

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND



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# Millennials' Perceptions of Employer Attractiveness in the South African Context

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Miri Rose Williamson

Student number: 600199

Supervisor: Nicky Israel

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**Declaration**

I, Miri Rose Williamson, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university  
\_\_\_\_\_, 21 September 2018.

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## **Acknowledgments**

### **To my supervisor, Nicky Israel**

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise so willingly with me. Your passion for research and your understanding and belief in every person, in this case me, enabled me to complete this journey. Your academic excellence and ability in assisting me with getting my thoughts into clear and understandable ideas was invaluable. You have been more than a supervisor to me, you have been my mentor and I cannot thank you enough.

### **To my mommy**

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### **To my participants**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research and for sharing your thoughts and views on this topic.

*To my Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of my faith*

## **Abstract**

The generational phenomenon in the workplace remains a prominent topic in research, the popular press, and within organisations. There has been considerable focus on the newest generation in the workplace, known as Millennials, and how to attract, motivate, and retain this cohort, despite a lack of empirical evidence for the existence of the phenomenon. Research on Millennials is also mostly conducted in Western countries and local research often uses formative events in the United States (US) to define generational groups. Consequently, US-centric definitions and work-related stereotypes are often imposed and applied to South African Millennials. The aim of this study was to explore Millennials' perceptions of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and the psychological contract expectations of organisations in the South African context. The perspectives of two sample groups, a sample of recent employees classified as 'Millennials' and a sample of human resource practitioners, were explored in order to gain a more comprehensive, 'above-and-below' understanding of these perceptions. The study was qualitative in nature and utilised Smith's (1996) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants. Five recently employed individuals who could be classified as 'Millennials' and four human resource practitioners working in the financial and related industries were interviewed. Individual semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data and this was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The major findings included that generations in South Africa are defined by their proximity to the collapse of Apartheid and the consequently free flow of technology; and these events had a significant impact on the conceptualisation of the 'Millennial' generation in South Africa. Discrepancies were found between perceptions of the factors that attract and retain Millennials between the two sample groups. In addition, Millennial employees indicated that they expected organisations to meet their psychological contract expectations and their evaluations of the organisation's attractiveness seemed to be based quite heavily on this. These findings provide a basis for future research and suggest various possible practical and theoretical implications.

**Keywords:** Millennials, born frees, employer attractiveness, employer branding, psychological contract, perceptions, South Africa.

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## **Chapter One: Theoretical Background**

### **Introduction**

Modern day organisations strive to achieve and maintain dominance in the marketplace by employing highly skilled and talented individuals who form the “...foundation of competitive advantage in the modern economy” (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005, p.152). Organisations recognise that competitive advantage can be achieved by attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining talented individuals and consequently the concept of internal marketing has gained popularity among academics and practitioners (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Organisations adopt various marketing strategies including employer branding for the purpose of creating a positive image of the organisation in the minds of prospective and current employees (Berthon et al., 2005; Biswas & Suar, 2016). This positive image, which is known as employer attractiveness, is achieved through the effective communication of positive and unique aspects of the organisation to both potential and current employees as well as the implementation of these aspects in the workplace environment (Reis & Braga, 2016). Most of the research on employer branding and employer attractiveness has aimed to find commonalities and differences among individuals in their values, perceptions, and motivations in an attempt to assist organisations to attract and retain talented individuals (Bakanauskienė, Bendaravičienė, & Bučinskaitė, 2016). Research in the area has explored perceptions of employer attractiveness among individuals based on various demographic characteristics, including age (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012), gender (e.g. Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012), geographical context (e.g. Alniaçık, Alniaçık, Erat, & Akçin, 2014), and generational group/ cohort (e.g. Reis & Braga, 2016).

The Millennial generation has been entering into the labour market for over a decade and a half and they are considered to differ in their expectations and work values from previous workplace generations (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Ng & Burke, 2006). Organisations may therefore need to adopt different approaches in order to recruit, retain, and motivate employees from different generational cohorts due to possible generational differences in values, preferences, expectations, and attitudes (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014). The identification of generational work-related expectations could therefore be an important starting point for employer branding initiatives as this could assist an organisation to present as attractive a brand as possible for different groups of potential and current employees (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016). Exploring work-related values and preferences could also play an important role in enhancing understanding of the psychological contract, which consists of

reciprocal expectations and obligations formed between the organisation and current and prospective employees (Berthon et al., 2005; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The constructs of employer branding, employer attractiveness, and the psychological contract thus provide useful frameworks in which to explore perceptions of the employment relationship between the Millennial generation and the organisation (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017).

The overarching aim of the study was to explore Millennials' perceptions of employer branding and attractiveness in conjunction with this cohort's expectations of organisations in the South African context. In pursuance of this, a sample of recently employed individuals classified as belonging to the Millennial generation were utilised as they provided insight into their lived experiences as Millennials in the workplace. In addition, a sample of human resource practitioners from various generational groups were utilised as they manage the employment relationship and as such provided insight into their experiences on the phenomenon of Millennials in the workplace (Gibson & Hanes, 2003). The use of two sample groups provided a more comprehensive understanding of the main constructs as it allowed for both self and other perceptions of Millennials in the workplace to be explored (Embree, 2003). A generational perspective was utilised in the study to explore the main constructs however, similarly to Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons (2010), the aim was not to contrast generational perceptions but rather to contribute to multiple understandings of Millennials' perceptions and expectations in addition to how these manifest in the South African workplace. Hence a phenomenological approach was utilised in order to qualitatively explore and examine individual experiences in the workplace and the meanings of these experiences (Gill, 2014).

The value of this study is that despite research in the area of employer branding receiving substantial attention in recent years, there exists a gap in exploring both employer attractiveness factors and expectations of employers (the psychological contract) for samples of recently hired employees (Reis & Braga, 2016). Research in these areas has identified that perceptions of work preferences, values, and expectations differ based on contextual, generational, and other demographic characteristics, however additional theoretical and empirical work is needed (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Berthon et al., 2005; Ng et al., 2010). Furthermore, much of the research conducted to date has been international and research in South Africa is quite limited.

The significance of this research in the South African context is partly due to the diverse labour characteristics of the South African economy (Martins & Martins, 2014). The challenges facing South African organisations include: the struggle for talent, the de-racialisation of industries, skills shortages, employee mobility, and Diasporas ('brain drain') (Berthon et al, 2005; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Martins & Martins, 2014). In addition, the 'born frees' (South Africans born during or after the abolishment of the Apartheid system) provide a unique group of Millennials in which to explore expectations of employers and perceptions of employer attractiveness. The Millennial generation, specifically 'born frees', have recently entered into the South Africa labour market, and the arrival of any new generation has consequences for human resource management practices (Reis & Braga, 2016). In order for organisations to sustain their competitive advantage, they need to be aware of these expectations and preferences in order to attract, develop, and motivate this cohort, in addition to integrating this knowledge into both their employer branding strategies and practices within the organisation (Berthon, et al., 2005). Hence this study aimed to contribute to the existing literature in the respective areas focussed on in the study and to provide a basis for highlighting potential practical implications for South African organisations.

## **Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review that follows is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework in which this study was positioned. In pursuance of this, the literature review will commence with defining the Millennial generation and specifically 'born frees' in South Africa, in addition to presenting the controversy around using a generational perspective. A discussion on internal marketing will follow, which will focus on employer branding and attractiveness. In addition, employee expectations and the psychological contract framework will be reviewed. The literature review will conclude with a discussion on South African research in the relevant areas and the importance of the main constructs in exploring Millennials' perceptions in South Africa will be highlighted.

### ***Defining generational groups***

There is controversy in the literature surrounding the "...legitimacy of generations as a workplace phenomenon" (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017, p.209) as a result of a claims made about there being a lack of empirical evidence. In order to discuss this controversy, the literature review will begin by defining the Millennial generation and then the unique South African subset of Millennials, known as 'born frees'. This will be followed by a discussion

on the merits and pitfalls around taking on a generational perspective. An argument will be made for not relying on age cohorts alone when operationalising the Millennial generation, in addition to the use of a qualitative research design to provide a more holistic view of generational perceptions in the workplace.

The emergence of a new generation is often regarded as a result of significant historical or social events that are experienced by a group of similarly aged individuals, which occur early into their socialisation process, and which influence their perceptions and ways of thinking (Becton et al., 2014; Mannheim, 1952; Reis & Braga, 2016). Although controversial, a workplace generation is identified as having common experiences, attitudes, and preferences as a result of them having experienced common significant events which had an impact on their lives (Martins & Martins, 2014). It is assumed that individuals in each generation develop common value systems thus resulting in shared perceptions of phenomena which distinguish one generation from others born at different time periods (Parry & Urwin, 2011; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). There is a lack of agreement among researchers when labelling and establishing the time span of each work generation (Becton et al., 2014). Millennials are typically individuals beginning with “birth years between 1980 and 1983” (Becton et al., 2014, p.177), but the end points are yet to be agreed upon; other labels for this cohort include Generation Y, Nexters, and Generation Me (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Twenge et al., 2010). Thus in order to position this study in line with popular literature, the label Millennials was used to define this age cohort (Ng et al., 2010). The traits and characteristics that are used to stereotype the Millennial generation include being entitled and tech savvy; having high job mobility; and valuing leisure time, lifelong learning, fast promotions, meaningful jobs, team work, and diversity (Becton et al., 2014; Cadiz, Truxillo, & Fraccaroli, 2015; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Jonck, Van der Walt, & Sobayeni, 2017; Reis & Braga, 2016; Twenge et al., 2010).

The time span of each generation is usually based on significant events in the United States (US) and Europe and, as such, the Millennial generation is often defined by the following events: the fall of the Berlin wall, the war on terrorism, globalisation, increased demographic diversity, and rapid advancements in technology (Cadiz et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2010). An assumption is made that US-centric events have the same impact and hold the same importance in other countries (Cadiz et al., 2015). Due to the fact that these US-centric events did not have the same formative impact on the lives of all South Africans born in this time period, it was important to define the Millennial generation in this study by considering

events pertinent to this context that may have resulted in the emergence of a new generation (Becton et al., 2014).

In South Africa, the collapse of Apartheid in 1994 changed the existing social order of the country and resulted in a new generation (Becton et al., 2014; Cadiz et al., 2015). Hence the Millennial generation in South Africa, based on year of birth, consists of both an older and younger group of individuals who were impacted by the collapse of Apartheid during their socialisation process (Martins & Martins, 2012). The older group, despite being born during Apartheid, were not old enough to participate in it; whilst the younger group of individuals, the ‘born frees’, were born in post-Apartheid South Africa (Martins & Martins, 2014).

According to John, Kaunda, and Madlala (2015), the term ‘born free’ means “free from Apartheid” (p.110). There is no clear starting date for this cohort as some literature argues that they should be recognised from when South Africa had its first democratic elections in 1994 (e.g. Duncan, Bowman, Stevens, & Mdikana, 2007; Malila, 2013); while others argue that it should be dated from the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 (e.g. Cronje & Kane-Berman, 2015; Richter, Norris, Pettifor, Yach, & Cameron, 2007).

It is important to highlight that despite South Africa having a ‘unique’ generational group, known as the ‘born frees’, this is essentially a subset of the Millennial generation as this younger group falls into the time period defined as the Millennial generation (Martins & Martins, 2014). In addition, both younger and older Millennials’ everyday lives are considered to be distinctly different from those of their parents and previous generations, due to the collapse of Apartheid (Martins & Martins, 2012). Common experiences of Millennials in South Africa include persistent unemployment, inequality, violent crime, and increased prevalence of HIV (Mattes, 2011). Hence, regardless of increased educational levels of South African Millennials in comparison to other generations, Millennials will be affected by the challenges of entering into the modern South African labour market with limited employment opportunities resulting in increased youth and graduate unemployment (Martins & Martins, 2014; Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015).

Jonck and colleagues (2017) stated, in a study conducted on work values among four generation groups in South Africa, that due to South African being socially divided as a result of Apartheid, not all social groups may have been influenced equally or similarly by historical and social events. “South African Millennials... [may therefore be] ...a more diverse group than their global counterparts” (Martins & Martins, 2014, p.131). Martins and

Martins (2014) also note that initially Black (i.e. African, Coloured, and Indian) and White South African Millennials lacked common experiences, however, due to globalisation in society and increased racial integration, they propose that shared viewpoints and values have emerged among this cohort. Thus there is an argument to be made that both Black and White Millennials have more in common as a generational-based cohort than with other generational groups, irrespective of race (Martins & Martins 2012). Hence generational studies in the South African context are valuable because they allow researchers to “...establish whether citizens of this country have made progress to eradicate the effects of Apartheid in terms of individuals’ mindsets and work values” (Jonck et al., 2017, p.4). Despite this, research in South Africa on Millennials’ perceptions of the workplace remains limited. This highlights the significance of this study as it is vital to explore perceptions of generational cohorts in different geographic contexts, especially developing countries like South Africa (Cadiz et al., 2015; Jonck et al., 2017).

Since the mid-2000s, research on generational-based differences in the workplace has grown substantially however support for this generational phenomenon still remains mixed (Cadiz et al., 2015; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Twenge et al., 2010). It has been argued that there is a lack of empirical evidence as research in the field relies mostly on cross-temporal meta-analyses which lack samples that are nationally representative (Cadiz et al., 2015; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012). Lyons, Urick, Kuron, and Schweitzer (2015), however, argue that this claim lacks support and instead suggest that there is a lack of comparability among generational research rather than a lack of empirical research itself (Lyons et al., 2015). Regardless of the precise reason, this still creates a problem in that direct and consistent empirical evidence in support of generational differences remains lacking.

Another challenge of generational research is that differences in individuals’ perceptions, values, and behaviours may not be based on generational effects alone but may rather be a function of age and the life-course stage of individuals; this includes aspects such as work and family demands on individuals that shift over time (Rudolph & Zacher, 2017). However, according to Mannheim (1952), the generational phenomenon is useful over and above life-course stage and historical period. Generational theory is more than acknowledging that a person acts in a certain way because of their age, their life-course stage, or the fact that they were born in a certain historical time period but rather it encompasses all three aspects (Lyons et al., 2015). Thus the generational phenomenon cannot be disentangled from the effects of age, life-course stage, and historical period however these factors can be considered

as advantageous to the understanding of the generational phenomena rather than as a shortfall of generational research (Lyons et al., 2015). These factors inform the definition of a generation and contribute to shaping a unique identity for each age group born in a particular time. Hence despite the challenges identified above, generational research has the potential “to contribute valuable information about the changing nature of work and careers within the broader historical context” (Lyons et al., 2015, p.347).

### ***Generational identity***

Cadiz and colleagues (2015) emphasise the importance of using a social lens in generational research in order to shift the focus from developing generational-based stereotypes in the workplace. Lyons and Schweitzer (2017) explored the importance of generational identity, an individual’s knowledge that “...[they] belong to a generational group...[and the] emotional and value significance...of this group membership” (Joshi, Dencker, Franz, & Martocchio, 2010, p.393), in the workplace. They argued that the cause of contradictory results in the field may be due to the objective birth-year-based definitions being used to determine generations (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). By identifying generations as a source of identity which age-similar individuals may or may not subscribe to, Lyons and Schweitzer (2017) argue that an assumption of “homogeneity within age cohorts” (p.209) must be discarded. Thus the authors concluded their qualitative research by emphasising generational identity as an important concept to consider in generational research.

According to Joshi and colleagues (2010), there are three facets of generational identity. The first, age-based identity, which has been discussed above, is based on shared experiences during formative years (Becton et al, 2014; Joshi et al., 2010; Mannheim, 1952). The second, termed cohort-based generational identity, can be formed among a group of individuals that experience the same event, such as organisational entry, during a similar time interval (Joshi et al., 2010). These individuals will experience a similar set of socialisation experiences within the organisation and have similar employment contracts; thus a generation is formed as a result of the event of organisational entry (Joshi et al., 2010; Sherman & Morley, 2015). The third, incumbency-based identity, which is determined by the organisational role that an individual occupies, may also exist in an organisational context (Joshi et al., 2010). Various conditions and contexts experienced by an individual in their immediate environment and external context may reinforce or hinder a particular facet of generational identity (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017).

As suggested by Cadiz and colleagues (2015), and in order to counter the potential pitfalls of generational research, the definition of Millennials used in this research is based on the concept of an ‘organisational generation’, which focuses on defining a generation by a cohort of employees that enter into organisations during a similar time period rather than an age-based definition. Hence Millennials in this study were defined as individuals who had entered into the South African labour market from 2000 onwards. This is due to the fact that Millennials are considered to have been born after the year 1980 and, as such, entered the modern South African labour market in the new Millennium (Pyöriä, Ojala, Saari, & Järvinen, 2017). In addition, the Millennial participants in this study were individuals who had only been a part of the modern South Africa labour market, as perceptions of this working environment were explored. This labour market is characterised as being difficult to enter due to various socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, corruption, global economic crises, the inability of the economy to sufficiently create opportunities for graduates, and insufficient demand for low-skilled resources (Martins & Martins, 2014; Mattes, 2011; Oluwajodu et al., 2015). According to Jonck and colleagues (2017), another noticeable characteristic of the modern South African workplace is the advancement of women and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) which has resulted in greater diversity. The ‘organisation generation’ that was used in the study was defined based on premise that employees in this cohort might share relatively common experiences of the modern working environment. Thus the aim of this study was to explore individual’s perceptions of the main constructs, discussed below, using a qualitative research design, whilst still considering the fact there may be significant differences between generations in their perceptions of the workplace (Reis & Braga, 2016).

### ***Employer branding***

In the modern labour market, there has been a change in employment patterns as a result of global competition and rapid technological advancements (Berthon et al., 2005; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). Organisations have recognised the importance of having human capital with ‘superior’ knowledge and skills in their organisation, as these individuals are a vital source in maintaining a competitive advantage in the modern economy (Almıaçık & Almıaçık, 2012; Berthon et al., 2005). Employer branding is consistent with Barney’s (1991) resource-based theory, which highlights that sustained competitive advantage can be achieved by investing in talented individuals, as their skills and knowledge cannot be imitated by other organisations (Biswas & Suar, 2016). Therefore employer branding is considered to be a critical tool in the

acquisition, development, and retention of “distinctive human capital” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p.503). The importance of the internal marketing concept is that it identifies that employees are the first market of organisations, the ‘internal customer’, and as such organisations need to focus on both attracting potential employees and developing and motivating current employees (Berthon et al., 2005). Thus, in order to differentiate themselves, organisations have focused on creating employment brands that are centred around “building and sustaining employment propositions that are compelling” (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002, p.11) and attractive in addition to communicating this to both potential and current employees. This is achieved by creating an employer brand that is distinctive and unique, allowing organisations to attract and retain talented individuals (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The two main constructs in this study, employer branding and employer attractiveness, form part of the internal marketing concept as both constructs are key when dealing with the constant struggle for talent (Berthon et al., 2005). Therefore a discussion will follow on employer branding and then employer attractiveness as employees’ perceptions of attractiveness are both antecedents and consequences of branding initiatives.

Employer branding has become a prominent area of research when exploring the concept of internal marketing (Alnıaçık et al., 2014). This is due to employer branding being an essential tool to deal with changes in the business environment and shifts in expectations in the employment relationship as a result of a new generation entering the workplace (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). This construct is defined as “a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees [both current and potential]... and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm” (Sullivan, 2004, para.1). The focus of employer branding research has been predominantly on external employer branding initiatives and the relationship between external employer branding and attractiveness (Oladipo, Iyamabo, & Otubanjo, 2013), specifically, the use of employer branding initiatives in attracting prospective talented employees to an organisation by making the organisation into an employer-of-choice (Alnıaçık et al., 2014; Berthon et al., 2005; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). However, due to the focus of research being solely on branding efforts to attract prospective employees, this has limited the scope of field (Oladipo et al., 2013). Moreover, it is misleading as both stakeholder groups of employees, prospective and current, are needed to maintain competitive advantage (Oladipo et al., 2013). Therefore greater exploration of the concept of employer branding is needed as the efforts of the organisation involve

differentiating the organisation and making it desirable for both current and potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding consist of three parts. Firstly, an organisation develops a 'value proposition' based on the current value an organisation provides to an employee. Secondly, external employer branding is implemented, which aims to attract talented individuals by creating a positive image of the organisation in the minds of potential employees in order to make the organisation an employer-of-choice (Ewing et al., 2002). Thirdly, internal employer branding takes place, in which the attributes 'promised' by an organisation in external employer branding are integrated in the organisation in order to ensure that talented individuals are retained and motivated to pursue organisation goals (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Organisational employees play a role in each of the three stages: in the first stage information gained from employees, such as their qualities and experiences, in addition to other aspects such as organisational culture, is used with the intention of developing a 'value proposition' that resonates with both current and prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). The second stage, external employer branding, is aimed at attracting talent and, as such, has the ability to influence a prospective employee's decision in pursuing employment in a particular organisation along with influencing their expectations of the potential employment relationship (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The final stage, in which internal employer branding takes place, often comprises of employees who have also been influenced by external employer branding, and involves employees making evaluations of attractiveness and the psychological contract based on actual experiences (Sherman & Morley, 2015). Thus the perceptions of employed Millennials regarding employer branding are vital to explore due to the fact that branding is a tool used to attract and retain new generations of employees to organisations (Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The perceptions of individuals, such as human resource practitioners working in an organisation, who are exposed to the entire process of employer branding are also "invaluable [as this allows for researchers to also capture] perceptions... based on repeated observations of the process in practice over time and [in various] contexts" (Moroko & Uncles, 2008, p.163). Employer branding offers a platform in which human resource managers can better understand employees in the employer-employee relationship (Biswas & Suar, 2016). Hence the perceptions of both employed Millennials and human resource practitioners were explored in this study.

