals and objectives

All three generations perceived goals and objectives positively and there was no significant difference between their responses. This suggests that they all perceived their own personal goals and objectives can be satisfied through the achievement of organisational goals, and that they fully understand the mission and overall objectives of the organisation.

(7)   External and internal environment

There were no significant differences between the generational cohorts in terms of their positive perception of the overall dimension. However, there were significant differences in their responses to two of the four items. Although all positive, the three generations had significantly different perceptions that the company shares its success with the community and that they were satisfied with the company's involvement in the community.

There were no significant differences between their positive perceptions that the company's EE strategy has been clearly communicated to them and that they understand this strategy.

3.4.   Discussion

The objective of this study was to determine (1) if there is a difference between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture and if so, (2) are generational sub-cultures formed within the organisation as a result of these different perceptions.

Identifying, understanding and addressing generational sub-cultures amongst employees in the 21st-century world of work is becoming increasingly important if organisations wish to effectively attract, manage and retain talent and compete on a global level. The main contribution of this study at a practical level was therefore to identify the possible existence of generational sub-cultures within an organisation. If generational sub-cultures are present, then the need to develop an organisational talent strategy for effectively attracting, managing and retaining generationally diverse employees is imperative. Contrary to recent empirical studies that show mixed results (Parry & Urwin, 2011) or no significant differences between the generations (Real et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010), the results of this study indicate that there are significant differences in the way generations view five of the seven dimensions of organisational culture and as a result generational sub-cultures are formed within the organisation.

The results indicate a clear trend of Generation Y providing the highest ratings for almost all items, Generation X providing the lowest, and Baby Boomers being in-between. The lowest mean for any item was 2.34, given by Generation X, while the highest mean for any item was 4.2 given by Generation Y. This supports popular literature which characterises Generation X as typically more cynical and Generation Y as typically more positive, optimistic or even somewhat idealistic about the world of work (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Gibson et al., 2009; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009).

3.4.1. Leadership

There was a significant difference between the three generational cohorts' view of leadership although all three cohorts experienced leadership positively. Murray, Toulson, and Legg (2011) comment that while all employees may value a supportive leader, the expectations of the way this is manifested in the workplace may differ between the generations.

Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) discuss the traditional practice for leaders to communicate with other leaders within the workplace and not subordinates. It is therefore interesting that the results of this study indicate that employees from all three generational cohorts feel they are afforded the opportunity to present their ideas to leadership and are encouraged to give their opinions on work matters, and there are no significant differences between the generational cohorts in this regard.

3.4.2. Strategy and change management

Strategy and change management was viewed negatively by Generation X and Baby Boomers, but positively by Generation Y.

Generation Y, unlike Baby Boomers and Generation X, who are believed to have an internal locus of control, are deemed to have a strong external locus of control (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Twenge and Campbell (2008) discuss the relationship between Generation Y's view of themselves as powerless to control day-to-day life, their tendency to attribute outcomes to external variables such as company policies, procedures and relationships between

colleagues, their tendency to be more sensitive to organisational support, as well as their tendency to report stronger organisational commitment whenever they do perceive support from the organisation. This, coupled with their reported need to see the bigger picture and how their work fits in and adds value to the overall success of the organisation (Weyland, 2011) may partly explain, why Generation Y have a significantly different view of strategy and change management to Generation X and Baby Boomers.

However, there were no significant differences between the generational cohorts in their perception that change is a well-planned process in the organisation and their negative view that the company does not respond quickly to changes in the environment. This implies that all employees believed the company does not respond quickly to change and only Generation Y espoused change as a well-planned process.

In their study, Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) proposed that the more strategic or long-term focused dimensions of organisational culture may have the greatest influence on the creation of sub-cultures. The results of this study indicated significant overall differences between the perceptions of the generations with regard to strategy and change management and confirm the creation of generational sub-cultures based on this more strategic and long-term focused dimension.

3.4.3. Employee needs

Overall, this dimension was also viewed negatively by all three generational cohorts, although there were significant differences between the generations' responses on seven of the eight items of the employee needs dimension.

In terms of employee needs, Ng et al. (2010) discuss the popular view that the career-related expectations of generation Y are "supersized", unrealistic and disconnected from reward and performance. The responses given by Generation Y in this study were higher than Generation X or Baby Boomers for most of the items. Regarding the fairness of salary and fringe benefits, however, all three generations viewed this in a negative light. The recent global economic downturn may be

responsible for all three generations lowering their expectations and not Generation Y alone, as expected (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010).

3.4.4. Means to achieve objectives

Baby Boomers and Generation X have an overall negative perception of means to achieve objectives and there are significant differences between the cohorts' responses to the items.

Hershatter and Epstein (2010) discuss the popular view that Generation Y are a "demanding workforce", "high maintenance" or "needy" in their demand for structure, reassurance and feedback on performance. They are said to experience a large amount of angst when expected to work with ambiguity, without guidelines, templates or examples, because they are not used to performing without explicit instructions, well-defined criteria for success, and specific deadlines set by others (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). At the same time, Generation Y are said to be extremely sensitive to negative feedback and criticism, and this is likely to affect their perceptions of how fairly performance is rated (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009). It is interesting therefore that Generation Y have a positive perception that performance is evaluated objectively based on actual results, whereas Generation X and Baby Boomers view this in an extremely negative light. The organisation in which this study was conducted is large and traditionally bureaucratic, with set structures, procedures and guidelines for success. The results may therefore indicate that Generation Y find that these supporting structures suit their preferences for clarity and feedback, whereas Generation X and Baby Boomers find this more tedious, restrictive and frustrating (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

3.4.5. Management processes

This dimension was viewed positively overall by all three generational cohorts, although there were significant differences between the generations' perceptions of some items. One should note that all three cohorts experienced the collective formulation of objectives negatively as well as the retention of best workers.

