

Transnational Construction of Generation Y: A Scientifically Contested Concept Shaped by Consultants

A Dissertation

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to the Department of Political and Social Sciences

at Freie Universität Berlin

by

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Berlin 2023

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Date of defence: 10.07.2024

I hereby confirm that I have written this dissertation independently and without unauthorised assistance. I have indicated all sources. The dissertation has not been accepted or rejected in any previous doctoral examination.

In memory of my father and Mehmet Fatih Traş.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the construction and instrumentalisation of Generation Y as a discourse in the US and its translation to Turkey, guided by the inquiry to understand the enduring emphasis and popularity of generational thinking, despite the lack of empirical evidence and its theoretical shortcomings.

The analysis examines, in sequential order, influential actors shaping the Gen Y discourse in the US, uncovering implicit and explicit claims associated with it. The focus then shifts to Turkey, where the discourse gained prominence during the Gezi Park Protests, exploring local influencers and delving into the evolution and translation of Generation Y discourse within this unique context. The investigation extends to companies in Turkey, examining how employees and companies relate to and instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse in their management practices.

To address these inquiries, the dissertation adopts a constructivist approach, combining thematic analysis of texts on Gen Y from mainstream newspapers, popular business magazines, consultancy and research reports, and bestselling books in Turkish and English, with the in-depth interviews conducted with white-collar workers in Turkey.

The dissertation highlights the role of management and consultancy practitioners in constructing and disseminating the Generation Y discourse, suggesting that they employ strategies similar to those used for popular management fads and fashions, including the use of an ambiguous and polysemous language. The analysis reveals that, despite theoretical controversies, Generation Y is portrayed as a scientific concept based on birth cohorts while simultaneously drawing strategically on historical connotations of generational identity, aligning itself with alternative understandings of generations (such as kinship structures and youth as a driving force in shaping history). This research suggests that the Gen Y discourse is deeply embedded in the idea of a “new” era marked by digitalisation and widespread internet use. In this context, "generational conflicts" and "becoming outdated" are presented as a single problem, forming a central message within the discourse. Consequently, Gen Y discourse extends beyond addressing generational conflicts or explaining youth movements; it is presented as a panacea offering solutions to all current and foreseeable future problems.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is the culmination of a long journey that began at Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Üniversitesi and concluded at Freie Universität Berlin. I am therefore profoundly indebted to a significant number of individuals whose contributions enabled this journey. First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my advisor, Martin Krzywdzinski for his insightful guidance and unwavering support throughout this journey. His expertise and insightful suggestions played a pivotal role in the development of this dissertation. I am also thankful to Katharina Bluhm for her valuable and insightful feedback as my second examiner. Furthermore, this research received generous funding from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and was conducted during my tenure as a guest researcher in the "Globalization, Work and Production" unit at the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB). I deeply appreciate the funding and facilities provided by these organisations, which were instrumental in facilitating this research.

I also extend my gratitude to my former advisor, Yıldırım Şentürk, for his support and assistance, particularly at the outset of this journey but also consistently throughout. Special thanks are due to Sezgin Polat, whose expertise illuminated the statistical dimensions of debates surrounding generations. I am also indebted to Fügen Toksöz, who meticulously revised numerous drafts and consistently stood by me, especially during moments when I lost momentum to continue. Their contributions significantly enriched this dissertation. I would also like to express my thanks to Cem Özatalay, Şerif Derince, Sinan Birdal, Begüm Ö. Fırat and Serkan Başak for providing valuable advice and insightful feedback. I also want to thank my research participants who graciously accepted lengthy interviews and responded to my numerous questions with patience and sincerity despite their heavy workloads. This dissertation would not have been possible without them.

In acknowledging contributions that profoundly shaped my dissertation, it would be remiss not to extend my sincere thanks to individuals who played pivotal roles in my intellectual development. I am particularly grateful to M. Salim Şirin, Nilgün Toker Kılınç, Zerrin Kurtoğlu, Emmanuel Barot, and H. Neşe Özgen for their guidance and encouragement throughout my intellectual and academic journey. Leaving an academic position, relocating to another country, and embarking on a PhD program filled with uncertainties was and continues to be no easy feat. However, I consider myself fortunate to have had the unwavering support of many individuals who are making this transition smoother. A heartfelt thank you to all my friends and family who have been with me. I am particularly thankful to Theresa Martens, Yella, Vega, Laura Zimmerman, Simon Wieland, Barbara Schlüter, Anna Hewelt, Şahap Erслан, and Egemen Kepekçi for their emotional support and friendship.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| ABSTRACT | 1 |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | 2 |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 3 |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | 4 |
| LIST OF FIGURES | 5 |
| LIST OF TABLES | 6 |
| CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION..... | 7 |
| I.A. Theoretical Background and Aim of the Research..... | 11 |
| I.B. Research Questions..... | 14 |
| I.C. Research Methods | 15 |
| I.D. Significance of the Study..... | 16 |
| I.E. Outlook of the Chapters | 17 |
| CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND | 20 |
| II.A. Literature Review: What is Generation?..... | 20 |
| II.B. Theoretical Background: Constructing Generations | 45 |
| CHAPTER III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS | 67 |
| III.A. Clarifications on Methodological Integrity..... | 69 |
| III.B. Research Design and Research Questions | 73 |
| III.C. Research Methods | 75 |
| CHAPTER IV. ORIGINS AND DECONSTRUCTION OF THE GEN Y DISCOURSE | 93 |
| IV.A. Introduction: Gen Y Discourse..... | 93 |
| IV.B. Protagonists in the Gen Y Discourse | 95 |
| IV.C. Naming a Generation..... | 104 |
| IV.D. Defining Generational Cut-off Points and Major Distinctive Features | 108 |
| IV.E. From Description to Prescription: Generational Traits and Management Concepts | 116 |
| IV.F. Conclusion | 131 |
| CHAPTER V. THE GEN Y DISCOURSE IN TURKEY..... | 136 |
| V.A. Introduction: Translation of the Discourse from the US to Turkey | 136 |
| V.B. Main Actors in the Gen Y Discourse in Turkey | 137 |
| V.C. The Evolution and Popularity of the Term Gen Y in Turkey..... | 144 |
| V.D. Translation of the Gen Y Discourse to the Turkish Context..... | 157 |
| V.E. Conclusion..... | 170 |
| CHAPTER VI. GENERATION Y AT WORK: THE CASE OF TURKEY | 173 |
| VI.A. Introduction: Translation of a Discourse to Work-related Practices | 173 |
| VI.B. How Do Employees Relate to the Gen Y discourse? | 176 |
| VI.C. Translation of the Gen Y Discourse to Management Practices..... | 185 |
| VI.D. Conclusion | 216 |
| CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION: REASSEMBLING GENERATION Y | 222 |
| VII.A. Theoretical Framework and Research Overview | 223 |
| VII.B. Findings..... | 231 |
| VII.C. Discussions..... | 236 |
| VII.D. Reflection on Research Process..... | 248 |
| APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE..... | 256 |
| APPENDIX B. IDENTIFYING BESTSELLING BOOKS ON GEN Y | 258 |
| APPENDIX C. INTERVIEWEE DEMOGRAPHICS, COMPANY INFO SHEET, AND DATA LISTS..... | 261 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 283 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| AKP | Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) |
| ANT | Actor-Network Theory |
| BPR | Business process reengineering |
| Lean | Lean management |
| MNC | Multinational corporation |
| MT | Management trainee |
| OPP | Obligatory passage point |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. |
| QM | Quality management |
| TA | Thematic analysis |
| TQM | Total quality management |
| TUIK | Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (Turkish Institute of Statistics) |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States of America |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure III.1. Major qualities implied in the Gen Y discourse | 91 |
| Figure IV.1. Google search queries on "Digital Native", "Generation Y", "Millennials" and "Generation Me" | 104 |
| Figure IV.2. Google search queries on "Generation Y" and "Millennials" in US | 106 |
| Figure IV.3. Subscribers to "Millennials" and "Generation Y" groups on reddit | 107 |
| Figure IV.4. Chronology of the naming of the generation born around 1980 | 108 |
| Figure IV.5. Major qualities implied in the Gen Y discourse | 120 |
| Figure V.1. Opinion columns on Gen Y over years in <i>the Hürriyet</i> | 140 |
| Figure V.2. Google search queries on "Generation Y" in Turkey (2004-2019) | 145 |
| Figure V.3. Number of articles which include "Generation Y" in <i>the Hürriyet</i> over time | 146 |
| Figure V.4. Google search queries on "Generation Y" in Turkey and in the US (2004-2019) | 146 |
| Figure V.5. Google search queries on "Generation Y" in Turkey (June 2013) | 147 |
| Figure V.6. Number of MA and PhD theses on Generation Y in Turkey over time | 147 |
| Figure V.7. Number of academic articles on Generation Y on Dergipark over time | 147 |
| Figure V.8. Number of Articles on Gen Y in three business magazines over time | 148 |
| Figure V.9. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions in <i>the Hürriyet</i> | 149 |
| Figure V.10. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on Mediacat.com.tr | 149 |
| Figure V.11. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on Capital.com.tr | 150 |
| Figure V.12. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on Dergipark | 150 |
| Figure V.13. Percentage of MA and PhD theses in Turkey based on 3 dimensions | 151 |
| Figure V.14. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y in <i>the Hürriyet</i> | 153 |
| Figure V.15. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Dergipark | 154 |
| Figure V.16. Evolution of theses written in Turkey with different dimensions of Gen Y | 155 |
| Figure V.17. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Mediacat.com.tr | 155 |
| Figure V.18. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Capital.com.tr | 156 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table II-1. Two conceptualisations of generation | 50 |
| Table II-2. The major terms of management fashion literature | 53 |
| Table II-3. Major actors involved in the management fashion arena | 57 |
| Table II-4. Conceptualisation of generation and related research designs | 64 |
| Table III-1. Research aim(s) and design | 68 |
| Table III-2. Ten core assumptions of reflexive TA | 72 |
| Table III-3. Data analysed for Chapter IV | 77 |
| Table III-4. Coded management concepts and practices | 81 |
| Table III-5. Revisited version of codes on Gen Y traits | 88 |
| Table III-6. Generational traits in the Gen Y discourse | 89 |
| Table III-7. Generational traits classified as rebellious (progressive) and spoiled | 91 |
| Table IV-1. Actors and their mediums contributing to the Gen Y discourse | 96 |
| Table IV-2. Generation expert information sheet | 100 |
| Table IV-3. Information sheet of multinational research and consultancy companies | 101 |
| Table IV-4. Generational cut-off points and labels for the generation born around 1980 | 109 |
| Table IV-5. Main distinctive features referred to by major actors | 116 |
| Table IV-6. Generational traits in the Gen Y discourse | 117 |
| Table IV-7. Generational traits classified as rebellious (progressive) and spoiled | 119 |
| Table IV-9. Archetypes in history | 121 |
| Table IV-10. Traits attributed to Gen Y (Millennials) more than one time | 122 |
| Table IV-11. Generational traits which are common in Twenge and Howe & Strauss | 126 |
| Table IV-12. Gen Y narrative flow as an employee | 134 |
| Table V-1. Books on generations published in Turkey information sheet | 139 |
| Table V-2. Number of times main actors are mentioned in articles on Gen Y | 141 |
| Table V-3. Actors and their mediums that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey | 144 |
| Table V-4. References to different types of Gen Y traits in the media | 151 |
| Table V-5. Generational cut-off points in articles on Gen Y | 161 |
| Table V-6. Number of Gen Y articles which refer to the distinctive features at least once | 162 |
| Table V-7. Traits of Gen Y as described by Evrim Kuran | 163 |
| Table V-8. Number of Gen Y articles in Turkish which refer to the traits at least once | 164 |
| Table V-9. Number of articles that refer at least once to one of the management concepts | 168 |
| Table VI-1. Main dualities within the Gen Y discourse in work context | 180 |
| Table VI-2. Views of interviewees on generational theories, Gen Y, and their self-identification | 182 |
| Table VI-3. Gen Y traits most frequently mentioned by interviewees | 184 |
| Table VI-4. Assumptions and reasoning behind the major claims of the Gen Y discourse | 201 |

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, some people have been persistently trying to drive a wedge between us and our youth by labelling generations with letters. They think they are carrying out an operation through some badly edited images, street interviews, and media reports.

President and AK Party Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Anadolu Ajansi 2023)

Generations with letters, the hallmark of marketing, which make you look cool and up to date when you use them, are not divisions with social reality. They exist because the market can sell neither products nor ideas unless it divides and groups us. Today, lettered generations, which have come into widespread use and on which even books have been written, are the consumption groups of cosmopolitan America. (Yazıcıoğlu 2020)

1. Pew's "generations" cause confusion.
2. The division between "generations" is arbitrary and has no scientific basis.
3. Naming "generation" and fixing their birth dates promotes pseudoscience, undermines public understanding and impedes social science research.
4. The popular "generations" and their labels undermine important cohort and life course research.
5. The "generations" are widely misunderstood to be "official" categories and identities.
6. The "generations" scheme has become a parody and should end. (Cohen 2021b)

The first quotation is from the President of Turkey, who is known as conservative and right wing. The second is from an article written by an academic in a Turkish monthly socialist culture magazine called *Birikim*. The last is from an open letter written by Philip N. Cohen, an American sociology professor, for Pew research and signed by more than 150 academics and experts.

They all reject the popular generational labels, but for different reasons. The first claims that it is part of a plot against him and his party. The second claims that it is a division created by marketers to gain an understanding of consumers, and the third claims that it is a pseudoscience which discredits "real" social science.

They also reject generational labels because of different interests. The first rejects them to put an end to the "propaganda" that young generations do not support him. The second rejects them to support her claim that the political vision she defends captures social reality better than other visions, and the third rejects them to prove that his view of social science is better or more real than that represented by Pew's generational labels.

Yet they all fall within the scope of one claim: Generational labels do not accurately represent reality.

The same happens on the other side of the discourse. People with different interests promote and use these generational labels. It has become common to hear explanations based on these labels or to see cover stories in newspapers and business magazines, politicians referring to generation labels, research and consultancy reports featuring them, catchphrases like “ok boomer”, and books which tells us how to sell things to them and work with them. These labels are used for different reasons and motivations. A generational label can be an identity, a representation of an age group, a synonym for “young adults”, a consultancy product to sell, a great way to start small talk, but also a way to criticize strict managers and a way to get organised among young and new employees within a company.

The history of popular generational labels is hard to track down. First, it is not well documented and there are a large number of articles, books, and talks about generations. Second, different labels and different age intervals attributed to generations intertwine. The origins of generational labels and the attributed birth years to these labels illustrate some of these difficulties. The silent generation is known as the birth cohort that came before the baby boomers. People born between 1928 and 1945 are considered members of this generation (Pew Research Center 2014). But the term "silent generation" was coined in 1951 in a *Time* magazine article to designate persons aged eighteen to twenty-eight, or those who entered the workforce mostly in 1940, which means that the silent generation was born between 1923 and 1933. The label was transferred to later periods, and it is now used for those born between 1928 and 1945.

Baby Boomers are known as the generation that followed the silent generation and preceded Generation X. This generation is frequently defined as those born between 1946 and 1964 during the mid-20th century baby boom (Heery And Noon 2017). They are often associated with 1960s counterculture, civil and women's rights movements, and the sexual revolution (Bristow 2016b, 107). The term "baby boomer" was first used in a January 1963 Daily Press story by Leslie J. Nason, who described a large rise in college enrolments when the oldest boomers reached adulthood. But according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the present meaning of the term is derived from a story in the Washington Post from January 23, 1970 (Oxford English Dictionary 2023).

There are also changes and confusions when the term moves from one country to another. For Jack (2011), a columnist in *The Guardian*, the “baby boomer generation” is a term taken from America and incorrectly applied to the post-war pattern of British birth rates. Not until 1975 were as few babies born as in 1945; between 1956 and 1966, more babies were born in Britain than during the boomer decade of 1945 to 1955 (Bristow 2015, 8).

When the label “Generation X” was first coined by Charles Hamblett and Jane Deverson in their 1964 book *Generation X*, it was actually used to designate baby boomers (Asthana and Thorpe 2005; Bristow 2015). Only after 1991 did the term designate people born between 1965 and 1980, popularised by Douglas Coupland in his novel “Generation X”.

The label “Generation Y”, the focus of this dissertation, was first coined by the editor of Advertising Age in 1993 in the US and described as a new type of consumer. The Generation born around 1980 became associated worldwide with this term. Actually, two years before that, in 1991, Howe and Strauss had named this generation as “Millennials”. But the “Millennials” term only became more popular than Gen Y in the US after 2013.¹ As well as Gen Y and Millennials, there are other labels to designate the same people (born around 1980), such as Gen Me (Twenge 2014), Net Generation (Tapscott 2008), and Digital Natives (Prensky 2001; Palfrey and Gasser 2008). There was a similar diversity in defining the cut-off points of Gen Y until the seminal Pew Research defined the exact dates for Millennials/Generation Y (see Dimock 2018).

Before the Gen Y label became popular in Turkey, there were a few other generational labels such as “Özal generation”² and “children of September 12”³. These labels provide a wider perspective on the generation’s political and economic attitudes than just their consumption practices and/or employee behaviours. They are mostly portrayed as a generation who grew up with capitalist consumerist values due to political developments in Turkey, and are consequently seen as “apolitical”, “selfish”, or “money-grabbers” (Lüküslü 2009, 133; Bali 2002, 349–52).

The history of popular generational labels is not exceptionally long, and the definitions and labels of these generations change over time. While other labels (such as Baby Boomers) had been coined before Gen Y, Gen Y and Millennials are the most popular generational labels worldwide, and most other popular labels designating previous generations (such as Baby Boomers and Generation X) became popular within the same period (see, e.g., Bristow 2016a, 578; Kitch 2003, 193).

All of the popular generational labels are mainly defined as a birth cohort and characterised mostly as a type of consumer and/or employee (and sometimes as a political subject), and they are almost always portrayed from outside; self-identification and/or appearance as a historical agency are missing.

¹ I use and mostly focus on Generation Y instead of Millennials; in Turkey and in Germany, the label Millennials did not become very popular, and Millennials tend to reject the notion that it is a generation.

² Turgut Özal was the 19th Prime Minister of Turkey from 1983 to 1989, after the 12 September 1980 coup d’état in Turkey. He is known as the major figure in the neoliberal transformation of Turkey.

³ 12 September refers to the 1980 Turkish coup d’état when political activities and freedoms were curtailed by force.

In this context, popular generational labels can be seen as products formed in an arena in which different actors with different interests try to impose their programs (of action⁴). These programs can attempt to impose common assumptions and keep them on the agenda as well as their definitions and representations of the generations. But there are also antiprograms (of action) which question or reject the validity of generational labels, as illustrated by the opening quotes. This arena, composed of struggles and alliances to make Generation Y a valid and useful concept in others' eyes, is the main subject of this dissertation.

Although the definitions of "Generation Y" are ambiguous and inconsistent, some qualities particularly stand out. Almost all sources agree that this generation is the savviest in the use of technology, and new communication technologies are an indispensable element of their professional and private life. They are distinguished from preceding generations by being "the first generation having grown up in a continuous technological innovation" (Dejoux and Wechtler 2011, 229). With effective use of the Internet, reduced travel times, and frequent use of airplanes, everything is more accessible to and for them (M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008). It is also claimed that this generation is "impatient", "hasty", but also "go-getter" and "fast". Other commonly stated characteristics are "self-confident", "assertive", and "entitled" (Twenge 2014, 11), as a result of the parenting style and advertising that constantly tell them they are "special" (M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008, 21–22). On the other hand, this generation is deemed to be the highest educated generation in history, and therefore is more "open-minded" with "strong social and ecological sensibilities" (Tulgan 2009, 7–11) or "civic-minded" (Howe and Strauss 2000, 46). It is claimed that these characteristics are almost universal qualities of a generation by relying on the biased conception of globalisation; in a globalised world, generations become more similar than they were in past times.

This generation was first described as a new type of consumer in marketing and advertising literature. As they began to join the corporate workforce, the concept became a topic for human resources and management. Depending on the social context of the country, such as with the example of Turkey and Gezi protests, we can also see the "activist" or "political" qualities of this generation being accentuated. Generally, though, Generation Y is discussed as a matter of management at work.

According to popular management literature, Generation Y is different from previous generations and companies should adapt jobs and work environments accordingly (Pouget 2010; Erickson 2008; Türk 2013a; Alsop 2008b; Tulgan 2009; M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008). In this way, the literature

⁴ Programs of action embody the objectives pursued by the actors engaged in shaping the phenomenon of Generation Y, whereas antiprograms of action encapsulate the contrasting objectives of other relevant actors. The differentiation between programs and antiprograms is contingent upon the specific perspective of the observer (Akrich and Latour 1992, 261; see also Latour 1999, 309).

on Gen Y promotes and legitimises management policies and practices in companies (such as coaching, mentoring, flexible work arrangements, and team building activities).

However, there are issues with attributing traits to an age group by itself. The traits attributed to Gen Y (such as “impatient” or “open minded”) are imprecise and general, and the causal explanations offered for these traits are overly broad and oversimplified. Even scholars who work with quantitative data and use age groups as a major principle of classification to explain social change are critical of generational labels and the popular and academic hype around them (Rudolph et al. 2020a; 2020b; Cohen 2021a).

Despite these criticisms, the concept of generation is often and increasingly used to narrate social and political life (White 2013, 216). Generational discourses are currently “prolific” and “widespread” in public and political realms (Ferreira 2018, 136). Large companies order research about generations from research companies and hire consultants to teach their managers how to deal with them.⁵ Scholars continue to publish research about generations. These trends suggest that the concept of Generation Y still seems useful, current, and profitable.

This last observation is the starting point of this research: how can we make sense of the continued emphasis and popularity of generation labels and generational thinking despite the lack of evidence and theoretical foundation?

I.A. Theoretical Background and Aim of the Research

Before setting out the central objectives of my research, there are a few theoretical points to be underlined. Studies on social generations can be grouped into three distinct streams of research based on their conceptualisation of generation.

The first and most common stream, especially for those that use popular labels such as “Gen Y” and “Baby Boomers”, is the cohort-informed view. It relies on a classification principle based on birth years and accordingly makes use of mainly quantitative methods.

The second stream of research focuses on the historical or political role of generations and generational consciousness. In this stream of research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used, depending on the research subject and questions.

⁵ According to Duffy (2021), in 2015 American businesses spent more than seventy million dollars on generational counselling.

The third stream is the constructivist conceptualisation of generation. In this view, generation is seen as a matter of representation, and accordingly the representations of generations become the main object of study. In line with this view, I conceptualise generations and Generation Y as a social construct. This requires a significant change in the research design. Rather than asking “what is a generation?” or “who is Gen Y?” I ask how people define and describe Generation Y and how they legitimise generational labels as useful classifications.

This dissertation is not about Generation Y as a distinct group of people born between the years 1980-97, but rather the idea of Gen Y as a (social) construct or as a discourse. Therefore, this research does not share the implicit and explicit assumptions of popular theories of generations and the discourse on Gen Y in particular. In accordance with this constructivist approach, I avoid developing my own definition of what Gen Y is (until the very end of the dissertation). Instead, I examine by whom and how Gen Y is defined, described, and legitimised.

This also means that the theoretical weaknesses and the lack of empirical evidence underpinning generational categories and Gen Y are no longer of primary importance. What is important is how different actors from different fields (with different understandings of accurate, correct, and valid) with different interests manage to construct a common discourse, keep it current, legitimise it for others, and profit from it themselves. What is important is a) to identify the actors who produce the discourse and b) to examine how and what these actors do to produce and legitimise this discourse in the eyes of others.

The major advantage of this conceptualisation is that examining the different representations and the struggles behind them reveals quite different social relationships from the other two streams of research. While the first two streams portray an age group within the society or political milieu, the constructivist approach reveals the relationships of who talks and acts on behalf of generations. Examining generations with a constructivist approach reveals the actors, their interests and mediums, and the institutions which take part in the construction of the discourse; this perspective provides a better understanding of how generational labels and discourses built around them are instrumentalised, and what their common implicit and contextualised assumptions are. This dissertation aims to contribute to this stream of research.

Studying Gen Y as a matter of discourse also contributes to a diversification of the literature which this dissertation examines. When researching Generation Y, it is presumed that the required literature should be the sociology of age, generations and youth, or cohort studies. But this dissertation mainly engages with organisation and management studies, specifically management fashion literature. Organisation and management studies are particularly relevant, as Generation Y is mostly defined as

an employee in management accounts (see Ortiz-Pimentel, Molina, and Ronda-Pupo 2020, 460–61). But most of the academic studies on Gen Y from this field do not adopt a critical view and presume the existence of the generations. Management fashions, however, a small research area within organisational studies, provides better insights than any other academic field.