The concept of employer attractiveness is considered an antecedent of employer brand equity, and more specifically of employer branding (Berthon et al., 2005; Ewing et al., 2002). This is as a result of organisations needing to be aware of the factors that contribute to perceptions of employer attractiveness in order to develop effective employer brands (Berthon et al., 2005). In addition, employer branding provides individuals with information and benefits that can convey and reinforce the positive aspects of an organisation which influence perceptions of attractiveness (Reis & Braga, 2016). Hence perceptions of employer attractiveness can also be a consequence of employer branding initiatives. Thus employer branding equity is the intangible asset that exists in the minds of both current and potential employees, regarding their perceptions of the organisation, which has been constructed through the use of effective human resource practices such as employer branding and employer attractiveness (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

### ***Employer attractiveness***

According to Berthon and colleagues (2005), employer attractiveness is “...the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organisation” (p.151). This definition focuses on the initial stage of attracting employees; however organisations need to work on maintaining their attractiveness as well (Reis & Braga, 2016). Thus for the purpose of this study, employer attractiveness will be defined as “an attitude or expressed general positive affect [individuals have] towards an organisation” (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001, p.221).

Employer attractiveness is often operationalised in terms of attractiveness attributes and there have been various approaches used to determine these attributes (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) developed an instrumental-symbolic framework of organisational attractiveness which identifies two clusters of attractiveness attributes. This includes instrumental attributes which refer to the factual and objective attributes that a job and/or organisation provides individuals (such as salary and job security), and symbolic attributes which refer to subjective and intangible attributes (such as prestige and culture); these clusters of attributes determine the ideas and feelings that the brand represents for an individual (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The symbolic attributes have been found to play a role in determining perceptions of an organisation’s attractiveness over and above instrumental attributes (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Although other frameworks are useful, the most frequently used framework in the literature is Berthon and colleagues’ (2005) dimensions as these authors coined the term employer attractiveness and

their proposed attractiveness attributes reflect Ambler and Barrow's (1996) clusters of employer branding (Reis & Braga, 2017). Thus a discussion will follow on this framework as it was utilised qualitatively in this study.

Berthon and colleagues (2005) operationalised employer attractiveness in terms of the employment attractiveness (EmpAt) scale that they developed. This five-dimensional scale was developed in Australia based on prospective employees' perceptions of the attributes they considered when determining the attractiveness of an organisation (Berthon et al., 2005). The twenty-five item scale has been shown to be statistically reliable and valid for the measurement of employer attractiveness (Berthon et al., 2005). This was determined through internal consistency measures and various aspects of validity that were assessed, including nomological, convergent, and discriminant validity (Berthon et al., 2005). The structure of the scale was confirmed using factor analysis and content and criterion validity were also assessed by comparing the EmpAt scale with an independent global measure of employer attractiveness (Berthon et al., 2005). Subsequently there has been further research on the topic and various attempts to refine the scale, which have improved its cross-cultural applicability (Alniaçık et al., 2014).

According to Ambler and Barrow (1996), employer branding is the “packaging of functional, economic, and psychological benefits” (p.187) that an organisation provides to individuals. The five dimensions (values) of Berthon and colleagues' (2005) employer attractiveness fit into these clusters in the following way: the first dimension, economic value, refers to the extent to which an individual is attracted to an organisation based on an “above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunity” (Berthon et al., 2005, pp.159-162), this dimension is linked to Ambler and Barrow's (1996) economic benefits. The next two dimensions make up Ambler and Barrow's (1996) psychological benefits and include the dimensions of social value, which refers to “a positive and pleasant social and interpersonal [organisational] environment” (Reis & Braga, 2016, p.106), and interest value, which includes a “challenging and stimulating job... in an environment that encourages creativity and innovation” (Reis & Braga, 2016, p.106). The fourth dimension is development value, which refers to the extent to which an organisation is perceived to be attractive based on it providing an individual with “recognition, self-worth and confidence [along with] career-enhancing experiences and a spring-board to future employment” (Berthon et al., 2005, p.162). The final dimension, application value, refers to the “opportunity [provided to an individual which allows them] to apply expertise and convey

knowledge to others in a customer-orientated and humanitarian workplace” (Reis & Braga, 2016, p.106). These final two dimensions make up Ambler and Barrow’s (1996) functional benefits.

Berthon and colleagues (2005)’s scale highlights the dimensionality of employer attractiveness (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016). They also acknowledge that cross-cultural differences may have an influence on perceptions of employer attractiveness and, as such, the concept needs greater interrogation. Moreover, they emphasised that the EmpAt scale itself needed further psychometric testing and validation (Berthon et al., 2005). Consequently, there have been several proposed structures of the EmpAt scale in an attempt to validate the scale and identify attractiveness dimensions in various contexts including Brazil (e.g. Reis & Braga, 2016), India (e.g. Roy, 2008), Latvia (e.g. Alınçık et al., 2014), Norway (e.g. Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen., 2013), Sri Lanka (e.g. Arachchige & Robertson, 2013), and Turkey (e.g. Alınçık & Alınçık, 2012; Alınçık et al., 2014). However the scale has yet to be validated in the South African context. Roy (2008) stated that EmpAt scale was the “...only validated scale existing in the current literature for identifying the attractiveness dimensions of employer brand” (p.117). This study, however, did not attempt to measure attractiveness; instead it represents a qualitative exploration into attractiveness attributes among employed Millennials in South Africa using Berthon and colleagues’ (2005) dimensions as a framework in which to link different attributes.

The concept of employer attractiveness has been explored for samples of both potential and current employees. In some research, no significant differences between potential and current employees regarding attributes of employer attractiveness were identified (Alınçık & Alınçık, 2012). In contrast, other research has identified that these two groups of individuals differ in the value and prioritisation of dimensions of the attractiveness of an organisation (Lievens, Van Hove, & Anseel, 2007; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Jiang and Iles (2011) proposed that organisational attractiveness is two-dimensional and is made up of internal attractiveness (the attributes that current employees find attractive) and external attractiveness (the attributes prospective employees find attractive). However the same attributes were used in Jiang and Iles’ (2011) study for the two groups based on the work of Berthon and colleagues (2005) and Lievens and Highhouse (2003), and the authors concluded that greater exploration was needed on internal attractiveness. There is thus a lack of research on the attributes needed to create a desirable perception amongst current employees (Oladipo et al., 2013). Therefore in order to ensure that perceptions of attractiveness are maintained, there is

a need to explore perceptions of attractiveness among a sample of current employees (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Generational research has also proposed that Millennials differ in the value and prioritisation given to various attributes of employer attractiveness in comparison to other generations (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016; Reis & Braga, 2016). Therefore expectations of this cohort need to be explored to develop a strong employer brand that is consistent with employees' experiences which will assist in making an organisation attractive both internally and externally (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016). The possible differences among generations and employment status in terms of preferences and motivation have implications for the employer branding practices of organisations (Reis & Braga, 2016). Hence by exploring employed Millennials' perceptions of attractiveness, this study aimed to contribute to existing research and knowledge of employer attractiveness and branding.

Current employees are seen to evaluate attractiveness differently to potential employees (Knox & Freeman, 2006; Lievens et al., 2007; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Current employees' perceptions of attractiveness are considered to be influenced by two organisational identities - an employee's own perception of the organisation they work for and a constructed external perception which is an employee's assessment of others' perceptions of the organisation (Lievens et al., 2007; Knox & Freeman, 2006). Organisational identities are the perceptions that employees have regarding what is distinctive about an organisation (Gill, 2014). Favourable evaluations of the organisation by the current employee and others may result in increased organisational membership, enhance the employee's self-esteem, and organisational identification is more likely to occur (Lievens et al., 2007). Organisational identification is a type of social identity in which an individual identifies themselves as a member of an organisation (Lievens et al., 2007). This includes an individual identifying with an employer brand image; and it also increases the attractiveness of the organisation (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Lievens and Highhouse's (2003) symbolic attributes were found to be correlated with organisational identification for a sample of current employees (Lievens et al., 2007). According to Maxwell and Knox (2009), current employees will evaluate the attractiveness of the organisation in which they are employed by making a comparison with other organisations and thus will select attributes that make their organisation unique. They will also adjust the value of the attribute, whether positive or negative, when determining employer attractiveness (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Due to individuals who identify with the organisation deriving their self-concept from this membership they will favourably view their

own organisation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Thus organisational identification influences the attractiveness attributes that individuals will identify as being attractive (Lievens et al., 2007; Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

Attractiveness of an organisation is based on individual preferences, needs, and interests which can be determined by various factors, including individual, contextual (the organisation an individual works for), and generational factors and identification with these factors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, & Geinaert, 2001). Thus individuals will differ in the attributes that they find attractive and the prioritisation of these attributes (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). Maxwell and Knox (2009) highlight that in order to explore attractiveness for a sample of current employees, qualitative approaches should be utilised as these allow for individual perceptions of attractiveness to be explored. In addition researchers adopting a qualitative approach need to be aware that organisations have unique attributes and consider the bias in an individual's evaluations of their own organisation due to organisational identification (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Maxwell and Knox (2009) also state that employer branding and attractiveness research that explores potential employees' perceptions may not be generalisable for a sample of current employees. Thus further research that explores perceptions of current employees and takes into account the way in which the employment relationship changes needs to be conducted (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). A discussion will follow on the psychological contract as it provides a framework in which to explore expectations of this cohort and the changes in expectations, perceptions of attractiveness, and needs of a sample of employed individuals (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016; Biswas & Suar, 2016).

### ***Linking employer branding and employer attractiveness to the psychological contract***

The constructs of employer branding and employer attractiveness are closely linked to the psychological contract as external branding initiatives lead to the formation of the psychological contract (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Ruchika and Prasad (2017) attempted to validate the relationship between the three constructs using a sample of prospective employees. They identified that the information provided by organisations in employer branding to create an attractive organisation will lead to an anticipated psychological contract and, based on an individual's perceived image of an organisation, they will decide whether to pursue a job in that organisation (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The constructs continue to be interlinked after recruitment when an individual becomes an organisational employee, as they enter with expectations created during the recruitment stage and revisions of the contract take

place over time which influence perceptions of attractiveness and have implications for employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Persson & Wasieleski, 2015). Thus a discussion will follow on what the psychological contract is and how the three constructs are interlinked.

Ambler and Barrow (1996) stated that the employment relationship is characterised by an exchange of mutual benefits. Organisations provide functional, economic, and psychological benefits to their employees for the purpose of retaining employees and creating a workforce of skilled individuals who are committed to the organisation's values, goals, and culture (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Current employees invest functional, economic, and psychological effort in the employment relationship and this allows for a mutual exchange to take place (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Organisations will attempt to display and advertise the benefits of the organisation to current employees through aspects like career opportunities, training, and monetary incentives in order to encourage employees to be committed and remain with the organisation by making the organisation attractive (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding is a tool used by organisations to manage the employee-employer relationship which includes managing employees' experiences from the beginning of the process, by attracting prospective employees, to the retention of employees, by maintaining the attractiveness of the organisation (Biswas & Suar, 2016). During the recruitment stage of employer branding individuals will be provided with information about the organisation for the purpose of attracting them to the organisation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Individual perceptions about an organisation, specifically its attractiveness, form the basis of the psychological contract as they determine an individual's expectations (Biswas & Suar, 2016). Through actual experiences in the workplace, current employees are aware of the gaps between perceived 'promises' in employer branding and actual experiences (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Hence employer branding is closely linked to the psychological contract as the 'promises' made to individuals during external employer branding must be experienced by these individuals, as employees, in order to avoid perceptions that the organisation has not adhered to the psychological contract (Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010).

Organisations will attempt to avoid gaps in promises made in external and actual experiences, by ensuring that the attractiveness attributes that are incorporated in external employer branding reflect the actual experiences of employees working in a particular organisation (Reis & Braga, 2017). An employer brand that 'accurately' reflects employees' experiences is important as it provides information about the employment relationship based on more

realistic information regarding the inducements that an organisation can deliver and counters possible misguided information gained from other sources (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Employer branding initiatives influence individual perceptions of attractiveness and psychological contract expectations which has consequences for the employment relationship (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Hence the perceptions of current employees, who experience branding initiatives, and human resource practitioners, who manage the relationship, are vital in developing a comprehensive understanding of perceptions of employer branding and other related areas (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Therefore the constructs of employer expectations and psychological contract expectations will be reviewed.

### ***The psychological contract***

A psychological contract is “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange” (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994, p.246) among two parties. Therefore one party believes that ‘promises’ have been made by another party, and that, in exchange, they have made ‘promises’ to the other party; hence an obligation now exists between the two parties in which future benefits are expected (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The ‘promises’ made by the organisation include various inducements (for example: financial rewards, training, and career development opportunities) whilst an employee ‘promises’ various contributions (for example: performance, commitment, and loyalty) to the organisation in a mutual exchange (Sherman & Morley, 2015). These ‘promises’ extend beyond the obligations (commitments) that exist as a result of a written employment contract (Özçelik, 2015). In summary, the psychological contract was defined in this study as “the reciprocal obligations that comprise an employee-organisation exchange relationship” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p.228).

There are various perspectives on what factors determine individuals’ expectations in the employment relationship. The generational hypothesis identifies that expectations are formed during the socialisation process throughout childhood and, as such, are characteristic of a generational cohort, and remain relatively stable throughout an individual’s life (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Thus, irrespective of contextual influences in the labour market, Millennials’ expectations will remain relatively similar as individuals will enter into organisations with formed schemas about work, which will influence their expectations of organisations (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Lub, Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2014). In terms of the psychological contract, generational differences may influence individuals’ expectations and experiences which may impact their perceptions of the employment relationship (Lub et al., 2014).

However research has also identified that it is in fact generational identity that may lead to common psychological contract expectations among a group of individuals rather than simply belonging to a generational cohort (Joshi et al., 2010). Lyons and Kuron (2014) state that psychological expectations may be fixed but individual attitudes will differ due to working conditions and contextual factors changing throughout an individual's working career. According to Lub and colleagues (2014), the value of using a generational perspective when exploring the psychological contract is that it provides a greater understanding of the broader societal context that influences individuals' perceptions in the employment relationship. Hence this research took into account that psychological contract expectations may already be formed due to socialisation during childhood; however psychological contract expectations can change and develop as a result of actual experience within an organisation, which will be discussed below (De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003).

The period of socialisation in a particular organisation is an important stage in the formation of the psychological contract (De Vos et al., 2003). During the selection and recruitment stage both the employee and the organisation exchange expectations about the employment relationship (Sherman & Morley, 2015). This allows for a "rudimentary psychological contract" (Sherman & Morley, 2015, p.161) to be formed prior to an individual entering into an organisation. The psychological contract becomes more developed through the process of organisational socialisation and time spent in the organisation as retrospective interpretations and evaluations are made (De Vos et al., 2003). Individuals entering into the organisation learn about the organisation's social and functional (task) expectations along with knowledge on how to gain other organisational members' acceptance as a member of the organisation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). In addition, individuals develop new attitudes and behaviours that allow them to adapt and cope with their new environment (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). In line with the sense-making theory, recently employed individuals go through a sense-making process during socialisation, in which there is an adjusting of previously held expectations into more 'realistic' expectations (De Vos et al., 2003; Sherman & Morley, 2015). These "retrospective interpretation processes thus involve[s] an active change of expectations and assumptions based on actual experiences" (De Vos et al., 2003, p.539). Hence over time the psychological contract becomes more developed and changes occur in perceptions as the parties interact in cycles of mutual exchanges and evaluations are made about actual experiences (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

The formation of the psychological contract does not solely depend upon an individual's unilateral adaption of perceived promises made by an organisation compared to the actual inducements received (De Vos et al., 2003). De Vos and colleagues (2003) propose that employees' perceptions of psychological contract expectations are also determined by another unilateral adaption in which a newcomer evaluates their own perceived promises to the organisation compared to their own contribution in the organisation. Furthermore, the patterns of change in the psychological contract are determined by reciprocal evaluations as the newcomer makes evaluations of each party's perceived promises compared to the other party's action in the organisation (De Vos et al., 2003). Hence the psychological contract represents an important determinant of an individual's perceptions of the employment relationship (Lub et al., 2014). In summation, the psychological contract is characterised by the adaptation of perceptions, as newcomers and members of the organisation form expectations and make commitments to each other and the organisation which are influenced by their own values, actual experiences, and their evaluations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Thus individuals develop new expectations which are reinforced or challenged, leading to mutual exchanges and evaluations (Persson & Wasieleski, 2015). The unilateral evaluation of the organisation is an aspect which will be discussed in greater depth as it is closely linked to the impact of employer attractiveness and employer branding on the psychological contract (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Sherman and Morley (2015) highlight that both individual and organisational factors play a role in shaping the psychological contract. The individual factors are various individual characteristics, like personal motivation and values, which influence how an individual interprets their workplace setting (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The organisational factors are the formal and informal messages received from numerous sources of information, including those controlled by the organisation, through human resource activities like advertising, and from organisational members (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The formal and informal messages that are controlled by the organisation are closely linked to the branding initiatives of the organisation (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). Effective employer branding can convey a desirable message to potential and current employees regarding the organisation, which can influence perceptions of the organisation's attractiveness and, in terms of the psychological contract, influence expectations and evaluations (Wilden et al., 2010). Newcomers' perceptions are also influenced, especially during the early stages of employment, by organisational agents who communicate different messages about the organisation (Sherman

& Morley, 2015). Newcomers will make evaluations about their co-workers' psychological contracts with the organisation; in addition, supervisors may be seen as the proxy for the organisation and, as such, will provide vital psychological contract-related information (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The socialisation process also allows for evaluations of fit to take place as organisational members make evaluations about a newcomer's fit with the organisation whilst a newcomer is able to make evaluations about the job, organisation, and their fit with their co-workers (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Thus organisational identification can also influence an individual's evaluations of an organisation (Lievens et al., 2007; Sherman & Morley, 2015). Hence there are various factors that may play a role in influencing an individual's expectations and evaluations of an employment relationship.

The psychological contract is subjective, by nature, as the contract consists of an individual's perceptions of promises and the acceptance of these promises made between parties (Robinson & Rousseau 1994). Due to this subjectivity, there can be a lack of shared understanding and interpretation between the two parties of the inducements and the contributions that form the contract (Robinson & Rousseau 1994). The literature around the psychological contract tends to emphasise that organisations can control aspects of employment relationships to some extent by identifying actions and trigger events that cause psychological contract breaches (Persson & Wasieleski, 2015).

Persson and Wasieleski (2015) highlight that it is simply an expectation gap between an employee and an organisation pertaining to a perceived deviation from these parties shared core values that cause changes in perceptions, as violations are determined by cognitive interpretations. Hence the psychological contract is based on the shared belief that there is reciprocity rather than actual reciprocity (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993). Individuals' perceptions on this have been attributed to various factors based on different perceptions of the factors that influence individual's expectations in the employment relationship. The generational perspective emphasises that a generation will have similar expectations due to having similar experiences (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Thus the same can be said when considering individuals who enter an organisation at a similar time as a generation, as the nature of the organisation and the larger society at a particular time interval will impact both the employment relationship and the individual's experiences of this relationship (Joshi et al., 2010; Lub et al., 2014). Hence organisational factors play a role as the type of experiences and information an individual receives prior to entering into an organisation, during organisational entry, and during their time working in the organisation will influence their

perceptions of the employment relationships (De Vos et al., 2003; Sherman & Morley, 2015). Finally, individual factors also play an important role in how individuals interpret experiences (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The formation and the development of the psychological contract is thus fluid and subjective and, as such, research needs to focus on “actual perceptions of mutuality” (Persson & Wasieleski, 2015, p.370). Thus in order to achieve this, Millennials perceptions were explored qualitatively as the aim of this study was to provide insight into generational, contextual, and individual factors that influence South African Millennials’ expectations in the employment relationship (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010).

