

**EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT FOR A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE:
AN INTEGRATIVE AND DYNAMIC MODEL**

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KERRY J. MITCHELL

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This dissertation has been accepted for
the faculty of Fielding Graduate University by

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary McCall, PhD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary McCall, PhD
Chair

Committee Members:

Dorothy E. Agger-Gupta, PhD, Faculty Reader
Jean-Pierre Isbouts, PhD, Faculty Reader
Heidi Forbes Öste, PhD, Student Reader
Stanley Deetz, PhD, External Examiner

Employee Empowerment for a Multigenerational Workforce:

An Integrative and Dynamic Model

by

Kerry J. Mitchell

Abstract

Many consider workplace empowerment to be a magic wand; once the empowerment wand is waved, employees will magically increase their job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and productivity. However, employee empowerment is a dynamic and complex process.

Existing measures have not been revised for two decades, before the proliferation of the Internet. As workplaces become increasingly diverse and participatory, empowerment ideals have changed. This exploratory study used qualitative methods to explore how employees experience workplace empowerment and how it differs between generations. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with 33 participants. Findings suggest that existing measures of employee empowerment need to be updated for today's workplace and workers.

Employee empowerment has frequently been divided between structural and psychological elements, although findings suggest that they both are required and have a reciprocal relationship. Data suggest that the four pillars to employee empowerment are autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership. Additionally, the amount provided must match employees' desired levels to be effective. Career and life stages showed higher significance in desired empowerment than generation did. Finally, an integrative and dynamic model of employee empowerment is presented.

Key words: empowerment, employee empowerment, workplace empowerment, psychological empowerment, generations, birth cohort, generational cohort, knowledge workers, multigenerational workforce

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

You know when you feel like something is right and you're doing it for the right reasons and it just feels good? That's what that empowerment thing is about, not only feeling that for yourself but for those that you work with. ~ Baby Boomer Bob

Many consider workplace empowerment to be a magic wand; once the empowerment wand is waved, employees will magically increase their job satisfaction, loyalty, commitment, and productivity. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that empowered employees have increased productivity, company loyalty, and higher overall happiness than employees who do not feel empowered (Baird & Wang, 2010; Daft, 2005; Manning & Curtis, 2012). Indirect rewards of employee empowerment are that happier employees are likely to remain employed longer at the organization and to work longer hours than disempowered employees, lowering turnover costs and increasing productivity (Appelbaum, Hébert, & Leroux, 1999). When employees are confident and autonomous, managers can spend less time making decisions for their employees and can spend time on other projects. Therefore, high levels of employee empowerment can result in happier individuals and higher productivity for organizations. The view that empowerment solves numerous problems is so prevalent that more than 70% of organizations have implemented some type of empowerment program within part of their workforce (Spreitzer, 2007a). Yet few organizations report success with empowerment programs (Yukl, 2012). Failure may be due to the lack of understanding of what workforce empowerment is and how to enact it. With confusion around the term and what it means, as well as programs such as self-directed teams that are the same for everyone, empowerment may not truly be achieved (Yukl & Becker, 2006). As Collins (1995) posited, empowerment often comes from management giving up control rather than understanding what individuals want.

Workplace empowerment is a complex process that is largely divided between the structural (managerial) and psychological perspectives. In most scholarly work, empowerment is considered either power given to employees by management or an individual psychological process undergone by an employee (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012). However, I argue that both structural and psychological elements are needed for true empowerment, as each is part of a holistic construct.

Another reason that empowerment may not be fully realized within organizations is that it is presumed by many to be the same for everyone and thus, implemented programs are often one-size-fits-all. However, a cookie-cutter approach overlooks the personal process of becoming empowered. As Wilkinson (1998) explained,

The degree of participation offered by empowerment is strictly within an agenda set by management and it tends not to extend to significant power sharing or participation in higher level strategic decisions such as product and investment plans. It tends to be within systems rather than over systems. (p. 29)

Empowerment is multifaceted; it relies on organizational structure, managerial behavior, peer input, and individual psychological state (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001). Employees must be given the necessary tools, resources, and permissions created by organizational structure while receiving trust and support from management (Maynard et al., 2012). Additionally, employees must want to have the level of autonomy and decision-making power they are afforded. Despite theories to the contrary, most of the employee empowerment literature assumes people want to be highly empowered and will act on empowerment opportunities. McGregor (1965/2011), for one, theorized that some people lack motivation and want to be told what to do. As an illustration that the all-or-nothing presumption is faulty, Greasley, Bryman, Dainty, and Price (2005) found that the level of decision-making power desired varied greatly among construction workers in similar

positions. To this point, Yukl and Becker (2006) estimated that many empowerment programs fail because some employees resist empowerment. They stated that employees may have been conditioned over time to follow orders and that additional responsibility may “induce fear and insecurity in some employees” (p. 220). The current study investigated which factors contribute to the varying levels of empowerment wanted by individual employees.

Few studies have looked at empowerment as a multifaceted and individualist process, and therefore, little is known about the impact of variables such as culture, gender, age, socio-economic status, or job type to the experience of employee empowerment. One’s sense of employee empowerment may be impacted by one’s attitudes, beliefs, and values (Greasley et al., 2005). Thus, it is worth exploring if empowerment in the workplace varies by generation as different generations may have varying interpretations and expectations of empowerment.

Generational cohorts within the same region and culture may share attitudes, beliefs, and values about work (Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 1999). Youth are developmentally influenced by society’s conditions at that time, which leads to their attitudes and expectations as adults (Sparks, 2012). For this reason, generations of workers may have different expectations of organizational behavior and levels of empowerment. While some studies have shown differences across generations in work values (Chen & Choi, 2008) and job satisfaction (Dries, Pepermane, & De Kerpel, 2008; Sparks, 2012), none have been found which specifically looked at empowerment. Views of empowerment may have changed with generations due to societal changes.

Older generations who grew up in a time when women and minorities were blocked from leadership positions may have different expectations than younger generations who grew up after the women's and civil rights movements. Since the '60s, more women and minorities have joined the workforce and have slowly been achieving higher ranks and changing organizational dynamics. Women comprised almost half of the U.S. workforce in 2012 compared to less than 40% in 1970 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Forty-three percent of Millennials, the largest population of the workforce, are non-White (Pew Research, 2014). It is unknown whether this changing workforce has impacted perceptions of employee empowerment.

In addition to being diverse, today's younger workers are more educated than past generations. More than 22% of workers aged 18 - 34 have a bachelor's degree compared to 15.7% in 1980 ("Millennials vs. Baby Boomers -- Census Explorer," n.d.). This rise in education has increased steadily since the '60s with each generation achieving higher education status than the previous generation (Pew Research, 2007). At the same time employees are becoming more educated, they are also experiencing advancement in technology. Employees of all ages now potentially have infinite amounts of information at their fingertips.

If empowerment is increased by access to information as many contest (Daft, 2005; Kanter, 1977; Laschinger et al., 2001), then the introduction of the Internet may have influenced how workers view empowerment, especially knowledge workers who rely on information to do their jobs. If workers have access to information outside of work, they may expect to have such access at work and may feel disempowered if they do not. The Internet and mobile technology not only makes information easily accessible, it also allows

people to voice their opinions instantly to millions of people with both positive and negative consequences. People of all generations can now comment immediately on services, products, and entertainment. Additionally, the Internet and mobile technology has afforded some workers the ability to work anywhere, thus changing the structure and boundaries of the traditional organization (Davis, Shapiro, & Steier, 2012). For these reasons, some scholars have prognosticated that work and personal lives are becoming blurred (Meister & Willyerd, 2010) and workers will need to have autonomy at work to change roles fluidly. With these societal changes, views and experiences of workplace empowerment may have been altered.

Within the last two decades, scholarly research in the management field of employee empowerment has largely relied on one scale, Spreitzer's (1995a; 1995b) psychological empowerment instrument. Although much has changed to both the workforce and the organizational landscape in the last 20 years, Spreitzer's scale has been uncontested. Additionally, the scale focuses on psychological aspects of employee empowerment and ignores structural and managerial components. In an era when working from home and work-life balance are common (Meister & Willyerd, 2010), it is plausible that organizational structure has a significant impact on employee empowerment.

For organizations to succeed at empowerment initiatives, they must understand how workers of varying generations perceive and experience empowerment. Organizations need to determine how much and what type of empowerment employees want. It is often assumed that control is a negative force in organizations, but some research shows that not all people want the same level of control (McGregor, 1965/2011; Teubner, 2001). Some people prefer less control and to be told what to do. This may be true for newer members to the workforce

who do not yet have confidence or experience. Once organizations understand what employees want, they can then cater to what is empowering for all generations. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the meaning and experiences of empowerment across generations. This study focused on employee empowerment experiences across generations in order to uncover similarities and differences. Therefore, this study was rooted in two theoretical frameworks: empowerment theory and generational theory. Empowerment theory is broad and covers a wide range of meanings and situations. For this study, empowerment theory as related to the workplace was examined. Generational theory and its relationship to life stage as epitomized at work were also examined.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory changes meaning according to its context (Sadan, 2004) and is used in this study in relation to the workplace. Spreitzer (1992) established a theoretical model of psychological empowerment in the workplace, but other scholars have posited that psychological empowerment is only part of the workplace empowerment equation. Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, and Wilk (2001) theorized that psychological empowerment is preceded by structural empowerment. They claimed the elements defined in Kanter's (1977) structural theory of power in organizations provided the foundation for psychological empowerment. Kanter's theory proposed that one cannot be empowered without equipment and information required to make decisions and to complete tasks (Amichai-Hamburger, McKenna, & Tal, 2008). Rather than looking at both organizational and individual empowerment, most scholars have reported on only one aspect. Thus, employee empowerment is divided between a structural context and the psychological process in which employees choose to accept and act on the power they hold (Philpot, 2013). Conversely,

early management scholar Mary Parker Follet (1925/2011) claimed that power was not linear but circular. She maintained that power was a relationship and that each party affected the other. The current study considered how different generations of workers experience both structural and psychological factors.

Generation Theory

Mannheim (1952) defined generations as groups of individuals born within a particular time span and culture who share a set of worldviews. Worldviews are created by shared experiences during the group's formative years. Shared experiences include pop culture, world events, social trends, economic realities, and behavioral norms (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Similar social experiences and exposure lead generations to have collective ideas and beliefs about marriage, family, money, and work (Cogin, 2012). While many theorists do not believe generations share specific personalities or traits, it is clear that social norms do impact generations. For example, divorce was not considered acceptable by many people in the US before the '60s, but rates surged in the 1960s and 1970s (Nunley & Zietz, 2008). Generations brought up when having divorced parents was common (Generation X and Millennials) may see marriage and divorce differently than older generations in which divorce was stigmatized. Looking at societal influences in this way supposes that generations may perceive work differently. With an increase of today's jobs geared toward knowledge work (Heckscher & Adler, 2006), workers' attitudes about work may be different than when jobs primarily revolved around manufacturing. Younger generations may have different expectations about work not because of generational characteristics, but because of their changing environment.

Differences in attitudes, beliefs, and values may also occur due to life stage rather than generation (Kelan, 2014). People's values may alter as they experience new challenges and situations in life. For example, starting a family may cause one to value work-life balance more than when one started a career and valued career advancement. One criticism of generational studies is that studies conducted with various generations simultaneously may only show what each generation thinks at that time, not what they thought at the same age, complicating what is due to generation versus life stage (Kelan, 2014). To overcome this challenge, many studies use cross-sectional designs that compare results of similar studies at various points in time. However, that was not appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of employee empowerment research in the last two decades has been quantitative and focused on correlating the impact of employee empowerment to benefits such as job satisfaction and affective commitment rather than exploring employees' experiences of empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). However, the most commonly used empowerment scales, Spreitzer's psychological empowerment instrument and the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) were developed before the proliferation of technology permitted telecommuting, instant communication across the globe, and social means to voice one's opinion to a mass audience. In addition to technological advancements, the workforce has become increasingly more diverse and educated than past generations of workers. Work is changing from manufacturing and manual labor to knowledge work. Therefore, the scales currently used may not be an accurate reflection of how workers today, especially knowledge workers, experience

employee empowerment. Organizations and society have evolved quickly in the last two decades since these empowerment measures were developed and thus, it is not known if current definitions of empowerment vary across generations. Existing scales are outdated and thus require a qualitative approach to investigate the unspoken meaning of empowerment to today's employees. Once it is determined what empowerment means to today's workers, a new quantitative measurement can be created. Qualitative data are required to understand the empowerment experience and to create an understanding of what future quantitative measures should accurately mirror in their indicators. Thus, this study used qualitative means, in the form of individual and group interviews, to determine what employee empowerment means to workers today.

Purpose of the Study

Meaning and experiences of empowerment vary across generations and may have changed over time due to social norms. Determining how employees view empowerment across generations contributes to both academia and practice. Within the management literature, this study informs the creation of a new definition and scale of employee empowerment. Understanding how empowerment is viewed across generations and what contributes to these views also contributes to generational theory. The findings of this study can assist organizations in implementing structural empowerment and to support employees in the psychological process of empowerment. One goal of this research was to determine if generation or life stage impacts this experience. Therefore, the guiding research question was

R1: "What does workplace empowerment mean to different generations of workers?"

Additional subquestions provided further information on how employee empowerment is interpreted and experienced. These questions are

Subquestion 1: “How is employee empowerment influenced by organizations?”

Subquestion 2: “How is employee empowerment influenced by psychological factors?”

Key Terms

Several terms need to be defined for the purposes of this study. Empowerment and generations do not have agreed upon definitions so the meanings used in this study are explained.

Baby Boomers: In this study, Baby Boomers are considered those born from 1946 – 1964. Although there is little agreement on actual birth years for each generation, the years used for this study reflect those used in the U.S. Census as well as Pew research (Bourne, 2009).

Employee empowerment: An ongoing, interactive process between an employee and the organization in which the organizational culture and leadership allow for employees to gain knowledge, information and resources that employees can then choose to use and act upon when making decisions and completing work tasks or activities.

Generation: A generation is a group of people who have grown up in a similar time period and share formative experiences such as world events, economic factors, and societal values which affects their behavior, attitudes and beliefs (Bourne, 2009). Generations are often referred to in the literature as age or birth cohorts.

Generation X (Gen X): In this study, Generation X is considered those born from 1965 – 1980.

Life stage: Life stage refers to what is important to an individual due to the period of life one experiences. People experience similar needs and behaviors as they mature such as saving money to have children or saving for retirement (Cogin, 2012). However, these stages may not occur at the same age. These stages, such as having children and retirement, may affect one's expectations and needs of work.

Millennials: In this study Millennials are considered those born from 1981 – 2000. They are also referred to as Generation Y and Generation Next (Strauss & Howe, 1992).

Power: Power has many definitions and perspectives. In this research, power is primarily related to organizational structures that provide employees access to information, access to resources, and offer support needed to complete tasks and work. It also involves providing opportunities for workers to develop skills (Kanter, 1977).

Psychological empowerment: Psychological empowerment is the individual process of becoming empowered. It has been defined by Spreitzer (1995a) as “a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact” (p. 1444). This meaning is used for the literature review. However, the results of this study demonstrate that psychological empowerment is an aspect of employee empowerment that involves confidence, meaning, life stage, career stage, and personal factors.

Structural empowerment: Structural empowerment is effort within the organization that can encourage individual empowerment. It includes access to information, resources and support. Additional components are determining how to do one's tasks and making decisions (Yukl & Becker, 2006).

Veterans: In this study, veterans are those individuals born 1922 to 1945. They are also known as the silent generation or traditionalists.

Assumptions and Limitations

As with any research, this study involved assumptions and limitations. First, it was assumed that participants are able to read and understand English. Unless participants asked questions during the session, it was assumed that they understand the discussion and answered probes honestly (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Finally, it was assumed that participants had work experiences that have made them feel empowered or disempowered and honestly depicted their memories and opinions as best they could.

Limitations. Because it is impossible to get data from all variances of workers, this study was limited to its particular participants, and thus is not a representative sample of all U.S. workers. Results are limited to stories of the industries and experiences of the participants in this study. Employee empowerment is a personal experience and one study cannot account for all factors that may affect this process. Additionally, the researcher may have introduced bias due to her experiences and perceptions of working with other generations.

Although longitudinal and cross-sectional data of people at different points in time may provide more accurate distinctions between the impact of generation and life stage on perceptions of empowerment, that was not the aim of this study and was not possible with the data collected and analyzed. Some differences in perceptions may be due to generational influences such as Internet technology, while others may be due to age and life stage. Additionally, participants may have answered questions based on their most recent

experiences that may not be representative of all of one's experiences or organizations for which one has worked.

Participants may not have felt that their confidentiality was protected or may have been subconsciously influenced by other participants in the focus groups. To mitigate this, the researcher reminded participants that the data would only be reported in aggregate and received signed confidentiality agreements from all participants.

Delimitations. This study was exploratory in nature, and thus was open to a broad spectrum of participants. The only criterion for participation was 3 years of work experience and to be residing in the US. Although the research did not determine differences across industries and position level, some comments provided insight that these factors are worth exploring in future research. The oldest generation, Veterans, were not used in this study due to the small percentage currently in the workforce.

Summary

This chapter has explained how empowerment is important for both individual and organization success and how it may differ among generations. The identification of how members of different generations experience empowerment and what barriers they face will help organizations and individuals effectively implement empowerment processes. The findings contribute to empowerment theory as well as generational cohort theory. The remaining chapters will provide the foundation of literature used to inform this study and describe the methodology used in this study. Chapter 2 discusses current definitions and understandings of power and empowerment then explains conceptualizations of generational cohorts and its relation to life stage. Chapter 3 identifies the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and Chapter 5 discusses the findings

in light of previous research and future research. In Chapter 5, a model of employee empowerment that encompasses both structural and psychological aspects is offered. This model highlights the four pillars of employee empowerment – autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership – as well as the impact of organizational and psychological influences.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this study in various scholarly discussions about empowerment and generational differences. The discussions surrounding the research question of this study include power and empowerment theory within the context of organizations, generational cohort theory, and life stage. All of these areas are broad, so the conversations here focus on the context of the study, which is organizations. To begin the conversation on empowerment, it is important to understand the roots of organizational power structures. Thus, the organization of this chapter starts with power in an organizational context, then moves to empowerment theory and conceptualizes structural and psychological empowerment. Once employee empowerment is established, the conversation will shift to generational cohort theory, then life stage. The chapter will end by reviewing the connection of generations and life stage to understanding empowerment experiences of today's workers.

Organizational Power Structures

Empowerment is the experience of power, and thus a discussion of power within organizations is crucial to understanding one's sense of employee empowerment. Power has many definitions but is generally considered to be influence and control over others or the self (Clegg, 1989). Power within organizations is often seen as managerial or positional power, which is the authority to reward or punish others. However, that does not fully override individual power. Although individuals are subject to organizational structures to keep their jobs, they may have a choice in the types of roles they accept and whether to stay employed with one organization.

Organizations provide a unique but complex environment for empowerment as they are comprised of intricate networks of power relationships which are socially constructed by the individuals within the organization (Orlikowski, 2000). Power is not a constant state of something one does or does not have, as it is a dynamic relationship. In organizations power comes from employees and customers who allow the organization to exist and to survive. In this way, power is continually being produced and reproduced as people leave and enter the organization (Clegg, 1989), and as clients' needs and desires change. Organizations lose power if customers no longer buy their goods or services or if employees no longer work there. Thus, power is not constant; power relationships are dynamic and are constantly being renegotiated by the involved parties.

Power must be given, and in turn taken and accepted (Fortunati, 2014). How power is presented depends on the context and system; power structures within a family are much different than in an organization (Dillard, 2013). Within organizations, power relationships are often established when an employee is offered a position and that individual accepts the offer and negotiates the particulars. Employees may gain value and power as they learn new skills and gain experience. Employees construct power relationships with their immediate managers and those above them. In terms of employees having power, it means they have access to information, resources, and support needed to complete tasks and work, as well as opportunities to develop.

Organizations often operate with hierarchical systems meaning that those higher in the hierarchy are given more authoritative power. Managers or others in higher-level positions have authority to hire or fire employees or initiate other actions that impact lower-level employees. Employees are often reliant upon their jobs for economic wellbeing, so

managers or those who can affect one's livelihood have power. The higher one is within the hierarchy, the more privilege and control one has (Deetz, 1992). In turn, those who obey and conform are rewarded and keep their jobs. Follett (1925/2001) described this type of power as "power-over": Management has power over employees and rewards them when they consent to rules and demands. She presented an alternative she referred to as "power-with." "Power-with" means jointly constructing power and collectively working together. Power-with empowers people to become active in the organizational processes in which they are involved. This is advantageous to organizations because, as Deetz (1992) posited, people in hierarchical organizations often shut down when they do not have a voice. When people do not have a say in what they do or they feel patronized, they may resist in ways such as doing minimal work.

Power-with concepts re-emerged in the 1980s and 1990s embodied in participative management, total quality circles, and self-directed teams (Daft, 2005). However, many of these programs failed. Programs fail when they are labeled as empowerment, but the organizational structure does not truly allow for it or if they are not actual empowerment (Yukl & Becker, 2006). If it is something that is said, but not actually implemented, employees will not feel empowered. It also does not work if it is a gimmick the organization uses to gain more control or to monitor or survey employees, but must be genuine (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). If employees feel they will be punished for participating in empowerment programs, they will not internalize or achieve empowerment. Factors including the organizational culture, the direct manager, departments, and coworkers must all be aligned to allow power to emerge and to be taken. Power-with includes personal and relational power as concepts rather than relying only on authority and reward or coercive power (Follett,

1925/2011). This is where many ideals of power fall short; they do not consider the relationships based on followers supporting those who are experts, likeable, or charismatic (Yukl, 2012). These aspects may be forgotten because they are hidden and not as visually embedded within cultures in ways such as titles.

Additionally, in American society, much of one's status in the community is derived from one's social role and wealth, resulting in one's occupation as a significant contributor to one's identity. In this way, organizations have power over workers not just in terms of a paycheck, but also in terms of their social identities. In order for this power to succeed, employees must internalize the identity constructed through the organization (Castells, 2010). Employees have the choice not to adopt and enact the roles they are given within an organization. Thus, power within organizations relies on the interdependent relationship between workers and organizations. Employees are constricted by organizational structures, but they also have agency.

What makes power dynamics even more complex is that they are always being reconstructed. Employees react to the organization and management, management reacts to them. This dynamic relationship is why Follett (1925/2011) concluded that organizational power is circular in nature rather than linear. Instead of power being something that is only passed down through ranks, she postulated that managers and subordinates have a mutually influential relationship. Subordinates may reinforce power structures by conforming or they may challenge them with different requests or resistance (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Power is socially constructed, but often those who reinforce those structures are not consciously aware of doing so (Sadan, 2004). By conforming and obeying, employees may not realize they are reinforcing the power structures that enable those with power to maintain that power.

Another reason these programs may fail is that not everyone wants power or has the required skills and knowledge. Some employees prefer to work within the expected norms (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Quinn and Spreitzer (1997) contended that telling workers they are empowered does not work as no one can empower anyone else. Those who are given opportunities for power must accept and act on that power. When thinking of power this way, it is not only a relationship one has with others, but also with the self (Gastil, 1998). It is up to individuals to internalize power and to become empowered.

Employee Empowerment

Empowerment, in any discipline, is difficult to define or measure, complicating how employee empowerment is conceptualized. Scholars have not reached consensus as to what empowerment is or how to define it (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011). It has been referred to as “an act (empowering someone), a process or a psychological state” (Menon, 2001, p. 157). There is no consensus on whether empowerment is something that is given, achieved, experienced, or if it is a lengthy process one undergoes. Several scholars indicate that empowerment is a perceived state which may differ from actuality (Spreitzer, 1995b). As Ergeneli, Arı, and Metin (2007) proclaimed, “Many studies of the concept of empowerment and just as many definitions of the term exist in the literature. No consensus occurs in defining the concept” (p. 42).

Confusion may stem from the term empowerment and its roots in other disciplines. Empowerment theory is often explored from the sociological and community perspective and refers to oppressed people such as the frail and elderly or marginalized populations (Boldy, Heumann, & McCall, 2000). Empowerment has also emerged in a vast array of disciplines such as health, education, religion, social work, political science, and management (Bartunek

& Spreitzer, 2006; Fortunati, 2014). Within these fields, there is not one universal definition or meaning of empowerment, although there are common themes across disciplines with the exception of management. According to Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006), empowerment in most disciplines is related to sharing power and fostering human welfare. It is only the management field which focuses on productivity and employee output (Bartunek & Spreitzer, 2006).

According to empowerment theory, empowerment changes with its context (Fortunati, 2014), which is why it has a different meaning within organizations. Thus, while the foundational and conceptual aspects of empowerment are recognized here, this study will focus on empowerment in the context of organizations. Spreitzer (1992) labeled this as role empowerment, although she focused on a particular role within a specific organization. This study explored how employees define and experience workplace empowerment throughout their work life, not only for one position or organization.

Many studies, such as Spreitzer's consider only the management perspective. In order to create a truly empowered workforce, employee empowerment needs to be understood from the employee perspective rather than only from management's point of view. Empowerment is felt by the employees, so their perceptions must be understood to gain a complete comprehension of what empowerment means. Without the employee perspective, empowerment initiatives may not succeed if they do not address what employees at all levels consider empowerment. As work processes have changed and technology has proliferated, employees may have different perspectives than management as to what is truly empowering. Much of this confusion may stem from perceptions of management rather than employees and from outdated ideas of empowerment that have not embraced workplace

changes. Using only management perspectives of empowerment may limit findings to traditional ideas of power-over rather than power-with. Therefore, there is a need to understand employee empowerment from the employee's perspective in context of today's technological world.

Empowerment within organizations has been referred to as workplace empowerment (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008), organizational empowerment (Matthews, Diaz, & Cole, 2003), employee empowerment (Baird & Wang, 2010; Jarrar & Zairi, 2002; Petter, Byrnes, Choi, Fegan, & Miller, 2002) and psychological empowerment (Appelbaum et al., 1999; Boudrias, Gaudreau, Savoie, & Morin, 2009; Dewettinck & van Amejide, 2011; Kraimer, Seibert, & Liden, 1999). These terms are used interchangeably; they are defined similarly, and often use the same measurement. This is problematic as what is being measured is often not clear and thus learning cannot be applied to or implemented in actual workplaces. For the purposes of this study, the term *employee empowerment* is used because it most accurately reflects the organizational context as well as the individual process of the employee.

Conceptualizations of employee empowerment vary from decision-making power (Pardo del Val & Lloyd, 2003), motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), and the ability to influence change (Sadan, 2004). For these reasons, Jarrar and Zairi (2002) claimed that "employee empowerment can be termed the most arguable concept in the management of the 1990s" (p. 268). Because there is not agreement on what empowerment is, it is often studied within two classifications: structural and psychological (Yukl & Becker, 2006).

The division is rooted between the organization and personal power, referred to as structural empowerment and psychological empowerment. *Structural* (also called *relational*

or *managerial*) *empowerment*, is seen as something that management does to empower employees such as delegating or sharing power (Spreitzer, 1995a). Management may also allow decision-making authority or provide resources and information to employees. Many studies, especially those from the '70s to '90s, associate empowerment in terms of those with power giving power to those in lower level positions. "Empowerment is the process of passing authority and responsibility to individuals at lower levels in the organizational hierarchy" (Paul, Niehoff, & Turnley, 2000, p. 472). In contrast, *psychological empowerment* is the individual process each employee experiences in a unique manner, often referred to as intrinsic motivation (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Recently, management theorists have focused more on the psychological aspects of empowerment although the structural aspects are often measured in studies of nursing (Laschinger et al., 2001; Sparks, 2012). Based on Kanter's (1977) model, management scholars have postulated that both perspectives of empowerment are needed and that structural empowerment is an antecedent for an individual's perception of psychological empowerment which then leads to desired positive behaviors (Laschinger et al., 2001). In this model (see Figure 1), structural empowerment is the presence of conditions in the workplace that facilitate the psychological empowerment.

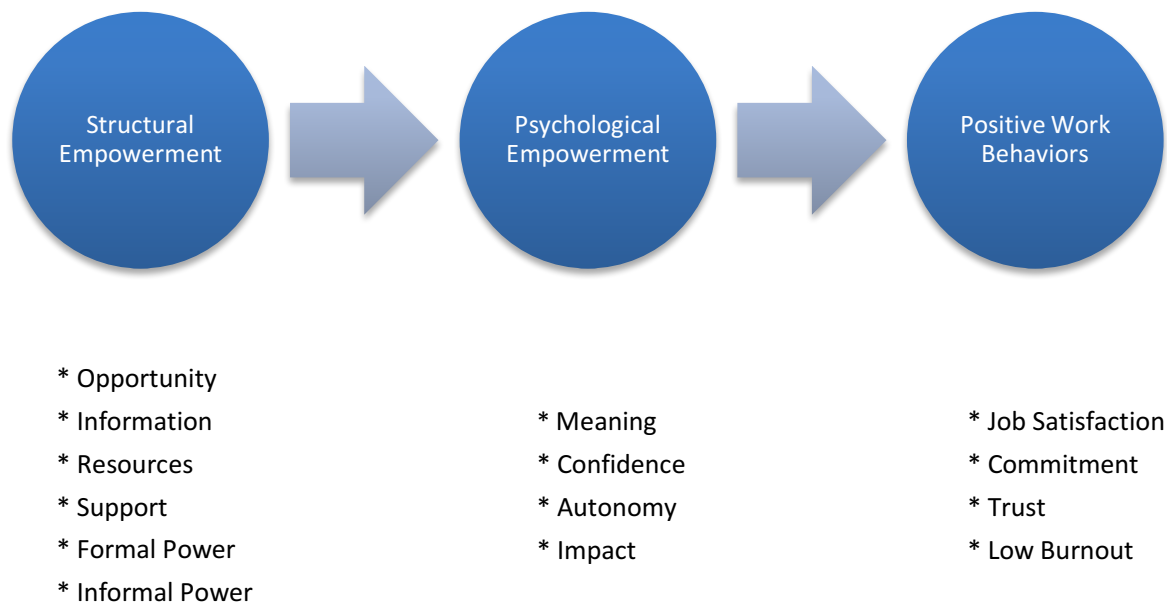


Figure 1. Expanded workplace empowerment model (adapted from Laschinger et al., 2001).

Laschinger et al. (2001) reported this as “psychological empowerment represents a reaction of employees to structural empowerment conditions” (p. 529). However, this model does not account for human agency involved with structural empowerment. Employees may not choose to apply for positions in which they do not feel confident or competent. Someone new to the workforce may not want to start on day one as a CEO, which means he or she may opt for a position more in line with his or her capabilities and knowledge. This is just one way psychological elements may come into play before an employee enters a particular organization. To understand the relationship of structural and psychological perspectives of empowerment it is helpful to focus on each perspective of empowerment separately.

The Structural Empowerment Lens

To be consistent with empowerment theory’s importance of the individual’s environment, the organization and its culture must be considered as an influence of employee

empowerment. An employee may wish to be empowered, but if management does not allow for it by upholding strict hierarchies and maintaining rigid control, the employee will not be able to act on it (Kanter, 1989). Structural components are most often viewed in terms of management behavior and decision-making processes and the result in terms of employee productivity. In this view, managers empower employees when they give them access to information, resources, and other elements required to effectively complete their jobs or to make decisions about work tasks (Ichatha, 2013). Organizational leaders can give employees what they need to empower themselves in such ways as education and training, providing mentorships, and acting as coach and supporter (Appelbaum et al., 1999). Management essentially removes the barriers to power. These ideals are derived from Kanter's structural theory of power in organizations.

Kanter (1977) posited that employees can only feel empowered when their work conditions facilitate opportunities to complete work tasks effectively. Required elements are access to lines of information, support, resources, and chances to learn and grow. Access to information includes the organization's mission, goals, and values as well as information about employee performance (Appelbaum et al., 1999). It may be difficult for employees to complete work or make decisions if they do not know how these tasks relate to the organization overall. Employees need to have information about the company in order to do their jobs and they need to have the power to make decisions that affect customers (Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). Kanter suggested that in order to be empowering, organizations must "make more information available to more people at more levels through more devices" (cited in Spreitzer, 1995b, p. 608). Support is explained as feedback and guidance given from superiors and peers to employees about how an employee does his or her job.

Resources include time and equipment needed to complete tasks as well as rewards and recognition (Laschinger et al., 2001). When employees have these sources of power, they are able to complete their work effectively, however their power is constrained if they do not have these characteristics.

For empowerment to work, it must be embedded within the culture rather than used as a ploy to make employees perceive control that they do not really have and it must be a true act of empowerment (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008). In a discussion of empowerment over the last 50 years, Yukl and Becker (2006) present empowerment programs such as employee stock ownership plans, open management (sharing information), and self-managed teams. None of these programs achieve empowerment as defined from either the structural or psychological perspectives. Employee stock ownership plans may provide employees with a sense of ownership, but does not mean that they have control or freedom in day-to-day activities or decisions. Sharing information is an important aspect introduced by Kanter (1977), but is not the whole of empowerment. Self-managed teams are the closest of the programs listed at giving employees actual power and influence. However, self-managing teams may actually restrict one's choice due to concertive control (Barker, 1999) in which the group members act as gatekeepers and manage choices together rather than from one manager. Two ways organizations can implement empowerment programs that provide actual influence are by decentralizing decision-making, flattening hierarchies, and increasing employee participation (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2004). If power remains at the top of the hierarchy and is not actually shared, empowerment will not occur. In fact, it may be disempowering if employees feel that the organization is being deceptive. When employees feel powerless, they become less motivated and experience more mental health

issues (Pasmore, 2001). Thus, structural work conditions impact one's sense of empowerment.

Structural Measurement: The Conditions for Work Effectiveness Scale. The Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) I and II (Laschinger et al., 2001) are scales that account for structural empowerment using Kanter's work as a guide. The CWEQ II is a shortened version of the CWEQ I. Laschinger et al. (2004) explained that the CWEQ is designed to measure the work conditions that can lead to psychological empowerment. This scale includes structural elements of opportunity, information, support, resources, as well as informal and formal power. The main sections of the scale are (a) access to opportunity, (b) access to information, (c) access to support, (d) access to resources, (e) informal power (connections inside and outside of the organization), and (f) formal power (flexibility, visibility), (see Appendix A for full scale and indicators).

While this model accounts for Kanter's (1977) conception of workplace empowerment, it does not include significant aspects of empowerment such as decision-making or control. Similarly to Paul et al., (2000), Yukl and Becker (2006) described empowerment in terms of decision-making power. They defined it as "the perception that workers can help determine their own work roles, accomplish meaningful work, and influence important decisions" (p. 210). Yet this measurement does not specifically ask about decision-making or one's level of control, so it may not reflect a true measure of employee empowerment.

In this model, structural empowerment is seen as an antecedent to psychological empowerment, and thus the scale does not account for psychological elements. According to Laschinger, et al. (2001), structural empowerment, as measured by the CWEQ, leads to

psychological empowerment, which then results in trust, commitment, job satisfaction, and low burnout. Contrary to this theory, trust was shown in two qualitative studies to be an aspect of psychological empowerment, rather than a result (Dillard, 2013; Greasley et al., 2005). The current study adds insight as to whether trust emerges as a factor or as a result of empowerment and which additional factors appeared.

The CWEQ is a comprehensive measurement of structural empowerment. However, it has mostly been used in nursing. Few management studies have used this scale when measuring empowerment, as they have traditionally relied on psychological empowerment measures (Maynard et al., 2012). This may be faulty as psychological empowerment is then assumed to be a separate construct than structural empowerment. Instead, several recent management scholars (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000; Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, & Fuller, 2001) have added a third dimension of employee empowerment that accounts for some of the CWEQ structural components: leadership. However, leadership is often reliant upon the organizational culture and is part of the structure.

Organizational Culture and Leadership. Kanter (1989) rationalized that organic or informal structures are best suited to empowerment as they allow for flatter hierarchies and decentralization. Surprisingly, no management studies were found which correlate organizational culture to leadership behaviors or psychological empowerment. While many studies focus on collaborative culture or participative decision-making, they neither acquire nor interpret the data in the specific context of employee empowerment. Results or opinions of these programs have not generally focused on perceptions of empowerment, but have been linked to other outcomes such as job satisfaction or productivity (Manz & Stewart, 1997).

This seems a blatant gap as empowerment theory claims that the process of empowerment is tied to one's environment (Sadan, 2004) which, in organizations, extends beyond leadership. The organization, as the environment, impacts how one becomes empowered as the organization culture is often what dictates whether individual managers encourage or proscribe employee participation and involvement (Morgan, 2006). If culture prohibits employees from providing a voice, taking action, or making decisions, managers and employees may not be motivated or feel empowered. As Appelbaum et al. (1999) proffered, "the level of empowerment in organizations will vary and shall depend upon the extent to which the culture and structure promotes and facilitates empowerment" (p. 239). Although Laschinger, Finegan, and Wilk (2009) confirmed the importance of culture, it is not directly accounted for in the CWEQ.

Another unexplored area is whether employees want power, and if so, how much is ideal. Chebat and Kollias (2000) contended that empowerment is "when management allows employees to make day-to-day decisions" (p. 68). To reach this result, empowerment programs in the '80s and '90s sought to distribute power in ways such as participative management, quality circles, and self-directed teams (Daft, 2005). Some of these programs faced unintended consequences constructed by those given power. For example, self-managed teams were shown to create different forms of control such as concertive control in the form of peer pressure (Barker, 1999). In other cases, sharing power created fear from both leaders who were losing power and employees who gained it (Manz & Stewart, 1997). In these instances, what was promised as empowerment was not truly empowering for employees if they did not want these levels of empowerment or did not have the skills to do so. Greasley et al. (2005) found that when employees encountered negative consequences to

becoming empowered, they resisted. Much of the research in structural and psychological empowerment assumes people want to be empowered at the same level and that structural empowerment leads the way. However, this negates the individual experience of empowerment. More research, such as the current study, is needed to determine which types and what amount of empowerment employees desire.