Latham's (2009) study emphasises the benefit of participation in formulating objectives and goal setting as having a positive effect on performance to the extent that it increases self-efficacy and the discovery of task relevant strategies. This relationship is not moderated by age, however (Latham, 1991), which could explain why there were no significant differences between the cohorts in this regard.

Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) acknowledge that if the best workers are not retained, an organisation can be negatively affected from the operational to the strategic level. Their research provides a model for organisations to influence employee retention based upon the value of employees to the organisation and is not generation specific which aligns to the findings of this study.

In their study, Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) found that sub-cultures were created based on management processes. Although this related mostly to differences in the way things were done between regions, the results of this study indicated that generational sub-cultures are also formed based on significant differences in the way generational cohorts view management processes.

3.4.6. Organisational goals and objectives

All three generational cohorts perceived organisational goals and objectives positively and there was no significant difference between their responses. Generation X have traditionally been said to value the opportunity to pursue corporate goals and their own goals at the same time, whereas Baby Boomers are said to have the attitude that they must focus on what is good for the company even if it is to the detriment of their personal goals (Wiant, 1999). The results of this study supported that view.

Kupperschmidt (2000) discusses the need for today's multi-generational leaders and managers to bring employees together in ways that provide fair and equitable opportunities for each individual to contribute their best and to achieve personal goals in alignment with organisational goals. If this approach of viewing employees as individuals rather than members of a generational cohort in terms of organisational goals and objectives is the reality in the workplace, then it would

explain why generational sub-cultures are not formed around different generational perceptions of this dimension of organisational culture.

3.4.7. External and internal environment

There were no significant differences between the generational cohorts in terms of their positive ratings of this dimension.

In their empirical study, Ng et al. (2010) found that Generation Y rated social responsibility and commitment to diversity as the most important factor. It is interesting therefore that in this study, all three generations viewed the organisation's commitment to diversity and involvement in the community positively and with no significant difference between them. Perhaps this can be explained in part by the transformation agenda in South Africa following the 1994 elections (Oosthuizen & Naidoo, 2010), in which awareness of diversity, employment equity policies and social responsibility are promoted by law and prioritised in the South African workplace. Research shows that organisational cultures tend to develop and evolve in ways that are compatible with the societal culture in which they are nested (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). This could also explain why generational sub-cultures are not formed based on differing perceptions of this dimension of organisational culture.

3.5. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicated that generational sub-cultures can be identified on the basis of five of the seven dimensions of organisational culture examined. Although the conclusions and the implications for practice drawn from this study are discussed in depth in chapter 4, there is evidence to support the development of talent management strategies aimed at effectively attracting, managing and retaining the generationally diverse workforce currently present in the workplace.

3.6. Limitations

A comprehensive discussion of the limitations of this study will follow in chapter 4, and only the most salient limitations are highlighted in this section. This study was conducted within one organisation in the ICT industry and the culture questionnaire

was adapted for use in this context. It is thus possible that the findings might not be generally applicable to other organisations and contexts.

This study was conducted using quantitative methods without a supportive qualitative phase such as conducting focus groups to verify the data. A mixed methods approach may have proven more robust (Bellot, 2011). The interpretation of the items of the questionnaire may have differed between respondents owing to English not being their first language or generational cohorts interpreting the items differently (Meriac et al., 2010). The possibility of employees responding in a socially desirable or undesirable manner could also be considered a limitation.

The concept of generations is complex and the cross-sectional design of this study was a limitation (Arsenault, 2004). A longitudinal study would make it possible to determine whether differences between generations are as a result of age, career stage, life stage or genuine generational differences (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Meriac et al., 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011).

3.7.   Recommendations

Although there are some empirical studies on generational cohorts, much of the literature is anecdotal. There is mixed support for the existence of real rather than perceived generational differences, and more empirical research would be required to substantiate or refute these popular perceptions.

In addition, further studies could examine the relationship between differing human resources practices and the formation of organisational sub-cultures (Palthe & Kossek, 2002). The influence of the South African transformation agenda on generational cohorts and organisational sub-cultures could also be examined in more depth.

The proposed contribution of this study was to enhance organisational talent management strategies. Deal et al. (2010), however, caution against designing workplace strategies based on generational differences, until such strategies can be shown to enhance employee relations. This could therefore be identified as an area requiring additional research.

Recommendations for further research are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

3.8. Chapter summary

This chapter reported on the research design and method followed for this empirical study. The results of the study with regard to the identification of generational sub-cultures within a South African ICT company were then discussed in the context of previous research and literature. The chapter concluded with a brief discussion of the implications for practice and the limitations and recommendations for future research.

The conclusions and limitations of this study, as well as the recommendations for future research are discussed in greater depth in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this research study in terms of conclusions, limitations and recommendations for further research is discussed below.

4.1. Conclusions

Conclusions derived from the literature review and the empirical study, respectively are discussed in the next sections.

4.1.1. Conclusion regarding the literature review

A detailed literature review with three specific aims was conducted to determine how organisational culture, sub-cultures and the formation of sub-cultures and generational similarities and differences are conceptualised in the literature. The general aims were realised through the achievement of the specific aims and the literature review was used to support the purpose of the study and the empirical research findings.