It is important to highlight that the Millennial generation, similar to prior generations that have entered into the job market, goes through the process of organisational socialisation which contributes to their psychological contract expectations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). The value in utilising a sample of recently employed individuals lies in the fact that the aim is to evaluate expectations based on the individual’s actual experiences (Reis & Braga, 2017). In addition, according to De Vos and colleagues (2003), during the first months of entering into an organisation, newcomers test their anticipated expectations due to the apparent differences that exist between anticipated and actual experiences of the workplace. Moreover, the schema theory perspective, which provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding the psychological contract, highlights the fact that over time, between six to twelve months after entry (cf. De Vos et al., 2003), a more stable and developed cognitive schema relating to the employment relationship is formed (De Vos et al., 2003; Sherman & Morley, 2015). Hence a sample of recently employed Millennials will provide valuable information regarding more developed and relatively stable psychological contract expectations and the impact of attractiveness and branding initiatives on the psychological contract (Reis & Braga, 2016).

### ***The above-and-below perspective***

Individuals involved in human resource management play an important role in ensuring that organisations are able to attract, motivate, and retain talented individuals (Berthon et al., 2005). These individuals are responsible for “...understanding and managing contemporary employment relationships” (De Vos & Meganck, 2008, p.46). This is achieved through the use of human resource practices and by managing individuals’ perceptions of the organisation. The retention practices of the organisation have to be in line with an employee’s values, expectations, and preferences; thus there is a close link to employer branding and other related areas (Alnıaçık et al., 2014; De Vos & Meganck, 2008; Özçelik, 2015). Despite

the retention of talented employees not exclusively being the function of human resource practitioners, they still play an essential role in influencing strategic decisions made by an organisation (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Berthon et al., 2005). In addition, according to Sherman and Morley (2015), human resource managers may be cited as representing the organisation in the context of the psychological contract as they manage the inducements that employees receive and develop profiles of employees' experiences. Thus, similarly to De Vos and Meganck's (2008) study, this study explored the perceptions of both human resource practitioners and employees, with the intention of providing greater "insight into the perspective of two important parties to the employment relationship" (De Vos & Meganck, 2008, p.57). Therefore this study utilised an above-and-below approach, in which the 'above' (other) perspective was captured by the human resource practitioners' perceptions and the 'below' (self) perspective was captured by recently employed Millennials' perceptions, on the topics of Millennials' psychological contract expectations, employer branding, and employer attractiveness (Lievens et al., 2007). The value of this approach is that comparisons can be made based on the perceptions of individuals who are classified as belonging to the generation of interest and from individuals who have to manage, understand, and have access to employees who have been influenced by a wide range of historical or social events during their socialisation (Becton et al., 2014; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Thus the utilisation of the above-and-below perspective will allow for a broader perspective on the topic in addition to achieving a more rigorous, reliable, and valid interviewing system (Sehlapelo & Terre Blanche, 1996).

### ***The South African context***

An organisation's ability to attract and retain talented individuals will remain an important source of competitive advantage irrespective of the economic landscape (De Vos & Meganck, 2008; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The current economic landscape consists of inflation, rising unemployment, and wage stagnation in both developed and developing countries, which impacts psychological contract expectations and perceptions of violations (Swales, 2013). In South Africa, there is a skills shortage and consequently attracting and retain talented individuals is essential for South African organisations to survive and remain competitive (Rasool & Botha, 2011). The skills shortage is due to various factors, including the educational system's failure to produce an educated workforce and, despite an increase in enrolment at tertiary educational institutions, increased graduate unemployment (Festus, Kasongo, Moses, & Yu, 2016; Oluwajodu et al, 2015). Skills mismatch has contributed to

graduate unemployment as graduate skills and knowledge are either not demanded or are in abundant supply (Festus et al., 2016). According to Oluwajodu and colleagues (2015), graduate unemployment may be due to graduates having unrealistic expectations of employment, including expectations of a high salary, because of their qualification and not wanting a lower level position. Emigration is another factor which has resulted in 'brain drain' as the South African labour market continues to lose highly skilled individuals to other countries (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009; Smit, Staz, & Bussin, 2015). Other factors include structural changes in the economy, HIV and AIDS, and crime (Rasool & Botha, 2011). The development and retention of talented individuals in a country is necessary for economic growth (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009). Thus this research may provide greater insight into employed Millennials' perceptions and human resource practitioners' perceptions of Millennials' values, preferences, and expectations in the workplace, thus assisting South Africa organisations as they need to attract and retain talented individuals from the newest generation that has entered into the labour market (Jonck et al., 2017).

According to Martins and Martins (2014), research conducted in the South African context regarding generational differences in the workplace is limited in comparison to research conducted internationally, and this may have an impact on South African organisations' ability to attract and retain talent. Previous research conducted in South Africa has considered differences among generations in work values (e.g. Jonck et al., 2017), reward packages (e.g. Smit et al., 2015), employee satisfaction (e.g. Martins & Martins, 2014), and other factors affecting retention (e.g. Masibigiri & Nienaber, 2011). Jonck and colleagues (2017) found that there were significant differences and similarities among generational groups in terms of work values in South African organisations. Baby Boomers and Millennials were found to be more similar in work related perceptions than they were to Generation X, with Millennials and Baby Boomers valuing social relationships, creativity, authority, and risk (Jonck et al., 2017). Martins and Martins (2014) identified that Millennials and other generational groups were similar in their expectations and the attributes that were valued. They found that Millennials expected and valued being treated with respect and as equals in addition to being a part of the decision-making process (Martins & Martins, 2014). Moreover, Martins and Martins (2014) found that communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the employer brand was important for Millennials when considering employer satisfaction. An important difference among the generational groups was that if Millennials' expectations were not met they were more likely to engage in job search strategies and move to another

job or organisation (Martins & Martins, 2014). Thus this finding links to the psychological contract and has implications for organisations as maintaining positive perceptions of the psychological contract is essential to retain this cohort.

Research conducted on the psychological contract has explored employee perceptions of psychological contract breaches and factors that are considered to violate or breach the contract (Botha & Moalusi, 2010). These included limited social recognition, poor social relationships, and a lack of opportunity for promotions, which are similar to aspects of employer attractiveness (Botha & Moalusi, 2010). Van der Vaart, Linde, and Cockeran (2013) found that positive evaluations of the psychological contract lead to positive job attitudes and lower an employee's intention to leave. In addition, the maintenance of positive evaluations of the psychological contract is necessary to retain talent (Persson & Wasieleski, 2015). Botha and Moalusi (2010) have therefore highlighted that the psychological contract is a helpful framework that can be used to explore the subjective perceptions of employees. There appear to be no formal studies conducted in South Africa that have explored employer branding and employer attractiveness in depth as yet. Thus this study provides the first exploration in the South African context that considers employer attractiveness, employer branding, and the psychological contract in a single study using a qualitative framework.

In conclusion, South African Millennials are a unique generational group in which to explore perceptions of employer branding, employer attractiveness, employer expectations, and the psychological contract. Despite this, research on these constructs is limited in the South African context. The three main constructs are related as employees' expectations and perceptions of attractiveness can be managed by incorporating effective employer branding strategies into the organisation (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016; Knox & Freeman, 2006; Reis & Braga, 2016). Thus a synergy among these constructs can be achieved by exploring Millennials' perceptions qualitatively. In order to gain greater depth of insight into the main constructs, an above-and-below perspective was utilised with the intention of capturing the views of both human resource practitioners, the 'above' (other) perspective, and recently employed Millennials, the 'below' (self) perspective (Lievens et al., 2007). As such, the aim of this study was to gain insight into individual's values, expectations, and preferences on attractiveness rather than to contribute to the stereotyping of Millennials, by identifying commonalities and divergences in perceptions and providing a basis for theoretical development and practical implications for organisations (Bakanauskienė et al., 2016).

## **Research Questions**

The core question in the current study was:

What are perceptions of what attracts Millennial generation employees to organisations and what they expect from organisations among a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and among a sample of human resource practitioners?

More specific questions included:

- 1) What are Millennials' perceptions of generational identity according to a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and according to a sample of human resource practitioners?
- 2) What are Millennial employees perceived as valuing in an employer according to a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and according to a sample of human resource practitioners?
- 3) What are Millennial employees perceived as expecting from an employer according to a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and according to a sample of human resource practitioners?
- 4) What are the commonalities and divergences between perceptions of the Millennial generation's views on generational identity, employer attractiveness, and employer expectations between a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and a sample of human resource practitioners?

## **Chapter Two: Methodology**

This chapter will provide an outline of the research methodology used in this study with the intention of gaining insight into the phenomenon of Millennials in the South African workplace. Research in the field is mostly reliant on the use of a positivist paradigm which has provided valuable contributions to the field but has also reduced the human experience into something measurable (Gibson & Hanes, 2003). A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used as this methodology allowed for greater understanding of the human experience by acknowledging the complexity of the areas under investigation and the complexity of the human interactions that take place in organisational contexts (Conklin, 2007; Gibson & Hanes, 2003). This chapter will begin with an in-depth discussion on the merits of using a qualitative phenomenological approach in this study. A discussion will follow about the participants in the study and the methods used to collect data as well as the ethical considerations involved in the process of collecting the data. Finally the chapter will conclude with the approach used to analyse the data in the study.

### ***a. Research design***

A qualitative research design was used in this research in order to provide a “more nuanced and subjective conceptualisation” (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017, p.209) of the generational phenomenon when exploring employer branding, employer attractiveness, and employer expectations (the psychological contract) in the South African context. Previous research based on the main constructs, using a generational perspective, has tended to contribute to a simplistic view of the generational phenomenon by stereotyping Millennials and other generational groups by assuming homogeneity of values, perceptions, and attitudes among groups of age-similar cohorts (Joshi et al., 2010; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Thus a qualitative approach was utilised in order to “give privilege to the perspectives of [the] research participants” (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p.723) by recognising that individuals are influenced by various other factors, including individual characteristics and contextual factors, and that different conditions experienced by an individual can either reinforce or diminish their generational and organisational identification (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Lievens et al., 2007; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Hence a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gain understanding of the individuals and their experiences by exploring their perceptions of their subjective experiences (Gibson & Hanes, 2003).

Smith's (1996) interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) was the qualitative methodology utilised in this study as this approach aims to "explore in detail ... [participants' lived experiences and]... how participants make sense of their personal and social world and the meanings particular experiences or events hold for participants" (Gill, 2014, p.126). IPA is not solely phenomenological, concerned with an individual's perceptions of phenomena, but is also interpretive as researchers attempt to make sense of an individual's experiences (Smith, 2004). Thus IPA allowed for the phenomenon of Millennials' perceptions of the workplace to be explored in addition to the lived experiences of recently employed Millennials and human resource practitioners (Foley, Myrick, & Yonge, 2012). IPA differs from other phenomenological approaches due to its idiographic epistemology as it seeks "...to capture and convey the richness of a particular person's experiences" (Gill, 2014, p.126) thus the approach assists the researcher in recognising the value of a single participant. IPA also recognises that phenomenological studies are an interpretative process and that a double hermeneutic takes place as the participants attempt to make sense of their personal and social world and the researcher attempts to make sense of the participants making sense of their world (Gill, 2014; Smith, 2004). Phenomenology identifies that the cultural and historical conditions that an individual is exposed to influence their understanding of experiences and, as such, an individual cannot be separated from these conditions (Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Gill, 2014). This approach allows the researcher to seek greater understanding of the human experience by recognising that individuals cannot have fully detached reflections about their experiences (Gill, 2014). Thus this approach allowed the researcher to "...uncover the underlying essences and meanings of experience to arrive at a deeper, intersubjective understanding of the phenomenon ... [that was being explored]" (Gibson & Hanes, 2003, pp.183-184). Due to the fact that the researcher could not separate herself from her interpretation of individual's perceptions, the researcher accepted and acknowledged her subjective and empathetic role in the research process (Barnes, 2012; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013).

IPA was utilised in this study as it originates from the discipline of psychology and, despite the application of phenomenological approaches being limited in organisational research, has been successfully applied to explore core concepts in the study previously (e.g. Conklin, 2007; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Priyadarshini, Kumar, & Jha, 2017; Tomkins & Eatough, 2014). According to Gill (2014), phenomenological methodology supports researchers' explorations into the phenomenon of organisational identity, which consists of an individual's

perception of the aspects that make an organisation distinctive and therefore attractive. IPA has also been used utilised when exploring the construct of employer attractiveness by Priyadarshini and colleagues (2017). The constructs being explored in this research are also complex and involve human interactions and, as such, IPA helped the researcher to gain understanding of the complexity of the human experience and the fullness of experiences in the organisational and social context (Gibson & Hanes, 2003). Moreover, Embree (2003) argues that possible generational dimensions in the social world should be explored using phenomenology. Therefore Smith's (1996) Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was selected as the phenomenological methodology in this study as it allowed for a phenomenological account of an individual's perception of the main constructs and their experiences and suited the aims and methodical approach of the current study (Priyadarshini et al., 2017).

#### ***b. Sample and sampling***

The sample consisted of five recently employed individuals classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and four human resource practitioners. The total sample consisted of nine participants; this is in line with IPA as Smith (2004) suggests obtaining a sample between five and ten participants. Nine participants allowed for a sufficient degree of theoretical saturation to be reached. The point of saturation is commonly defined as the point at which no new themes arise from the data and the existing themes have been fully developed (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Due to the subjective nature of this definition, the researcher used an audit trail and her own discretion to determine this point (Fugard & Potts, 2014; Guest et al., 2006). However when utilising IPA the point of saturation is not essential as this approach also recognises the value of each individual participant (Gill, 2014)

This sample was chosen as South African Millennials are a unique generation group in which to explore perceptions of the workplace (Martins & Martins, 2012). Recent employees have also been exposed to both external employer branding, as job seekers, and internal employer branding, as employees of an organisation, and, according to the literature, will have more developed and stable perceptions of attractiveness and expectations of the organisation they are working for (Lievens et al., 2007; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010; Persson & Wasieleski, 2015; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). In addition, human resource practitioners are involved in the employer branding process and their perceptions of Millennial employees will influence the management strategies used to attract, motivate, and retain Millennials (Reis & Braga, 2016). Finally, an above-and-below (self-and-other)

perspective of Millennial's perceptions of the workplace allowed for better understanding of the complex relationship that exists among employees and the organisation (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002).

Purposive sampling was used in order to obtain the desired sample. Smith's (1996) Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis recommends the use of purposive sampling as it allows researchers to obtain participants for whom the research questions are significant (Priyadarshini et al., 2017). Participants for this study were obtained by sending email invitations to individuals who met the criteria in their personal capacity. Individuals who expressed interest were sent an email invitation, either for recent employees (please refer to Appendix A) or for human resource practitioners (please refer to Appendix B), and a participant information sheet, either for recent employees (please refer to Appendix C) or for human resource practitioners (please refer to Appendix D), as appropriate. Arrangements were made to meet for an interview, which took place in a secure location that was sufficiently private but also accessible and comfortable for both the researcher and participant. The participants in this study were required to meet the following criteria for each sample group. The recently employed Millennials had to have been employed in a full-time position for a maximum of two years at an organisation. In addition, these individuals needed to fit the definition for Millennials, individuals who entered into the job market after the year 2000. The human resource practitioners had to have been working in human resource recruitment for an organisation and needed to have a minimum of five years of experience in this role. Initially the sample was obtained from the finance industry but it was expanded to individuals in associated industries in order to access a sufficient number of participants. Due to the fact that the human resource practitioners were drawn from any generation currently in the workplace, the generation these individuals fell into and the values and priorities they ascribed to were taken into consideration during the analysis of the data.

The nine participants in this study worked in various organisations in Gauteng, South Africa in the financial industry or related industries. The five employed Millennials met the definition of Millennials as their working career ranged between seven months to one and a half years and, as such, they started working in the modern labour market and had experienced similar working conditions. Moreover, they met the age-based definition of a Millennial as they were between twenty-two and twenty-four years old and, more specifically, met the definition of 'born frees' as they were born after the year 1990. The four human resource practitioners all met the criterion of a minimum of five years of experience in

recruitment and had careers of between nine and twenty years in the field. This sample belonged to either the Millennial generation or Generation X, “born between 1965 and 1979” (Becton et al, 2014, p.177), based on an age-based definition.

The demographic information of the participants was as follows: Participant One was a twenty-two year old, White, English-speaking female working in a field related to the financial industry. Participant Two was a twenty-four year old, African female, whose home language was isiZulu (although she was also fluent in English), who worked as an accountant in the financial industry. Participant Three was a twenty-three year old, White, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking female who worked as a lawyer in the financial sector. Participant Four was a twenty-three year old, Indian, English-speaking male who worked for a company in the financial sector. Participant Five was a twenty-four year old, African, English-speaking and Xhosa-speaking female working in a field related to the financial industry. These five participants all showed a degree of identification as a Millennial (Joshi et al., 2010) and constituted the sample of recent employees classified as Millennials in the study.

In the sample of human resource practitioners, Participant Six was a forty-five year old, White, English-speaking female who worked in the financial sector; and Participant Seven was a forty-year old, Coloured, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking female who worked in a field related to the financial industry. Participant Six and Participant Seven were both classified as Generation X based on an age-based definition. Participant Eight was a thirty-two year old, White, English-speaking female who worked as a recruiter of graduates in the financial sector; and Participant Nine was a thirty-seven year old, White, English-speaking female who worked in a field related to the financial industry. Both Participant Eight and Participant Nine identified themselves as being on the cusp of the age-based definitions of the Millennial generation and Generation X, but they both considered themselves as different to the recently employed Millennials (Becton et al., 2014). All four of the human resource practitioners identified themselves as different from the recently employed Millennials.

Table 1

*Summary of participant demographics*

| <b>Participant</b>       | <b>Age</b>   | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Race</b> | <b>Home Language</b>  | <b>Employment information</b>                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Participant One</b>   | Twenty-two   | Female        | White       | English               | Working in a field related to the financial industry                              |
| <b>Participant Two</b>   | Twenty-four  | Female        | African     | isiZulu               | Accountant in the financial industry                                              |
| <b>Participant Three</b> | Twenty-three | Female        | White       | English and Afrikaans | A lawyer in the financial sector                                                  |
| <b>Participant Four</b>  | Twenty-three | Male          | Indian      | English               | Working in the financial sector                                                   |
| <b>Participant Five</b>  | Twenty-four  | Female        | African     | English and Xhosa     | Working in a field related to the financial industry                              |
| <b>Participant Six</b>   | Forty-five   | Female        | White       | English               | Human resource practitioners working in the financial sector                      |
| <b>Participant Seven</b> | Forty        | Female        | Coloured    | English and Afrikaans | Human resource practitioners working in the financial sector                      |
| <b>Participant Eight</b> | Thirty-two   | Female        | White       | English               | Human resource practitioners working in the financial sector                      |
| <b>Participant Nine</b>  | Thirty-seven | Female        | White       | English               | Human resource practitioners working in a field related to the financial industry |

### ***c. Instruments and procedures***

The main source of data was semi-structured interviews conducted between the participants and researcher based on pre-existing interview schedules. There were two schedules, one for recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation (please refer to Appendix H) and another for human resource practitioners (please refer to Appendix I). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have access into the lives and experiences of the participants as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) identifies a connection between what participants say and their experiences (Fossey et al., 2002; Gill, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were beneficial in the study as they provided both flexibility and a focused exploration of the constructs; and allowed the researcher to follow up on any important issues that arose during the interview process in real time (Fossey et al.,

2002; Smith, 2004). These face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants, and the data was transcribed and then analysed.

Due to the interactive nature of the interview process, the primary research instrument was the interviewer who was also the researcher. In line with IPA, the researcher's subjectivity is considered an essential part of the research process and as such reflexivity is needed (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013). Reflexivity can potentially validate the research process as reflective notes allow the researcher to have greater awareness of their subjectivity and continually question the research practices and processes being used (Pillow, 2003). The researcher therefore maintained both a self-reflexive journal and an audit trail throughout the research process. In line with Foley and colleagues (2012), reflexivity played an essential part in maintaining the orientation of the study on the participants and the phenomenon of interest.

The two separate semi-structured interview schedules consisted of fourteen pre-existing questions for recent employees (please refer to Appendix H) and thirteen pre-existing questions for human resource practitioners (please refer to Appendix I). The interview schedules and prompts were derived from previous literature and empirical findings, and drew on the work of Berthon and colleagues (2005), De Hauw and De Vos (2010), Lyons and Schweitzer (2017), Martins and Martins (2014), and Reis and Braga (2016), which provided the basis for the questions that were developed. The questions for both interviews were organised around certain themes. For recent employees, the aim was to explore the individual's own perceptions of the workplace. Initially the questions focussed on participants' perceptions of the attractiveness of the organisation and employer branding, followed by the psychological contract and their expectations, then generational identification of Millennials. The interview schedule for human resource practitioners aimed to explore the perceptions of this sample regarding Millennials in the workplace. The questions focussed on generational differences in attitudes, expectations, and behaviours observed by human resource practitioners with specific reference to Millennials in the workplace.