In the structural viewpoint, leadership has not been a constant consideration. Some scholars consider leadership an aspect of structural empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kuo et al., 2010; Petter et al., 2002; Spreitzer, 1995a, 1995b; Yang & Choi, 2009), while others believe that leadership is a separate dimension (Arnold et al., 2000; Konczak et al., 2000; Niehoff et al., 2001). Arnold et al. (2000) posited that specific leadership behaviors such as giving words of praise and encouragement and providing support are crucial to actualizing empowerment and are beyond the scope of structural components. Most studies that include leadership behaviors measure their impact on psychological empowerment and have shown that support from leadership does lead to higher levels of psychological empowerment (Arnold et al., 2000; Boudrias et al., 2009; Konczak et al., 2000). Leadership is not formally included on the CWEQ, although several indicators do ask about feedback from immediate supervisors (Laschinger et al., 2001). Other than the CWEQ, leadership as a construct generally has been measured *in relation to* employee empowerment, not *as part of* the concept.

Leadership is troublesome as a separate dimension as there is no clear boundary of where the organization ends and leadership begins. Additionally, there is not a clear distinction between leadership and management. Generally, the culture of an organization

stems from the values of executive leadership, so it may be difficult to separate the two (Schein, 2010). Managers cannot give power they do not have (Appelbaum et al., 1999).

As Christens (2012) asserted, “it is not always possible for one person to empower another, particularly when there are stark inequalities between them” (p. 122). Even if a manager gives control to employees, those employees must not have fear of acting empowered or it will not be accurately internalized. Employees must choose to be empowered and know that doing so will not result in negative consequences (de Vries, 1994). Fortunati (2014) accurately warned that the structural empowerment perspective is troublesome as “The meaning of empowerment, which is essentially to give power to somebody, itself is a paradox, since power is gained, not given” (p. 176). Because organizations are socially constructed, people give and receive power both collectively and individually. Thus, structural empowerment does not fully capture employee empowerment – the psychological aspect is also required.

The Psychological Empowerment Lens

Studying employee empowerment only from the management perspective is problematic as it negates the personal experience of becoming empowered (Collins, 1995). Empowerment has both social and personal aspects, and both need to be considered (Boldy et al., 2000). In contrast to the structural lens, psychological empowerment focuses on the individual process. As Gastil (1998) surmised, power can be thought of as influence on others (such as managers influencing their employees) but it can also be directed inward so that one can do something for himself or herself. This involves one understanding the choices one has and choosing to act on them (Gastil, 1998). This type of personal power is psychological empowerment.

Within the psychological empowerment lens, structural components are not forgotten, but assumed to be antecedents to the psychological process and thus are not measured (Spreitzer, 1995b). Spreitzer (2007a) asserted that psychological empowerment is a “set of psychological states that are necessary for individuals to feel a sense of control in relation to their work” (p. 66). It involves workers’ perceptions that they contribute to the organization and influence decisions (Huang, Singh, & Ghose, 2012). Thus, empowerment cannot just be mandated by organizations or management, it also must be adopted by individuals.

Spreitzer’s (1995b) seminal work is based on Thomas and Velthouse’s (1990) conception of psychological empowerment. They claimed that four dimensions impacted empowerment: meaning, choice, competence, and impact. Spreitzer (1992) created a theoretical model of empowerment based on these four dimensions. She kept the basic framework, but concluded that each dimension influences the others so one dimension cannot be measured separately. She contended that the four cognitions comprised a holistic whole. She used the example that if employees have power to make decisions but do not feel as though they have a sense of meaning about those decisions, they will not achieve empowerment (Spreitzer, 2007a). Thus, the process of empowerment is active, requiring employee agency. It is not a definitive state that one has or does not have, as it can be felt in degrees.

Spreitzer (1992) kept the same terms, but slightly modified the meanings. In order to validate her model, she searched through literature in multiple disciplines to find the common themes of psychological empowerment. This search validated Thomas and Velthouse’s conception (Spreitzer, 1992). She then conducted interviews with 18 managers in the high-tech industry to further validate the themes. Once the themes were validated, she created

questionnaire indicators based on other measures within specific areas, such as Hackman and Oldham's (1980) autonomy scale. Although Spreitzer's (1995b) scale is 20 years old, the majority of recent workplace empowerment studies in the management discipline still cite, refer to, or use it even though it may no longer be accurate or relevant for the values of today's workforce (Maynard et al., 2012). A search on Google Scholar yielded 3,607 citations of Spreitzer's (1995b) original model. When searching for citations of Spreitzer since 2014, more than 1,800 works are listed. This demonstrates that current studies are still using a measurement that may be rooted in historical theories of empowerment rather than considering what empowerment means today. The model is also used to describe empowerment in several textbooks (see Daft, 2005; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Yukl, 2012). Due to its prevalence, Spreitzer's model will be explained followed by a discussion of how the model has been used in current studies.

Spreitzer (1995a) defined psychological empowerment as “a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact” (p. 1444). The four cognitions are explained as

- Meaning: the level of personal connection the employee has to work.
- Competence: the level the employee believes he or she has the required skills and abilities to perform quality work.
- Choice (self-determination): the level of freedom an employee has to complete his or her work.
- Impact: the level the employee believes he or she can influence the holistic organization (Kuo et al., 2010), (See Appendix B for complete inventory).

Spreitzer's instrument is based on the role of the employee and research she conducted on managers. She explains that the role basis means that psychological empowerment is a precedent to structural empowerment and a mediating factor of positive behaviors. However, this assumes that the employee has no choice in which role he or she applies for or accepts. To demonstrate the internal nature of the instrument, it was originally titled "intrapersonal empowerment in the workplace survey" although she later referred to it as the "psychological empowerment instrument". As described in her model, choice and impact cannot solely be the perception of the individual as what an employee is allowed comes from the organization or management. Thus, the scale may not be only psychological.

Reliability and validity have been concerns of Spreitzer's psychological empowerment scale as her research was originally done in the high-tech industry, using middle managers as her primary sample. Managers traditionally have more power than employees without a management title, and the results may vary for others in different roles who do not have the same level of authority (Kraimer et al., 1999). Spreitzer's studies were completed in one organization, so empowerment may be more linked to that particular role within that organization rather than individuals and their experiences across roles or organizations. People take experiences with them even when they leave one position or company, so limiting them to one role may not clearly illustrate the empowerment experience. Additionally, more research is needed across various industries and sectors such as government and nonprofit.

No recent theories or measurements of employee empowerment have been offered, and thus scholarly work for the last two decades has largely relied on Spreitzer's (1995b) established psychological empowerment inventory. Additionally, few management scholars

have used a structural empowerment model such as the CWEQ to measure employee empowerment. When they have, they assumed Spreitzer's model is predicated on structural empowerment and have not questioned the accuracy of the measurement. In Maynard et al.'s (2012) 20-year review of exemplar workplace empowerment studies, 28 of 29 used Spreitzer's model to research individuals' psychological empowerment. Only one of the studies did not use Spreitzer's model to measure individual empowerment.

Additionally, all 29 of the works cited in Maynard et al.'s (2012) review were quantitative. The model has not been contested and has been used to measure primarily effects of psychological empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). The measurement was used in the following ways:

- To explore relationships of psychological empowerment and trust of immediate managers (Ergeneli et al., 2007; Moye & Henkin, 2006)
- To look at the effect of work redesign on psychological empowerment and organizational commitment (Kuo et al., 2010)
- To determine the relationship of psychological empowerment to crowd sourced customer service (Ichatha, 2013)
- To measure whether "psychological empowerment mediates the interactive effect of participative leadership and the controllability attributional style on work performance" (Huang, 2012, p. 318).
- To explore the correlation of psychological empowerment to supervisor's empowerment practices and employee behavioral empowerment (Boudrias et al., 2009).

- To determine the connection of psychological empowerment to leadership behaviors, affective commitment, and job satisfaction (Dewettinck and van Ameijde, 2011).

These studies are only a small sample of those that have cited Spreitzer's work and used her scale. They represent the reliance on Spreitzer's instrument to assess a variety of connections and behaviors related to workplace empowerment. Conclusions drawn from these recent studies consider the impact of psychological aspects as defined by Spreitzer two decades ago. They do not consider the structural aspects of employee empowerment nor do they consider the changing work environment. It is worrisome that what is being measured as empowerment may not be what today's employees actually consider empowerment to be.

Many scholars explain employee empowerment as the ability to make decisions based on the information and knowledge employees have. However, Spreitzer's scale does not directly ask about trust, decision-making power or information, and knowledge. The only component that comes close in meaning is competency. Recent qualitative studies have shown that trust from management may also impact one's sense of empowerment, although trust is not accounted for in Spreitzer's scale (Dillard, 2013; Greasley et al., 2005). When explaining why structural empowerment is an antecedent, Spreitzer and Doneson (2008) clarified that if employees are given access to information, but they do not know how to use the information, they will not be empowered. The same could be said for the cognitions in her psychological empowerment model. If workers feel competent in their skills such as decision-making, but are not allowed to use those skills due to being reprimanded for not getting required approvals, they may not feel empowered. Similarly, competence for some people comes from feedback. If employees are not given feedback from management on what they do well or what to improve, it may impact their level of competence and thus,

empowerment. Greasley et al. (2005) enriched this relationship in their research of 16 construction workers who wanted trust from management, but stated that it was important to earn the trust and not to be blindly trusted. Consequently, employee empowerment may be interdependent as Follett (1925/2011) argued, rather than linear.

Another complexity of empowerment is that it is a personal construct and may not be the same for all employees. All workers may not want to have power or authority to make decisions or they may construct the notion in a different way than decision-making. The assumptions that everyone wants to be empowered may be another reason empowerment initiatives fail. Yukl and Becker (2006) illustrated how they encountered workers who resisted empowerment. One assembly-line operator told them he only wanted to “come in each day, do my job and go home at the end of the shift” (p. 220). Reasons for this resistance vary. Some people naturally do not want power and others have been conditioned over time to follow orders and thus believe they cannot make decisions. If workers have never experienced empowerment, it may be fear of something new or confusion of what is “right.” It may also depend on whether employees who are given more power have the decision-making and problem-solving skills to be effective (Gandz & Bird, 1996). Rather than being given too much power too soon, Dillard (2013) found that some employees felt more empowered when management helped them grow into a role and provided support as they learned.

Additional factors on how one chooses to become empowered may be age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and experience. Studies on various factors such as gender and age have been mixed with no consensus as to who is most affected or how (Seibert et al., 2011). Kanter (1977) speculated that women and minorities might have lower levels of

empowerment, as they were often tokens during the time of her writing. Acker (2011) agreed by indicating that organizations are structured by privileged men and do not allow for women's needs. She demonstrated this point by explaining how women are at a disadvantage due to work hours that are not convenient for child rearing and other structural elements such as common use of sports metaphors within business lexicon. Statistics show that women, minorities, and those who are disabled largely do not reach top leadership spots (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In addition, women are less likely to receive some forms of empowerment such as encouraging feedback and opportunities for training (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004). These types of experiences may impact psychological empowerment and should be researched.

Additional influences on personal empowerment may be age and experience. If Spreitzer's model is an accurate portrayal of what employees feel is empowerment, there may be differences among generation or life stages. One component that may vary by age is competency. Competency has been shown to be higher in older and more experienced workers, which could mean that competency increases with experience and is thus higher in older workers (Ergeneli et al., 2007). Competence then may lead to more meaning, especially in positions which impact others, such as nursing (Sparks, 2012). Differences in empowerment may be affected by age, life stage, or generation, which have not been explored in management studies.

Empowerment and Today's Workers

During the last few decades since Kanter (1977) and Spreitzer's (1995b) empowerment models were conceived, organizations have undergone many changes. Due to the proliferation of digital technology such as the Internet, workers are now able to

communicate with people across the world and to work from home. Access to information is available instantly. The Internet allows information to be communicated quickly and provides new forms of development and training. This new world of work enables new organizational challenges such as flexible working hours, telecommuting, and the change from manufacturing workers to knowledge workers (Jarrar & Zairi, 2002). Drucker (2004) postulated that leadership will merge into a form of part leadership, part partnership due to the rapid expansion of knowledge workers, those who work with, disperse, or create knowledge. Knowledge workers “*have to manage themselves. They have to have *autonomy**” (p. 84). In addition to the type of work being done in organization, who is doing the work is changing, which may impact one’s sense of empowerment.

More women and minorities have entered the workplace, with almost half of the labor force being women (47%) and 36% being non-White (Burns, Barton, & Kerby, 2012). Millennials, which make up more than a third of U.S. workers are the highest educated generation in history (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Twenge (2007) asserted that recent generations are more confident and have higher self-esteem than previous generations. This sense of confidence could affect one’s sense of competency, which may in turn affect meaning as people are likely to feel meaning when they are competent (Spreitzer, 1995a, 1995b). However, many Millennials did not work during high school and many Millennials, especially males of color are unemployed (Young Invincibles, n.d.), which may impact their sense of confidence.

Additionally, Millennials are thought to require more meaning from their jobs than past generations (Tulgan, 2009). If they have a different sense of what meaning is it may affect their sense of empowerment. Autonomy is also thought to be an expectation of

Millennials (Espinoza, 2012), which may impact how they see choice and self-determination on Spreitzer's scale. However, competency may come with experience and those who have more work experience may have higher levels of competence, more comfort making decisions, and thus empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012). In order to understand how generational influences may affect empowerment, it is first necessary to understand what generations are and what is known about each generation currently in the workforce.

Generational Cohort Theory and Impact of Life Stage

Academics have differing views on what generations are and what meaning, if any, they have. Some proclaim that each generation has personality characteristics and behavior traits (Howe & Strauss, 2000), while others claim that generations are influenced by events occurring during formative years, but the effect is worldviews, not personality (Elder, 1994). Another contributing factor to how people see the world may be their life stage. People of the same age may share ideas about life based on current circumstances such as graduating high school or starting a family. Both generational worldviews and life stages are also impacted by numerous factors such as gender, culture, race, and ethnicity. This section will provide an overview of generation theory, social markers which signify generations, and life stage.

Generational Cohort Theory

Some scholars use the term generations, while others refer to generational cohorts, birth cohorts, or age cohorts (Kelan, 2014). Generational cohorts, or generations, refer to a group of people with similar birth years who have similar attitude, beliefs, and values based on their similar historical and social experiences within a specific culture (Zemke, Raines & Filipczak, 2013). Formative experiences and social norms influence a generation's

preferences and views of marriage, education, work, and careers. Viewing generations as socially constructed cohorts began with Comte in the late 1800's (Zimmerer, 2013).

Mannheim (1952) then theorized that generations are socially formed through cultural norms.

However, generations are only one facet of the social context that influences a person's worldview (Mannheim, 1952). People within the same culture and age share events but they may experience them in different contexts based on culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, education, and myriad other factors. Some events, such as war, affect all generations, but the impact is different based on age and experience in addition to factors mentioned previously. Mannheim (1952) explained this as sharing similar events but in different "generational locations" (p. 176). Specific technologies such as computers, mobile devices, and the Internet fall under this category. All generations experience technology, but how they use it differs (boyd, 2014; Duggan & Smith, 2013; Smith, 2014).

One complexity in studying generational cohorts is that there are no set years that are universally agreed upon for each generation. Current generations are identified differently in scholarly research, pop literature, and government publications. This study will use the generational age ranges found in such sources as the U.S. Census and Pew research. While tentative time frames are used, those who are on the "cusp" of a generation may have experiences and views that match both generations to which they are connected. The four generations alive today are shown in Table 1. The birth years listed stray from what some use in popular literature. Strauss and Howe (1992) proposed that generational cohorts have predefined birth years that span approximately 20 years. Twenty years was denoted as the length of one phase of life including childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and elderhood.

Table 1

Generation Birth Years and Ages

Generation	Birth Years	Age in 2015
Veterans (aka Traditionalists, Silent Generation)	1922 – 1945	70 to 93
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964	51 to 69
Generation X	1965 – 1980	35 to 50
Millennials (aka Generation Y)	1981 – 2000	15 to 34

However, there is no empirical evidence to support this theory and many academics discount these predefined generational cohorts because experiences and events may not naturally occur formulaically in 20 year spans (Kelan, 2014). Other scholars do not believe that generations can be predicted or fall into neatly organized lengths of time as generation-defining events and influences may occur randomly (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2014; Kelan, 2014).

While some speculate that generations share characteristics and personalities (Zemke et al., 2013), the purpose of this study was to determine shared attitudes, values, and beliefs about work and employee empowerment. For this study, characteristics such as Baby Boomers' optimism, Generation X's skepticism (Zemke et al., 2013), or Millennials' narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2009) were not considered as those are individual personality traits that have not been proven or related to work values. Individuals are unique and may have different attitudes, values, and beliefs that were partially formed by culture, parenting, and other factors. The intent of this study was to determine whether there are collective worldviews shared by generational cohorts that impact their sense of empowerment at work.

Arsenault (2004) suggested that generations “create their own traditions and culture by a shared collective field of emotions, attitudes, preferences, and dispositions” (p. 124). While individuals may have emotions or attitudes that are not readily known, widely accepted social norms of generations are evident. While specific orientations may vary according to many variables such as race, class, and gender, the majority is represented in statistics. For example, women who were born in the early 1900s generally married much younger than women today. Then, almost one-third of women were married by age 20 and three-fourths had children by their mid-twenties (Sheehy, 1996). Today only 26% of Millennials are married by age 32 compared to 65% of the Veterans who were married at that age (Pew Research, 2014). Statistics such as these demonstrate that there has been a shift in general attitudes about when to get married. Additional differences have been shown in when to move out of the parental home, when to have children, which gender should work or stay home with children, and what a career means (Espinoza, 2012). While many workers used to stay with one company for life due to company loyalty and pensions, popular literature postulates that Millennials are prone to job-hopping if it provides a better income, more flexibility, or increased meaning (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). Although not all people in a generation are affected by a particular generational change such as divorce, people they know most likely have been affected and then they become impacted indirectly (Elder, 1994).

A missing element within some of the generational scholarship is recognition of variables such as race, ethnicity, and social class. Although members of a particular cohort may experience the same events, how they experience them and what it means will vary according to circumstances. Much generational research in popular literature such as Strauss

and Howe (1992) has been done on affluent areas and thus may not incorporate differences in gender, race, class, or other factors. For this reason, the generational information discussed in this paper is limited to what has been studied empirically and may be missing key information on traditionally marginalized groups. As educational attainment increases (even at relatively slow rates) among ethno-racial and lower income groups, their sense of empowerment will be a critical piece to add to our understanding of this construct.

Social Markers

Since birth years of each generation are not agreed upon, it is useful to look for social markers that may influence one's worldview. Social markers are those factors that influence one's behavior and worldviews, such as world events, shared experiences, and social norms (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003). Elder (1994) suggested that the social changes with the most impact in the 20th century were the growth of education and mass media as well as the fluctuating economy. Although neither of these is directly accounted for in generation theory, their impact cannot be denied.

Technology as a Social Marker. A significant consideration for all generations currently in the workforce is technology, and most significantly, the Internet.

A really big *discontinuity* has taken place. One might even call it a “singularity” – an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back. This so-called “singularity” is the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century. (Prensky, 2011, p. 1)

The Internet has had a considerable effect on how people see the world and how they work. Communication across the world is now instantaneous and Internet users are privy to overwhelming amounts of information. Castells (2009) claimed that technology has impacted society to the point that the information age has begun. His premise is that

technology has affected people as much as other technology shifts such as the printing press and television. In this sense, technology is an important social marker that affects generations. The majority of Millennials (94%) have access to the Internet, although usage is most likely highest among those with the highest socio-economic status (Pacansky-Brock & Ko, 2013). Access to the Internet may not be equal, but it is pervasive enough that most people in the US can access it, even if limited, via libraries and mobile devices (boyd, 2014).

While all generations have been impacted by technology, they relate to it differently. Prensky (2011) referred to the younger generations who grew up with technology as digital natives and those who adapted to it as digital immigrants. While there has been some controversy around the specific terms used, Prensky's point was that those who grew up with the Internet see it differently than those who were older when they learned to use it. Prensky stated that Millennials do not know how *not* to use technology to communicate. While many Baby Boomers see the Internet as a tool, Millennials may see it as part of them – as an appendage (Maushart, 2011). In one study looking at predictors of computer use, Watkins (2010) found that age was the highest predictor. Personality traits, socio-economic status, race, gender, and other characteristics did not have an impact close to that of age. To illustrate this fact, Millennials may spend more than 20 hours a day using media and technology such as the Internet (Rosen, 2011). The number of hours spent with media and technology increases in reverse generational order. Veterans spend the least amount of time, and Millennials the most (Smith, 2014).

People of all generations spend much of their time on the Internet using social networking sites. Facebook is the most popular social networking site although it is used more by Millennials (84%) than Veterans (45%) (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Many younger

people access these sites via mobile devices. Only 12% of teens do not have access to cell phones and African American teens are more likely to have a smartphone than White or Hispanic teens (Lenhart, 2015). How the Internet and smartphones are used varies by age, gender, race, and socio-economic status. Regardless of how they are actually used, users all have the capability of gaining new information.

Access to information is important as it provides a sense of empowerment (Kanter, 1989). “If we live in a world where information drives what we do, the information we get becomes the most important thing. The person who chooses that information has power” (Seth Godin, cited in Rheingold, 2012, p. 127). Information takes on a new meaning in the digital world as people no longer have to memorize facts – they can just Google to find answers (Allenby & Sarewitz, 2011). In this respect, some have explained that the Internet is a form of autonomy as barriers no longer exist to finding information (Ito, 2010). Because they are used to having and finding information easily, today’s workers may demand to have information (Wright & Li, 2011). Organizations that do not provide information such as the company’s goals may impact employees’ sense of empowerment. No studies were found which directly looked at Internet usage and employee empowerment, but it seems there may be a connection as the Internet has allowed easier and quicker access to information.

The Impact of Life Stage

One reason some scholars challenge generation theory is that it is difficult to understand what is based on generation versus life stage. Erikson (1959) posited that people experience universal development stages: childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and old age. People encountering the same stage, such as beginning their career, starting a family, or nearing retirement, may share attitudes, beliefs, and values (Cogin,

2012). However, these choices are specific to individuals and may not occur at even intervals with all members of a generational cohort.

As Elder (1998) reasoned, “all life choices are contingent on the opportunities and constraints of social structure and culture” (p. 2). Even those who share significant events such as the Great Depression or World War II may experience it differently due to location, culture, family, class, and other factors. Thus, not everyone who grew up during the Great Depression will exhibit the same behaviors such as saving money under a mattress. These differences make it difficult to determine specific ages that transformative life experiences occur. Not everyone within a generation will have children or retire at the same time.

Attitudes to work orientation depend on generation as well as life experience and life stage. One example is when one enters or leaves the workforce. One entering the workforce may have different attitudes than one who has experience, although one may enter the workforce at different ages. If an organization has a large number of employees in one age group who experience a life transition at the same time such as beginning a family, it can be challenging to determine if the shared values are due to generation or to life stage. As an example, many of the qualities such as currently assigned to Millennials were once assumed of Generation X. Muchnick (1996) claimed decades ago that Generation X demanded freedom and autonomy, did not like micromanaging, needed flexibility, work-life balance, and wanted daily feedback. These traits are also stated of Millennials (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). These similar traits, if representative of both generations, may be due to generational impacts or may be due to the experience of first entering the workforce. These expectations may change over time as workers of all generations gain experience and maturity. This study explored differences in generations’ experiences of

empowerment and which differences may be due to generation versus life stage or age.

Generations and Empowerment

Employee empowerment is an individual process and varies for each person. However, there may be similarities in generations, age, and life stage. For example, workers with higher status generally score higher on perception of empowerment (Ergeneli et al., 2007). It often takes time to reach higher status positions, which could be due to age and experience, not generation. Societal norms have changed over time, which may impact how generations view the workplace and empowerment.

Although few studies were found on empowerment across generations, other studies on generations and work orientation suggest that there are differences. Jora and Khan (2014) found that Millennials are less satisfied in general with work, work conditions, and administration. These results could be due to unrealistic expectations of work. It would be interesting to see if older Millennials with more work experience would have the same ratings as younger Millennials just entering the workforce. Murphy (2011) found that Millennials and Generation X rated advancement much higher than Baby Boomers. This could be due to generation, but may be due to life stage as workers may look for advancement in the beginning and middle of their careers and may not be as worried about advancement as they near retirement. Murphy also found that independence was rated higher by both Generation X (60%) and Baby Boomers (61%) than Millennials (40%). These results are contrary to popular literature that claims that Millennials want independence and autonomy (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Tulgan, 2009). However, independence may be less generational in nature and instead due to lack of experience.

Several studies purport differences in work values among generations. In a study of engineers, Dries et al. (2008) found that both Baby Boomers and Generation Y valued

security in a job more than Generation X, although their research was completed in Europe and the results may vary in the US. In another study, Millennials and Generation Xers rated asceticism as their highest work value, while Baby Boomers and Veterans chose hard work as their highest value (Cogin, 2012). When asked to rank the top 6 of 25 motivating factors, all four current generations ranked the top two as “respect for me as a person” and “good pay.” However, the remaining four factors varied among generations. Millennials were the only generation who chose “getting along with others on the job” as one of the six top factors (Montana & Petit, 2008). Smola and Sutton (2002) surmised that workers’ values change in surprising ways as they mature. In their study, they found that older workers developed a “less idealized view of work” (p. 379) over time. Compared to workers from 1974, the older workers in this study were less likely to believe that hard work or having pride in one’s work influenced one’s value. While these studies did not explore employee empowerment, they suggest generation or age may impact one’s view of work. This study identified similarities and differences in empowerment experiences.

Conclusion

Employee empowerment is an important concept as it leads to satisfaction, self-worth and a sense of value (Greasley et al., 2005). As Sadan (2004) clarified, “A sense of powerlessness leads to a lack of self-worth, to self-blame, to indifference towards and alienation from the environment, beside inability to act for oneself” (p. 144). Employee empowerment is beneficial to both employees and managers. When employees are empowered to make decisions, they save managers’ time. Without needing management involvement, productivity increases. As Fred Smith of FedEx claimed,

Empowering people is the single most important element in managing our organization. Empowered people have the necessary information to make

decisions and to act; they don't have to wait for multiple levels of authorization. Empowered people identify problems and they fix them. They do what it takes to keep customers happy. (as cited in Manning & Curtis, 2012, p. 161)

Since empowerment is so important, it is essential to understand the experience from the employee perspective. Current empowerment measures were developed with managers and within a particular role. The study presented here focused on personal experiences of individuals to determine what empowerment means to today's worker. It highlighted the concept of being empowered rather than being empowered in a particular role or organization. Little is known about how much empowerment employees want and how much it varies by individuals (Paul et al., 2000). This study learned how employees from different generations define and experience empowerment and identified factors that contribute to how they undergo the empowerment process such as age and life stage. This understanding allows organizations to better encourage employee empowerment. Additionally, it contributes to the employee empowerment and generational literature. A theory of workplace empowerment rather than empowerment adapted to a workplace context is needed. The results of this study contribute knowledge that may inform such a theory. How this study was conducted is explained next.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter describes the methodology that was used to study how workers of different generations define and experience employee empowerment. Within the last two decades, scholarly research on employee empowerment within the management field has largely relied on one scale, Spreitzer's (1995a) psychological empowerment instrument. Another instrument, the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) is used primarily in nursing but measures structural aspects of empowerment. It is based on Kanter's (1977) conceptions of empowerment in the '70s and '80s. Organizations have changed in important ways in the last two decades, which may impact the experience and perception of employee empowerment. Thus, this study hoped to gain understanding of how employee empowerment is perceived among generational cohorts and how it varies at different life stages. Since this relationship is relatively unexamined, exploratory research was conducted using qualitative methods. Data collection included focus groups and interviews. This chapter explains the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis.

Research Design

The goal of this research was to determine what employee empowerment means to today's workers. Although there is extensive research on employee empowerment, it is most often using instruments that may not accurately assess what it means to today's workers. Thus, the research was exploratory in nature. The purpose was to explore what employee empowerment means to workers today and what influences it. Another goal was to determine if employee empowerment is consistent across generations or whether there are differences. Since not much is known about empowerment and what it means today, or if meanings vary across generations, qualitative research was the best method to use (Creswell, 2008). Current scales of workplace empowerment may not be accurate, so qualitative

methods were used to answer the research question as well as to determine how participants felt about the current scales and whether they measure empowerment.

Qualitative research allows participants to answer questions and to explain the meaning behind their answers (Hair, Money, Samouel, & Babin, 2003). With qualitative research, the researcher can ask questions that lead to understanding of underlying issues such as attitude and reasoning that contribute to behaviors and opinions (Martins & Martins, 2014). Qualitative methods also result in rich descriptions that provide context for the answers provided (Merriam, 2002). The qualitative methods used included focus groups and interviews in order to gather data from a broad audience. Rationale for using focus groups and interviews is explained next.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were chosen as they allow participants to hear various opinions and to react to them in order to find shared understanding of the concepts (Martins & Martins, 2014). Strengths of using focus groups are that they provide data from multiple people and those people can affect how each other views and constructs employee empowerment. Rather than coming from the researcher, answers come from the participants. Focus groups afford participants the opportunity to share ideas with others and to shape their responses accordingly (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Multiple participants provided a range of opinions and attitudes that triggered responses in the other members which they could ask each other about or expand the answer (Neuman, 2011).

Although there are many benefits to focus groups, there are also risks. For example, some participants may dominate the conversation, while others may be shy or hesitant to speak up (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Participants may feel pressured to provide similar

answers or feel insecure about their answers. This could be true when discussing empowerment, as participants may realize they have a different perspective than others in the focus group. To avoid this, I began the sessions by explaining there are no “correct” answers and that empowerment is a personal process and perspective.

Interviews

Individual interviews provided a deeper understanding of experiences and behaviors influencing employee empowerment across generational cohorts. Interviews provide additional insight into experiences and patterns, resulting in in-depth and rich data (Creswell, 2008). Interviews permit the sharing of personal stories and allow time for clarification questions. Because empowerment can be personal, participants may share stories individually that they would not share within a group. Interviews may allow the participants to provide additional stories or to go deeper into their stories since they are not worried about taking time from another participant. Focus groups and interviews combined yielded a variety of perspectives on empowerment.

Data Collection

This section will discuss the procedures taken to complete the research. First, a summary of the pilot study will be discussed. Next, the recruiting and data collection procedures will be explained. The section ends with a description of the participants and setting.

Pilot Study Summary

Before completing this study, a pilot study was completed. The pilot study was conducted to test the research and recruiting methods. In the pilot study, two online focus groups were conducted and four interviews were completed. One focus group had two

people attending and the other had three. There were nine participants in the pilot study: four Baby Boomers, four Generation X, and one Millennial. There were seven females and two males. Focus groups and interviews were transcribed and coded. Data were then analyzed. Slight changes were made to the interview and focus group scripts as one question was deleted and the order of the questions was changed. Once changes were made, the dissertation study was conducted.

Dissertation Study Overview

The original goal for the dissertation study was to obtain a minimum of four focus groups with mixed generations and as many interviews as needed until saturation was reached (see Appendix C for IRB approval). Participants signed informed consent forms to demonstrate their understanding of the research and their rights to withdraw from the study (see Appendix D for informed consent form). Each participant completed a basic demographic survey that asked about age, gender, years of work experience, ethnicity and income (see Appendix E for the full demographic survey). The data were used to identify each participant's generation and to determine if there were differences based on the other demographic categories. During each focus group and interview, participants were asked what empowerment means to them and to describe examples of when they were and were not empowered (see Appendix F for full interview script). They were also asked about elements of empowerment used as indicators in the CWEQ (Laschinger et al., 2001) and Spreitzer's (1995b) psychological empowerment instrument (see Appendices G and H for permissions to use these scales). To do this, I elicited volunteers to participate and then conducted the interviews and focus groups. Each of these steps will be explained.

Procedures

The first step of the research was to identify volunteers to participate in the research. Requirements for participants were few since this study was exploratory. While specific elements such as one's age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and years in the workforce may change how one views empowerment, those differences have not yet been identified. For that reason, I hoped to gain a diverse participant base. The only requirements were that participants were over 20 years old, reside in the US and have 3 years of work experience.

To recruit participants, I posted for volunteers on social media (see Appendix C for IRB approval). I posted a call for research participants on LinkedIn, Meetups, Reddit, Facebook, and Twittter (see Appendix I for recruiting posts). On LinkedIn, I posted to 20 different groups, ranging from local professional networking to groups for specific types of workers such as training and development, accounting and finance, and marketing. Although I was not a member of all the groups, I could see some of the members' postings and the number of members, so I chose ones that seemed to have large numbers that may mean they had diversity of age, race, and positions within their memberships. In total, these groups have over 10,000 members, yielding a diverse group of possible recipients. I also posted to my status on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. The reason for choosing this method was to find a variety of worker types such as line workers versus knowledge workers and across a variety of industries.

When participants saw the posting, they sent me messages on the social sites stating they would volunteer. Friends also shared my status and postings, so other participants were received from snowball methods. These participants wrote me via the site or via personal

email to state they were interested in volunteering. Once volunteers demonstrated interest, I responded with an email via the social site or personal email with further details and providing the informed consent forms and demographic survey so that they would be able to see what they would need to sign and disclose (see Appendix I for email responses). Once they agreed to participate, they were asked if they wanted to do a focus group or an individual interview and dates and places were agreed upon. Several participants demonstrated interest in focus groups, but their availability did not coincide with others, so they did an interview instead.

The intention was to have several focus groups, however they were continually canceled for various reasons, so only two focus groups were used. As Krueger and Casey (2014) explained, people are more likely to disclose when they perceive that they are similar to others. Thus, there needed to be some commonality within the focus groups. To help with this, the recruitment postings stated that participants could choose to do either an interview or a focus group. This seemed fortuitous in the beginning as several participants who contacted me were interested in focus groups and initiated this by asking if they could create a focus group with coworkers. I agreed if the coworkers were interested and were in different generations. A total of four focus groups were scheduled but participants dropped out, often leaving only one person in attendance. The single participants then participated in an interview since they were prepared and did not want to reschedule. Thus, two focus groups and 27 interviews were conducted. One focus group had two people and the other had four. Additional focus groups were not scheduled as data were reaching saturation.

When originally scheduled, focus groups were composed of two to four volunteers, depending on availability. Focus groups were intentionally kept small to create a feeling of

safety among participants. With the time limit of 60 – 90 minutes, smaller groups meant that each participant had ample opportunity to speak. More than four participants would not be conducive to the topic as it could make people uncomfortable and increase the time needed to capture data. Focus groups and interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes although several participants arrived and stated they only had an hour or just over an hour. Questions began with an introduction question, a warm-up question, and progressed to key questions (see Appendix F for the interview script). Sessions ended with a closing question and summary (Hair et al., 2003). Conversations did not get out of control nor did anyone dominate the conversations since the groups were small and participants knew each other.

The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured. Questions were open ended and supported the research question by asking about the meaning of empowerment (Neuman, 2011). Participants were not provided with a definition or examples, but were asked to think about what workplace empowerment meant to them. Probing questions obtained specific details and experiences (Neuman, 2011).

The intention was to video-record participants in focus groups and to audio-record interviews. Video is preferable to audio as it allows the researcher to see who is speaking during transcribing and it shows nonverbal behavior that may provide insights to participants' responses. In the pilot study, participants did not want to be videotaped, so for the dissertation study, the recruitment email gave them the option of either audio or video recording. Neither focus group agreed to be videotaped. They were audio-recorded instead. One interview participant agreed to use a video camera and was recorded using GoToMeeting and with Snag-it screen capture as a backup video recorder.

A digital audio recorder and a LiveScribe pen were used to record interviews and focus groups. Multiple recording devices were used to ensure that the sessions were recorded in case one device did not work. Since the LiveScribe pen matches audio with notes, I was able to pair voices with notes.

Participants

A total of 33 people participated in the study. Two people were in Focus Group 1, four people were in Focus Group 2, and 27 participants completed interviews. LinkedIn yielded the most participants. A total of 12 participants recruited from LinkedIn participated in the study. Three additional people volunteered, but two withdrew due to illness or injuries that prevented them from being able to participate and one responded after the study was complete. Of the 12 recruited from LinkedIn, one responded to the posting in a local networking group and invited two coworkers to join in a focus group. However, one was not able to make the meeting on the designated day. Another participant responded to my status and asked three coworkers to join us for a focus group. Thus, four people were recruited to focus groups from coworkers who had read the initial post. Three others volunteered who had seen the posting in a career group discussion. Three others responded to my status.

One participant responded to the call from Reddit (a social news site) where it was posted under a research subreddit (a group for a particular topic). One was achieved from a posting to a women's Meetup group. Eight participants on Facebook forwarded the posting to people they knew such as children and spouses who then volunteered. The remaining 11 participants were achieved through snowball methods. They received the posting or an email from someone who had seen my post and responded to me via email rather than through a specific site. Some were friends of those who had participated. An additional five

respondents were received via snowballing, but they did not attend at the appointed time or did not respond to specific request for meeting times, so they did not participate in the study.

Focus Group 1 was initially set to include three coworkers, one of each generation including one employee who had only been with the company for a month. The Millennial was not able to attend the focus group on the appointed day due to an extended meeting that she could not leave. Thus, the focus group was conducted with two people (a Baby Boomer and a Gen Xer). Focus Group 2 was to be three people, but my initial contact was not sure of her coworkers' ages, so she asked three people to attend, for a total of four participants. According to the demographic surveys completed, there were three Gen Xers and one Millennial in the focus group, all women. The focus groups provided rich insight into how workers at the same company responded similarly or differently to the same questions. The other two focus groups were not conducted as volunteers did not arrive on the agreed date. Since I had one person in each of these groups at the location, I proceeded with an interview. I completed interviews with other members of the original focus groups, but they could not agree on times for focus groups. Thus, two focus groups and 27 interviews were completed. It was difficult to get Millennials to respond during the pilot study, so I had contemplated offering a monetary incentive, but did not need to do this.