4.1.1.1 The first aim: to conceptualise organisational culture from a theoretical perspective

This specific aim was addressed in chapter 2 and the conclusions can be drawn.

The concept of organisational culture was first introduced in 1979 by Pettigrew who believed that sociological and anthropological concepts could be useful in understanding how organisational cultures are created. The concept of organisational culture sparked the interest of many academics and practitioners, and instead of being a fad that would pass among managers, consultants and academics, a plethora of different theories, models and frameworks were developed to explain organisational culture as well as its impact on and relevance for organisations (Beyer & Trice, 1987; Hofstede et al., 1990; Dauber et al., 2012).

The field of organisational culture has been characterised by competing definitions, epistemologies and research paradigms, and the literature reveals that this continues to be a challenge (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004; Fink & Mayrhofer, 2009).

One of the key difficulties in this field of research has been defining organisational culture, especially since the concept lends itself to a broad variation of disciplines and research orientations such as anthropology, sociology, management studies, political science and industrial psychology (Alvesson, 2013). In the literature review, a variety of the more well-known definitions of organisational culture were explored, and Martins' (1989, 2006) definition of organisational culture was ultimately deemed comprehensive and thus adopted for the purposes of this study.

The literature review also revealed that there seems to be little consensus on the characteristics of organisational culture. Each characteristic had been separately recognised in literature but integrating them into one construct was new (Hofstede et al., 1990). It was also found that the varying concepts and definitions of organisational culture give rise to different research questions and interests (Smircich, 1983; Dauber et al., 2012). This places the onus on researchers to be informed on the concepts of organisational culture and to define it appropriately, in line with their research question and interests.

The literature review in this study also encompassed an examination of the models and elements of organisational culture, including Pettigrew (1970), Hofstede et al. (1990), Schein (1990), Hatch (1993), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Martin (2004) and Martins (1989).

Martins' model is based on the work of Edgar Schein (1990), and describes organisational culture by drawing on open systems theory. The organisational systems model explains the interaction between organisational subsystems, the complex interaction that occurs at different levels between individuals and groups, and the external environment, which can be seen as the primary determinants of behaviour in the workplace (Martins & Martins, 2002). The model therefore encompasses all aspects of an organisation upon which organisational culture can have an influence, and vice versa (Martins, 2003). In addition, because Martins'

(1989) model focuses on the dimensions of organisational culture rather than typologies, is applicable to the South African context and is aligned to this research study's overall paradigm perspective, this model was chosen to form the foundation for this research study.

The literature review revealed that an extension of the conceptualisation of organisational culture seems to be whether organisational culture should be measured, assessed and analysed qualitatively, quantitatively or with mixed methods. Although each approach has benefits and limitations, a mixed methods approach seems preferable, and most recent studies have shown a preference for and involved some combination of both (Bellot, 2011), the onus is again placed on researchers to choose the method that best suits the needs of their study.

For this research study, a quantitative approach was adopted owing to the ease at which large samples could be surveyed, and because of time constraints, minimum intrusiveness, human resources and organisational policy. In concluding the literature review which highlights the complexity of the concept of organisational culture, Martins and Von der Ohe (2006) provide guidance by aptly pointing out that researchers define their own approaches to culture assessment and conceptualise organisational culture in a way that is useful for a specific environment or organisational need.

4.1.1.2 *The second aim: to conceptualise organisational sub-cultures and the formation of organisational sub-cultures from a theoretical perspective*

This aim was addressed in chapter 2 and the following conclusion can be drawn:

The relationship between the organisational whole and its constituent parts has long been raised and debated in organisational culture literature (Joyce & Slocum, 1982). Organisational cultures are composed of various interlocking, nested and sometimes conflicting sub-cultures (Martin & Siehl, 1983) and they are recognised as existing independently of organisational culture and groups within the organisation and may have their own distinct set of values, beliefs and attributes (Lok & Crawford, 1999).

Despite the existence of different sub-cultures and the subsequent potential for misunderstandings and conflict, it is the particular mix of sub-cultural differences within an organisation's boundaries that make its culture unique (Gregory, 1983; Petkoon & Roodt, 2004). The literature suggests that organisational culture as a construct applied to the whole of an organisation is useful in differentiating one organisation from another in inter-organisational studies, but it has limitations when trying to explain people's intra-organisational behaviour because of the complexity of sub-cultures present (Lok et al., 2005).

There seems to be some agreement on the sources of organisational sub-cultures with the more common sources including employees' personal characteristics, personal biographies and social histories, positional characteristics, geographical distribution, occupational categories, the influence of a specific manager, shared experiences and the set-up of the organisation (Jermier et al., 1991; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006; Crough, 2012). Although age has been identified and studied as a personal characteristic that can contribute to the formation of sub-cultures, the study of generational cohorts, which is a different concept to age, has not been examined and could not be considered a source of sub-culture formation without some evidence.

The literature review revealed that an awareness of organisational sub-cultures is relevant at a number of levels. Consultants and practitioners who truly understand an organisation's culture can assist with relevant interventions such as improving effectiveness, change management and performance (Jermier et al., 1991). Managers in the organisation can also be assisted to be culture-conscious and avoid inadvertently crushing parts of the organisation through company-wide solutions that conflict with sub-cultural needs (Hofstede, 1998). At an individual level, because commitments and possibly other work-related attitudes such as job satisfaction are impacted more by things occurring in the immediate context of organisational sub-cultures, a monolithic organisation-wide approach may not always be the most viable strategy (Lok et al., 2011).