The recruitment of participants involved email invitations being sent to individuals who met the criteria in their personal capacity. Individuals who met the criteria and who were interested in participating in this study were sent a formal invitation email (please refer to Appendix A for recent employees and Appendix B for human resource practitioners) inviting them to participate in the study. In addition, these individuals received a detailed participant information sheet (please refer to Appendix C for recent employees and Appendix D for the

human resource practitioners) which was attached to the email. The participant information sheet aimed to provide potential participants with an explanation of the study and what participation entailed. An email address was provided in the sheet in order for individuals to contact the researcher and arrange a time to conduct the interview. A reasonably private, secure, and quiet location that was convenient for each individual participant and the researcher was chosen for the interview to take place. The interview process began with the participants receiving the participant information sheet again and being asked to complete two consent forms (please refer to Appendix E and Appendix F). The signed consent forms provided confirmation that the participant was willing to take part in the study and allow the interview to be audio-recorded. The consent forms also requested permission for direct quotes obtained from the interview to be used in the final research report, published online, and used in research forums.

Once the consent forms were completed, the data collection process commenced. Firstly, the participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire (please refer to Appendix G), which was used for descriptive purposes. Secondly, a short discussion on ethical considerations and the research topic took place. Thirdly, the audio-recording device was switched on and the interview took place, with interviews ranging from between twenty-five to seventy-five minutes. Finally, once the interviews were finished, the participants were encouraged to ask questions before leaving. The data was then transcribed and analysed, and, if requested, a brief summary providing feedback regarding the findings was given to the participants.

#### ***d. Ethical considerations***

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) (clearance number: MORG/17/012 IH; please refer to Appendix J).

In terms of confidentiality and anonymity, due to the interactive nature of the interviews the participants were not anonymous to the researcher; however their identities were kept strictly confidential (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). In order to make sure that participants and organisations could not be identified, each transcript went through a process of sanitisation during which identifiable information was removed. The researcher and supervisor were the only individuals to have access to the audio-recorded interviews and the full transcripts. The audio-recordings of the interview were destroyed when the research was completed. The

consent form requested permission for the participants' anonymised transcripts to be stored indefinitely on a password-protected computer for research purposes on condition that all identifiable information had been removed. The data from these interviews, once analysed, is presented in the form of this research report and may possibly be presented in other research forums.

In order to ensure informed consent, the participants in this research were provided with a detailed participant information sheet and were required to complete two consent forms prior to the start of the interview process confirming their participation and that the interview could be audio-recorded (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). Participation was voluntary and, as such, the participants were not coerced or compelled to participate in any way (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, there was no material benefit for participation; the only benefit for participants was gaining greater insight into their own perceptions. There were also no foreseeable risks to participating in the study.

There was no intentional deception in the research and the purpose of the study was clearly disclosed. Prior to the interviews being conducted, the researcher covered ethical aspects with the participants. Firstly, the participants were given an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity when reporting the results, and were made aware of the fact that they could withdraw their responses if they wished to do so (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). Secondly, participants were informed that they were allowed to terminate participation at any time during the interview process and that there was no foreseeable harm for them. Finally, the participants were made aware that they could get feedback, in the form of a brief summary of the research findings, if requested. Debriefing took place after the interview in order to allow participants to ask questions. The contact details of researcher and supervisor were also given to answer any further questions or concerns.

#### ***e. Data analysis***

Data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) "...does not prescribe any specific thematic template for the analysis of the data gathered through its technique" (Tomkins & Eatough, 2014, p.7). Thematic analysis was used in this research as it is compatible with various paradigms and a range of theoretical approaches, including IPA (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thematic analysis is considered to be an essential method in qualitative research which allows for a rich and detailed interpretation of the data provided from interviews (Braun & Clark, 2006). IPA has

an inductive epistemology and, as such, aims to generate new possibilities through flexible techniques by avoiding the use of pre-existing themes that constrain interpretation and to rather allow for unanticipated themes to emerge during the analysis (Smith, 2004; Tomkins & Eatough, 2014). Thus thematic analysis allowed this to take place as it involved exploring and identifying themes, patterns, and connections from the data provided from the individual interviews by the researcher based on her own perceptions and intuition (Fossey et al., 2002).

Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase guide to performing thematic analysis was applied in this research to allow for a more rigorous analysis. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data and then, secondly, generated initial codes based on interesting features (Braun & Clark, 2006). Interesting features included the Millennial human resource practitioners identifying themselves as different to the 'younger', recently employed Millennials, with the collapse of Apartheid and technology playing a role in determining generational splits among both samples of participants. Moreover, in line with extant literature, perceptions of attractiveness and expectations appeared to be linked (Knox & Freeman, 2006). The next two steps involved gathering all the data for each theme and making sure the themes related to the data collected (Braun & Clark, 2006). As a fifth step, the researcher defined and named the themes; this resulted in three themes namely:

1. The generational phenomenon
2. Employer attractiveness
3. Psychological contract expectations

The finally step of the analysis involved the use of selected extracts from the data and the literature review in order to substantiate the chosen themes and create a rich interpretation of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Thus the process was iterative as the researcher moved between the data and literature (Tomkins & Eatough, 2014). This is in line with IPA's interrogative epistemology as it aims to contribute to the field of psychology through an in-depth analysis of case studies and a subsequent discussion on the analysis in relation to psychological literature (Smith, 2004). Thus thematic analysis was used as meaningful results in qualitative research can be achieved through analyses done in a methodological manner (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

In this study reflexivity was used throughout the research. Reflexivity is "both a concept and a process" (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017, p.427) and is a critical concept in the field of qualitative research (Palaganas et al., 2017). Reflexivity challenges the view

that research methods are “objectified procedures” (Attia & Edge, 2017, p.33) that need to be learned and rather views research methods as being developed by the researcher in the environment they are operating in (Attia & Edge, 2017). Through the process of reflexivity a researcher is continually interacting with the research and the research is not viewed as a stagnant collection of fact to be analysed (Attia & Edge, 2017). Researchers utilising reflexivity are acknowledging that the research process is affected by their own discoveries and how they perceive these discoveries (Palagnas et al., 2017). Reflexivity is achieved by observation and reflection in which a researcher first observes, reflects on what they have observed, and then begins the process again (Attia & Edge, 2017). Schon (1983) highlighted the distinction between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. This was particularly important in the interview process as the researcher needed to be aware that decisions made while interviewing as well as when reflecting on the interview which had an effect on the research.

The researcher used a journal to reflect on each interview and this informed decisions around future interviews as well as how the data was analysed. The journal helped to identify themes emerging in the interviews and also made the researcher aware of possible gaps that were emerging in the process and how to handle these. The use of a journal as a means to reflect in research is beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, it provides evidence of the research and thus provides validity in forming part of the audit trail, and secondly, it is a useful tool in the reflective process (Vicary, Young, & Hicks, 2017). The audit trail gave a clear indication of how the researcher’s thinking evolved throughout the study and also assisted the researcher to reflect on all aspects of the study (Carcary, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that an audit trail should be made up of six categories, namely: raw data, analysis notes, data reconstruction, process notes, material related to intentions, and preliminary development information (as cited in Carcary, 2009). The researcher in this study attempted to record all six aspects during the research process and through the use of the reflections in the journal was able to produce an audit trail that both informed the analysis and ensured that this was rigorous.

### **Chapter Three: Results and Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of Millennials in the South African workplace among samples of recently employed Millennials, who could provide insight into their own experiences in the workplace, and human resource practitioners, who could provide insight into their experiences of managing employees from various generational groups. In order to achieve this, the overarching research question was: *What are perceptions of what attracts Millennial generation employees to organisations and what they expect from organisations among a sample of recent employees classified as belonging to the Millennial generation and among a sample of human resource practitioners?* Through the process of analysing the data obtained through nine individual interviews and using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis, three overarching themes emerged. In the first theme, the generational phenomenon, the participants' understandings of generation as a source of identity in the South African context were explored and the analysis began to tap into the manifestation of generational differences in the workplace. In the second theme, employer attractiveness, the participants' perceptions of the attractive attributes that younger Millennials value in an organisation were explored. In the third and final theme, psychological contract expectations, the perceptions of younger Millennials as they actively evaluate their anticipations (based on prioritised attractiveness attributes, expectations, and perceptions of the exchange relationships) against actual experiences in their current organisations were explored. The overarching themes will be discussed below as they provide insight into the participants' experiences of the generational phenomenon in the South African workplace.

#### **Theme One: The generational phenomenon**

The focus of this theme was to explore the participants' perceptions of the generational phenomenon in the South African workplace. The key findings related to this theme were firstly, that generation as a source of identity in the workplace varied among the participants. The participants' own identity was explored and the recently employed Millennials were found to have a strong generational identity as younger Millennials. The human resource practitioners differed in their perceptions of generation as a source of their own identity, but they identified themselves as being different from the younger Millennials in their perceptions, values, and ways of thinking. Secondly, the participants' identifications suggested that South Africa has its own specificities with regard to generations. The collapse of Apartheid appeared to be the primary determinant of generations for the participants and

technology, a US-centric event, was secondary. Thirdly, the participants indicated that generational differences manifested in the workplace but the two sample groups differed somewhat in their perceptions of the ways in which the generations differed. Similar to Lyons and Schweitzer (2017), the participants demonstrated an awareness of the generational phenomenon in the workplace in their discourse when discussing their own identity and the dynamics in the workplace. These findings make up the sub-themes of the generational theme which will be discussed further.

### ***Generational identity***

The participants in this study varied in the degrees to which they expressed that generation was a basis of identity in the workplace. Generations appeared to be a source of identity in this study for the recently employed Millennials, as they all identified that they belonged to the younger group of Millennials known as ‘born frees’ and they placed value on this membership (Joshi et al., 2010). The recently employed Millennials were aware that they were different to South Africans born before them but they did not use terminology like ‘born frees’ to define themselves. Instead they recognised the collapse of Apartheid as a significant event that defined them. The human resource practitioners differed in their perceptions of generation being a source of their own identity, but those who did identify generation as a source of identity also used the collapse of Apartheid as a way to define their generation. Most of the participants identified generation as a source of identity and identified with their age-based generation group; however there was one participant who identified generation as a source of identity but who did not identify with her age-based generational group, and another participant who did not identify generation as a source of her identity. Despite this, the findings generally aligned with previous research indicating that generation is a source of identity which individuals may or may not subscribe to (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Thus before exploring generational differences or perceptions of attractiveness and the psychological contract, it is important to understand the individual participant’s identity.

The participants in the study who both identified generation as a source of identity and identified with their age-based generation group were mostly Millennials. The younger Millennials’ perceptions and the perceptions of the older Millennial, Participant Eight, will be contrasted as they identified as part of the broader category of Millennial, but also identified as belonging to two sub-groups of the generation (Martins & Martins, 2014). Lyons and Schweitzer’s (2017) work was used to highlight three possible reasons for the Millennials’ identification as such. Firstly, generational identification of the Millennials was based on a

historical location, which in this study was the collapse of Apartheid (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). The younger Millennials “... *didn’t witness the changes in the laws... the Act of democratising South Africa... we know South Africa... as a democratic society*” (P5) as they were born after 1990. Participant Eight, who identified as an older Millennial, stated that “...*I have noticed the change massively although... when Apartheid happened... I was young*” (P8) as she was born before 1990. These two statements highlight the differences in the experiences of the two South African Millennial groups as a result of Apartheid, which is in line with Martins and Martins’ (2014) work. Secondly, there was generational identification due to shared experiences of the recently employed Millennials as members of a generation born “...free from Apartheid” (John et al., 2015, p.110). Participant Four commented that “...*it was so free...for me when I grew up... I thought it was normal for Black and White people to be friends and to interact*”. Younger Millennials “...*we are more just liberal*” (P3) as their environments were “...*ethnically diverse... in a working environment, in a school environment*” (P1). Participant Eight commented on witnessing the change as “...*I think it’s been amazing to see companies transform in that way and to be able to think differently and have melting pots of cultures and even just backgrounds, education, experiences*”. The historical event of the collapse of Apartheid impacted the Millennials’ shared experiences as the experiences were somewhat different for those born during Apartheid, the older Millennials, and those born after the collapse of Apartheid, the younger Millennials (Martins & Martins, 2014).

The recently employed Millennials also identified shared experiences of technology and this differentiates them from other generations. Millennials are considered to be influenced by rapid advancement in technology (Martins & Martins, 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016) however Participant Five commented that the advancements “...*don’t feel as rapid... the technology was kind of already there when I was a child*”. She commented later in the interview that “...*the technologies have evolved throughout the years... even when we were in primary school, like we had Myspace and it would become Facebook and like BBM. Then it became like WhatsApp*” (P5). This idea was echoed by other participants, for example, Participant Four noted that “...*half the technologies in high school are irrelevant now*”. Millennials “... *use technology all the time... we actually cannot function without technology... it’s been there constantly in the background*” (P1). The comments made by recently employed Millennials highlight that they mostly agreed with the view that they are the modern generation as a result of being ‘digital natives’, born with modern technology

(Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Participant Five commented that “...we [Millennials] have access to information access to technology...we are the people who will actually keep the company running... are we are the people who will be using technology”. Similar to global extant literature, technology was found to be a basis for forming generational identity among Millennials (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Parry & Urwin, 2011; Reis & Braga, 2016).

Technological advancements did not have the same impact on the socialisation of Participant Eight, older Millennial, who commented that as an “...I grew up in a world where I didn't have a cellphone...when I was at varsity, Facebook didn't exist” whereas the younger Millennials “...they've come into a world where they've been brought up with technology” (P8). Technological advancements were seen as less impactful for Participant Eight, which may demonstrate her personal experiences rather than the experiences of older Millennials in South Africa. However, within the South African context technological advancements may not be as strong a defining feature for older Millennials as they were in the US and other western countries. This may have been due to the fact that sanctions placed on South Africa meant that Apple, IBM, and other computer and technology companies disinvested during the 1980s and only reinvested after the collapse of Apartheid (Man, 1996). This resulted in a delay in the rapid advancement of technology in South Africa, meaning that younger Millennials would have been born with/or during an injection of advanced technology which the older Millennials would have experienced later in their childhood from their global counterparts. Martins and Martins (2014) commented that South African Millennials' mind-sets are also influenced by global influences. Globalisation was another internal factor considered however it did not emerge as a major influence for the recently employed Millennials as “...we were already born into a globalised world” (P5). Hence the Millennial generation cannot simply be understood using international definitions and historical events.

Thirdly, generational identification is based on shared values (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). A shared value of the Millennial generation was found to be the importance of social relationships at work, “...we want interactions with colleagues... with people our age” (P3), and development, as Millennials are “...like ok... we got this now we have to get the next big thing” (P3) “...opportunities...need to be quite endless” (P8). The recently employed Millennials and older Millennial participant were found to have shared values as a group; this will be discussed further under the attractiveness theme.

Thus the three possible reasons for Millennial group identification highlight the similarities shared among the Millennials but also differences in values, perceptions, and ways of thinking among the two sub-groups of Millennials. The reasons for identifying as a recently employed Millennial were also shown to be based on three factors: the historical event of the collapse of Apartheid, which resulted in shared experiences of only living in a democratic South Africa; shared experiences as a result of technological advancements; and the fact that these factors consequently seemed to contribute to shared values in the workplace.

Participant Eight identified as an older Millennial, stating “...*I would describe myself as... on the cusp ever so slightly, but definitely more I would say like 70% Millennial*”. This is in line with the data obtained from the interview with Participant Eight, as the reasons for her identification differed from the younger Millennials as the collapse of Apartheid and rapid advancements in technology happened later into her formative years, but she shared some of the same values. Despite Participant Eight stating that she identified primarily as a Millennial, she referred to Millennials throughout the interview as ‘they’, whereas the recently employed Millennials referred to Millennials as ‘we’. This may be due to a distinction between younger and older Millennials as Participant Eight’s role was to recruit graduates, which would include individuals who mostly fall into the younger group of Millennials (Martins & Martins, 2014). However, the researcher attributed this to her role as a human resource practitioner as she deals with individuals from various generation and in the organisational context might therefore discuss the generational groups as ‘they’, whether or not she identified with them, in order to remain neutral in a professional capacity.

There were two human resource practitioner participants who identified as belonging to Generation X. Participant Seven identified with the age-based generation group, whereas Participant Nine was considered to be part of the older Millennial group based on an age-based definition. Participant Nine was on the cusp of the older Millennials and research (e.g. Becton et al., 2014; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Parry & Urwin, 2011) has identified that individuals on the cusp may be ambivalent to one or both generational groups. However Participant Nine identified with Generation X, which is more in line with the researcher’s understanding that Millennials are individuals who began working after the year 2000 and Participant Nine started working in 1998 (Pyöriä et al., 2017). Participant Nine identified herself as belonging to Generation X, “...*my generation at the middle kind of thing*” (P9). According to Lyons and Schweitzer’s (2017) work, Generation X is the middle generation in the workplace between Millennials and Baby Boomers. This was aligned with a view point

expressed by Participant Seven, a Generation X human resource practitioner, who commented that “... *[there are] the three generations still working here and there is a huge fight between the two...and we are more open to both sides*”.

The individuals who identified as belonging to Generation X also positioned their generational group in relation to the collapse of Apartheid. Participant Seven commented that “...*when I was at school I was still impacted. I can remember things... However, you [‘born frees’] don’t know about Apartheid. You don’t know*” (P7). She commented that when she “*enter[ed] the job market...Triple BEE was just introduced and it wasn’t taken seriously. There was no penalty... I battled to find a job*”. Moreover Participant Nine commented that in the workplace, “...*I worked in places... [with] the variety of people... I learned that different people and different cultures operate differently and have different expectations*”. Generation X is defined by Jonck and colleagues (2017) as the first South African generation to be influenced by labour market regulatory codes such as the Employment Equity Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and, consequently, they do not view working in multicultural environments as a threat.

Technology was also a factor discussed by Generation X even though it is not a factor used to define the generational group in global (Reis & Braga, 2016; Twenge et al., 2010) and South African literature (e.g. Jonck et al., 2017). Millennials “...*they are embracing the technology whereas we are a little bit more cautious of the technology*” (P9). Participant Seven commented that “...*technological changes happened... I am open to the change, but I’m not savvy*” and Participant Nine commented that “...*I hate technology...it’s just exhausting*” but that with technology “...*we are now just a message away...it’s not about writing a letter anymore... [to] loved ones... they are close now*”. Their use of technology as a factor to define their identity can be attributed to the fact that an individual’s orientation towards technology is also used to distinguish one generation from another (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). There are ‘digital natives’, who were born with technology, and there are ‘digital immigrants’, who experienced rapid growth in technology and the Internet later on in their lives (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). These Generation X participants seemed to recognise that they were ‘digital immigrants’ as “*change in the past happened all the time...but the changes happened gradually over time. Now changes happen exponentially*” (P7). Participant Nine also stated that “...*there has been a lot that has influenced me*” but that “*my father was very much an older generation*” and this impacted “...*how I was raised*”. Participant Nine’s perceptions of Millennials were the most negative of the human resource practitioners and

this may be why Participant Nine did not identify as a Millennial, because she seemed to view Millennials' values as too different to the 'older generation' values that she grew up with.

Participant Six was the only participant who did not identify a work generation as a source of her own identity. In terms of an age-based definition, she would belong to Generation X but she commented that “...*I am 85% genetics... I am programmed... I have a personality... certain capabilities.* Thus individual differences were emphasised by her as playing a predominant role in determining her workplace values, expectations, and behaviours (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). She commented that “...*So, for me has the social context changed my values, my motives, my drivers? No, because I think they fundamentally genetically driven*”. And “*I had to operate in ways differently because of the social context, because of political or economic systems, yes I have. Would I choose to? No not particularly, but I've had to.*” (P6). Despite Participant Six not identifying work generation as a source of her own identity, she was aware of generations being a social phenomenon in the workplace. This was evident as she did discuss generational groups and the conflict that arose as a result of differing work values, perceptions, and ways of working based on these, despite not obviously identifying with a particular generation herself.

The participants in the study indicated that generational differences exist in the workplace, irrespective of whether they identified with a generation group or their defined age-based group. In response to whether generational differences exist in the workplace the participants unanimously believed that there were differences, commenting “...*yes yes yes yes oh my gosh yes!*” (P4), “*yes...absolutely*” (P1), “...*yes. Definitely*” (P8), “...*yes, I think definitely. definitely. definitely*” (P5), “...*definitely!*” (P3), “...*definitely*” (P7), “...*definitely*” (P6), and “...*absolutely... definitely... there are generational differences*” (P9) and “...*I think there's a difference*” (P2). Before exploring the manifestations of these generational differences in the workplace, the specificities of generations in the South African context will be explored.