The main focus of this literature is on a phenomenon that is challenging to explain using conventional notions of rationality and efficiency. Why do companies which claim to seek optimum profit invest and rely on faddish ideas and practices? This focus is related to my guiding question (how can we make sense of the continued emphasis and popularity of the generations and generational thinking despite the lack of evidence and theoretical foundation?). To answer this question, Management fashion ignores the weaknesses of the ideas in question and focuses on the forms of the discourses (e.g., rhetorical aspects) and the type of actors (e.g., management gurus, consultants, managers, and employees) who contribute to the construction of these ideas, their interests, and their relations with each other and other actors.

Management fashions and Gen Y also show many other important similarities. The characteristics ascribed to management fashions in the literature, such as ambiguity, theoretical weakness, "cure-all" character, and the effort to comprehend and explain them, provide an analytical framework for a deeper understanding of the Gen Y discourse.

Researchers in this field have typically been interested in work-related concepts and practices such as total quality management, lean production, and green management. With the exception of Williams' article (2019), no previous study has investigated generations within the management fashion literature.⁶ Thus, this dissertation also aims to contribute to the literature on management ideas and fashions by studying a research subject that has received comparatively less attention.

In summary, this dissertation is situated at the intersection of two academic fields: studies on generations and management fashions. Despite initially appearing unrelated, this is due to the constructivist approach employed. The research subject of this dissertation is the construction of Generation Y in the US and its translation to Turkey. The main research question is: "How and by which actors is Gen Y constructed and instrumentalised as a discourse, and how do they make it reliable and useful in the eyes of others in the US and Turkey?".

⁶ Williams elaborates on Generation Y (Millennials) as a matter of management fashion. In his article, he begins with a remarkably similar question to the question in this study: "Why has the Millennial archetype gained such prominence and what purpose does it serve within employing organisations?" (2019, 372). Despite the common findings and similar conceptualisations, my research covers a broader focus and area than Williams': the origins of the Gen Y discourse and its transfer to the Turkish context. Additionally, the data I analysed are not limited to in-depth interviews but include content analysis of the print media in both Turkey and the US.

I.B. Research Questions

The Gen Y discourse is conceptualised as "the sum of the struggles and collaborations in naming, defining, and keeping the term relevant and profitable for the interested actors". Following the concept of translation in Actor-Network Theory (ANT), all actors who contribute to the discourse on Gen Y, such as consultants, journalists, and HR specialists, are seen as speaking and acting on behalf of this generation. This implies that each actor provides or contributes to the representation of Gen Y and strives to establish their representation as the most useful, authentic, accurate, or appropriate.

In accordance with this theoretical framework, my focus is on the representations of Gen Y, exploring how they are defined and described, and examining the contexts from which these representations originate.

To investigate the construction of Generation Y in the US and its translation in Turkey, I chose three distinct contexts.

The first context is the United States, where most popular generational labels, including Gen Y, originated, and gained global popularity (Chapter IV.). I analysed books, magazine articles, and research reports from prominent consultancy and research companies to examine the Gen Y discourse in the US. The key research questions guiding my analysis of the US context are: "Who are the influential actors contributing to the Gen Y discourse in the US?" and "What are the implicit and explicit claims of the discourse and narratives on Gen Y produced by these actors?"

The second context is Turkey. Using text-based data, such as bestselling books, academic and magazine articles, and research reports from consultancy companies, I examined the discourse on Gen Y within the Turkish context (Chapter V.). My research questions regarding the analysis of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey are: "Who are the influential local actors contributing to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey?" "How is the Gen Y discourse translated to the Turkish context, and how has it evolved?" and "How does it differ from the original discourse in the US?"

The final context is companies in Turkey (Chapter VI.). Since the Gen Y discourse is primarily produced and discussed in the business world, often transformed into a consultancy product, it is crucial to examine the discourse within this context. I conducted in-depth interviews and participatory observations to analyse this context. The research questions regarding the role of the Gen Y discourse in companies are: "How do employees relate to and instrumentalise the discourse within companies?" and "How do companies instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse as management practices?"

I.C. Research Methods

In line with my theoretical framework, I aim to investigate the construction of the Gen Y discourse in the US and its translation to the Turkish context by employing qualitative modes of inquiry.

I utilised three different methods of data generation: semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document collection (mainstream media, practitioner articles, academic articles, consultancy and research reports, and bestselling books in Turkish and English). I classified and coded all the documents, interview transcriptions, and observation notes based on the organising and research questions.

To analyse generated data, I used QDA software to code the interview transcriptions, observation notes, academic and practitioner articles, and books. To analyse and interpret these data, I primarily employed Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2021d) reflexive thematic analysis, which provides a theoretically compatible and accessible method of analysis.

The data for the study on the genesis and content of the Gen Y discourse (Chapter IV.) were mainly derived from the analysis of six research reports on Gen Y from consultancy companies and four bestselling books on Gen Y in English. Google Trends and some academic and practitioner publications from the mainstream media were used as supplementary or secondary data sources.

To investigate the translation of the Gen Y discourse to the Turkish context (Chapter V.), data were primarily drawn from one research report prepared by a consultancy company (Deloitte) and one book written by a Turkey's well-known generation expert (V.D.), as well as 185 articles published in the mainstream media, 171 articles in three different business magazines, and 98 academic articles, all in Turkish (V.C.).

To examine the instrumentalisation of the Gen Y discourse in companies in Turkey (Chapter VI.), I employed data obtained from 26 in-depth interviews and two participant observations. The interviews were conducted with white-collar workers⁷ who mostly work for MNCs in Turkey and Turkish companies with strong ties to foreign capital. These interviews were complemented by two participant observations at workshops on generations at work.

⁷ In this dissertation, I adopt the following definition of white-collar worker: "an individual who works in an office or has a professional career such as banker or lawyer" (Bell 2014).

I.D. Significance of the Study

It may seem counterintuitive to write a PhD dissertation on a concept with many theoretical and empirical problems. But the fact that an idea is weak and that there is no evidence for its existence does not mean that its influences and the role it plays in our lives are unworthy of study. The importance of the Gen Y discourse lies in its popularity and its diverse usage in daily life. This popularity does not appear to be temporary. We increasingly hear politicians and journalists using these labels, and see notable encyclopaedias and dictionaries including terms such as Gen Y and Gen Z (e.g., Merriam-Webster n.d.; Zelazko 2023). Despite the inherent limitations of the concept, generational labels like Gen Y have acquired significant social implications.

Generation Y is first and foremost a classification, like gender or social class, which provides explanations for many different phenomena (such as social change or work employee conflicts) in daily and academic life. It is an identity which is mostly defined from outside, and mainly shaped by consultants, experts, and academics. It is also a representation of a group of people; depending on the context, this might be the representation of an age group, young adults, or a new type of employees or subordinates for managers. Implicitly, the discourse surrounding Generation Y also offers a vision of the future and novelty, while promoting certain ethical, political, social, and work-related values.

Generational labels, including Gen Y, are highly versatile terms with various meanings and uses. Discussions on age-related employment issues more frequently incorporate generational perspectives, as they have become well-established in societal discourses (Pritchard and Whiting 2014, 1607). Above all, these labels serve as important tools for narrating our social, political, and work lives (Foster 2013b).

Generational labels influence our actions and our views of the world and work-related issues, while obscuring other explanatory variables such as changing employment relationships, gender, or social class-based inequalities. To gain a better understanding of this process, a close examination of the construction of the Gen Y discourse and uncovering the contextualised assumptions are crucial.

Exposing these assumptions and patterns also provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the discourses built around the following generations (e.g., Gen Z) and relate them to broader societal discourses such as flexibility (Fairclough 2003), youth (Lesko 2001), new management ideology (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007), or the new ideology of human relations (Mills 2002, 235).

I.E. Outlook of the Chapters

The dissertation is composed of three themed chapters, while the overall structure of the study takes the form of seven chapters.

Chapter I is the introductory section, providing a concise overview of the theoretical background and research objectives (I.A.), the research questions (I.B.), a discussion of research methodologies (I.C.), the significance of the study (I.D.), and an outlook of each chapter (I.E.).

Chapter II presents the literature on the concept of generations (II.A.) and the theoretical background of the research (II.B.). In sub-chapter II.A., different conceptualisations of generation within academic literature are examined, with discussions on the assumptions and theoretical challenges associated with dominant conceptualisations and a review of the current literature on generations. One of the aims of this study is to uncover the implicit assumptions of the Gen Y discourse. This sub-chapter situates the study within the existing literature, while also examining the key assumptions of the birth-cohort-informed view of generation adopted in the discourse on Gen Y. These assumptions, rooted in a positivistic and quantitative perspective on generations, are integrated into the subsequent stages of the analysis in the following chapters. The second section of the chapter (II.B.) explains the constructivist approach adopted in this research, highlighting its impact on the research design and the broader conceptualisation of generations as a social construct (II.B.2.). The influence of the constructivist approach also extends to the academic literature on generations, encompassing management ideas and trends. The subsequent part of this sub-chapter (II.B.3.) focuses on the significant concepts, understandings, and findings within this literature, contributing to the analytical framework for understanding Generation Y as a discourse phenomenon.

Chapter III introduces the research design, methods, and data generation and analysis processes. The first part of Chapter III (III.A.) features a concise overview of how the theoretical foundation and conceptualisation of generations, as discussed in the preceding chapter, informs the research design, methodology, and employed methods in this thesis. It highlights the coherence and compatibility among these elements. The second section of the chapter (III.B.) details the objectives, research design, and research questions, formulated based on the three specific contexts focused on in this study. The research methods are introduced in detail (III.C.), encompassing the data generation process (III.C.1.) and an overview of the analysis process (III.C.2.). The coding and theme development strategies (III.C.3.) employed to address the research questions are outlined.

Chapter IV. focuses on the origins and content of the Gen Y discourse, deconstructing the discourse and examining how it reflects the cumulative efforts of diverse actors to gain allies and maintain its relevance and benefits. The quantitative data in this chapter are derived from various texts on Gen Y, such as bestselling books, magazine articles, and research reports written by the major actors involved in the construction of the discourse. The chapter begins by presenting the key actors in the generational discourse and exploring their relationships and interactions (context). It then focuses on four key dimensions of the discourse (naming, cut-off points, distinctive features, and traits and prescriptions), analysing the textual and rhetorical strategies employed by authors (content). Based on this analysis, it is argued that the discourse on Gen Y is built on assumptions: Gen Y differs dramatically from previous generations, these differences are likely to create conflicts, and young generations represent the unavoidable future. The last assumption enables the presentation of "generational conflicts" and "becoming outdated" as one and the same problem, forming a central message within the discourse on Generation Y that is commonly observed in significant publications. Like the discourse on management fashions, the discourse on Gen Y, particularly in terms of generational traits, exhibits an ambiguous nature, facilitating its adoption and adaptation by various actors. An outline of the Gen Y narrative is derived which can be applied to a variety of texts, such as books, reports, seminars, talks, and magazine articles on Gen Y.

Chapter V. examines the translation of the discourse on Gen Y to the Turkish context. The chapter begins by exploring various bodies of literature on Generation Y in Turkey and identifying the key actors involved in producing and disseminating the discourse (V.B.). Similar to the United States, the construction of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey involves comparable actors, with Evrim Kuran playing a prominent role. The evolution and popularity of the discourse on Gen Y in Turkey is analysed, based on a thematic analysis of Turkish mainstream media and business magazines (V.C.). The concept of Gen Y undergoes a similar evolution as in the United States, transitioning from a consumer-focused description to an emphasis on its employee dimension. However, unlike in the United States, the discourse in Turkey gains political significance during the Gezi protests, serving as an explanatory concept. This leads to increased popularity, with Evrim Kuran's media presence playing a significant role. Over time, the discourse in Turkey increasingly portrays Gen Y as employees rather than political actors. In the third sub-chapter (V.D.), the analysis focuses on Evrim Kuran's book on generations, comparing and relating it to the bestselling books from the United States examined in the previous chapter. Despite the political use of the discourse on Gen Y in Turkey, the content does not differ significantly from the discourse in the United States.

Chapter VI. investigates the role and instrumentalisation of the discourse on Gen Y within companies in Turkey, where the major actors differ from those in the previous contexts (Chapters IV and V). In

this chapter, managers, employees, and HR staff become the primary actors contributing to the construction of the discourse on Gen Y. The data for this chapter are based on twenty-six in-depth interviews and two participant observations. The chapter deals with two major topics. First, it explores how employees relate to the discourse within the work context (VI.B.). Respondents use the term "Gen Y" interchangeably with other terms that refer to new, young, or subordinate employees, suggesting that people see generational categories as sets of work-related characteristics rather than strictly age-based cohorts. In line with this, the discourse serves as a way for employees to differentiate themselves from others and interpret the attitudes of their colleagues.

The next sub-chapter VI.C. focuses on the translation of the discourse into management practices. The analysis of four management practices within companies (workshops on Gen Y, Gen Y Social Activity Club, Gen Y Board, and reverse mentoring) reveals that they mainly target white-collar workers and are concentrated in departments such as human resources, marketing, and purchasing. However, the practices predominantly benefit a small, privileged group within the company, aligning with the portrayal of Gen Y in the literature as westernised, upper-middle-class, and well-educated individuals. The practices informed by the discourse on Gen Y are often pre-existing concepts, and their implementation is mostly aimed at changing the mindset of older managers rather than introducing radical transformations. Gen Y discourse is instrumentalised within companies as a means to legitimise management practices and promote a progressive image to the public.

The final chapter (VII.) provides a concise summary of the research findings, aiming to answer the major research questions and the guiding question, which I refrain from asking up to the conclusion. In the initial section of the conclusion (VII.A.) there is a concise overview of the theoretical framework, conceptual tools, primary objectives, and research questions, as well as an illustrative summary of the research. The next section (VII.B.) presents the key findings, focusing on two aspects of the Gen Y discourse: the main actors in three distinct contexts, and the assumptions and claims made within the discourse. The third section (VII.C.) consists of two discussions based on these findings. The first discussion examines the claim of novelty associated with the discourse and provides an answer to the guiding question (VII.C.1.). The second discussion delves into the management concepts and practices advocated by the discourse on Gen Y, discussing their significance and relevance in the context of Turkey and identifying possible discourses and claims that the Gen Y discourse may neglect or suppress (VII.C.2.). Finally, the fourth section explores the research process itself, discussing its significance (VII.D.1.), limitations, and potential avenues for future exploration (VII.D.2.). The Conclusion includes final remarks and highlights the significance of the research (VII.D.3.).

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

II.A. Literature Review: What is Generation?

II.A.1. Introduction: Generation as an academic concept

The concept of generations is a difficult one to work with. The more rigorous one tries to be in attaching dates to generations, or the more inclusive one is in fixing the demographic boundaries of any given generation within a society, the more contrived and unrealistic one's definition is likely to look. In common-sense use the term generations are applied not, as it ought strictly to be, to whole age categories of a society but to particular sub-sets of other social formations – old politicians, young manual workers, some students. And this turns out to be a very sensible limitation. Efforts to use the concept more ambitiously end up either as genealogy (the history of fathers and sons in particular families) or as waffle. (Abrams 1970, 175–76)

As Abrams points out, the concept of generation is highly contested; it has been discussed and criticised by many social scientists (e.g., Aboim and Vasconcelos 2014; Kertzner 1983; Laslett 2005; Jane Pilcher 1994; Ryder 1965; Spitzer 1973) in various ways from different perspectives. While some of them point out that it is not possible to statistically distinguish the generational effect from age and period effects, others note that the idea of generation, most often, represents a smaller group of people than it claims to encompass. Therefore, it is possible to find many different definitions and uses of the concept within the social science and social theory.

The *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* distinguishes five different definitions for the use of the term in social sciences:

(1) to designate levels in extended kinship structure; (2) to designate the general stage or segment in the life-course that a group occupies (for example the current generation of college students); (3) to refer to those who experienced a common historical period (for example the Depression Generation, the Sixties Generation, or Generation X); (4) to refer to a subset of a historical generation who share a common political or cultural identity; and (5) to denote a circumscribed age group in the population. (Jackie Scott 2006, 233–35)

All these different uses of the term can overlap and therefore are interrelated, but this polysemous use of the term nevertheless creates confusion as well as methodological problems (which I detail in the next pages) in academic literature. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish different conceptualisations of the idea of generation for the sake of theoretical clarity.

There are many different attempts to classify the academic conceptualisations, which can sometimes be confusing and overwhelming (e.g., Mauger 2015b; Biggs 2007; Burnett 2010). Because of this, I rely on the groupings proposed by Purhenon (2016a; 2016b), Gilleard (2004), Alwin and McCammon (2003; 2007) and Reed and Thomas (2020) to a certain extent. I have chosen these authors because I believe that classifications of theories are better founded when the classifications are based on their epistemological and ontological assumptions (e.g., what kind of understanding of the human being and knowledge do these authors adopt?). In this framework, I distinguish four different conceptualisations of generation: 1) generation as a kinship, 2) generation as a birth cohort, 3) generation as a socio-historical agency, and 4) generation as a social construct.

Examining these four conceptualisations aims to provide an overview to see the major academic discussions about generations. It also targets to enable us to see how different theoretical approaches deal with the idea of generation.

The first one, generation as kinship, referring to familial relations, is important because it is the oldest use. However, it also represents the present-day concept in some fields of social sciences. The second one, generation as a birth cohort, deserves special attention as it is the most dominant understanding in the academic literature on generation. The third conceptualisation, generation as a socio-historical agency, can be found in early theoretical discussions as well as in the recent attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of generation as a birth cohort. The fourth one, generation as a social construct, is a less common approach, which has developed over the last 20 years, and yet it is important for this dissertation because it is how I conceptualise what generation is and how I design the research. It is also important because it legitimises my use of certain conceptual tools and arguments from very different fields, namely studies of management ideas and fashions.

II.A.2. Generation as a kinship

The conceptualisation of generation as a kinship designates levels in extended kinship structure which basically frames the relationship between parents, children, and grandchildren. This use of the term is the oldest one, which goes back to Hellenic and Roman civilisations and has survived until today (Burnett 2010, 27; Falardeau 1990, 60).

This definition of the term has also been used in the sense of kinship in social anthropology for a very long time. However, social anthropologists use the term in a broader sense than sociologists. They refer to the whole domain of kinship relations rather than its limited use of parent-child relations used by sociologists (Kertzer 1983, 126). Demographers, on the other hand, used the term in the sense of larger kinship relations when they were trying to devise measures for its duration (Kertzer 1983, 126).

The use of the term generation which refers to kinship structure is also found in the family (e.g., Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Goldscheider 2008) and immigration studies (e.g., Foner 2010; Foner and Dreby 2011). In that context, the first and second generations refer to parents or grandparents who immigrated to another country, and the third generation refers to their children or grandchildren who were born and raised in the country immigrated to. For instance, Nahirny and Fishman (1965) analyse the loss of cultural and social differences from generation to generation by tracing it from the first to second generations, then from the second generation to the third. Moreover, certain sociologists have regarded the term 'generation' as pivotal in elucidating the transmission of culture, status, and property from older to younger members of society, as well as in explaining leadership succession, and similar phenomena (Eisenstadt 1971) The concept of generation is also employed in connection with extended kinship within the realm of education. A principal source in this domain is the book "Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture"(1990) authored by Bourdieu and Passeron (Purhonen 2016a, 98).

The research subject of this dissertation is Generation Y (or Millennials). It relies mainly on an understanding of generation as a group of people who were born approximately at the same time. Therefore, the conceptualisation of Gen Y (in the academic and popular literature) does not refer, at least explicitly, to the extended kinship structures. However, this genealogical meaning of the term generation is often added implicitly into generational discourses, especially in the popular literature, when generational differences are illustrated. For instance, many consultants in their talks on Gen Y use the example of themselves, their parents, and their children to illustrate the difference of views between generations. Moreover, there are also some academic attempts to equate the age group with the genealogical structures in order to legitimise the cut-off points for distinct generations, but these attempts seem to fail due to the complex and changing structures of being a parent (Frith 2005). In this context, some philosophers and researchers such as Mentré (1920), Mauger (2015b) distinguish between "social generation" and "familial generation" in order to separate the genealogical meaning of the term from its other meanings. According to them, familial generation designates the kinship descent relationship, while the term social generation designates "a group of men belonging to different families whose unity results from a particular mentality and whose duration embraces a determined period" (Mentré 1920, 13).⁸

⁸ Mentré (1920) was the first person to distinguish between familial and social generations.

Although the use of the term generation which refers to kinship descent relationships is connected to the other uses and the conceptualisation of generation in theoretical discussions (see, e.g., Mannheim 2011), I do not scrutinize the kinship use of the term further because the main subject of this dissertation is Generation Y and the term Generation Y is not used in the kinship sense (for a detailed history of kinship use of the term, see Burnett 2010, 9–26; Mauger 2015a, 23–46).

II.A.3. Generation as a birth cohort

While originally the term generation was used in the sense of kinship and genealogical relationship, after 1850s the term generation was also used to mean those of the coevals.⁹

It was mostly used to show the differences and contrasts between the older generation and the youth. From then on, terms such as “the rising generation”, “the new generation”, and “the young generation” started to be used extensively (Wohl 1979, 249). Wohl (1979, 249) interprets this shift as a crucial one because it shows that society is divided into compartments defined by age. Besides, Burnett (2010, 42) puts forth that especially after WWII the cohort-informed view of generation gained popularity through the social planning and social statistics whose production was led by the state as well as social and demographic trend analysis.

Today, this understanding of generation as an identifiable group of coevals dominates the academic literature (Edmunds and Turner 2005, 560; Foster 2013a). This cohort-informed view of generation is most commonly used in the fields such as demography, gerontology, and psychology (Lyons and Kuron 2013, 141). Similarly, the vast majority of the academic and popular literature on Gen Y in both Turkish and in English perceive Gen Y as a birth cohort. Accordingly, it is common to see the cohort-informed view of generation and the interchangeable use of generation and cohort in many academic articles.

Oxford dictionary of social sciences defines a cohort as “any group of persons defined by a common, time-specific situation” (Calhoun 2002a). For instance, people who graduate in the same year would form a graduating cohort just as people who are married during the same period of time would constitute a marriage cohort. Alwin and McCammon (2003, 36) and Marshall (1983, 52) note that social scientists often use the term cohort as shorthand for “birth cohort” which suggests or refers to

⁹The most significant authors who used the term generation, at first, in that sense were August Comte and John Stuart Mill. They both interpreted the succession of generations as a crucial factor of social change (Purhonen 2016b, 175).

the people who were born the same year (e.g., people born in 1983) or people who were born during a short period of consecutive years (e.g., people born from 1980 to 1996).¹⁰

Given the above definition, conceptualising generation as a birth cohort is an attempt to group people based on their age. Therefore, age is the major component of the idea of generation as a birth cohort, but different from the age groups¹¹, the idea of birth cohort additionally presupposes that the age group in question should share some significant experiences (or events) during the same interval of time and be bonded by these experiences. Accordingly, within the academic literature the most common definition of the birth cohort is “a group of people who have lived through a certain period of time and shared common historical experiences” (Statt 2004b, 24).¹² Defined in this way, a person’s birth cohort membership is seen as the indicator of “the unique historical period in which a group’s common experiences are embedded” (Alwin and McCammon 2003, 26).

In keeping with this line of description, the (birth) cohort effect is defined in the dictionary of business and management (Jonathan Law 2016) as such: “Any effect associated with being a member of a group born at roughly the same time and bonded by common life experiences (e.g., growing up in the 1980s)”. Ryder (1965, 845) notes that a birth cohort effect is significantly related with shared and “formative experiences” of a life cycle/course¹³ which distinguish and differentiate its members from

¹⁰ It is also important to note that while the lifespan developmental literature uses the term birth cohort mostly to refer to one year (e.g., people born in 1983), generation literature often uses it to refer to consecutive years of birth (Rudolph and Zacher 2016, 115).

¹¹ Age group is commonly defined as “a number of people or things classed together as being of similar age” (Stevenson and Lindberg 2015).