There were 33 total participants: 10 Baby Boomers, 13 Generation X, and 10 Millennials. The demographic breakout of the participants is shown in Table 2 (see Appendix J for complete listing of participants and demographics). Participants were also asked if they considered themselves knowledge workers. All but two participants marked "yes."

Table 2

Participant Demographics by Generation

	Baby Boomers (10)	Generation X (13)	Millennials (10)
Gender	4 Males 6 Females	4 Males 9 Females	5 Males 5 Females
Education	6 Post-graduate 2 College 1 Some college 1 Trade/Technical	6 Post-graduate 6 College 1 Trade/Technical	2 Post-graduate 6 College 1 Some college 1 HS Diploma
Ethnicity	10 White	10 White 1 East European (German) 1 Mixed (Mexican/ Chinese/Native American/ Haitian) 1 Black/Panamanian	6 White 1 Indian/Asian 1 Latino 1 African American 1 Hispanic American
Household Income	1 \$25,000 – \$59,999 5 \$60,000 – \$99,999 4 \$100, 000+	6 \$60,000 – 99,999 7 \$100, 000+	1 < \$25,000 3 \$25,000 – \$59,999 1 \$60,000 – \$99,999 5 \$100, 000+
How Paid	6 Salary 3 Hourly 1 Contract	12 Salary 1 Contract	5 Salary 5 Hourly

Participants were not asked about their industry as the pilot study determined that many older workers drift among different industries doing the same type of work. However, many participants mentioned the industry where they worked currently or had previously. The spectrum was vast and included utilities, entertainment, real estate, consulting, technology, social work, public service, direct marketing, higher education, government, manufacturing, medical, nonprofit, restaurant, and financial services. Some of the positions or departments included utilities fieldwork, sales, student advising, teaching, training and development, instructional design, marketing, victim advocate, sales support, fire fighting, police work, consulting, waiter, customer service, and internal communications.

Setting

The settings for the focus groups were in-person and interviews were either via phone or in-person. When possible, I met with participants face-to-face, although some were out of state and could not meet or had busy schedules and asked to participate via phone. The in-person focus groups and interviews were conducted in library conference rooms. These rooms are private and quiet, so they provided a safe spot with limited interruptions. Libraries also offer comfortable chairs, a table to write on, and rooms small enough to facilitate conversation. Luckily, the focus group participants worked near libraries and so they were convenient locations (Josselson, 2013). The phone interviews were scheduled for GoToMeeting so they could be recorded easily. However, several participants forgot to use the link, so they used cell phones on speaker for recording. Those calls were completed in my private home office where no one could overhear.

Data Analysis

Once the data collection was complete, the focus groups and interviews were transcribed, and then coded. Four transcripts were transcribed by the researcher and the others were professionally transcribed (see Appendix K for professional assistance confidentiality agreements). The transcripts were then coded and analyzed. Participants were given pseudonyms before compiling the codes.

Data analysis followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). I first listened to each focus group or interview not personally transcribed and corrected errors in the transcripts (Neuman, 2011). Next, I read each transcript once to get familiar with the transcripts as a collection. Then I reread each transcript two more times to get familiar with the data. The next step was to create codes and themes. I began by making notes about

words, ideas and themes. Once I had done this for each transcript, I grouped them in codes. I then put the codes into NVivo and identified the data extracts previously marked (Braun & Clarke, 2006). NVivo was used only to organize the data and codes. I created themes according to raw data and then used a priori codes for specific questions asked about existing scales (the CWEQ and Spreitzer's [1995b] psychological empowerment scale). Some of the questions about these measurements yielded "yes" or "no" answers (whether specific influences are needed for empowerment) and these were tracked separately for quantity of "yes," "no," or "depends" answers.

During the coding process, I made memos about themes or ideas that I could not yet formulate or wanted to explore further. Codes were collapsed to combine themes that were similar in meaning. For example, influence was originally two separate codes – voice and impact. Reflecting on the statements in each code, both dealt with influencing the organization, manager, department, or customers. Thus, they were grouped together and renamed influence. There were originally six key themes: trust, value, autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership. However, when reviewing the statements in each theme, trust and value were not always needed for empowerments, but seemed to reinforce the four other codes (autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership). For this reason, trust and value were moved to influences rather than defining aspects of employee empowerment. Statements about trust and value were generally about trust and value coming from management and the organization, not about personal trust, so they were considered organizational. Twenty-two structural influences were identified from the data and then collapsed. For example, flexibility was originally three separate codes: flexible hours, work-life balance, and working from home. They were often mentioned together, so they were

grouped under one heading: flexibility. In the same way, opportunities for growth had originally been separated into training and development, advancement opportunities, keeping up with the industry, and learning. The final codes included 13 organizational influences that were then grouped into three categories: structure, culture, and support.

To provide reliability to the coding, a second coder was used for six transcripts, two of each generation (Merriam, 2002). The second coder holds a master's degree and is a doctoral student. She signed a confidentiality agreement before beginning coding (see Appendix K for the confidentiality form). Influences on employee empowerment were divided into structural and psychological. A codebook was constructed to provide guidance to the other coder. The codebook was extensive as it had both emergent and a priori themes. Thus, it was initially difficult for the second coder to identify all the codes. Although we agreed at 90% or above on the codes she identified, many that I had identified were missed. The second coder and I engaged in dialogue about what was confusing and how some codes seemed similar and the codebook was adjusted. The codebook was consolidated through joint agreement of both coders. Once the codebook was consolidated and easier to use, the second coder continued to code and we discussed the few disparities. Agreement was over 90% after the discussion. I then reviewed and adjusted the remaining transcripts (Merriam, 2002).

Demographic Information

General demographic data were collected such as age, gender, education level, income, and years of work experience (see Appendix E for demographic survey questions). This was done as minorities, those with low income, or those with low education may feel low levels of empowerment which may extend to the workplace (Christens, 2012). However,

the main themes did not yield much variety across the entire sample, so the demographic data were not analyzed beyond generation.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is “moderator, listener, observer, and eventually analyst” (Krueger & Casey, 2014, p. 7). I acted as the moderator for the focus groups and took notes to trigger my memory later. I attempted to remain neutral and not to provide bias to the discussion. It was critical to avoid emotion either nonverbally or verbally when participants responded (Krueger & Casey, 2014). I did not agree or disagree with speakers, but asked them to expand on what they had said or asked them to explain it further. I also avoided nodding my head or providing other signs that could have been interpreted as agreement or disagreement. I carefully chose language that did not show judgment about answers provided (Krueger & Casey, 2014).

Limitations

Participants for the study were diverse in many areas such as position and industry, but not as much as I had hoped. They were relatively highly educated and were mostly middle-class. Thus, the most significant limitation in the study is the lack of diverse employees. This lack of diversity may be due to the recruiting methods used for the study. Participants who responded may have had an interest in empowerment due to studying it or working with it in their jobs. For example, 4 of the 33 participants either were or previously had been in human resources (HR). Since HR employees often deal with empowerment and engagement issues, they may have more familiarity with the topic than other workers. Empowerment is also a topic discussed in many graduate programs from social work to

management, so those with a knowledge of the topic may have been more inclined to respond to the call for participants.

Summary

This chapter explained the methodology for this study. Qualitative research, in the form of interviews and focus group was used to answer the main research question: “*What does workplace empowerment mean to different generations of workers?*” and the subquestions: “*How is employee empowerment influenced by organizations?*” and “*How is employee empowerment influenced by psychological factors?*” Qualitative research was chosen to extract meanings and experiences about empowerment and social media. Focus groups and interviews were selected to gain a broad view of these terms and to get a variety of experiences. The study is not generalizable due to the small sample, but that was not the purpose. The sample provides a basis for exploratory research in determining which factors should be explored in future studies. This study provides information on perspectives of educated knowledge workers. The next section will explain the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the study. The purpose of the study was to answer, “*What does workplace empowerment mean to different generations of workers?*” Included in this overarching research question were subquestions about the structural and psychological aspects that influence empowerment. Secondly, to determine if the meaning of empowerment has changed, participants were asked about current measures of employee empowerment, the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ) and Spreitzer’s psychological empowerment instrument. Thus, this chapter will first present answers to Question 1 by describing how people defined and explained employee empowerment. Next, I explore the structural influences on employee empowerment followed by the psychological influences. How people responded to the existing measures of workplace empowerment will then be presented.

Research Question 1: *What does workplace empowerment mean to different generations of workers?*

This inquiry hoped to determine what the participants’ core meanings of empowerment are based on how they define or explain employee empowerment. Participants were asked questions such as what empowerment means to them, how the meaning has changed over time, barriers to empowerment, and experiences of empowering others. Findings suggest that there are four pillars that are necessary for empowerment to occur. Data also showed that employee empowerment is not easily defined; it is complex and dynamic. Because organizations and people change over time, how one views empowerment is fluid. In this section, I will discuss the four pillars of empowerment and end with the dynamic nature of employee empowerment. As an example of how structural and

psychological merge and affect each other, the impact of one's role or position (such as job title) will be discussed.

The Four Pillars of Employee Empowerment

Four pillars emerged as to what defines employee empowerment: autonomy, decision-making power, influence, and ownership (see Figure 2). Although other influences were determined, these four pillars were identified as crucial elements of feeling empowered at work. These pillars were consistent across all generations.

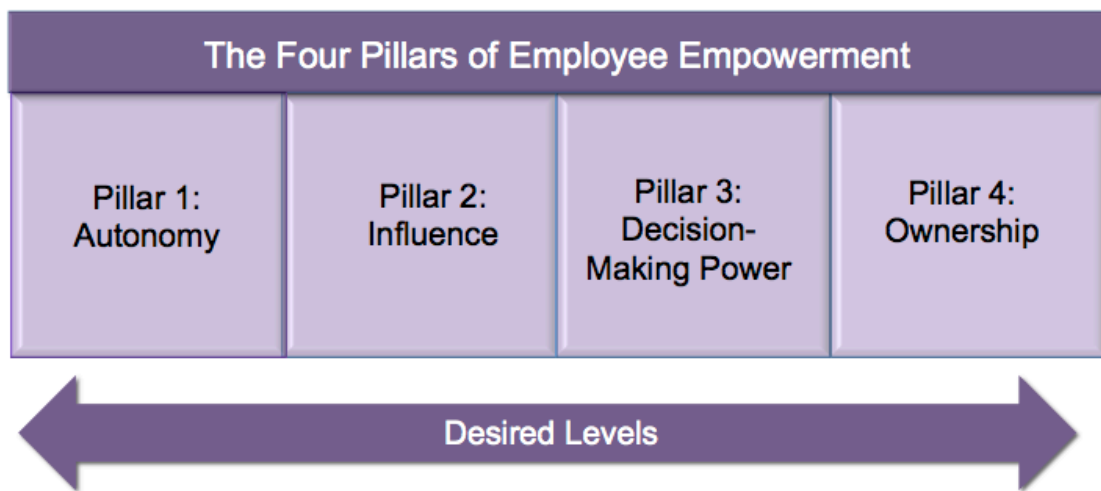


Figure 2. The four pillars of employee empowerment.

Participants described these pillars as essential to empowerment. They explained that when these pillars are present, they feel empowered. When they are not present, they do not feel empowered. Participants also expressed that the desired level of these pillars differed. Some wanted power to make decisions only about their work, and others wanted to make decisions about budgets, departments, and programs. The meanings and number of statements made about each of the pillars are identified in Table 3. Numbers of respondents are descriptive and demonstrate the saturation reached by the majority of respondents. They

may be used in future themes to demonstrate differences across generations. For those numbers not included in text, they can be found in the noted appendices with sample statements of each theme.

Table 3

The Four Pillars of Empowerment Defined

Term	Meaning	Sample Words
Pillar 1 - Autonomy 190 statements by 33/33 participants	Freedom to decide how to do one's work. Involves control over one's environment, tasks, and how work gets done.	Autonomy, freedom, control, implement, latitude, leeway, choice
Pillar 2 – Influence 173 statements by 32/33 participants	Providing a voice or input to the organization. Having an impact on one's job, department, organization, community, or customers.	Ideas, impact, influence, input, suggestions, voice, being heard, contribute
Pillar 3 – Decision- Making Power 81 statements by 27/33 participants	Having power or authority to make decisions or solve problems without going through management.	Decision, solution, authority
Pillar 4 - Ownership 54 statements by 21/33 participants	Having responsibility or accountability for a project.	Accountability, own, responsibility, mine

Findings showed that the amount of autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership each person wants varies according to personal factors such as life stage and career stage. Employees felt most empowered when their desired levels of the four pillars were matched by the organization. To explain this relationship, each of the four pillars will be explored.

Pillar 1 - Autonomy. All 33 participants described empowerment in terms of control, freedom, and choice to do one's job and to complete tasks. *Autonomy* was the most frequently used word to describe workplace empowerment and was considered one of the most significant aspects.

Table 4

Importance of Autonomy to Employee Empowerment by Generation

Generation	Quote about Importance of Autonomy
Baby Boomer	"That's probably one of the key things. I'd say that's probably the most key thing to be empowered is to have some degree of autonomy in what you're doing." (Greg)
Generation X	"I think the autonomy was always there. That was my biggest desire, was to have that autonomy. That was to me the ceiling of empowerment." (Melissa)
Millennial	"I feel personally like that would be the biggest one for me as far as empowerment goes would be freedom of choice and direction, all that." (Zach)

In addition to autonomy, terms that were frequently used to define employee empowerment were freedom, control and choice. When initially asked, "What does workplace empowerment mean to you?", five participants used the term "autonomy", four used "control" and five used what it is not - "micromanagement" (see Appendix L for generational answers to this question). Gen Xer Katrina solidified the importance of freedom: "Empowerment should be-- I feel like it should be freedom, right? I think empowerment equals freedom to make choices." The absence of freedom was described as disempowering. Millennial Brian offered, "So to the extent that you don't have personal

freedom to pursue a direction of a task or of a goal on your own, I feel that it is limiting or killing the existence of empowerment.”

Freedom and control referred to daily routines such as how and when to complete work tasks and projects. Several participants of each generation described control and freedom as receiving guidelines, but completing tasks however they chose. No one wanted to be told how to do their job or how to do specific tasks (see Appendix M for additional comments on autonomy as freedom and control).

Autonomy was also explained in terms of what it is not – micromanagement. Baby Boomer Greg initially defined empowerment as, “What it looks like to me is where they allow you to do your job without having to be micromanaged, no matter whether you were sitting on a bench or sitting at a desk or managing large organizations.” All generations agreed and felt their autonomy, and thus empowerment, was limited by micromanagement or managers “standing over their shoulders.” When probed further about times they felt empowered, participants provided examples of when they had solved problems or initiated tasks without needing approval and times they did not feel empowered were when they were micromanaged. Micromanagement was explained as having someone look over their shoulders, “correct” all of their work, or be checking their work constantly.

Autonomy and micromanagement were perceived as being given from the management or a part of the organizational culture. It emerged most frequently as a product of negative and fear-based cultures. When asked about organizational barriers, 67% of the participants made comments about how micromanagement inhibits empowerment. All generations commented on the disempowering effect of micromanagement. Although supervisors are the ones who micromanage, it was perceived by some participants to be part

of the organization's culture. Millennial Brandi explicated that organizational cultures lead to managers feeling like they have to hover over and control their employees. Participants suggested that micromanagement has negative effects on employees' morale and affected their self-confidence. Millennial Victoria expressed how horrible it feels to have someone hovering over her.

Micromanaging definitely undermines how you feel about yourself, even, and then you start to get angry at other people. I think it makes for a pretty negative work environment. And there's obviously no room for empowerment there, feeling like you're a successful person there.

(See Appendix N for sample comments by generation describing micromanagement).

Pillar 2 - Influence. Influence was explained as providing voice and being heard within the organization. Influence was mentioned by each generation, although Baby Boomers made the fewest comments: Baby Boomers made 44 comments, Generation X made 76 comments, and Millennials made 52 comments. Participants expressed that when they can freely voice opinions, ideas, and suggestions, they feel empowered. Another way employees felt they had influence was when they have an impact on their job, department, or organization. Participants who did not have influence stated they felt powerless. Powerlessness was depicted in being told no without listening, being shut down, or being told what to do without a discussion. These two delineations of influence, having voice and having impact, will each be discussed.

Influence as having voice. Voice refers to being able to provide options, suggestions, ideas, or solutions without being ignored or shut down. One aspect of having voice was portrayed as feeling that management was really listening and considering what employees said. Participants felt that employees having a voice meant that they matter and that others care what they think. Voice was mentioned by the majority of participants from

all generations (see Appendix O for sample of comments by generation about influence as having voice).

Participant perceptions were that when management or leaders of the company take time to listen and to discuss employees' input, it means they value them. The more someone felt heard, the more empowered he or she felt. For example, Baby Boomer Greg discussed how a suggestion box allows for people to make suggestions, but they are not necessarily heard. He experienced having voice in a more in-depth way: "They'd have meetings every morning with a flip board where they just would come up with ideas, discuss issues or brainstorm for the first 15, 20 minutes of the shift." Gen Xer Amy explained how her team was to be assigned a new manager and she wanted to have input. She approached management about letting her and her team interview the management candidates. The company allowed the team to interview their potential manager and considered their recommendations. She felt heard and appreciated.

When participants were not allowed to voice their opinions and ideas, they felt powerless. Participants provided stories of how they did not feel listened to when their ideas were dismissed or shut down. Common words used to describe these situations were "denied," "shut down," and "rejected," and generally occurred without explanation from management. Not listening was identified as both an aspect of individual managers and an aspect of the culture. Millennial Peter described how frustrating powerlessness can be.

"No, we're not willing to entertain it. We're not willing to look at it. We're not willing to explore it. We don't really care what you think. This is how we're going to do it. You better get on board or you're going to be in trouble." I think it's very demotivating and discouraging, and I think if that happens so many times that it becomes a consistent pattern, you get very frustrated. You don't really have any interest in doing great work.

Millennial Thomas shared that they often had great ideas that would help the company, but it was not worth the hassle to bring them up. For him as well as others, voicing ideas could turn into a conflict or a bigger deal that was not worth the time.

Being told what to do without being able to provide input was also disempowering. Millennial Zach illustrated this point by stating, “Every job I've worked, any time I try to initiate change it's always, ‘You know, a lot of people are looking for a job right now, so you kind of have to do what we say.’” Gen Xer Shelly felt that not listening to others or telling them what to do is a demonstration of power in which one shows how he or she has power over someone else. Being shut down and being told what to do (feeling powerless) yielded many comments, although more were made from the younger generations than from Baby Boomers (see Appendix P for comments by generation on powerlessness).

Influence as having impact. In addition to wanting to have voice, participants wanted to have an impact on their job, department, or organization. Gen Xer Dawn illustrated this as “That's empowering because you know if you find something that needs changed you're going to be able to implement that change if you can have a good idea and explain and a justification. So that's empowering.” Gen Xers Amy and Dawn thought impact was more empowering than voicing opinions, because they could see those opinions in action. Gen Xer Dan explained the “goose bump moments” he got when he did something that positively impacted the organization. In some cases, impact was tied to specific positions or roles within the company. For example, Baby Boomer Jane felt unmotivated because she felt her job was only “pushing paper” and had no tangible impact on the organization's success.

Similarly to not having voice, not having an impact was explained as disempowering.

Many participants provided stories of times they could save the company money, but were not able to because management did not listen. Gen Xer Rick works in training and wanted to buy products in bulk to save thousands of dollars, but could not get management to commit to following through. He and other participants demonstrated disappointment and frustration with not being heard, especially when it impacted the organization negatively. When participants felt blocked or as though they did not make an impact, they often opted to look for other jobs inside or outside of the company. Baby Boomer Keith shared a time he was told that he was not “relevant” to one department, so he changed departments in order to make a worthwhile contribution to the organization. Desire for impact occurred across all generations. Of the 65 total statements made about having an impact or making a contribution to the organization, 20 were made by 8 of 10 Baby Boomers, 27 were made by 10 of 13 Generation X, and the remaining 18 were made by 7 of 10 Millennials (see Appendix O for sample of comments by generation about influence as impact).

Pillar 3 - Decision-Making Power. Empowerment to many participants included the power or authority to make decisions. Participants wanted to be able to make decisions or solve problems without multiple levels of approval and to be supported in their decisions. Decision-making was not mentioned as frequently in participants’ initial reactions of employee empowerment, although it came up repeatedly in examples of being empowered. Gen Xer Amy described the importance of making decisions:

The leaders of the team value each individual, or in this case, myself, in order to make decisions based on the information that they've given us and empowered us to make decisions in the best interests of ourselves and the company and that they trust us to make those decisions.

Part of having that power meant taking responsibility for the decision, but knowing that management would support them in the decision. Participants who feared consequences of

making decisions that were seen negatively did not feel empowered. Not being able to make decisions and having to go through or wait for others for approval was seen as a barrier to empowerment. Millennial Peter explained that he did not have the power to make even simple decisions affecting his customers and he had to wait for approval from the home office in Europe. He felt disempowered to help his customers. In total, 27 participants made 81 statements about decision-making that were fairly evenly distributed across generations (see Appendix Q for comments by generation on decision-making power).

Pillar 4 – Ownership. Participants felt empowered when they had ownership of a project or task (see Appendix R for sample comments by generation about ownership). Ownership was discussed as connected to responsibility. Several participants explained that when they owned a project and accepted the responsibility, they felt empowered, but also more willing and excited to take on new projects. Baby Boomer Bob explained that he felt increased pride in something he created and for which he took responsibility. Millennial Thomas agreed and described the feeling of pride in these terms:

From that moment on I think what happened to me is I immediately took ownership of that project. Because OK. Well if it's on me then it's on me all the way and so, you know....it was no longer just a project that I was working on. It was *my* project. And so I think that was a pretty important thing for me in my career for me to understand how to take ownership of a task and what you're working on.

Several participants who were or had been managers explained that they gave new employees ownership in stages to make sure they were ready. As the employee proved he or she could do the project, the managers gave them more tasks and responsibility. Gen Xer Alexis explained that she made sure all of her employees always had a project or task that they owned so that they felt pride and felt as though they were making a contribution.

As shown in each of the four pillars, there is an organizational aspect and an individual aspect of employee empowerment that creates variation in what one wants and what one is allowed. Each of the four pillars has further connections which makes empowerment complex. This complexity will be explained next.

Empowerment is Complex and Dynamic

Responses showed that empowerment is complex and multifaceted. It is not just one thing and it is not constant. Many participants made comments about how empowerment is composed of multiple elements. For example, Gen Xer Rick stated,

But it's a multifaceted thing. You can't just say it's this and that's it. It cannot happen. It's got to be multifaceted. We were just talking about links. There are a lot of things that have to fall into place before people feel empowered.

Most responses did not use just one or two words to describe employee empowerment (see Appendix L for a listing of initial responses to the question of what empowerment means).

Gen Xer Melissa supported the idea that empowerment is not just one thing and how different aspects are intertwined. She stated, “It's pretty much all of it, yeah. Because when you don't have one of those pieces, then it rocks everything.” As participants discussed employee empowerment, they began to see sides of the concept they had not originally considered. Some participants originally explained empowerment in terms of their manager or organization, but later confirmed that they had an impact on their empowerment as well.

Another finding was that not only is defining empowerment complex, but so is sustaining it.

One Gen Xer, Katrina, explained that sustainable empowerment is what is difficult.

“Empowerment by itself is easy. Empowerment with support and encouragement and reinforcement is different.”

Participants demonstrated that empowerment is dynamic. They explained how they felt empowered at times and did not feel empowered other times. One explanation given was that as one gains more trust and feels valued, he or she gains more motivation to do well and to take on additional levels of empowerment. Millennial Thomas portrayed this relationship:

It comes from, you know, maybe the first time you feel empowered by someone else. That's such a strong feeling that I think it's kind of addicting almost. And you say, you know, "My opinion does matter." Or, "I can contribute to this group." Or, you know, whatever...or for me it was when I was like, "Wow. This is my project." A switch flipped for me and I started to realize that well, all of my work is my work. And so, you know, it started to become...you know, all of a sudden my work became very important to me.

As Brandi explained, the more confident and competent one becomes, the more likely the manager is to give that employee additional empowerment. Thus, the amount of empowerment workers want fluctuates throughout their careers and the amount given by the organization changes. It is a dynamic relationship. A frequent example of how employee empowerment changes was one's position within a company. Participants discussed how empowerment levels changed with the different positions they held.

Impact of Position on Employee Empowerment. Participants discussed different positions they had held and how their feeling of empowerment changed with these different positions. The most obvious and frequent example was management versus non-management roles. Several participants felt that managers had more decision-making power, but less autonomy.

Differences were not limited to management roles. Baby Boomer Kimberly explained that her level of autonomy changed when she moved from sales to support. However, she appreciated the flexibility and the personal freedom that came from traveling less. Millennial Zach terminated employment at a customer service job due to the inflexible

schedule and time demands, but later returned when they offered him a different position that allowed more autonomy in how work was done.

Several participants explained that the title or pay grade determined how much impact and influence one could have. The lower they were on the organizational chart, the less power they felt they had. Millennial Hannah had worked on projects in which she was not allowed to talk to the customer. She framed her feelings as, “I was frustrated that I felt like I was being muted, in a way, because of my tenure or my grade level.” Several participants felt this way, especially those in hierarchical or rigid cultures. As they moved up or switched roles, they gained additional empowerment.

Baby Boomer Bob works in law enforcement and provided examples of how different roles had different tasks due to the nature of the work. “Depending on where you fit in the organizational structure, the impact is different. From a line staff point of view, the impact is certainly different from those at the executive staff level and all levels in between.” He expanded by explaining why this matters: “You're supervising people on the street, a lot of times it's split-second decisions and you're responsible for a lot of things going on.” Gen Xers Dan, Eddie, and Alexis reiterated similar sentiments about jobs dealing with crisis situations about the fire service and the military. As their roles changed, the type of autonomy and decision-making they were allowed changed.

Another factor that emerged in terms of role was whether workers are part of unions. Millennial Peter posited, “As a former manager of hourly blue-collar type employees, it's very different to hear how they perceive the world versus white-collar professionals and also union versus non-union.” His Baby Boomer coworker Kimberly supported his thoughts by discussing the impact of factors such as safety:

Especially at the factory level, I think if you're working a shift and even working overtime, when we become tired or stressed or there's a likelihood that you can become-- I can't say "careless," but we take chances that we probably wouldn't if we were sharper. They really encourage taking time off.

Baby Boomer Todd who works in the utilities industry (as do Peter and Kimberly) verified the importance of the union because it sets the guidelines for promotions and raises, as well as safety. Dan explained that being a member of a union provides job security: "But before that, they can't fire you without due process, the union's going to fight the whole way." It was scary for him to move from a union position to a management role that is non-union. Knowing he could be fired at any time brought a different sense of how to do his job and the risks he could take.

Working part-time or on a contract basis may also impart a different sense of empowerment. Millennials Brian and Zach explained that part-time jobs, especially manual labor, do not provide opportunities for empowerment due to the type of work. Part-time employees are generally not given opportunities to provide influence even if they want to move to a full-time or management position. In these ways, the position one has impacts the level of empowerment one may obtain. As workers change positions, they may change their level of empowerment. Thus, empowerment is dynamic.

Summary

Employee empowerment is complex and dynamic, but is bolstered by four pillars. The four pillars are autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership. The amount of these levels desired varies among individuals and is given from management or the organization. How empowered one feels is dynamic and is often impacted by the position one holds. As shown in each of these pillars, there is an organizational aspect and an individual aspect of employee empowerment that creates variation in what one wants and

what one is allowed. Additional structural and psychological aspects will be explained in the next two sections.

Subquestion 1: *“How is employee empowerment influenced by the organization?”*

The four pillars of empowerment are the most significant factors to employee empowerment. They define what empowerment is. However, participants identified additional organizational factors that influence how empowered one feels. Participants defined their sense of empowerment in terms of trust and value from the organization. Trust and value is shown through organizational elements of structure, culture, and support. Organizational structures include hierarchy, politics, and management practices. Organizational culture includes open communication, safety, flexibility, and ethics. Minor factors of organizational culture are collaboration and inclusion. Organizational support includes resources, available information, opportunities for growth, and personal advocates. Each of these influences is discussed.

Organizational Reinforcements: Trust and Value

When participants did not perceive that they were empowered, they felt as though they were not trusted or valued. Organizational structures, culture and support were discussed in how they demonstrated trust and value or a lack thereof. Thus, trust and value reinforced employee empowerment by proving empowering structures, cultures and support. Participants described how trust and value leads to influence, autonomy, decision-making power, and ownership, as shown in Figure 3.

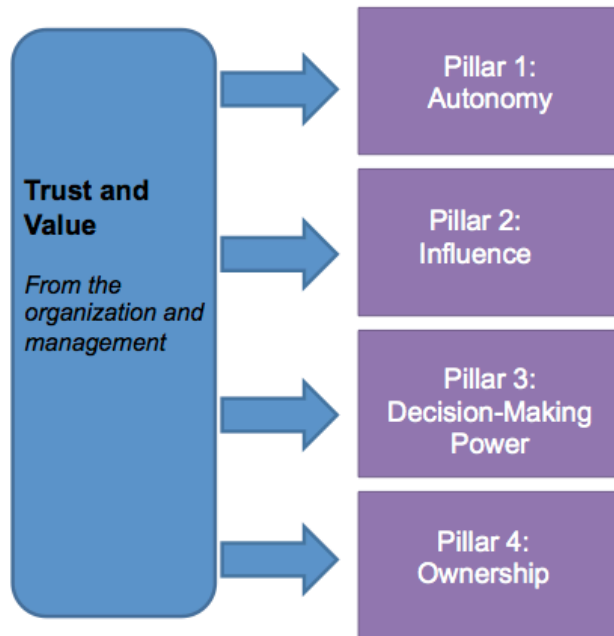


Figure 3. Trust and value reinforce the four pillars of employee empowerment.

Trust Reinforces Employee Empowerment. Trust was identified as an integral part of employee empowerment. Micromanagement was perceived as a sign that management did not trust the employee. Being trusted by the organization, management and peers was mentioned by 85% of the respondents and was important across all generations (see Appendix S for sample quotes about trust by generation).

Participants most frequently referred to trust in relation to being given freedom to control their work, to do their tasks as they chose, and to make decisions without having someone standing over their shoulders. Additionally, other benefits such as flexibility and support were received when management trusted the participants. Several participants who work or had worked remotely discussed how trust was vital in telecommuting situations. They also expressed how trust led to resources such as information and equipment. Gen Xer Joyce explained that trust is a spectrum. “An important word, that's ‘trust’. With trust comes empowerment. So you build your trust, and with that, more and more

empowerment comes.” This is similar to how participants who are managers described giving ownership to their employees. As they earned trust and gained confidence they were given additional tasks and projects.

Value Reinforces Employee Empowerment. Value was described as being appreciated by the organization. When employees did not feel valued, they did not feel empowered. Like trust, being valued was perceived as leading to the keys of empowerment. Participants indicated that when they felt they were valued, they felt a higher sense of worth and were more inclined to provide voice or to do more. Feeling valued was also important across generations although it was mentioned least among Baby Boomers (see Appendix T for sample quotes by generation about value). Gen Xer Amy described how she felt valued by her organization when she decided she wanted more work-life balance. She approached the organization about changing positions rather than quitting. They listened to her concerns and helped her find another position within the company, which made her feel valued. Although it required a move to another state, she felt heard and valued as they showed desire to work with her. Other ways participants felt valued were when they were given opportunities to voice their opinions, when they were sent to training courses, and when they were considered for different roles or positions within the company.

Similarly to trust, employees perceived when they were not valued and became resentful. Baby Boomer Julie described a situation in which she had worked at an organization for many years before they changed requirements for her position. She no longer met the requirements and was not allowed to keep her job. She felt that the company should have known her worth and valued her enough to find a way to keep her employed. Gen Xer Dawn illustrated a time when she worked for a company that did not value its

employees, almost to the point of being unethical. Both Julie and Dawn elucidated the feeling of powerlessness when one does not matter to the company. They felt unmotivated and did the least amount required before terminating employment.

Organizational Element 1: Structure

Data suggested that the more formal the structure the less employees felt empowered. Structure emerged mostly as a barrier to empowerment. The elements of structure that surfaced were hierarchical structures, politics, and management styles. Each of these structural elements will be discussed.

Hierarchical Structures. When asked about times when they did or did not feel empowered, the type of organization that was most frequently identified as a barrier to empowerment was bureaucracy that enforced hierarchies and rigid processes. Of the 33 participants, 17 explained a barrier to workplace empowerment with the terms “bureaucratic,” “hierarchical,” or “micromanagement.” Hierarchy was perceived as leading to a lack of authority to make decisions, sometimes with negative consequences. Baby Boomer Keith gave the following example:

Something so simple as ordering pizza to be delivered so that people could continue to work and eat lunch was a violation. I did not have the authority to do that, for example. Around spending money of any kind, I need paper for the printer, “No, no, no. You're not allowed to do that.” That kind of stuff is where I always had a problem with empowerment at this company.

Several participants discussed how those in power hoarded information to maintain power, which sometimes resulted in stymied progress. Gen Xer Alexis described how those with power caused negative consequences:

I really wanted to increase efficiency in some of our processes, and that would've meant a couple of departments sharing information and decreasing or eliminating duplication of work between three departments and kind of consolidating experts and

sharing information in something such as SharePoint or even in our accounting system somehow so that we could all view and update the same record instead of doing it three different times in three different places. But a couple of the directors wanted to hold that power and didn't want to share information, so it became kind of an impossible goal because of that.

Gen Xer Rick described a bureaucratic culture with many rules and the tenet that the time spent sitting in one's chair is important: "The more you sit in your cube, the better off you are. And follow the rules, whatever they lay out. No pushback." Several participants had similar stories of how they were frustrated when they were not allowed to make even small decisions or to implement quick decisions that would save contracts or clients. Millennial Peter also experienced a similar situation in which he had to wait for someone working in Europe to approve something his client needed immediately. As he contended, "And it's quite frustrating when I can't control my own destiny."

Organizational Politics. When asked about barriers to workplace empowerment, nine participants answered organizational politics and playing the game. Of these nine, six were Baby Boomers and four were Generation X. No Millennials mentioned politics. Baby Boomers Jane and Olivia positioned politics as a necessity of working in a bureaucratic culture. Jane expanded by saying how she let the other persons "perceive" power by letting them think they were controlling situations when she was really the one doing it. Olivia's situation with her manager also displays a sense of power.

I moved the pieces in the wrong way and I was losing and I needed to get stable again and I needed to... I mean I needed to show her the power differential and that she had it... I was confronted directly for disobeying an order, and she stopped talking to me, she put her nose in the air and I probably could just let it be, but I can't work that way. I went back to her and said let's do mediation, knowing full well all I was going... she was going to state her case about all the things I did wrong and I was going to get to say you are right, I was wrong. You are right, I was wrong. You're the

boss, I was wrong. It was really staged for her and it worked. She went back to just taking care of business, just doing what you need to do.

Politics was usually referred to in relationship to management and leadership.

Management. The most empowering managers were described as those who provide the four pillars of empowerment. These managers demonstrated trust and made employees feel valued. They also communicated well and allowed flexibility. Gen Xer Kristin explicated what this looks like:

One of my most favorite positions was just where my boss was really relaxed on your hours. You didn't get in trouble for being late because of traffic or this, that, or the other thing. He didn't care as long as you were there. He was definitely a compassionate boss and also kind of gave me extra things. When I had my daughter, he let me work from home for six weeks. It was just kind of a verbal agreement. He made sure that I was at least there a couple days a week.

Baby Boomer Olivia also mentioned a supervisor who trusted her and was inspirational.

Both she and Gen Xer Amy stated that one particular boss changed how they worked and that they would never forget the positive lessons they learned from those individuals. When people remembered the empowering bosses they had, it was often accompanied by comments about how it was their favorite position, how they learned and grew, and how they felt empowered.

Conversely, when employees did not have empowering supervisors, they felt angry, frustrated, and often quit the company. Examples of negative managers ranged from those who were verbally abusive to those who knew little about their employees. Baby Boomer Linda talked about her abusive boss: "Oh, it was awful, awful. Just terrible. She was afraid and then she was angry and then she would take it out on me." Millennial Brandi had a negative encounter with the CEO of the company and felt frustrated. She presents her experience as

He would say things to knock me back down and say, "Oh, Brandi, Miss I'm-Trying-to-Get-an-MBA wants to talk! What are you going to say? It must be smarter than me." And he would actually look at me in the face, deeply in the eyes, with this intimidating stare and say, "Do you think you're smarter than me?" So that was very unempowering.

Other participants had similar experiences with abusive managers and cultures that valued productivity over employee well-being.

Organizational Element 2: Culture

In addition to structure, four cultural influences were identified that were significant to employee empowerment: open communication, safety, flexibility, and ethics. Two additional influences were identified by a third of participants: collaboration and inclusion. Each of these influences is defined in Table 5. The four most important factor--open communication, safety, flexibility, and ethics--will be explained in relation to how they impact employee empowerment.