### ***Generations in South Africa***

The generational phenomena in the workplace has been researched extensively in the US and Canada (e.g. Joshi et al., 2010; Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Ng & Burke, 2006; Ng et al., 2010; Twenge et al., 2010), Europe (e.g. De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Parry & Urwin, 2011) and in other contexts. However Reis and Braga (2016) emphasise that there is a gap in the literature as it fails to “...reflect specificities of other contexts” (p.104), as an assumption is

held that US-centric events have the same impact and hold the same importance in other countries (Cadiz et al., 2015). This study found that, similar to Martins and Martins (2012; 2014), the Millennial generation in South Africa appears to consist of two groups, namely older and younger Millennials. This division also seems to be defined by the collapse of Apartheid and the widespread perception of this as a core feature in defining ‘generations’. Similarly, in this study the collapse of Apartheid appeared to be the event used by the participants to determine what a generation is. This could suggest that, irrespective of other factors, South Africans first understand themselves as being born before or after the collapse of Apartheid; and only then apply some secondary US-centric factors, such as technology, when defining generational groups. A critical possible implication of this finding, specifically that the participants seemed to locate their identity around the collapse of Apartheid, is that the use of US-centric definitions of generations may not be fully relevant in the South African context.

For the sample, the core determinant of a generation seemed to be the collapse of Apartheid, which was used by the participants as an event to separate individuals into two generational groups: those born in Apartheid and those born free from Apartheid. The literature demonstrates that there is no clear starting date for this event as some recognised it as starting from the first democratic elections in 1994 (e.g. Duncan et al., 2007; Malila, 2013) while others recognised it as starting from the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 (e.g. Cronje & Kane-Berman, 2015; Richter et al., 2007). Participant Five commented that there are *“people born before like 1990 also... people born after 1990. So the split was from 1990”* whilst Participant Seven identified it as *“the end of Apartheid 1994”*. Thus the collapse of Apartheid is seen to span the years from 1990 to 1994. Participant Five, a recently employed Millennial, stated that as *“...I think, as people who were born in 1993 we wouldn’t have necessarily been able to... witness those events. We would have only been able to experience them from how, from the stories that people who were there tell us”*. The historical event of the collapse of Apartheid could be seen as having a stronger effect on the recently employed Millennials than any other age group co-existing at the time because it impacted their formative years, and thus it is an event that distinguishes them from other generations (Becton et al., 2014). This finding is in line with the literature (e.g. Cadiz et al., 2015; John et al., 2015; Martins & Martins, 2014) as the identity of the ‘born frees’ is seen to be linked to democracy and the collapse of Apartheid.

The two Millennial groups that were identified in the study were similar to Martins and Martins' (2014) work. This study also found that the "*...Millennial age group there's like also like there generational sub-divisions*" (P5). One recently employed Millennial participant discussed a shared experience of experiencing multicultural and multiracial environments. Participant Five commented that "*...there are differences in how people that were born in 1982 and people that were born in 1990...how they perceive race...and society in South Africa*". This split between the Millennials into younger Millennials and older Millennials could be due to different formative experiences of South Africa. A Generation X participant noted that younger Millennials' experiences appeared to be different, stating that "*...the younger people they don't come from that oppressed past anymore*" (P7). There was also found to be a degree of similarity among the Millennial generation as "*I definitely feel that what we share as like 1982 and 1993 is some sort of alienation from our parents*" (P5).

Another key finding was that the other participants who were not younger Millennials also located their generation around the collapse of Apartheid. This was done by considering the number of years living in Apartheid when determining their generation. Participant Seven, a Generation X participant, stated that "*...I was as in Matric when it was the end of Apartheid 1994. So, my whole schooling was in the Apartheid years and then I enter university and its havoc to everybody*" she went on to say that "*...that's why I'm saying my generation's quite complicated because you had that, the Apartheid part*". Moreover, Participant Eight, an older Millennial, responded to a question about her generational identity by stating "*...how old was I when Apartheid happened? So, I was young, but you know, I suppose I haven't seen ...Like the two completely different worlds that I haven't been exposed, and I have been exposed*".

Thus the strict age-based definitions of a generation were not entirely appropriate in this study, as generation was found to be a source of identity that individuals subscribed or did not subscribe to. Moreover US-centric definitions and labels of generations were not appropriate as events such as the fall of the Berlin wall and the war on terrorism did not define the Millennial generation; nor were events such as the emergence of AIDS and Music Television (MTV) used to define Generation X. Thus within the South African context the use of the international definitions of Millennials and older generations may not be appropriate as South Africa has its own unique event, the collapse of Apartheid, that seems to have had a differential effect on how generations are understood in this context. It is important to note, however, that technology was a US-centric event that was evident in this study, as younger Millennials identified themselves as being born into a world with

technology and the older Millennial and the Generation X participants also used technology to locate their generation. Thus technological advancements were a global event that was used by the participants in a similar way as Apartheid was used to delineate generations into one of two groups, namely ‘digital native’ and ‘digital immigrant’. The sanctions on South Africa that delayed the advancement of technology (Man, 1996) may also influence the participants’ understandings of generations as both democracy and rapid advancements in technology were experienced in South Africa at a similar time.

The focus of this study was to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the workplace generational phenomenon in South Africa; and these findings highlight the need for further exploration of generational research in different contexts. This is vital because, as illustrated by the findings in this study, generational labels and age-based definition determined in other contexts may not be appropriate cross-culturally as countries have their own events that may determine their generational cohorts.

### ***Generational differences in the workplace***

The participants in the study unanimously believed that generational differences exist in the workplace regardless of their own generational identity or lack thereof. They also identified main features that they felt manifested as generational differences in the workplace, including perceptions of hierarchy, respect, work ethic, and loyalty. The two groups differed somewhat in their perceptions of the distinguishing features that differentiate between the generations as the younger Millennials believed differences existed in terms of hierarchy and the human resource practitioners identified differences in work ethic and loyalty. The participants in this study identified that generational differences did exist in the workplace by discussing their personal experiences of conflict between the generations in the workplace (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). Generational differences were mostly attributed to socialisation but life-course stage was considered by three of the participants, in particular Participant Six. This is in line with the literature (e.g. Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017; Lyons et al., 2015) as generational differences are seen to be entangled with age, life-course stage, and historical location.

Some of recently employed Millennial participants emphasised that perceptions of age hierarchy in the organisation was an evident manifestation of generational differences. Participant Five commented that in her organisation “... *there’s definitely a hierarchy in terms of age*”. “*Here...I feel they think my age is a determining factor of my ...um...my capability*” (P1). The older generation think that “...*they are old and need some seniority... if*

*they make a decision... we must go along with it*" (P4). The concept of respecting elders and organisational hierarchy were important issues that most of the younger Millennial employees identified. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) believe that issues around these factors are attributed to the fact that throughout the Millennials' lives they have been encouraged to have close relationships with parents and other authority figures such as teachers, and thus they want a boss who is a friend and co-worker. Moreover Millennials may also expect flat hierarchy and access to senior leadership, which may cause tension among the generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). One human resource practitioner commented that "...*working in a culture where it's an extremely flat...structure that accessibility to people... it's easier for them [younger Millennial] generation to connect [with]*" (P8) however this was not a common difference identified by the human resource practitioners.

The recently employed Millennials' perceptions appeared to be in line with Hershatter and Epstein's (2010) work, as they believed that due to Millennials' "... *relationship to hierarchy... I feel like all the generations feel like we're a lot more disrespectful*" (P5). The older people "...*they expect a certain level of respect from you so you need to refer to them as Mrs or Mr or whatever in order to be respectful... but we sort of...are like you show us respect and we'll show you respect*" (P3). Participant Three also commented that "...*I am talking to people like 40 years and above... they'll be like...that's so disrespectful, you can't be so friendly, you're not supposed to have personal relationship with your director*". Participant Seven, a human resource practitioner, echoed this view, by commenting that there is "...*room for improvement with Millennials...I think they can...be more cognisant of how to conduct themselves [sic] in the corporate world...how to address older people...there is a difference between how you conduct yourself with your friend*".

The recently employed Millennials emphasised in the interviews that their lack of adherence to hierarchical structures in the workplace often led to animosity among the other generations, as the older generation believed that Millennials were disrespectful. However the recently employed Millennials felt that their approach was better as the older generations "...*they had to get in line but then that was the way the world worked... but like we don't have to get in line*" (P4). Perceptions of hierarchy were attributed to differences in socialisation as their parents were seen to encourage close relationships and "*the younger people they don't come from that oppressed past anymore, where a child must sit in a corner and be seen and not heard...[they] have that questioning mind-set*" (P7). Consequently, the recently employed Millennials believed that "...*the people older than us always kind of*

*abided by certain rules* (P5) whereas the “*Millennials are all like hey ... there is no concept of hierarchy*” (P3). Thus despite some of the younger Millennials recognising that their lack of adherence to hierarchical structures did cause tension they demonstrated a lack of desire or intention to behave in a manner that would reduce this animosity. A clash of perspectives and values is likely to cause tension among the generational groups and consequently it may reduce productivity and engagement in the workplace. This clash may be difficult to resolve if neither side is willing to change their mindset.

Some of the human resource practitioners recognised the generational differences in perceptions of hierarchy and respect of elders but did not identify this as the main manifestation of generational differences in the workplace. The human resource practitioners rather identified that loyalty and work ethic were the features that differentiated the Millennial generation from the other generations in the workplace. In the “*...older generation I think that there is a much more sense of work ethic if I can call it that with older generation so people are loyal, to companies to positions that kind of thing*” (P9). Work ethic was emphasised by the human resource practitioners as they seemed to feel that, in line with Myers and Sadaghiani’s (2010) findings, “*...Millennial newcomers should have to ‘pay their dues’ as they did when they were young workers*” (p.227). Participant Nine commented that “*...my father was very much an older generation... I was taught...that you put... your heart and soul into something...and that you work hard... it was a huge factor*”. The human resource practitioners in the sample attributed the difference in work ethic to the fact that the younger Millennials “*they’ve also been told by their parents that you can be anything you want...the worlds your oyster...unfortunately sometimes just like well you also need to work frikkin hard... to achieve it*” (P8). Older generations were also believed to differ in their perceptions of “*a hierarchical system of progression*” (P6) as older generations think “*...I’ve been with the organisation for 30 years and that’s why I am the manager, they [Millennials] want to just be a manager within a 2-year period*” (P7). Thus perceptions of hierarchy in terms of progression within a person’s career were discussed as a generational difference by some of the human resource practitioners whilst the recently employed Millennials discussed hierarchy as being purely age-based. This illustrated an example of a generational-based differential understanding of the same phenomenon.

In this study loyalty to organisations as a generational difference was also explored by some of the participants as some of the human resource identified that “*... very older generation...went cradle to grave in one employment*” (P6). These participants recognised

that generations older than them also had different perceptions of loyalty to organisations as Participant Seven commented that “...*my mother for example... she can't fathom me wanting to apply for another position... She worked at one company for thirty-five years*”. Twenge and colleagues (2010) recognised that changes in the working environment have impacted on employee loyalty and lifelong employment in one organisation and consequently employees may work for various employers. Millennials in particular are seen to have higher levels of careerism, “...a cosmopolitan career strategy emphasising a preference for changing organisations frequently to get ahead” (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010, p.295). Participant Four, a recently employed Millennial, agreed with this view that generational differences exist in terms of careerism as “...*I think for them [the older generation] they think that your growth within an organisation is... starts and ends within 10/ 20 years... but that's not true*”. Participant Six, a human resource practitioner, commented that “...*the older generation might feel a little bit wounded by the way in which Millennials either interact with them or are not seen as particularly loyal to them, and those are values that an older generation hold close*”. Hershatter and Epstein (2010) state that loyalty is seen differently among Millennials and older generations, as to older generations loyalty often involves working hard whilst for Millennials it involves receiving benefit from the organisation. These generational differences may impact the psychological contract, which will be discussed further in Theme Three as the younger Millennials in this sample seemed to place greater emphasis on receiving their valued attributes and meeting their needs rather than contributing to the organisation.

Generational differences in the workplace were mostly attributed to socialisation by the participants in the study however some considered the influence of biological aging and the life-course stage. In particular the human resource practitioners identified life-course stages as influencing differences in behaviours and values in the generations. Participant Six identified that “...*what people value changes over a period of time... as young individuals probably have a higher risk profile than an older employee... who might have a family to support or who has to think about retirement and is not willing to take the risks*”. The participants identified communalities in the older generation due to shared life-course stage as they believed that “...*Will I be able to retire?* (P7) is what the older generation will consider and this is likely to impact their values. Participant One, a recently employed Millennial, commented that older generations are concerned with “...*a pension fund... knowing how much longer they had to work because of their age*”. Thus the participants

identified that a cohort's values may differ due to maturation in biological age and life-course stage; this was in line with Lyons and Schweitzer's (2017) work. Thus as the Millennials get older and begin to consider retirement the prioritisation of their values may change.

Despite life-course stage being considered as a possible explanation for the manifestation of generational differences, this does not hinder or weaken the exploration of the generational phenomenon in this study. Mannheim (1952), the father of generational research, identified that exploration of the generational phenomenon is useful over and above age and life-course stage and argued that the entanglement of historical period, age, and life-course stage adds to the value of generational research. Furthermore the participants identified generational differences that have been attributed to differences in socialisation, and generational theory identifies that work values are considered to be unlikely to change incrementally throughout an individual's life (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015). Most of the themes identified in this study, including generational identity based on the collapse of Apartheid and rapid advancements in technology in addition to attitudes to hierarchy and loyalty, were not life-course stage based and this illustrates that the generational phenomenon represents more than just biological age or life-course stage.

The focus of the generational theme was to explore the participants' perceptions of the existence of the generational phenomenon in the South African context. Consequently the data provided insight into the participants' identities, how generations are understood in the South African context among the participants, and the ways that these differences manifested based on their experiences. The collapse of Apartheid provides an historical event unique to this context that impacted on the participants' understandings of generations. Furthermore, the collapse of Apartheid influenced various aspects of society, including the rapid influx of technology that had been restricted due to sanctions imposed on South Africa. Thus additional research on the younger Millennial generation in the South African workplace should take place as this unique South African subset of Millennials could differ in their values, preferences, expectations, and ways of thinking from older South African Millennials and their global counterparts as a result of differing events shaping their formative years. Furthermore the data identified that generational differences “...*come through, in the ways [generational groups] want to work, what actually motivates them, how they want to be managed, what's important to them in terms of the workplace*” (P8). The sample of younger Millennial employees' values, expectations, and experiences of the workplace as well as the human resource practitioners' perceptions of the Millennial generation in the workplace (as

their role is to manage the employment relationship and generational dynamics in the workplace) will therefore be explored next.

### **Theme Two: Employer attractiveness**

The focus of this theme is to explore perceptions of younger Millennials regarding which aspects of a potential or current employer are valued the most or thought to be most attractive. These perceptions were drawn from a sample of recently employed younger Millennials as well as from human resource practitioners. The attractiveness attributes will be discussed beginning with the recently employed Millennial participants as they commented on the attributes they personally valued, followed by the human resource practitioners who discussed their perceptions of what they thought younger Millennials value. Berthon and colleagues (2005) five-dimensional framework will be utilised as the interview responses were linked to the attractiveness values identified in the framework. Additional attractiveness factors drawn from other theorists such as Lievens and Highhouse (2003) will also be discussed where relevant. The attractiveness attributes will be discussed in order of perceived prioritisation.

The most prominently identified and valued attractiveness attribute of recently employed Millennial participants was the social aspect; this is defined as a “...working environment that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere” (Berthon et al., 2005, p.159). According to one participant, the social “... *experience is very important for young people... is there like a running club... or drinks on Friday night*” (P3). Another participant believed that as Millennials “... *we are supposed to feel happy in our working environment... the people around us feed into our experiences*” (P1). Participant Five stated that she is attracted to the organisation due to the team atmosphere as it “...*is working like with friends... very much a collaborative experience*”. Participant Three suggested that as Millennials “...*they sort of seek out the companionship because they actually don't know how to cope without friends*” (P3). The idea of respect when interacting with co-workers and supervisors was also an important issue for two of the younger Millennial participants as they discussed having a lack of encouraging and supportive colleagues. Participant One stated that “...*it's the people that are making me feel so intimidated*” (P1) and therefore she wanted to be “...*treated with respect*” (P1); and the other participant commented that she wanted a “...*a boss that that would...not be rude*” (P2).

The importance of positive social relationships for Millennials was explored in research by Hershatter and Epstein (2010), who argue that Millennials' need for close relationships with their managers and co-workers is a result of their socialisation in which close relationships with parents and teachers was encouraged.

Having good relationships with colleagues and supervisors, in addition to supportive and encouraging colleagues, was therefore emphasised as a highly valued attribute by four of recently employed Millennial participants. This finding is in line with Jonck and colleagues (2017) as they found that South African Millennials value social relationships in the workplace. In addition, Millennials are expected to value nurturing working environments in which they can build close relationships with co-workers and supervisors (Ng et al., 2010). Participant Four did not prioritise the social aspect to the extent that the other participants seemed to, but he did recognise that his job allowed him to “...*make relationships*”. This seemed to be made more in reference to career-enhancing experiences, which fall under development value, than to supportive relationships (Berthon et al., 2005). This could possibly be attributed to gender differences in the prioritisation of social value, which is in line with extant literature (e.g. Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Reis & Braga, 2016) in which a significant difference was found between the different genders for the perceived importance of social value. Even though the social value was not prioritised by this individual he did recognise that he had supportive co-workers and, in particular, a supportive supervisor which allowed for his most prioritised attribute of development to be achieved.

The social aspect was a prominent theme during the interviews with four of the five recently employed Millennials; and was thus the factor that seemed to impact overall attractiveness perceptions for this group the most. The importance of social relationships within the workplace was not identified by the human resource practitioners; they believed that Millennials rather valued having flexible hours which allowed for social interactions and activities outside of the organisation.

The second most prominently identified and valued attribute by the sample of recently employed Millennials was development value, which is defined by “...recognition, self-worth and confidence [along with] career-enhancing experiences and a spring-board to future employment” (Berthon et al., 2005, p.162) received from an employer. The recently employed Millennial participants valued developing their skills as they believed that the job would provide the necessary experiences by “...*learning bit by bit until becoming like a*

*partial expert*” (P2). Participant Five commented that as an employee “...I got to learn a lot about the career and I got to gain skills that I may not necessarily have gained if I had gone somewhere else. So, I think it’s been...beneficial”. Similarly Participant Three indicated with regards to the attributes she found attractive that “I knew the opportunity was I would be exposed to so much more” (P3). In contrast, Participant Two emphasised her frustration over not gaining desired skills, because as an employee “I thought I would be taught to...be a bookkeeper” however through her experiences “...I actually realised... that I am not going to be trained to do some kind of work” and consequently she wanted to “...move on to the next company to reach my potential”. Participant One also pursued employment in her current organisation for development reasons, as she commented “I haven’t had much experience with this type of organisation so I thought it would be good experience for me”. Participant One was the only participant who discussed valuing an organisation that made her “...feel good about [her]self” (Berthon et al., 2005, p.158), and her self-worth was an overarching theme in her interview. She stated “... I definitely lost a lot of my confidence” and she used to be “...so assertive and now I really struggle”. She was very emotional about this as she felt that “...you know you are supposed to feel happy in your working environment” and that “I need to feel comfortable” (P1). Thus both Participant One and Participant Two emphasised valuing development, despite their organisations not providing this attribute.

Development value also seemed to be the most important attractiveness factor for Participant Four; he commented that “You know when you enter these huge corporates people say you will never make an impact... but like for me it’s not that I am making a major impact but I am making some impact in terms of my business unit”. He valued receiving recognition as “...I got my own project” (P4) as well as career-enhancing experiences as he has gotten to “...sit in meetings with these huge people...I was presenting on my [work] for them” (P4).

Participant Five also valued receiving recognition and gaining experience as she and a colleague, “...we supposedly have leadership positions ... we ask the rest of the group for their feedback”. Thus the recently employed Millennial participants who were provided with career-enhancing experiences, namely Participant Four and Participant Five, seemed to value development as an attractiveness attribute very highly.

The recently employed younger Millennial participants therefore identified both social and development aspects as particularly important attractiveness factors for an employer even if they were not experiencing these attributes in their work. The participants also identified development as an important attribute they were seeking prior to joining the organisation and

that they continued to want from their employers once they began work. However as current employees the social aspect was identified as the most important factor for them.

The social aspect might be an important foundation for development – this aligns with the viewpoint that Millennials regard strong relationships with co-workers and supervisors as the foundation for negotiating their role as employees of an organisation and these relationships determine their level of job satisfaction (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Moreover, research (e.g. Hershatter & Epstein, 2010) demonstrates that Millennials have been brought up in nurturing and supportive environments which have allowed them to be successful and thus organisations that mirror this are seen to be attractive. The recently employed Millennials who identified their organisations as providing social and development aspects seemed to find those organisations more attractive and identified themselves as organisational members. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) also proposed that communication with colleagues that is frequent and affirming is seen to be imperative for Millennials' development, specifically in terms of recognition and confidence. The quality of the relationships between Millennials and their co-workers and supervisors affects their productivity, thus the implication is that encouraging and supportive relationships in organisations may lead Millennials to perform better in their organisation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). This seemed to align with most of the recently employed Millennials' perceptions as they expressed the importance of supportive interactions for both social and development purposes. This finding to an extent seemed to align with international understandings of Millennials' values, however whether this can be attributed to a shared generational perspective or life-course stage remains an interesting and open question.