¹² As can be seen, the definitions and the uses of the term generation and cohort are most of the time identical, e.g., as a form of age group consisting of those members of a society who were born at approximately the same time (John Scott and Marshall 2009). However, for some researchers, especially for the ones who are in the scientific communities where at least precision is seen as a virtue (see Hempel 1965; Latour and Woolgar 2006), it raises an important and legitimate concern that generation is taken “as equivalent to something for which there is already an adequate word” (Foster 2013a, 53). Marshall (1983, 53) puts forth that “scientists value parsimony and it is counter-productive to use two different terms for the same thing”. Due to this problem, some researchers suggest that using the term “cohort” instead of generation for populations that experience the same important events at the same period of time is more appropriate (Pilcher 1994, 483) and accordingly the term generation should only be used in its original sense of genealogy and kinship (Kertzer 1983; Glenn 2005; Riley, Johnson, and Foner 1972). However, Olivier Galland (2007, 107–17) objects to this Anglo-Saxon origin argument stating that in French the perception and impact of the term “cohort effect” is less effective than the term “generational effect.” In this sense Galland separates the conception of generation as genealogical, historical, and sociological.

¹³ According to the dictionary of social sciences (Calhoun 2002b), life cycles and life course is defined as such: “Both terms refer to the culturally defined sequence of stages in human life, rather than to precise periods of years or to biological development. Childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age are structured differently in different cultures and may vary considerably in duration. In any given society, specific life stages are associated with sets of statuses, roles, and values. They are similarly accorded different privileges and responsibilities”. It is important to highlight that life-course scholars have a significant influence on academic discussion on generation (Edmunds and Turner 2002c, 1); and the cohort-informed generation view and the life-course theory share a very similar assumption: “The assumptions of the life-course approach are that as individuals grow older, they undergo certain qualitative changes in physiology, cognitive functioning, emotional patterns, and needs.

the others. For instance, people born between 1980 and 2000 should have experienced the same significant events (e.g., 9/11, Digitalisation) at the same stages of their lives (e.g., childhood, adolescence, adult life, and old age) in order to be called a “birth cohort”.

Therefore, age and the above-mentioned elements such as having “distinctive formative experience”, “common life experiences”, and experiencing “the same historical events” are the essential components of the idea of cohort and cohort effect. Accordingly, we can say that the conceptualisation of generation as birth cohorts has two major components: age and sharing a common formative life experience at the same life stage.

Based on these components, birth cohort studies assign characteristics for the cohort enabling it to be distinguishable from the others or describe its characteristics in such a way that it can have a kind of unique defining “personality” This “personality” is mostly defined by the researcher because the characteristics assigned and/or described are based on the definition of the questions produced by the researcher. However, in time the identifiable “personality” of the cohort enables communities to be distinguishable from each other (Burnett 2010, 46).

In this context, conceptualising generation as a birth cohort presupposes that individuals who experience the same historical events in the same stages of their lives in similar environments have the same or similar value systems and/or personal traits, despite the socialisation differences at micro levels (Noble and Schewe 2003, 980).

In return, we encounter a series of theoretical and methodological challenges in this type of conceptualisation:

II.A.3.1. Assumptions: Constant and essentialist identities

The first theoretical problem is related to age. By grouping people based on their birth year, the cohort-informed view of generation assumes implicitly that generations have quantifiable and stable boundaries (birth years); additionally, it assumes they are homogenous enough to be studied (Lyons and Kuron 2013, 141).¹⁴ Therefore, generational identities should be constant and unchanging

These biopsychological changes occur over the life span and are considered to be sequential, irreversible, and for the most part universal. The maturational unfolding process occurs as individuals of similar age levels move in a sequential direction toward certain characteristic growth patterns” (Braungart and Braungart 1986, 208).

¹⁴ Correspondingly, cohort analysis is a macro-analytical tool which allows researchers to study the category as a whole for distinctive features (Neuman 2014, 46). In this context, it is possible to say that the use of the term generation in the sense of a birth cohort necessitates the adoption of quantitative approaches and (at least partially) some positivistic postulates.

(McDaniel 2002, 100–101) as one cannot change and choose when to be born. Thus, cohort-informed view of generation can easily lead to biological deterministic (or essentialist) explanations.

On the other hand, the aforementioned assumption creates a methodological challenge about how to decide when a birth cohort (or generation) starts and ends. The division between one birth cohort and another is arbitrary, and it is hard for researchers to justify how they have decided to group birth years. In other words, it is quite difficult to provide legitimisation for how the beginning and the end of an age cohort is determined or should be determined (e.g., born 1900–2000) as well as its extent (e.g., ten-year intervals). It is mostly legitimised by referring to historical events and/or life stages such as being young during WWI or being an adult in the Great Recession, etc. But these kinds of definitions are imprecise and constitute a contradiction between the idea of division of individuals based on their age and the positivistic approach, which seeks preciseness and objectivity. Therefore, “being young in WWI” does not mean much, as the definition of the young changes over time and over space (Bourdieu 2002). For instance, while the age of thirty-five is considered to be young in academia, in football being in one’s late twenties can be considered old. Moreover, Frith (2005, 143) notes that due to the effects of longer life expectancies, late or second marriages, delayed pregnancies, as well as increased geographical and occupational mobility of people, the simple link between age and status is not the same any longer and thus more complicated than before.

For instance, let us say that we would like to talk about Gen Y in Turkey, and we rely on the commonly accepted age interval 1980–1997. This group of people witnessed and experienced the transition to liberal economy (1980s), a post-modern coup (1997), Gezi protests (2013), an unsuccessful coup attempt (2016), more than a 20-year AKP government, establishment of private TV channels, common use of PC and the internet, many economic crises, etc. However, the previous generation (namely Gen X) also experienced these events with the difference that this generation was in a different stage of their lives (e.g., they were parents when Gezi protest happened, or they were teenagers when the common use of the internet started). Nevertheless, this is a questionable argument because of two main reasons: 1) There is not always an overlap between life stage and age (e.g., the age of a being parent varies dramatically over years and within the birth cohorts); 2) even if it is the case, it is hard to prove why someone born in 1980 would experience a significant event differently than someone who was born in 1979.

II.A.3.2. Defining common formative experience

Another theoretical challenge is about the “common formative experience” or being bonded by significant events. Most of the researchers do not clearly identify experience and its effects on individuals. Instead, they implicitly assume that just being born in the consecutive years within a society automatically bonds them as a generation (or birth cohort). This presupposition is highly questionable and imprecise. For instance, can we say that the '68ers who were part of the movement and the ones who were not part of the movement (but who were still young at that time) in France share common life experiences? Or is being young in France in 1968 enough to have different values from those who were not young at that time? Without being able to say yes to these questions (which need further investigations on the effects of the event on people), making claims on generations as a birth cohort is misleading.

II.A.3.3. Attribution of characteristics to a birth cohort

The third theoretical issue is related to the attribution of characteristics to a birth cohort such as “Gen Yers are entitled”. These kinds of claims are often criticised as ignoring the socialisation differences at micro-levels (Noble and Schewe 2003, 980), which is seen as “a smoothing over of irregularities of experience” (Burnett 2010, 46). For instance, when we say that “Gen Yers are entitled”, we presuppose that the historical events experienced by Gen Y are experienced in the same way by both women and men, people of colour and white individuals, the lower and upper classes of Gen Y and, therefore, that they all developed similar attitudes such as being entitled. This aspect of generation in general (but especially for the cohort-informed view of generation) has been criticised by many researchers. They claim that the aspect of generation leads to over-generalisation and ignore the differences within the generation. These critiques focus on the idea that generation supplies a false representation because it represents a smaller group of people than it claims to encompass (Burnett 2010, 46–47; Purhonen 2016a, 106; Pritchard and Whiting 2014, 1619) – most often privileged groups (Wohl 1979, 253; Bourdieu 1996, 126; White 2013, 217). That is why the concept of generation – and for similar reasons the concept of “youth” – is criticised as a sort of manipulation that social scientists should approach with caution (Bourdieu 2002; Kriegel 1979; Mannheim 2011; Zaim 2006).

II.A.3.4. Age, cohort, and period effect

Nonetheless, according to many researchers, it is still possible to empirically prove that individuals who experience the same events at the same stage of their lives can have some common traits or values which distinguish them from other birth cohorts by using cohort analysis (without measuring

the effects of historical/formative events). Cohort analysis is a type of longitudinal research¹⁵ that “traces information about a category of cases or people who shared a common experience at one time period across subsequent time period” (Neuman 2014, 46). However, at this point, It is important to underline that cohort analysis is a type of longitudinal research which many scholars ignore (see Parry and Urwin 2017; Rudolph, Rauvola, and Zacher 2018; Jureit 2017, 6). Instead, they use cross-sectional data which compares different age/peer groups (e.g., people born around 1960 to 1980) at one point in time (e.g., in 2010) and note the differences as generational differences. However, from a quantitative research perspective the problem with studies on generations based on this type of data is that when comparing two different age groups, the differences observed and determined may be just age differences, not generational (or birth cohort) differences. Because of this, some researchers suggest that the only valid data which has the capacity to distinguish the generational (or cohort) effect from the age effect is the longitudinal data, because longitudinal research can hold age effect constant (Parry and Urwin 2011; Rudolph et al. 2020a; Twenge 2008; Lumbreras and Campbell 2020, 262). Thus, any findings obtained from cross-sectional studies claiming to be generational are categorically false.

Another theoretical challenge for the cohort-informed view of generation is to distinguish the period effect from the age and cohort effect (see Parry and Urwin 2021; Rudolph et al. 2020a; Noble and Schewe 2003; Costanza and Finkelstein 2015; Costanza et al. 2012; Lyons et al. 2015; Palmore 1978; Carlsson and Karlsson 1970). Period effect denotes “any outcome associated with living during a particular time period or era, regardless of how old one was at the time” (APA Dictionary 2007). Determining the differences between the age, cohort, and period effects is important because if two of these three factors are not defined by identical casual factors (assumed to be unmeasured), conclusions that are reached in relation to the third effect might be false as regards to the other two (Rudolph and Zacher 2016, 3). At this point, we should keep in mind that although longitudinal data can hold the age effect constant, it does not erase period effect and accordingly longitudinal research cannot identify generational/cohort effect because “they inherently confound cohort and period effects with one”(Rudolph and Zacher 2016, 3).

Joshi et al. (2011, 181) summarise this complicity as follows:

The age-period-cohort problem arises because an individual’s age, the cohort in which she is located, and the historical period are confounded (Blossfeld, Hamerle, and Mayer 1989). Each of these factors

¹⁵Longitudinal research is defined as “any research that examines information from many units or cases across more than one point in time” (Neuman 2014, 44).

has a specific cause: age effects result from the aging process (i.e., becoming older); period effects are a consequence of external influences that vary over historical time; and cohort effects are a function of being born at certain time periods. However, estimating effects of each factor is challenging, in that, age effects often cannot be separated from period or cohort effects in many types of extant data.

To illustrate these aforementioned methodological problems all together, let us assume for the sake of argument that Gen Yers have greater environmental sensibilities than Gen Xers in Turkey, based on one survey. However, this does not reveal a generational difference. To do so, one would need to say: Gen Y had greater environmental sensibilities compared to Gen X *when both were young*. To make such a claim, we would then need to have longitudinal data. This type of data might distinguish between the cohort effect and age effect, but then yet another issue arises: When Gen X were children (1990s), environmental issues were not as prominent a topic as when Gen Y were children (2000s). Therefore, we do not know if the difference measured between Gen Y and X is because of the period effect (changing sensibilities) or because of the cohort effect (to be born at the same time and bonded by common life experience). Additionally, between 1990–2000, not all Gen Xers were children. Some of them were already in adulthood, just as not all the Gen Y were children in 2000s.

There have been some attempts to solve the problem of the age, cohort, and period effects by developing new statistical models (e.g., Yang and Land 2016; Palmore 1978), but they require different types of data (longitudinal, cross-sectional, and time-lag) over a long range of time, which apparently only exists for the Baby Boomers and not for the following generations (Lumbreras and Campbell 2020, 263).

Another major source of uncertainty within the academic literature on generations, especially within the management and organisational studies, has been the lack of empirical evidence to prove the existence of distinct generations, despite the abundant number of articles published on the topic (Rudolph et al. 2020a; Costanza et al. 2020; Parry and Urwin 2011). Rudolph et al. (2018, 48) make a critical review of the academic articles on generational theories of leadership, and they argue that there are very few empirical studies. Therefore, the vast majority of the articles are based on theoretical assumptions instead of empirical evidence. Hence, most of the research adopting the cohort-informed view of generation presuppose the existence of generations (and concordantly generational differences) and focus on the investigation of the generational qualities. There are only a small number of studies that question the existence of the generations or generational differences, and most of them put forth that there are not significant differences between generations (Parry and Urwin 2011, 88). For instance, to this end, Jean Pralong (2009, 18) carried out a field survey with the participation of “Generation X” and “Generation Y” in the workplace. In view of the results of the

inquiry, Pralong observes that there is no difference between the working methods of these two generations and that, in this respect, the very existence of “Generation Y” can be called into question. Similarly, Costanza et al. (2012) put forth that there is no significant difference in work attitudes between generations based on a meta-survey which consists of 19,961 subjects’ data.

In conclusion, as can be seen, cohort-informed view of generation has serious theoretical, methodological, and empirical problems which call into question its validity. Although the theoretical approach adopted in this research differs critically from that type of conceptualisation, it is important to look at the theoretical assumptions behind the idea of generation within academia and note that generation even as an academically defined concept lacks precision and can be potentially misleading.

II.A.4. Generation as a socio-historical agency

The second stream of research on generations, mainly based on sociology and political science, provides a more nuanced and less quantifiable approach to the idea of generation. This approach introduces the individual agency and generational consciousness to the studies of generations; therefore, unlike the cohort-informed view which stresses age, it focuses on the sense-making process of the individuals and enforces a deeper analysis of the mutual relation between the historical events and the generation (Joshi et al. 2010, 4). Accordingly, this view emphasises “collective identity and the feeling of ‘us’ created by shared experiences” (Purhonen 2016a, 97). As a result, generations are understood as a potential source of collective identity and political power (Purhonen 2016b, 169) most typically with a focus on youthful movements.¹⁶

In the same vein, Edmunds and Turner (2002c, 67) define generations as such:

In a general sense, we may define a generation as an age cohort that comes to have social significance by virtue of constituting itself as cultural identity. It is the interaction between historical resources, contingent circumstances, and social formation that makes “generation” an interesting sociological category.

As can be seen, their definition is based on the distinction between age cohorts and generations. In this sense, generation is something more than an age cohort: It is only possible to name an age cohort a “generation” if we can talk about a common culture and self-consciousness. Their approach to generation, which requires the inclusion of common culture and self-consciousness, leads Edmunds and Turner to downplay the importance of age and instead indicate the importance of historical

¹⁶ This conception of generations is mostly referred to as “social,” “cultural,” “historical,” or “political” generations (Purhonen 2016b, 173). Some other researchers indeed simply deem this conceptualisation to be a generation and clearly distinguish it from the cohort-informed view of generation (e.g., Burnett 2010).

events in the development of distinct “intellectual generations”. Consequently, generations become both the “products” and “makers of history” (Jones, Nayak, and Davies 2003, 528).

The roots of this understanding of generation can be traced back to near the end of the 19th century within the works of Dilthey and Pinder (which Mannheim (1972, 180–86) classified as the romantic-historical approach on generations), but without a doubt it was Mannheim’s theory of generation that made the major theoretical contribution to this type of conceptualisation.¹⁷ Mannheim’s work became the “canonical, unifying point of reference” in the field of sociology of generations (Purhonen 2016a, 96), although perceived and interpreted very differently.

The conceptual tools provided by Mannheim to understand generations as a sociological problem has influenced many researchers, especially the social and political scientists who tried to understand and interpret the rise of youth and student movements in 1960s and early 1970s in Europe (Purhonen 2016b, 17). These movements and related events reinforce (to some extent) the idea that generational theories cannot ignore (unlike the cohort view) the socio-historical roles and the self-consciousness of generations within the academic and intellectual circles.¹⁸

In this context, I briefly present Mannheim’s generation theory to illustrate the view of generation as a socio-historical agency (for a more detailed analysis of Mannheim’s role in generational theory, see Burnett 2010, 27–41).

Mannheim (1972, 310) highlights what most of the generation theories of his time are missing:

Most generation theories, however, have this in common, that they try to establish a direct correlation between waves of decisive year classes of birth – set at intervals of thirty years, and conceived in a purely naturalistic, quantifying spirit – on the one hand, and waves of cultural changes on the other. Thus, they ignore the important fact that the realization of hidden potentialities inherent in the generation location is governed by extra-biological factors, principally, as we have seen, by the prevailing tempo and impact of social change.

¹⁷ It is important to note that despite his contribution to this kind of conceptualisation of generation, drawing on his sociology of knowledge, he can be considered one of the originators of social constructivism, which I prefer to avoid discussing as it is beyond the subject of this dissertation (see, e.g., Kumar 2006, 172–73; Ihl 2002, 125^2).

¹⁸ According to Purhonen (2016b, 17) who quotes Eisenstadt (2001), these social movements enabled the concept of generation to reach large masses: At the end of 1960s, the concept of generation was acknowledged and used by whole populations of all ages and not only by a small group of intellectuals. This was different from the 1920s, when only a small circle of intellectuals in Europe acknowledged the concept.

Although it is anachronic to say,¹⁹ it is possible to suggest that Mannheim delivered a significant critique of the understanding of generation as a birth cohort (under the name of positivistic approaches to generation) and made the problem of generations a problem of sociology instead of biology, while also conceptualising generations as a matter of “extra-familial” and “socio-historical” phenomena (Burnett 2010, 27) based on the critiques of previous approaches to generations, which he named: positivist and romantic-historical approaches.

From the positivist perspective,²⁰ the approximately estimated lifetime, regular births, and aging process determine the social and cultural changes. Therefore, the study of generations can “explore” the generally accepted “rules” of historical development via demographic statistics. Mentré’s (1920) argument that each new generation shows itself with new thought movements and doctrines every 30 years is a good example of positivist position in generational approaches (Galland 2007, 109). In this context, according to Mannheim, the positivist position is completely exterior and mechanical as it sees the concept of time as that which separates generations. On the other hand, romantic-historical approach sees time as phenomenon that cannot be explained internally and quantitatively.²¹ Therefore, generation signifies a mood and a common destiny rather than a concrete condition. According to Mannheim, both approaches have merits and faults. It is true that the concept of generation should be built on the biological rhythm of birth and death, as the positivist approach claims, but these biological factors gain their meanings according to the social realm.²² Therefore, biological factors cannot be explanatory or determinant by themselves.

On the other hand, the idea of generational entelechy that “denotes an intellectual formative tendency characteristic of a certain period of time, which cannot be derived from ‘some milieu’ and which cannot be explained causally in any way” (Pinder 1926, 33 as cited Jaeger 1985, 281) can contribute to the understanding of generations and social changes if it focuses on the roles of social events and phenomena.

Based on the criticisms of these two approaches, Mannheim makes three distinctions “generation location”, “generation as actuality”, and “generation unit”. Generation location refers the historic and social realm shared by all the individuals who are about the same ages (as can be seen, the definition

¹⁹ It is anachronic because the cohort analysis in the sense of “studying social and psychological phenomena” started only around 1970s (Glenn 2005, vii) while Mannheim’s *The Problem of Generation* was first published in 1927.

²⁰ Which I believe fits well to what the literature on generations has deemed the cohort-informed view.

²¹ Mannheim (1972, 281) explains the interior time as a type of time “that cannot be measured but only experienced in purely qualitative terms.”

²² Bourdieu (1980, 145) says that age is a biological data that can always be socially manipulated, which, in a way, confirms this argument.

is no different than birth cohort). However, this shared location describes only the potential or possibilities. We can speak of a “generation as actuality” only when individuals react together and similarly to the same historical events, in other words, when social and intellectual contents form a real and concrete bond between the individuals who are in the same generational location. Therefore, generation location indicates the position of the members of a generation only based on their age and the historic-social realm, regardless of their awareness of sharing the same generational location and/or their feeling of belonging to that generation. On the other hand, generation as actuality is based on sharing a common destiny and taking part in and contributing to intellectual and social movements which transform and shape a historical condition (Galland 2007, 110). However, generation as actuality does not have a homogenous structure, either. Mannheim’s concept of generation unit indicates groups who are led by the same actual historical problems but adopt them in different ways and react to them differently (Mannheim 2011, 60; Devriese 1989, 14). Hence, generation units indicate different trends and groups who belong to the same generation but who are in conflict with each other.²³ The unit that wins the struggle gets the chance to define the generation and the period. For example, today when we hear the term ‘68 generation, we think of the “left” wing not the “right”. And this is because it was the left-wing generation units who managed to leave a mark in history.

In sum, we can say that Mannheim brought diverse genealogical explanations of ‘generation’ together and put forth generation as a problem of sociology rather than a problem in the domain of biology and/or culture. For him, generations are movements formed by youth when the youth enter to a wider society and encounter problems which they are not allowed to respond or react to. This shift from old structures enables youth to make new connections and to develop collective responses/reactions to change the pre-set and older structures. To make such a change, each generation needs to develop its own social understanding as well as a “sense of themselves as a historical agent” by acting upon a certain social situation together (Burnett 2010, 38–39).

As can be seen, unlike the cohort-informed view of generation, Mannheim’s approach, which influenced many researchers, firstly, is more sensitive to the differences within the generations due to his idea of generational units, which are in conflict and which exist within the same generational location (Braungart 1976; Dunham 1998). For instance, following Mannheim’s approach to generation, Pilcher (1998) examines women’s attitudes about gender-role reversal empirically

²³ Here at this point Mannheim takes the “romantic and conservative youth” in opposition to the “liberal and rationalistic youth” as an example. This shows that when giving these examples, he thinks of the polarity between the right and left wing in France (Mannheim 1972, 291).

amongst three cohorts and argues that “historical location via cohort operates to make permissible and/or available, some ways of talking rather than others.”

Secondly, Mannheim’s conception of generation does not rely on a passive container of traits, as with the cohort-informed view; instead, generations are political subjects that shape and are shaped by socio-historical events. A similar conception can be found in the works examining youth movements such as the ’68 movement (e.g., Mauger 2013; Jalabert 1997; O’Donnell 2010), the youth in Europe before and during the WWI (e.g., Wohl 1979), the political role of youth movements in Israel and interwar Germany (Eisenstadt 1971), or works which study generations as “self-conscious entities which display evaluation and reflection” (Burnett 2003).

Third, to be or become a political actor/subject, the peer group ought to have (to some extent) a self-consciousness and generational identification, which is not a must for the cohort-informed view because while the cohort is determined and defined by researchers according to age and related data, generation (in Mannheim’s sense) is formed by actors who belong to that generation and change the social situation (Burnett 2010, 50). Therefore, the view on generation as a historical agency emphasises the collective consciousness and actions of a group of people who are born approximately at the same time, with a special focus on traumatic events and their relation to generational memory. For instance, drawing on Mannheim, Turner (2002, 21) analyses the role of traumatic events (such as wars) in creating generational consciousness to “demonstrate the value of generations over class in understanding cultural, intellectual and national change in the twentieth century”.

According to socio-historical agency view of generation, it is not for granted that every age group develops its own distinctive generational culture. Developing a shared culture as a generation depends mainly on the special historical circumstances/traumatic events that they experience in their adolescence and early adulthood. Therefore, the boundaries of the generations become less fixed than they are in the cohort-informed view (e.g., instead of born between 1980–1997, being young in ’60s).

And accordingly, researchers who want to study generations should pay a special attention to the interrelation between the traumatic events and the youth (or youth movements) that ultimately aim to interpret or understand the social changes.

The relatively recent works of Edmunds and Turner (e.g., 2005; 2002a), which follow Mannheim’s view with a combination of Bourdieu’s approach, are the notable contributions to this conception of generation (see, e.g., Eyerman and Turner 1998). Turner (1998, 302) defines generation as “a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus and lifestyle,” and he adds

that generation should also “refer to a cohort which has a strategic temporal location to a set of resources as a consequence of historical accident and the exclusionary practices of social closure.” Accordingly, the traumatic events are seen as “the basis of a collective ideology and a set of integrating rituals that become the conduit for the commemoration of the traumatic experience”(Edmunds and Turner 2002c, 4). Turner and Edmunds are criticised that their interpretation of Bourdieu is limited to his use of generation and does not cover the other important elements of his sociology (see, e.g., Purhonen 2016a, 104–5; Burnett 2010, 52). Besides, Purhonen (2016a, 105) draws attention to the point that they focus on the role of intellectuals without relating it to “wider contexts”.