In addition, clashes between the main culture and sub-cultures or between sub-cultures can cause problems in strategy implementation, and by understanding them and implementing different HR practices for sub-cultures, the translation of HR strategies into HR practices can be more effective (Martin & Siehl, 1983; Palthe & Kossek, 2003). Petkoon and Roodt (2004) succinctly emphasise that consistency, consensus, harmony and integration of the organisational culture may occur, but in the midst of inconsistencies, ambiguities, conflicts, disruption and dissolution of sub-cultures.

4.1.1.3 *The third aim: to conceptualise and compare cross-generational similarities and differences from a theoretical perspective*

The specific aim was also addressed in chapter 2 and the following conclusions can be drawn.

Newspaper stories, consultant press releases, magazine articles and increasingly books are exhorting that there are different generational cohorts in the workforce that differ from each other in ways that are important for leaders and managers (Kowske et al, 2010; Macky et al., 2008; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010).

With four generations represented in the workplace for the first time, the study of generational dynamics in the workplace is taking on new significance and can be seen as one of the main challenges currently facing managers (Dencker et al., 2007; Lester et al., 2012; Lundby et al., 2012). The concept of generational cohorts is complex for many reasons, including a lack of mutual exclusivity between generations, but it provides a means of categorising people, even if only provisionally (Arsenault, 2004; Foster, 2013).

Although also highly debated, the three generations classified by Reynolds et al. (2008), used in this study are Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1981) and Generation Y (those born between 1982 and 2000). Each generation is said to have social, economic, political and other contextual factors that shaped its values and beliefs about work (Real et al., 2010).

The literature review revealed that research on the similarities and differences between the generations, be it qualitative or quantitative, is contradictory and generally inconclusive (Ng et al., 2012). The potentially negative impact that misperceptions between generations can have in terms of conflict, lack of co-operation and poor performance in the workplace, at individual and team level, as well as at an overall organisational talent management level, should be a concern that is appropriately addressed by leadership (Dencker et al., 2007; Meriac et al., 2010). It is therefore useful to identify quantifiable differences and to separate actual differences from perceived, possibly inaccurate perceptions perpetuated in the media (Lester et al., 2012; Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Meriac et al., 2010).

The three specific aims of the literature review were realised and the relevance of examining organisational cultures, sub-cultures, and generational differences and similarities lies in the importance of the fit between an individual's psychological climate and the prevailing organisational culture because this represents the extent to which the individual's perceptions differ from, or are consistent with, the perceptions of the organisation held by other members. These similarities or differences can influence the formation of sub-cultures (Joyce & Slocum, 1984).

Furthermore, dealing with a diverse workforce, in terms of attraction, management and retention, within the context of an ever-changing global, dynamic and competitive world of work, is among the many challenges facing managers today and such diversity is not limited to gender, religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds but also relates to the various generational values found in the workplace (Gibson et al., 2009; Smith & Lewis, 2011).

The managers of today's workforce are encouraged to bring all multi-generational employees together in ways that provide fair and equitable opportunities for each individual and group to contribute their best and to achieve their personal goals in alignment with organisational goals, and accomplishing these tasks mandates generationally savvy strategies (Kupperschmidt, 2000).

4.1.2. Conclusions regarding the empirical study

The empirical study was conducted to determine firstly if there is a significant difference between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of organisational culture, and if so, secondly, to determine if generational sub-cultures are formed within the organisation as a result of these different perceptions.

Based on the findings of this study, hypothesis H1 is accepted (there are significant differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employee's perceptions of organisational culture). Hypothesis H2 (generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' different perceptions of organisational culture) is partially accepted.

4.1.2.1.   The first aim: to determine if there are any significant differences in Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y employees' perceptions of the organisational culture, within a large ICT organisation

Conclusion 1

Contrary to recent empirical studies that show mixed results (Parry & Urwin, 2011) or no significant differences between the generations (Real et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010), and similar to two South African studies on employee satisfaction and knowledge retention (Martins & Martins, 2012), the results of this study indicate that there were statistically significant differences between the three generational cohorts with regard to five of the seven dimensions of organisational culture measured. These dimensions comprise leadership, strategy and change management, employee needs, means to achieve objectives and management processes. Furthermore, the items of these dimensions were examined and statistically significant differences were found between 63% of the items.

There were no statistically significant differences between the three generational cohorts' perceptions of two of the seven dimensions of organisational culture measured. These comprise goals and objectives, and external and internal environment.

It can therefore be concluded that the generational cohorts have different perceptions of organisational culture within the ICT organisation surveyed, except on the dimensions of goals and objectives and external and internal environment.

Conclusion 2

Although Generation Y employees perceive all seven dimensions of organisational culture positively, Generation X and Baby Boomer employees have mixed perceptions of the organisational culture. Four of the seven dimensions, namely leadership, management processes, goals and objectives and external and internal environment, were perceived positively by the respondents and could be considered strengths for the organisation.

Generation X and Baby Boomer employees perceive the dimensions of strategy and change management, employee needs, and means to achieve objectives more negatively than the aforementioned dimensions, suggesting areas of development for the organisation when considering these two generational cohorts.