The human resource practitioners in the study did not discuss the relationship between social and development value which might reflect differences in perceptions between the samples regarding the importance of social value. Development value was recognised to some extent by two of the human resource practitioners, who indicated that Millennials are seen to value “...development...because they want to climb that ladder” (P7) as they want to know “*what can I learn, where can I grow, be exposed*” (P8). The concept of flexibility in the way Millennials work was also considered. However development was not seen as a prioritised attribute and was seen as separate from social relationships. The lack of awareness of the potential importance of social value for Millennials by the human resource practitioners has implications for employee satisfaction and retention, and consequently for organisational performance and success.

Another highly valued attribute by all of the recently employed Millennials in this study was organisational reputation, which was identified as an initial attractiveness attribute. Arachchige and Robertson (2013) identified organisational reputation as an additional dimension of employer attractiveness when validating Berthon and colleagues' (2005) framework in Sri Lanka. Moreover, reputation is identified as a symbolic (subjective and intangible) factor in Lievens and Highhouse's (2003) framework. The participants identified their organisation as being attractive because it is "...[a] well-established company" (P5), "...it's well-known" (P1), its "...history... legacy" (P4), and "...also status" (P3). Despite Participant Two not being attracted to the organisation she was currently working for based on reputation as "it's still a start-up company" she wanted to "...work for [one of] the big four" well-established accounting firms; thus she also considered organisational reputation as an important factor when evaluating attractiveness. Some of the human resource practitioners also specifically identified reputation as being valued by Millennials, for example, Participant Six noted that Millennials, "...fundamentally... are attracted to organisations based on [their] affiliation of that organisation's values, their accomplishments, their performance and their brand... [considering] which organisation does things differently that suits me" (P6). Participant Nine stated that reputation is valued as "...they [the Millennials] like saying that they work for [a known organisation] as opposed to... something that is unknown". The reputation of an organisation is an important aspect in branding initiatives as it contributes to the creation of a positive image of the organisation in the minds of employees (Reis & Braga, 2016). The value placed on reputation is also in line with Sivertzen and colleagues' (2013) findings in which reputation was positively related with intention to pursue a job. Reputation, however, was not identified as an attribute that assisted to retain the recently employed Millennials at the organisation but rather as an attribute that attracted them to the organisation at a point when they had limited personal experiences as organisational employees.

The next attribute that was somewhat prioritised by the recently employed Millennials was application value, which is the extent to which the organisation provides opportunities "...to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer-orientated and humanitarian" (Berthon et al., 2005, p.162). Participant Four and Participant Five both valued "... an opportunity to practice what [they] had originally studied for" (P5). Participant Four enjoyed "[coming] into an environment where I was actually gonna get work done and it wasn't going to be a thing like I am going to sit and wait for like 4 months before actually doing something. The recently employed Millennial participants who did not

perceive application value in their work discussed their frustrations in this regard as they wanted to be able to apply their knowledge. For example, Participant One commented “...*I am qualified... trained... and not to help...[be] an extra hand*”. Later on in the interview she stated that “...*I feel like I could be doing more as well... and given more opportunities to do what I am qualified to do*” (P1). Moreover Participant Two “...*feels like my job should be done by someone who’s only just finished matric... that you don’t even need a varsity degree for this job*”. The lack of opportunity to apply their knowledge was discussed in the interviews but for Participant Two this was an important attribute that was missing from her job combined with a perceived lack of development opportunity, an unsupportive manager, and her organisation not having an established reputation. This led to Participant Two evaluating her organisation as unattractive.

The Millennial participants only identified wanting to apply their knowledge and did not identify valuing an environment that was humanitarian and/or customer-orientated. Thus this differed from some of the human resource practitioners’ beliefs that an organisation with a humanitarian-orientation was highly valued by Millennials. In addition, the human resource practitioners did not identify application of knowledge as being important. The application attribute being valued by the Millennials is in line with Reis and Braga (2016), who found that wanting to share and practice their skills and knowledge was more important to the Millennials in their study than to other generations. Application value may, however, simply have been valued more by the recently employed Millennials in this study as they had recently graduated and had limited experience in applying knowledge gained at university. This may have also influenced Reis and Braga’s (2016) findings as the Millennials would have had less experience than the older generations.

The final two attractiveness values in Berthon and colleagues’ (2005) framework were mentioned by some of the recently employed Millennial participants but were not discussed as extensively as the other attributes. Economic value, defined as “...[an] above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunity” (Berthon et al., 2005, pp.159-162), was identified as initially being valued by some of the Millennials when they were prospective employees, “...*the salary that was the most influential...But also status maybe more than actual money*” (P3). Participant Five stated that “...*it’s a good salary compared to the, like general average salary of my work or in terms of like as a salary in general*”. Participant Two was frustrated that “...*I get paid like someone who didn’t go to varsity [university]*”. Thus salary was regarded as a factor that contributed to employer

attractiveness by some of the recent employees; this aligns with literature suggesting economic benefits are important (e.g. Ng et al., 2010; Reis & Braga, 2016; Twenge et al., 2010). Two of human resource practitioner identified that salary was a value but commented that “*Salary. Yes, [but for] everybody across that doesn’t make them [Millennials] special*” (P7), and “*money is not specific to Millennials... I do believe the money motivates [everyone]*” (P9). Economic value also consists of factors other than salary such as promotion, however the recently employed Millennials did not raise the issue of promotional opportunities. This might be attributed to the limited time spent in the organisation by these employees rather than a lack of value placed on promotional opportunities as the literature suggests that promotion is important to Millennials (e.g. Bakanauskienė et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2010). This could, however, also possibly represent an important distinction in what is prioritised by Millennials internationally as compared to in South Africa.

An interesting trend that was identified during the interview process was that individuals who were initially attracted to the organisation due to salary became frustrated when they became employees. Commenting that “*...obviously salary is a bonus but at the same time... you know... the hours that I’m putting in, doesn’t quite match what I think I should be earning*” (P3) and “*...it is really annoying... frustrating...that you are not valued paywise*” (P4). Participant Three identified that “*...coming into [the organisation] without knowing what it was like, it was a pay check that called me*” however based on actual experiences in the workplace “*...if somebody came and offered me more benefits but like a bit of a lower salary I would choose that*”. This suggests that experiences change initial perceptions because, as an employee, individuals gain actual experience within the organisation and identify factors that were not included in employer branding initiatives - “*you also start to see the politics that involved in the organisation that you’re not aware of, that you don’t know coming in when they try and sell the job to you*” (P3). This change in perceptions that takes place when individuals evaluate anticipations with experiences will be discussed further in the third theme.

Organisational culture was identified by some of the recently employed Millennials as an attractiveness attribute. Participant Three was initially attracted to her organisation because it was “*...culturally very welcoming... they do sell the idea that culturally they are the funnest*” and for Participant Five “*...they promoted... a family environment*”. Organisational culture was added to the employer attractiveness scale by Roy (2008) when validating the scale in the Indian context. However these aspects of the organisational culture refer to the social

environment, thus social value is valued as both an initial attractiveness attribute, with reference to organisational culture, and as an attribute valued by recent employees who have spent time in the organisation. Participant Eight, an older Millennial human resource practitioner, identified that an organisational “...*culture could be very attractive to a Millennial because it [reflects] the way that we operate or a company operates*”. Two of the recently employed Millennial participants also indicated that they were initially attracted to an organisation where the organisational culture promoted social interaction. Most of the human resource practitioners did not discuss organisational culture as being an important factor, though, which is in line with the responses of the younger Millennials in this study.

The least discussed attribute was interest value, which includes “...an exciting work environment, novel work practices and that make use of employer creativity to produce high quality, innovative products and services” (Berthon et al., 2005, p.159). Participant Three was attracted to her organisation based on “...*the type of work because... [it is] very intellectually stimulating work*” and Participant Five as “*[the organisation] encourages new ways of working*”. Interest was only mentioned by two of the recently employed Millennials and was not prioritised by either of the participants. In addition, the human resource practitioners also did not identify interest as an important attractiveness attribute for younger Millennials. These findings are in line with Reis and Braga’s (2016) results, as interest value was one of the least valued attributes by Millennials. Despite social value and interest value both being identified as psychological benefits in Ambler and Barrow’s (1996) framework, these factors seemed to be regarded as among the most and the least attractive attributes respectively by the Millennial participants in the study – this supports a necessary theoretical distinction between these aspects.

The responses of the recently employed Millennial participants demonstrated that social and development attributes were important perceived attractiveness factors for these individuals as current employees and influenced their perceptions of the overall attractiveness of their organisation. The findings also demonstrated that reputation, application, and salary were somewhat important attributes but that salary did not sustain its attractive value.

Organisational culture was another feature that was valued by some of the younger Millennials – this could be as a result of this incorporating various other aspects that they also seemed to value, such as a flat hierarchical structure, social interactions, and development opportunities. Hence the various extensions to Berthon and colleagues’ (2005) five-factor model were supported in this study as organisational reputation and culture were considered

as attractiveness factors. There was a considerable overlap between international trends in assumptions of Millennials' priorities and those of the younger Millennial participants; however there were also useful individual and more unique facets that emerged that could reflect the unique social environment of young South African Millennials.

The findings that are discussed above are based purely on individual responses to what attracts them to potential and current organisations. It is also worth noting that interest value was not regarded as particularly important by the younger Millennial participants. The findings so far also demonstrate a lack of congruence between the attributes valued by the younger Millennial participants and the human resource practitioners' beliefs on what attracts Millennials to organisations. The discussion will now focus on the human resource practitioners' perceptions in order to understand what attributes they believed were attractive to Millennials.

The majority of the human resource practitioners felt that flexible working time would be an extremely important factor in determining attractiveness of the organisation. Millennials were believed to value flexible hours as they *"...definitely [want] work flexibility. Flexi hours... The younger generation they see no need... to do their eight hours... if they have the tools and if they start later okay..."* (P7). Millennials do not *"...need to sit in an office. They don't need to work certain times of the day"* (P6). In terms of the literature, flexible hours are not directly mentioned in Berthon and colleagues' (2005) framework however this attribute does form part of Lievens and Highhouse's (2003) instrumental (objective) factor of attractiveness.

Although flexible hours were considered to be highly influential in younger Millennials' evaluations of attractiveness among the human resource practitioners, only one recently employed Millennial identified flexible hours as being an important aspect of attractiveness, *"...the younger generation it does not work like that... work[ing] a set time... you have to come in at 8 and leave at 5...[that is why] they [the organisation] have like given me flexible hours"* (P4). He went on to say that *"...I need flexible hours... I know I can't get into work at 8 and be functioning... I would rather come in later...and be happy with life and be the most functional person"*. This response may have been due to the fact that Participant Four was required to travel a long distance to get to work whilst the other recently employed Millennial participants were located closer to their jobs, thus having flexible hours may have been a priority for this participant. In general, the concept of flexible hours was not considered as an important attractiveness factor among the Millennial participants in the study though.

The human resource practitioners did to some extent identify the social aspects of the work environment as important; however their focus was on personal lives outside of the workplace rather than relationships in the organisation. Most of the human resource practitioners focused on flexible hours and work/life balance as Millennials and Generation X were seen as different. According to one practitioner, as Generation X “... *we are still trying to find a balance between life and work*” (P9). These perceptions aligned with the viewpoint put forward by Twenge and colleagues (2010), who proposed that Millennials ‘work to live’ and therefore flexible hours can be seen as a solution to accommodate social relationships outside of the organisation. Jonck and colleagues (2017) found that their Generation X participants did not value social relationships but that their Millennial participants did, thus in this study the Generation X human resource practitioners may not have identified social relationships in the workplace because it was not an overarching value for them. One of the human resource practitioners also subscribed to another finding of Twenge and colleagues (2010), who noted that Millennials may not value the social aspect of a work environment as much because technology and social media have replaced the need for them to value a job that provides opportunities to build personal relationships at work. Participant Six stated that “...*all of [the Millennials’] communication, all of their interaction or the majority of it sits in tech... it is part of who and what they are... and they want to work in a similar way*”. She questioned whether “... *they can develop the extent of trust in somebody without face-to-face contact...business...it’s about a relationship with a customer, a client, a colleague, a senior, a junior. It’s a relationship*” (P6). However, despite technology being a factor that is perceived as distinguishing the Millennial generation from other generations by the practitioners, the recent Millennial employee participants valued supportive colleagues and supervisors and working for organisations that provided them with the opportunities to build relationships. This finding is more in line with Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), as they recognised that flexible hours may be valued by Millennials but that they prioritise workplace relationships as well. Participant Eight, one of the human resource practitioners, recognised this, stating, “...*chill areas... [give individuals the] opportunity to say your life can be also at work almost and you don’t have to feel like this like work life balance is so hard*”. This statement highlights that despite changes in the way that individuals work, Millennials still spend most of their day at work and consequently the social aspect is important as they seeking out “...*companionship*” (P3) in the workplace.

The concept of flexibility in the workplace needs to be discussed further as there were also differences in understanding among the human resource practitioners based on age. The Generation X practitioners tended to consider working from home to be valued and this understanding of flexibility has been discussed. However Participant Seven, an older Millennial, identified factors more similar to those of the recently employed Millennials as she discussed flexibility in terms of how the work itself is carried out and autonomy rather than location. Autonomy was also seen as an important factor for the Millennials by Participant Eight, a Millennial human resources practitioner, who stated that personally she valued that the “...organisation trusts me that I am seen as an adult and I am going to do the job and I will deliver”. In organisations “...where they have potentially not got flexible hours... [Millennials] they want to have the freedom to operate how they want... they like to be managed, very onerous, very not micro managed” (P8). The desire for freedom in how they operate in the workplace was evident in the recently employed Millennial participants’ interviews as Participants Four and Participant Five valued having “...the freedom” (P4) whilst Participant One and Participant Two felt their “...autonomy is completely... constricted” (P1) and desired to work for an organisation that gave them freedom to operate. Hence despite the Generation X human resource practitioners believing that it was simply flexible hours that the Millennials valued, the Millennials themselves from both samples suggested it was flexibility in how they operate in the organisation that was valued. Autonomy and freedom can represent a combination of social and development values in the Berthon and colleagues (2005) model.

The second attribute identified as valued by several of the human resource practitioners was corporate social responsibility (CSR). Participant Seven commented that “...these ones [the Millennials] want that values must be in place [like] CSR, corporate social responsibility, [and] flexibility. Main one”. Participant Eight, a Millennial human resources practitioner, responded to a question about what attracts Millennials to an organisation by stating that “...[Millennials want] a company that gives back to the community”, however when talking about her own values as a Millennial in the workplace she did not identify CSR as being one of her values. Similarly, none of the recently employed Millennials identified valuing or being attracted to organisations because of their CSR despite the literature (e.g. Biswas & Suar, 2016; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017) identifying that an organisation’s reputation is influenced by perceptions of the organisation’s practices such as its CSR. These findings are in line with Twenge and colleagues’ (2010) work in which Millennials were found to be no

more likely to value working for an organisation that helps others or is beneficial to society than older generations (such as Baby Boomers and Generation X). Moreover Klimkiewicz and Oltra (2017) identified that individuals' attitudes towards CSR, specifically whether it is valued by an individual or not, will determine whether CSR influences perceptions of employer attractiveness. Thus, despite the human resource practitioners' belief that South African Millennials value flexible hours and CSR, perceptions of this sample of Millennials did not support this.

The attractiveness attributes mentioned above reflect the benefits that the recently employed Millennials valued in an organisation or the benefits they believed the organisation had failed to provide. These attractiveness evaluations were based on the attributes that the individuals valued, whether or not these attributes were promised by an employer in the contract or through employer branding initiatives. Thus attractiveness values seemed to be closely linked to psychological contract expectations that the Millennials had about the workplace. This study found that the factors valued by Millennials were the same as the attributes that they expected. It was the ability to meet or failure to meet expectations that contributed to employer attractiveness evaluations. Moreover the recently employed Millennial participants attributed their personal values to preferences shared among other younger Millennials (Gill, 2014). Therefore the participants identified that their socialisation as younger Millennials played a role in determining the attributes that they valued in the workplace. The human resource practitioners also found it difficult to separate themselves from the historical, cultural, and political context they had been exposed to when discussing their perceptions of the younger Millennial generation. Thus the phenomenon of perceived generational difference shaping perceptions of attractiveness did seem to occur in the current study. The next overarching theme that will be discussed is psychological contract expectations as, similar to extant literature (e.g. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Reis & Braga, 2016; Ruchika & Prasad, 2017) that has linked employer branding, employer attractiveness, and psychological contract expectations, there was an overlap among these factors in the data.

### **Theme Three: Psychological contract expectations**

The focus of the theme on psychological contract expectations is to understand the recently employed Millennials' perceptions of the organisations they were working for. Individuals' perceptions of an organisation are often based on their attractiveness evaluation of the organisation which more broadly relate to perceptions of the psychological contract (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The psychological contract is "the cognitive schema that an individual holds

about their employment relationship” (De Vos et al., 2003, p.539). During a newcomer’s entry into an organisation they actively test their anticipations against their experiences (De Vos et al., 2003). Individuals engaged in this process assess their perceived promises made to the organisation prior to organisation entry, their current contribution to the organisation, the organisation’s perceived promises prior to organisational entry, and the organisation’s current inducements (De Vos et al., 2003). This exchange relationship characterises the psychological contract however it can be argued that anticipations are also influenced by attractiveness values and expectations gained through socialisation in the employee’s formative years. Thus in order to gain greater understanding of the recently employed Millennial participants’ perceptions of their organisations, their individual attractiveness evaluations, expectations, and perceptions of the exchange relationships were explored.

The perceptions of employees regarding their organisation are seen to be influenced by the organisational identities which individuals use to evaluate their organisation (Lievens et al., 2007; Knox & Freeman, 2006). Dutton and Dukerich’s (1991) framework identifies that organisational identity exists in three ways. The first way, which is external, refers to a prospective employee’s evaluations of the organisation prior to them beginning work there (Knox & Freeman, 2006). Participant Four commented that “...*I have always been a customer of [the organisation], I have always been a fan...[they] get things done*”. Prospective perceptions cannot be truly explored in this analysis, though, as the participants were not interviewed prior to entering the organisation. However, it seems likely that prospective evaluations made by the recently employed Millennials based on information gained from external experiences of the organisation would have contributed to a “rudimentary psychological contract” (Sherman & Morley, 2015, p.161); and, in line with generational theory, that this might have also been impacted by expectations formed during their socialisation.

The remaining two organisational identities used in Dutton and Dukerich’s (1991) framework are utilised by current employees and therefore these identities are both useful when exploring the recently employed Millennial participants’ current interpretations of their organisations. The second organisational identity includes an employee’s perceptions of others’ evaluations of the organisation (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Participant Three commented that “...*it is quite a thing to say oh I work for [this company]... people know who they are and what is to work there*”. However the other recently employed Millennial participants did not directly consider external evaluations when discussing current

perceptions of their organisation. They did, however, note organisational reputation as a major initial attractiveness attribute – thus external evaluations did play a role in what they felt would draw Millennials to a particular company and in what drew them to their own current roles in four of the five cases.

The third organisational identity, internal identity, refers to a current employee's perception of the organisation. The recently employed Millennials differed in their perceptions of their current organisation however they did seem to use their expectations and prioritised values to evaluate their organisation. Some participants, specifically Participant Five and Participant Four, felt they were experiencing most of their prioritised values and, consequently, they had strong positive internal evaluations of the organisation they were working for. As shown in the cases of the other participants, however, the less personal attractiveness values and expectations were perceived to be met by the organisation, the less positive their evaluations of the organisation were. Those participants who had strong positive internal evaluations of the organisation also appeared to demonstrate higher levels of organisational membership identification. This is in line with the extant literature that combines organisational identities and organisational identification (e.g. Lievens et al., 2007; Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Maxwell and Knox (2009) argue that due to individuals experiencing organisational identities, which are conceptually the same as employer brand image, there is strengthened organisational membership identification and thus consequently individuals are likely to find their organisation more attractive.