In this regard, it is possible to say that this socio-historical view of generation has provided an important and new depth to the generation concept by liberating it from its essentialist and over-generalising condition in the light of the generational memory and consciousness. However, on the other hand, the conceptualisation of generation as a socio-historical agency makes the concept more complex and contingent, which also poses difficulties for employing quantitative approaches to the studies of generations (Reed and Thomas 2020, 3).

I believe the studies that rely on the conception of generation as a historical agency are more theoretically sound and more aware of the implicit assumptions of their claims. Therefore, it can be said that this approach to generations overcomes the many obstacles enumerated in the previous section (II.A.3.).

But it still does not provide an accurate theoretical framework for my research, mainly because of the question of representation. The cohort-informed view gets its legitimacy to talk on behalf of a generation by numbers, based on surveys claiming to be representative of the society in question and take the average of this group as it is representation. On the other hand, in the second type of conceptualisation, the representation is based on concrete social events and the role of the youth movements on social change. In other words, “generation” is conceptualised through groups who have the power to change and transform the social structures, i.e., generation is mostly defined and described through the group (or groups) who have the power to change and transform the social structures. This means that similar to the cohort view, the socio-historical view of generation risks representing a smaller group than it claims to encompass, ignoring the diversity of the other possible actors outside and within the examined generational group. Therefore, the problem of overgeneralisation (or overrepresentation) of the cohort-informed view of generation is also valid for the socio-historical view.

In this context, it does not seem very feasible to talk about a powerful sense of identification amongst Gen Y. Most of the people who talk about Gen Y actually do not belong to Gen Y. There is also not enough evidence to claim that formative/significant events (e.g., 9/11, Gezi, the rise of the internet) have developed a memory and culture specific to Gen Y alone. Hence, in my opinion, it does not seem very reasonable to claim that Gen Y has been formed as a result of the struggle both between generations and the struggle within the generation itself. Moreover, we cannot assert that differences between generations are the catalyst for social transformations in the case of Gen Y. Therefore, to analyse Gen Y from this point of view seems both inconvenient and inefficient.

Besides, the cohort-informed view and the socio-historical agency approach have different understandings of what generation is and how it should be studied. But both consider generation to be an identifiable group of individuals and thus the questions that these two views ask are not entirely different from each other. For instance, both views ask the same questions such as “What is generation?” “Is the concept of generation a scientifically valid concept?” if not, “How can we make it valid and efficient for understanding and explaining society and social change?”

But I believe a third approach which can overcome the validity problem of the generation as a concept and analyse the different definitions and descriptions of generation without giving a new definition can provide an enriching understanding of generation. In the following section, I present this approach that I adopt to study Generation Y.

II.A.5. Generation as a social construct

As can be seen from the previous conceptualisations of the idea of generation, social sciences try to answer the question of how generation should be defined in order to make it accurate for explaining or understanding social changes and/or a group of individuals. Thus, the struggle within the social sciences is to find/create the best possible definition of generation as a concept which is “exhaustive and specific enough to inform methodological choices” (Foster 2016, 377); but, as Foster (2012a) points out, there is a third stream of research which makes the multiple meanings and definitions of generation a study subject in itself. This third way has been developing recently and slowly (e.g., White 2013; Foster 2012b; Williams 2019), and it differs dramatically from the previous ones due to the constructivist epistemological stances that it adopts.

Switching to a constructivist perspective requires generation(s) to be tackled as a matter of discourse. The discourses built around the idea of generations mainly define, describe, and explain the

generations, therefore, present a representation of the generations.²⁴ This stream of research mainly focuses on “generational discourses and the way which the terms, concepts, labels, classifications, manifestoes, even scientific theories shape generational identities and how people perceive the relations between generations” (Purhonen 2016b, 18).

As a result of this epistemological position and research focus, there is also a significant shift in the research questions. The dominant questions of the generation studies such as “What is a generation?”; “What are the characteristics of a generation?”; or “Is generation as a concept efficient/coherent enough to explain and understand a group of people and the related social phenomena?” are replaced with the questions “By whom and how generations are represented? And in which context?”

This change in asking questions allows researchers who study generations as a matter of social construct to put aside several important methodological and epistemological issues on generations (that I discuss in the previous sub-chapters). They no longer need to deal with or find a solution (at least directly) for the vagueness, validity, and elitist connotations, or misguidance of the concept. Instead, the focus of the research shifts to the influence and the use of a weak but no doubt a popular idea of generation in different contexts such as at work, in the media, etc. This shift allows them to turn their attention to finding answers to questions or tackling issues such as how people relate to the idea of generation; what people do with the idea of generation in different contexts; what kind of efforts, struggles, and collaborations they make in order to make the concept valid, fruitful, and sufficient in the eyes of others. Moreover, the implicit assumptions of the generational discourses and what these assumptions mean in a particular context become especially important.

In this context, the current literature on generation as a social construct or as a matter of discourse can be classified into three groups: 1) theoretical articles that discuss the possible conceptualisation and meaning of the generation in relation to the theories of philosophers and sociologists (e.g., Foucault, Bourdieu), 2) articles focusing on the representation of generations in the media, and 3) studies focusing on the idea of generations at work. This last focus is parallel to the focus of this dissertation.

²⁴ Accordingly, all the studies that focus on the representation of generations can be seen as a part of the conceptualisation of the generation as a social construct although some of them do not explicitly refer to a constructivist approach.

II.A.5.1. Theoretical discussions

There are significant theoretical differences in discussions about the study of generations between different scholars such as Purhenon, Turner, Aboim and Vascancelos.

Purhenon (2016a) proposes a new approach to the idea of generation based on a different interpretation of Bourdieu. Unlike Edmunds und Turner (2002b), who adopt Bourdieu's seldom use of the concept of generation, Purhenon suggests that the study of generations (in light of Bourdieu) should concentrate "on his more general approach to the genesis of social groupings, classification struggles and the difficult relationships of representation" (2016a, 94). In that sense, Purhenon (2016a, 109) shows that generations can be seen and studied by "analysing the processes of generation-making in symbolic struggles" as a result of the representation and classification struggles that can overcome the essentialist views on generations.

On the other hand, Aboim and Vascancelos (2014), drawing on Foucault's view on discursive formation and on a critical reappraisal of Mannheim's theory, suggest that generations are better conceived as a discursive formation and Mannheim's generational units should be replaced by dominant ideas of the time (2014, 165). Thus, Aboim and Vascancelos's article provides an important theoretical insight into how to study generations from a constructivist perspective (i.e., as a matter of discourse). They propose a theoretical frame which they argue is more sensitive to the diverse types of actors by replacing the *generation unit* with dominant ideas and discourses about a given generation. Most of the time, even in the constructivist approach, the major actors are identified by their relation to the age and generational terms (e.g., youth, older generations, the leader of youth movements, etc.). However, when we replace generation with the dominant idea driving a generation, the number of potential actors enabled to contribute to the generational discourses grows dramatically (e.g., business world, mainstream media, academics, etc.). Yet, the major focus of the theoretical framework which Aboim and Vascancelos provide is how people relate to and identify themselves vis-a-vis generational discourses.

II.A.5.2. Generations in the media

One of the common focuses of communication and media studies is the representation of groups in the media. Studies on the representations of generations in the media provide important insights into the construction of generations and generational conflicts.

Kitch's article analyses 20 years of cover stories in newsweeklies about four generations in the US (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and the Greatest Generation). This article provides

important insights into the role of the journalists in constructing generational labels, but more importantly it shows the common points between the representations of these generations through the analysis of over 20 years. For instance, Kitch (2003, 198) argues that “generations are consistently defined by lifestyle choices such as clothing, hairstyles and consumer products –identity markers located in the political conditions and especially the popular culture of each generation’s adolescence or young adulthood” and the traits presented by newsweeklies regarding different generations are both distinct and overlapping at the same time

The last argument is especially significant for this research as it focuses mainly on the evolution of Gen Y and ignores the other popular generational labels’ evolutions. Kirsch shows that many generations who claim to be different from each other are represented in a remarkably similar way over time (e.g., Baby Boomers and Gen Xers were described as rebellious and entitled, just like Gen Y when they were first talked about). This finding shows that there is a pattern for generational traits talked about in media, which repeats with the rise of each new generational label (see also Rauvola, Rudolph, and Zacher 2019, 5–6).

Similarly, Pritchard and Whiting (2014) analyse the online news about age at work in the UK (with a focus on the Baby Boomers and the Lost Generation). The significance of this study is that the authors (2014, 1619) put forth that “generational positions are reinforced through enrolling both familial and cohort understandings of generations which, while distinct theoretical constructs, here combine to produce apparently discursively robust constructions of generational identities”. Here, it is important to see that different understandings of generation can be instrumentalised together and therefore reinforce the legitimisation of the idea of generation in the media and in our daily lives.

Raby and Shepperd (2021, 380) analyse 30 Canadian editorials written in response to 2019 climate change protests. They focus on the statements and assumptions around age, generation, and heroism in these editorials. According to them all these representations point to the continuing hierarchical structures in relation to adults and children, some shared, mixed ideas and feelings about the activist stance of young people, the insufficient recognition of the effects of climate change regarding both its priorities and disadvantages and the representation of activists, as well as an apparent tension between the recognition of activism as a collective process and the focus on the individual “girl hero” ((Raby and Sheppard 2021, 392). In that sense, the article provides a good example to show how generational narratives can be used to illustrate and explain political protests.

Bristow (2015) on the other hand examines the construction of the Baby Boomers and generational conflict in the UK based on a qualitative media analysis of national newspapers. According to Bristow (2015, 188), the reason for the social construction of the Baby Boomer problem was to justify or

provide cover for political decisions taken about pension, housing, and healthcare services. However, it is not the generational conflict, the attitudes of the Baby Boomers, or the gap between young and old which caused it. It can be analysed and understood better if it is taken into consideration as the expression of economic stagnation and ideological confusion.

White (2013) examines generationalism as the systematic appeal to the concept of generation for narrating the social and political in British public life based on a selective literature composed of articles from mainstream newspapers, weeklies, and blogs. She distinguishes five distinct functions of the generational discourses and the uses of the idea of generation: 1) “historical explanations”, 2) “ways to periodize”, 3) “source of community”, 4) “means to identify injustice”, and 5) “as an axis of conflict and impending crisis”. And by these distinct functions, White puts forth that generational discourses provide acceptable master-narrative for different political orientations by connecting science and normativity. In sum, White shows that the idea of generation can be instrumentalised in many different ways in the political sphere.

All these media studies indicate that the idea of generation might not be scientifically well founded or reliable but that when it is examined as a representation of a group of people, it shows that generational representations and discourses are very rich sources to study to learn more about perhaps not the generation itself but about the interests and intentions of the ones who produce and spread these representations. Accordingly, they give an important understanding of the role and functions of the generational discourses.

However, according to my first observations of the texts on Gen Y (especially published in Turkey but also the popular American publications), employee and management dimensions of Gen Y are much more dominant than their political and activist dimensions. Therefore, the studies which focus on generational issues at work with a constructivist perspective provide a better understanding of possible actors, roles, and functions of generational discourses for this research.

II.A.5.3. Generations at work

The approaches on generational discourses at work are diverse, and they depend on their theoretical influences as well as the focus of their research questions.

Generations as a management tool

Reed and Thomas (2020) adopt Foucauldian approach in order to make sense of the idea of generation, and accordingly they focus on the governing aspect of the generational thinking at work. They identify the idea and theories of generation as a management tool “to stratify a workforce along

generational lines, to distinguish its qualities and to differentiate orientations to work”, and they name this practice as management-by-generation (Reed and Thomas 2020, 1). They illustrate this Foucauldian approach with a case study (a UK-based international insurance company). It is concordantly understandable that the Foucauldian perspective leads them to focus on the governance and bio-politic aspects of the construction of the generation at work between HR, managers, and employees. However, despite many similar observations, unlike Reed and Thomas, this dissertation does not limit its observations to the governance dimension and has a more fluid focus, mainly due to the translation perspective and the focus on the travel of the management ideas (see section II.B.3.2.).

Generation as a mental structure

Foster elaborates on generations and generational differences from a constructivist perspective as a matter of representation (2016), identity (2012b), and more generally as a matter of mental structures (Foster 2013a; 2012a). Her empirical works are mainly based on qualitative data drawn from 52 interviews with older and younger workers (Foster 2012a; 2013a; 2016). These works are noteworthy for the analysis of generations as social constructs.

Foster’s works offer important insights in many different ways. First of all, they present a very accurate form of doing an empirical constructivist research. Secondly, the research provides us with the implicit assumptions embedded in the idea of generation, which has many similarities with what I found out in my in-depth interviews.

Lastly, Foster (2012a, 35) argues that first, the idea of generation works as “a vehicle for thought and action – a mental structure that provides people with, and limits them to specific way(s) of understanding, speaking, and acting in the world”. Accordingly, Foster focuses on the work-life stories of the interviewees from different ages and suggests that generational discourse shapes one’s way to relate to paid work, which coincides with the restructuring of the economy and transformations of other socio-political changes.

Thus, it can be said that generational representations are examined more in thoughts and mental structures of the employees within the work context. This again provides many important insights for my research and especially for the sub-chapter VI.B. where I analyse how my interviewees relate to generations at work. But despite many theoretical and observational similarities, my direction within the constructivist realm differs from theirs.

Generation as a management fashion

The most significant article for this dissertation was published in 2019 by Williams. It is titled “Management Millennialism: Designing the New Generation of Employee”. Williams, in this article, addresses a very similar question to my guiding question: “Given the acknowledged limitations of

‘generational thinking’..., [w]hy has the Millennial archetype gained such prominence and what purpose does it serve within employing organisations?” (2019, 372). Based on this question, Williams builds his analysis on management fashion literature and examines one company case in which the idea of generational differences are taken seriously and where the entrance of Millennials is considered to be a reference point for the human resource management. He, first of all, notes (2019, 372) that Gen Y is not a cohesive group and is usually defined not by the members of the group but from the outside with the intent to contrast the assumed differences between generations. Secondly, he observes that the Gen Y traits and the managerial prescriptions given in the literature on Gen Y are in line with the existing management thinking. Based on these observations, he argues (2019, 373) that Gen Y has been conceived according to the specifications of employers and “serves as a model for the actual future workforce.”

While Williams’s approach to analysing the idea of Millennials (Gen Y) as a matter of management fashion has many similarities to the approach followed in this study (see section II.B.), my own approach, research design, and findings differ from Williams’s study. The first major difference is the research topic: While he focuses on one company based in Ireland, my focus is on the transfer of the idea of generation from the US. to Turkey. Furthermore, Williams does not examine the origins of the Gen Y discourse, whereas I reconstruct its development first on management books and consultancy companies’ research reports in the US. and then in management literature and press in Turkey. Different from Williams, I do not conclude or argue that the Gen Y discourse serves as a model for developing the future workforce. Rather, I argue that it is characterised by a kind of strategic vagueness and openness to fit into very different managerial goals. My in-depth interviews within the companies also point to different findings than Williams’s analysis. As I describe in sub-chapter VI.C., there is a considerable variety of managerial approaches to implementing Gen Y concepts in companies. In several cases, the discourse is used less for “designing employees”, as Williams argues, and more as a tool to change managerial attitudes and styles and to address older managers who resist to changes in the companies.

Overall, the conceptualisation of generations as a social construct enables us to tackle the narratives and discourses built around the idea of generation. Accordingly, the representations of generations gain a central role for these studies. This view allows us to have a better understanding of how generational discourses are instrumentalised and what their common implicit assumptions (which are in line with other narratives and discourses in our daily lives) are.

II.A.6. Conclusion

This sub-chapter attempts to provide a brief review of the academic literature on the idea of generation. As can be seen, many different academic fields and disciplines have contributed to the generation literature. Alongside the popularity of the concept in the public sphere, this diversity within the literatures makes the number of academic articles abundant. For simplicity's sake, however, I present three main conceptualisations of generations, mainly based on the differences between their theoretical approaches. I do so for two reasons: First, I believe classifications based on epistemological assumptions are more efficient in tracing the main tendencies in the academic fields. Second, presenting and classifying the literature in this way support the theoretical and methodological choices I have made for this dissertation.

In this context, I divide the academic literature into four main aspects: generation as a kinship, as a birth cohort, as a socio-historical agency, and as a (social) construct. Although the first one can be integrated into the other two conceptualisations of generations (birth cohort and socio-historical agency) and can also be found implicitly in the generational discourses, my research subject Generation Y is defined (at least in its explicit definitions) as a group of people born in the same consecutive years therefore as a group of coevals.

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When generations are understood as groups of coevals, there are two major conceptualisations in the academic literature: a birth cohort and a socio-historical agency. Generation theories and academic literature on generations are dominated by the cohort-informed view, which relies on a positivistic and quantitative view on generations. Viewing generation as a birth cohort assumes that generations have quantifiable boundaries (birth years) and that they are homogeneous enough to be observable and meaningful as a research subject (Lyons and Kuron 2013, 141). However, some researchers criticize the cohort view as misleading, essentialist, and overgeneralised. And some other researchers challenge and criticise the concept of cohort methodologically, arguing that it is not easy (or even possible) to separate different effects from the generational effects.

The third conceptualisation might be read as an attempt to overcome the methodological and theoretical problems of the literature on generations. According to the socio-historical agency view, a

birth cohort can be named as a generation only if the members of the cohort recognize themselves (and act accordingly) as a part of the generation. Thus, this conceptualisation puts the emphasis on the consciousness and the agency role of the generations, which is often used to explain and understand youth movements. This view is more theoretically sound, but still the danger of enlarging the experience of a group of people to the whole age group exists for this type of conceptualisation. In other words, these studies (at least potentially) represent experiences as being those of the whole generation although they are more likely the experiences of a smaller group (e.g., students, soldiers, literary men, etc.). Case in point: Generation Y (or Millennials) as a concept is mainly defined and represented by those other than the generation itself. That is why I believe that socio-historical agency view does not fit for the case of Gen Y.

Therefore, I turn to the fourth and least common/most recent approach to the idea of generation: generation as a matter of (social) construct. This approach allows us to study generations as a matter of discourse and accordingly the validity and efficiency of the concept have a secondary importance. Instead of specifying the generation itself, who describe it and how they describe it become the primary focus.

For this dissertation, I adopt the constructivist conceptualisation of generations to study Generation Y. The use of generation in the sense of kinship does not fit to any existent notion of Generation Y, as it is typically only defined as a birth cohort. I also reject the birth cohort conceptualisation of generations, not only because of the theoretical and empirical problems that it creates and leads to but also because, I do not find much (academic, social, and political) interest to study a very popular but theoretically weak concept in this way.

When it comes to socio-historical view, I believe Generation Y, even when taken only as a label, does not adequately fit because it is hard at present to talk about their generational memory and defining moments. Although it might be possible to make such determinations in the future, today it would be too presumptive to make such claims.

Nevertheless, these three conceptualisations of generation provide important insights to understand the challenges, rhetorical strategies, and components of the concept and thus the discourse built around it (not only at the scholarly level but also at popular and practitioner levels). For instance, most of the time, consultants on generations use elements from all these conceptualisations in their workshops: While defining generations by their age of birth (as a birth cohort), they also emphasise that strict lines cannot be drawn for the start and end of a generation. To illustrate the difference between generations, most often they refer to anecdotes from their grandparents, parents,

themselves, and their children; therefore, they implicitly use the genealogical sense of the concept (generation as a kinship), and when they claim that this generation is the carrier of the new “spirit of the world,” they imply something similar to the idea of generation as a socio-historical agency (similar to the claim that ’68 Generation defined and changed their period as well as the next ones).

When we reject these three conceptualisations, we are left with the constructivist approach. This approach, as I show in the next chapter, not only allows us to overcome the theoretical and empirical problems stated in this sub-chapter but also to see the very idea of generation and Gen Y specifically from a different perspective: The Gen Y discourse can be studied as a matter of management fashion, since both of them show very similar qualities.

However, social constructivist approaches are also diverse amongst themselves, and this diversity creates differences in their focal points and therefore in their findings. In the next sub-chapter, I explain the constructivist epistemology that I adopt and how it influences my conceptualisation of generation (as a matter of discourse) and my methodology in detail.

II.B. Theoretical Background: Constructing Generations

II.B.1. Introduction: Studying weak concepts

Considering the empirical and theoretical problems of generation as a concept reviewed above, it is clear that the evidence for the existence of generations and generational differences is lacking.²⁵ Then, one might rightfully ask the question: Is it really worthwhile to study such a weak concept, especially when there are already so many concepts in the history of social sciences that we do not talk about anymore?

The fact that an idea is weak and lacks evidence for its existence does not mean that its influences and its role in our daily lives are not worth to study. There are few good examples that show studying weak ideas might be fruitful and important. For instance, studies such as Wacquant’s (1996) examination of the “underclass” used in the fields of social sciences and journalism or Boltanski’s work (1978) investigating the concept of “auto didactive executives” (cadres autodidactes) used in the business world both constitute valuable examples of how “twaddle” is taken into consideration. These two concepts ambiguously describe a heterogeneous population as a homogeneous group; therefore, they are misleading. But more importantly, Wacquant and Boltanski show us how these concepts are

²⁵ It is important to bear in mind that these issues of coherence are not limited to the academic use of the concept. Generational discourses also contradict with the common sense from time to time (e.g., that the generational traits do not differ much between countries and cultures).

constructed and what the consequences of these constructs are by examining how and by whom they are defined and perceived.

As a student of Bourdieu, Wacquant borrows Bourdieu's quote "youth is just a word" (1993, 94) and adopts it for the underclass: "underclass is just a word but a dangerous one" (1996, 259). When Bourdieu says that he does not mean that youth does not exist or is not worth studying, what he means is that we need to perceive it and accordingly study it from a different perspective. We should study youth as a human-made classification which is the result of many struggles within different fields:

The logical division between young and old is also a question of power, of the division (in the sense of sharing-out) of powers. Classification by age (but also by sex and, of course, class) always means imposing limits and producing an order to which each person must keep, keeping himself in his place. (Bourdieu 1993, 94)

In this context, what Wacquant says of underclass can also be said of generations: Generation is just a word but a dangerous one. It is dangerous because, first and foremost, for more than ten years with irregular frequency discourses on generations and generational differences have become very popular. We get used to seeing this topic in mainstream newspapers and magazines. It becomes increasingly common to hear generational explanations at work, to read "ok boomer" on social media, and to see private research companies publishing their surveys with references to generational categories. We also observe that the participation of young people in social movements and protests are glossed over with the generational traits of the young population. Therefore, studying generation as social construct is important, not just because it is mainstream and overhyped but also because that hype ends up cloaking more important phenomena that actually do explain many aspects and fields of our lives.²⁶ In line with its importance, it is also dangerous because the idea of generation and generational explanations which shape our understanding of the world in many ways, are more than what they denote. Like all other discourses, generational discourses also have implicit assumptions and, via these assumptions, they present one understanding of the world while muting different potential understandings at the same time (Hay 2016, 248).

Once we accept that studying a weak concept might be fruitful and enriching, the first question that comes to mind is how we can make sense of the continued emphasis and popularity of the generations

²⁶ Williams (2019, 377) also points out another aspect of the discourse built around Millennials (Gen Y) as a reason to take it seriously: "Since the status of the Millennial appears to align with existing management thinking, it should not be dismissed too readily as the product of naivety."

and generational thinking despite the lack of solid evidence (Williams 2019, 377; Rudolph et al. 2020b, 11). This question is the starting point for this research.

While working on this key question, a sub-field within the organisation and management studies – namely studies on management ideas and fashions – provided me important insights and helped me to deepen the analysis of the research subject (II.B.2.). But before explaining the relevance of this field, I elaborate on the constructivist approach and its influence on this research (II.B.2.).

II.B.2. Constructivist approach: “Generations are not born, they are made”.

Elliot et al. (2016a) define constructivism in the *A Dictionary of Social Research Methods* as such: “An epistemological position holding that, although the world is independent of human minds, knowledge of it is always a human and social construction. Knowledge is, therefore, constructed through social discourse and is based on experience, and not the result of direct observation or perception”.

Adopting a constructivist epistemology, therefore, means assuming there is no truth outside of social interactions or, at least, the knowledge of truth is only intelligible via the analysis of these social interactions and meaning productions.²⁷ Hence, all the things that we perceive as “true” and “real” are part of a process which is socially constructed with collaboration, consensus, struggles, and power dynamics within a given social context (Elliot et al. 2016a).