4.1.2.2.   The second aim: to determine if there is evidence that generational sub-cultures have formed within the organisation based on the generational cohorts' perceptions of organisational culture

The specific conclusions drawn in terms of this research aim are as follows:

Conclusion 1

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that generational sub-cultures were created within the organisation based on differing perceptions of leadership, strategy and change management, employee needs, means to achieve objectives, and management processes. In terms of these dimensions the second hypothesis can be accepted.

Previous research has grouped age as one of many possible biographical categories with which to study sub-cultures (Jermier et al., 1991; Martins & Von der Ohe, 2006; Crough, 2012). The results of this research study confirm that generational cohorts,

a more complex concept and one different to age, can indeed be considered a source of sub-culture formation within the organisation.

Conclusion 2

Contrary to expectations, generational sub-cultures are not formed within the organisation based on differing perceptions of goals and objectives, and external and internal environment.

4.1.3. Conclusions regarding the central hypothesis

Based on the results of this research study, the central hypothesis is accepted. The central hypothesis stated that generational cohorts hold different perceptions of organisational culture and this leads to the creation of generational sub-cultures. Quantitative evidence proved there were statistically significant differences between most of the three generational cohorts' perceptions of organisational culture and that generational sub-cultures were subsequently formed.

4.1.3.1.   Conclusions regarding the contribution of this study to the field of industrial and organisational psychology

The results of both the literature review and this empirical study have contributed towards enhancing knowledge in the field of industrial and organisational psychology in the manner described below.

The concept of organisational culture has been debated for many years, and there continues to be little agreement on issues such as definition, characteristics, models, measurement and analysis. Many of the discussions by theorists and practitioners on this topic are somewhat dated and this study contributes fresh research and confirms the relevance of the concept of organisational culture in the ever-changing 21st-century world of work.

This study was also conducted in a South African organisation. Against the backdrop of transformation, additional factors necessitate that South African organisations gain sound insight into their own cultures (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004) and therefore the need

to conduct research in this unique setting is still relevant and imperative for the field of industrial and organisational psychology in South Africa.

This study confirms the addition of generational cohorts as a source of sub-culture formation. Previous research has not focused on this as a stand-alone source, and when biographical data was considered, age, which is a separate concept to generational cohorts, was studied as only one of many other factors.

This study also provides empirical support for organisations to consider implementing tailored talent attraction, management and retention strategies based on an awareness of the relevance of sub-cultures in general and generational sub-cultures in particular.

There is much debate on the real and perceived differences between generations and much of the previous research that is based on American organisations, is anecdotal, contradictory and inconclusive. This research adds to a growing body of quantitative studies and provides a means to access the opinions and perspectives of each generation separately. This reduces the risk of employees reporting on their perceptions of other generations, which could by nature be flawed and based on misperceptions. In addition, the South African context in which this study was conducted provides an alternative perspective to the American view on generational cohorts.

Although this study successfully addressed the intended aims, many new research questions have arisen on basis of the literature review and the results of the empirical study. This in turn creates momentum for the field of industrial and organisational psychology, of which continuous, original research is a key characteristic.

4.2. Limitations of the study

4.2.1. Limitations of the literature review

Few studies, and South African studies in particular, link organisational culture, sub-cultures and generational cohorts, although the concepts have been studied

separately and in some depth. The unique contribution/value add of this research study is therefore evident, although the paucity of literature on generational sub-cultures with which to compare the results of this study is considered a limitation.

The literature review relied heavily on the original writings of those who were in the forefront of organisational culture research. More recent research on this concept would have added much value and endorsed the continued relevance of this concept in the workplace today.

4.2.2. Limitations of the empirical study

A number of limitations to this empirical study should be taken into account.

The study was conducted in one organisation in the ICT industry and the culture questionnaire was adapted for use in this context. Hence general applicability to other organisations and contexts could be limited.

This study was conducted using quantitative methods without a supportive qualitative phase such as conducting focus groups to verify the data. Employees' written answers to questions may not necessarily reveal their basic assumptions, which are often non-debatable and unconscious (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004). A mixed methods approach may therefore have proven more robust (Bellot, 2011).

Despite English being the business language of the ICT sector company, the interpretation of the items of the questionnaire may have differed between respondents due to English not being their first language or generational cohorts interpreting the items differently (Meriac et al., 2010). The possibility of employees responding in a socially desirable or undesirable manner could also be considered a limitation.

The concept of generations is complex and blurring between generations is to be expected – for example, people born at the start and end of a generation may share some similarities (Murphy, 2011). Generational cohorts may also not fully capture life and work experiences which is why some younger Baby Boomers could identify more closely with the Generation X or Generation Y perspective and some

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Generation Y employees may align their values more closely with the Baby Boomer generation (Favero & Heath, 2012). The use of generational cohorts classified according to birth year may therefore be a limitation to the study. Similarly, differences between the three generations may also be attributed to age-related changes or career stage and this too could be a possible limitation of the study (Meriac et al., 2010).

Owing to the complexity of the concept of generational cohorts, the cross-sectional design of this study was a limitation (Arsenault, 2004). A longitudinal study would make it possible to determine whether differences between generations are the result of age, career stage, life stage or genuine generational differences (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Meriac et al., 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011).