The participants who demonstrated strong identification as organisational members included Participant Four and Participant Five, as they often used the term 'we' when discussing their organisation "...*we can actually deliver*"(P4), "...*we are all about collaborating*" (P5). They both had positive internal evaluations of the organisation and organisational identification. Participant Three identified herself as a member of the organisation "...*we do such big transactions*" (P3), with strong positive external evaluations; however her overall evaluation of her organisation's attractiveness was reduced as a result of her experiences as an employee. Participant One also demonstrated a degree of organisational identification due a positive external evaluation but due to negative internal evaluations she seemed to find her organisation only moderately attractive. The organisation is "...*upholding their [external] appearance... but it's what's actually happening inside that's the problem*" (P1). Finally, Participant Two identified a lack of positive internal evaluations and organisational membership as she had experienced an unsupportive manager, poor pay, a lack of

development opportunities, and a lack of young people to interact with. Participant Two was also the least attracted to the organisation she was currently working at. One interesting statement by her in this regard was “...a lot of the companies are doing that out there and I feel like it's not unique”. This statement is linked to employer attractiveness as the perception of an organisation having unique and distinctive features determines perceptions of employer attractiveness and is the aim of employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

It is worth noting that current employees will often evaluate the attractiveness of their organisation by making comparisons with other organisations in a manner in which their organisation is constructed as different and unique (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). This was very evident in the study among the recently employed Millennial participants. Participant Four discussed the attractiveness of his organisation by making a comparison with other jobs available in other organisations in the industry, stating that “...what largely attracted me is the actual work that we were doing... I have actually started working and doing actual projects...with other graduate programmes in [other organisations] ... [it is] kind of like “let’s see which rotations you can do” and then...you don't actually get like a chance to actually work in that job”. Moreover, Participant Three stated that the organisation she was working at is “...one of the biggest companies in Africa... I knew I would be exposed to so much more than if I went to [another] company”. She went on to say that “...culturally it was attractive... I have done work at other big companies and it was definitely not the same as where I am now”. Participant Three and Participant Four both viewed their organisation as being attractive and identified themselves as organisational members and, as such, they may have strategically selected attributes that made their organisation seem different and unique. In contrast, Participant One found that her organisation had become less attractive and consequently selected a negative attribute to make a comparison with “... [the organisation] I went to as a student... I was treated with so much respect as one of the others...then I came here...they treated me so much younger...so differently”. Maxwell and Knox (2009) proposed that current employees will select attributes provided by the organisation and adjust the importance of these attributes as attributes that they personally value when discussing the attractiveness of an organisation. This is more prevalent among individuals who identify themselves as organisational members, as organisational memberships are incorporated into their self-concept (Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

In this study, the recently employed Millennials, particularly those who identified as organisational members, may have adjusted the importance of the attributes they found most

attractive to make their organisation seem more attractive. Thus the prioritisation of values among all the younger Millennial participants could change depending on their current organisation. Despite this, the data provided by the participants did provide insight into their current experiences and perceptions of the organisations they were working at when the study was conducted. Furthermore, their overarching expectations and attractiveness values were considered to be influenced by socialisation in their formative years and could therefore be argued to remain relatively stable throughout their life (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Lub et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). Thus, in line with the literature, the Millennial participants found their organisation more attractive if their expectations were met and less attractive if they were not; and this supports the potential universality of this finding for all employees regardless of generation.

The psychological contract provides a useful framework in which to understand the recently employed Millennials' perceptions of the organisations they were working at. The psychological contract demonstrates the subjectivity that exists in the employment relationship as there is often a lack of shared understanding and interpretation about the unwritten 'promises' that exist among two parties (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). The psychological contract is considered to focus on mutual expectations and thus the recently employed Millennials' evaluations on whether the two parties met each other's expectations will be discussed (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The evaluations made by individuals in terms of the psychological contract may lead to positive perceptions of the organisation in instances where expectations are met or may lead to negative perceptions in instances where there are perceived or actual violations. Thus the psychological contract will be explored further. Reciprocity was also considered among the participants in the study; both the human resource practitioners and recently employed Millennials identified a lack of mutuality.

The work-related expectations identified by the recently employed Millennials were similar to their values previously identified in the study and included social relationships, development, flat organisational structures, and mutual respect. Despite human resource practitioners identifying different values shared by Millennials they also identified that what the young Millennials valued were the same as their work-related expectations. Participant Seven, a human resource practitioner, commented that "[Millennials] *these ones want flexibility...*" and later in the interview when asked about expectations she commented that "*they expect...flexibility, flexibility, flexibility*". The recently employed Millennials discussed expectations when entering in the organisation and at times made comparisons between their

expectations and current experiences. The researcher believes that the data demonstrates that the young Millennials may not have had clear expectations or considered their pre-employment expectations when entering the organisation however when they perceived violations of their implicit expectations, their individual perceptions of the attractiveness of the organisation were impacted and they became somewhat aware of their expectations overtly.

Expectations discussed by the younger Millennials were either related to the social working environment and/or to development. The expectations of the recently employed Millennials included a positive working environment *“I expected to see people who are friendly...”* (P2); Participant Five commented that *“I expected to be more alone in the process...but it is very collaborative”*. Participant Three commented that she thought *“...because we were so busy, I thought interactions with colleagues and everything wouldn’t matter the most...but...at the same time...it does matter most”*. Despite Participant Three not initially expecting the social aspect to be important, she identified it as being the most critical attractiveness value as a current employee. Development opportunities were also discussed *“I was expecting more work... more contribution... given more freedom and given more opportunities”* (P1) and *“I expected from them was to teach me”* (P2). Participant Four and Participant Five both discussed greater development opportunities than they expected *“I didn’t expect that I would learn this much”* (P5) and *“I was expecting this idealistic view... I was like somebody else will do it, but then I had to do the whole development, so that’s really which is good [sic] because I was learning different aspects”*. Other expectations were mutual respect and hierarchy, *“...I expected if you respect me then I will respect you”* (P2); this was emphasised by the participants as a generational difference in the workplace and not directly discussed when exploring expectations. This may be due to the fact that the positive social environment discussed by the participants incorporated a flat structure in which there were supportive supervisors who would be easily accessible as well as mutual respect among colleagues.

These factors are important ones that are likely to influence perceived organisational support. Biswas and Suar (2016) highlight that perceived organisational support links to perceptions that an organisation values an individual’s contributions and is concerned for their wellbeing. Thus when individuals believe they have organisational support they are more likely to reciprocate and employer attractiveness is increased (Biswas & Suar, 2016). In this study perceived organisational support seemed to increase employer attractiveness however it did not seem to impact the need for reciprocity among the younger Millennials.

The psychological contract expectations of the recently employed Millennials and reciprocity in the employment relationship were explored in this study by asking the participants if they had met their organisation's expectations and whether they felt the organisation had met their expectations. Most of the recently employed Millennials believed that they had met the expectations of the organisation to varying degrees, "...100% it's not even arrogance" (P3), *"I really do, but maybe I am just being like...facetious"* (P4), *"I think have definitely...I mean I've taken this position seriously"* (P2), *"I think I have"* (P1). The participants did provide reasons for believing that they had met these expectations, including *"...anyone could do it"* (P2), *"...the expectations of the organisation were low... but my boss' expectations for us were different... but I think I have met the expectation of my boss as well"* (P4). Participant One felt that *"... I have tried as hard as I can in the difficult situations that I was been faced with"*. Participant Three provided evidence for how she had met the organisation's expectations in terms of her perceived expectations as *"...the hours are so long they expect somebody who will do... I like give up everything to be there and I also think like it does look promising that I will get retained... so that's also an indication, they wouldn't keep me if I didn't meet their expectations"*. When asking Participant Five whether she believed she had met the organisation's expectations, she commented *"hmmm. Good question. I never thought of that... I hope I have, although like I think it's – I don't know what they expect from me other than to represent them properly"*. Participant Five highlights a lack of understanding that may exist among employees regarding the expectations of organisations. The subjectivity that exists in the exchange relationship was also demonstrated as the participants selected aspects which positively reflected their contributions to the organisation and did not considered areas in which they might not have met expectations. Furthermore the organisation's expectations discussed were significantly less than Millennials' own expectations of their organisations. This is in line with previous research that recognises that employees will often overstate their own contributions and understate the organisation's inducements when discussing the psychological contract (Sherman & Morley, 2015).

The younger Millennials differed in their views on whether the organisation had met their expectations. Participant Four and Participant Five both believed that the organisation had met their expectations commenting, *"yes...I'm being serious... my expectation has been met"* (P4) and *"...Yes, more than expected actually"* (P5). These responses are in line with the previous data that has been presented as both of these individuals felt they had received the

attractiveness attributes they valued and both believed they had organisational support as they worked in organisations with positive social relationships and had various development opportunities. Despite Participant Four identifying concerns regarding salary and generational differences, his perceived receiving of other valued attributes led to a positive evaluation of his organisation and the psychological contract remaining intact. Hence both Participant Four and Participant Five experienced psychological contract fulfilment as they believed that their organisation had upheld their side of the agreement (Sherman & Morley, 2015). The remaining three participants did not feel that the organisation had met their expectations, commenting “Never!” (P2), “*they didn’t meet up to my expectation*” (P1), and “*...not even about the slightest have they kept their promises*” (P3). Participant One differed from the other two individuals as, despite recognising that her expectations were not met, she did not believe that the organisation had completely failed to keep the promises made during the recruitment process “*Yes and no, um...I mean they have kept their promises*”. Thus this provided a contrast to the remaining younger Millennial participants who believed that promises made during the recruitment process had not been upheld.

The participants discussed the promises made in the recruitment process when assessing whether the organisation had met their expectations. Participant Two commented that “*...the job description for this position and had there bookkeeping so I took the job... I expected from them was to teach me first of all the basics of doing bookkeeping*”. She went on to comment that “*...when I started working here I actually realised that I not going to be trained to do [that] kind of work*”. A perceived psychological contract violation was experienced by Participant Two as she believed that her organisation had not upheld their side of the agreement (Sherman & Morley, 2015). This violation of psychological contract resulted in a desire to leave her current organisation, with her commenting “*...I am not... staying*”. Participant Two highlighted the importance of consistency of the attractiveness attributes used in external employer branding initiatives and the experiences of employed individuals in order to avoid perceptions of violations and breaches of the psychological contract (Reis & Braga, 2016). Furthermore Botha and Moalusi (2010) identify that perceptions of the psychological contract are negatively impacted by poor social relationships and a lack of development opportunities, which Participant One had also experienced in her current organisation.

Participant Three had also experienced a lack of consistency between external branding and experiences as an employee. She commented that “*the image that they created... was that*

*everybody loves everybody... the truth of the matter is that you see it every day it's who you know that gets you far and that I was not expecting".* She also states that *"the promises they made to me they have not been true at all and my view coming in 18 months ago have not been true"*. Participant Three did not demonstrate a likelihood of leaving the organisation but she did make an important observation regarding generational differences in responses to expectations not being met, stating *"...I think it's like with the older crowd if their expectations aren't met they will still stay...whereas with us if our expectations aren't met we leave"* (P3). This observation was consistent with Martin and Martin's (2014) findings that South African Millennials are considered more likely than other generations to leave an organisation if their expectations are not met. In particular, when there are perceived or actual violations of the psychological contract, as in Participant Two's case where she felt there were poor social relationships, an unsupportive boss, and a lack of opportunity for her to develop her skills (Botha & Moalusi, 2010).

The human resource practitioners also discussed reciprocity in the exchange relationship between the younger Millennials and the organisation. Participant Six commented that *"I think that there is still probably a mismatch between the organisation's expectations and what they get from a Millennial...both ways"*. The human resource practitioners recognised that the Millennials contribute to organisational success however they felt there was often a lack of reciprocity as Millennials simply focussed on their expectations being met and not the organisation's expectations. Participant Eight commented that *"not everything is according to how a Millennial wants to work and sometimes you also have to understand that there's a bit of give and take"*. She went on to say that *"cool dream big and these are the things that we can give you but you also need to give us you know, and there are times for being a little bit more I suppose committed, serious...hard work"*. The human resource practitioners also discussed the extent of Millennials' expectations, for example, one participant noted that *"they need to maybe to be balanced and more realistic in terms of expectations"* (P7). Participant Nine commented that *"Millennials are like okay now what's the organisation going to do for me... so who is going to mentor me...where's my space...it's a whole different ball game"*. In general the human resource practitioners seemed more balanced in terms of their perceptions of the exchange relationship, recognising that there is often a lack of understanding and alignment in expectations. This more balanced view on the psychological contract among Millennials and organisations may be attributed to the fact that human

resource practitioners play a key role in maintaining the employment relationship and have a wider perspective (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

This theme focused on the link between the three main constructs of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and the psychological contract. In particular, the recently employed Millennials' experiences as newcomers in organisations were explored in an attempt to understand their perceptions of their current organisations. The younger Millennials used various aspects in order to evaluate their current organisations, including the perceived existence of the attractiveness attributes they valued and evaluations of organisational identities. Furthermore, their psychological contract expectations gained through socialisation, external employer branding initiatives, and individual experiences were used as a framework to evaluate the organisation and the perceived promises made by themselves and their current organisation. The younger Millennials' experiences were impacted by co-workers and, in particular, supervisors, who often act as a proxy for the organisation in the psychological contract (Sherman & Morley, 2015). Furthermore the Millennials identified valuing and expecting positive working environments and development opportunities – the onus for providing these did seem to be placed on the Millennials' co-workers and supervisors. Thus an implication of this research is that supervisors and co-workers play an essential role in perceptions of the organisation and the psychological contract. This, along with the interplay of generational differences in the workplace, often contributes to perceived lack of reciprocity and conflict among Millennials, other generational groups, and organisations.

## **Chapter Four: Conclusions and implications**

### **Conclusions**

This study found that the generational phenomenon may have to be explored further in the South African context as the participants' perceptions and understandings of workplace generations differed from US-centric definitions and understandings of workplace generations. The collapse of Apartheid is considered to have caused a binary split between Apartheid and post-Apartheid in civil society (Habib & Kotzé, 2003). The sanctions, boycotts, and disinvestment that started in the 1950s and gained impetus in the 1980s meant that South Africa was isolated from the rest of the world (Man, 1996). Furthermore the Apartheid government actively withheld information from their citizens (Man, 1996). Consequently, democratisation resulted in the free flow of information and rapid exposure to international influences, such as technology and globalisation, which had been delayed. The collapse of Apartheid and the structural changes that took place constituted key South African events that were used to determine generational groups by the participants in this study; this meant that in this study US-centric definitions did not suffice. The data provided by the participants also suggested that changes in the social, political, and economic structure of the country following the collapse of Apartheid not only initiated the beginning of a 'born free' generation but also influenced the defining of other generations in this context

The participants in this study both felt that and demonstrated to some extent that the Millennial generation in South Africa is split into an older Millennial generation and a younger 'born free' Millennial generation; and this split was attributed to structural changes that took place surrounding the advent of democracy (Martins & Martins, 2014). The collapse of Apartheid and rapid advancements in technology were recognised as pivotal events that defined younger Millennials and separated them from other older generational groups. Consequently, these two factors were seen as creating a binary split in society and were used as the overarching factors to define and understand South African generations by the participants. Thus possible further research should explore South African understandings of workplace generations, in particular the 'born free' generation.

The notion of generation being a source of identity that individuals may or may not subscribe to was also identified from the data in this study. The recently employed Millennials in this study demonstrated a relatively high degree of identifying and recognising themselves as younger Millennials; this cohort was defined as individuals who had only experienced a post-

Apartheid South Africa where technology and information flowed freely. Some of the other generational groups did not demonstrate the same degree of generational belonging as the younger Millennials, but also used the collapse of Apartheid and rapid technology as events to situate their generation. Thus this study further demonstrated that generation is a source of identity for only some of the participants and there are also degrees of identification with a generational group (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017). The participants also identified that generational differences play out in the workplace due to different values, expectations, and approaches to work. Consequently the existence of generational differences as a workplace phenomenon in the South African context was identified by the participants to some extent.

The overarching aim of this study was to explore perceptions of Millennials, in particular the younger Millennial cohort, with regards to prioritised employer attractiveness attributes and psychological contract expectations. The two sample groups of recently employed Millennials, identified as belonging to the younger Millennial group, and human resource practitioners, who considered themselves as different from the younger Millennials, both provided their perceptions of younger Millennials' perspectives on these issues. The study found that distinct differences existed between the two samples in terms of their perceptions of the younger Millennial generations' values, preferences, and expectations in the workplace. The human resource practitioners identified two main attractiveness factors: flexible working hours, particularly as a mechanism for allowing Millennials to have social relationships outside of the workplace; and organisations that emphasise corporate social responsibility. These attributes, in particular flexible working hours, are common factors believed to be valued by Millennials in literature and the popular press based on traditional, US-centric definitions (Becton et al., 2014); however these factors were not aligned with the younger Millennials' perceptions. The recently employed Millennials identified that their own preferences were shared among other younger Millennials and emphasised social relationships with colleagues and supervisors in addition to opportunities for development as primary attractiveness attributes. The presence of these attractiveness attributes within an organisation was also identified as important for sustaining positive affect towards the organisation. The lack of alignment between the two samples may have implications for South African workplaces as the approaches used to attract, motivate, and retain employees may be based on incorrect assumptions of what younger Millennials want from organisations.

Exploration into participants' perceptions of Millennial expectations of the organisation and the psychological contract demonstrated that the younger Millennials' evaluations of the

organisation were somewhat more complex than the human resource practitioners alluded to, as the younger Millennials compared their current experiences with their prioritised attractiveness attributes and expectations (gained through socialisation and employer branding). The exchange relationship between employers and employees was also considered by both sample groups. Most of the younger Millennials felt that there was a lack of mutuality as the organisation was receiving more from them than they were providing. However the human resource practitioners believed the younger Millennial generation wanted the organisation to contribute more to the employment relationship than they were prepared to give to the organisation. Although this is not contrary to the literature regarding mutuality in the employment relationship, the exploration of the psychological contract began to tap into the complexity of younger Millennial participants' perceptions' regarding their evaluations of organisations and suggested that interventions may be needed to allow for better understanding between generations.

### **Implications**

The analysis in the study demonstrated various findings that with further exploration may be found to be broader trends. A brief discussion of some of the implications of these key findings follows below.

The concept of workplace generations in the South African context was a central aspect of this study. The findings highlighted that for the participants, generational identity was determined by proximity to the collapse of Apartheid and the consequential rapid flow of advanced technology. These two pivotal events were overarching factors used to define and distinguish generational groups from each other. An implication of this is that there needs to be further exploration of the conceptualisation of generations within South Africa, as there is a possibility that the definitions used widely in theory and practice are based on US-centric events and understandings that do not accurately reflect generations in the South African context. Hence, similar to Cadiz and colleagues (2015), an argument can be made that a generation needs to be understood and determined by the specific events that have a formative impact for a group of individuals within a particular context. Hence there is a need for further context-specific research and possibly the development of localised workplace-generation theory.

The conceptualisation of the 'Millennial' generation in particular may need further consideration, as within this study the participants perceived a binary split within the

traditional age-based 'Millennial' cohort based on proximity to Apartheid. Similar to Martins and Martins' (2012; 2014) findings, this was based on a division between older 'Millennials' born during Apartheid but not old enough to actively participate in the system; and younger 'Millennials', also known as 'born-frees', who were born after the Apartheid system was abolished. There is a need for further research to determine whether this binary split in the Millennial generation is a broad trend in the South African context, as there may be empirical differences and/or similarities between the Millennial cohorts. A practical implication of these findings may be that 'born frees' and older Millennials differ in their values, perceptions, and ways of thinking; and consequently organisations may need to change their strategies in order to attract, motivate, and retain these different cohorts.

This study also began to tap into the perceptions of the nine participants on what attracts, motivates, and keeps Millennials at organisations. The concepts of employer attractiveness and branding as well as psychological contract expectations provided the forum in which to explore these perceptions. The recently employed Millennials in the study emphasised the importance of social relationships within the workplace and development opportunities as factors that both attracted and kept them at organisations. In addition, reputation was identified as an initial factor attracting them to the organisation and application, opportunities to apply expertise and convey knowledge (Berthon et al., 2005; Reis & Braga, 2016) were identified as attractiveness factors to a lesser extent. These findings, if supported by further research, could suggest that organisations may need to focus on creating working environments that promote positive social relationships, provide recognition for employees' contributions and development opportunities, and allow individuals to apply their knowledge and skills to their work. Moreover, organisational reputation should also possibly be included in employer branding initiatives as despite it being valued more as an initial attractiveness attribute it was still seen as an important attribute in attractiveness evaluations.

Another important trend that was identified in the data was that there was a mismatch between the perceptions of the two sample groups with regards to attractiveness, as the human resource practitioners identified flexible working hours and corporate social responsibility as the prioritised attractiveness factors for Millennials. This mismatch could possibly be attributed to human resources practitioners assuming that South African Millennials are defined by US-centric definitions and share the same values as their global counterparts. This study did find an overlap in what was valued by the Millennial participants

with international trends and assumptions; however there were also important differences which may reflect the unique characteristics of the younger South African Millennials.