Unlike the common misunderstanding, if something is socially constructed, this does not mean it is less real, imaginary, or freely invented. It means that what we call reality or truth is not created from nothing “but constructed or assembled from that which already exists” (Czarniawska 2009, 156).²⁸

When Beauvoir (1956) said “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”²⁹ or when Bourdieu (1993) said “youth is just a word,” they were taking similar epistemological stands, and they definitely were not saying that gender and youth are not real or unimportant. On the contrary, their approach to these subjects enables us to think about them without falling to biological determinism. They are real because of their consequences and because of the way they shape our thoughts and our way of

²⁷ While the first one can be seen as an ontological position, the second one refers to an epistemological and methodological stand. It is also important to bear in mind that whether ontological or epistemological constructivist approaches vary within themselves. For instance, while for some, it can be just a useful method to explain some specific phenomena (e.g., representation issues in media studies), others can see it more as an approach which shapes all human activities.

²⁸ Latour (2005) proposes the term assembling instead of constructing.

²⁹ It might not be correct to say that Beauvoir adopts constructivist epistemology, but it is possible to claim (at least to some extent) that her conception of human (and accordingly gender/sex) can be qualified as constructivist -although it is anachronic to say so.

thinking. To put it another way, it does not mean that if I stop thinking about genders (which is probably not possible or not that easy to do), genders and the inequalities produced based on gender differences will disappear.

For this dissertation, I adopt a theoretical background similar to the Actor-Network Theory (ANT, also called the sociology of translation). Although I make use of some concepts of ANT, it is possible to say that I do not strictly follow the theory, but I believe I have not moved away from their constructivist epistemology, either (for a detailed Latour's understanding of constructivism, see Latour 2003). The idea of Gen Y and the discourse built around it are first and foremost representations of a group of people. Therefore, I believe some major concepts of ANT such as translation and spokespersons, who interpret the process of construction as a matter of representation, do provide a better framework than other constructivist approaches. Additionally, ANT seems more sensible than the other constructivist theories regarding the relations between the local and global actors within diverse fields (e.g., academia, media, or business world) for analysing the travel of ideas (see, e.g., Czarniawska-Joerges and Sevón 2005; Czarniawska and Joerges 1996).

Actor-Network Theory's definition of construction does not differ dramatically from the other constructivist approaches: Latour (2003, 16–17) as one of the founders of ANT defines a (socially) constructed entity as one “a) which has not always been around, b) which is of humble origin, c) which is composed of heterogeneous parts, d) which was never fully under the control of its makers, e) which could have failed to come into existence, f) which now provides occasions as well as obligations, g) which needs for this reason to be protected and maintained if it is to continue to exist.”

On the other hand, the constructivist epistemology proposed by Actor-Network Theory deviates from the other constructivist approaches in the active role it gives to the non-human entities, especially those produced by science and technology in “the explanation of society in the making” (Callon 2006, 267).³⁰

³⁰ This difference has important consequences for the approach to the research: First and foremost, the division between social and natural “reality” becomes “the result of the generalised negotiation about the representativity of the spokespeople. If consensus is achieved, the margins of manoeuvre of each entity will then be tightly delimited” (Callon 2006, 267). In line with this, Latour (2005, 8) claims that all research subjects – including the non-human actors – are natural, social, and discursive, and therefore they are all real, human, and semiotic entities all at the same time. Following this understanding the major dichotomies of the sciences such as object/subject, facts/artefacts, discourse/reality, human/non-human, words/things are rejected within ANT but not their existence or their consequences in our daily lives. They are rejected in such a way that we should not change our methodological approach based on the qualities of the research objects (e.g., humans/non-humans, modern/premodern, material/immaterial). Moreover, we should and can study all these with the same approach and can therefore understand what kind of efforts make things understood as natural, social and/or discursive.

When generation is understood as a (social) construct, the discourse built around it becomes the main material to be examined. Discourse is not only a verbal linguistic process, but it includes non-verbal processes in the light of power relations. Following Foucault's view, discourse can be understood first and foremost as "any historically identifiable pattern of verbal and non-verbal behaviour which transmits sets of propositions and implications" (Stringer 2005). However, it is more than that: "Discourses also simultaneously reproduce knowledge and power through what is possible to think/be/do" (Hay 2016, 248). Thus, discourse analysis is the method which enables us to grasp how "a particular knowledge of the world becomes common sense and dominant, while simultaneously silencing different interpretations" (Hay 2016, 248).

In this context, generation as a matter of discourse includes every attempt to define, describe, and act on behalf or in the name of a generation. Additionally, generational discourses are mostly framed for a purpose (Foster 2016, 18) – sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly; sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. Therefore, the question of consistency of a discourse also plays an important role. Lock and Strong explain (2010, 246) the consistency in the discourses as such:

Discourses tend to have an internal consistency, and even where certain ideas are not expressed in them, these principles of consistency provide "spaces" as to what might "legitimately" be subsequently expressed, and, by implication, what might not be expressed. "Not expressing" something has two facets. First, the set of ideas cohering in a discourse make some stances toward the world much harder to formulate. Second, the way of formulating the world in a particular discourse act to make some things appear to be "the natural way that things are", because there is a consistency among them that intuitively makes (unreflective) sense to those who speak through it.

For the researchers who adhere to such an understanding, it means that discourse includes verbal and non-verbal acts, thoughts, as well as implicit and explicit assumptions. Additionally, the analysis of a discourse thus defined cannot be limited to the analysis of the content. It is also necessary to analyse the context where the creation, distribution, and reception of the discourses take place. This includes a close look into the intentions and the interests of the creators, the power relations that enable the production and distribution of these discourses, and the type of materials in which discourses are embedded. In other words, if generations are taken as a matter of discourse, deconstructing it in the sense of exposing its "contextualised presuppositions" (Elliot et al. 2016b) becomes the main method of analysis.

When generations are studied as a matter of discourse, researchers are to ask several various important questions. They should ask "How is a generation defined? By whom and in which context?" instead of "What is a generation?" Similarly, they should ask "What do they do in order to make the

concept reliable and useful in the eyes of the others?” instead of “Is generation a valid concept?” (see Table II-1.)

This change in asking questions, allows us to put aside several important methodological and epistemological issues on generations (that I discuss in the previous section II.A.3.). We do not need to deal with or find a solution for the problem of vagueness, validity, elitist connotations, and misguidance of the concept of generation anymore. Instead, the focus of the research shifts to the influence and the use of a weak but no doubt a popular idea of generation in our daily lives. This shift prompts us to seek answers to questions and address issues such as how people engage with the concept of generation, what actions they take in various contexts, and the efforts, struggles, and collaborations they undertake to validate, make fruitful, and enhance the efficiency of this concept.

As can be seen, these questions do not seek an answer to define the generations per se; therefore, it is unlikely to develop essentialist claims and explanations when such an approach is adopted. Hence, neither the reality nor the existence of generations, nor the traits of generations have a primary importance for the constructivist approach and accordingly for this research.

In line with the change in questions, the type of materials to deal with and the approach to these materials also change due to the adoption of a constructivist epistemology. A constructivist approach puts aside the assumption of what is true, real, or knowledgeable and sees, for instance, research reports as a production by specific actors within a context. Therefore, for the constructivist, a not well-founded popular article can be more relevant than a comprehensive, longitudinal study on generations because both are considered to be discursive productions in different fields that contribute to the bigger discourse on generations.

In this dissertation, I analyse the construction of the Gen Y within this framework. Accordingly, attempts to construct Gen Y constitute its main axis. I focus on and analyse how and by whom Gen Y is constructed and what kind of strategies are used to legitimise this construction rather than what Gen Y is and whether or not it represents reality.

Table II-1. Two conceptualisations of generation which lead to two different approaches in the research. Source: Author.

| Generation as a distinct group of people | Generation as a construction |
|---|---|
| “What is a generation?” (e.g., people born around the same years) | By whom and how generations are defined? (e.g., by academics as a birth cohort) |
| Who is Generation Y? (e.g., people born between 1980–97) What are the distinctive traits of the Gen Y? (e.g., technologically adept) | By whom and how is Generation Y defined? (e.g., by managers as an entitled generation of employees) |
| Is generation a valid/efficient concept? Is Generation Y a valid conceptualisation? | What do actors do in order to make the idea of generation/ Gen Y valid in the eyes of the others? |

II.B.3. Generation Y as a management idea

As the organizational sciences move toward the ideals of evidence-based practice, generations and assumed differences between them are quickly becoming yet another example of a discredited management fad. (Rudolph et al. 2020b, 11)

As mentioned earlier, due to the constructivist approach I adopt, questions directed to the research subject change from “What/who is Generation Y?” to “How is Gen Y defined? By whom and in which context?” and “Is Generation Y a valid concept?” to “What do they do in order to make the concept reliable and useful in the eyes of the others?”.

The potential answers to these questions also determine which scholarly fields I should relate to for the case of Gen Y. An overall look at the literature and mainstream media coverage about Gen Y shows that this generation is first described as a new type of consumer in marketing and advertising literature. When this generation begins to join the corporate workforce, the concept becomes a matter of human resources and management, which increasingly effects discussions about age-related work subjects (Fineman 2011). While these concurrent dimensions exist, my in-depth interviews with corporate white-collar workers and analysis of the articles published in Turkey suggest that human resources and management (HRM) are the most dominant dimensions that define Gen Y.

According to popular HRM literature, Generation Y is different from previous generations, and companies should adapt jobs and work environments accordingly (Pouget 2010; Türk 2013a; Tulgan 2001; M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008; McQueen 2010; Alsop 2008a). Thus, the Gen Y discourse legitimises many HRM policies in companies (e.g., coaching, mentoring, 360-degree feedback, soft-skills training, flexible work arrangements, team building activities, etc.).

Concordantly, Gen Y discourse is mainly propagated by actors related to the corporate world such as management consultants, research and consultancy companies, popular management book writers, and business journalists. It is also important to bear in mind that most of the time these actors are not part of the Gen Y age group but older. In line with this, Shaw (2018, 20) draws attention to the fact that the voices of young generations themselves are mostly absent in the vast majority of the narratives produced around generational issues.³¹

Consequently, based on this preliminary look, it can be said that Gen Y is a subject which is mostly produced and diffused by business-related actors.

³¹ Similarly, Lyons and Schwitzer (2017, 213), based on their research in Canada, show that those in the Gen Y age group is the least likely group to identify with a generational group.

Scholarly journals of management and organisation studies similarly have allocated significant attention to the management of generations in the workplace since 2010 (Foster 2016, 375).³² Most of such studies focus on Gen Y (or Millennials) in comparison to previous generations like Baby Boomers and Generation X (e.g., Twenge et al. 2010; Reisenwitz and Iyer 2009; Krahn and Galambos 2014; Karaman et al. 2015). The common approach is to consider Generation Y as a birth cohort and/or age group who have different values, behaviours, and expectations at work than the previous generations. Even the studies which claim to challenge the accuracy of the common traits that are attributed to generations presume that generation is a logical way to categorise people (Foster 2016, 17).

In sum, most of these scholarly management articles take the existence of the generations for granted, rely on the arguments (e.g., cut-off points) from the popular business literature and use cross-sectional data, which means that generation is understood just as an age group, nothing more. Therefore, the academic management literature on Gen Y does not sit comfortably with the conceptualisation of generation that I adopt for this research.³³ However, a niche area within the management studies, namely the studies on management ideas and fashion has been very helpful for this research.

II.B.3.1. Management ideas and fashions

This sub-field of management studies developed at the beginning of 1990s. Management scholars tried to explain the reasons for the introduction and the constant use of “new concepts, techniques and buzzwords in the management community” (Madsen and Stenheim 2013, 68). In the last 20 years, the management fashion theory has broadened and extended into many different directions. However, the most common issue that is dealt with in these studies is “the dissemination and diffusion of management concepts” (Madsen and Stenheim 2013, 68).

Before explaining how I build my analysis around this literature, it is important to take a brief look at some conceptual distinctions and situate Gen Y as a discourse among these distinctions. Bort (2015, 46) summarises these distinctions as follows:

³² For the bibliometric analysis of the development of the study on generations in management and business journals see Ortiz-Pimentel et al. (2020).

³³ Besides, as Klikauer (2015, 198) puts forth the majority of the management studies (and to some extent critical management studies) stay inside the managerial paradigms and ideologies therefore they are non-critical and do not accord with the intended social and political implications of this research.

Table II-2. The major terms of management fashion literature. Source: Bort 2015,46.

| Terms | Short descriptions | Examples |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Management idea | A broader discourse about what “good” management looks like at a particular point of time. It can have a positive as well as a negative connotation. | Greening or green management (Fineman 2001) |
| Management concept | A label that contains a relatively abstract description of what managers “ought to do” and they include “a system of assumptions, accepted principles and rules of procedure” (Nicolai et al. 2010, p. 163). | Empowerment (Lincoln et al. 2002) |
| Management practice | Practice is the specific application of a management concept in an organization. It describes how organizational processes work or at least should work. | Related to the management concept work-life balance, a firm might implement the following practices: remote work, hot-desking, or virtual teamwork (Whittle 2008) |
| Management fashion | Management fashion is a concept that has been taken up by a significant number of managers, who “jump on the bandwagon” (Birkinshaw et al. 2008, 831; Nicolai et al. 2010, 164). | Business process reengineering or lean production (Nijholt and Benders 2007, 630) |
| Management panacea | Concepts that are framed in such a broad way that they can be related to different “problems”, adopted in various contexts, and used in different kinds of organizations (see Gill and Whittle 1993, 282; Rovik 2002, 126). | Total quality management or management by objectives (Gill and Whittle 1993) |
| Management innovation | Refers to the introduction of novelty in an organization, and it is related to organizational change (see Birkinshaw et al. 2008, 826). | BP’s (formerly The British Petroleum Company plc.) introduction of peer groups (Ghoshal and Gratton 2002) or the business cell structure at Litton Interconnection Products (Birkinshaw and Mol 2006) |

However, it is important to note that there are no strict lines to distinguish these concepts from each other and no strong consensus among scholars who work with these concepts (Bort 2015, 35). Mainly because of this reason, I interpret these concepts as different aspects of the same phenomena and accordingly adopt the term *management idea* for the Gen Y discourse since it is the broadest and, in a way, the most neutral definition. Management idea denotes “a broader discourse about what ‘good’ management looks like at a particular point of time. It can have a positive as well as a negative connotation” (Bort 2015, 46). As I point out in the next pages, according to the ideas/concepts studied in the field of management ideas and fashions, the discourse built around Gen Y shows some important differences. That is why I prefer to use the broadest term “management idea” instead of the terms fad, or fashion. Moreover, these terms have strong negative connotations. For instance, qualifying the Gen Y discourse as “fashion” would directly connote the ephemeral nature of the idea, which might not be the case, or the term managerial practice related to Gen Y, which is identified as “management fad”, would imply that such a practice is being implemented by the management on the employees with little or no input from them. They are popular terms within the corporate world but not necessarily due to any real need for organisational change (Miller and Hartwick 2002). Although these terms and their connotations can be used for the Gen Y discourse in many aspects, I prefer not to call the Gen Y discourse a fad, or fashion because I do not want to create (pre)judgements

and guide the reader and myself in that direction. In other words, I believe these concepts are a part of the “diagnosis”, which a good therapist should avoid as long as they can because this kind of diagnosis can become an obstacle to genuinely understand the counselee (Yalom and Elkin 2018).

Studies on management fashions focus on different managerial ideas and practices, but the majority of the fashionable ideas have strong technical and practical implications such as total quality management (e.g., Boje and Winsor 1993; Erçek and Say 2008; Zbaracki 1998), business process re-engineering (e.g., Heusinkveld, Benders, and Hillebrand 2013; Fincham 1995; Jackson 1996), and lean management (e.g., Morris and Lancaster 2006; H. Andersen and Røvik 2015). For instance, literature on total quality management (TQM) commonly suggests tools and techniques such as failure mode and effects analysis, benchmarking, statistical process control, use of different diagrams, etc (Dale, Dehe, and Bamford 2016, 181).

Even though these management ideas are criticised for not being precise enough to put them into practice in the companies, they are still more precise than the Gen Y discourse, as they suggest specific tools and techniques (in order to reach the desired results). The Gen Y discourse promotes different managerial ideas and practices, but these practices and ideas are recommended to the managers who want to work with Gen Y as “natural” results of the Gen Y characteristics. For instance, Gen Y is considered “a generation paving the way to a more open, a tolerant society” (Tulgan 2001, 6). Therefore, it is important as a manager of Gen Y to embrace diversity, listen to employees, and take them seriously. Hence, the link between the Gen Y discourse and managerial practices (including tools and techniques) is not direct and indeed weaker than the link between other management discourses (e.g., TQM, BPR) and management practices.

Despite all this, content and context-wise, the similarities between the Gen Y discourse and management fashions are very striking.

Different uses and roles of management ideas

First and foremost, fashion and management fashions have their particular rationality, or at least as a research subject, studies of fashions demand different forms of rationality because the typical understanding of rationality does not provide satisfactory answers:

If one considers fashion as a topic in itself, on the contrary ..., one looks for a different and particular form of rationality – one in which the observation of others (the observation of observers) is not a mistake but rather the best way to understand social phenomena, a way to seize their complexity without getting lost in arbitrariness. (Esposito 2011, 604)

The idea of “observation of observers” sits comfortably with the constructivist approach because instead of asking “Who is Gen Y?”, constructivists ask the question “By whom and how is Gen Y defined?”. But more importantly, the observation of the observers means that the object of the observation tends to become a secondary concern, since the popularity of a fashionable idea is most often not so dependent on the idea itself but mostly dependent on the organisational factors (Williams 2019, 377) such as the interests of the managers or institutional isomorphism³⁴.

As I point out in the previous pages, conceptualisation of generations as a birth cohort has many theoretical and empirical flaws, and therefore it is interesting to observe the continued emphasis and popularity of the generations and generational thinking. This is very similar to the situation of the management ideas when they become fashions and seen as a cure-all for managerial issues.

Brunsson and Olsen (1993, 87), for instance, observe that in some cases, after the adoption of the management ideas, it is possible to see that there is no significant change “at the level of operation” but only “at the level of talk” within the company, and still management expresses satisfaction with the results. On the other hand, some significant findings on management ideas show decentralisation or self-coordination, for instance, can contribute to the hierarchical control within the companies – contrary to proposed outcomes of more employee autonomy (Kieser 1997, 67).

Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1988, 174) put forth that management fashions give meaning and ease the adoption of many different changes which are to be implemented within organisations. In this context, the popularity of an idea is sought in different possible uses and roles of the management idea in question. Kieser (1997, 66–67) notes a similar function for the management fashions:

The management Fashion simplifies coordination between the different project groups within a company; it helps to orchestrate scattered restructuring activities. One of its main functions is to cut short discussions. Proposals can be easily rejected by classifying them as not fitting the fashion.

The Gen Y discourse, when it is translated to managerial practices, can also have very similar roles and functions. For instance, framing new managerial practices as it is done for the Gen Y employees (or just labelling these practices with the Gen Y label) legitimises most of the new or current changes

³⁴ Isomorphism in the social sciences refers to a similarity in the processes or structure between one organisation and another. This similarity may arise from imitation or independent development under similar constraints. (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; see also, Meyer and Rowan 1977).

within a company. Williams makes a similar observation. In the article where he builds his analysis of Millennial (or Gen Y) archetypes on management fashion literature, he indicates that the Gen Y traits and the managerial prescriptions given in the literature on Gen Y are in line with the existing management thinking. Accordingly, he puts forth that Millennial archetypes are used as a discursive resource “that serve to frame pre-existing beliefs and exigencies into a bigger and more compelling stories” (Williams 2019, 377). When I analyse the noteworthy books on Gen Y both in English and in Turkish, I observe a similar pattern (see Chapter IV. and section V.D.) such as the promotion of the already existing management concepts and practices (e.g., flexible working hours, mentoring, etc.) as convenient or necessary practices for working with the Gen Y employees. Similarly, I also observe that, in the companies where the Gen Y discourse is taken seriously, the pre-existing management concepts being implemented are presented as changes to create a better work environment for Gen Y. Within this framework, it is possible to say that my observations and argumentations are in line with Williams’s own. However, in addition to his argumentation, I also observe and, accordingly, argue that there is a considerable variety of managerial approaches and usage of the Gen Y concept in companies and the point at issue is sometimes also to help old managers adapt to changing working conditions rather than just designing young employees from the HR perspective. Therefore, I argue that there is a significant cleavage between the Gen Y discourse at rhetorical level – which focuses on the characteristics of the Gen Y (i.e., young) employees – and its usage at the practical level, where companies often use it to push older managers to change their leadership styles and also working conditions and relationships.

Another significant observation of Williams (2019, 384) is that Millennials are presented as the representative of “the future of the workforce.” In other words, designing the Millennials becomes equal to designing the future of the workforce. In Chap IV., in the detailed analysis of significant books on Gen Y, I similarly put forth that one of the most important claims of the Gen Y discourse is that Gen Y represents the future and therefore employers should change according to the needs of this new generation. Parallel to this, managers who introduce practices aimed at young generations often do so in order to promote themselves as open-minded and progressive, while making others who criticize these practices seem as close-minded. Hence, the ambiguities and the contradictions of the management ideas do not necessarily affect its adoption and its popularity negatively due to its implicit roles and uses within the companies.

In this framework, the different uses and the roles of the fashionable management ideas explained in the scholarly literature enrich the understanding of the potential roles of the Gen Y discourse in the business world.

Actors of the management fashion arena

Some scholarly studies in this field focus on different actors who take part in this arena. These types of studies help to be more aware of the possible actors and their roles that contribute to the Gen Y discourse (see Table II-3.). Drawing on Madsen and Slåtten’s (2013, 114–15) summary, we see that most of the different types of actors involved in the management fashion arena are also present in the construction of the Gen Y discourse.³⁵ Kieser (1997, 63–64) summarises how a management idea becomes a management fashion by way of different actors as such:

In order to produce management fashions and myths, the potential bestseller must become an object of public discourse. Management magazines must pick up the basic ideas developed in bestsellers. Consulting companies which do not have bestselling author for the current fashion in their team must somehow find a way to present themselves as also being competent in this new concept... Very soon university professors enter the discussion. They are welcomed in the arena because they provide legitimacy for the fashion – even if they have no original serious research to contribute to the fashionable concept. For many of them, participation in the arena is a substitute for academic research.

This brief story of the fashionable management ideas could easily help to demonstrate the story of the Gen Y discourse as the major actors and their interests of both are very similar. Therefore, studies on typical actors and mediums such as management gurus (e.g., Clark, Bhatanacharoen, and Greatbatch 2015; Brad Jackson 2001; Bradley Jackson 1996; Parker and Ritson 2005) and bestseller management books or talks (e.g., Clark and Greatbatch 2004; Furusten 1999; Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges 1988) help to have a deeper understanding of the actors who contribute to the construction of the Gen Y discourse.

Table II-3. Major actors involved in the management fashion arena. Source: Madsen and Slåtten 2013, 114–115.

| Actor type(s) | Role(s) |
|-------------------------|--|
| Consulting firms | Consulting firms assist client organizations in the implementation of management concepts. Generalist firms offer services related to a wide range of concepts, while specialist consultancies tend to focus on one aspect such as IT, HR, or strategy. |
| Software firms | Software firms tend to focus on the technical aspects of concepts. They develop complementary products that assist in the implementation of management concepts. |
| Management gurus | Management gurus present management concepts and ideas in books, conferences, and seminars. Gurus can operate on a global scale or be local gurus. |
| Business schools | Academics employed at business schools publish articles about concepts in academic and practitioner-oriented journals. Concepts are also frequently incorporated into courses and materials in educational programs, particularly MBA programs and executive education |

³⁵ However, there are two types of actors whose contributions are so small or indirect that they can be neglected. These actors are software firms that “develop products that assist on the implementation of management concepts” and security analysts who “evaluate companies which are using particular management concepts, and by doing so, which increase or decrease the popularity of the concepts” (Madsen and Slåtten 2013, 114–15), which might be explained by the fact that Gen Y discourse does have technical and technological implications, compared to the other management ideas.

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Conference organizers | Conference organizers arrange conferences and seminars focusing on particular management concepts. These are often held in close cooperation with consultants and software firms, who speak at these conferences and present their products and services. |
| Business media | The business media function as a channel which transmits information about new concepts. Examples of business media include books, professional journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, and DVDs. |
| Publishers and book editors | Publishing companies produce books about management concepts. Book editors serve as gatekeepers who decide which ideas get published. |
| Professional organizations | Professional organizations have normative function in legitimizing new concepts and ideas by talking about concepts in newsletters, meetings, and seminars. |
| Analysts and shareholders | Security analysts may positively evaluate companies who are using particular management concepts and further increase the popularity of concepts. |
| Famous managers | Well-known managers, a.k.a. "hero managers", serve as opinion leaders and models to other organizations, who in turn may imitate their behaviour. |

Semantic and rhetorical aspects of management fashions

The studies that focus on the semantic and rhetorical aspects of management fashions illustrate the possible roles and functions of the ambiguous and vague language which is also typical for the majority of the generational discourses. Especially in Chapter IV. and V.C., where I focus on the content of the generational narratives, the analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed in the bestselling management books (Clark and Greatbatch 2004; Kieser 1997) and management guru's talks (Collins 2012; Clark and Salaman 1998; 1996) provide a better understanding of the rhetorical strategies within the discourse employed by the writers.