Table 5

Organizational Cultural Factors by Generation

Term	Meaning	Sample Words
Open Communication 142 statements by 31/33 participants	Open and honest communication with one's manager, coworkers, or customers. Involves sharing of ideas and two-way conversations.	Dialogue, discussion, conversation, honest, open
Safety (fear) 75 statements by 24/33 participants	Safety is being able to voice opinions or make mistakes without the fear of losing one's job or experiencing other negative repercussions.	Safe, afraid, stable, comfortable, punish, blame, repercussions, mistake, failure
Flexibility 91 statements by 23/33 participants	Flexibility means having options for schedules, hours worked, and work time. It includes work-life balance and working remotely.	Schedule, hours, time, remote, work at home, work/life balance
Ethics 58 statements by 26/33 participants	Organization ethics refer to the organization's value, mission, and business practices being legal and moral.	Ethics, values
Collaboration 32 statements by 15/33 participants	Collaboration means working with others to come up with ideas or to complete projects together.	Collaborate, teamwork, working as group
Inclusion 11 statements by 7/33 participants	Inclusion is when employees feel that they are part of the department or organization.	Inclusive, separate, silo

Organizational Culture Factor 1 - Open Communication. The majority of participants (31 of 33) indicated that open communication was a significant influence to empowerment. Participants often used communication and information interchangeably, although they are two different factors. Here, information involves gaining or accessing information one needs to do his or her job while communication is not about facts and the communication of them, but refers to having two-way, honest, and open conversations.

Common words found used to describe open communication are dialogue, conversation, and discussion. Open communication is on the empowering end of the continuum and the lack of communication is on the opposite end, which is disempowering (see Appendix U for sample quotes of open communication by generation). Almost all participants mentioned open communication as an empowering influence. Open communication was portrayed as honest conversations, two-way discussions, and dialogue.

Having a dialogue meant that the employee was not fearful of being honest with management. Others described open communication as group meetings where everyone's voice was heard and positive debate incurred. It was also used to describe providing feedback. Gen Xer Katrina encompassed all of these ideas:

And I think that the relationships that you have with people, the open communication, not being judgmental to any idea, not being judgmental or punitive if somebody takes a risk or does something because you say you're empowered and then all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, well you're not empowered to do that." So I really think it's how we communicate, how we build relationships, how we reinforce, or even how we give constructive feedback to somebody that's made a decision is really important.

Participants also expressed how not having open communication made them feel disempowered. For example, Millennial Victoria explained, "I have had experiences with no empowerment at all and I think there was no communication. It was a bad thing. No communication between the employer and me." Participants found it frustrating not to be able to talk about their perspectives or to say why they disagreed. Millennial Peter extends the idea of not communicating to creating a negative environment: "We should be able to learn from each other. We should be able to have those conversations. And if you can't have that communication, those conversations and be able to work through issues, it becomes toxic."

Organizational Culture Factor 2 – Safety. Safety was explained as feeling safe when voicing ideas, making mistakes, and taking risks (see Appendix V for sample comments on safety and fear). Safety was more frequently mentioned by Baby Boomers (7 of 10 participants) and Generation X (11 of 13 participants) than Millennials (3 of 10 participants) Gen Xer Melissa explained how she felt safe at her current organization:

And if it's not correct and something comes up, it's not this big deal. We all make mistakes. There's no finger pointing, there's no belittling, there's none of that. It's just fix it and move forward if there is something that comes up. And I find that very empowering.

Millennial Hannah appreciated how her company celebrated failure and encouraged people to take risks. When they felt safe, they were more willing to take ownership and make decisions.

On the opposite side of safety was fear. Many participants were afraid of saying the wrong thing, making a mistake, or losing their job. They were worried about the consequences and repercussions of doing something wrong. Additional words used to describe fear were “punish,” “penalize,” “trouble,” and “retribution.” As Baby Boomer Greg describes, a culture of fear makes work uncomfortable and unpleasant.

Really, you came up with any type of new ideas you were penalized for it. It was a place where people just went to their meetings, gave upper management what they wanted to hear, and just went about their day-to-day jobs. It was a pretty stilted place to work. It wasn't a very pleasant place to work. There was a lot of retribution in the place. Empowerment, I think, wasn't even thought of in there.

Participants were fearful about getting blamed for doing something and getting in trouble for it. Ways participants were punished included being written up, not getting promoted, being marked for something in a performance review, and getting tasks or projects taken away. Several were afraid of losing their jobs as they had seen many people in the organization being demoted or terminated.

Organizational Culture Factor 3 - Flexibility. Although flexibility can have several different meanings, here it refers to flexibility in one's work schedule. It indicates flexibility in hours worked, schedules, ability to work from home, and work-life balance. Flexibility in tasks or how to do one's job is discussed under autonomy. Specific factors of flexibility include flexible schedule and hours, working from home, and work-life balance (see Appendix W for sample comments by generation about flexibility). These factors varied by generation: Working from home was referenced by 20% of Baby Boomers and Millennials, but almost half of Generation X (46%).

Most participants wanted work-life balance and time to tend to personal errands, family, or whatever was important to them. To some, this meant establishing rules on when they would be available outside of work rather than being connected 24/7. Flexible work schedules were important as some participants wanted to come in or leave at different times in order to attend to children. Working from home was empowering to many, whether it was an occasional option or a telecommuting position. Several participants reported experiences with inflexible organizational cultures that valued "seat time." This meant that the more one sat in his or her office, the more he or she was seen as doing work. Two participants referred to this as "butts in seat." Gen Xer Kristin supplied an example.

I remember one company I worked for saying we were taking too much time microwaving our food at lunch and that we needed to hurry up and get back to our desks within a certain amount of time. It's like, are you kidding me? I can't necessarily just pick it up right away. It's hot. What do you want me to do? Burn myself?

When workers felt like they did not have the flexibility they needed, they often looked for another job.

Organizational Culture Factor 4 - Ethics. Ethics initially emerged in the pilot study as an important influence on employee empowerment and became a question in the dissertation study. If it did not naturally emerge, participants were asked to describe the impact of ethics on their empowerment. Most participants stated that the organization's values had to align with them in order for them to feel empowered. In total, 26 of the 33 participants mentioned ethics and organizational values. The other seven did not mention ethics or did not answer the question directly. For all 26 who mentioned ethics, they stated that if the organization they worked for was not ethical, they did not feel empowered. All 10 Millennials conversed about ethics, while 11 of 13 Generation X did and 5 of 10 Baby Boomers did. Examples of ethical or unethical behaviors included the treatment of employees and customers, as well as the company's mission and purpose.

Several participants mentioned the ethical actions of management, while others focused on the organization and what its services and products are. Millennial Sofia provided reasoning for why she would not work for an organization she did not believe in.

And I need to know they are doing the right thing. There is no way I could... Just one example. I love organic food and I'm very health conscious. But I had a lot of people telling me – because I would like to work for the food industry and people said you should get in contact with Burger King, McDonald's or these kinds of chains...but there is no way. There is no way I can work for a company that I don't believe in what they are doing.

While some participants would not apply to companies with bad ethics or purpose, others quit when they realized this about the company. Gen Xer Eddie described how miserable he was when he was employed with a company that took advantage of its employees and customers. He left as soon as he was able to. In many situations, participants like Eddie quit

when they felt that their values did not aligned with the organization's. Another Gen Xer, Alexis had a similar experience.

And one of the reasons, honestly, that I left my last position was because I didn't feel that my values matched the organization's values, and I have a different code of ethics. They might think they're doing the right thing and that the end justifies the means, and I kind of disagreed and bumped heads with senior leaders in the organization. So it was my choice to basically just walk out of what I saw as a bad situation that didn't make me feel good at the end of the workday.

Cultural factors that significantly impacted empowerment include open communication, safety, flexibility, and ethics. Support will be discussed next.

Organizational Element 3: Support

Workers at all levels needed support in order to feel empowered. Support was combined as a grouping for the people and resources that emerged as necessary to complete one's job. Factors that emerged as aspects of support are resource availability, information availability, opportunities for growth, and personal advocates. Each of these factors is explained in Table 6, followed by a description of each.

Table 6

Elements of Organizational Support

Term	Meaning	Sample Words
Resource Availability	Supplies, equipment, and other tools required to perform one's job.	Equipment, people, technology
Information Availability 154 statements by 33/33 participants	Having access to information and facts about the company, one's job, customers, and equipment.	Transparency, goals, objectives, mission, expectations, information
Opportunities for Growth 191 statements by 32/33 participants	Personal or professional development. Includes learning new skills, gaining knowledge, and enjoying opportunities for new roles and tasks.	Growth, development, education, learning, tuition, improve, knowledge, skills
Personal Advocates 85 statements by 29/33 participants	Support is when someone is able to get help, assistance, or guidance. It is also feeling that others have your back.	Help, assist, support, guidance, backing, defend, approve

Organizational Support Factor 1 – Resource Availability. Having access to resources is a necessity to empowerment. If one does not have the tools and resources required to do his or her job, the work cannot get done. Participants were asked which resources they needed to be empowered beyond basic equipment. The most frequent response in connection to technology resources was an intranet. Some participants mentioned using collaboration tools or intra-company platforms such as Yammer, SharePoint, TeamSpace, Basecamp, and Google products. Most participants rely on telephone and email to communicate although several mentioned using instant messaging or texting.

One issue that emerged is gaining access to systems required for people to do their work. Participants explained that access to specific information or systems was blocked. Gen Xer Amy did not have access to the system she needed to process customer invoices and had to bypass the system by logging into a system she does not use often. Since she does not use it often, she forgets the password and it takes time to hunt down the system administrator to get the password. Both Gen Xer Rick and Millennial Zach presented situations in which the organization had technology such as the Internet or instant messaging, but blocked employees from using it, even when it was helpful to get information for a customer or from a colleague. Baby Boomer Alissa established the difficulty of getting information in some industries due to regulations that protect clients. Although not an extensive list of industries that may be impacted, participants in this study listed education, financial, and health care as industries that have to be careful with information due to legalities and regulations.

Organizational Support Element 2 - Information Availability. Having access to information and knowledge is an important aspect of employee empowerment. Having information available to them was mentioned by all 33 participants in 154 statements. Information included facts that need to be communicated to employees, generally in a one-way format. Participants need to have access to information, but they do not generally need to discuss or converse about it. Information was described as related to the organization, the task, the equipment, the customer, or other things workers needed to know to perform their jobs. The word “transparency” was often used to refer to clear and honest communication and was mentioned by nine participants. Three types of information emerged as well as the way information is learned. These aspects of information are (a) the organization’s goals, mission, and strategy; (b) job expectations; (c) all other types of information; and (d) shared

knowledge. Other information includes things about who does what, where to find information on processes, information on changes, and client. In all of these areas, people want clear, concise, transparent information to be available where they can find it, when they need it.

Organization's goals, mission, and strategy. Participants explained how they needed to know the organization's goals and mission in order to know what they were striving for in their jobs. When they did not know what the goals were, they often felt like they did not know what their own goals or aim should be and could not align them with the organization's. Baby Boomer Bob referred to it as a road map that tells one which direction to go (see Appendix X for sample comments by generation about availability of information).

Several participants mentioned that they needed to know how their work contributed to the company's goals. Gen Xer Dan explained that knowing what was going well and was changing helped workers to plan and to prepare. Knowing about the organization makes it easier to contribute ideas and suggestions. Gen Xer Amy explained that having information available, whether on an intranet, given in meetings, or provided face-to-face, was not "empowering, I feel like it's a necessity."

Not having information was mentioned more than having information – it is something that is not always appreciated when one has it, but has significant impact when it is missing. Baby Boomer Linda expressed this best.

Excuse me, I made that involuntary gasp because what I've found is they don't have any written strategic goals for the organization. Isn't that weird?... I've always aligned my work with the organizational goals, but nobody knows what they are... how empowered are you if you don't know that what you're doing is contributing to the greater good? It's kind of... Yeah, it's weird.

As shown in this statement, not having information about the organization's goals makes one feel disempowered and also makes workers distrustful of the organization. Several participants questioned how they could sell the company or defend it if they did not know its goals, mission, or strategy.

Job expectations. Another area that was important to participants was knowing what is expected of them. As Baby Boomer Jane stated,

And in the job I've got right now, we're very regimented, very regulated, and we have to do exactly what they want, but what they want isn't always defined. So there is no empowerment at all. You're always trying to guess what everybody wants.

Having job descriptions as well as defining what success looks like helped participants know what to do. Participants felt uncomfortable when they had to ask repeatedly for expectations or what they were supposed to do. Baby Boomer Keith explicated that knowing what is expected of one is “a huge part of empowerment, probably the most important foundation to it, really.”

Other information. Although information about the organization such as its goals, mission, and strategy was mentioned most frequently, other information was also required. Other information, desired included who to go to for what, where to find equipment or information and how to use technology. Several participants mentioned needing information about their clients or customers or having access to databases that provide information such as contacts, phone numbers, and other information.

Sharing knowledge. Most information came from management and could be found in internal online portals, newsletters, or was given in meetings. Several participants mentioned that another way to get information was by sharing it with others. Ways that participants shared information varied. Gen Xer Kristin created a technology toolkit that is available

online for her colleagues to access. Others posted information in online portals or distributed them via email to their internal networks.

Organizational Support Factor 3 - Opportunities for Growth. An important aspect of empowerment for all generations was the opportunity for personal and professional growth. Formal and informal learning opportunities to gain new skills and knowledge are included in this element. Growth was most often mentioned with phrases such as learning, professional development, personal and professional growth, and education. Participants reported growth in terms of formal education programs such as college, professional growth such as training and development, and other opportunities such as attending conferences.

Opportunities for growth included several secondary themes: opportunities for new challenges, training and development, and to keep up with the latest information and skills in one's industry. While "opportunities for growth" was important to all generations (32 of 33 participants), Millennials focused on it more frequently than the other generations. Baby Boomers made 38 statements among 9 of 10 participants, while Generation X made 54 statements among all 13 participants and Millennials made 95 statements among all 10 participants (see Appendix Y for sample statements about opportunities for growth by generation). The term "learning" was used twice as frequently by Millennials than Baby Boomers. Millennial Victoria exemplifies the importance of learning: "I'd probably rate educational opportunity as the number one thing I'd probably need to feel empowered in the workplace."

Challenging opportunities. Challenging opportunities included the need for new challenges or projects, taking risks, or doing work outside of the normal tasks or scope of

one's position. Doing something new or outside of one's scope was empowering because it provided growth. Gen Xer Shaun explained the allure of a new challenge:

I think if you're not challenged, then how are you going to grow? Yeah, I think challenge is a must because if you're in a position where you're not challenged, and some people do, then you're not going to grow or you're just probably going to be stagnant, I guess.

This category was remarked on more frequently by Millennials than the other generations. Almost half of the respondents in this area were Millennials who accounted for 7 of the 15 participants and made 13 of the 28 statements. Two Baby Boomers made two statements and six Generation X made 13 statements (see Appendix Z for sample comments by generation about opportunities and new challenges).

Although most participants claimed they wanted challenging work, several professed that work should not be too challenging. Baby Boomer Jane enjoys challenges as long as they are not constant: "It's important to me to be busy with an occasional challenge. I don't want to be challenged all the time. But it's nice to once in a while have to think. Just not all day, every day." The main focus was that the challenge should lead to growth.

Training and development. One way participants want to grow is through training and development. Courses can be offered from the company or can be external, as long as they provide opportunity to gain new skills and knowledge. Training refers to gaining new skills and knowledge that are relevant to one's career goals.

Several Millennials mentioned that they enjoyed training and felt empowered by it only when it was done correctly. They stated that training should be customized and should occur when one is ready for it. Some also mentioned that informal training such as on-the-job training by a coworker was helpful. A few participants mentioned that training resources

were not as common lately due to the economy as training programs had been cut or limited to save costs. Millennial Peter elucidated the importance of training in his example:

It was a training class. It was not a requirement of my company. It was something they provided and you could choose to pursue if you wanted to or not. I felt like it would ultimately help me become more well-rounded, but ultimately help my customer. I would be more knowledgeable in this certain arena. I enjoy things like that so long as they don't take away immensely from my full-time job.

Several participants in management roles valued training as an opportunity to empower their employees by giving them new skills or knowledge. Two participants regarded leadership training as the most important learning opportunity they were given and three others mentioned they appreciated attending them. Of these five, one was a Baby Boomer and the other four were Millennials. The four members of the second focus group (three Gen Xers and one Millennial) discussed how they would like access to conflict management training. Others mentioned they needed training to learn how to use equipment and updated technology, especially on technical tools such as online enterprise platforms (intranet-supported wikis or blogs, Yammer, SharePoint, etc.). Classes on computers and software were also needed.

Opportunities to maintain relevant knowledge and skills. Participants also felt that they needed to have the latest knowledge and skills in their industry or position in order to be empowered. They explained these skills and knowledge as ways to grow and improve within their position. Baby Boomer Todd, proposed: “You can always learn something new. There's always new technologies coming out, new equipment or whatever. You're always learning. There's not a day goes by that something you can't learn or something that's different.” Similarly, other participants explained that they wanted to learn what was cutting edge or new in their profession. Training was a great resource as well as conferences,

subscriptions, and memberships. Some mentioned how it would help the company or customers as well as themselves. Unlike the other secondary categories, Millennials referenced this the least of all generations. One Millennial commented on staying current in his or her profession in contrast to three Baby Boomers and three Generation X.

Organizational Support Factor 4 - Personal Advocates. Advocates were described as people within the organization or community who offers assistance, help, or guidance. They were described as people who have the employee's back and may advocate for or defend that employee. In some cases, support from management meant approval or encouragement. The importance of support seemed important across generations and was mentioned by 29 of 33 participants. Generation Xer Alexis exemplifies the importance of management support:

I need their support, first of all. If I need extra resources or some sort of guidance, I expect them to be there for that. Oftentimes, there are opposing forces in the workplace and people with opposing agendas, and so you need a strong leader who will back you up and not undermine your effort.

The words used most frequently to explain advocates were support, help, and backing.

Advocates were also mentioned as mentors or coaches, and peers.

Mentors and coaches as advocates. Mentors or coaches were also seen as advocates who could be empowering. Informal mentors or chosen mentor relationships were more empowering than formal or forced mentorship. Gen Xer Katrina revealed, "I just think formal mentors, placing somebody with somebody else, I think it can be awkward." She did, however, appreciate informal mentors or having the opportunity to choose the mentor. Her coworker, Millennial Hannah, had a mentorship with someone she did not like and did not feel the relationship was supportive. Thirteen participants mentioned the importance of having a mentor. Two Millennials had never had a mentor. Brandi declared that she did not

know what mentor meant, as she had never had the opportunity to have one. Two participants (both Millennials) used the term “coach” rather than mentor. One Millennial, Thomas, shed insight on what a coach does:

So for me it was one of my peers. And I think that relationship was important because it was peer to peer. I could ask her really stupid questions and you know, feel comfortable. You know, like, ah, this isn't going to go on my you know, year-end review or whatever, if I ask her something dumb or write something up in front of her. And so I think that was helpful for me to have a coach that was separate from the manager... a coach is someone you go to pretty much every day... or at least that's how I handled that relationship. You know... “This is what I'm thinking on our project kickoff meeting. Do you think this makes sense?” Really just bounce, you know...small ideas off of them.

Peers as advocates. Supportive coworkers were also mentioned as an influence on empowerment. Participants who worked with friendly and supportive coworkers felt more empowered than those who worked with disagreeable colleagues. Several participants mentioned how relationships with peers, teammates, and customers were important to feeling empowered. Millennial Peter clarified the importance:

I've realized over time if you're fair, reasonable, and have a mutual respect for that contact on the other line, they very much empower you. They want to see you be successful, and they'll go and do things above and beyond to make sure that we have mutual success.

Several participants mentioned the value of having a team with whom to share ideas, to go to for information, to get feedback, and for support. Millennial Erika rationalized the power of teams: “You definitely need people. In terms of having a team, you're working for a common goal, for a common cause, that's empowerment.” Gen Xer Kristin felt that she worked better when she worked with people she liked and felt like she belonged.

On the other hand, coworkers can also cause drama and interpersonal conflict. Gen Xer Eddie charged, “Conflicts, being with the wrong person, that can be just not good. More

for me what holds me back is people, from being empowered. It's people.” Baby Boomer Julie concurred that colleagues can have a negative impact: “When you have one real bad apple, it keeps from empowering people.” Baby Boomer Todd contended that empowerment such as decision-making can create disempowerment with coworkers. He explained the strain that can be put on a relationship when one peer becomes the supervisor. Seventeen participants made comments about the impact of interpersonal conflict.

Summary

Employee empowerment is complex. It is influenced by how trusted and valued employees feel, which stems from organizational structure, culture, and support. The aspects of structure that act as a barrier to empowerment include rigid hierarchies and micromanagers. Cultural factors that emerged include open communication, safety, flexibility, and ethics. These influences and their relationships are shown in Figure 4.

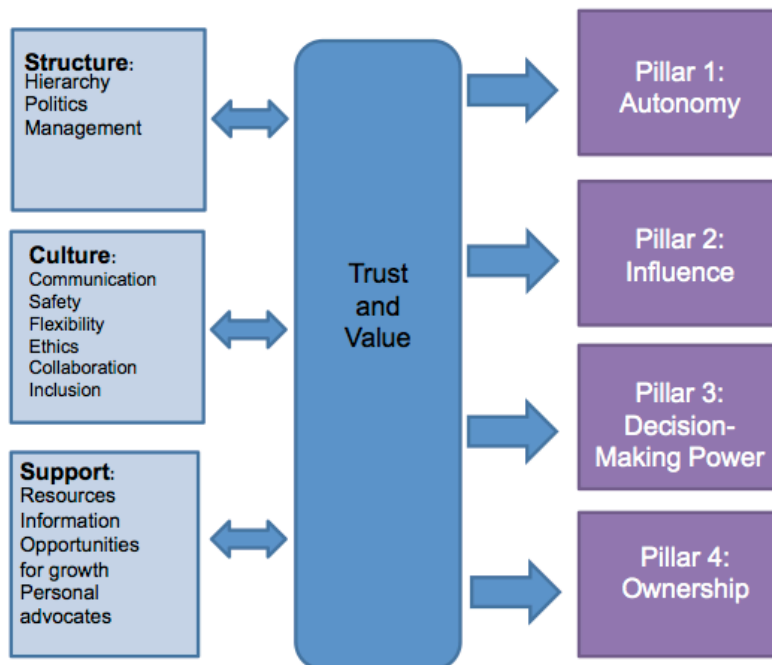


Figure 4. Structural influences of employee empowerment.

Subquestion 2: “*How is employee empowerment influenced by psychological factors?*”

The four pillars of empowerment are the most significant factors to employee empowerment. Data showed that how much of each pillar one wants is influenced by many factors. Career and life stage were the most significant in this study and led to other elements such as confidence and meaning. Additional personal factors that emerged are personality, age, education, socio-economic status, culture, ethnicity, and generation. This section will discuss the driving influences of career and life stage, then the two most significant influences, confidence and meaning, and will end with a discussion of how personal factors influence empowerment.

Psychological Driving Influences: Career and Life Stage

Participants indicated that they have individual needs and wants that do not always correlate to the same expectations of the four pillars of empowerment. Also, the degree to which they aspired to each pillar changed over time as they gained confidence, experienced different life situations, and gained maturity. When asked how much empowerment they wanted, 12 participants answered that they did not want to be managers or CEOs. They did not want to make high-level decisions. Some had been managers and chose not to be currently because they wanted more flexibility, work-life balance, or less stress. They felt they were more empowered by having less decision-making power and responsibility. Four participants (one Gen Xer and three Millennials) voiced that they desired to be in management positions and wanted higher levels of responsibility. In contrast, six participants wanted to be entrepreneurs so that they could have the ultimate level of autonomy and influence. The amount of empowerment they wanted changed throughout

their life stage and career stage. Thus, life stage and career stage are driving influences of desired levels of employee empowerment. This relationship is shown in Figure 5.

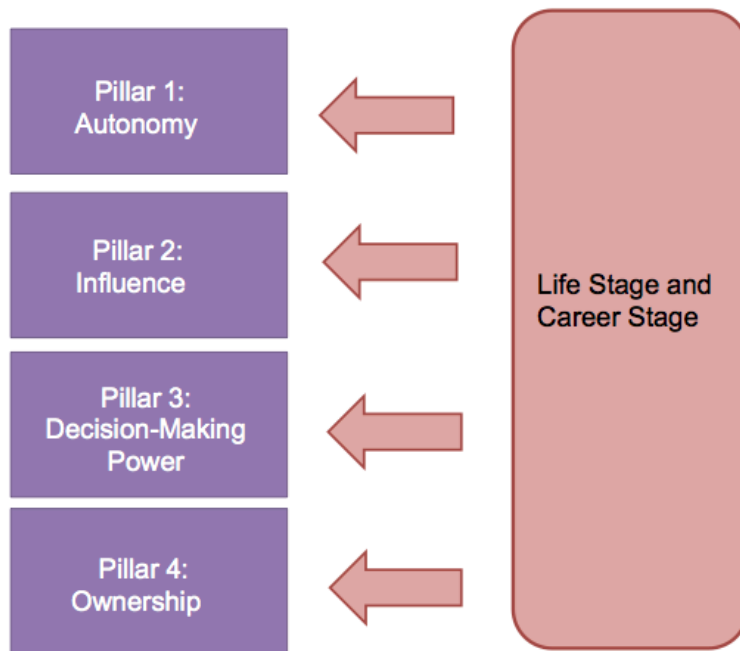


Figure 5. Life and career stages are driving influences of desired levels of employee empowerment.

Several participants felt that giving employees too much power when they are not ready for it can be damaging to their confidence and impact the organization negatively. Baby Boomer Jane explained how her supervisor did not want to be in management, but was forced to accept the role. Jane felt the manager performed poorly as she did not want that level of responsibility. Gen Xer Dan discussed how giving people too much power too quickly sets them up to fail as they may not have the skills or confidence to take on ownership of something entirely new. Millennial Brandi demonstrates this relationship.

You really have to trust people, and they really do have to be at a high enough level to know what they're doing. Because if you empower someone to do what they think is right, they may not actually know what's right. They may not have enough

background experience. You have to make sure that people have the experience they need for that autonomy to be earned. They have to earn that autonomy.

The two factors that were mentioned most frequently in terms of what motivated participants were career stage and life stage. How much empowerment participants want was largely determined by where they are at in their life.

Impact of Career Stage on Employee Empowerment. Findings showed that career stage is an important factor as one's view of empowerment changes with experience and maturity. Entry-level workers did not feel they had much empowerment, while those with seniority desired and often had high levels of empowerment. Many participants explained that they did not have a sense of what empowerment meant when they first entered the workplace. The youngest participant, Zach (age 21), initially answered that workplace empowerment "doesn't honestly mean too much to me just because I don't have a close connection with the workplace yet due to the jobs I've had." Similarly, Gen Xer Dan and Millennial Brandi explained that they did not have a word for empowerment when they began working and did not understand the concept. Several participants explained that they just did what they were told in their first jobs and as they gained experience, they learned that they had options. Baby Boomer Keith presented his first job at McDonald's as an example of when he did not have much empowerment. Since he started there when he was 15, he did not want empowerment, he just wanted a job, and to earn money. He did not think he could have handled empowerment at that point in his life. Baby Boomer Bob illustrated his experience:

I went from, "It's a privilege to have a job. When the boss says 'jump' you say 'how high?' and you do what you need to do." Whereas as my career developed it went more from gaining the knowledge and the skills and the expertise of the position and letting that motivate me and empower me to do my very best and then model the

behavior that I wanted from the people that reported to me. So it became a matter of people not working for me but people working with me.

Participants who are nearing the end of their careers also demonstrated a different perspective on empowerment. Many felt that they did not have much empowerment at their jobs because the organization no longer valued older employees. In contrast, several felt more empowered to coast in their jobs because they were not looking to advance or move higher. Baby Boomers Linda and Todd specified that they had five years until they could retire, so they did not let the same things bother them that they used to. Todd used the phrase “cruise control” to explain that his focus was on retirement and Linda said, “But it does give you that sense of freedom. It's like I only have to stick it out, you know? So if things aren't going so well, it's like, well, whatever.”

However, age does not always signify the ending of one's career. Gen Xer Eddie retired from the military, but now does consulting work. His goal is to make as much money as he can now so that he can completely retire within a few years. Several other Gen Xers were also focused on retiring at a young age. Thus, knowing that one was close to retirement changed how participants were motivated, although they were not all within one age group or generation.

For those mid-career, they mentioned that what they wanted had changed. Gen Xers Alexis and Eddie explained that as they gained experience, they cared less about money and advancement and more about meaning. Baby Boomer Kimberly voiced that visibility and networking was important early in her career because she needed to gain knowledge of the company and to advance. As she gained experience, she found a role that provided meaning and work-life balance. Others explained that as they gained experience they became less

concerned with their own empowerment and focused more on empowering others. Baby Boomer Alissa presented these ideas as

I think when you are first starting you tend to think a little more about what's in it for me? As you grow in your career you have you think about a lot of things -what is good for the organization, what's good for your audience? And you empower the workforce – how do you leave it better than when you came?

Career stage influenced how one wants to be empowered. Similarly, life stage impacts what one desires from work.

Impact of Life Stage on Employee Empowerment. Life stage also emerged as a driving influence of employee empowerment. Participants indicated that empowerment was more related to advancement, titles, and growth when they began their career and that it changed to flexibility and financial stability as they began to have families. Workers reported wanting more advancement and decision-making power when they were single. As they got married and had children, they wanted more flexibility, less travel, and more work-life balance, even if that meant giving up control or decision-making power. Because the ages of getting married and having children varied, the life event had more impact than age. Gen Xer Shelly had returned to work in her 40s after having children. Although she was older, she was also learning about corporations and how to work within that environment. Baby Boomer Jane explained that her ideas of empowerment changed as she aged. “When I was younger I wanted the big two-story house and the huge yard and the white picket fence, and now I want a condo. So I don't know if it's work or if it's me.”

Elements of Psychological Empowerment

Confidence and meaning emerged as psychological factors that impact employee empowerment as shown in Table 7. Employees do not want to take responsibility or make decisions if they are not confident that they have the ability to do so. If they are confident to

do their work effectively, they felt empowered. In addition to confidence, workers desired meaning from their work, although meaning various connotations to different people.

Table 7

Elements of Psychological Empowerment

Term	Meaning	Sample Words
Confidence 94 statements by 26/33 participants	Confidence is how much one believes in himself or herself. It includes one's sense of his or her abilities or knowledge.	Confident, abilities, self-worth, value, strengths, trust in self, insecurity
Meaning 96 statements by 29/33 participants	How people want to contribute to the organization or society. Includes individual or organizational purpose.	Meaning, contribution, passion, success, rewarding, purpose, motivation

Psychological Element 1 - Confidence. Participants of all generations identified confidence as closely related to empowerment. They are so closely related that Millennial Hannah had a difficult time separating them. "It's so heavily tied to confidence. The more we talk about it out loud and the more I think about how it resonates with me, it's very much tied to confidence and self-security and things along those lines." Hannah's coworker Shelly agreed with Hannah during their focus group and framed confidence as the foundation of empowerment.

Participants explained that confidence invites empowerment. As participants gained confidence, their desired levels of the four pillars increased. Millennial Brian asserted,

It almost went from being a fake-it-till-you-make-it kind of attitude and then your self-confidence grows further in your career and you feel more willing and able to take on greater projects because you start to understand that some of the senior leaders, what goes into their decision-making process, and you start to realize

maybe you can make some of those decisions. So you feel a little more empowered because you have greater exposure to how things are currently being done, whereas maybe when you were a little more amateur in your career you didn't really quite understand why some things were happening in the way that they were. I think that's where the empowerments come, as growth and opportunities come.

Older participants explained that they gained confidence with age and experience. Baby Boomer Linda described how she did not have confidence when she entered the workforce and was content to let people tell her what to do. Now that she has been in the workforce for decades, she is confident and wants to be left alone to do her work. Other participants had similar stories. As they gained experience, they no longer waited to be told what to do or asked for directions. Increased confidence and knowing what to expect led to taking initiative or directly asking for what one needs.

Many participants explained that once they were confident in their abilities and worth, they took actions to empower themselves. Some set boundaries for when they would respond to emails or how late they were willing to work. Other stories included participants standing up for themselves, providing suggestions and taking control of their work.

Participants revealed that the more confidence they had, the more they went forward on projects without asking questions or asking for permission. They also discussed how they volunteered for projects and found ways to go around systems. Three Millennials voiced that their confidence would help them find good places to work; they were no longer willing to work somewhere that did not appreciate them and meet their needs.

Participants posited that they or coworkers who did not have experience and confidence were less likely to take on projects due to fear of making a mistake or getting in trouble. Other participants confirmed that they had held themselves back at times by not accepting positions or taking ownership due to their lack of confidence and insecurities.

Baby Boomer Jane, for example, explained that she would not accept management positions as she had a fear of being a bad manager.

Participants who were or who had been managers tried to make sure they empowered their employees little by little so that they did not damage their confidence by giving them too much too soon. Gen Xers Eddie and Alexis described giving new employees one project at a time. As the employees did well, they were given more projects and more difficult tasks. Gen Xer Dan explained that empowering someone beyond his or her abilities could lead to failure, which results in decreased confidence. Gen Xer Alexis agreed by stating,

You don't want to set someone up for failure because not only does that kill their confidence and make them more reluctant to make decisions in the future, but it can be detrimental to the organization's goals.

From the employee perspective, Millennial Sofia felt that the manager is the one who officially gives one empowerment, but someone with confidence will go forward with the assumption that he or she can do it without being given permission or being told to do it.

Psychological Element 2 - Meaning. Participants needed to derive meaning from their jobs, although meaning was different for everyone. Meaning also changed throughout one's lifetime. For many, meaning was related to passion. The term "passion" was frequently used to describe meaning, generally in relation to the community one serves. Gen Xer Dan exemplified this, "Because I think that you have to have your heart and soul into whatever you're going to do. I think otherwise then you do tend to begin to go through the motions and you're not as effective." The term passion was used more often by Millennials than the other generations to describe what has meaning to them. Nine participants were passionate about helping others.

Passion and meaning were often used in relation to helping those within the communities participants serve. For example, social workers were passionate about helping those in the community such as victims or welfare recipients, and trainers were passionate about developing others within the organization. The firefighter and police officer were passionate about helping the people in the communities they served as well as students they taught. Advisors and teachers found meaning from helping their students. Two participants derived meaning from their customers and knowing they helped them. Seven participants (one Baby Boomer, three Gen X, three Millennials) found meaning from helping larger causes with society. Even if they did not directly impact these communities, knowing their organization did helped them find meaning.

Eight participants (two Baby Boomers, three Gen X, and three Millennials) used the word “success” to describe meaning. However, success had different meanings to different people. For some, it was advancement. Gen Xer Margherita found meaning in being a role model for her daughter. She wanted to show her that one can do passionate work and take care of a family at the same time. Her empowerment at work intertwined with her empowerment at home.

It meant working hard and going to school and as a woman, and as a woman of color, I wanted to show her that she can do it and she doesn't need anyone and especially that she can do it for her. I wanted to empower her to be a strong woman in the world and that she can do something if she wants it she can make it happen.

Only one participant, Millennial Zach, mentioned power as motivation. Gen Xer Eddie was the only one who stated that money provided meaning, although two others knew people who worked only for the paycheck.

Gen Xer Eddie thought some people find meaning in attention and being important ,while others want to socialize and make meaning through connections. Baby Boomer Keith explained that he found meaning in different ways.

Meaningful to me is, this is what it is: three kinds of compensation to Keith. There's the financial compensation, there's the education compensation, and there's the job experience. Kind of like if you go to the beach and you look at a beautiful sunset, that's an experience. That's what I mean by experience, that you enjoy specifically the activities you're doing. If those are all in balance, then I'm happy. But for example, if I'm not growing in my knowledge, then the other two better be high. If two of them are out, for example, if I'm not growing in my knowledge and I'm not getting a lot of enjoyment out of my job, then you better be paying me a whole lot of money to do it. So those three things in balance, that's what I'd say is that case.

Findings indicated that confidence and meaning impact how empowered one feels. Meaning was personal and varied among participants. The relationship of confidence and meaning as well as life and career stage are shown in Figure 6. Confidence and meaning are also related to other personal factors that are discussed next.

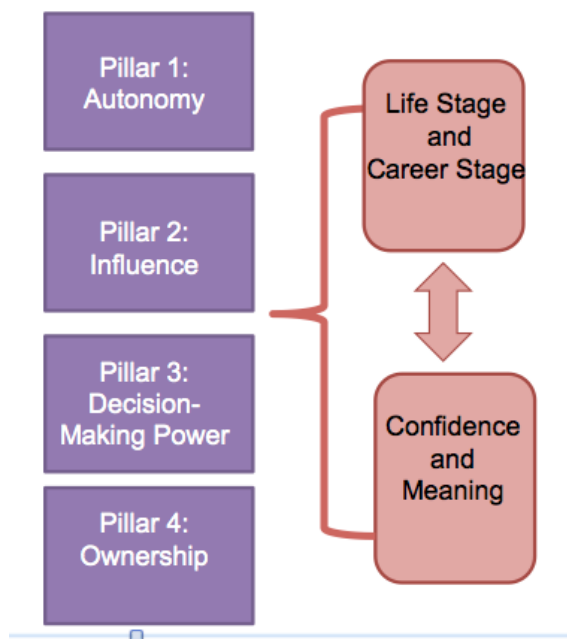


Figure 6. Driving psychological influences on employee empowerment.

Personal Factors that Influence Employee Empowerment

Factors such as personality, race, age, gender, culture, education, socio-economic status, and generation emerged as influences on how one views empowerment. These personal factors affected how participants experienced empowerment and how much empowerment they want. Only the elements that emerged strongly will be discussed – personality, age, generation, and gender.

Personal Factor 1 – Personality. When asked how they saw differences in desired empowerment among coworkers, participants stated that there are personality differences. They described differences in work ethics that influence how people want to be empowered. Millennial Thomas linked empowerment to intrinsic motivation.

Yes, there are things that an organization can do to empower people but if you're not already an intrinsically motivated person, you're going to be looking for those types of roles where, yeah. I just show up and they say, "Thomas, run this query." And then I run the query and then I'm done. And so, there are people for whom that is a completely fulfilling role. Um, but I don't believe those are naturally empowered people.