4.3. Recommendations

A summary of the core conclusions and recommended interventions to enhance talent attraction, management and retention strategies is provided in figure 4.1 below and thereafter discussed in further detail.
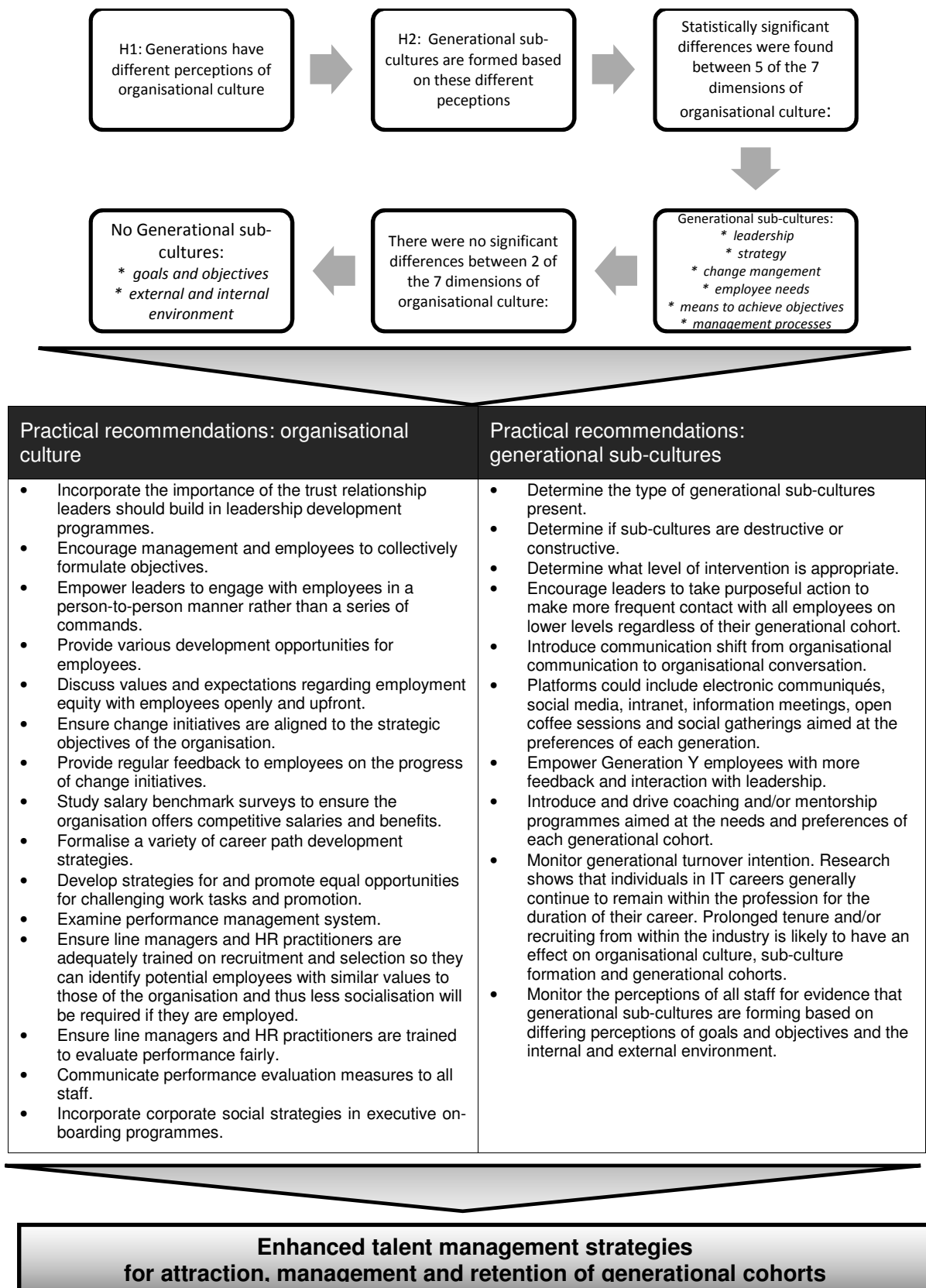
| H1: Generations have different perceptions of organisational culture | → | H2: Generational sub-cultures are formed based on these different peceptions | → | Statistically significant differences were found between 5 of the 7 dimensions of organisational culture: |

| No Generational sub-cultures:
* goals and objectives
* external and internal environment | ← | There were no significant differences between 2 of the 7 dimensions of organisational culture: | ← | Generational sub-cultures:
* leadership
* strategy
* change mangement
* employee needs
* means to achieve objectives
* management processes |

Practical recommendations: organisational culture	Practical recommendations: generational sub-cultures
• Incorporate the importance of the trust relationship leaders should build in leadership development programmes. • Encourage management and employees to collectively formulate objectives. • Empower leaders to engage with employees in a person-to-person manner rather than a series of commands. • Provide various development opportunities for employees. • Discuss values and expectations regarding employment equity with employees openly and upfront. • Ensure change initiatives are aligned to the strategic objectives of the organisation. • Provide regular feedback to employees on the progress of change initiatives. • Study salary benchmark surveys to ensure the organisation offers competitive salaries and benefits. • Formalise a variety of career path development strategies. • Develop strategies for and promote equal opportunities for challenging work tasks and promotion. • Examine performance management system. • Ensure line managers and HR practitioners are adequately trained on recruitment and selection so they can identify potential employees with similar values to those of the organisation and thus less socialisation will be required if they are employed. • Ensure line managers and HR practitioners are trained to evaluate performance fairly. • Communicate performance evaluation measures to all staff. • Incorporate corporate social strategies in executive on-boarding programmes.	• Determine the type of generational sub-cultures present. • Determine if sub-cultures are destructive or constructive. • Determine what level of intervention is appropriate. • Encourage leaders to take purposeful action to make more frequent contact with all employees on lower levels regardless of their generational cohort. • Introduce communication shift from organisational communication to organisational conversation. • Platforms could include electronic communiqués, social media, intranet, information meetings, open coffee sessions and social gatherings aimed at the preferences of each generation. • Empower Generation Y employees with more feedback and interaction with leadership. • Introduce and drive coaching and/or mentorship programmes aimed at the needs and preferences of each generational cohort. • Monitor generational turnover intention. Research shows that individuals in IT careers generally continue to remain within the profession for the duration of their career. Prolonged tenure and/or recruiting from within the industry is likely to have an effect on organisational culture, sub-culture formation and generational cohorts. • Monitor the perceptions of all staff for evidence that generational sub-cultures are forming based on differing perceptions of goals and objectives and the internal and external environment.