II.B.3.2. Translation of management ideas

Some of the studies on management fashions adopt ANT's approach and focus on the circulation of management ideas and concepts within different contexts (e.g., Czarniawska and Joerges 1996; Czarniawska-Joerges and Sevón 2005; Morris and Lancaster 2006; Mueller and Whittle 2011). These studies are not only important because they examine similar phenomenon (management ideas) with a similar theoretical background (ANT) but also because of the travel (therefore translation) of an idea to different contexts.³⁶ Therefore, these studies are in line with the focus of this research – origins of the Gen Y discourse (US) and its travel to Turkey.

³⁶ Here, context is not limited to the geographical designations but also covers a scope from a consultancy product (e.g., books, workshops and research reports on Gen Y) to practical changes within a company (e.g. new mentoring programs, youth clubs) – for a detailed explanation of these two different dimensions, see section II.B.3.3.

ANT's idea of translation

ANT's concept of translation plays a crucial role in these studies which turns every act to a matter of representation and every actor a spokesperson of someone or something.³⁷ Latour (2006, 6–7) defines “translation” as the total of the negotiations, intrusions, acts of persuasion, and the calculations which and when an actor or a force allows himself or herself the authority to speak or to act on behalf of another actor or a force. He exemplifies the concept of translation with the comparison of a physician and a party leader. According to Latour (2008, 40), there is an important symmetry between them. Political spokespersons represent the mass of citizens and scientific spokespersons represent voiceless material things. The first type speaks on behalf of their voters who cannot manage to speak with one voice, and the second speaks on behalf of the material things which cannot speak at all. The first kind can betray as well as the second ones can.

Callon (1984, 224) explains the advantages of translation as a conceptual tool as follows:

Translation is the mechanism by which the social and natural worlds progressively take form. The result is a situation in which certain entities control others. Understanding what sociologists generally call power relationships means describing the way in which actors are defined, associated, and simultaneously obliged to remain faithful to their alliances. The repertoire of translation is not only designed to give a symmetrical and tolerant description of a complex process which constantly mixes together a variety of social and natural entities. It also permits an explanation of how a few obtain the right to express and to represent the many silent actors of the social and natural worlds they have mobilized.

Through this process of translation, human and non-human actors constitute an actor-network which designates “a heterogeneous network of aligned interests, including people, organisations and standards”(Walsham 1997, 468) which gives them the authority to talk on behalf of something or some people.

In this context, obligatory passage points (OPP) are considered to be the qualities of actor-networks and usually they are interrelated with the first stage (problematization) of a translation process. At this point, to develop an actor-network, OPPs become essential. Thus, OPPs turn into the element “by

³⁷ In line with this view, Latour (2005, 91) rejects the idea of social constructivism as well: “‘constructivism’ should not be confused with ‘social constructivism’. When we say that a fact is constructed, we simply mean that we account for the solid objective reality by mobilising various entities whose assemblage could fail; ‘social constructivism’ means, on the other hand, that we replace what this reality is made of with some other stuff, the social in which it is ‘really’ built”.

which the leading actors set up a problem for all the entities at stake and present its resolution as an 'obligatory passage point' to the realisation of their respective goals"(Cochoy 2014, 111).

Callon (1984) illustrates the obligatory passage point based on "the attempts by three marine biologists to develop a conservation strategy" for the scallop population in St. Brieuc Bay. In their different written documents, these three researchers do not limit themselves only to identify the actors (e.g., fishers, other scientists, scallops); they also claim that the interests of these actors are in line with their proposed research program:

The argument which they develop in their paper is constantly repeated: if the scallops want to survive (no matter what mechanisms explain this impulse), if their scientific colleagues hope to advance knowledge on this subject (whatever their motivations may be), if the fishermen hope to preserve their long term economic interests (whatever their reasons) then they must: 1) know the answer to the question: how do scallops anchor?, and 2) recognize that their alliance around this question can benefit each of them. (Callon 1984, 205–6)

Translation therefore refers to a specific type of *displacement*: "different goals and problems are presented as equivalent or similar to one another until the interests of some literally become the interests of the others" (H. Giroux and Taylor 2002, 503). As there is no exact equivalent and since there is always some amount of displacement in translation, it means that every act of translation is also an act of manipulation and therefore treason (Baiocchi, Graizbord, and Rodríguez-Muñiz 2013, 330).

If we transpose this approach to the case of Gen Y, we can argue that all the actors (or actants³⁸) who speak about Gen Y are speaking in the name of "Generation Y", a generation that cannot get together and speak in their own name. Quantitative and qualitative data, research, advertisements, generation experts, consultants, columnists, managers, PR companies, politicians, academics, etc. that articulate statements on Gen Y will, therefore, be talking on behalf of this generation. And as it is quite often mentioned in ANT literature, there is no direct translation, translators always translate based on their position, context, and interests. Latour states (1993, 206) that "since a spokesman always says something other than do those it makes speak, and since it is always necessary to negotiate similarity and difference, there is always room for controversy about the fidelity of any interpretation. It can always make them say something else". For that reason, every difference in the Gen Y discourse matters to trace back the relations behind the discourse which allows them to build it and make it

³⁸ Latour (2017, 180) describes ANT's understanding of actor as such: "An 'actor' in ANT is a semiotic definition –an actant–, that is, something that acts or to which activity is granted by others. It implies no special motivation of human individual actors, nor of humans in general. An actant can literally be anything provided it is granted to be the source of an action".

work. Hence, the idea of translation suggests focusing more on describing interactions of the actors (which includes textual, natural, and social entities) and continuously changing interpretations about the interested phenomena constructed by the actors in a specific context.

Translation approach in management studies

This understanding of translation is adopted in organisation and management studies by Czarniawska and Sevón (2005; 1996) to understand the regular circulation of management ideas. In this context, management ideas are translated into objects (e.g., books, research reports, presentations even a buzzword, etc.). After ideas become “tangible objects”, they can travel. Then, actors in different organisations such as consultants and managers can adopt and transform them into actions which fit well in their contexts and serve their interests (Corvellec and Eriksson-Zetterquist 2017, 367).

Rovik (2011, 12) similarly argues that the notion of translation has two important suppositions: First, “management concepts are not physical, fixed objects, but transformable ideas” and, secondly, “local actors are not passive adopters, but active translators who may copy some aspects of a popular management idea while neglecting, omitting, reinforcing or altering others”. Concordantly, the notion of translation recognizes that the spread of ideas in time and space is not a direct process, where the idea does not change, but rather it is a process where the idea is actively translated by the actors that have differing interests (Sturdy 2004, 171).

In this context, the translation approach proposes a better understanding of what Czarniawska and Sevón (1996; 2005) call “the globalisation of management ideas – ideas that travel around the globe but are always translated locally”. Accordingly, Czarniawska (2009, 156) argues that ANT’s notion of translation offers “a vocabulary that permitted joint conceptualisation of the material and the symbolic aspect of translation – a focus on language without falling into idealism”.

This approach helps to deepen understanding of how the travel and adoption of a management idea works. Besides the organisations’ problems and needs regarding its context, factors such as organisational actors’ values, beliefs, interests, and experiences, are given as explanations to show how certain management ideas are understood and why their meaning changes (Örtenblad 2015b, 9). Hence, the translation approach by itself gave me a significant and useful vision to understand how and why Gen Y as a management idea is interpreted in different ways by different actors.

In this regard, translation of the idea of Gen Y to different contexts and to different HRM practices plays a crucial role in order to have a deeper understanding of firms and what firms do with managerial ideas. Therefore, this approach allows me to get beyond the acceptance or rejection process of

management ideas in firms due to lack of efficiency or incoherence but focus on how different actors instrumentalise Gen Y as a discourse and make it reliable and useful in others' eyes.

In sum, I think the conception of translation of a management idea is a powerful tool for understanding how the knowledge of Generation Y has spread in time and space, and how its meaning has changed as it is interpreted and reinterpreted by various actors. In addition, as the translation perspective prioritises the empirical data not the macro-level theories, this perspective is also a useful tool to move beyond the dichotomies such as developed/undeveloped economies, western/eastern corporate cultures which lead to a limited understanding of changes of management ideas and practices when they travel between nations.

II.B.3.3. Circulant state and registered state of a management idea

In line with the translation perspective, I examine the Gen Y discourse in three different contexts. First, I explore where it originated and gained its popularity – the US (Chapter IV). Next, I scrutinize its translation to the Turkish context (Chapter V) based on text-based data such as best-selling books, magazine articles, and research reports from consultancy companies. These two chapters, therefore, put forward the major actors (who produce and contribute to the Gen Y discourse) and what kind of content (including the implicit assumptions) they produce on a national scale. The third context is the translation of the discourse to the firms in Turkey (what firms do with the Gen Y discourse). I analyse this context based on the in-depth interviews and participatory observations that I conducted. To distinguish the first two contexts from the last one and for the analytical clarity, I use Chiapello and Gilbert's (2013, 248–49) distinction "circulant state" and "registered state". Circulant state designates the state of a management tool (or discourse) in its macro-form which intervenes at large scales (e.g., national). Registered state, on the other hand, designates the state of a management tool in its micro-form, specific to a company and the company's internal context.³⁹ For the case of Gen Y as a discourse (but also for the management ideas in general), it is significantly two different contexts. The first context is the circulant one in which major actors develop the Gen Y discourse in such a way that it can be sold as a product e.g., workshops, consultancies, books. The second context is the registered one, which is companies' internal context where old and new employees, managers, and HR staff can

³⁹ I believe this distinction fits better than "micro" and "macro" because the latter distinction tends to ignore the relation between these two dimensions and especially an important part of Chap VI focuses on what firms do with the knowledge of Gen Y produced by the consultants via workshops on Gen Y. Additionally, the registered and circulant state distinction is in line with the translation perspective that I adopt, especially when ANT's position on macro–micro scales and conception of network are considered: They recommend that researchers should ignore macro and micro distinctions and see what is seen as "macro" actors as the sum of action and actants – see Latour (2017), Callon and Latour (1981).

change and reshape the Gen Y discourse. The interests and positions of these new actors are different from those of the actors in the circulant state.

II.B.4. Conclusion

In the literature review (II.A.), I present various conceptualisations of generation in social sciences and related theoretical and academic discussions. I accordingly adopt the constructivist conceptualisation of generation which treats the idea mainly as a matter of discourse. In this context, in the next sub-chapter (II.B.), I present the constructivist approach and its influence on the research design which at the same time connect my research topic Generation Y to another body of literature, namely to management fashions and ideas.

I explain the concepts and conceptualisations I use mainly to form an analytical framework for this research. In other words, the theoretical background and concepts discussed in this chapter form the “theory of the process” rather than the “theory of the outcomes” (Barley 2020).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Barley (2020, 63) distinguishes these two types of theories within the organisational theory and argues that for the role-based approaches, theoretical propositions about the outcomes are mostly insignificant: “what matters is whether similar patterns occur empirically in multiple settings. At best, emphasising roles, role relationships, encounters, and networks informs a theory of process rather than a theory of outcomes”.

Table II-4. Conceptualisation of generation and related research designs. Source: Author.

| Conceptualisations of generation as coevals | Cohort-informed view of generation | Generation as a socio-historical agency | Generation as a social construct |
|--|---|--|--|
| View on the idea of generation | Generation as a distinct group of people | | Generation as a (social) construction |
| Principle of classification | Grouping by age | Grouping by age and shared memory | Grouping by articulation of generational experiences |
| Borders of generations | Fixed (e.g., people born between 1980–97) | More flexible and determined by the traumatic events of the period (e.g., “the sixties generation”). | Do not intend to define any borders between generations instead can provide an overview of which authority use which/what kind of borders and age intervals or can consider self-proclaimed generational identities. |
| Generation becomes generation | Based on the interpretation of the quantitative data by the researchers | Based on the intra-generational and generational struggles (needs self-consciousness/self-identification). | Mostly based on who/what is claiming to talk on behalf of the generation (highly depending on the research subject and on the research questions). |
| Commonly used methods and methodologies | Quantitative studies of the age groups | Studies on the influential actors (mostly in the political and cultural area) and the collective memory within the generation (or age group). Qualitative (In-depth interviews, focus groups and content analysis) and quantitative methods. | Studies on the actors who claim to speak on behalf of the generations (scientist, politicians, youth organisations, experts) or discursive materials on generations (mostly qualitative methods: participant observations, In-depth Interviews, content analysis). |
| Fundamental research questions | What is a generation? (e.g., people born around the same years) Is generation a valid/efficient concept | | By whom and how generations are defined? (e.g., by academics as a birth cohort) |
| Fundamental research questions | Who is Generation Y? (e.g., people born between 1980–97) What are the distinctive traits of the Gen Y? (e.g., technologically adept) | | By whom and how is Gen Y defined? (e.g., by managers as an entitled generation of employees) |
| Fundamental research questions | Is Generation Y a valid conceptualisation? | | What do actors do to make the idea of generation/ Gen Y valid in the eyes of the others? |

Different conceptualisations of generation within the academic literature and its influence on the research design and questions are summarised in Table II-4. As can be seen, the approach to generations as a (social) construct differs significantly from the other two.⁴¹ When Generation Y is

⁴¹The focus of this dissertation is Generation Y. Gen Y is mostly defined as a distinct age group born around 1980. Accordingly, it can be said that Generation Y is mainly taken as a birth cohort, but when generations are conceptualised in that way some theoretical problems occur. Although I do not adhere to the cohort-informed view of generation and because I examine generation as a matter of social construct, the dominant understanding of Gen Y, (as a birth cohort) and the related theoretical problems (referred in this chapter) have significant importance for this research. Thus, the examination of this view (in the form of literature review) has provided me important insights: First and foremost, in line with one of the objectives of this research, which is to expose the contextualised assumptions of the Gen Y discourse, the theoretical problems that I have mentioned earlier indicate the implicit assumptions of the cohort-informed view of generation. Secondly, these problems have given me important insight into where to look while analysing the texts on Generation Y and shed light onto possible conflicts (e.g., generational cut-off points) and alliances between various actors.

taken as a matter of (social) construction, it means that different actors and entities get together to define what Gen Y is and try to keep the idea “real,” “true,” “scientific,” and “relevant” in the eyes of others. Thus, the discourse built around Gen Y becomes the main object of the analysis. The adoption of the constructivist epistemology accordingly also changes the design and the research questions of the study. Instead of asking “What is a generation? / Is generation a valid and/or efficient concept?” the constructivist approach asks the questions “By whom and how are generations defined? / What do actors do to make the idea of generation valid in the eyes of the others?”

In line with the constructivist view, I observe that Generation Y is mostly defined and discussed in popular, practitioner, and academic management accounts, and that it has strong similarities with the management ideas and fashions. Hence, I use and benefit not only from the literature on generations but also from the academic literature on management fashions. Within this literature the traits attributed to management fashions such as the ambiguity, theoretical weakness, the “cure-all” characters, and the effort to understand and explain them provide a better view on Generation Y.

But most importantly this literature examines mainly a phenomenon that defies explanation with the typical understanding of rationality and efficiency. For instance, why do companies claiming to seek optimum profit, invest and rely on faddish ideas and practices? Management fashion literature, in order to answer this question, puts aside the strength of the ideas in question and focuses more on the forms of the discourses (e.g., rhetorical aspects) and the type of actors (management gurus, consultants, publishers, managers, and employees) who contribute to the construction of these ideas, their interests and their relations with other actors. Therefore, the different perception and uses of the management idea in question arise.

The conceptual tools of ANT also provide a significant contribution to my analytical framework to study Generation Y. First of all, due to the idea of translation, statements on Gen Y are seen as the representations of Gen Y. This can be a survey, an anecdote, a book, a research report, a news article, an academic speech, or a conversation between a manager and an employee. Accordingly, those who produce and propagate these statements are seen as the spokespersons for Gen Y.

In line with this, by analysing the content of significant texts on Gen Y, I put forth that these spokespersons most often implicitly claim that Gen Y represents the future and especially the future of the workforce. This is what ANT scholars call the obligatory passage point of the translation process, where different interests and problems are presented as the same or similar to the ones of the other

Moreover, they have legitimised my choice of conceptualisation as it suspends the common theoretical problems and still provides a framework to study the interested phenomena.

actors (H. Giroux and Taylor 2002, 503). For the case of Gen Y, the presentation of the problems that arise with the joining of the Gen Y in the business world and the claim that the problems caused by the present changes (or the changes in the near future) in the business world are the same, allow consultants, generation experts, and consultancy companies to convince other actors (e.g., managers, employers, management scholars) that they need to understand this generation in order to stay up to date and adopt the needs of the present and the near future.

Additionally, the idea of translation within organisational studies supposes that management ideas are transformed every time they travel due to the interests of the actors that become part of the translation process. In other words, when a management idea moves from one context to another, new actors become part of the translation process, which means that they reinterpret the idea according to their (new) interests. The relevance of this view for this study is that the Gen Y discourse gains new shapes, uses, purposes, and interpretations every time it moves to another context. Accordingly, I have put extra effort into tracing the differences of the Gen Y discourse in different contexts because they also enable me to distinguish different actors and different interests of the actors.

Regarding the contexts in which I examine the Gen Y discourse, I rely on Chiapello and Gilbert's (2013, 248–49) distinction the “circulant state” and “registered state” for analytical clarity. In this dissertation, different contexts do not only refer to national or societal differences of contexts (e.g., in the US and in Turkey) but also to the differences of a national context from the internal contexts of companies. Thus, circulant state designates the state of a management idea where the idea circulates in large scales (e.g., national). Registered state, on the other hand, designates the state of a management idea in its specific form such as in a company and company's internal context.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

In this chapter, I begin by laying out the relation between the theoretical background and the methodological choices that I make (III.A.). Then, I introduce my research design and the research questions (III.B.), and finally I explain the research methods that I employ to answer these research questions (III.C.).

Table III-1. below provides a brief overview of this chapter in connection with the aim, theoretical background, and design of this research. As explained in the previous chapter, the way I conceptualise Generation Y and the theoretical framework that I adopt strongly influence both the aim and the design of this research. The starting point is my astonishment about the various uses of the concept and its popularity in different fields (e.g., academia and business world) despite its weakness and incoherence. Existing explanations such as isomorphism or managers' fear of change, following new trends etc., in my opinion, did not and do not provide satisfactory answers to the popularity of generational labels. These explanations are not wrong, but they seem limited. Therefore, I choose to problematise Generation Y based on the constructivist approach which, in a way ironically, does not focus on the weakness or incoherence of the concept but on the actors that contribute to the construction of the concept.

As explained in the previous chapter, the way I conceptualise Generation Y and the theoretical framework that I adopt influence the research aim and design for two reasons: a) personally, I deeply value the coherence between epistemological assumptions, research questions, methods, and methodologies; b) the constructivist approach calls for different research questions than others.

For its methodology, this dissertation relies on a discourse-oriented ethnography, which emphasises the holistic examination of the actors and the context that they are in – but without obscuring the discourse they produce.

In line with this, the central research question is “Who are the actors that construct and instrumentalise Gen Y as a discourse and how do they make it reliable and useful in the eyes of others?” To answer this, I develop (sub)research questions based on the three contexts that I focus on. I apply qualitative research methods to answer the research questions specific to each context. I use participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and collections of documents as the methods of data generation. I make use of Braun and Clarke's (2021d) reflexive thematic analysis to analyse and interpret these data.

Table III-1. Research aim(s) and design. Source: Author.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| Starting point for this research/ Guiding question | How can we make sense of the continued emphasis and popularity of the generations and generational thinking despite the lack of solid evidence? | | |
| Subject | Construction of Generation Y in the US and its travel to Turkey | | |
| Aim | How and which actors construct and instrumentalise the Gen Y as a discourse and make it reliable and useful in the eyes of the others? | | |
| Chapters | Chap IV | Chap V | Chap VI |
| Form of discourse | Circulant state | Circulant state | Registered state |
| Chapter subjects | Construction of the Gen Y discourse in the US | Translation of the Gen Y discourse from the US to Turkey | Translation of the Gen Y discourse to firms in Turkey |
| Chapter aims | Chapter IV examines the origins of the Gen Y discourse and how it reflects the cumulative efforts of diverse groups of actors to recruit allies and to keep the discourse relevant and profitable. | Chapter V examines the Gen Y discourse in Turkey and how it reflects the cumulative efforts of diverse groups of actors to recruit allies to keep the discourse relevant and profitable. Additionally, this chapter compares it with the case of the US | Chapter VI examines the role and use of the Gen Y discourse in firms in Turkey, with a focus on how employees relate to the discourse within their companies, and the relationship between the Gen Y discourse and managerial practices. |
| Methodology: discourse analysis (discourse-oriented ethnography) | This chapter performs a detailed analysis of the significant texts and contributors to the Gen Y discourse in the US. | This chapter performs a detailed analysis of the significant texts and contributors to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. | This chapter performs a detailed analysis of the interviews with employees of Turkish companies that purchase training workshops on Gen Y and/or claim that Gen Y pertains to HR strategies according to the needs of that generation. |
| Major research questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are the influential actors that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in the US? - What are the implicit and explicit claims of the discourse and narratives produced by these actors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are the influential local actors that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey? - How is the Gen Y discourse translated for the Turkish context? How does it differ from the original discourse in the United States? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do employees relate to and instrumentalise the discourse within companies? - How do firms instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse as management practices? |
| Major Source of Data | Print media in the US | Print media in Turkey | In-depth interviews with white-collar workers in Turkey & participatory observations in Turkey |
| Major Methods of Analysis | Thematic analysis | Thematic analysis | Thematic analysis |

III.A. Clarifications on Methodological Integrity

Levitt et al.(2017, 9–10) define “methodological integrity” as follows:

[Methodological] integrity is established when research designs and procedures (e.g., autoethnography, discursive analysis) support the research goals (i.e., the research problems/questions); respect the researcher’s approaches to inquiry (i.e., research traditions sometimes described as world views, paradigms, or philosophical/epistemological assumptions); and are tailored for fundamental characteristics of the subject matter and the investigators.

In line with this understanding, in this sub-chapter, I briefly explain how the theoretical background, the conceptualisation of generation (detailed in the previous chapter), informs the research design, methodology, and methods⁴² employed in this dissertation, and how all these are compatible with each other.

In the previous chapter, I argue that Generation Y is a matter of discourse and I adhere to an understanding of discourse similar to Foucault’s, which emphasises the knowledge and power relations in its construction. I define the Gen Y discourse in the previous chapter as “the sum of the struggles and collaborations in naming, defining, and keeping the term relevant and profitable for the interested actors”.

I conceptualise this sum based on Actor-Network Theory’s idea of translation, which is the sum of the attempts to gain the authority to talk and/or act on behalf of a generation – who are not able to get together and speak for themselves. In this respect, all those who contribute to the discourse about Gen Y such as consultants, journalists, and HR professionals, as well as the actants (non-human actors) such as quantitative data, reports, or advertisements on Gen Y talk and act on behalf of this generation.

Despite the common constructivist epistemology, ANT and Foucault’s views of discourse and of research in general differ to some extent. For instance, Foucault focuses more on the relation between discourse, power, and knowledge production in society as expressed through language and practices. Accordingly, many scholars qualify his methodology as Foucauldian discourse analysis (e.g., Arribas-Ayllon, Walkerdine, and Rogers 2008).

⁴² Here, I purposefully employ the term “methodology” instead of “method”. While some academics interchangeably use the two words, others believe it is important to distinguish the difference between them. According to the latter perspective, a research methodology is both a method and an implicit set of assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology), whereas a research method is a set of methods for gathering, analysing, and interpreting research data (Smart 2012, 147).

On the other hand, ANT suggests ethnography as the key methodological approach (Latour and Woolgar 2013; Baiocchi, Graizbord, and Rodríguez-Muñiz 2013). While it is true that ANT ethnography differs significantly from classical ethnography, the goal of producing a holistic understanding of the shared world of a particular social group and examining its collective local culture remains consistent, as opposed to case studies (Smart 2012, 147). In this sense, “holistic understanding” that I am interested in is the construction of the Gen Y discourse.