Baby Boomer Olivia admitted that she worked with people who were negative and disenfranchised and would never feel empowered due to their personality. Nine participants mentioned that having a positive attitude or outlook contributed to empowerment because they could find the good in all situations. Twelve participants expressed how some people are happy doing the same thing, while others want challenge and control. Millennial Victoria had worked with people who just wanted a high-paying job and others who wanted work-life balance. Dawn sees this with her employees.

There's some people that really want to understand what's going on, know the deals, be that leader in front of the sales team, in front of a deal. I think those people are a lot more empowered. And then there's other people that just have no desire to get out in front, and you're constantly having to tell them, "Call that sales

rep. Go do that. Go talk to the team. Schedule a call. Get everybody together. Be the leader of the team." And they just push back. And they're in my office every day, like, "I need to call so-and-so, but can you call them for me?"

Millennial Erika experienced similar situations with her employees. She would try to give them more control or power and they did not want it. Baby Boomer Joe calls himself a high achiever and had to refine his management style to account for those who did not want to achieve more or to continue learning. For this group of participants, it was a hard learning curve to realize that not everyone wanted to excel or to reach higher levels in their work.

Personal Factor 2 – Age and Generation. Since generation is determined by date of birth, the two have similar influences. Age was identified by both Millennials and Baby Boomers as a factor that caused disrespect or disempowerment at work. Baby Boomer Jane described how older workers are treated at her company. "It's mostly people that are 50 and older, and we just feel like they don't want us anymore. Well, the CEO said in a webcast that he wanted a youthful company, and he was only going to hire youth." Millennial Zach felt that younger people of all generations are treated differently: "Younger people will always have a bad rap. Doesn't matter which generation it is, the next one's always going to be worse than the previous generation. So it's kind of jumping over that stigma."

Age was also identified as a contributor to how confident one felt. Gen Xer Dan illustrated it as, "So when you come in, you're in your infancy, you're excited, everything is cool, you're a toddler, you're a sponge, you're taking it all in. Then you reach that adolescence, where you're like, hey, I know it all." Age and generation were identified as factors of work expectations, including empowerment. Kristin shared that her mother wants to make as much money as she can for retirement, while Kristin wants to have autonomy and meaning. Millennials Peter and Sofia indicated that their generation changes jobs more

frequently than past generations because they focus on growth and development. They want new experiences and skills rather than stability. Millennial Brandi pontificated on what she perceives as differences between generations.

There's more discomfort with the younger people. I don't know if it's something that has been awakened in us or whatever it is, but we have a different perspective and we want to live and we want to feel like we're part of something and feel like we're reaching some spiritual goal... there's more of a drive for autonomy and empowerment and being able to reach a higher level of consciousness within your job that the younger folks are looking for that the older people don't even want. They don't care about that.

Gen Xer Alexis witnessed Baby Boomers engaging in more political behaviors than other generations. She claimed they were more likely to vie for power in terms of status and title.

Another empowerment factor affected by age is the use of technology. Gen X managers Dawn and Alexis provided examples of how older people were generally not as likely to use technology as younger generations. Dawn explained that her Baby Boomer employees made phone calls rather than looking something up online. She did not feel that they were empowered by technology even though they had information available on their computers. Alexis was frustrated that her Baby Boomer workers wanted printouts rather than keeping documents electronically. This affected her in terms of keeping costs down. Baby Boomers Linda and Bob agreed that they do not want to use new forms of technology such as instant messaging (IM) and social media. Linda's coworker Rick explained that he tried to give her information via IM, but she did not know how to use it and would not respond. Bob explained that he does not like technology because he was not brought up with it. He did not find it empowering as he is scared to break something or have it "blow up." Baby Boomer Todd found Millennials he worked with were so distracted with cellphones that he took a

different position so that he would not have to compete with technology to get workers' attention. Baby Boomer Jane posited that technology leads to poor work habits.

When I entered the workforce we didn't have cellphones, we didn't have computers. We came in at 8:00, we left at 10:00 for a 15-minute break, we left at noon for our lunch, we left at 2:00 for a 15-minute break, and we went home at 5:00. We smoked at our desks. Well, I didn't, but others did. I mean, that's the way it was. Nobody thought twice about it. That was the way it was. And it's not that way anymore. They come when they want to come, they leave when they want to leave, they take long lunches. They don't care.

Age and generation impact how one views empowerment. Technology empowers some while it disempowers others. Societal changes in how work is viewed have also impacted employee empowerment. Millennial Brandi summed it up when explaining how she had recently interviewed an older worker, a Baby Boomer, who said he viewed work as a gift. She had never heard younger workers speak that way about work.

Personal Factor 3 – Gender. Gender was indicted as an influence on empowerment by those who did or had worked in male-dominated industries. Thirty percent of the female respondents identified gender as an influence on empowerment. All seven of these participants worked in male-dominated industries and four worked at the same company. One male who worked in a male-dominated industry also saw the impact females faced in his organization. Gen Xer Katrina presented her experience as

But man, talk about not feeling empowered and talk about feeling like you're constantly working ten times as hard as everybody else to get the same credibility. I remember walking away from that thinking I will never in my career make anybody feel this way ever.

Millennial Brandi attested that one organization she worked for only gave women titles with “administrative” in them, no matter what the actual position was. Although men also did administrative work, their titles were different. Gen Xer Dan, who is a firefighter, described

how he sees it changing in the future. When they go to schools, women firefighters are there to show children that women can do it too.

Summary

This section described psychological and personal factors that influence employee empowerment. How workers see empowerment depends on their confidence and how they derive meaning from their work. These elements are impacted by personal factors such as personality, age, and gender as shown in Figure 7.

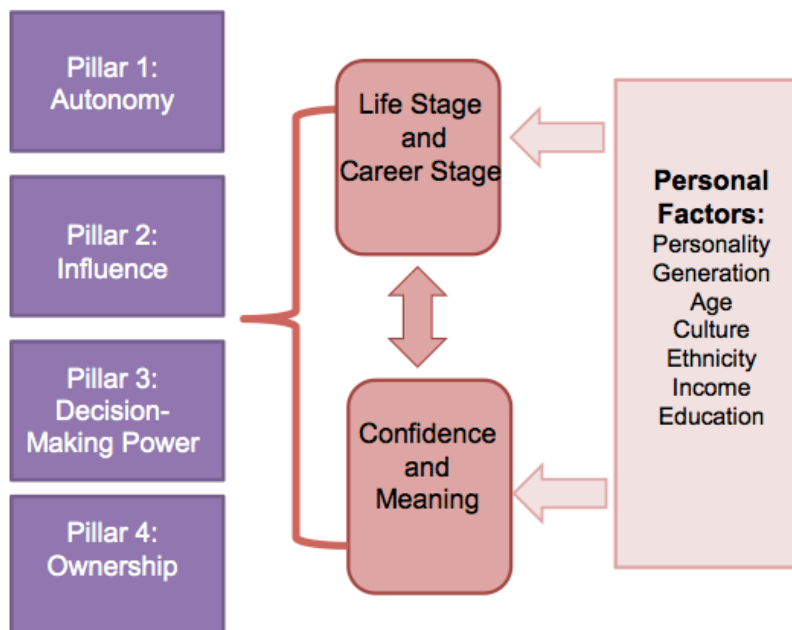


Figure 7. Psychological influences of employee empowerment.

Responses to Existing Measures of Workplace Empowerment

To compare current definitions of empowerment with the existing and traditional measures of empowerment, participants were asked about Spreitzer's psychological empowerment instrument and the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Scale (CWEQ). During the pilot study, participants were given the entire survey to read and to discuss with which

areas they did or did not agree. Only those areas that suggested importance in the pilot were asked about in the dissertation study. Participants were asked if these areas influenced their empowerment. Results of these questions were often answered as yes or no but some participants added commentary or explained their answers. Some inadvertently did not answer the question, coded here as “no answer” (NA). Some said it was not that simple – it depended on other factors. For example, one component of the CWEQ, feedback, did not receive any “no” answers, but several stated that it depended on whether the feedback was positive or negative, how the feedback was delivered, and whether it was authentic. For others, it depended on the position they held or it had changed over time. Often the meaning of the terms was not clear, so participants were asked to answer with what the terms meant to them. For example, some interpreted flexibility in terms of hours of work and telecommuting options, while others perceived it to mean having flexibility in how work tasks got completed. The responses to these two instruments will be discussed.

The Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ)

The CWEQ is a survey based on structural empowerment elements that are often used in employee empowerment studies, especially within nursing. There are two versions, a lengthy one and a shortened version. The CWEQ –I is comprised of 58 questions, some of which are specific to the nursing field. Thus, participants in the pilot study were asked instead about the 21 questions in the shortened CWEQ – II. Both versions ask about the same areas, but the shortened version (CWEQ-II) has fewer questions (see Appendix A for the full questionnaire). The areas explored in the CWEQ include opportunity, information, resources, support, formal power, and informal power, as shown in Table 8. Since this scale was designed for nurses, some of the original indicators were deleted or adapted for the

current study. For example, in the CWEQ under the opportunity portion it asks about “collaborating on patient care with physicians” (Laschinger et al., 2001, p. 270). This question was not used.

Table 8

Elements of the Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire

Element	Examples
Opportunities	Challenging work, opportunity to learn new skills, access to training, tasks that use one's skills, chances to advance
Access to Information	Knowing the current state of the organization, the organization's goals, understanding how one's role connects with the organization's vision, the goals and values of top management, how salary decisions are made
Support	Feedback about what one does well or could improve, hints or advice, suggestions about job possibilities, help in a work crisis, rewards and recognitions for a job well done
Access to Resources	Having necessary supplies, having adequate time to accomplish job requirements, influencing decisions about people and equipment needed for one's department
Formal Power	Task variety, rewards for unusual performance or innovation, flexibility, participation in educational programs, visibility
Informal Power	Being sought out by supervisor or peers for ideas about problems, supervisor asking for one's opinion, receiving information about upcoming changes from immediate supervisor, getting to know auxiliary workers, exchanging favors with peers, seeking out ideas from professionals with whom one does not have direct contact

Note. Adapted from Laschinger, H. K. S., Finegan, J. E., Shamian, J., & Wilk, P. (2001). Impact of structural and psychological empowerment on job strain in nursing work settings: Expanding Kanter's model. *Journal of Nursing Administration*, 31(5), 260–272.

Some of the elements on the CWEQ were identified organically as influences to empowerment and are discussed above. Those elements are access to information, flexibility, challenging work, and access to training and development. The last two, challenging work and training and development are discussed under “opportunities for growth.” These four elements are listed in Table 9 with the breakout of how they answered these specific questions about the CWEQ. The numbers presented here are descriptive to demonstrate the generational responses.

Table 9

Answers to Elements of CWEQ by Generation (Emergent Influences)

CWEQ Element	Yes	No	D	NA	BB (10)	Gen X (13)	Millennial (10)
Access to Information	29	2	1	1	9 yes 1 depends	12 yes 1 NA	8 yes 2 no
Flexibility	26	1	2	4	6 yes, 1 no 2 depends 1 NA	11 yes 2 NA	9 yes 1 NA
Challenging Work	25	1	7	0	8 yes, 1 no 1 depends	10 yes 3 depends	7 yes 3 depends
Access to Training and Development	26	1	5	1	8 yes 1 depends	10 yes 3 depends	8 yes, 1 no 1 depends

Some elements of the CWEQ emerged in the interview questions. Others were not mentioned in participants’ answers, so they were asked if those elements affected their empowerment. These elements are shown in Table 10 along with answers as to whether they impacted participants’ workplace empowerment. Findings are based on respondent’s initial reactions to what the terms meant, but they were not defined. Some participants did not

know what the terms meant or explained what it meant to them, while others just answered yes or no.

Table 10

Answers to Elements of CWEQ by Generation (Non-emergent Influences)

Element	Yes	No	D	NA	BB (10)	Gen X (13)	Millennial (10)
Using skills and knowledge**	28	1	3	1	10 yes	11 yes, 1 no 1 depends	7 yes 2 depends, 1 NA
Advancement opportunities or different roles**	18	8	5	2	3 yes, 4 no 2 depends 1 NA	7 yes, 3 no 2 depends, 1 NA	8 yes, 1 no 1 depends
Feedback	25	0	8	0	7 yes 3 depends	11 yes 2 depends	7 yes 3 depends
Rewards and recognition**	16	10	3	4	3 yes, 5 no 2 depends	8 yes, 2 no 3 NA	5 yes, 3 no 1 depends, 1 NA
Variety**	29	2	0	2	9 yes, 1 NA	12 yes, 1 no	7 yes, 1 no, 2 NA
Visibility	11	17	3	2	4 yes, 4 no 1 depends, 1 NA	4 yes, 8 no 1 depends	3 yes, 5 no 1 depends 1 don't know
Being sought out by manager or peers**	25	3	3	2	9 yes 1 NA	9 yes, 1 no 2 depends, 1 NA	7 yes, 2 no 1 depends

Note. ** Indicates there may be variance in generational preferences in this sample.

CWEQ Element 1 -Using one's skills and knowledge. Most participants wanted to use their skills or knowledge. Millennial Erika stated, "Not being able to use your skills and abilities in terms of the position I have, that's tough. I think it's one of the worst feelings that you could have." Answers varied due to interpretation of the indicator. It asks if one gets to use *all* of one's skills and some participants responded that they did want to use their skills,

but it did not have to be all of them or all the time. Millennial Brandi explained it as “To feel empowered I don't think I have to be using all of my skills, but just some of them, the biggest ones.” She discussed how she felt earning her MBA was important, but she did not use that education in her current position. Gen Xer Katrina agreed that she did not want to use all her skills all the time. “It's like exercise, right? You don't flex every muscle, depending on what you're working on.”

How one uses his or her skills and knowledge may also have an impact. Millennial Victoria said, “it boils down to being able to use those skills meaningfully, not just using them, period.” Gen Xer Joyce felt that it is important to use one's skills, but it did not add to empowerment. Few comments of the 42 statements about using skills and knowledge emerged; they were given in response to this specific question asked. Four people indicated that being able to use their college education was empowering (Gen Xers Kristin and Margherita and Millennials Raj and Sofia).

CWEQ Element 2 -Advancement opportunities or options for different roles.

This element involves opportunities to advance within the company or move to different roles. When asked if advancement opportunities are important to empowerment, there were varied answers. For several, it has changed over time. Gen Xer Alexis also felt that advancement had changed.

When my kids were younger I had to focus more on making money because I have a family to support, a mortgage, and all these things going on. So career development, because I needed the greater income, was what was important. I was more likely to try to climb the ladder and more focused on promotion than income and didn't care if I had to put in long hours to get there.

Several older workers stated that advancement was more important to younger workers, mainly Millennials, than it was to them. Gen Xer Rick who works in Human

Resources, felt the company lost Millennial workers because of the lack for advancement. Other participants, such as Gen Xers Shelly and Joyce, felt that just knowing the opportunity to advance existed was empowering. Baby Boomer Olivia posited that “Anybody who is working anywhere should be encouraged to move up and grow and I think that’s a huge barrier when there’s nowhere to go in an organization.” Some participants, such as Gen Xer Dawn, was discouraged when she learned there were not opportunities for promotions. She explained that it made her feel as though there was no reason to do more than the minimum.

Advancement, to many, was more about growing than the money or title. Participants across generations wanted new positions in order to grow their skills and knowledge.

Millennial Brian proclaimed the importance of learning:

If it’s better outside of the world of financial gain, it’s better for my growth opportunities, I think that yes, that’d be very empowering. I wouldn’t put a whole lot of weight on financial gain as a source of empowerment.

Millennial Sofia and Baby Boomer Bob both left positions when they felt they had done all they could and had nothing left to learn in that role. One participant, Baby Boomer Todd, knew the opportunities for advancement in his union-supported position when he started. Positions are assigned according to strict processes including passing tests and seniority, so there is a natural progression.

CWEQ Element 3 -Feedback. Most participants appreciate constructive criticism or feedback. Feedback can come from managers, colleagues, or clients. Some participants do not like feedback, but know it is part of the learning process. Gen Xer Shaun explained how people can only be empowered when they know what their strengths are and what they need to do to meet expectations. Without feedback, people had no idea if they were doing a good

job. Others appreciate any kind of feedback so that they can improve and get additional perspectives. Some, like Millennial Peter, solicits feedback from everyone.

I constantly ask for feedback. I'm of the school of thought, I'm not perfect, I love learning more about what I can do better. So for me, yeah, it's a constant. I'm always asking for feedback from my manager, from my peers, from my customer, from [coworker], whoever.

Some felt that constructive feedback was a sign that the manager or peers cared. Gen Xer felt that feedback is important. He wants feedback from the management so that he is not surprised with comments in formal processes and so that he can do his job well.

Millennial Victoria only wants feedback from managers she respected. Otherwise, it holds little meaning for her.

Without feedback, workers do not know what they need to improve. Several Baby Boomers (Jane and Olivia) mentioned that they only received feedback when they did something wrong. Olivia explained that she had learned no feedback meant she was doing well. Several participants felt that how the feedback is given is what matters. Millennial Brandi reiterated this point: "Feedback is a component, and being honest and realistic about how I'm doing is important, but I've never seen feedback really given in a good enough way." Baby Boomer Julie and Millennial Thomas both discussed using the sandwich method in which one is given points of success followed by areas for improvement, ending with more successes. Julie explained that receiving only negative feedback is not empowering. Interestingly, one feedback process that emerged by almost 30% of participants is the performance review. Comments were made across generations (three Baby Boomers and Generation X, four Millennials). Participants who mentioned performance reviews were frustrated by the process and lack of fairness. Baby Boomer Kimberly asserted that the organization has too many requirements outside of traditional job tasks that employees must

meet in order to get a good rating on the annual review. Things such as being on committees or taking online training classes counted toward her performance, while she thought she should be judged on her customer service ratings and other skills important to her day-to-day job. Baby Boomer Jane considers the process unjust.

We have what's the performance improvement, and there are a lot of people that are retiring because we all got bad reviews this year, whether it was justified or not... They did the bell curve, and an amount of us had to fit in each section, whether we deserved it or not. But that crushes you too. Because it doesn't matter what you do, a certain amount of you are going to be here. And it doesn't matter. You could all deserve to be here, but a certain percentage of you are going to be here.

CWEQ Element 4 - Rewards and recognition. Rewards and recognition is personal. For many, it depended on what the reward was. Money and time off were mentioned, but being recognized for doing a job well done was the most frequently indicated type of reward employees desired. Money was identified as a reward by seven participants: two Baby Boomers and five Generation X. Time off was listed by five participants: one Baby Boomer and four Generation X. Those who have been managers concurred that each person wants something different. Millennial Erika stated,

Everybody likes to have some kind of recognition. For example, I actually give a survey to my staff about what type of recognition is important to them, because everybody's different and you just recognize it that way, some people truly like a little pat on the back. Some people like gifts, some people like money. Some people just like their name in a newsletter or something. So I think it comes in various ways, but I think that recognition's definitely a sense of empowerment.

Gen Xer Shaun expressed how rewards or recognition can lead to relationship building.

“Everybody wants food or money or prizes or something. But for me it's more than that. It's more than materialistic type things. It's true, heartfelt interaction with people and that sort of

thing.” Similarly, several participants felt that recognition from the community or from customers is more impactful than coming from the organization.

Gen Xer Amy explained that rewards are nice, but do not lead to having additional power or autonomy, so she did not relate it to empowerment. Gen Xer Kristin and Millennial Victoria also agreed that rewards are not empowering, but make one feel good.

CWEQ Element 5 - Variety of tasks. Most participants need variety in their day-to-day work tasks. Without variety, participants felt like they were doing monotonous work that made them bored and distracted. Several participants named specific places they would not work due to the monotony – such as call centers, motor vehicle, or factory lines. Millennial Zach discussed how he left jobs after doing the same thing over and over because he needed a change. He thought a year was about the length he stayed before he had to move to a new job with different tasks.

CWEQ Element 6 - Amount of visibility. The only element that did not show significant importance is visibility. The indicator on the CWEQ is worded as “visibility of work-related activities,” but that was confusing to many participants. When visibility did not lead to positive reactions such as advancement, many preferred not to be visible and used words such as “staying in the background” and “being invisible.”

Those who did or had worked remotely felt that those in the office, closest to management had the most visibility and that it was more difficult to be visible if you were not in the office. Two participants are not virtual but work out in the field and thus do not spend time in an office. They too felt that they were not as visible, but it did not matter as long as management knew what they did. Others felt that the position or department dictated

how much visibility was important. For example, those in training, human resources, and management wanted visibility so people would come to them.

CWEQ Element 7 - Being sought out. The CWEQ has several different indicators for this concept. There are six questions total. Three focus on being sought out from one's supervisor and the other three ask about peers. The questions asked separately about being asked about ideas, solutions to problems, and opinions. These questions did not reveal different answers in the pilot study, so one question was asked in the dissertation study--if it is empowering to be sought by managers or peers for ideas, opinions, or solutions.

Most participants did enjoy being sought out by either managers or peers. None stated there was a difference in who asked them, but found it flattering either way. Some said they enjoyed it, but it was not empowering. Others mentioned that it was linked to other factors such as trust and competence. Being sought out shows that people value and trust the person and that the person is competent. Several people mentioned that they did not like to be asked if it meant that someone else was too lazy to look for information or solve the problem him or herself.

Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Instrument

Participants were asked about the four components of Spreitzer's (1995b) scale: meaning, choice, competence, and impact. Table 11 shows how participants responded to the scale and its effect on empowerment. The total answers for yes, no and depends are shown, followed by the generation breakdown. The numbers are shown to demonstrate reactions of agreement to Spreitzer's components.

Table 11

Reactions by Generation to Spreitzer's Four Components of Psychological Empowerment

	Yes	No	Depends	BB (10)	Gen X (13)	Millennial (10)
Meaning: <i>personal connection to work</i>	30	2	1	9 yes 1 no	13 yes	9 yes 1 no
Choice: <i>freedom to complete work</i>	32	0	1	10 yes	12 yes 1 depends	10 yes
Competence: <i>belief in skills and abilities to perform quality work</i>	11	6	6	10 yes	6 yes 5 no 2 depends	5 yes 1 no 4 depends
Impact: <i>belief in influence on the holistic organization</i>	21	8	4	8 yes 2 no	7 yes 4 no 2 depends	6 yes 2 no 2 depends

In this study, meaning and choice were important across all generations. Competence and impact varied in importance, with competence being the only component with distinctions in generation. Meaning is explained above under psychological elements of empowerment. Choice has the same meaning as autonomy, pillar 1 and is explained in that section. The only component of Spreitzer's scale that did not emerge in this study is competence.

Competence was mentioned by 18 of 33 participants, although most of them were prompted with a question about whether competence was empowering. Thirty-one statements were made. Spreitzer labels the section of the scale as competence, but questions ask about mastering skills and confidence. Competence was referred to in terms of being confident about one's abilities. Baby Boomer Greg explained that one could be working on mastering

a skill and still be confident and empowered, even if the skill was not yet mastered. Gen Xer Amy posited that competence itself is not empowering, but can lead to gaining empowerment. She felt that if organizations think one is competent, that person is likely to get autonomy, influence decision-making power, and ownership. Two participants felt that an organization would not hire someone who was not competent, so it was not an issue. Gen Xer Rick was competent in many areas but was not allowed to use those skills in his organization, so it was not empowering to have those competencies.

Summary

This chapter has explored the question of what empowerment means to workers of different generations and what the influences are. Empowerment is complex, multifaceted and dynamic. It is comprised of different elements that change with the organization and as employees mature and grow. Employee empowerment has four pillars – autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership. These pillars are achieved to varying degrees and are impacted by what the organization gives and what the individual wants. Maximum level of employee empowerment is achieved when the desired levels match what is given. Organizations provide the four pillars when they trust and value employees. Individuals do not all want the same levels of the four pillars and are influenced by their life experiences. Career stage, life stage, and personal factors such as personality, age, and gender influences how one views and desires empowerment. Although the four pillars are desired by all generations, the levels desired may vary according to individuals.

Additional organizational factors also influence employee empowerment. Organization structure, culture, and support are needed to feel completely empowered. Although these factors are valued by all generations, there are some differences in

importance. Opportunities for growth was mentioned more frequently by Millennials than other generations. Safety was mentioned least by Millennials although they did mention its opposite, fear.

Employee empowerment is also affected by psychological and personal factors. Career stage and life stage emerged as dominant factors of what empowers employees. Confidence and meaning are also important influences. These findings are significant as they differ from the most frequently used employee empowerment scales. Both structural and psychological influences are significant and must be married accordingly to achieve true empowerment that is sustainable. However, empowerment changes as one matures, changes positions, or experiences life stages. Thus, an accurate portrait of empowerment is fluid and can only be measured at specific points in time. Because employee empowerment is so complex, all influences should be accounted for, measured, and provided. Empowerment programs that focus on only one aspect may not empower employees at all levels. Multiple influences to be considered are shown in Figure 8.

Structural Influences

Psychological Influences

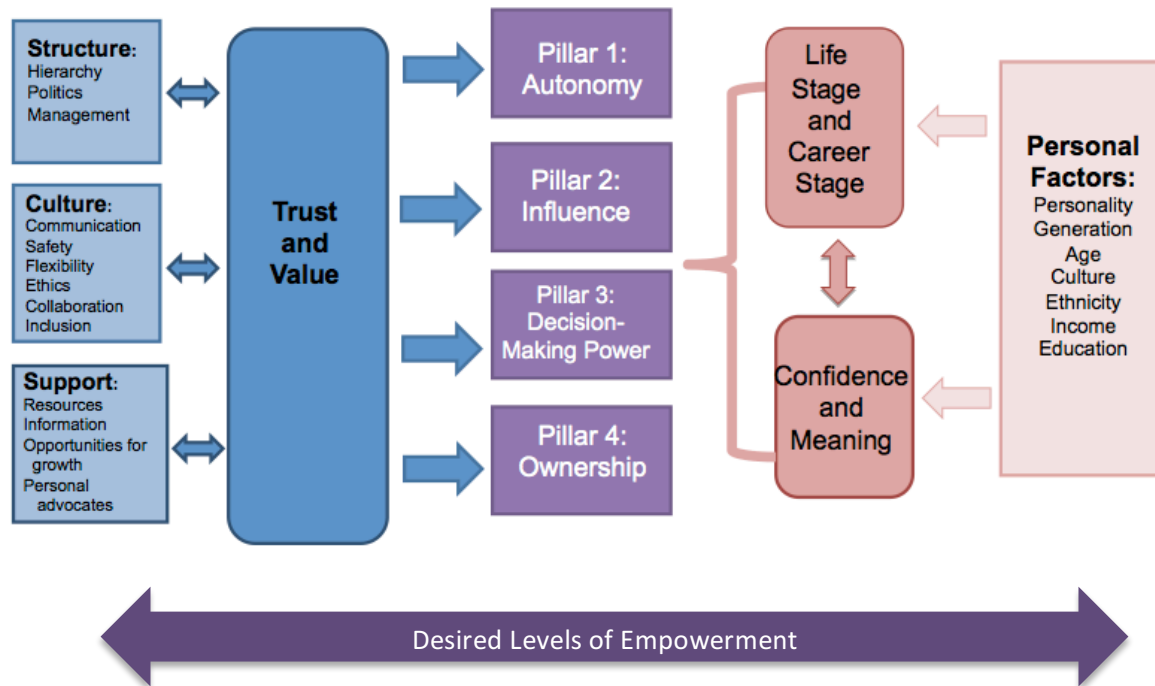


Figure 8. A dynamic model of employee empowerment.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss and interpret the findings of the study. This exploratory study sought to discover what employee empowerment means to today's workers and what influences or contributes to it. The study also explored whether existing measures of workplace empowerment are relevant for today's workers. Findings confirm some aspects formerly considered important to employee empowerment are still relevant, but suggest the concept may be more complex and dynamic than represented in the current literature. The findings revealed four pillars of empowerment--autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership--that vary in degree, both as desired by individual employees, and as provided by the organization. For example, while all employees want decision-making power, some may want to make only decisions that affect themselves, while others want to make decisions for the entire company. Both structural and psychological components contribute to employee empowerment. The four pillars of empowerment are given by the organization and the amount desired is determined by employees' internal motivation that stems from personal factors, life stage, and career stage. Organizations and managers that trust and value their employees maximize the strength of the four pillars of empowerment. In addition, how empowered one feels is significantly impacted by organization structure, culture, and support. Psychologically, employee empowerment is impacted by one's confidence, meaning, and personal factors.

In this section, the findings will be discussed in the context of existing literature on workplace empowerment. First, organizational power structures will be discussed, followed by workplace empowerment theory, and ending with generation and life stage theories. Once the findings are discussed, a new model of employee empowerment is presented. The

chapter ends with implications of the study, the limitations, and recommendations for future studies.

Situating the Findings in the Literature

The theoretical framework for this study involved empowerment theory and generational theory. The conversations will be organized around these bodies of literature to demonstrate how this study contributes. First, I will discuss findings about organizational power structures, followed by empowerment theory. Next, I discuss generational theory and life stage.

Organizational Power Structures

Participants confirmed that workplace empowerment partially originates from the organization and partially from themselves. One way this occurs is that power is given to and accepted by employees (Fortunati, 2014). The organization's structure facilitates the amount and extent of empowerment given to an employee (Appelbaum et al., 1999). This was shown in numerous comments made using the terms "permission," "authority," and "allow," signifying that workers need to know what they are permitted to do in an organizational setting and what the structure or management allows. They can then work within the guidelines provided.

Structures include how decisions are made – either centralized or decentralized (D'Aprix, 2011). Consistent with Kanter (1977) and others (see Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Pearce & Manz, 2005; Powell, 1990; Teubner, 2001) findings showed that these employees felt more empowered in informal environments that allowed for voice than in formal organizations in which decisions are passed from the top-down. Hierarchical structures that are rigidly enforced and fear-based cultures were most frequently mentioned

in this study as barriers to empowerment. Gen Xer Rick explained that in this type of culture, his personal empowerment was trumped by organizational structures. “I’m very confident in my ability to do my job, but because of where I work, doesn’t give me the empowerment to do it.” Rick claimed the barrier to using his skills and confidence was the hierarchical structure in which he had no power or influence and was only allowed to do what he was told. Rick’s coworker, Baby Boomer Linda, agreed that the fear-based culture made it impossible for most people to make decisions or to have any type of control. Others who worked in hierarchical and fear-based cultures had similar stories. These findings are consistent with Kanter’s (1977) argument that workers who have low power in the system often feel powerless.

Management practices are also part of organizational structure and impact how subordinates feel empowered. As shown in Chapter 4, micromanagement was indicated by 73% of participants as a detriment to being empowered in the workplace. Micromanagement may be per manager or it may be part of a fear-based culture. Much literature exists on participatory and informal cultures, but not as an aspect of employee empowerment. This study suggests that hierarchical and fear-based cultures may prohibit empowerment. Managers who provided their employees opportunities for autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership were perceived as empowering and made employees feel trusted and valued. Although previous studies have recognized leadership as a trigger for psychological empowerment, scholars have not considered it part of the empowerment construct (Arnold et al., 2000; Boudrias et al., 2009; Konczak et al., 2000). Findings suggest that immediate managers dictate what employees are allowed or not allowed to do, substantially impacting their level of empowerment. Many stories from participants

explained that the immediate manager prohibited employees from being empowered, while other supervisors generously gave flexibility, asked for ideas, and gave autonomy.

Participants who were managers echoed this sentiment by explaining how they empowered their employees by giving them projects, listening to their ideas, and giving them freedom.

On most measures of empowerment, management is not directly asked about in the indicators. The CWEQ does not explicitly ask about management relationships, but asks about feedback from managers on things done well or needing improvement. Findings suggest that managers affect employees in ways beyond providing feedback. As Millennial Zach explained, some empowerment comes from within the individual, but it also requires management support. “The self-worth is definitely internal, but it does need motivation through management recognition, having a say in what's going on, having a sense of importance of what's going on where you're at.” Findings from this study hint at a strong relationship of organizational structure and management practices on employees’ empowerment and are consistent with assertions that decentralized and low formalized structures that allow for flexibility, growth, and influence are favorable conditions for empowerment (Kanter, 1977; Yukl & Becker, 2006). Findings also support Conger and Kanungo's (1988) assertion that “Words of encouragement, verbal feedback, and other forms of social persuasion are often used by leaders, managers and group members to empower subordinates and coworkers” (p. 479). If culture or management does not make it possible to be empowered fully, then they should be considered elements of employee empowerment.

Although organizational structures have a significant influence on empowerment, its relationship may not be linear as Laschinger et al. (2001) contended. This study suggest that power in organizations may be circular in nature as attested by Follett (1925/2011). Several

participants debated “power over” versus “power with,” supporting Follett’s claims that organizations and the people who comprise them affect each other. Gen Xer Shelly professed, “being empowered is different than having power over somebody.” She, as well as others described scenarios of how managers had power over them, demonstrating the coercive power that comes with a title. “Power over” meant that management told employees what to do and they had to do it. “Power with,” on the other hand, included listening to others’ opinions and helping them. “Power with” involves having influence and impact. When one can provide input and suggestions and it is listened to and put into action, employees feel empowered.

One tactic that participants used to demonstrate “power with” is that empowering others empowered them. This is consistent with studies that imply leaders gain more power by empowering others (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). Empowering others made participants feel good and in some cases, it freed them up to focus on other tasks. Many felt that their power came from helping others, not from having total control. Millennials Thomas and Zach desire positions of power so that they can give power to employees by allowing them to have influence and to make decisions.

The impact of organizational culture and management on employee empowerment supports Orlikowski's (2000) argument that organizational power structures are dynamic. They are socially constructed by the members of the organization, so power structures fluctuate as the organization changes or people enter and leave the organization. As people grow and gain confidence, their idea of empowerment changes, which creates changes in the organization. In this study, managers significantly influenced how empowered participants felt. Often, when participants changed positions or managers, their level of empowerment

also changed. Several participants explained how managers within the same company did not provide the same levels of autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership. When direct managers were too controlling or micromanaging, the participants quit or tried to change departments in order to work for a more empowering manager. Others explained how top management increased or diminished employee morale and empowerment through their comments, actions, and behaviors. For example, some leaders wanted to implement growth initiatives, while others decreased them. The dynamic nature of empowerment will be illustrated further in the following sections.

Workplace Empowerment Theory

Much of the management literature about workplace empowerment divides empowerment into either a structural or psychological construct. This section will discuss findings and their relation to arguments on both perspectives. Following these discussions, an argument for a combined approach to employee empowerment will be presented, although the generational differences will be framed in the following section.

When discussing structural and psychological empowerment influences, it is important to consider that influences are not something that one does or does not have. It is felt on levels like a continuum (Spreitzer, 1995a) as shown in Figure 9. One end is complete empowerment and the other is complete lack of empowerment. Thus, when discussing influences, the more one has, the more empowered he or she feels. Similarly, when these influences are decreased, people feel less empowered.

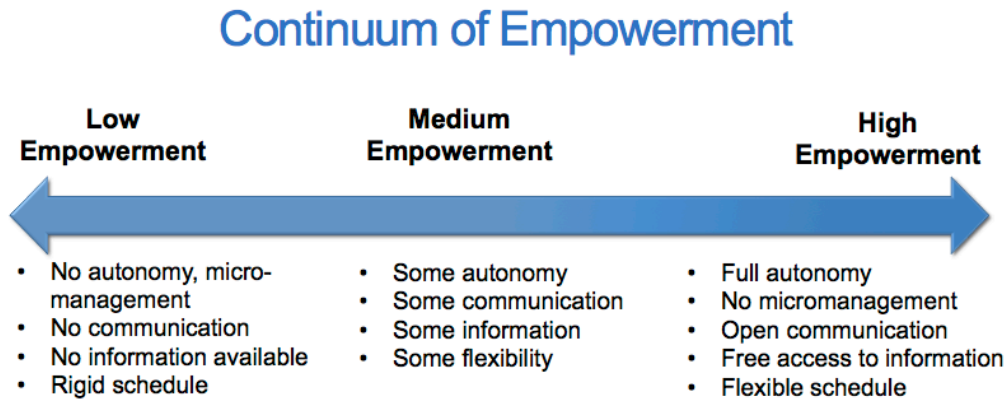


Figure 9. Continuum of employee empowerment.

Structural Empowerment. Structural and psychological elements historically have not been definitely defined or agreed upon. Findings in this study shed insight on which factors come from the organization and which from the self. Influences that were used with words such as “given” and “allowed” as well as organization or management were coded as structural influences. The findings suggest that there are four pillars of empowerment as well as categories that influence how trusted and valued employees feel: structure, culture, and support.

The Four Pillars of Employee Empowerment. The four pillars that emerged as the definition of empowerment are autonomy, influence, decision-making, and ownership (shown in Figure 10). These will each be discussed. One may have partial empowerment if he or she only has partial autonomy or has autonomy but little decision-making power.

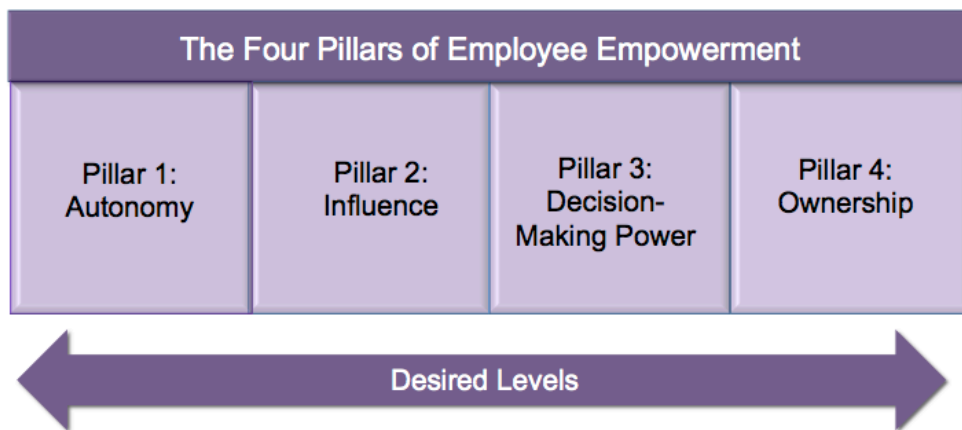


Figure 10. The four pillars of employee empowerment.