**Enhanced talent management strategies
for attraction, management and retention of generational cohorts**

Figure 4.1: Summary of core conclusions and recommended interventions to enhance talent attraction, management and retention strategies

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4.3.1. Recommendations for the organisation regarding organisational culture

This study achieved its aims and showed that generational cohorts do have different perceptions of some dimensions of organisational culture and that generational sub-cultures are formed as a result. There is value in this research for the field of industrial and organisational psychology, although practical recommendations can also be made for the organisation in which this study was conducted.

Before addressing generational sub-culture recommendations, one should note that this study also provided insight into the organisational culture as a whole and clear areas of strength and development were evident.

The dimensions of culture that were perceived positively include leadership, management processes, goals and objectives, and external and internal environment. For the organisation to continue to build on its strengths, the following recommendations are made:

The results of this study indicate employees were satisfied with leadership's ability to set an example, manage people and manage work. Research has shown that leadership creates trust, and this in turn influences relationships and job satisfaction (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2002). The impact that leaders have in attracting and retaining talent should therefore continue to be emphasised in the organisation and incorporated into leadership development programmes to ensure continued strength.

Managers could continue to review and upgrade rules and processes and continue to encourage employees to spend time on implementation. It may, however, be beneficial to ensure employees and management collectively formulate objectives as encouraging the participation of all involved would further strengthen this dimension of organisational culture.

The results of this study show that the employees believed their own personal objectives could be satisfied through the achievement of organisational goals. Research shows that the provision of developmental opportunities increases organisational commitment (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). By developing employees and providing them with additional skills and tools to achieve their own and the

organisation's goals, this dimension of organisational culture will be strengthened and is likely to result in higher employee commitment and retention of critical skills.

The organisation should continue to clearly communicate legislative requirements as well as demonstrate adherence to its own diversity strategy. In addition, organisational policies and practices should continue to prioritise the attraction, management and retention of diverse talent. Regarding this area of talent management, research shows that discussing values and expectations with employees may help to avoid disappointment and conflict, to also help manage expectations from the outset and to help reduce employee turnover and recruitment costs for the company (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). In addition, because research shows that executive on-boarding programmes are key determinants of initial levels and rates of adoption of corporate social responsibility/community involvement over time (Mazutis, 2013), there is value in continuing to strengthen this dimension of organisational culture.

The dimensions of strategy and change management, employee needs and means to achieve objectives were negatively perceived by employees. The organisation could begin to address these areas by means of the actions set out below.

The results suggest that even though employees are kept informed about the strategy of the organisation, they feel change in the organisation is not a well-planned process. Literature shows that many organisational change and development programmes fail for this reason, and these failed initiatives can have psychological consequences for employees that could lead to counterproductive behaviour (Parumasur, 2012). It is thus essential for the organisation to ensure a change initiative is not only aligned to the strategic direction of the organisation, but is also well planned and that champions at all levels in the organisation are selected to drive and support the change process. Employees should receive regular feedback on the progress of the initiative because this is likely to encourage their participation, and support retention during difficult change processes.

The results of this study show that employees were not convinced that equal opportunities for all had become a reality in the organisation. Although the current

economic downturn could be a challenge for the organisation, it could examine salary benchmark surveys to ensure that it offers competitive salaries and benefits. The organisation could also formalise a variety of career path development strategies and promote equal opportunity for challenging work tasks and promotion. This is likely to enhance the organisation's reputation in South Africa as an employer of choice, strengthen this dimension of organisational culture and give it a competitive edge in the attraction, management and retention of talent.

The results of this study show that employees generally felt that work is not distributed equally among staff and that performance is not evaluated objectively. The organisation could examine its performance management system, ensure line managers and HR practitioners are adequately trained on how to evaluate performance fairly and that performance evaluation measures are communicated to and understood by all employees.

One should note upfront that while the recommendations formulated below address dimensions of organisational culture from a generational sub-culture perspective, a formal change management process should be employed and the organisation's decision makers should consider the wider implications of these interventions before embarking on any major changes. It is necessary to be sure that separate strategies developed to attract, manage and retain generational sub-cultures do not inadvertently heighten competition and animosity among the cohorts or reinforce negative perceptions. Martins and Martins (2012) suggest that organisations need to take note of the similarities between the generations and maintain the strategies for focusing on these. However, they also need to note of the different expectations and needs of younger generations. This could be a subject of ongoing further research for the organisation.

4.3.2. Recommendations for the organisation regarding generational sub-cultures

This study identified the fact that generational sub-cultures have been formed on the basis of differing perceptions of certain dimensions of organisational culture. Recommendations for the organisation in this regard are set out below.