The importance of social interactions and relationships and the image of an organisation for Millennials were identified by both of the two sample groups but there was a mismatch in the underlying motivation attributed to these factors and this resulted in a disconnect between how these factors were understood and manifested in organisations. This highlights the importance of qualitative research to identify these types of distinctions in perceptions. A practical implication of this mismatch is that if the motives of Millennials are not fully understood by individuals involved in managing the employment relationship, organisations are likely to use employer branding initiatives that do not effectively attract, motivate, and retain this generation. These findings support the need for further research to explore perceptions of attractiveness among Millennials which would provide a basis for developing understanding among human resource practitioners as to which strategies would be most effective to employ.

The exploration into psychological contract expectations provided further insight into the role that the psychological contract plays in retaining Millennials. The human resource practitioners worked off seemingly standard assumptions that Millennials have high expectations of organisations and do not acknowledge the reciprocity that should take place in the employment relationship. The sample of recently employed Millennials did primarily focus on their expectations of the organisation and seemed relatively unaware of the organisations' reciprocal expectations of them. However whether this was a function of generational membership or a career-stage issue due to a lack of experience still remains unanswered. Hence practical implications that may be beneficial throughout organisations involve the articulation of psychological contract expectations by both employees and organisations. This may be particularly useful for Millennials as they seem to be more willing to leave an organisation if their expectations are not met.

The findings demonstrated that there was also a mismatch in perceptions on the manifestation of generational differences in the workplace among the participants. The younger Millennials identified hierarchy as a key difference that separated them from other generations; and further indicated that they did not abide by hierarchical structures. In contrast, the human resource practitioners identified work ethic as being the key difference between Millennials and older generational groups. This has useful practical implications as these mismatches in

values and perceptions are likely to cause hostility between generational groups and have negative effects for important organisational outcomes such as productivity and work satisfaction. Furthermore it may be difficult for individuals to compromise or shift their mind set regarding perceived generational differences. Hence there is a need for further exploration into ways in which perceptions of generational differences and stereotyped behaviours play out in the workplace to assist human resource practitioners in mediating the relationships between generational groups and thus improving inter-generational relations.

This is a base study of the generational phenomenon in the South Africa workplace. The analysis in this study demonstrated various preliminary findings that provided insight into important themes from the literature and the perceptions of a small group of participants which merit further exploration in the South African context. With further exploration, the findings in this study may be found to be common or prevalent, thereby providing more generalisable theoretical and practical implications. This study, has, however, provided an important starting point on which further empirical work can be based.

### **Strengths**

The overarching strength of this study was that the generational phenomenon within the South African context was explored in a manner that did not impose US-centric generational definitions and extant theories and rather let the participants' understandings and perceptions guide the process. Hence the utilisation of a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis allowed for the nine interviews to strongly inform the discussion as the themes that emerged were not pre-determined and yet both aligned with and questioned extant literature. The methodology also allowed for the researcher to continually use a process of reflexivity to better understand the perceptions of the participants and to consider her own preconceptions and perceptions (Attia & Edge, 2017). The study was further strengthened by the use of an above-and-below (self-and-other) perspective which provided insight into the two sample groups' perceptions whilst still giving "privilege to the perspectives" (Fossey et al., 2002, p.723) of each individual. The constructs of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and the psychological construct provided frameworks in which to situation and compare findings. Finally, South Africa provided a forum in which to explore the generation phenomenon in a context with its own historical events which were influential within this context but had limited influence in other geographical areas (Cadiz et al., 2015). These factors allowed for new insight to be gained and possible consideration of this to take place in future research.

## **Limitations**

There were a number of limitations within the study. Firstly, the sample consisted predominantly of female participants and this may have influenced the findings as gender differences have been found in the prioritisation of organisational attractiveness dimensions (Almıaçık & Almıaçık, 2012; Reis & Braga, 2016) and the perceived existence of valued attractiveness dimensions within organisations (Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007). Furthermore, despite gender differences being identified as influencing work-related values and behaviours, the effect of gender on generational differences has not been fully explored (Parry & Urwin, 2011). Thus the findings regarding attractiveness and expectations may have reflected the gender composition of the sample. Further research should take the role gender may play in perceptions of attractiveness and generations into account for both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

The ‘above’ perspective in the study consisted only of the views obtained from human resource practitioners however there are other role-players with expertise in human behaviour in the workplace (e.g. industrial psychologists and talent managers). These perspectives were not able to be incorporated into the study due to practical limitations. The expansion of the ‘above’ perspective is an important consideration for future research as it would allow for alternate viewpoints of professionals with direct involvement in managing people, recruitment, and evaluation to be captured and would thus be very useful for further theory development.

The participants were from different organisations which meant that their perceptions were based on different organisations and organisational cultures. Furthermore the recently employed Millennials also had different roles within the financial industry and related industries. Research demonstrates that individuals who entered into an organisation at the same time in relatively similar roles are likely to have shared experiences of an organisation (Joshi et al., 2010); thus the participants were unlikely to have shared experiences of organisations. However, due to the influence of socialisation in the formative years of the younger Millennials’ lives it is possible that their expectations, values, and preferences to some extent were already set and their experiences simply influenced their attitudes (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010; Lub et al., 2014; Lyons & Kuron, 2014). The findings of this study demonstrated a strong degree of similarity in perceptions of the Millennial generation among the sample of recently employed Millennials participants whilst among the sample of human resource practitioners the perceptions were similar to a lesser degree. Hence valuable insights

regarding the generational phenomenon and communalities and differences in perceptions were identified. Nevertheless it would have been beneficial to compare individuals from the same organisation resulting in a degree of shared organisational experience for the purpose of fully exploring individuals within a sample group and the above-and-below (self-and-other) perspective.

The researcher was relatively inexperienced as an interviewer and consequently may have led the participants down a particular path even though every effort was made to ensure that this did not take place. Furthermore the researcher identified herself as belonging to the 'born free' Millennial generation and as such may have had certain biases when conducting the analysis. The researcher acknowledged and accepted that qualitative research is inherently subjective through various measures such as a reflective journal and an audit trail however unconscious bias in the interpretation of the data remains a possibility. A final limitation is that the perceptions of nine participants cannot be generalised to other South African employees, however this study provided an in-depth understanding of the nine participants' perceptions and the findings merit further exploration.

### **Recommendations**

This study found that the concept of workplace generations in South Africa may be defined differently in comparison to international, US-centric based understandings, and thus a critical recommendation for future research is further qualitative exploration into generational understandings and definitions within the South African context. In addition, the use of an above-and-below (self-and-other) perspective provided some insight into two groups' perceptions of the phenomenon. Thus future work comparing and contrasting perspectives between different types of participants and the expansion of the 'above perspective' to include more professionals involved in managing employees may be valuable. Quantitative exploration may help to determine the alignment between actual and assumed work-related values and expectations and may help to identify generalisable trends in this regard. Further exploration into the values of the 'born free' generation in the workplace may provide valuable academic and practical insights as this area remains relatively untapped. Finally, according to Habib and Kotzé (2003), South Africa represents a "useful laboratory for investigation and understanding the social phenomena because of its transient nature...where the old and the new exist" (p.246). Thus due to the strong distinctions between groups based on proximity to the Apartheid system and the role this was identified as playing in the conceptualisation of workplace generations in South Africa, further exploration in this

context may provide new and exciting insights into the social phenomenon of generations and may help to advance localised theoretical understanding and effective practice in the area.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Invitation email (recent employees)**

Dear potential participant,

My name is Miri Williamson. I am currently completing my Masters in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirement for the degree we are required to conduct research and complete a research report on the findings we obtain.

The focus of my research is to explore perceptions of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and employer expectations for employees classified as ‘Millennials’. I am looking for individuals who have been employed in a full-time position for a maximum of two years in an organisation and who fit the definition for Millennials (individuals who entered the job market after 2000).

Participation will involve you volunteering to take part in a face-to-face interview with myself that should take about half-an-hour to forty-five minutes. As a participant, your identity will be kept strictly confidential and no information that could identify you as an individual will be included in the research report. Feedback for the findings of the study in the form of a summary will be provided to you if requested. More details about the study and how to participate are provided in the full participant information sheet that has been attached. If you would be willing to participate in my study, please contact me – my details are included below.

Thank you for considering participation in my study.

Kind regards,

Miri Williamson

Email: [miriwilliamson@gmail.com](mailto:miriwilliamson@gmail.com)

## **Appendix B: Invitation email (human resource practitioners)**

Dear potential participant,

My name is Miri Williamson. I am currently completing my Masters in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirement for the degree we are required to conduct research and complete a research report on the findings we obtain.

The focus of my research is to explore perceptions of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and employer expectations for employees classified as ‘Millennials’ – individuals who entered the workplace since the year 2000. I am looking for individuals who have been working in human resource recruitment for an organisation and who have a minimum of five years of experience in this role.

Participation will involve you volunteering to take part in a face-to-face interview with myself that should take about half-an-hour to forty-five minutes. As a participant, your identity will be kept strictly confidential and no information that could identify you as an individual will be included in the research report. Feedback for the findings of the study in the form of a summary will be provided to you if requested. More details about the study and how to participate are provided in the full participant information sheet that has been attached. If you would be willing to participate in my study, please contact me – my details are included below.

Thank you for considering participation in my study.

Kind regards,

Miri Williamson

Email: [miriwilliamson@gmail.com](mailto:miriwilliamson@gmail.com)

## Appendix C: Participation information sheet (recent employees)



**Psychology**  
School of Human & Community Development  
**University of the Witwatersrand**  
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050  
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



Dear potential participant,

My name is Miri Williamson. I am currently completing my Masters in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirement for the degree we are required to conduct research and complete a research report on the findings we obtain. A focus of my research is to explore perceptions of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and employer expectations for employees classified as 'Millennials'. I am looking for individuals who have been employed in a full-time position for a maximum of two years at an organisation and who fit the definition for Millennials (individuals who entered into the job market after 2000).

If you meet the criteria outlined above, I would like to invite you to take part in my research. Participation will involve you volunteering to take part in a face-to-face interview with myself that should take about half-an-hour to forty-five minutes. When you arrive at the interview venue you will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and sign two consent forms. I require your consent to participate in the study and your consent for the interview to be audio-recorded as your responses to the questions need to be accurately transcribed. I will specifically need your permission to directly quote your responses although these will be confidential as I will make sure that there is no information that could identify you as an individual included in the research report. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the recordings and full transcriptions which will be stored on a password-protected computer. The recordings will be destroyed when the research is complete. With your permission, copies of your transcript with all identifying information removed will be kept indefinitely for research purposes provided that all identifying information is removed and that you consent to this.

As a participant, your identity will be kept strictly confidential and no information that could identify you as an individual will be included in the research report. You can also choose to leave at any time during the interview if you feel uncomfortable with no penalty, and you are also free to choose to not answer any questions you do not wish to answer during the interview. There are no direct benefits for participating in the study, and it is not anticipated that you will experience any risks to your well-being during the data collection. You will be able to ask any questions you have about the research at the end of the interview. In addition you have right to ask for any information that has been discussed to be excluded. Feedback for the findings of the study in the form of a summary will be provided to you if requested.

Your consent and participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Should you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Kind regards,

Miri Williamson

Supervisor: Nicky Israel

Email: [miriwilliamson@gmail.com](mailto:miriwilliamson@gmail.com)

Email: [nicky.israel@wits.ac.za](mailto:nicky.israel@wits.ac.za)

## Appendix D: Participation information sheet (human resource practitioners)



**Psychology**  
School of Human & Community Development  
**University of the Witwatersrand**  
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050  
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



Dear potential participant,

My name is Miri Williamson. I am currently completing my Masters in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirement for the degree we are required to conduct research and complete a research report on the findings we obtain. A focus of my research is to explore human resource practitioners perceptions of employer attractiveness, employer branding, and employer expectations for employees classified as 'Millennials' – individuals who entered the workplace since the year 2000. I am looking for individuals who have been working in human resource recruitment for an organisation and who have a minimum of five years of experience in this role.

If you meet the criteria outlined above, I would like to invite you to take part in my research. Participation will involve you volunteering to take part in a face-to-face interview with myself that should take about half-an-hour to forty-five minutes. When you arrive at the interview venue you will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and sign two consent forms. I require your consent to participate in the study and your consent for the interview to be audio-recorded as your responses to the questions need to be accurately transcribed. I will specifically need your permission to directly quote your responses although these will be confidential as I will make sure that there is no information that could identify you as an individual included in the research report. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the recordings and full transcriptions which will be stored on a password-protected computer. The recordings will be destroyed when the research is complete. With your permission, copies of your transcript with all identifying information removed will be kept indefinitely for research purposes provided that all identifying information is removed and that you consent to this.

As a participant, your identity will be kept strictly confidential and no information that could identify you as an individual will be included in the research report. You can also choose to leave at any time during the interview if you feel uncomfortable with no penalty, and you are also free to choose to not answer any questions you do not wish to answer during the interview. There are no direct benefits for participating in the study, and it is not anticipated that you will experience any risks to your well-being during the data collection. You will be able to ask any questions you have about the research at the end of the interview. In addition you have right to ask for any information that has been discussed to be excluded. Feedback for the findings of the study in the form of a summary will be provided to you if requested.

Your consent and participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Should you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Kind regards,

Miri Williamson

Supervisor: Nicky Israel

Email: [miriwilliamson@gmail.com](mailto:miriwilliamson@gmail.com)

Email: [nicky.israel@wits.ac.za](mailto:nicky.israel@wits.ac.za)

## Appendix E: Consent form for the interview



**Psychology**  
School of Human & Community Development  
**University of the Witwatersrand**  
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050  
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in the research being undertaken by Miri Williamson for her study on Millennials' perceptions of employer attractiveness in the South African context and understand all information provided in the cover letter.

I understand that:

a) Participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw from the study at any stage with no penalty or negative consequences whatsoever should I wish to

☐

b) I do not have to answer any questions I do not want to answer

☐

c) There will be no direct benefits or foreseeable risks to participating in the study

☐

d) I will have an opportunity to ask any questions if I wish to do so at the end of the interview and can ask to withdraw any responses I am uncomfortable with

☐

e) Any information that could identify me as an individual will not be included when reporting the results of the study

☐

f) A pseudonym will be used in the research if I am quoted

☐

g) I am aware that the results of the study will be reported in the form of a research report for the partial completion of the

degree, Master of Arts in Organisational Psychology. The research may also be presented at both local and international conferences as well as be published in journals and/or book chapters

☐

- h) I am willing for my transcript to be kept for further research purposes provided that all information that could identify me as an individual is removed

☐

- i) I will be asked for permission to audio-record my interview as explained in the conditions in the separate consent form for audio-tape recording.

☐

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix F: Consent form for audio recording



**Psychology**  
School of Human & Community Development  
**University of the Witwatersrand**  
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050  
Tel: (011) 717 4500 Fax: (011) 717 4559



I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in the research being undertaken by Miri Williamson for her study on Millennials' perceptions of employer attractiveness in the South African context and understand all information provided in the cover letter.

I understand that:

- a) The audio-recording and transcript will only be processed by the researcher and her supervisor ☐
- b) No identifying information will be used in the research report in order to keep my identity confidential. If I am quoted directly, a pseudonym will be used. ☐
- c) I am willing for my transcript to be kept for further research purposes provided that all information that could identify me as an individual is removed ☐

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_.

In addition,

- d) I give permission for the researcher to use direct quotations from the audio-recording used during the interview provided that my identity is kept confidential and that I will be referred to by a pseudonym.

| YES | NO |
|-----|----|
|     |    |

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix G: Demographic form

### Demographic questionnaire

Dear participant,

The following information is requested for descriptive purposes only.

**Age:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:**

|             |               |               |  |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> | <b>Other:</b> |  |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|--|

**Race:**

|              |              |                 |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| <b>Asian</b> | <b>Black</b> | <b>Coloured</b> |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|

|               |              |               |  |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--|
| <b>Indian</b> | <b>White</b> | <b>Other:</b> |  |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--|

**Home**

**Language/s:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Job title/ position:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Time in career**

**(in years):**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Time in current**

**position (in years):**

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix H: Interview schedule for recent employees**

### Interview schedule (recent employees)

1. What initially attracted you to the organisation you are currently working at? More specifically what aspects of the organisation and/or the job were most influential in your employment decision?
2. As an employee, to what extent do you feel that the organisation has maintained this level of attractiveness? And why?
3. Prior to working for the organisation, what expectations did you have about:
  - the job
  - this specific organisation
  - the work environment generally
4. Do you feel that the organisation has met your expectations and kept the promises they made during the recruitment and selection process? Please explain
5. Do you feel that you have met the expectations of the organisation? In what ways?
6. Based on your experiences in the workplace, do you think generational differences exist in the workplace? Why?
7. What are your perceptions about employees who can be classified as Millennials, i.e. employees who started working after the year 2000?
8. What do think other generations' perceptions of Millennials are? Are these in line with your own perceptions of Millennials?
9. South African Millennials are typically defined as a group of individuals whose lives have been influenced by rapid advancements in technology, globalisation, and the democratisation of South Africa during childhood and adolescence. Do you feel you have been influenced by these events? If so, in what ways?
10. In what ways do you think your perceptions of the workplace are similar to employees who started working before 2000?
11. In what ways do you think your perceptions of the workplace are different to employees who started working before 2000?
12. Do you think that what attracts employees who started working after 2000 to organisations is different to what attracts employees who started working before 2000? In what ways?

13. Do you think that what employees who started working after 2000 expect from organisations is any different to what employees who started working before 2000 expect from organisations? In what ways?
14. Is there any further information you would like to add about the perceptions of employees classified as Millennials in the workplace or generally?

For Questions 1-5 and 12-13, additional prompts may be implemented as appropriate from the following list. Questions for all of these prompts would follow the form of “What about...?”

- i. Salary
- ii. Additional benefits (medical aid, retirement benefits, etc...)
- iii. (Good) opportunities for promotion
- iv. Opportunities to gain (career enhancing) skills and experience
- v. Job security
- vi. Time flexibility and working hours
- vii. Location and travel
- viii. Workload
- ix. Innovative practice and opportunities for creativity
- x. Excitement
- xi. A happy and/or fun working environment
- xii. Acceptance and belonging in the work environment
- xiii. Any other factors/ aspects not yet mentioned

## **Appendix I: Interview schedule for human resource practitioners**

### Interview schedule (human resource practitioners)

1. Based on your experiences in the workplace, do you think generational differences exist in the workplace? Why?
2. What are your perceptions about employees who can be classified as Millennials, i.e. employees who started working after the year 2000?
3. What do you think general perceptions of employees who started working after the year 2000 are in the workplace?
4. Millennials are often defined as GenerationMe, Generation Tech, Nexters, and Generation Y. Is this in line with your own perceptions of Millennials?
5. Based on your experience, which aspects of an organisation do you think are most influential for employees who started working after 2000 when choosing an employer?
6. Have you noticed any changes in the approaches used by organisations to attract employees who would be classified as Millennials? If so, what have these changes been?
7. Have you noticed any changes in the approaches used by organisations to motivate and retain employees who would be classified as Millennials? If so, what have these changes been?
8. Based on your experience, what expectations do employees who could be classified as Millennials seem to have about organisations?
9. Have you noticed any changes in expectations of organisations among employees who started working after the year 2000 in comparison to employees who started working prior to the year 2000? If so, what have these changes been?
10. Have you noticed any changes in what organisations expect of employees who could be classified as Millennials? If so, what have these changes been?
11. Do you think generational differences have an impact on organisational functioning, how they treat their employees, or how they perceive the organisation? If so, in what ways?
12. What do you feel has influenced your values, priorities, and the attitudes that you ascribe to generally?
  - political context

- social context
- economic factors

13. Is there any further information you would like to add about the perceptions of employees classified as Millennials in the workplace or generally?

For Questions 5-10, additional prompts may be implemented as appropriate from the following list. Questions for all of these prompts would follow the form of “What about...?”

- i. Salary
- ii. Additional benefits (medical aid, retirement benefits, etc...)
- iii. (Good) opportunities for promotion
- iv. Opportunities to gain (career enhancing) skills and experience
- v. Job security
- vi. Time flexibility and working hours
- vii. Location and travel
- viii. Workload
- ix. Innovative practice and opportunities for creativity
- x. Excitement
- xi. A happy and/or fun working environment
- xii. Acceptance and belonging in the work environment
- xiii. Any other factors/ aspects not yet mentioned

## Appendix J: Ethical clearance certificate

### UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

### HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)

#### CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: MORG/17/012 IH

#### PROJECT TITLE:

Millennials' perceptions of employer attractiveness in the South African context

#### INVESTIGATORS

Williamson Mini

#### DEPARTMENT

Psychology

#### DATE CONSIDERED

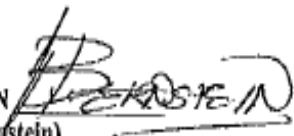
27/06/17

#### DECISION OF COMMITTEE\*

Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 27 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON   
(Dr Colleen Bernstein)

cc Supervisor:

Ms Nicky Israel  
Psychology

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#### **DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)**

To be completed in duplicate and one copy returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 10<sup>th</sup> floor, Senate House, University.

I/we fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

**This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019**