Scholars such as Spreitzer (1995a) and Laschinger et al. (2001) consider autonomy (freedom and control) and some aspects of influence (such as impact) as psychological. However, findings illustrate that freedom, control, and impact come from the organization or manager. Baby Boomer Olivia supplied this example:

Maybe it would be an employer, a supervisor empowering a subordinate. Allowing somebody to work at their full capacity. Be creative to put into place ideas, to come up with those ideas, to put those ideas in place, allowing that to happen. That would be workplace empowerment.

As Olivia and other participants illustrate, their abilities to control, influence, and impact organizations must be given. Thus, autonomy and influence are included here as structural.

Kanter (1977) agrees with the importance of autonomy as she regarded power within organizations as “synonymous to autonomy and freedom of action” (p. 197). However, autonomy is not included in the CWEQ, perhaps because it is designed for the nursing profession that has regulations and protocols dealing with health and possibly life or death. Autonomy is called “choice” or “self-determination” on Spreitzer’s (1995b) psychological empowerment scale, perhaps to avoid the confusion found in this study about the individual aspect of autonomy. Although autonomy is most often identified with freedom and control,

some participants related autonomy to independence and individual work. All four participants from Focus Group 2 (all were employed at the same company) interpreted autonomy to mean that decisions were made in isolation without input from others. Thus, they appreciated the freedom and control aspects of autonomy, but not what was perceived as the independence aspect. Other participants felt that one could have autonomy and also have teamwork and collaboration. Thus, because autonomy was so closely related to empowerment with most participants, it is the term used in this model. To illustrate this point, Baby Boomer Linda described empowerment in one word--autonomy. Although autonomy is considered structural, the amount desired is psychological. Some participants mentioned wanting total autonomy and hope to be entrepreneurs, while others stated they wanted guidelines, but the freedom to achieve them how they wanted.

Influence is partially accounted for on Spreitzer's (1995b) scale under impact, although it limits impact to one's department and does not ask about having voice or input. The CWEQ asks whether managers or peers ask the employee for ideas, but it does not expand to whether management or the organization listens to ideas or acts on them. Although influence as voice is often ignored in employee empowerment literature, it is dominant in employee voice literature. Similarly to what de Vries, Jehn, and Terwel (2012) concluded in their work, this study demonstrated that having a voice is not enough; employees also need to feel heard. If employees perceive management actions for input to be false and suspect that management is really not interested in what they say, they will not provide voice. However, if employees sense that management does want to hear and use their input, they are likely to feel trusted and to feel as though they can impact the organization. Additionally, influence can positively impact the organization. When management takes time to give feedback and

explain why specific ideas will not work, it helps employees grow and to understand processes in order to formulate better ideas in the future.

Decision-making is not discussed on either of these two scales. Other scholars such as Pardo del Val and Lloyd (2003) focus solely on decision-making, but do not include the other pillars of empowerment. Spreitzer and Doneson (2008) confirmed that empowerment enables workers to make decisions and to take risks, although Spreitzer's (1995b) scale does not account for making decisions.

Ownership is also not accounted for in either measurement. Although ownership is not prevalent in employee empowerment literature, it is present in other management topics such as job crafting. When employees are allowed to craft their jobs, they take ownership of projects and their job. The more control and ownership they have, the more positive results occur such as happiness and productivity at work (Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2013). Although they do not define ownership the same as it was used in this study, findings suggest that when employees feel in control and own what they do, they feel engaged and empowered.

Reinforcing Employee Empowerment. Study results suggest that what reinforces the four pillars of empowerment as well as other structural elements are trust and value. If the organization does not trust or value its employees, it will not provide opportunities for empowerment. If employees do not feel trusted or valued, they do not feel empowered. When an employee is valued, that employee is often give more opportunities to influence others by providing voice and may be given more opportunities for autonomy, a higher level of decision-making power and additional opportunities for ownership. Therefore, trust and value reinforce organizational empowerment. This relationship is shown in Figure 11.

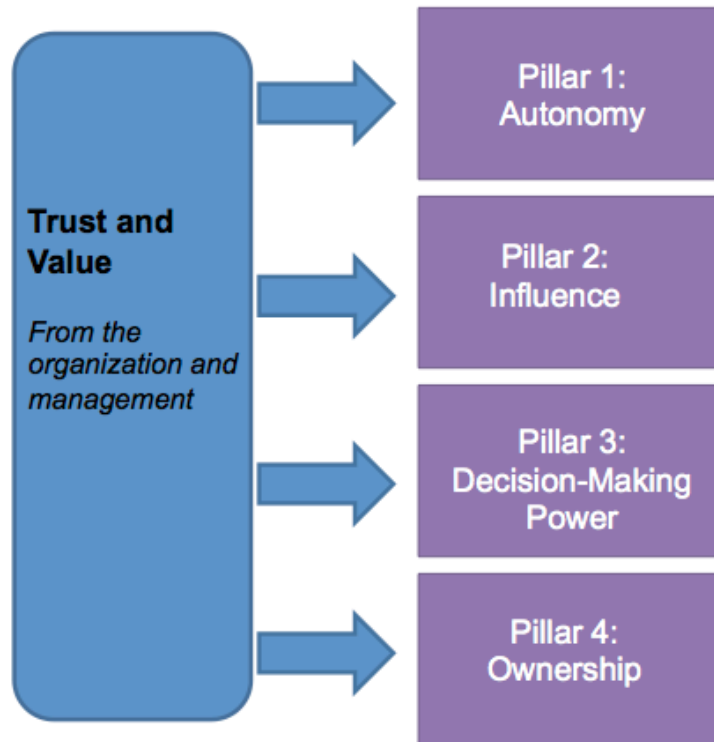


Figure 11. Organizational trust and value reinforce the four pillars.

Although value is not accounted for in recent literature, mutual trust has shown to be an important factor in qualitative studies (Dillard, 2013; Greasley et al., 2005). Trust and value may change over time, such as when a new manager is assigned or during times of organizational change, which may result in changing levels of empowerment. As employees gain trust and value, they gain access to structural elements. Laschinger et al. (2001) maintained that trust is an employee outcome or behavior and later tested the outcome of empowerment with trust on job satisfaction and commitment. However, scholars have not considered whether employees perceive trust from employers as part of the empowerment construct.

Additional structural elements of employee empowerment. Findings from this study support most of Kanter's structural elements, although they were categorized and defined

slightly differently. Kanter's (1977) structural empowerment theory is widely used in workplace empowerment studies (Maynard et al., 2012). Kanter argued that elements needed for empowerment include opportunities, information, resources, support, formal power, and informal power as shown in Table 12. The findings of this study mostly support her structural components, although the elements are grouped differently. Findings of this study showed significant categories to be structure, culture and support as shown in Figure 12.

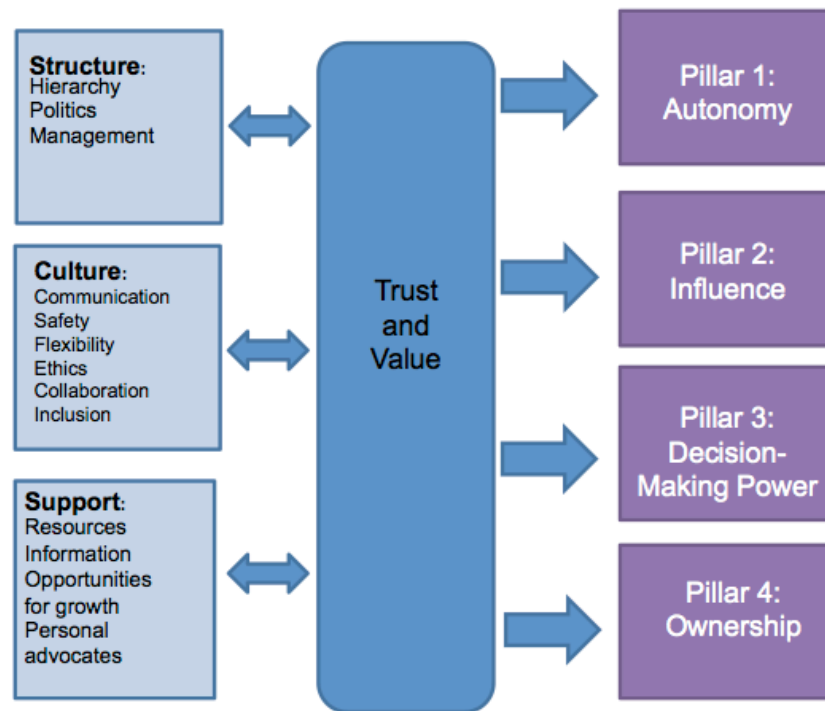


Figure 12. Structural influences of employee empowerment.

Support encompasses Kanter's main elements--information, resources, opportunities for growth, and personal advocates--as they all contribute to how successful employees can be. Aspects of formal and informal power generally fall under this study's culture category.

Table 12

Comparison of Kanter's Structural Elements to Categories of Current Study

Kanter's Elements	Kanter's Explanation	Category in Current Study
Opportunities	Opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge and options for mobility within the organization	Support – <i>Opportunities for Growth</i>
Access to Information	Information required to do one's job including data, technical knowledge, and expertise	Support – <i>Information Availability</i>
Support	Feedback about what one does well or could improve, guidance and direction from one's supervisor, peers, or subordinates	Support – <i>Personal Advocates</i>
Access to Resources	Having necessary supplies, equipment, money, and adequate time to accomplish one's job	Support – <i>Resources</i>
Formal Power	Opportunities to have flexibility, creativity, and visibility in one's job	Culture – <i>Flexibility (only flexibility emerged)</i>
Informal Power	Relationships and networks of superiors, peers, and subordinates	Support – <i>Personal Advocates</i>

These influences do not define empowerment, but influence how empowered one feels. For example, if one does not have the requisite support to make an informed decision, the ability and power to make that decision is essentially mooted, because the decision is not likely to produce the desired results. Similarly, one may have autonomy to decide how to do one's job, but if he or she does not have the necessary equipment he or she may not be able to act on this autonomy. These influences contribute to empowerment by providing the support and environment needed for the four pillars to exist and are also given when employees are

trusted and valued. The findings will be discussed according to the categories that emerged. Structure was discussed previously, so the two remaining categories are support and culture.

Support. The category of support includes elements that provide support for employees to complete their tasks. They involve resources, information, opportunities for growth, and personal advocates. Most of Kanter's components fall into this category and were supported by the findings. Access to resources is a necessity for employee empowerment, as employees cannot successfully complete their tasks without necessary equipment. In this study, resources that emerged included more than basic equipment and identified necessary people, referred to as personal advocates. Personal advocates were described as mentors, coaches, and peers, which Kanter (1977) accounted for as an aspect of informal power. Growth and advocates are not included on Spreitzer's scale (1995b) and are only indirectly mentioned on the CWEQ. The CWEQ asks about being sought out by peers for information, but does not mention mentors, coaches, or other supportive relationships.

The CWEQ has two indicators that refer to growth: One that asks about the opportunity to learn new skills and the second asks about access to training programs. Data showed that opportunities for growth and advancement are important to workers, especially Millennials. For some participants, the chance to move position or roles was about the growth a new position would provide. Access to training was important, but additional means of learning such as formal education or subscriptions were also appreciated and used. While important, training is not the only way for employees to grow and develop.

Information was also found to be empowering, as employees may not be able to align performance without knowing how their work aligned with the end goal. Employees wanted information on the organization's goals, values, and strategies. This coincides with Kanter's

(1989) affirmation that “Until people feel informed about where they are headed overall [in terms of company vision] they don’t feel capable of taking the initiative to solve a problem” (p. 5). They also wanted to know expectations for their job and information that would help them complete their tasks successfully. The CWEQ includes a section on accessing information such as the organization’s mission and how salary decisions are made. It does not ask about job expectations (Laschinger et al., 2001).

Additional findings of this study are that workers did not only want to gain information, they also want to actively share information with others. Participants felt that sharing with others was important to keep everyone in the loop or on the same page. It is often faster than going to other sources or waiting for a manager to provide it. Those who shared information with others found that it saved time and increased productivity. Additionally, it helped contributors feel involved. This supports Arnold et al.’s (2000) assertion that sharing information leads to higher levels of empowerment. Not surprisingly, one way participants shared information was through enterprise social platforms. How they used the sites differed depending on the position and the company. Many participants used intranet sites such as wikis or blogs to both gain information and to post information for others. The few who did not use internal enterprise systems often still felt a sense of security knowing they did have access if they needed it. They liked having someplace they knew they could go to find information and knowing they had access.

Culture. Culture involves aspects of the organization’s culture and includes open communication, safety, flexibility, ethics, collaboration, and inclusion. The only element in this category considered by Kanter and included on the CWEQ is flexibility (Laschinger et al., 2001). The indicators on the CWEQ for flexibility are vague. One indicator asks about

the flexibility in one's job, but does not explain whether it means flexibility in tasks, flexibility in how to do work, or a flexible schedule. Since the CWEQ was designed for nurses, it is less likely to mean flexibility in schedules, although that is what it meant to many participants in this study. Flexibility in this study meant work-life balance, latitude in schedules, and possibilities for working from home. It was shown to be important across all generations. When organizations did not give flexibility, workers felt like they were not trusted or valued. Several stated management should trust them to get their work done on time.

Open communication, safety, ethics, collaboration, and inclusion are not illustrated on either the CWEQ or Spreitzer's (1995b) psychological empowerment scale. These elements may be important to today's workers due to the proliferation of the Internet, making it easy to access information and to communicate to people in new ways. Although not included on either the CWEQ or Spreitzer's (1995b) instrument, communication has shown to be an important aspect of leadership in generational studies (Arsenault, 2004; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007). The word "honesty" was used frequently by participants to describe open communication. Similarly to this study, honest communication was an important aspect of leadership to all generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Open communication demonstrates that employees are trusted and valued. It helps workers feel part of the organization and makes them empowered to do their jobs.

All generations found safety and ethics empowering. Safety is important to empowerment as it is what leads workers to voice their opinions and ideas. When workers did not feel safe, they were less likely to voice opinions, find solutions, or to make decisions. They also did not want to accept responsibility. Safety and ethics may be important due to

the volatile environment after Enron and other business scandals as well as downsizing from the recession. All current generations have lived during recessions, which may impact their views.

Organizational structures often lead to culture and vice versa. Another example of the power of culture was Focus Group 2, four women who work at the same company. They all voiced strong objections to needing autonomy to be empowered as they perceived autonomy to be individual-centered. They found control and freedom empowering, but not independently. In contrast, they all felt that collaboration and joint decision-making was an important aspect of being empowered, which most likely was embedded within their company culture. Inclusion also emerged in the findings, although not as strongly. It may be that only those who experienced not being included realized its importance. The few statements were powerful. Millennial Victoria explained that her work environment was frustrating when she was not treated the same as others: “It just felt exclusive, like I knew I was never going to become one of those people.” Other participants mentioned they had been excluded or seen others who had been which made them feel disempowered.

The CWEQ. Elements that are on the CWEQ but did not emerge in this study include challenging work, recognition and rewards, variety of tasks, and visibility. None of these elements emerged organically, although all but visibility were stated as important when directly asked. Visibility was not important to most participants in this study and created confusion. Participants did not know if it meant physical visibility or visibility of one’s ideas. Challenging work was important because it allows people to develop and refine knowledge and skills, so it was considered part of opportunities for growth.

Rewards were empowering only if they were the type of reward the person wanted and were sincere. Recognition was appreciated by most participants and had a stronger connection to empowerment than rewards. Money was not necessarily a driver for participants, but they appreciated receiving spot money awards as it meant their work was valued. In this way, receiving rewards or recognition was viewed as an extension of feedback and as a sign of one's worth. It meant they had done something well. In this way, rewards show that one is valued.

Summary of structural empowerment. While most of Kanter's (1977) elements agreed with findings of this study, they were not identified as the most important aspects of empowerment. In this study, autonomy, influence, decision-making, and ownership were the pillars of empowerment. Additional structural factors that emerged in this study that are not in the literature or the CWEQ are influence, decision-making power, ownership, trust, value, open communication, safety, and ethics. The organization's culture and leadership are part of the structure and need to be considered. For example, safety comes from knowing that you can make errors and not be fired. Employees are not empowered if they are constantly fearful of losing their jobs or facing other repercussions. The four pillars of empowerment as well as organizational structure, culture, and support require management to trust and value their employees. Truly empowering cultures involve employees in decision-making and provide them voice. These systems allow employees to empower themselves (Boudrias et al., 2009).

Psychological Empowerment. Management research has largely relied on Spreitzer's (1995b) psychological empowerment scale even though it was created over 20 years ago. Spreitzer's scale focuses on four components: meaning, competence, choice (self-

determination), and impact. In the current study, two of Spreitzer's components were considered structural rather than psychological – choice and impact. As explained in the last section, choice was titled autonomy in this study and impact is part of influence, both of which are given by the organization. Most participants mentioned that they were given the limits or guidelines of their autonomy by management and then they could do their work within those guidelines. The confusion as to whether to classify autonomy and influence as structural or psychological demonstrates the reciprocal nature of workplace empowerment – it is the level desired from the individual that must be given by the organization.

Meaning and competence. The other two components of Spreitzer's (1995b) scale, meaning and competence, had varying importance in the current study. They are categorized in this study as psychological influences of confidence and meaning as shown in Figure 13.

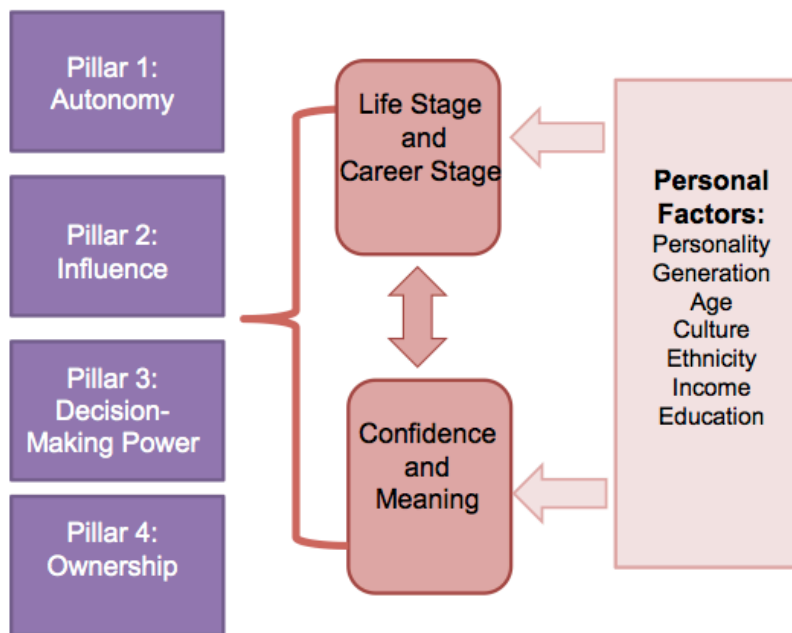


Figure 13. Psychological influences of employee empowerment.

The significant psychological influences shown in the findings are confidence, meaning, life and career stage, and personal factors such as personality. Spreitzer's (1995a) meaning component is similar to this study's and competence falls under confidence.

Meaning was important across generations, but not specifically as Spreiter envisioned. For example, one of the three indicators asks, "The work I do is important to me" (p. 625). Many participants described how the actual work may not be as important as what the company does or who it impacts. For some participants, the end result was that the work or the organization positively impacted their clients, students, victims, or community members. Some claim that Millennials need meaning in their work (Lipkin & Perrymore, 2009; Tulgan, 2009) although it was shown in this study to be empowering to all generations. The connotation of meaning varied. For some, making money or advancing was important. To others, making the world better provided meaning. Others explained that meaning changed for them as they aged. At one point advancement was important but as they neared retirement, impact to the world increased in importance. Choosing the career field or organization is another demonstration of psychological and organizational influences merging. By choosing to apply and work for a company that values the greater good such as nonprofits, one is impacting his or her meaning and thus, empowerment.

Confidence, rather than competence, arose in the results. Competence was important to some participants, but not all. Many people felt that one did not have to master skills but could be working on them. One indicator on Spreitzer's scale asks, "I have mastered the skills necessary for my job" (p. 625). Several participants felt that once they had mastered what they were doing, they needed a new challenge. Thus, learning was more important than competency.

Confidence has a reciprocal relationship with empowerment; as one becomes more empowered, he or she gains confidence. As one gains confidence, she or he is often given more empowerment. Millennial Sofia explained the relationship as “Of course you have to be empowered by the manager but if you are confident enough you can go forward without someone constantly telling you what you are supposed to be doing.” In this way, confidence and empowerment can fuel one another.

The more experience one had, the more he or she knew how to navigate organizational politics and knew what was allowed. They asked for what they needed, including job transfers, training resources, and mentorship opportunities. Asking for feedback was also common. Employees also selected positions according to their confidence levels. Several participants explained they chose their particular roles because they felt confident in those responsibilities and did not apply or accept positions in which they did not feel confident. Some were not ready to be managers, were not confident enough in their skills, or were afraid that they would not be good managers.

One way participants stated they gained confidence was through feedback. When employees were given positive feedback, they perceived themselves to be competent. Managers often rate employees on their skills using processes such as performance evaluations. Several participants explained that annual performance reviews were the only time they received feedback on their skills and abilities to complete their jobs effectively. Several employees explained the poor process of performance evaluations and stated they often did not relate to the skills required for their jobs. Thus, processes can impede empowerment if they do not help employees achieve confidence or competence. One needs to know what to improve in order to become a master.

The confidence to make decisions comes from support. When participants knew they would be supported, they were confident in making their decisions. The confidence was less about their abilities but more about confidence in keeping their jobs and being supported if something was done wrong. Gen Xer Joyce, a female who worked in a male-dominated industry, stated that she did not have confidence earlier in her career to risk being treated poorly by voicing her suggestions and not being supported. Gen Xer Rick, however, felt that organizations may not impact one's confidence if they do not allow one to do what he or she excels at. He charged that he was confident, but did not feel empowered because the organization would not let him use his abilities. Confidence comes from both the self and the organization. Confidence affects empowerment as workers are more likely to want additional autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership when they feel self-assured and capable.

Career and life stage. Although Spreitzer's (1995b) instrument has similar components, it ignores other psychological factors such as career stage, life stage and personal factors. For example, competence and confidence have been seen to increase with experience (Smola & Sutton, 2002), therefore competence and confidence should increase as one ages and gains experience. Assigning the same levels of empowerment to an employee just entering the workforce and one who has been in the workforce for 20+ years, may lead to different results. Employees need to be ready to receive the level of empowerment they are given.

Additional factors revolve around life experiences. The current study suggests that desired levels of empowerment stem from one's career and life stages. Empowerment may change as one gets married, has children or experiences other life events. At these stages,

they may desire more flexibility over advancement. Changes throughout life stages and also at career stages may also impact empowerment. When someone is new to a company, he or she may not have confidence in the system or know what is acceptable, although someone who has worked at the same company for more than 10 years may have much more confidence in what is allowed.

Data suggest that meaning also changes with age. Millennials in this study were more likely to want advancement and to grow. Several Generation X and Baby Boomers stated that they were no longer as concerned with making money and advancing but wanted work-life balance and to contribute to a meaningful cause. Meaning changes throughout one's lifetime; as one ages, passions and needs change.

Competence and confidence also change with career stage. In a study of nurses, Baby Boomers scored higher than the other two generations on the competence and meaning aspects of psychological empowerment (Sparks, 2012). While not asked directly about competence or confidence levels in the current study, several older participants explained that they became more confident as they got older, not because of their age, but due to experience. Time allows people to improve their skills, increasing one's confidence. More time in the workforce gives workers additional perspectives and opportunity for role models and feedback. Thus, increased confidence may be due to career stage rather than age or generation.

Personal factors. Empowerment also changes according to one's personality, ethnicity, age, gender, culture, and generation. How one views empowerment is a composite of the self. Gen Xer Margherita explains it well: "Being a woman, being a woman of color, the culture and generation. I came from Panama, I'm Latina, I'm Black and how I was raised

--they are still – they come together to form how I empower myself.” Although organizations cannot account for all personal factors, they do require consideration and dialogue. Not every person has the same internal motivation or wants the same level of empowerment. Even when one desires a high level of empowerment, he or she may not be ready. Several participants who came from or worked in different cultures saw variances in how people approached empowerment. Millennials Raj and Sofia, who are originally from India and Brazil, described the different ethics they saw in the US compared to their home countries. Millennial Thomas had worked with impoverished peoples in Peru and depicted how those he worked with were in a very hierarchical system in which those with power told others what to do. All of these personal factors combine with personality to determine how one views empowerment.

Employees need permission from management to control their work, make decisions, to be heard, and to retain ownership. However, there are ways they can increase their own empowerment. Participants explained that they wanted to attend training courses, but they also took ownership of learning on their own. Some read business books, trade journals, and others attended conferences, even if their companies did not pay for it. All participants had taken opportunities for education or learning. This included earning degrees, attending training, or finding a mentor. They also felt empowered when they solved problems, initiated work, and found ways to work around the system.

Most participants mentioned working with others who had no desire for empowerment. Other people were content to come to work and do the minimum required. Some felt these people were motivated solely by money. Personality, attitude, and values are an important aspect of how much empowerment one wants.

Fusing Structural and Psychological Empowerment

Laschinger et al. (2001) posited that structural empowerment is an antecedent to psychological empowerment as shown in Figure 14. However, this assumes that employees lack agency when entering an organization and that they are not agents of co-constructing the organization (Orlikowski, 2000; Clegg, 1989).



Figure 14. Expanded workplace empowerment model (Laschinger et al., 2001).

Findings suggest that structural components mediate psychological empowerment, but how much empowerment one wants and accepts varies with the individual. Rather than assuming one has or does not have empowerment, how much empowerment one wants should be a consideration. The structural level of empowerment given should match what the individual is ready to accept. If the organization gives decision-making power, but the individual is not confident enough to make decisions, he or she does not feel empowered, but more likely overwhelmed. Conversely, if the individual desires more decision-making power, but has to go through management or other channels, he or she may not feel empowered, and may become resentful and even leave the organization. To truly experience empowerment, employees must feel that they have opportunities to make decisions without consequences, and have the confidence and desire to do so (Spreitzer & Doneson, 2008). Thus, findings

suggest that employee empowerment comes from where the level of empowerment given from the organization matches the ideal level of the employee, as shown in Figure 15.

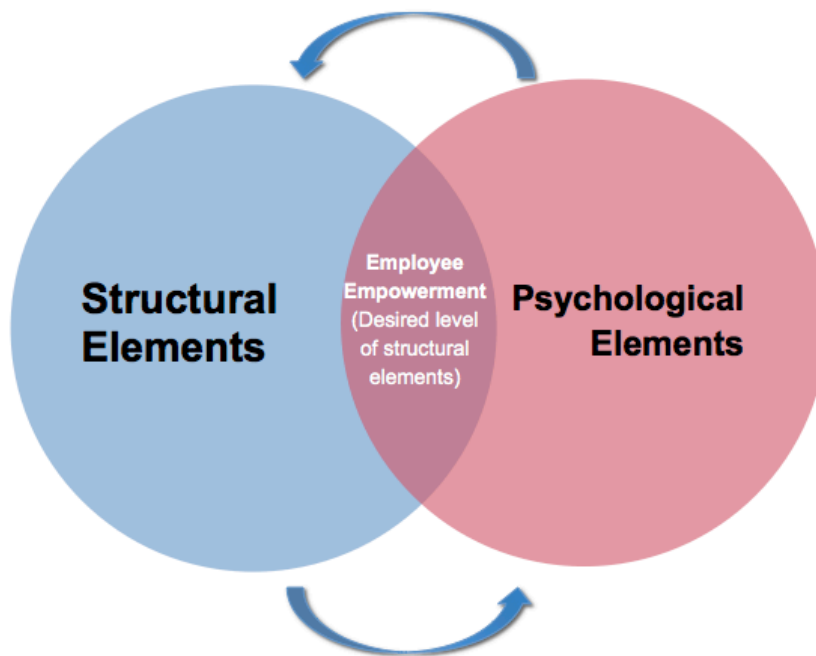


Figure 15. Dynamic and reciprocal nature of structural and psychological influences.

Empowerment ideals change over time as people gain new experiences and encounter new life stages. Although most participants felt they took advantage of empowerment opportunities, they experienced times when they could not or chose not to act on opportunities due to personal values such as time commitments or family obligations. Several participants, Gen Xers and Baby Boomers, had declined opportunities that required additional time commitments or additional tasks that would impede their current job or work-life balance. Millennial Peter effectively explained the relationship of structural and psychological empowerment as

People can very much think they're empowering you--I don't think anybody has any bad intentions per se when it comes to empowerment--but if they're not giving you what you need or giving it to you in the right way, it's not empowerment and it can

even be detrimental. So I would say it has to be a little bit of a two-way street and you have to make sure if you're willing to empower, you're doing it in the right way. And that most likely doesn't mean a one-sided approach.

The role or position chosen is another way some participants enacted self-empowerment. For those who desired meaning by helping others, they chose to work in social work or for nonprofits. Several participants changed positions in order to achieve more flexibility or work-life balance. Even though supervisors have power through their management title, several participants thought they had less realized power. In some cases, managers had less autonomy and flexibility than their employees. Several participants explained that they had been managers and opted for other positions or turned down offers of management because they did not want that level of responsibility. In this way, empowerment is a paradox; to some people, giving up organizational power results in stronger personal power.

When employees do not have the levels of empowerment they desire, they may exhibit agency by leaving the organization. One-third of the participants (12 of 33) mentioned wanting to leave corporate America or to start their own business so that they could have more empowerment. Several participants mentioned owning their own business as the ultimate empowerment. Several Baby Boomers mentioned wanting to leave their current positions but were close enough to retirement that it may not be a good choice for them. Jane stated that she was so desperate she was considering leaving her position in corporate America even though it would not be a good long-term decision financially. Her reasoning was “so I feel like I'm in control again.” In this sense, empowerment is having control and finding the right role to match desired control.

Summary. Empowerment is complex, multifaceted, and dynamic. In Laschinger et al.'s (2001) model, structural empowerment leads to psychological empowerment, which then leads to positive behaviors such as trust and low burnout. However, the findings of this study propose that structural and psychological empowerment have a reciprocal relationship – they continually affect one another, and fluctuate over time. They also suggest that trust may be an element of organizational structure rather than a resulting behavior. Value and trust reinforce the four pillars and impact the other structural influences: structure, culture, and support. Employee empowerment is achieved when the desired levels of the four pillars are given by the organization. Desired levels of empowerment are composed of psychological influences: meaning, confidence, career stage, life stage, and personal factors.

Generation Theory

This section will discuss findings of generational differences. General observations will be discussed first, followed by conversations on structural and psychological elements. Comparing generations is difficult due to the specific years specified. Two participants for example had birthdays in November or December of the last year of the generation (1980 for Generation X), making them “cuspers.” As Lancaster and Stillman (2003) imparted, there are “no magical birth dates that make you a part of a particular generation” (p. 13). Categorizing participants in the cohort they belong to according to years may not be accurate as they may experience some aspects of both generations. Culture is another consideration of generations. Three participants were immigrants to the US, so they may belong to different generational groups depending on when they came to the US. Generation years tend to vary among location, region, and country as events are experienced differently or at inconsistent times spans (Kelan, 2014).

Within the generations, perspectives on communication varied. This was illustrated even in terms of completing interviews for the study. Millennials volunteered, but frequently canceled or hedged on setting a commitment to complete the interview. Of the 10 Millennials who volunteered, two live in different states and were required to do the interview via phone. One Millennial was recruited by a coworker as part of Focus Group 2. Of the remaining seven, only one agreed to meet in person and to commit to the place and time of the interview. The other six required phone interviews and would not agree to be videoed partially because they had difficulty knowing where they would be at the designated time for the interview. They felt using a phone would be convenient. In contrast, most Baby Boomers wanted to meet in person. Six interviews with Baby Boomers were conducted in person and one who lives out of state was via video conference. Two others lived out of state. Appointments with the last two were originally scheduled in person but canceled due to illness and natural disaster (his home was flooded with the heavy rains in Colorado, forcing him to stay home waiting for help to arrive).

Structural Influences and Generation. Although there was a small sample of each generation to compare, some differences in employee empowerment may indicate areas for further research. However, there were far more areas of similarity than difference. Three of the four pillars (autonomy, influence, and decision-making) were important for all generations, although the level desired fluctuated. One of the four pillars, ownership, was not mentioned from as many Millennials (40%) as it was Baby Boomers (90%) and Generation X (62%). This may be due to career stage more than generation and younger workers may not be in leadership positions or have proven themselves enough to own projects. Trust and value reinforced empowerment for all generations.

Structural influences yielded similarities and differences among generations. Elements that were empowering for all generations include informal structures, supportive managers, and open communication. Having availability to resources, information and personal advocates was also empowering to all generations. Additional elements such as flexibility, ethics, and opportunities for growth were also important to all generations although they had different perspectives on what they look like. Areas that had differences included politics, safety, and collaboration. The elements with differences will each be discussed.

Flexibility has been mentioned in the popular literature as something Millennials crave (Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Tulgan, 2009). In this study, all generations appreciated flexibility. The type of flexibility mentioned most often was working from home and was mentioned by twice as many Generation X as the other two generations. This could be a generation preference as some postulate (Zemke et al., 2013), but it may also be that many Generation X are at the point of having children and want flexibility to attend to family. It may be an impact of life stage rather than generation.

Flexibility may also have different connotations for different generations. Kimberly, a Baby Boomer, and her Millennial coworker, Peter, both stated that flexibility was important. When probed further, Kimberly explained that she was allowed to come in late if there was bad weather or at times when the area was not safe (they work close to prior school shooting locations). To Peter, it meant having work-life balance and options such as working 14-hour days to have Fridays off. Mannheim (1952) suggested that each generation influences the one above and below it. In this sense, Generation X may have initiated the importance of flexibility, which was then perceived as important by the generations above

and below, Baby Boomers and Millennials.

When asked directly if the organization's values aligning with theirs was empowering, almost all participants said yes. However, ethics came up organically twice as often from Millennials as Baby Boomers with Generation X in the middle of the two. This could be generational and a result of growing up during Enron and other very public ethics scandals (Howe & Strauss, 2000). It may also be due to the influx of ethical courses or training in business schools and organizations after these scandals (Wecker, 2011).

Opportunities for growth was also empowering to all generations, confirming previous findings that all generations want personal growth and development (Chen & Choi, 2008; Murphy, 2011). However, findings from this study suggest that career advancement is more empowering for Millennials than Baby Boomers. These results are similar to Smola and Sutton's (2002) and Moore, Grunberg, and Krause's (2014) assertions that Millennials desire advancement more than the other generations. Rather than generation, a desire to advance may be due to entering the workforce. Those who are preparing to leave the workforce may have more priority on creating meaning outside of work. Millennials used the term "learning" twice as much as Baby Boomers. This effect may be generational, or it may be top of mind due to entering the workforce. Similarly, more Millennials (70%) wanted challenging work in order to learn and grow compared to Baby Boomers (20%).

Surprisingly, collaboration was mentioned as empowering more by Generation X (by 10 of 13) than the other two generations (two Baby Boomers and four Millennials). Collaboration was mentioned in the second focus group of four employees who work together at a financial company. The only person in the focus group who did not mention the importance of collaboration was the sole Millennial (the other three are Generation X). This is

surprising because the literature posits that Generation X likes independence and prefers to work alone, while Baby Boomers and Millennials like to work in teams and collaborate (Tapscott, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010). Results may partially be affected due to the organizational culture in which all members of Focus Group 2 work. Focus Group 2 was comprised of three Generation X and 1 Millennial, who work together in a collaborative environment.

Another reason that Millennials may not immediately think of collaboration is that they may not yet have had the experience of it at work. Victoria stated that the one thing that had changed for her was how important collaboration was – to the point that she plans to look for positions in the future which allow for collaboration. Raj posited that he did not know the value of collaboration until he was in a position that worked in teams often. In these cases, it may be due more to career stage and experience than generation.

How generations perceived organizations also differed. Politics and playing games was mentioned most frequently by Baby Boomers. This may be a generational difference as Millennials are said to ignore politics (Zemke et al., 2013) or it may be due to the length of time in the workforce Baby Boomers have accumulated. Similarly, safety was mentioned by half as many Millennials as Baby Boomers but they equally mentioned the reverse of safety, fear. This also may be because Millennials are entering the workplace. Five of the ten Millennials stated they had 3 to 5 years of work experience compared to 31+ for most Baby Boomers. These findings are interesting considering Smola and Sutton (2002) found that workers' values change as they mature, but they become less supportive of the organization over time. It may be that workers experience fear and politics that amasses throughout one's career. Two Baby Boomers and one Generation X expressed being tired of workplace drama

and political games. Millennial Sofia contended that it took her many years (she is now 29) to understand that organizations are systems and that one has to understand the system before becoming successful or empowered.

Although many contend that Millennials are technology-savvy and need cutting-edge technology at work (Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010; Prensky, 2011; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009; Tulgan, 2009), others maintain that not all Millennials use social technologies or use them the same. Factors such as culture and socio-economic status impact which technologies workers may have had or do have access to and how they use them (boyd, 2014). While this study did not examine these factors, it was found that who used technology varied among individuals. Some Baby Boomers did not use social media outside of work but did use enterprise social platforms such as wikis to obtain information. Some Generation Xers and Millennials did not use enterprise systems as they did not find them useful and stated they were time-consuming. Generation Xer Margherita uses Facebook to reach her clients, who are students. In these instances, technology was more dependent upon work tasks and clients than generation.