The literature indicates the existence of three types of sub-cultures, and it would likely be beneficial for the organisation to identify if the generational sub-cultures are destructive or beneficial so they can determine the appropriate level of intervention and adjust and develop their strategy accordingly or maintain the status quo. For example, if the generational sub-cultures are enhancing and the core values of the dominant culture are more fervent in this cohort than in the rest of the organisation, or if they are orthogonal, whereby the generational cohort simultaneously accepts the core values of the dominant culture and a separate, un-conflicting set of values particular to themselves, these generational sub-cultures could be appointed as ambassadors or change agents in the organisation. If the generational sub-cultures display a counterculture, however, whereby some of their core values present a direct challenge to the core values of a dominant culture, a different type of intervention would be required to ensure that the sub-cultures' values are realigned with those of the dominant organisational culture (Martin & Siehl, 1983).

Leadership in the organisation should take purposeful action to make more frequent contact with all employees at lower levels, regardless of which generational cohort they belong to. While it is true that Generation Y employees equate empowerment with more feedback from, and interaction with, leadership, rather than less oversight, and the relationship with their immediate manager has been shown to be key to the retention of Generation Y employees (Thompson & Gregory, 2012), the results indicate that the other two generational cohorts may also value more frequent contact with their managers.

New business trends point towards a shift from corporate communication to organisational conversation (Groysberg & Slind, 2012), and this organisation could empower its leaders to find a way to engage with employees in a way that resembles an ordinary person-to-person conversation more than a series of commands from high up. Leaders' role in the management and retention of talent could therefore become more practical and hands on.

The generational cohorts held significantly different perceptions of employee needs, the means to achieve objectives and the management processes dimensions of

organisational culture. Again, the organisation could develop strategies that are tailored for each generation. Coaching and/or mentorship is an intervention that could address a number of related issues such as skills development, career progression, self-motivation, making a contribution in identifying outputs, the company's care for employees, managing diversity, managing conflict and recognition and reward. The needs of each generational cohort could be confirmed and addressed separately and well developed, precise coaching and/or mentorship programmes could initiate relevant changes in behaviour, attitude and performance more effectively than a training programme (Atkinson, 2012). In addition, because this organisation by nature comprises mostly professional and technically skilled employees, they would probably feel more engaged and motivated if there were opportunities for them to develop their professionalism.

Generational sub-cultures were not formed in the organisation on the basis of differing perceptions of organisational goals and objectives and external and internal environment. Since these two dimensions were also viewed positively by all three generational cohorts, it is not recommended that separate interventions for each cohort are implemented. It would probably be beneficial for the organisation to monitor their actions and the perceptions of this dimension of organisational culture and make adjustments at a later date if necessary.

4.4. Future research

While it is recognised that organisational culture as a construct applied to the whole of an organisation is useful in differentiating one organisation from another in inter-organisational studies, it has limitations when trying to explain employees' intra-organisational behaviour because of the complexity of sub-cultures present (Lok et al., 2005). As the nature of the 21st-century world of work evolves and attracting, managing and retaining talent becomes more of a challenge, it will be important to continually develop or refine instruments and techniques with discriminant validity (Petkoon & Roodt, 2004) that can assist with monitoring the relevance of the constructs of organisational culture and organisational sub-cultures.

Although there are some empirical studies on generational cohorts, much of the literature is anecdotal. In addition, there is mixed support regarding the existence of real rather than perceived generational differences and a more robust body of empirical research is required to substantiate or refute these popular perceptions and bring clarity where studies have been inconclusive. In particular, empirical research focused on the work behaviours, attitudes and expectations of generational cohorts is necessary and likely to become somewhat easier as more Generation Y employees come of age and begin to enter and function in the workplace.

The proposed contribution of this study was to enhance organisational talent management strategies. Deal et al. (2010), however, caution against designing workplace strategies based on generational differences until such strategies can be proven to enhance employee relations. This could therefore be identified as an area requiring additional research.

Following this, further studies could examine the relationship between differing human resources practices and the formation of other organisational sub-cultures (Palthe & Kossek, 2002) that are not necessarily generational in nature. For example, the influence of the South African transformation agenda on organisational sub-cultures could also be examined in more depth.

4.5. Integration of the study (practical use, knowledge/value add)

This study sought to investigate generational sub-cultures within an ICT organisation, to determine if generational cohorts hold different perceptions of organisational culture and if so, whether these different perceptions lead to the formation of generational sub-cultures.

The study therefore contributes to the body of knowledge on organisational culture and the evident formation of sub-cultures at a generational level. As attraction, management and retention of all employees and those from different generations in particular, becomes more challenging in the 21st century world of work, the results of this research can be used as a benchmark in developing and enhancing unique talent management strategies aimed specifically at generational sub-cultures.

4.6.   Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted the conclusions that can be drawn from both the literature review and the empirical study conducted. The complexities surrounding the concepts of organisational culture and organisational sub-cultures were summarised as were the challenges regarding generational cohort theory and generational similarities and differences. Conclusions relating to the contribution of this study to the field of industrial and organisational psychology were then drawn. The limitations of this research study were acknowledged in terms of both the literature review and the empirical study and recommendations for the organisation as well as for further research were subsequently discussed. Since the aims of this study were achieved, this chapter concluded with a brief integration of the study in order to highlight the practical use and value add. This study is herewith concluded.

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