But what makes ANT different from typical ethnographies? It is the symmetrical approach that ANT suggests by denying methodological distinctions between discourse, the social, and the natural (Latour 2017, 16). And in line with this view, ANT is also known as a material semiotic method (John Law and Mol 1995; John Law 2009). Correspondingly, some scholars consider ANT’s methodology as a type of discourse analysis and qualify it as a type of discourse-oriented ethnography (see, e.g., Smart 2012; Gee and Handford 2012).

Thus, despite the differences, firstly, it is still possible to say that Foucault’s understanding of discourse and ANT’s methodology are not incompatible (cf. Foucault 2011; John Law 2004). Secondly, within this framework, the methodology that influenced this research can be qualified as a discourse-oriented ethnography.

Barry Smart explains the major features of discourse-oriented ethnography based on the evolution of the ethnography. According to Smart (2012, 148), the methodology of ethnography has undergone a diversification of goals, epistemologies, and methods while still maintaining its main objective of examining the culture and social reality of a specific community or group as the method has moved across these various academic disciplines, professional fields, and alternative forms and as researchers have adapted it to their own ends. Since the middle of the 20th century, ethnography has evolved to focus its investigation on the discourse practices of specific social groups as these discourse practices are manifested in speaking, writing, or other symbolic forms.

Neither ANT nor Foucauldian discourse analysis provides detailed technical tools or procedural guidance for analysing and interpreting the data, but rather it offers an “ensemble of sensibilities” (Baiocchi, Graizbord, and Rodríguez-Muñiz 2013, 335) and/or a set of broad principles for research. Then, the method for qualitative data analysis has to be coherent and compatible with the methodology and the epistemological assumptions that I adopt. Accordingly, I mainly follow the guidelines of Braun and Burke’s (2021d) on reflexive thematic analysis.

Reflexive thematic analysis (or reflexive TA) is an interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis, which is easily accessible and theoretically flexible, facilitating the identification and analysis of patterns and themes in a given data set (Byrne 2022, 1392). Alongside its accessibility, the theoretical

flexibility that reflexive TA provides is one of the key aspects of this method – it is also the main reason I choose it. Theoretical flexibility means that it can be used within many theoretical frameworks and related research questions, but it does not mean that it is atheoretical (Terry et al. 2017, 26):

TA needs a theoretical underpinning, and researchers need to be clear about what this is. Indeed, it is precisely because of the theoretical independence of (our version of TA) that it is particularly important for researchers to make their theoretical approach explicit to the reader – it does not come ‘inbuilt’. Due to this theoretical independence, TA can be used to address a really wide range of research questions – which stem from, or require, quite different theoretical frameworks.

This understanding of theoretical flexibility leads to an important difference between reflexive TA in its approach to coding and good coding. Terry et al. (2017, 22) distinguish two main clusters of approaches within the thematic analysis:⁴³ “(1) an approach defined by an emphasis on coding reliability; (2) a more qualitative approach that advocates for a flexible approach to coding and theme development”.

While the first one advocates for a coding process designed to allow the researcher to test and report on coding reliability, the second approach endorses a more “organic” and “flexible” process of coding (Terry et al. 2017, 23). Coding reliability approaches in thematic analysis are based on a conception of reliability which underlines that “the success is determined on the basis of different individuals achieving the same outcome (identical coding) through the administration of the same measure (the code book)” (Terry et al. 2017, 23).

On the other hand, reflexive TA assumes that “coding ‘gets better’ (i.e., develops depth and moves beyond the obvious surface level) through immersion in, or repeated engagement with, the data – something unlikely to be achieved with a codebook approach” (Terry et al. 2017, 27). Accordingly, reflexive TA relies on an understanding of analysis as follows: “as something created by the researcher, at the intersection of the data, their theoretical and conceptual frameworks, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills and experience; it is not seen as something waiting ‘in’ the data to be found” (Terry et al. 2017, 27). In line with this view, coding and theme development are seen as subjective and interpretative processes.

Additionally, reflexive TA promotes “deep thinking about the conceptual foundations of the research” and underlines the importance of coherence in different aspects of qualitative research projects in which reflexive TA is employed for data analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021b, 20). In other words, for the

⁴³ It is important to bear in mind that thematic analysis is an umbrella term which can include or significantly overlap with other qualitative data analysis such as grounded theory or discursive analysis.

method's founders, the methodological integrity constitutes one of the substantial parts of a good qualitative research.

As can be seen, reflexive TA provides a more compatible and coherent method of analysis and coding strategy for the constructivist framework⁴⁴ that I adopt and for my research questions which are based more on "how" than "why" compared to other type of qualitative data analyses (see Table III-2 for the methodological assumptions of reflexive TA).

Table III-2. Ten core assumptions of reflexive TA. Source: Clarke & Braun 2021, 8.

1. Researcher subjectivity is the primary tool for reflexive TA, as knowledge generation is inherently subjective and situated. Your subjectivity is not a problem to be managed or controlled, to be gotten rid of, but should be understood and treated as a resource for doing analysis (Gough & Madill, 2012). This means the notion of researcher bias, which implies the possibility of unbiased or objective knowledge generation, and the potential to control such bias, make little sense within reflexive TA.
2. Analysis and interpretation of data cannot be accurate or objective, but they can be weaker (e.g., unconvincing, underdeveloped, shallow, superficial) or stronger (e.g., compelling, insightful, thoughtful, rich, complex, deep, nuanced).
3. Good coding can be achieved alone, or through collaboration – if collaborative coding is used to enhance understanding, interpretation and reflexivity, rather than to reach a consensus about data coding.
4. Good quality codes and themes result from dual processes of: (a) immersion and depth of engagement; and (b) giving the developing analysis some distance. The latter usually takes time and is often achieved through taking a break from the process.
5. Themes are patterns anchored by a shared idea, meaning or concept. They are not summaries of everything about a topic.
6. Themes are analytic outputs – they are built from codes (which are also analytic outputs) and cannot be identified ahead of the analytic process.
7. Themes do not passively 'emerge' from data but are actively produced by the researcher through their systematic engagement with, and all they bring to, the dataset.
8. Data analysis is always underpinned by theoretical assumptions, and these assumptions need to be acknowledged and reflected on.
9. Reflexivity is key to good quality analysis; researchers must strive to understand and 'own their perspectives' (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999).
10. Data analysis is conceptualised as an art not a science; creativity is central to the process, situated within a framework of rigour.

⁴⁴ Braun and Clarke's (2021a, 43) view on the compatibility between reflexive TA and discourse analysis and on constructivist research practice is as follows: "Reflexive TA does not provide tools for a detailed and fine-grained analysis of language practice that some discourse analytic approaches offer. But when implemented within a critical qualitative theoretical framework of some kind (e.g., constructionism [Gergen, 2015], poststructuralism [Gavey, 1989]), it can offer something akin to what we have elsewhere described as pattern-based discursive approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2013). These include the aforementioned interpretative repertoire analysis and, particularly, poststructuralist DA [Discourse Analysis]".

III.B. Research Design and Research Questions

The question “How can we make sense of the continued emphasis and popularity of the idea of generations and generational thinking despite the lack of solid evidence?” is the starting point of this research. However, the management trend literature and the constructivist epistemology recommend the researcher not to focus on the weaknesses (e.g., lack of evidence, contradictions, and conceptual fuzziness) of the interested phenomenon, at least at the beginning, but to explore the relations that produce, spread, popularize, and legitimise it. These relations can be intra-textual (e.g., references between ideas within a text), intertextual (e.g., two texts sharing the same assumptions), and social (e.g., different actors that see their interests in the same topic).

In this framework, my focal point is the construction of Gen Y as a discourse and its translation to the Turkish context. Therefore, my primary concern is the discourse on Gen Y and its significant contributors. Accordingly, the main aim of this dissertation is to answer the question “How and which actors construct and instrumentalise the idea of Gen Y and make it reliable and useful in the eyes of the others?”

To answer this question, I conducted thematic analysis of the texts on Generation Y and in-depth interviews to understand the historical development of the term “Generation Y” as well as the changing interpretations of the idea, according to actors, their interests, and the contexts that they are in. While my qualitative data analysis consists of texts about Generation Y from mainstream newspapers, popular business magazines, consultancy research reports, and bestselling books in Turkish and English; my interviews are conducted with white-collar workers in Turkey.

To this end, I choose three different contexts⁴⁵ to analyse. The first one is the US, where most of the popular generational discourses emerged, including on Gen Y, and became popular worldwide.⁴⁶ In Chapter IV., I examine the US context in its circulant state⁴⁷ through books, newspaper, and magazine

⁴⁵ Despite the risk of oversimplifying (and also contradicting the radical epistemology of ANT) for the sake of clarity, I rely on the content and context distinction. Context is the place where the actors either act on behalf of Gen Y or claim to produce knowledge on Gen Y. Content, on the other hand, consists of all the written and oral articulations of Gen Y produced by these actors.

⁴⁶ The relevance of the US case is that it constitutes the origin of the Gen Y discourse. But in addition to that, examining the US context enabled me to offer solid arguments against the typical reactions to generational labels, which most of the time assume that “imported labels and concepts” do not fit to the Turkish case or similar reactions, which presume that these concepts are being used in a correct, efficient, and scientific way in the “west” but not in the Turkish context because Turkish experts and academics import them without reflecting on and adapting them to the Turkish context. By analysing the US case, I put forth that similar critiques are also valid for the US case.

⁴⁷ Circulant state refers to the state of a management tool (or discourse) in its form which intervenes on a large scale (e.g., national). In contrast, the registered state is the state of a management idea specific to a company and its internal context (see section II.B.3.3.).

articles written on the topic, and related research reports from big consultancy companies. With this aim, I perform a detailed analysis of the significant texts and the contributors to the Gen Y discourse in the US.

Accordingly, the major research questions regarding the analysis of the US discourse are:

- Who are the influential actors that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in the US?
- What are the implicit and explicit claims of the discourse and narratives on Gen Y produced by these actors?

The second context case is Turkey. The reason I choose Turkey is first because it is a context that I know relatively well and easy for me to navigate. But in addition to that, the Gen Y discourse has a particular evolution in Turkey. The term “Gen Y” was used by the mainstream media to explain the unexpected and unusual “Gezi Park Protests” and gained its popularity through these protests. I had the chance to observe this evolution closely, because I was living in Turkey at the time of the protests (2013). I scrutinize Gen Y discourse in its circulant state in the Turkish context in Chapter V based on text-based data such as bestselling books, academic, and magazine articles as well as research reports from consultancy companies.

Accordingly, the research questions regarding the analysis of the Turkish discourse are:

- Who are the influential local actors that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey?
- How is the Gen Y discourse translated to the Turkish context? How has it evolved? How does it differ from the original discourse in the US?

The third context is the firms in Turkey (Chapter VI). As Gen Y discourse is mainly produced and discussed in the business world and very often transformed into various management practices and/or used to legitimise them, it is crucial to examine the discourse in its registered state. I analyse this context on the basis of 26 in-depth interviews and 2 participatory observations. The 26 interviews are first utilised to explore how the interviewees perceive, relate to, and make use of the Gen Y discourse in their work life. Secondly, based on the same interviews and two participant observations, I identify four major cases in which knowledge on Gen Y is explicitly and formally transformed into managerial practices: Gen Y workshops at six companies (FMCGCo, TelecommunicationsCo, MachineryCo, CosmeticsCo, MarketresearchCo1, BeveragesCo), the Gen Y social activity club (Gen Y Club) at BeddingCo, the Gen Y board (Y-Board), and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo.

The first case of Gen Y workshops is built on two participant observations of such workshops and eleven interviews with persons from different sectors and different positions who attended. In addition, I interviewed two freelance corporate trainers who were preparing workshops on

generations for companies in the future. For the second case on the Gen Y social activity club, I interviewed the HR manager of BeddingCo who first proposed the Gen Y club idea for their company, and a young employee who was an enthusiastic participant and organizer of the club. For the Y-Board and reverse mentoring cases, I interviewed the HR manager of FMCGCo who contributed to the implementation of both practices.

In this framework, the research questions regarding the role of the Gen Y discourse in firms are:

- How do employees relate to and instrumentalise the discourse within companies?
- How do the firms themselves instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse as management practices?

III.C. Research Methods

In this sub-chapter, I introduce the research methods in detail: the data generation process (III.C.1.) and the overview of the analysing process (III.C.2.) which are presented in the same order as the subsequent chapters. Finally, I present the coding and theme developing strategies (III.C.3.) that I use to find answers to my research questions.

III.C.1. Methods of data generation

The data generation methods I employ are a collection of documents, semi structured interviews, and participant observations⁴⁸.

In Chapter IV where I focus on the origins and content of the Gen Y discourse, the quantitative data for the thematic analysis are obtained mainly from 4 popular practitioner books and 6 consultancy company research reports on Gen Y in English. In addition to these, I also use Google trends, some academic contributions, and mainstream media articles for practitioners as supportive and/or secondary data sources.

For Chapter V, where I explore the translation of the Gen Y discourse to the Turkish context, the data are mainly gathered from one fundamental book written by one of the most significant generation experts in Turkey, one research report prepared by consultancy companies, and 185 articles published in mainstream media and 171 articles in three different business magazines as well as 98 academic articles in Turkish.

⁴⁸ In this dissertation, all originally Turkish and French sources, encompassing interviews, articles, books, and academic references, are translated into English by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

In Chapter VI, I examine the roles and uses of the Gen Y discourse in companies in Turkey, with a focus on how employees relate to the discourse within companies, and the relationship between the Gen Y discourse and managerial practices. To this end, I use the data drawn from the 26 in-depth interviews and two participant observations that I conducted.

In the following sections, I present in detail the processes of data generation for each type of data (III.C.1.1., III.C.1.2., III.C.1.3., III.C.1.4.).

III.C.1.1. Data from popular and practitioner literature in English

As Generation Y is a hype term used in many different fields, there is a high number of actors and texts that have contributed to the Gen Y discourse in the US and in Turkey. Therefore, some limitations for the data to be analysed is unavoidable and necessary. To limit the data, my guiding principle is the significance of the actors and texts that contributed to the construction of the discourse. I accordingly use three indicators to determine the significance of actors and texts:

The first indicator for selection is the content of the texts written on Gen Y. Some texts, such as bestselling books written by generation experts or reports prepared by big research and consultancy companies, offer a broad and relatively complete understanding of Gen Y. However, there are also some sources, such as academic articles or most mainstream media texts, that only offer a limited view of Gen Y and deal only with certain aspects of the generation. The former group provides a richer source to examine the generational discourse. Hence, when analysing the origins of the discourse (Chap IV), I focus more on these texts rather than the ones which do not explicitly and broadly define Gen Y. Another indicator I make use of is the recognition of the actors and their publications that played a historical role in the evolution and popularisation of the Gen Y discourse in the US.

These indicators are used to identify first and foremost the significant texts and actors in the US, where the term Gen Y was coined.⁴⁹ In this framework, I undertake a thematic analysis of the texts listed in the Table III-3.

⁴⁹ For a detailed explanation on how I identify the bestselling books on Gen Y for analysis, see Appendix B.

Table III-3. Data analysed for Chapter IV. Source: Author.

| | Author/Company | Publications |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Bestselling Books | Howe, Neil; Strauss, William | Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation (2000) |
| | Tulgan, Bruce | Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y (2009) |
| | Twenge, Jean M | Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are more Confident, assertive, Entitled and more Miserable than ever before (2014) |
| | Van den Bergh, Joeri; Mattias Behrer | How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generations Y and Z. (2016) |
| Research and Consultancy Reports | Deloitte TTL | The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey (2016 Report) |
| | Deloitte Insights (Former Deloitte University Press) | A New Understanding of Millennials: Generational differences re-examined (2015) |
| | Gallup | How Millennials Want to Work and Live: Purpose, Development, Coach, Ongoing Conversations, Strengths, Life (2016) |
| | Pew Research Center | Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends (2014) |
| | Universum | Understanding a Misunderstood Generation (2017) |
| | PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) | Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace (2011) |

III.C.1.2. Data from Turkish academic literature

I performed three different search queries in order to understand the role of the universities and academics on the construction of the Turkish Gen Y discourse: First, I searched the biggest database of Turkish Academic Journals *Dergipark*,⁵⁰ run by a public institution (TÜBİTAK), for articles that have the term “Generation Y” in their abstracts or on their titles. There are 98 such articles, from 2011 to 2019. I chose *Dergipark* database because most of the Turkish university journals are covered and indexed by them; thus, it gave me a good overview in terms of where and in which context Gen Y is discussed in the Turkish academia.

To deepen my analysis of Turkish academia, I ran a second search query for master’s and PhD theses with the keyword “Generation Y” in their titles in the database of Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education. This database covers all master’s and PhD theses written in Turkey (‘CoHE Thesis Center’ n.d.). My query results cover 122 master’s and PhD theses from 2011 to 2019 (see Appendix C. for the list of the academic articles analysed in this study).

⁵⁰ DergiPark platform provides online hosting services and an editorial workflow management system for academic journals published in Turkey by TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM (‘DergiPark’ n.d.).

III.C.1.3. Data from Turkish mainstream media and practitioner literature

To discover how “Gen Y” is discussed in the Turkish mainstream media, I chose *the Hürriyet* as a daily newspaper because it is one of the most significant Turkish newspapers (founded in 1948) and, as of January 2018, it had the highest circulation in Turkey with a weekday circulation of about 319,000 (‘Tiraj | MedyaTava’ n.d.). Additionally, Ayşe Arman is a columnist for this newspaper, and I believe she had a key role in introducing “Gen Y” to the public just after the Gezi Protests, especially due to her first interview with the Turkish “Gen Y” specialist Evrim Kuran (Arman 2013a).⁵¹

Except for the period of Gezi Protests, most of the articles on Gen Y are in the economy sections or HRM supplements of the newspapers. Besides, I performed an online query for articles with “Generation Y” in the title published in popular Turkish business magazines and business blogs. I chose one popular business blog (Kariyer.net IK Blog) and two business magazines *Media Cat Turkey* and *Capital Dergi*.

Capital Dergi (founded in 1993) is one of the most famous and oldest monthly business and economy magazines in Turkey. It also has a supplement entitled *Young Capital*. On the other hand, *Kariyer.net IK Blog* is one of the most frequently mentioned sources in my interviews. And as it is also connected to a business and employment-oriented service that operates via websites like LinkedIn (Kariyer.net), it has a more human resources orientation. Within the same context, *Media Cat Turkey* fills the gap in the marketing view. *Media Cat* is a marketing communications magazine also founded in 1993. It is also important for this research as it is in cooperation with the *Adage* magazine, which is the first magazine to use the label “Generation Y” for the people who were born around 1980.

On the databases of these three magazines and the daily newspaper *Hürriyet*, I made a search query of “Generation Y” in Turkish and retrieved 36 articles from *Kariyer.net IK Blog* dated 2013–2019, 69 articles from *Media Cat* dated 2007–2019, 66 from *Capital Magazine*, 185 articles from the “news” and “columns” category of *Hürriyet.com.tr* dated 2010–2019 2019 (see Appendix C. for list of the articles analysed in this study).

III.C.1.4. Data from interviews and participant observations

In compliance with my research questions, my field research focuses on people who 1) produce Gen Y discourse (e.g., in forms of consultancy and research for the business world); 2) buy Generation Y discourse as a workshop, consultancy, or research; and/or 3) claim that they change their marketing and/or HR strategies according to the needs of that generation.

⁵¹ The influence of that interview can also be seen on Google trends. “Ayşe Arman Generation Y” as a search query related to the Gen Y is in the 14th place (Google Trends n.d.).

This focus led me mainly to the multinational corporations and big Turkish companies, because when the expenses for these kinds of consultancies, research, and workshops are considered, it is less likely for small firms with smaller budgets to spend their money on Generation Y workshops or consultancies. As one of my interviewees put it, “Generation Y or Generational conflict in the companies are luxury subjects”.⁵²

In this framework, it is unfortunately not a straightforward process to find white-collar respondents for in-depth interviews. Firstly, Turkish companies or the branches of multinationals in Turkey are not very interested in academic research about their companies, at least not for qualitative research. Secondly, if one does interviews through an official procedure, there are many bureaucratic obstacles to overcome. I therefore used a snowball sampling strategy to find my respondents. In addition to that, I collected manager names from the articles used for my thematic analysis. I contacted them via a professional networking platform, and three of them agreed to an interview. For reasons of confidentiality and to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, I refer to the firms by generic monikers (e.g., CosmeticsCo) and changed the names of all the interviewees.

I conducted 26 in-depth interviews and did two participant observations. As the discourse is broad and popular enough to cover almost any industry, my interviews are not limited to any industry or sector. My interviewees either work or worked in many different industries, ranging from consumer goods to construction (for more details, see Appendix C.). Ten of the interviewees work in HR positions, and six of the interviewees work in marketing departments or consultancies. I interviewed four people who work for two multinational market research companies. The remaining interviewees come from other backgrounds including sales, customer service, IT, and business journalism.

The interviews were mostly conducted with employees of multinational companies in Turkey (MarketresearchCo1, CosmeticsCo, FMCGCo, FoodCo, TelecommunicationsCo, BankingCo, MarketresearchCo2) and large Turkish companies with strong links to multinationals (MachineryCo, AutomotiveCo, BeveragesCo). The interviewees are senior employees of companies that have invested in the Gen Y discourse in its most common form (workshops on Gen Y) and/or claimed to have changed their management and HR strategies according to Gen Y needs.

The two participant observations are from workshops on Gen Y, mainly for the business world. The first was Cheryl Cran’s (leadership expert and consultant) workshop named “Gen Y in the business

⁵² The main audience at Cheryl Cran’s “Gen Y” workshop that I took part in, and the statements of Ömer (HR director of a relatively small construction company) and Didem (business development representative at ElectronicsCo), also confirm this observation.

world". The second is the online workshop from the Istanbul Chamber of Industry entitled "Managing Gen Y and Z" given by Özgür Sav (consultant and speaker).

I make use of the 26 interviews in sub-chapter VI.B. with a focus on interviewees' generational self-identifications and views on Gen Y and generational labels. I identify four particularly interesting management practices in reference to and/or informed by the idea of Gen Y (VI.C.) and discourse surrounding it. These practices are workshops on Gen Y (VI.C.1.), Gen Y social activity club (VI.C.2.), Gen Y Board, and reverse mentoring (VI.C.3.).

Workshops on Gen Y are the most common forms of management practices informed by Gen Y discourse, in which a management consultant presents the characteristics of Gen Y and show efficient ways to work with them to (most often) older managers and HR staff.

Gen Y social activity club is a particular practice at BeddingCo which combines several management practices, such as mentorship, management trainee programs, and organising workshops and social activities.

On the other hand, Gen Y Board at FMCGCo is a sort of executive board that aims to represent the younger employees. Another management practice at FMCGCo related to Gen Y discourse is reverse mentoring which is basically the pairing of an older, senior colleague as the mentee and a younger, junior employee acting as the mentor to share expertise (W. M. Murphy 2012, 550). Reverse mentoring is promoted in Turkey as a "good practice" for companies that aim to attract young recruits.

III.C.2. Methods of data analysis

For the analysis of the generated data, I coded the transcriptions of the interviews, observation notes, academic and practitioner articles and books with the help of QDA software. To analyse and interpret these data, I mainly employed Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2021d) thematic analysis. But overall, I applied the same principles to all the generated data. I searched for textual, rhetorical, and thematic patterns and legitimisation strategies in these documents while simultaneously examining the contexts from which the data were produced. In the following sections, I briefly present the outlines of the analysis for each type of data (III.C.2.1., III.C.2.2., III.C.2.3., III.C.2.4.); in the next sub-chapter, I present in detail the coding and theme building strategies that I used for the analysis of the data (III.C.3.).

III.C.2.1. Data from popular and practitioner literature in English

For the analysis of the data from popular and practitioner literature in English, I searched for textual, rhetorical, and thematic patterns in these documents. Essentially, I read (and coded accordingly) these

texts based on the following questions and compared them with a focus on the interests of the authors and institutions that produced them.

Context:

- Who produced and disseminated the text?
- In which form(s) is the text presented (e.g., books, talks, academic articles), and how is it disseminated (e.g., through mainstream media, practitioners' magazines)?
- Are there any names or institutional references in the text? If yes, how and in which context?

Content:

- What are the main arguments of the text?
- What are the implicit or unquestioned assumptions on Gen Y and on generations in the text?
- How is Gen Y defined?
- How is Gen Y described?