Psychological Influences and Generation. Generations did not show much variance in finding confidence and meaning to be important. However, many Millennials stated they were not yet confident in understanding how organizations work or knowing what they were or were not allowed to do. In this way, there were different levels of confidence, but all found having confidence important to empowerment. This suggests that employees become more empowered as they age and mature in their work experience.

More than generation, career- and life-stage impacted confidence and meaning, which is consistent with Erikson's (1959) assertion that life cycle stage is more influential than age.

Those entering the workforce had less confidence and felt less empowerment. Those who were nearing the end of their careers felt confident, but often did not feel valued or trusted by their employers. Participants have shown how life stage impacts what one needs at work and what one is willing to risk to get it. As one enters the workforce, one has limited experience and confidence that impacts how much support and training one needs. Over time, one's values may change. A common example was when participants started a family, their goals changed from workplace advancement to work-life balance. Moore et al. (2014) also found that experience and maturity affected workplace values more than generation.

Life stage also has a significant impact on how one experiences events and social markers such as technology, diversity, the economy, and participatory workplaces. As Elder (1998) explained, one's role impacts how one experiences events. He explained how children during the Great Depression had different experiences based on ages and how they could participate. Some 5 year olds may have experienced it differently than 15 year olds who were able to work. Although they are both in the same generation, their experiences are much different. This is important to consider today as life events such as becoming a parent are often delayed. Women having their first child may be in their 20s or their 40s. Thus, how they would experience the balancing of motherhood and work may be very different experiences. Life events Elder discussed such as earning a degree or retirement, no longer have specific age ranges and vary across generation. It is important for organizations to consider employees' life stage as much or perhaps even more than their generation.

Summary

Generation may impact employee empowerment, but career and life stage were more significant influences in this study. Ideas and expectations of empowerment are often non-

existent at the beginning of one's career. As employees gain confidence, their desired empowerment levels increase. Someone entering the workforce in his or her teens may not have the same expectations or desires as someone who enters in his or her 40s. Those who started working when voice was not common may have different ideas of empowerment than those who have been told they should have a say at work. Although several Baby Boomers explained how work had changed since they began their careers, they had kept up with social norms and were no longer content to come to work and only do what they were told. Thus, changes in social norms affected all generations.

Even more than generation, career and life stages impacted what levels of empowerment one wants. Empowerment is not constant; it changes as one gains experience or encounters different life stages. As workers gain family responsibilities, they feel empowered with flexibility and options that allow them to work and to take care of family. Those who are close to retirement may not want advancement, but want to feel respected and valued for their experience and knowledge. Empowerment is individual. It must be given by the organization at levels the employee wants. To truly enact empowerment, organizations need to consider what their employees want and help them achieve it. To assist with these efforts, a dynamic model of employee empowerment is presented in the next section.

A New Model of Empowerment

My model addresses the complexity and fluidity of employee empowerment. It represents the reciprocal relationship of structural and psychological influences. The model is built on the premise that employee empowerment is maximized when employee readiness and desired levels are matched with empowerment levels given by the organization. The model focuses on the four pillars of empowerment--autonomy, influence, decision-making

power, and ownership--and what influences them. Workers gain empowerment from the organization's structure, culture, and support. The structure, culture, and support demonstrate whether employees are trusted and valued. Trust and value lead to increased levels of these influences. They affect one another.

The readiness for and desired levels of the four pillars develop from psychological factors. Confidence and meaning impact how one wants to be empowered and how much. These two elements are impacted by one's career stage, life stage, and personal factors such as personality. Career stage and life stage also impact the level of empowerment one desires. They also impact how much trust and value the organization provides. Empowerment is always changing as the organization undergoes transformation such as new leaders. Workers gain experience and encounter life experiences that change their desired levels. Thus, employee empowerment is always changing. The model is illustrated in Figure 16.

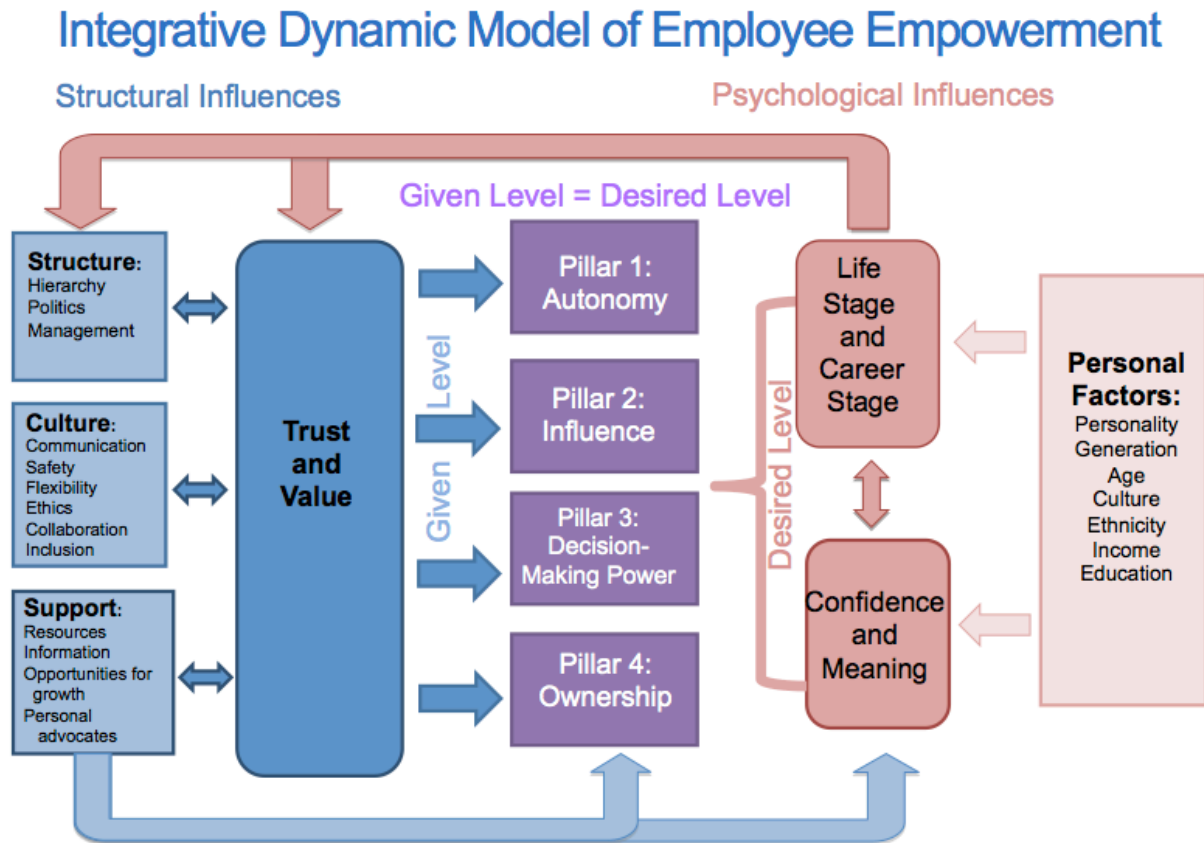


Figure 16. Integrative dynamic model of employee empowerment.

Implications of the Research

This research contributes to scholarly conversations as well as provides evidence for developing new measures of workplace empowerment. It also has practical implications for organizations and managers who truly want to empower their workforce. Scholars and practitioners will have a better understanding of what empowerment means and how to encourage it within organizations. Practitioners will be able to provide organizations and management with direction on empowering behaviors.

Implications for Theory

Findings contribute to workplace empowerment theory and generation theory. Findings suggest that existing models are not representative of today's workforce. Employee

empowerment should not be divided among structural and psychological components as they affect one another in an ongoing and dynamic manner. Workplace empowerment has changed with the proliferation of the Internet, changing work cultures, and diverse employees. Employees have new ways of communicating and gathering information, which needs to be reflected in measures of empowerment. The results of this study provide insight into areas that need additional research to confirm their impact on empowerment such as decision-making power and ownership. Although increased emphasis has been placed on workers' happiness and engagement in recent years, workplace empowerment theory has not been revised. The findings here challenge current conceptions of empowerment and provide a dynamic model that represents the dynamic and complex nature of empowerment.

Differences were shown among generations, but the more significant factors were career and life stage. Empowerment is complex and is constructed from one's experience, personality, confidence, and meaning. It is not as predictable as merely understanding generations. It relies on one's experiences and relationship with work, as well as one's personal attributes, needs, and desires, which change across one's work life.

Implications for Measurement of Empowerment

The findings suggest that new questions should be raised about empowerment. Most importantly, instead of asking how much empowerment one has, future scales of employee empowerment should ask how much empowerment one desires or is ready to accept and if that level matches what the individual is given from the organization. Scales should ask not just about what provides empowerment, but what acts as barriers to empowerment such as management and culture. In addition to current organizational elements, future measurements should consider ownership, safety, open communication, and perceptions of

trust and value. The ethics of the organization should be aligned with employees' values. Implications for scholars are that a more accurate scale can be created to measure empowerment and correlate it to other variables. This study may start the conversation about what is important to today's workers in relation to empowerment. Workers are more educated, diverse, and have the Internet as well as mobile technology. New areas such as communication and safety may be part of a new empowerment scale. Trust, value, and management relationships should be considered. Additionally, meanings of indicators also need further clarification. With new technologies, the meanings of terms such as visibility and flexibility have changed.

Implications for Practice

Organizations that truly want to empower their employees can use the dynamic model presented to understand their employees. The model provides an overview of which elements affect empowerment and which are most significant. Although there were some differences in generations, there were more similarities. This may mean that rather than catering to a specific generation, organizations can empower employees of all generations using similar techniques. Organizations should consider that empowerment is individual and dynamic. To provide empowerment means understanding what each employee wants and is ready for and then providing it. It requires ongoing dialogue to determine when changes occur so that management can match them. Organizations should make sure that employees are not given too much responsibility before they are ready. It can be given over time, rather than at once. Managers in this study expressed success in giving employees ownership and autonomy in steps and providing more as the employees gained confidence. Empowerment does not work if organizations and managers do not trust and value their employees.

Empowerment will become even more important in the future as the quantity of knowledge workers increases (Drucker, 2004; O'Toole & Lawler, 2006; Yang & Choi, 2009).

Limitations of the Study

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the sample size is too small to make generalizations although it serves the purpose of providing insight into and suggestions for areas of future research. The diversity of this sample is also a limitation. The participants in this study are highly educated and most consider themselves knowledge workers. Adding more diverse voices in terms of gender, ethnicity, and job level or type may provide further insights. It is important to consider employees at all levels, as those at lower levels who have been marginalized may not understand empowerment or see how they can “claim it” even when offered (Boldy et al., 2000).

An additional limitation may be the impact of the media. Several participants explained their empowerment using terms and phrases that were heard in popular literature. For example, some Millennials originally stated that their generation was entitled and so they had to differentiate entitlement from empowerment. Erika twice commented on being a Millennial in terms of her answers: “And it's not necessarily the negative Millennial kind of autonomy that is addressed” and “Oh, I'm sounding like a Millennial!” Other Millennial participants also seemed to have a sense of perceptions about their generation and made references to entitlement as well as job-hopping, although for those who mentioned that their generation job-hopped, they personally had not.

Empowerment is different for everyone and some participants had a hard time expressing it or thinking about what it meant on their own. Three female participants either did or had worked on social services in which they are taught in graduate school about

empowering the oppressed. They often went back to their thoughts of empowerment in general and had to refocus on what it meant in the workplace rather than their own empowerment or what they had seen in the community. For others, they focused on the specific job they had – especially those who felt disempowered, and had difficulty thinking about experiences outside of the current position.

Finally, bias may have been introduced into the research due to my experiences in the workforce. As a female, Generation Xer, I may have biases that were subconscious. Before conducting the interviews, I engaged in reflexivity and bracketing to understand what assumptions I may have from my 25 years of work experience. It was important to separate my biases and assumptions so that they did not impact my questions, responses, or interpretations. Rather than assuming what participants meant, I asked for clarification and examples.

Future Research

This study was exploratory and qualitative in nature and thus, was not able to account for all variables that may impact employee empowerment from either organizational or psychological origins. However, a plethora of topics requiring additional research were exposed. The five most significant topics will be discussed.

Research topic one involves times of change. Organizational change is a time when employees often feel vulnerable and disempowered. This is a time when employees require information and communication in order to make decisions. Not receiving what they need may enhance feelings that they are not trusted or valued. Exploring empowerment during times of organizational change should be studied.

The second topic involves types of roles and their relationship with empowerment. Although the sample size was small, data showed some differences in blue-collar versus white-collar positions as well as union versus non-union positions. Additional research is needed to better understand if different types of positions view levels of the four pillars differently. Depending upon the type of work, union workers may not have the same options for empowerment due to union rules. Additionally, some slight differences were suggested in employment type such as part-time, and contingent workers compared to full-time workers. This is another area that could be explored to see if the four pillars found in this study emerge with all position types. Position may also impact empowerment based on one's tenure. Several participants in this study demonstrated increased safety due to their lengthy tenure at one company. Seniority could be a factor that leads to increased empowerment because employees with longevity may be trusted if they have proven themselves to be competent.

The third topic is remote or virtual workers. Workers who work remotely may have a different sense of empowerment as they have lower visibility but may have more autonomy. Future studies should compare remote workers to co-located workers and study whether virtual managers impact one's sense of empowerment.

The fourth topic is specific characteristics of an organization. For example, company size may be a factor. Smaller companies may have limited budgets and may have fewer opportunities for new roles. They may, however, have more opportunities for voicing opinions than larger organizations. Cultural factors may also have an impact. For example, the six female workers in this study who worked in male-dominated industries felt disempowered at times. Gender as well as other factors that dominate one industry or sector

may provide insight into how empowerment is experienced by those not part of the dominant group.

The fifth topic is external to the organization. Although most structural elements come from the organization, external factors can impact how organizations react to their environment. A significant factor that was mentioned in the study was the economy. External events such as the recession greatly impact employees' sense of empowerment. This was especially true for Baby Boomers who felt they were not able to quit due to the economy and the loss of job potential. Others explained that they were not able to take risks as they were scared to lose their jobs as it may be difficult to find another one in this recessive economy. Future studies may look at the impact of external factors such as economy.

Conclusion

Benefits of employee empowerment are numerous. Since the 1980s, studies have shown connections to many organizational benefits such as increased productivity and higher employee commitment and loyalty (Ugboro & Obeng, 2000). In addition, when employees are happier, they are more likely to give higher levels of customer satisfaction and are less likely to leave the organization which lowers the costs of employee turnover (Niehoff et al., 2001). Additionally, when employees are happy, they experience fewer mental health issues and are less likely to display undesired behaviors such as pettiness and violence than are unhappy employees (Pasmore, 2001). For these reasons, workplace empowerment can be advantageous for both organizations and employees.

However, existing empowerment measures focus on either structural or psychological empowerment. Looking at them separately does not provide an accurate picture of what employees need and feel. Employee empowerment is given by the organization. Employees

may want autonomy, influence, decision-making power, and ownership, but will not act on these desires if they fear consequences. Therefore, psychological components are not an accurate conception of employee empowerment. Focusing only on the structural aspects, however, diminishes employee agency. Employees are individuals and desire different levels of empowerment. These desires stem from career stage, life stage, and personality. Yet none of these influences are considered in existing models of empowerment. Employee empowerment is dynamic and complex and deserves accurate measures. This study offers a new and more complex and dynamic model of empowerment at work that can provide the basis for developing new and more accurate measures of empowerment today.

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Appendix A

Conditions for Work Effectiveness Questionnaire (CWEQ I, long version)

Key to Which Questions Fall into Which Subscales

O = Opportunity subscale (7 items)

I = Information subscale (8 items)

S = Support subscale (9 items)

R = Resources subscale (7 items)

FP = Formal Power subscale (9 items)

IP = Informal Power (18 items)

*Opportunity:***How much of each kind of opportunity of you have in your present job?**

		None		Some		A Lot
1.	Challenging work	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The chance to gain new skills & knowledge on the job	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Access to training programs for learning new things	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The chance to learn how the organization works	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Tasks that use all of your own skills and knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The chance to advance to better jobs	1	2	3	4	5
7.	The chances to assume different roles not related to current job	1	2	3	4	5

*Information:***How much access to information do you have in your present job?**

		None		Some		A Lot
--	--	------	--	------	--	----------

1.	The current state of the organization	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The relationship of the work of your unit to the organization	1	2	3	4	5
3.	How other people in positions like yours do their work	1	2	3	4	5
4.	The values of top management	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The goals of top management	1	2	3	4	5
6.	This year's plan for your work unit	1	2	3	4	5
7.	How salary decisions are made for people in positions like yours	1	2	3	4	5
8.	What other departments think of your unit	1	2	3	4	5

Support:

How much access to support do you have in your present job?

		None		Some		A Lot
1.	Specific information about things you do well	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Specific comments about things you could improve	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Helpful hints or problem solving advice	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Information or suggestions about job possibilities	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Discussion of further training or education	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Help when there is a work crisis	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Help in gaining access to people who can get the job done	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Help in getting materials and supplies needed to get the job done	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Rewards and recognition for a job well done	1	2	3	4	5

Resources:

How much access to resources do you have in your present job?

		None		Some		A Lot

1.	Having supplies necessary for the job	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Time available to do necessary paperwork	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Time available to accomplish job requirements	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Acquiring temporary help when needed	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Influencing decisions about obtaining human resources (permanent) for your unit.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Influencing decisions about obtaining supplies for your unit	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Influencing decisions about obtaining equipment for your unit	1	2	3	4	5

Formal power:

In my work setting/job:

		None		Some		A Lot
1.	the amount of variety in tasks associated with my job is	1	2	3	4	5
2.	the rewards for unusual performance on the job are	1	2	3	4	5
3.	the rewards for innovation on the job are	1	2	3	4	5
4.	the amount of flexibility in my job is	1	2	3	4	5
5.	the number of approvals needed for nonroutine decisions are	1	2	3	4	5
6.	the relation of tasks in my job to current problem areas of the organization is	1	2	3	4	5
7.	my amount of participation in educational programs is	1	2	3	4	5
8.	my amount of participation in problem solving task forces is	1	2	3	4	5
9.	the amount of visibility of my work-related activities within the institution is	1	2	3	4	5

Informal power:

How much opportunity do you have for these activities in your present job?

		None		Some		A
--	--	------	--	------	--	---

						Lot
1.	Being sought out by supervisor for ideas about problems	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Having immediate supervisor ask for your opinion	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Receiving early information of upcoming changes in work unit from your immediate supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
4	Chances to increase your influence outside your unit e.g., nomination to influential committees by supervisor	1	2	3	4	5
5	Seeking out ideas from auxiliary workers on the unit, e.g., secretaries, ward clerks, housekeeping	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Getting to know auxiliary workers as people	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Seeking out ideas from auxiliary workers outside of the unit, e.g., admission clerks, technicians	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Being sought out by peers for information	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Receiving helpful feedback from peers	1	2	3	4	5
10	Having peers ask your opinion	1	2	3	4	5
11	Being sought out by peers for help with problems	1	2	3	4	5
12	Exchanging favors with peers	1	2	3	4	5
13	Seeking out ideas from professionals other than those you have direct contact with	1	2	3	4	5

Note: The scale was designed for nursing, so some questions referred to a hospital or coworker such as a doctor. Questions were adapted appropriately. Reprinted with written permission from the author.

Appendix B

Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Instrument

(Instrument names and subscales were removed for the study)

1 = Very Strongly Disagree	2 = Strongly Disagree	3 = Disagree	4 = Neither	5 =Agree	6=Strongly Agree	7 = Very Strongly Agree
----------------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	----------------	----------	---------------------	-------------------------------

Meaning

The work that I do is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The work I do is meaningful to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Competence

I am confident about my ability to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Self-Determination

I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Impact

My impact on what happens in my department is large.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Note: Reprinted with written permission from the author.

Appendix C

IRB Approval

FGU Institutional Review Board | (805) 898-4034 | IRB@Fiel



March 13, 2015

Kerry Mitchell
Cc: Mary McCall

RE: IRB No. 15-0314 (Pilot/Dissertation) "Exploring employee empowerment across generations" by Kerry Mitchell.

Dear Kerry,

Congratulations! On behalf of the Fielding Institutional Review Board, it is my pleasure to confirm that the IRB documents received for the **Mar 2015** IRB review cycle have been **APPROVED**.

STUDY ID:	15-0314 MITCHELL Kerry (HOD Mar 2015)
CATEGORY:	Minimal Risk (Expedited)
DETERMINATION:	APPROVED (3/13/2015)
EXPIRATION:	3/12/2016

This study is subject to continuing review by 3/12/2016 unless closed before this date.

This approval does not replace any other permissions or approvals required of students, faculty, or other researchers. If committee or other approvals are required to conduct your study, all approvals must be received by the researcher before recruitment, enrollment, or data collection begins. Each school has very specific requirements for approvals to be obtained and the IRB requests that you ensure that all requirements have been met. If institutional/organizational approvals are required, retain a copy of the approval(s) with your study documents.

The following information is provided to help you comply with human subjects protection requirements:

1. You must adhere to the Belmont Commission's ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice.
2. You must use the final IRB approved study documents to conduct your study.
3. All recruitment materials must receive IRB approval prior to utilization.
4. You must submit reports on unexpected or serious adverse events experienced by participants.
5. Federal guidelines require that projects undergo continuing review at least once a year. You will receive a communication approximately 4 weeks prior to the expiration date noted above. Complete and return the required documents prior to the expiration date to avoid a lapse of approval.
6. After you complete your study, go to http://web.fielding.edu/private/research/IRB_Forms.asp and download the Status Report form. Email the completed form to irb@fielding.edu.
7. Documentation of informed consent and a written research summary for your project must be maintained for at least three years following the date of completion. Documentation may be in hard copy, electronic, or other media formats. The IRB may review your records relating to this project.

Any proposed changes or modifications to your approved study must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others may require full board review. **Revision**

Appendix D

Informed Consent and Confidentiality Agreement

Research Project Title: Exploring employee empowerment across generations

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to examine how employees of different generations view workplace empowerment

I am inviting you to participate in a study about employee empowerment. The study is being conducted by Kerry Mitchell, MA a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organizational Development at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This study is supervised by Dr. Mary McCall.

Before you agree to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the information provided in this Informed Consent Form. If you have any questions, please ask the researcher for clarification.

Information about the study: This research is being conducted in order to understand how employees of different generations sense empowerment in the workplace. Many focus groups and interviews will be completed with members of different generations. The total number of participants will be between 35 and 70.

What is involved if you participate: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a short 8-question demographic questionnaire. You will attend a focus group either in person or online with up to 4 other individuals which will last approximately 60 minutes. You will want to arrive early to get seated and to complete the short questionnaire. You may also choose to do an individual interview lasting 60 – 75 minutes. All focus groups and interviews will be audio-recorded. Online focus groups and interviews have the option of using a web camera, but using it will be your choice. The purpose of recording is so the researcher has an accurate record of the interview that will be transcribed for analysis. All data will be kept confidential.

Risks and benefits: The risks to you are considered minimal and there is minimal likelihood that you will experience emotional discomfort because of your participation. If you choose to participate you will be asked to describe empowerment at work. Benefits of participation are that you may experience self-awareness and learn what others think of empowerment. You may develop an understanding of how you are influenced or how you influence others at work.

Confidentiality and protection: Study related records will be held in confidence. You will only be asked your first name in the focus group and interview. In the data, you will be referred to by participant number, not name. Your consent to participate in this study includes consent for the researcher, supervising faculty, and a transcriptionist to potentially see data including audio and video files. The transcriptionist has signed a Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement. The research records may also be inspected by authorized representatives of the Fielding Graduate University, including members of the

Institutional Review Board or their designees. They may inspect, and photocopy, as needed, study records for study monitoring or auditing purposes.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms and other information that could be used to identify you will be kept separate from the data. Quotes may be used for publication, but actual names will not be used. Quotations used will be referenced to participant numbers such as “participant 1, Gen X”. All materials will be kept in secure online file by Kerry Mitchell. Any records that would identify you as a participant in this study, such as informed consent forms, will be scanned and kept in a confidential electronic file and destroyed by Kerry Mitchell approximately five years after the study is completed.

The results of this research will be published in my dissertation and possibly published in subsequent journals, books or presentations. A report will be provided upon request to participants.

The security of data transmitted over the Internet cannot be guaranteed, therefore, there is a slight risk that the information you send to me via email or while on GoToMeeting will not be secure. The collection of such data is not expected to present any greater risk than you would encounter in everyday life when sending and/or receiving information over the Internet.

Participation in this research is voluntary - You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after your participation, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed. Your decision to participate, decline or withdraw will be kept confidential. The researcher is also free to terminate the study at any time.

Study results: You may request a copy of the summary of the aggregate final results by emailing the researcher.

Additional information: You may also ask the researcher or contact the supervising faculty if you have questions or concerns your participation in this study. You may also ask questions at any time during your participation in this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Fielding Graduate University IRB by email at irb@fielding.edu or by telephone at 805-898-4033

Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agree to participate in this research. Return one to the researcher and keep the other for your files. The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains the right to access to all signed informed consent forms.

I have read the above informed consent document and have had the opportunity to ask questions about this study. I have been told my rights as a research participant, and I

voluntarily consent to participate in this study. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research study. I shall receive a signed and dated copy of this consent.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

Dr. Mary E. McCall
mmcall@fielding.edu

Fielding Graduate University
2020 De La Vina Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93105-3814
805-687-1099

Kerry Mitchell
kerrymitchell @email.fielding.edu

720-971-5803

.....

Appendix E

Demographic Survey questions

1. What is your age?
20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-49 50-55 56-60 61-69 70+
2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
High school graduate Trade/Technical/vocational School
Some college College graduate Post-graduate degree
3. How many years of work experience do you have?
3-5 5-10 11-20 21-30 31+
4. What is your total household income?
Less than \$25,000 \$25,000 - \$59,999 \$60,000 - \$99,999 \$100,000+
5. What is your gender?
6. What is your ethnicity and race?
7. How are you paid? hourly salary contract
8. Do you consider yourself a knowledge worker? Yes No
A knowledge worker is someone who, for his/her job, primarily finds, creates, packages, distributes or applies knowledge.
9. How often do you use social media (such as *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Reddit, intranet wikis, blogs*, etc.) for personal or professional use?
Daily Weekly Monthly Rarely Never

Appendix F

Interview and Focus Group Questioning Script

Type	Question	Reasoning
Introduction (2 min)	Welcome everyone! Thank you for your time and participation today. I am Kerry Mitchell and I am doing this focus group as part of my doctoral dissertation. In this session we will discuss workplace empowerment. There are no right or wrong answers – I want to know what you think and what your experiences have been. This is exploratory research, so I am not looking for a specific answer or link. Empowerment is a personal experience, so I expect that you may have different responses. This information will remain confidential and I ask that you also keep confidential whatever is said here. It will be recorded and transcribed only for analysis purposes. Only I and my dissertation committee will see it.	<i>To make sure participants know the topic (without getting too much information that may be biased) and why they are here. To remind them of the process and confidentiality.</i>
Open (2 min)	1. Tell us your first name only and your favorite thing about your job.	<i>Build rapport, warm up group</i>
Warm-up (2 min)	2. What does workplace empowerment mean to you?	<i>Exploring empowerment theory</i>
Key (5 min)	3. Take a couple of minutes to think about workplace empowerment. Describe an example of when you felt empowered at work.	<i>Exploring organizational & psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	4. What else encourages empowerment that you did not express in your examples?	<i>Exploring both empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	5. What does your manager or the organization do to empower you at work?	<i>Exploring structural empowerment (CWEQ)</i>
Key (5 min)	6. What resources do you need to be empowered?	<i>Exploring structural empowerment (CWEQ)</i>
Key (5 min)	7. How have you empowered yourself at work?	<i>Exploring psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	8. Tell me about an instance in which you had an opportunity to be empowered, but chose not to. (What did you resist?)	<i>Exploring psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	9. How has empowerment changed for you since you entered the workforce?	<i>Exploring psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	10. Tell me about a time when you felt that you were not empowered at work. (<i>Follow-up with what caused you to not be empowered, i.e. barriers? – how did that feel and how did you react?</i>)	<i>Exploring organizational (Yukl, 2012) & psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995)</i>
Key	11. What barriers to empowerment do you face from	<i>Exploring organizational &</i>

(5 min)	your manager or organization? How do you react to those barriers?	<i>psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	12. What are some examples of how you have empowered others?	<i>Exploring organizational empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	13. Are there negative aspects to empowerment?	<i>Exploring both empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	14. Explain if you have limits to how much empowerment you want to have. <i>(example – do you want to be manager and make decisions, participate in decisions, etc.)</i>	<i>Exploring psychological empowerment</i>
Key (5 min)	15. What differences do you see in how others view empowerment?	<i>Exploring psychological empowerment</i>
Ending	16. I'm going to discuss some characteristics on these scales. Tell me if they are empowering for you. (Confidence, competence, etc. – see scales). <i>Show Spreitzer's scale (Appendix B) and CWEQ (Appendix A)</i>	<i>Exploring CWEQ and Spreitzer's scale</i>
(2 min)	17. Is there anything else you want to tell me about empowerment in organizations?	<i>Opportunity to bring in other ideas or thoughts</i>
Release (2 min)	Does anyone have any questions? Thank you all again for your time. I appreciate your interest and your time.	<i>Thank them for coming. Give opportunity for them to ask questions.</i>

Possible additional questions:

- How much empowerment do you want? (i.e., Do you want to make decisions, participate in decisions or be told decisions?)
- What does empowerment feel like?
- What influences how others are empowered? (i.e., age, title, etc.)
- How do you know if you've been heard?
- What stops others from empowering themselves?
- Are ethics/org values related to empowerment?
- What are consequences of not being empowered?
- Is visibility important to empowerment?

Appendix G

Permission to use CWEQ



NURSING WORK EMPOWERMENT SCALE

Request Form

I request permission to copy the Nursing Work Empowerment Scale as developed by Dr. G. Chandler and Dr. Heather K. Spence ~~Laschinger~~. Upon completion of the research, I will provide Dr. ~~Laschinger~~ with a brief summary of the results, including information related to the use of the Nursing Work Empowerment Scale used in my study.

Questionnaires Requested:

Conditions of Work Effectiveness-I (includes JAS and ORS): Yes

Conditions of Work Effectiveness-II (includes JAS-II and ORS-II): Yes

Job Activity Scale (JAS) only:

Organizational Relationship Scale (ORS) only:

Organizational Development ~~Opinionnaire~~

or Manager Activity Scale:

Other Instruments:

Please complete the following information:

Date: 2/12/2015

Name: Kerry Mitchell

Title: Empowerment across generations (working title)

University/Organization: Fielding Graduate University

Address: 26 Dawn Heath Dr, Littleton CO 80127

Phone: 720-971-5803

E-mail: kerrymitchell@email.fielding.edu

Description of Study: I will be conducting focus groups across a wide range of employees - from high-tech companies to education. Although it is not nursing, I think most of the questions apply to structural empowerment.

Permission is hereby granted to copy and use the Nursing Work Empowerment Scale.



Date: February 19, 2015


Dr. Heather K. Spence ~~Laschinger~~, Professor
School of Nursing, University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada. N6A 5C1
Tel: 519-661-2111 ext.86567
Fax: 519-661-3410
E-mail: hkl@uwo.ca

Appendix H

Permission to Use and Copy Spreitzer's Psychological Empowerment Instrument

Re: Inquiry on Psychological Empowerment Scale and Interest  Dissertation x

 **Gretchen Spreitzer** <spreitze@umich.edu> Feb 19 ☆  

to me 



Hello Kerry, such interesting work you are doing! you have my permission to use the instrument. Please do share your findings with me so that I can learn from you. Given I am on sabbatical, i do not think the timing wil work out for me to be an external reader. Best wishes!

Re: Inquiry on Psychological Empowerment Scale and Interest  Inbox x  

 **Gretchen Spreitzer** 6:00 AM (6 hours ago) ☆  

to me 

Absolutely, Thanks Kerry!

 **Gretchen Spreitzer**
spreitze@umich.edu
 [Show details](#)

On Wed, Feb 3, 2016 at 7:44 PM, Kerry Mitchell <kerrymitchell@email.fielding.edu> wrote:
Hello, Dr. Spreitzer. I have completed my research for my dissertation and would like permission to print your original scale in the appendix of my dissertation with the proper citation. Please let me know if you give me permission to copy the Psychological Empowerment Scale. Once completed, I will send you a short synopsis of the findings. Thank you for your consideration. -Kerry Mitchell

Kerry Mitchell, M.A.
PhD Candidate, Human and Organizational Systems

On Thu, Feb 19, 2015 at 7:58 AM, Gretchen Spreitzer <spreitze@umich.edu> wrote:
Hello Kerry, such interesting work you are doing! you have my permission to use the instrument. Please do share your findings with me so that I can learn from you. Given I am on sabbatical, i do not think the timing wil work out for me to be an external reader. Best wishes!

On Wed, Feb 18, 2015 at 5:39 PM, Kerry Mitchell <kerrymitchell@email.fielding.edu> wrote:
Hello Dr. Spreitzer.

I am a doctoral student working on my PhD at Fielding Graduate University. For my dissertation, I would like to use your Psychological Empowerment Scale. My research question involves how employee empowerment is sensed across generations. Please let me know what you need from me to grant permission to use it.

Additionally, I am looking for an external reader on my committee. While I know you are extremely busy, I would be honored to have you consider serving as external reader. If you have interest, please let me know. I would love the opportunity to set up a call with you and discuss this.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Kerry Mitchell

Appendix I

Recruiting Posts and Email Response to Volunteers

Post to local LinkedIn groups and local Meet-up groups

Want to voice your opinions and experiences?

I am reaching out for volunteers to participate in my dissertation research. I am studying employee empowerment across generations. I am hoping to understand how employees of diverse backgrounds and generations experience employee empowerment. I selected this group since you are local and represent a wide variety of organizations and positions.

I am looking for 4 – 5 individuals to conduct a focus group at one of the following locations – online/audio, Highlands Ranch library, Douglas Country Library, downtown Denver or the DTC. Both interviews and focus groups can take between 60 and 90 minutes. I will need some quick paperwork completed before the meeting that can be done online or in person (but please come a few minutes early to complete).

Participant criteria are

- Must be US citizen
- Must be at least 20 years of age
- Must have at least 3 years of work experience

Please contact me if you have interest and I will tell you more about the study. Please contact me via a reply or an email at Kerry@moxysolutions.net. Please provide

1. Your interest in an interview, focus group or both
2. Your generation
 - Baby Boomers were born 1946 - 1964
 - GenX was born 1965 - 1980
 - Gen Y was born 1981 – 2000
3. The best time for you to meet (morning, afternoon, evening, weekend).
4. The best location for you.

Once I have enough volunteers, I will provide possible dates and times.

Thank you for your interest and support. Please pass this on to anyone you think may be interested in participating.

Kerry Mitchell

Post and email to LinkedIn groups, Reddit, Google+ groups, LinkedIn status, ListServes and Twitter direct message

Want to voice your workplace opinions and experiences?

I am reaching out for volunteers to participate online in my dissertation research. I am studying employee empowerment across generations. I am hoping to understand how employees of diverse backgrounds and generations experience employee empowerment.

I am looking for individuals to conduct online/phone interviews and focus groups that will be about an hour.

Participant criteria are

- Must be in US
- Must be at least 20 years of age
- Must have at least 3 years of work experience

Please contact me if you have interest and I will tell you more about the study. Please reply or email at Kerry@moxysolutions.net. Please provide

1. Your interest in an interview, focus group or both
2. Your generation
 - Baby Boomers were born 1946 - 1964
 - GenX was born 1965 - 1980
 - Gen Y was born 1981 – 2000
3. The best time for you to meet/call (morning, afternoon, evening, weekend – or suggest a time).

Thank you for your interest and support. Please pass this on to anyone you think may be interested in participating.

Kerry Mitchell

Post to Facebook

Hello friends and family. Do you know anyone who may be interested in sharing his or her voice and workplace experiences with me?

I am looking for volunteers (cannot be friends, coworkers, classmates, etc.) to participate online (or in-person if they are in the Denver area) in my dissertation research – interviews and focus groups. I am studying employee empowerment across generations. I am hoping to

understand how employees of diverse backgrounds and generations experience employee empowerment.

I would love your assistance by passing on this information to individuals to conduct online interviews and focus groups. Both interviews and focus groups can take between 60 and 90 minutes. I will need some quick paperwork completed before the session that can be scanned and emailed.

Participant criteria are

- Must be in US
- Must be at least 20 years of age
- Must have at least 3 years of work experience

Please contact me if you have interest and I will tell you more about the study. Please reply or email at Kerry@moxysolutions.net. Please provide

1. Your interest in an interview, focus group or both
2. Your generation
 - Baby Boomers were born 1946 - 1964
 - GenX was born 1965 - 1980
 - Gen Y was born 1981 – 2000
3. The best time for you to meet (morning, afternoon, evening, weekend).
4. The best location for you.

Once I have enough volunteers, I will provide possible dates and times.

Thank you for your interest and support. Please pass this on to anyone you think may be interested in participating.

Kerry Mitchell

Email Response to Volunteers

For phone/online interview volunteer–

Hello X.

I appreciate your interest in my research. The interview will take about an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes. I will be asking you about your experiences regarding workplace empowerment. I will let you suggest a time and work around you unless you want me to give you some options. The interview will be via phone or online with webcams, whichever you prefer. This is so that I can record and transcribe the call. All names will be removed, but it will help me with analysis.

I will also need some forms completed, which I have attached. The first one explains the research process and provides you with your rights. The second one is demographic data I am using to look for correlations. As you can see, it only has a number attached to it, no names. You can send those back to me anytime before the interview.

Thank you for your interest and I look forward to speaking with you.

Kerry Mitchell

For in-person interview volunteer—

Hello X.

I appreciate your interest in my research. The interview will take about an hour to an hour and fifteen minutes. I will be asking you about your experiences regarding workplace empowerment. I will let you suggest a time and work around you unless you want me to give you some options. I also need to know your approximate location so that I can find a meeting room. I generally use library meeting rooms of the location is convenient. The interview will be recorded so that I can record and transcribe the call. All names will be removed, but it will help me with analysis.

I will also need some forms completed, which I have attached. The first one explains the research process and provides you with your rights. The second one is demographic data I am using to look for correlations. As you can see, it only has a number attached to it, no names. I will bring these to the interview for you to sign and give you a copy.

Thank you for your interest and I look forward to speaking with you.

Kerry Mitchell

Appendix J

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Generation	Age	Education	Years of Work	Household Income	Ethnicity	How Paid
Kimberly	Female	Boomer	50 - 55	College Grad	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Rick	Male	Gen X	36 - 40	Post-graduate	21 - 30	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Linda	Female	Boomer	61 - 69	Post-graduate	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Olivia	Female	Boomer	56 - 60	Post-graduate	21 - 30	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Hourly
Kristin	Female	Gen X	31 - 35	Post-graduate	5 - 10	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Eddie	Male	Gen X	41 - 45	Post-graduate	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Contract
Melissa	Female	Gen X	46 - 49	Post-graduate	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	Mixed	Salary
Jane	Female	Boomer	56 - 60	Post-graduate	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Alexis	Female	Gen X	36 - 40	Post-graduate	21 - 30	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Amy	Female	Gen X	46 - 49	College Grad	21 - 30	\$100,000+	Eastern European	Salary
Alissa	Female	Boomer	50 - 55	Post-graduate	31+	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Peter	Male	Millennial	26 - 30	College Grad	3 - 5	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Julie	Female	Boomer	50 - 55	Post-graduate	31+	\$25,000 - \$59,999	White	Hourly
Margherita	Female	Gen X	46 - 49	College Grad	21 - 30	\$60,000 - \$99,999	Black/Panamanian	Salary
Shaun	Male	Gen X	41 - 45	Post-graduate	21 - 30	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Dawn	Female	Gen X	31 - 35	College Grad	11-20	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Keith	Male	Boomer	56 - 60	Some College	21 - 30	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Zach	Male	Millennial	20 - 25	HS Diploma	3 - 5	Less than \$25,000	White	Hourly
Dan	Male	Gen X	46 - 49	Trade/Technical	11-20	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Sofia	Female	Millennial	26 - 30	College Grad	5 - 10	\$25,000 - \$59,999	Latino	Hourly
Erika	Female	Millennial	31 - 35	College Grad	11-20	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Brandi	Female	Millennial	26 - 30	College Grad	11-20	\$100,000+	African American	Hourly
Todd	Male	Boomer	50 - 55	Trade/Technical	31+	\$100,000+	White	Hourly
Raj	Male	Millennial	20 - 25	College Grad	3 - 5	\$25,000 - \$59,999	Indian/Asian	Hourly
Victoria	Female	Millennial	20 - 25	College Grad	3 - 5	\$25,000 - \$59,999	White	Hourly
Bob	Male	Boomer	61 - 69	Post-graduate	31+	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Contract
Katrina	Female	Gen X	46 - 49	College Grad	5 - 10	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Shelly	Female	Millennial	26 - 30	Some College	5 - 10	\$100,000+	Hispanic American	Salary
Hannah	Female	Gen X	36 - 40	College Grad	21 - 30	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Joyce	Female	Gen X	46 - 49	College Grad	11-20	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Thomas	Male	Millennial	26 - 30	Post-graduate	3 - 5	\$60,000 - \$99,999	White	Salary
Greg	Male	Boomer	61 - 69	College Grad	31+	\$100,000+	White	Salary
Brian	Male	Millennial	26 - 30	Post-graduate	5 - 10	\$100,000+	White	Salary

Appendix K

Professional Assistance Confidentiality Agreement

Title of Project: *Exploring employee empowerment across generations*

Name of Researcher and Affiliation with Fielding: Kerry J. Mitchell, Doctoral Student

I have agreed to assist Kerry Mitchell in her research study on *employee empowerment across generations* in the role of transcriptionist or coder.

I understand that all participants in this study have been assured that their responses will be kept confidential. I agree to maintain that confidentiality. I agree that no materials will remain in my possession beyond the operation of this research study. I further agree that I will make no independent use of any of the research materials from this project.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Title _____

Appendix L

Initial Responses by Generation to “*What does workplace empowerment mean to you?*”

Who	Initial Response
Baby Boomers	
Kimberly	An ability to excel and improve your current position. So upward mobility.
Jane	What it means to me is that everyone at every level is allowed to say what they think needs to be happening and then they're given the authority or the power or whatever to go forward and move that forward without having someone micromanage them along the way.
Linda	Autonomy
Olivia	Maybe it would be an employer, a supervisor empowering a subordinate. Allowing somebody to work at their full capacity. Be creative to put into place ideas, to come up with those ideas, to put those ideas in place, allowing that to happen.
Alissa	it's a style of working in which the worker has decision-making, control and that they are given training and resources in order to be successful.
Julie	For me, it's about the relationship that people build to become either personally or professionally successful.
Keith	It is that I have the authority that I need to either make decisions or to raise concerns in a way that isn't going to be negatively looked upon or actions taken. So you have the authority you need to make decisions you need as well as when you have concerns and raise them that you are not in an environment that you are concerned about your job risk, shall we say.
Todd	I guess that would mean that you have some say-so, you're a more important person at work that you have the responsibilities to say what goes on, maybe.
Bob	That means that the management team, the executive teams, command staff, CEOs, really empower the line workers to have feedback and input into their jobs and then the ability to act upon that feedback and improve performance or work product or what

	it has to be.
Greg	Basically are empowered, for example, if there was a defect on the line, they could stop the shipment and not ship it. They have the authority on their own just to go out and stop the line. They don't have to wait from a higher-up or quality assurance type person, not have to ask for permission, just report it and go from there and then get to the root cause of the issue.
Generation X	
Kristin	It means that I'm allowed to be a little bit creative with my work. They're not quite as particular about hours and stuff because sometimes things come up and 8:30 to 5:30 doesn't necessarily work. So I think time flexibility is helpful and empowering because then it lets you do what you need to do and focus on your work.
Eddie	Employees being empowered of taking control of themselves and the direction that they want to go.
Melissa	Autonomy, trust, communication. Two-way communication, I should say.
Rick	Autonomy, using the skills that you've learned, and being able to apply them. Breaking the mold.
Alexis	To me that means not micromanaging and trusting in your subject matter expert. And really, that's about it. Allowing people to make decisions and take ownership of their responsibilities.
Amy	That means to me that the leaders of the team value each individual, or in this case, myself, in order to make decisions based on the information that they've given us and empowered us to make decisions in the best interests of ourselves and the company and that they trust us to make those decisions.
Margherita	Workplace empowerment means that employees will be able to make decisions, that they are treated as professionals and that they are not micro-managed.
Shaun	It means being able to use my skills and my background and my work history in the current workplace to not only help the company or department that I'm working in but to help me grow as an employee.

Dawn	It means probably having a sense of power at the workplace, a sense of being able to accomplish things and have control over your day-to-day job and your position in the company.
Dan	For me it means just giving people the ability to not only reach their potential, because they have the ability to invest themselves into endeavors, but then the organization as a whole reaches another level of potential because they are empowered to make decisions, to think outside the box, to take critical looks at processes.
Erika	I think of giving everybody a voice.
Joyce	It is about having power and feeling free to be able to do that and have that voice.
Shelly	it means being able to have a voice and being able to be free to take charge and take your career where you want it to go and have a voice in things you want changed or implemented.
Millennials	
Peter	I think for me in my position it's about enabling me to be the most successful I can be
Zach	Doesn't honestly mean too much to me just because I don't have a close connection with the workplace yet due to the jobs I've had.
Sofia	It's something that comes from the employer giving the.... in a response of trusting the employee and in terms of giving responsibility and autonomy and to work more by himself.
Brandi	To me that means not micromanaging and trusting in your subject matter expert. And really, that's about it. Allowing people to make decisions and take ownership of their responsibilities.
Raj	I think it is facilitating the work environment and facilitating the people in a workplace to work more efficiently and work more in an optimized way so that they bring positive results and positive impacts for the company.

Victoria	I think workplace empowerment just means giving your employees enough tools or resources to make it a better learning environment or to give themselves better opportunities to stay involved and interested in the work, how much that you actually enjoy working there. Maybe even some of it is having a degree of control, a little bit of autonomy, over some of the choices and maybe work/life balance.
Hannah	I think of accepting responsibility for risk as well, being empowered to take risks and to debate healthily as well,
Katrina	And as well as making significant changes, having the empowerment to not only have a vision and have an idea but influence change up, down, and sideways without repercussion.
Thomas	the ability to charter my own direction in terms of projects or you know what I think...the work that I think needs to be done.
Brian	I guess I would say that I would think of a flat organization. By that I mean one that orders a lot of communication across different ranks or different levels of employees.

Appendix M

Sample Comments by Generation Demonstrating Autonomy as Freedom and Control

Generation	Quotes about Autonomy: Freedom and control
Baby Boomers	<p data-bbox="440 380 1317 413">“I like to be given the "what" and then let me figure out the ‘how’.” (Linda)</p> <p data-bbox="440 447 1377 548">“Allowing somebody to work at their full capacity. Be creative to put into place ideas, to come up with those ideas, to put those ideas in place, allowing that to happen.” (Olivia)</p> <p data-bbox="440 581 1308 646">“It's kind of just, "You know what to do. Go do it." And You have to have freedom” (Bob)</p>
Generation X	<p data-bbox="440 680 1377 745">“Empowerment should be-- I feel like it should be freedom, right?” and “I think empowerment equals freedom to make choices.” (Katrina)</p> <p data-bbox="440 779 1360 844">“Being able to have that sort of freedom to do your regular work day how best suits you is very important” (Shaun)</p> <p data-bbox="440 877 1370 978">“But they at the same time give you the support by providing the resources you need and then just letting you get from point A to point B however you see fit.” (Alexis)</p> <p data-bbox="440 1012 1328 1077">“I was just given tasks and that was it. Here's what the expectation is, here's what the benchmark is, you figure out how to do it.” (Rick)</p> <p data-bbox="440 1110 1008 1144">“Having freedom is being empowered.” (Eddie)</p>
Millennials	<p data-bbox="440 1190 1382 1255">“And "Okay, here's this project. Here's some guidelines. Go do it. Ask me if you have any problems." That's what I like.” (Victoria)</p> <p data-bbox="440 1289 1377 1390">“So to the extent that you don't have personal freedom to pursue a direction of a task or of a goal on your own, I feel that it is limiting or killing the existence of empowerment.” (Brian)</p> <p data-bbox="440 1423 1325 1488">“It works better for me this when, when I know that I understand what I am supposed to do but I am free to do it they way I want to.” (Sofia)</p>

Appendix N

Sample Comments by Generation Describing Micromanagement

Generation	Quote
Baby Boomers	<p>“What it looks like to me, maybe all of the above, but what it looks like to me is where they allow you to do your job without having to be micromanaged, no matter whether you were sitting on a bench or sitting at a desk or managing large organizations.” (Greg)</p> <p>“So when the micromanagement pieces come in, then that becomes frustrating for me and to my way of thinking, my perspective, is it becomes more negative feedback so there's a lack of trust, there's a lack of confidence. Then I think that just puts a blanket on my enthusiasm and desire to do the best that I can.” (Joe)</p>
Generation X	<p>“And you don't necessarily have someone standing over your shoulder telling you how it's done,” (Alexis)</p> <p>”Just let me do my job. The way I see fit, without going back and "fixing" it.” (Rick)</p> <p>“Get out of my way. Just tell me what needs to be done and give me the expectations or the guidelines and trust that I'm going to do the job without looking over my shoulder.” (Rick)</p>
Millennials	<p>“I think the biggest thing for empowerment for me is knowing I can do what I need to and that there's not somebody checking over my back (Brandi)</p> <p>“When the project manager at that other institution, University V, micromanages us or takes away a little bit of our autonomy by making us document everything we do every hour, that kind of feels a little bit undermining of that. You're taking away the choices I can make to do good for the project.” (Victoria)</p>

Appendix O

Sample Comments by Generation Demonstrating Influence as Having Voice or Impact

Generation	Quote
VOICE: Baby Boomers 24 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“If you had a better way to do something, you didn't have to be an engineer, you could suggest-- and not in a suggestion box. They'd have meetings every morning with a flip board where they just would come up with ideas, discuss issues or brainstorm for the first 15, 20 minutes of the shift.” (Greg)</p> <p>“It means listening to what I have to say, not necessarily agreeing, but having that discussion with me when I do have an opinion. Allowing me to express my opinion even if it's different than someone else's. Listening to my suggestions.” (Jane)</p>
IMPACT: Baby Boomers 20 statements by 8/10 participants	<p>“If we close down the building tomorrow, the company would keep running for a really long time because most of us just push paper. Most of what we do has very little impact on what the company-- the light's are going to turn on whether I turn this paperwork into the commission or not, right? Because it's the guys out in the field who are keeping everything running. We just push paper.” (Jane)</p> <p>“That's empowering that you have impact, you have power. It's not power over but you have impact.” (Alissa)</p>
VOICE: Generation X 46 statements by 12/13 participants	<p>“And I asked for the opportunity to be able to interview the top three candidates who were potentially going to become my boss and therefore I could make a recommendation on behalf of myself and/or the team. And I was given that project, and it wasn't in the normal realm of the corporate experience, but it was something where I felt like I was heard, that I was given the opportunity, and the company was open to suggestions and recommendations.” (Amy)</p> <p>“Giving input. Acting on would be nice, but being able to have something listened to, what your ideas are, and then acting, if they can, on that. But for me, it's about the voice.... I work for leaders who allow my voice to be heard and give me the feedback, whether it's positive or negative. Again, it's just knowing that I'm free to be able to suggest things, talk about things, and knowing that my leaders are listening to me fully is what makes me go to work every day.” (Joyce)</p>
IMPACT: Generation X 27 statements by 10/13 participants	<p>“Impact to me is more closely related with empowerment. I can equate impact, empower-- it doesn't usually give authority, but it's a driving force if you can impact and move something, then indirectly that's power.” (Amy)</p> <p>“Partly that's empowering because you know if you find something that needs changed you're going to be able to implement that change if you can have a good idea and explain and a justification. So that's empowering,” (Dawn)</p> <p>“I feel like I contribute to the organization, I know I have an enormous responsibility as a trainer and a training officer, and I can do whatever I want. And that is empowerment so that you can have those goose bump moments when you're like, "I actually did something really cool for the organization." (Dan)</p>

VOICE: Millennials 33 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“I think the biggest thing is having a voice.” (Zach)</p> <p>“I think that by giving people a voice and the respect of listening to their suggestions or ideas, I think that that gives people empowerment, for sure.” (Erika)</p>
IMPACT: Millennials 18 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“For me it's a big deal because if I'm not making an impact, then I don't feel like I'm doing my job. So if they don't notice if I'm helping or contributing then they don't really think that I'm making much of a difference, that I'm doing a good job.” (Erika)</p> <p>“What impact will it create? If I can attach myself at that vision, like okay, this analysis will give this impact or will optimize revenue or will optimize another process, then I function in a better way.” (Raj)</p> <p>“Working on something on something you know is valuable and has a positive impact is empowering and exciting versus you saying, "Can you work on this tiny little thing compared to this big and strategic project?" or something to that effect. To me, that's energizing.” (Hannah)</p>

Appendix P

Sample Comments by Generation on Powerlessness

Generation	Quote
Baby Boomers 4 statements by 3/10 participants	“I’ve requested four or five times to take it and I’ve been denied. And I know having been denied, they just aren’t receptive to it.” (Olivia)
Generation X 19 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“Fear of the unknown or just fear of being shut down. Fear of having your idea stolen and you not getting any of the credit whatsoever, which used to be really big for me.” (Melissa)</p> <p>“Not even being open to the input of other entities within the organization and people who are, [00:13:00] especially people on the front lines who are actually doing the work and really have some great input that could be very useful, but just dismissing that because you’ve gained tunnel vision and you just have your head set on this one agenda because you think it will impress someone or look good in a newspaper, but you’re not really taking into account the intricacies of the situation.” (Alexis)</p> <p>“There’s a lot of people that you’re told no, and the buck stops there for them and they don’t move forward and they don’t feel empowered. So certainly there’s been times where I’ve been stunted.” (Dan)</p>
Millennials 12 statements by 6/10 participants	<p>“No, we’re not willing to entertain it. We’re not willing to look at it. We’re not willing to explore it. We don’t really care what you think. This is how we’re going to do it. You better get on board or you’re going to be in trouble.’ I think it’s very demotivating and discouraging, and I think if that happens so many times that it becomes a consistent pattern, you get very frustrated. You don’t really have any interest in doing great work.” (Peter)</p> <p>“What most people simply want is just the ability to feel safe sharing their ideas and doing things that they think are going to help the company be a success without being questioned and without having people shoot their ideas down.” (Brandi)</p> <p>“I pretty much got shot down every time. And so, there were times when I would just let things fall by and say, “Hey, I think there might be a better way to do that, but I know that if I bring it up it’s going to turn into a whole, you know, big issue and I’ll be here until 2 in the morning. And it will be a big problem for me.” (Thomas)</p> <p>“what most people simply want is just the ability to feel safe sharing their ideas and doing things that they think are going to help the company be a success without being questioned and without having people shoot their ideas down.” (Brandi)</p>

Appendix Q

Sample Comments by Generation about Decision-Making Power

Generation	Quote
Baby Boomers 27 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“I basically had authority basically, for the most part, to make the decisions - as long as the decisions were right and it wasn't hurtful - but I could make the decision. I was empowered without having to check with the powers that be.” (Greg)</p> <p>“In some cases a business decision would be made that that's what we're going to do, but other times I would have the authority in my job to say, "No, this is not what we do, it's not core to our business, and we're not going to do that." In that particular case, I had a specific customer that did exactly that, that they had signed up for a service that we just flat out don't even do. And so they escalated me, trying to get me to do what they wanted, and my decision was no, and rightfully so my boss and everybody above me supported that decision.” (Keith)</p> <p>“I feel empowered to figure out a solution to move them forward to completion without it having been dictated as this is the cookie-cutter solution.” (Alissa)</p>
Generation X 31 statements by 9/13 participants	<p>“That means to me that the leaders of the team value each individual, or in this case, myself, in order to make decisions based on the information that they've given us and empowered us to make decisions in the best interests of ourselves and the company and that they trust us to make those decisions.” (Amy)</p> <p>“I feel empowered when I'm given the leeway to make decisions and the support to know those decisions will be supported by management if they go right.” (Dawn)</p> <p>“Do we continue with this really, really important business initiative or do I need to wait for my boss and my colleague to come back? And I have the empowerment to make that decision, knowing that they're going to trust my judgment and trust that I'm making the right decision on behalf of the business, on behalf of the firm, on the behalf of our clients.” (Katrina)</p>
Millennials 23 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“That is the worst part ever. If you have to go through someone all the time to make a decision. That's no empowerment for me. I remember when I we had to post some things online on social media and I thought is this good enough? Is this going to be bad for the company? I had to take risks all the time and that's good. That's when you feel and when you put yourself in your manager's place and you have enough power to make decisions.” (Sofia)</p> <p>“I definitely have felt empowered by gaining the freedom, the flexibility, from my supervisor to be able to make decisions for my team and for my staff so that I could create solutions versus just sitting on them.” (Erika)</p> <p>“I think it's being able to use my knowledge and educational abilities to make decisions and to be more of the decision-maker in the organization,” (Brian)</p>

Appendix R

Sample Comments by Generation about Ownership

Baby Boomers 12 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“if you feel empowered, you're taking sole ownership and responsibility” (Kimberly)</p> <p>“What I realize is the agency that I work for now - and I never really thought this way before but I really do now - everything that I do I do well, but it belongs to the agency because I work for the agency. It's not mine.” (Olivia)</p> <p>“Well, you own it. I say that, and it does look kind of funny. What I mean by that is with empowerment comes responsibility. If you're going to have the authority to, for example, go out and procure something, then there's responsibility with that.” (Keith)</p> <p>“He just said, "Take it and run with it." So I became certainly more invested in the outcomes and the purpose. It lent more importance to me about what I was doing because it was something that I created.” (Bob)</p>
Generation X 25 statements by 8/13 participants	<p>“Because I want them to come up with the solutions, not just me. Because if they come up with the solution, they have more ownership in it, and so that helps.” (Rick)</p> <p>“I make sure that people have something that they own, [00:23:00] something that's theirs and that they are in charge of because I think they take more pride in it and strive to do a better job.” (Alexis)</p> <p>“I've done that before and I like that. I really enjoy doing that when I'm the sole person. Everything's on me. I like that a lot because then it's my fault either way if it's good or bad.” (Eddie)</p> <p>“Because once your name's on it, you own it. You're the one that signed it, so you're the one that everybody comes to with questions on it, if there's a mistake on it. It's all you.” (Dawn)</p>
Millennials 13 statements by 4/10 participants	<p>“Basically, my manager is in Atlanta and I'm pretty much autonomous. [00:01:00] I work in corporate communications and I pretty much create my own projects and own my own projects.” (Brandi)</p> <p>“From that moment on I think what happened to me is I immediately took ownership of that project. Because OK. Well if it's on me then it's on me all the way and so, you know....it was no longer just a project that I was working on. It was my project. And so I think that was a pretty important thing for me in my career for me to understand how to take ownership of a task and what you're working on.” (Thomas)</p>

Appendix S

Sample Comments by Generation on Trust

Generation	Quote
Baby Boomers 23 statements by 8/10 participants	<p>“Being trusted to use your own best judgment and experiences. (Linda)</p> <p>“It's very empowering that I am trusted to do the job that I am doing and it's very well accepted.” (Julie)</p>
Generation X 50 statements by 11/13 participants	<p>“The other part that makes the whole experience of this position empowering is the trust is there. The trust is there from my colleagues, the trust is there from the higher-ups, the trust is there from the students. There's a lot of trust going on, and I feel very entrusted with people's decisions, helping them make decisions. I feel very trusted as far as my work. Nobody double-checks my work. They just know that it's correct.” (Melissa)</p> <p>“If I'm in a given state or in a home office, they may say, "I don't know if they're there," call them on the phone, "Oh, they must not be in their office." Well, maybe they're calling their client, they're on a conference call, they're on their WebEx. And that's where the element of trust comes in. If trust isn't there, the empowerment really isn't there.” (Amy)</p> <p>“An important word, that's "trust". With trust comes empowerment. So you build your trust, and with that, more and more empowerment comes” (Joyce)</p>
Millennials 37 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“I fully trust you. I know you're capable of doing this. I want you to contact this person or whoever you feel like you need to contact to get this done." And that often means going outside of the chain of command, essentially, to get things done or get things moving.” (Peter)</p> <p>“The biggest thing would be a sense of trust. The company trusts you, they make you feel more like you're a part of it.” (Zach)</p> <p>“If I were to say the things that cause empowerment for me it would be first off autonomy and second off trust.” (Thomas)</p>

Appendix T

Sample Comments by Generation on Value

Employee Value	Quote
Baby Boomers 18 statements by 6/10 participants	<p>“I like that. I think it would be empowering. Ya, I think it goes to that support of you are valued and you count. Your opinion counts.” (Olivia)</p> <p>“And the fact that if you work there for so many years, they could've granted me what would be called grandma'd, you know, grandma'd me in. When you prove your worth, that should be something.” (Jane)</p>
Generation X 30 statements by 11/13 participants	<p>“Hey, you did a great job on that project. We really appreciate it,” that means more to me than getting a check or a certificate. Just actually hearing, “Hey, you're valued here, and we couldn't do this without you,” or “We really appreciate your hard work.” (Alexis)</p> <p>“That means to me that the leaders of the team value each individual, or in this case, myself, in order to make decisions based on the information that they've given us and empowered us to make decisions in the best interests of ourselves and the company and that they trust us to make those decisions.” (Amy)</p> <p>“I don't feel like they treated employees very ethically. So if there was a need of a person, that was way down on the list. When you know as a person you're not valued and respected, there's no power in what you're doing because you know that you don't matter. Whereas when you matter more, it gives you more power and more desire.” (Dawn)</p>
Millennials 34 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“I'd definitely say for me empowerment, now kind of looking back on it, is kind of a sense of value and self-worth, I would say are probably the biggest things.” (Zach)</p> <p>“If I'm a manager the only way I'm going to give empower, I'm going to empower an employee is if I value them, if I believe in them, if I trust them. So yes, I think they are very connected.” (Sofia)</p> <p>“Of course. Yes. Everybody wants to feel needed and valued. Again, if I'm not needed, I just feel like, well, why am I here?” (Erika)</p> <p>“If there is training available and someone sends you to that training, that again sends that same message about, “Here's your laptop. Here's your phone. Oh and we're sending you to training.” And you're like, “Oh. They're investing in me.” You know, I'm more important to them than the 10 widgets I get to crank out that day.” (Thomas)</p>

Appendix U

Sample Comments by Generation about Organizational Cultural Influence -
Open Communication

Open Communication	Quote
Baby Boomers 32 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“Because if there's open dialogue and open communication then when I have a brilliant idea and I come to my manager or to somebody and say, "I've got this brilliant idea," we can talk about it and they can tell me, "Yeah, it's brilliant," or "It's got these flaws. Go back and work on it." That would be really empowering.” (Jane)</p> <p>“You have to know that people you're dealing with are going to be truthful and they're going to deal with you in an open and honest fashion.” (Greg)</p>
Generation X 62 statements by 12/13 participants	<p>“It's just an open communication and a genuine interest in growing the idea or the business or both. And without fear. I guess that's what open communication means to me is communication without any fear.” (Melissa)</p> <p>““At the firehouse we have a table. Everybody from the firefighter to the captain has a place at the table where they can talk and we can work things out and we can all weigh in on how we do things and maybe make them better.” (Dan)</p> <p>“And I think that the relationships that you have with people, the open communication, not being judgmental to any idea, not being judgmental or punitive if somebody takes a risk or does something because you say you're empowered and then all of a sudden it's like, "Oh, well you're not empowered to do that." So I really think it's how we communicate, how we build relationships, how we reinforce, or even how we give constructive feedback to somebody that's made a decision is really important “ (Katrina)</p>
Millennials 48 statements by 10/10 participants	<p>“I very much view empowerment as soft resources. And in that respect, I'd need time, communication, understanding, somebody that's willing to listen and not just want to convey their thoughts and not really care what you say. So you have to have mutual respect, open dialogue.” (Peter)</p> <p>“if I am working with my manager, I want to work closely with this person and have an open communication with this person.” (Sofia)</p> <p>“My first supervisor that was in the research coordinator role, she had a little bit more mentorship and she would come and talk to employees individually and see how we were doing and just have personal conversations with us a little bit to kind of bond a little bit. That was nice and I knew I could go to her with any questions that were outside the scope of our protocol and learn from that.” (Victoria)</p>

Appendix V

Sample Quotes by Generation on Organizational Culture Influence - Safety and Fear

Safety	Quote
Baby Boomers 25 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>"This didn't work so well, so how do I make it a little better?" and that stuff, it was easier to feel that I could make mistakes and then learn from them and go forth without taking a bunch of heat for it." (Bob)</p> <p>"I don't think anybody feels safe anymore. You see people who were directors that are now sitting in cubes. People just disappear. It's unsettling." (Jane)</p> <p>"But it was probably the last real top-down place that I'd ever been, and really, you came up with any type of new ideas you were penalized for it. It was a place where people just went to their meetings, gave upper management what they wanted to hear, and just went about their day-to-day jobs. It was a pretty stilted place to work. It wasn't a very pleasant place to work. There was a lot of retribution in the place. Empowerment, I think, wasn't even thought of in there." (Greg)</p>
Generation X 33 statements by 11/13 participants	<p>"And if it's not correct and something comes up, it's not this big deal. We all make mistakes. There's no finger pointing, there's no belittling, there's none of that. It's just fix it and move forward if there is something that comes up. And I find that very empowering." (Melissa)</p> <p>"If people are constantly worried about their job security or that they're going to be disciplined for lack of performance or making errors, then they're less apt to ask someone to help them or empower them because they're afraid that it's all going to fall on their shoulders." (Dan)</p> <p>"Not knowing the unknown. Are there going to be repercussions later? Would I –will they find something for to fire me? Would I be a trouble-maker. It's very unfair that whatever I said will count against me and that is what will hold me back." (Margherita)</p>
Millennials 7 statements by 6/10 participants	<p>"if people make mistakes we don't crucify people. And for me it's empowering and comforting to know that I can screw up and that I'm not going to lose my job over it if I do something that maybe my boss wouldn't agree with. So I think celebrating failure is something we do well." (Hannah)</p> <p>"What most people simply want is just the ability to feel safe sharing their ideas and doing things that they think are going to help the company be a success without being questioned and without having people shoot their ideas down." (Brandi)</p> <p>"Any time I try to initiate change it's always, "You know, a lot of people are looking for a job right now, so you kind of have to do what we say." (Zach)</p>

Appendix W

Comments by Generation on Organizational Culture Influence - Flexibility

Flexibility	Quote
Baby Boomers 21 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“Flexibility, if you don't have to be there at 8:00 every day or you can work from home, that's empowering, I would say. Flexibility like that.” (Greg)</p> <p>“And having balance between personal and professional life, which is important.” (Kimberly)</p> <p>“It was work/life balance. In my life back in those days with Strategic Outsourcing was a 24/7 position. I carried a pager before a cellphone and my cellphone after when cellphones were common, and that was connected to my hip literally. No matter what I was doing, I'd be at a baseball game on a day off or on a cruise to Alaska, and the next thing you know, as soon as I boarded, I was on the phone dealing with stuff. And I decided that moving up to management, that was only going to get worse. I decided, with [daughter] being the new baby and all that stuff, that I wanted to spend more time at home and less time on the phone or at work. I don't mind traveling, but when I'm home, I'm home.” (Keith)</p>
Generation X 41 statements by 10/13 participants	<p>“It's pretty much everyone wants a flexible work schedule or work from home opportunity.” (Rick)</p> <p>I remember one company I worked for saying we were taking too much time microwaving our food at lunch and that we needed to hurry up and get back to our desks within a certain amount of time. It's like, are you kidding me? I can't necessarily just pick it up right away. It's hot. What do you want me to do? Burn myself?” (Kristin)</p> <p>“Well, I worked through my lunch and I stayed till 6:00 and you're going to beat me up because I was here at 8:10 and not at 8:00? It was like that. And so it was very difficult” (Melissa)</p>
Millennials 29 statements by 6/10 participants	<p>“I feel empowered when the company understands that I have a life and let's me take time during the day to go and do things that I need to do, because no matter what, I'm always going to be on top of my working now, I'm always going to get my job done. I just need the company to respect my time.” (Brandi)</p> <p>“Someone who was my peer was promoted, and she kind of took a back seat to what I was doing and she trusted me, she let me set my own hours completely. So basically I was able to come and go as I needed in order to allow for school and other things going on in my life. And that made me feel pretty comfortable and like I was trusted in workplace, trusted enough to set my own hours and clock them accordingly.” (Victoria)</p> <p>“I've worked for Heath Company and the trust wasn't there. It was a butts in seats kind of situation. You're there from 8 to 5 or think you weren't working at all.” (Thomas)</p>

Flexibility Types by Generation

Type	Number of participants & statements	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Flexibility (total)	91 statements by 23/33 participants	21 statements by 7/10 participants	41 statements by 10/13 participants	29 statements by 6/10 participants
Flexible schedule, hours	60 statements by 21/33 participants	15 statements by 7/10 participants	26 statements by 8/13 participants	19 statements by 6/10 participants
Work from home	16 statements by 10/33 participants	2 statements by 2/10 participants	10 statements by 6/13 participants	4 statements by 2/10 participants
Work-life balance	15 statements by 10/33 participants	4 statements by 3/10 participants	5 statements by 3/13 participants	6 statements by 4/10 participants

Appendix X

Sample Comments by Generation of Availability of Information

Organization Information	Quote
Baby Boomers 17 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“Excuse me, I made that involuntary gasp because what I've found is they don't have any written strategic goals for the organization. Isn't that weird?... I've always aligned my work with the organizational goals, but nobody knows what they are... how empowered are you if you don't know that what you're doing is contributing to the greater good? It's kind of... Yeah, it's weird.” (Linda)</p> <p>“You've got to have a road map. You've got to know what those expectations are. You have to not only know them but be able to buy into them and model them to the rest of the organization.” (Bob)</p> <p>“Without that, then you'd be operating in a vacuum and you're not going to be very effective unless you're lucky. So you definitely need that, even if it's not an empowering organization. You just need that to know where you're going and what the goals are, what the plan is, what the strategy is, what the cultural fits are, those things. Yeah, you definitely need to know that.” (Greg)</p>
Generation X 14 statements by 9/13 participants	<p>“I think that is important because I think everyone needs to align their goals with the organization's overall goals. And if you have these different agendas and people doing their own thing, that's really weakening the organization overall because you're not working toward a common goal.” (Alexis)</p> <p>“I feel valued and I feel trusted, but I don't feel like it's empowering because I feel like if they want me to contribute to something bigger and better and wider and our team's out working towards that goal, they're going to get more from me, but I don't think that that's the company giving me more power or empowering me. I think that it's just the right decision. If they want to achieve their goals, it's better to have everybody on board with what the vision and what the goal is and to share the progress towards the goal. And if they don't, that's a shortcoming of the company. I don't feel it's empowering, I feel like it's a necessity.” (Amy)</p> <p>“You've got to be transparent. You've got to let people know what's going on in the organization and where they fit and be part of the process. Master plans, core values, mission statements, they've got to be part of all that. And then you've got to let them know, "Hey, we're missing the mark on this," or "We're doing really well on this," or "We're being scrutinized for that." (Dan)</p>
Millennials 10 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“How could you even be that good at serving the company if you don't understand the company?” (Brandi)</p> <p>“I think transparency to a reasonable extent within an organization is empowering. I think that most good organizations that I've worked for that had a common goal are pretty transparent and provide a lot of information to their employees. And everything within moderation, but definitely keeping employees in the loop.” (Brian)</p> <p>“When you start in a company you learn all that. You learn what the customers know, what is there I mission, what is their vision. But I want to know at what point are they at. I would constantly ask at my last job, what is happening now, what is going on so that I could work with the marketing department to in a way that would help the company it would need more sales in this department or of this specific product so I need to know what is going on so my work can make sense.” (Sofia)</p>

Appendix Y

Sample Comments by Generation about Opportunities for Personal and Professional Growth

Learning and Growth	Quote
Baby Boomers 32 statements by 9/10 participants	<p>“Being a life-long learner played a pretty significant role in that. Every day when I go to work, when I went to work, every day I have to learn something new. It may not be a huge moment of having an epiphany, it could be very, very small, but it's important for me to learn something new every day.” (Baby Boomer Bob)</p>
Generation X 31 statements by 11/13 participants	<p>“Yeah, you have to grow. You have to have the opportunity to grow. I've been in places where if you don't pay for it, you're not going to get it. It's kind of how it goes. And it really detracts from people's engagement but also how much they feel like their job is worth it.” (Gen Xer Rick)</p> <p>“It does, but when you're somebody who constantly wants to improve their skills, then you just want to go further. It's like feeding the fuel, I guess. I feel like I have to move on, do something different, or I'll get bored.” (Gen Xer Kristin)</p>
Millennials 76 statements by 10/10 participants	<p>“We talked about that, we didn't talk about empowerment, but I talked about the possibility of growing, of doing more than they said in the job offer because I need, I want experience. I think my generation we want as much experience as we can get.” (Millennial Sofia)</p> <p>“When you cannot learn you cannot get satisfied, and then you don't feel empowered” (Millennial Raj)</p> <p>“Personally that's very important. And I think that might be the stage of my career that I'm in. I call it the sponge stage where I just want to learn everything anyone has to teach me about anything. And so, you know, that's pretty broad, but that's, you know, pretty exciting to me when I come home at the end of the day and I now know something that I didn't know. That is really fun for me.” (Millennial Thomas)</p>

Appendix Z

Sample Comments by Generation on Opportunities for New Challenges

Challenging Opportunities	Quote
Baby Boomers 2 statements by 2/10 participants	“I like new stuff. Whenever I've done program development and I get it up and running. And then I might have to do the case-management stuff..borringgg. So, give me a new project. Give me something new to do. That's what I want.” (Baby Boomer Olivia)
Generation X 13 statements by 6/13 participants	<p>“So just that ability to kind of work outside of your original framework is empowering me.” (Gen Xer Dan)</p> <p>“I think if you're not challenged, then how are you going to grow? Yeah, I think challenge is a must because if you're in a position where you're not challenged, and some people do, then you're not going to grow or you're just probably going to be stagnant, I guess.” (Gen Xer Shaun)</p> <p>“I love a challenge, and for me being given the opportunity, like you said, the opportunity to do something that's challenging, the opportunity to do something that maybe isn't in your area of responsibility, that's what I would find empowering. When it's not a normal part of the expected responsibility and it becomes something additional or that you're granted the opportunity to do something, then I find that that is empowering because it's growing and it's exceeding the expectation or the responsibility.” (Gen Xer Amy)</p>
Millennials 13 statements by 7/10 participants	<p>“Yes, that is very important to me. If there is no challenge, there is no excitement. When I see this internship it's going to be challenging for me, but that's good because it means that I'm going to grow.” (Millennial Sofia)</p> <p>“I'm in a certain circumstance for a reason and there's a lesson. I think that I stuck it out to try to figure out and challenge myself in different ways I had never been challenged before. That's why I still feel like, did I learn, did I grow from that?” (Millennial Erika)</p> <p>“So if my challenge is on, let's say, executing a task or you have to complete data analysis for a particular project, and if the data analysis is really challenging, then you feel a little bit out of your comfort. Then actually you push yourself further and you really learn a lot. So when challenges are facilitating my learning, then obviously yes.” (Millennial Raj)</p>