I coded each text based on these organising questions and the related codes, which I developed from the selective literature (for more details, see section III.C.3.). At the end, I compared and analysed the claims, legitimisation, and rhetorical strategies that the authors employed under four major topics (naming, cut-off points, distinctive features, generational traits and prescriptions). I also created a code group for management practices and concepts that repeatedly came up in the data (see Table III-4).

Table III-4. Coded management concepts and practices. Source: Author.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 360-degree performance | Shadow board |
| 4.0 | Sustainability |
| Corporate social responsibility | Flexible working hours |
| Digitalisation | Brand activism |
| Employer branding | Game rooms/Play stations |
| Home office/Remote work | Shared desk |
| Innovation | Sustainability |
| Leadership | Total quality management |
| Mentorship/Coaching | Management trainee programs |
| Reverse mentoring | Organisational storytelling |

III.C.2.2. Data from Turkish academic literature

For the articles from the Turkish academic literature, I classified all the collected articles and the theses on Gen Y in three main categories: a) Gen Y as a consumer, b) Gen Y as an employee, and c) Gen Y as an activist. After that, I also coded them by the academic field which their writers work in. And finally,

I classified them over time in order to understand the evolution and the changing popularity of Gen Y discourse within the academic literature.

In addition, I coded these articles based on the universities their writers work at, to understand if Gen Y is a research subject in well-reputed and influential universities. Besides, I took into consideration the number of master's and PhD theses written on Gen Y to see if Gen Y as a graduate research subject is important or academically reliable. Finally, I crosschecked the references to the academic figures most cited in popular press to have an overview of their influence on the construction of Gen Y discourse in Turkey.

III.C.2.3. Data from Turkish mainstream media and practitioner literature

First, I classified the texts from Turkish mainstream media and practitioner literature in three main categories based on how Gen Y is portrayed: a) Gen Y as a consumer, b) Gen Y as an employee, and c) Gen Y as an activist. Secondly, to understand the evolution and the changing popularity of Gen Y discourse, I classified them based on their publication dates. After that, as I did for the previous data from popular and practitioner literature from the US, I focused on the four key dimensions of the discourse (naming, cut-off points, distinctive features, generational traits and prescriptions). In addition, I also coded the management concepts and practices mentioned in these articles to see how the concepts and practices connected to the Gen Y discourse.

III.C.2.4. Data from interviews and participant observations

In Chapter IV., where I make use of the data from interviews and participant observations, two research questions arise which are quite different from the ones in the previous chapters. These are: How do employees relate to and instrumentalise the discourse within companies? How do firms instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse as management practices?

For this reason, in addition to the view of the interviewees on Gen Y (how they define and describe Gen Y), I included questions on personal history with Gen Y as a concept, and the instrumentalisation of ideas about Gen Y at work to the interview guide (see Appendix A. Interview Guide). I coded the transcription of the interviews according to the interview guide, which also includes the codes that I used for the previous data (Gen Y traits, four major topics, and management practices).

III.C.3. Coding and theme building strategies

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the generated data is mainly guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) reflexive thematic analysis. Before I explain my coding and theme developing process, it is important to explain some key concepts of this type of analysis.

In reflexive TA, a code is thought of as an analytical unit or a tool that the researcher uses to create (initial) themes. In this sense, codes refer to the entities which capture minimum one observation or one facet. On the other hand, themes are like “multi-faceted crystals” which assemble numerous observations or facets (Braun and Clarke 2021c, 340).

Besides, a theme needs to include a wide range of data that is connected by and supports a shared meaning (Braun and Clarke 2021d, 26) but more importantly, this shared meaning needs to be organised around a central concept (deemed the central organising concept⁵³). These organising concepts should be an analytic output, not an input (Braun and Clarke 2021b, 9).

In line with this, the researcher’s “analytic task” is to investigate the expression of shared or similar ideas and meanings in various contexts (Braun and Clarke 2021d, 26). This united pattern may be demonstrated at a more semantic or more latent level.⁵⁴

Based on this view, Braun and Clarke (2021d, 26) distinguish between theme-as-shared-topic (also referred to as topic summaries) and theme-as-shared-meaning: “A topic summary is a summary of everything the participants said about a particular topic, presented as a theme. One of the main problems with topic summaries for us, and for reflexive TA, is that they unite around a topic, rather than a shared meaning or idea”. Accordingly, reflexive TA does not consider “topic summaries” to be a theme, which is often the case for other qualitative-data-analysis practices.

In the context of this dissertation, I have two major layers of coding and analysing the data. The first one fits better to the definition of topic summary than theme because the first layer focuses on the common topics and issues within the Gen Y discourse (referred to as four major topics of Gen Y) and is organised by the question of how the Gen Y is defined and described.

On the other hand, the second layer of coding focuses on generational traits which has (relatively) sophisticated organising concepts (e.g., dichotomy of spoiled/rebellious provides the qualities of the themes in the reflexive TA sense). In the next sections, I explain in detail my coding and theme building process.

⁵³ Central organising concept is defined as “the (sometimes implicit) idea that unifies meaning in a theme; the concept or idea that all the analytic observations that constitute a theme relate to” (Braun and Clarke 2021d, 86).

⁵⁴ While semantic refers to a focus on meanings at a more surface and explicit level, latent refers to the exploration of meanings at a more underlying or implicit level (Braun and Clarke 2021d).

III.C.3.1. Familiarisation with the data and developing codes

To become familiar with the data, I read three bestselling books (Tulgan and Martin 2001; M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008; Alsop 2008a) and many mainstream media and business magazine articles written on Gen Y in English and in Turkish. Additionally, I started to speak about and discuss Gen Y with my white-collar friends. Based on this preliminary process and the central organising questions (mentioned above), I created the first version of the interview guide and started the interviews (see Appendix A.). At the same processes decided to formulate a selective literature text on Gen Y to see if the arguments, claims, and insights that I had based on the preliminary process were indeed common within the other bodies of literature on Gen Y.

I started with four popular books (Tulgan and Martin 2001; Tulgan 2009; Twenge 2014; Kuran 2018), which are cited quite often in the academic literature. The authors of these books are management consultants. Among them, only Twenge and Martin hold academic positions. Twenge is a professor of psychology at San Diego State University, and Martin serves as an associate professor at Georgian Court University. Therefore, I also analysed their academic publications (Twenge 2010; Martin 2005) on Gen Y in order to see if there is any difference between academic literature and popular human resources and management literature when it comes to describing Gen Y traits by the same authors. The fourth writer whom I examined is Evrim Kuran, who is the most famous Gen Y expert in Turkey from whom many of my interviewees received training on Gen Y. Her book *Telgraftan Tablete* (2018) enabled me to examine both the differences between Gen Y traits in Turkey and in the US as well as similarities between my interviewees' narratives and hers.

Even though most of the academic literature on Gen Y often makes references to the Gen Y practitioner literature and/or does not have a satisfactory sampling size, it is still important to analyse this academic literature, which, at least potentially, can be influential on the construction of Gen Y discourse. I therefore chose one Turkish article (cited 127 times) by H. Keleş (2011) and one English article (cited 837 times) by S.P. Eisner (2005) based on the number of times that they were cited.

Research companies and their reports on Gen Y are also very influential in determining the Gen Y discourse. This influence is evident in the references to these reports throughout the literature on Gen Y. That is why I added two research reports, one on Gen Y worldwide and one on Gen Y in Turkey, prepared by two well-known research and consultancy companies – Gallup Inc. (2016) and Deloitte Eğitim Vakfı (2013). Finally, I added to this selective literature the observational notes that I took at Cherly Cran's workshop on Gen Y in İstanbul in 2014.

This selective literature can be seen as exploratory as I decided what was popular and what could be seen as diverse without a strong guiding principle.⁵⁵ However, despite that, the analysis of this literature helped me to create the first codes and initial insights for the common and major topics within the texts.

III.C.3.2. Refining codes and developing themes

The selective literature and some of the transcriptions of the interviews had already given me the framework for how Gen Y got defined (age range; as a consumer, employee or activist; and common formative experiences – e.g., 9/11) and how it was described (generational traits). In addition, I discovered that in most of these data there was (sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly) advice or prescriptions to come to terms with Gen Y. Moreover, familiarisation and the first coding process led me to make my organising questions more detailed and precise as follows:

- How is Gen Y defined?
 - What are the birth years (e.g., 1980–1997) which define the generation? How do they legitimate their choice of birth years?
 - Which designation do they choose (e.g., Gen ME, Millennials, Gen Y) and how do they legitimate this choice?
- How is Gen Y described?
 - Which dimension of Gen Y is emphasised most? (Activist, employee, or consumer)
 - What traits are attributed to Gen Y?
 - Does the text draw a more positive or negative image of the Gen Y?
 - Distinctive features
 - What significant and/or historical events make this generation different from the other generations? (e.g., overparenting, 9/11, digitalisation)
 - Advice/Prescriptions
 - What do the authors of the texts suggest for the change which comes with Gen Y? And to whom do they suggest it?

I accordingly coded the rest of the generated data based on these sub-questions. Through the end of the coding process, I had two major blocks of codes. The first block consists of the main topics or issues

⁵⁵ This selective literature should not be confused with the literature that I analyse in the next chapters (IV and V). Although some of the sources overlap, I chose the sources for these chapters with a more systematic and coherent justification.

within the Gen Y narrative; the second major block consists of Gen Y traits of that appear to be essential to the Gen Y discourse as well as the cohort-informed view of generation itself.

Below, I elaborate on these blocks of codes based on my organising questions for the data analysis. While the first group of codes gives the major components of a typical narrative on Gen Y, the second one focuses on the values, attitudes, and characteristics of Gen Y.

III.C.3.3. Major topics of Gen Y as a narrative

The code blocks related to the main issues of the Gen Y narrative show the common and major topics in Gen Y discourse, especially for the written texts in which the aim is to provide an overview of Gen Y. These topics provide the major elements of Gen Y narrative: (1) naming the generation, (2) defining the birth years, (3) describing the significant events and social changes which make Gen Y different from the others (referred to as distinctive features), (4) Gen Y traits, suggestions and prescriptions to “deal” with them.

As mentioned earlier, coding the claims on four issues which are organised by the question of how Gen Y is defined and described should be seen as a topic summary or theme-as-shared-topic instead of theme-as-shared-meaning. In line with this, although my coding approach is more inductive and stays in the semantic level, comparative analysis of different bodies of texts based on these topics allows me to explore meanings at more implicit levels, such as points of struggles and alliances between actors (e.g., naming the generation), their interests (e.g., selling consultancy on Gen Y), their strategies to achieve their interests (e.g., vague definition of generational traits).

The other block of codes which stands out is the “Gen Y traits”. This block deserves special attention for two main reasons: First, popular generational discourse and conceptualisation of generations as birth-cohorts almost always differentiate one generation from the others based on the characteristics attributed to each generation. Secondly, generational traits enable us to comprehend how a generation is described.

Accordingly, a core element of my analysis is the systematic documentation of these traits in different bodies of literature. In this context, I coded all the data based on the common traits attributed to Gen Y. They consist not only of the characteristics but also the attitudes of Gen Y such as “Gen Y likes to discuss their salaries with their co-workers”.

Let me briefly exemplify how I coded Gen Y traits within a transcription. During my interview with Hakan, who established the Gen Y social activity club in the company that he used to work, I asked what kind of needs he thought he would fulfil by establishing the club. This is his answer:

When you look at Gen Y, you see that the period they grew up is different from the previous ones because of the internet technologies (which have become more and more important) and this makes us different from the previous generations in essence. This difference of ours makes us learn faster and get bored faster. We cannot adapt to 8 am–6 pm working hours like Gen X or be satisfied just with an increase in salary. Because I know this and because I know that the administrative staff of this company 10 years later will consist of Gen Y and because I am myself a member of Gen Y, I gave great importance to this Club.

I coded this paragraph as follows:

- “When you look to Gen Y, you see that the period they grew up is different from the previous ones because of the internet technologies” coded as *[R] Internet Era*. It is not a Gen Y trait since it mainly explains why this generation is different than the other ones. Therefore, it is coded as distinctive features [R].
- “This difference of ours makes us learn faster” coded as *[Y] are fast/go-getter/dynamic /fast learner* because this code includes all the positive aspects related to immediacy at a general level.
- “and get bored faster” coded as *[Y] are impatient/get bored easily* because it includes all the negative aspects related to immediacy at a general level.
- “We cannot adapt to 8 am—6 pm working hours like Gen X” coded as *[Y] like flexibility* because this code includes all the qualities which refer to flexibility in a work context.
- “Or be satisfied with an increase in salary” coded as *[Y] prioritise work-life balance* since this code also includes the idea that Gen Y do not prioritise money.

As can be seen, I adopt a more inductive and semantic approach⁵⁶ to coding. But this approach is confronted with two particular difficulties. First, different bodies of literature mean different vocabularies (e.g., the choice of wording of an academic article and a popular business magazine can differ dramatically). Secondly, especially the popular literature on Gen Y does not use a nuanced vocabulary, preferring instead ambiguous wordings with different implications, which makes it difficult to code these traits. Accordingly, the process of developing the codes and themes consisted of several steps: I started with a limited number of codes; the number of codes strongly increased during the course of the analysis, and I finally had to consolidate the codes by joining similar ones or dropping codes which proved too specific. I accordingly obtained 37 codes on Gen Y traits (see Table III-5.) which was more than 64 at the beginning.

⁵⁶While inductive refers to an approach where coding development is driven by the content of the data, semantic refers to a focus on meanings at the more surface and explicit level (Braun and Clarke 2021d).

Table III-5. Revisited version of codes on Gen Y traits. Source: Author

| |
|--|
| 1. want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see result |
| 2. optimistic |
| 3. parents/family are important for them |
| 4. value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty |
| 5. are good team players |
| 6. are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) |
| 7. prioritise work-life balance |
| 8. are ambitious/entitled |
| 9. are impatient/get bored easily |
| 10. have (high) (over) self-esteem |
| 11. are globally mobile/like to travel |
| 12. dislike hierarchy/question the authority |
| 13. are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner |
| 14. have strong ecological/social sensibilities |
| 15. are innovative/creative |
| 16. love to be social/are extroverts |
| 17. are open-minded/progressive (value diversity/freedom)) |
| 18. questioning (everything) |
| 19. want to have fun |
| 20. want to feel appreciated (all the time) |
| 21. are technologically adept |
| 22. ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey |
| 23. dislike formality and bureaucracy |
| 24. have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations |
| 25. invest in themselves (education/training) |
| 26. are job hoppers/not loyal |
| 27. like customisation |
| 28. like flexibility |
| 29. are good at multitasking |
| 30. professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers |
| 31. willing to take initiative/are autonomous/self-reliant |
| 32. like gamification |
| 33. want an entertaining work environment |
| 34. want to be promoted (too) fast/soon |
| 35. want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody |
| 36. are lazy/not hard-working |
| 37. are hard to please/critical |

During this reviewing process, I realised that there are some implicit and explicit similarities and differences between codes on Gen Y traits in three different aspects:

General and work-related traits

Like the major and most basic classification (activist, consumer, and employee) that I did for the overall orientation of the texts that I analysed, I classified first the generational traits as consumption-, work-, and activism-related and as general traits. Among them only work-related and general traits were dominant. This classification helped me to see the relation between general and work-related traits, which were often the adaptation of a general characteristic to a work environment. For instance, the “impatient” trait of the Gen Y becomes at work context “want a promotion too fast, too soon” and that is why they always have “unrealistic” or “high” expectations. Thus, this classification made the thematization of generational traits easier based on the other two aspects (3 major themes and progressive and spoiled poles).

3 major themes of Gen Y traits

Table III-6. Generational traits in the Gen Y discourse. Source: Author.

| 3 Aspects | Open Minded/Progressive | Fun/Friendly | Need of Immediacy |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| General traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are open-minded/progressive (value diversity/freedom) questioning (everything) dislike hierarchy/question authority have strong ecological/social sensibilities. value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents/family are important to them want to have fun love to be social/are extroverts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner are impatient/get bored easily |
| Work-related traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see results prioritise work-life balance are globally mobile/like to travel ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey dislike formality and bureaucracy invest in themselves (education training) have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations like flexibility are hard to please/critical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are good team players want an entertaining work environment professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers like gamification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are lazy/not hard-working want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody want to feel appreciated (all the time) are reward-driven (want immediate and constant feedback) want to be promoted (too) fast/soon are job hoppers/not loyal |

Most of the Gen Y traits refer to similar themes and qualities such as “ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey”, “dislike hierarchy, question authority”, or “value diversity and freedom”. Accordingly, after a couple of unsuccessful attempts of theme building around these ideas, I finally managed to regroup

my codes based on three major themes: open-minded/progressive; fun/friendly; and need of immediacy (see Table III-6.). The traits which are grouped under “open-minded” cover mainly the traits in relation to authority (including managers) and political issues. The traits grouped under “immediacy” cover the traits related to speediness and impatience. Lastly, “fun/friendly” covers mainly the traits that have immature and childish connotations as well as those related to entertainment expectations.

Progressive and spoiled

In line with the organising question of the themes (Does the text paint a more positive or negative picture of Gen Y?), I intended to see which actors provided a more positive representation of Gen Y and which ones provided a more negative representation. Accordingly, from the beginning, I regrouped the codes as positive, negative, and neutral. However, as the number of the texts I analysed increased, that kind of grouping became complicated. I often had traits on Gen Y that are both positive and negative at the same time, which led me to revisit the codes, merge and split them, and invent new ones. But this problem enabled me to understand that these traits were often two sided (referred to as dichotomous ambiguity, see IV.E.1. Rhetorical aspects of generational traits) and depending on how they are presented; they could be a positive or a negative trait. For instance, the Gen Y trait “prioritising work-life balance” can be interpreted as “valuing leisure” or “not being a hard-worker” (Twenge et al. 2010, 1134). These two-sided aspects of generational traits can also be found in a form of quantity difference. For example, the trait “questioning generation” can be presented as “they question everything” or “they question too much”. I reflected on this aspect of the generational traits and regrouped most of them accordingly, and then I named these two groups “spoiled” and “rebellious” (in its positive sense “progressive”).

These two themes within the Gen Y traits are also in line with the distinctive features of the Gen Y (e.g., “They are (progressively) rebellious because they are raised in an era where diversity and freedom valued” or “They are spoiled because they are used to getting all sorts of information with one click” is a typical narrative for Gen Y). But more importantly, the thematization of the Gen Y traits as spoiled and rebellious, and accordingly figuring out that a significant number of them refer implicitly to the same or very similar qualities enabled me to see a common strategy that authors employ. For instance, most often, when Gen Y is characterised as “get bored easily” and “go-getter” at the same time, the authors implicitly claim that if you listen to the author, or apply what they recommend, you can change this new generation of employees from “impatient brats” to “go-getters”. Table III-7. presents positive and negative formulations of generational traits which allude to similar qualities.

Table III-7. Generational traits classified as rebellious (progressive) and spoiled. Source: Author

| | Rebellious (Progressive) | Spoiled |
|----------------------|---|--|
| | have (high) self-esteem | have (over) self-esteem |
| Immediacy | are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner | are impatient/get bored easily |
| | are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) | want to feel appreciated (all the time) want to be promoted (too) fast/soon |
| | willing to take initiative/are autonomous/self-reliant. are ambitious | want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody are entitled |
| Fun/ Friendly | want to have fun like gamification want an entertaining work environment love to be social/are extroverts parents/family are important for them | professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers |
| | value directness/transparency/honesty | value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty |
| Open Minded | open minded (progressive, value diversity and freedom) have strong ecological/social sensibilities invest in themselves (education/training) | have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations |
| | questioning dislike hierarchy/question authority dislike formality and bureaucracy ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey | question everything hard to please/critical are job hoppers/not loyal |
| | prioritise work-life balance want their work to be meaningful | are lazy/not hard-working |

Accordingly, the three common themes (immediacy, fun/friendly, open-minded) and the division of the traits as spoiled and rebellious within these themes enabled me to conceptualise how commonly Gen Y is described within a range of two qualitative poles.

These two poles of traits are what allows Gen Y to be considered to be a “progressive” and/or “spoiled” generation. The progressive aspect of Gen Y indicates that they are “rebellious/civic-minded, friendly/fun and fast”, whereas the spoiled aspect suggests that they are “naïve/unrealistic, disrespectful and impatient” (see Figure III.1.). These are the major dominant themes of the Gen Y discourse that shape the views of these authors’ audiences. However, these two apparently conflicting aspects of Gen Y (progressive and spoiled) can merge together without contradicting each other due to the polysemic aspects of the generational traits.

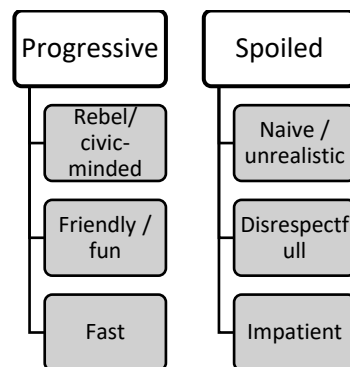


Figure III.1. Major qualities implied in the Gen Y discourse. Source: Author.

Overall, the compatibility between the theoretical background, research questions, and the methods or methodologies that are employed to answer these questions is something I take very seriously. Adoption of a constructivist epistemology necessitates some significant changes in the research design. In line with discourse-oriented ethnography, the research asks primarily the question “how” in order to have an understanding of “why”. Instead of asking what Gen Y is or whether they exist or not, this research primarily asks by whom and how Gen Y is defined and described in different contexts.

In this framework, I focused on three different context: first, I analysed major actors and their publications in the US to examine the origin of the discourse; second, I analysed Turkish mainstream media and practitioner literature to examine its translation to Turkey; lastly, to understand how Gen Y discourse is used and transformed to management practices in companies, I conducted in-depth interviews and participant observations with white-collar workers in Turkey. For the analysis of these data, I employed mainly (reflexive) thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021d), which enabled me to put forth the major component of the Gen Y discourse and the dichotomous character of the generational traits defined in this literature.

CHAPTER IV. ORIGINS AND DECONSTRUCTION OF THE GEN Y DISCOURSE

IV.A. Introduction: Gen Y Discourse

When I say young/old, I am taking the relationship in its most general form. One is always somebody's senior or junior. That is why the divisions, whether into age groups or into generations, are entirely variable and subject to manipulation...My point is simply that youth and age are not self-evident data but are socially constructed, in the struggle between the young and the old. (Bourdieu 1993, 95)

Bourdieu's understanding of generation and age as a "social construct" is key to understanding the development of the Gen Y discourse. He argues that the concept of generation is "entirely variable", requiring us to deconstruct the development of this concept and the role of various actors, their interests and strategies. Contrary to Bourdieu, I show that the struggles and collaborations regarding the Gen Y discourse do not happen mainly between the young and the old, but between actors in and around the world of business.

Existing research shows that it is not possible to isolate one significant group of people who identify themselves as Generation Y. Based on their qualitative research in Canada, Lyons and Schwitzer (2017, 213) indicate that those in Gen Y age group are the least likely group to identify with a generational group. Besides, self-identification is not enough on its own to become an influential actor in the construction of generational discourse. It is also necessary that members of a generation participate in (formal or informal) organisations to have a voice and be heard. For instance, there are different groups of people who identify themselves as 68ers and different organisations claiming to represent their voices (e.g., "68er-Bewegung" in Germany, "68liler dernegi" in Turkey). But the fact that members of Generation Y have not identified with such labels until now does not mean that they might not in the future. The catchphrase "Ok Boomer", which gained popularity among young people in 2019 to mock the attitudes of the baby boomer generation, can be interpreted as the first sign of such identification, albeit an indirect one (cf. Bote 2019; Hoffa 2019). Nevertheless, members of Generation Y themselves cannot be considered as major actors in the construction of generational identities.

So, who is driving the Gen Y discourse? In this chapter I show that contributors to the Gen Y discourse mainly come from previous generations, work in business-related fields, and act according to their professional interests rather than for the direct interest of an age group (or generation). Hence, Bourdieu's approach to age and generations is helpful as a starting point but is insufficient, as the

major actors (young and old people) that he identifies do not fit exactly with the actors in the Gen Y discourse.

In addition to this understanding of generation, the constructivist perspective that I adopt for this research also requires a different understanding of research objectives. Neuman (2014, 337) briefly explains the constructivist perspective as follows:

Instead of treating a document or statistical report as a neutral container of content, qualitative researchers examine the larger context of its creation, distribution, and reception. Consistent with a constructionist perspective, qualitative researchers emphasise the entire process from a document's creation (including the intentions of creators) through its consumption or reception by various receivers/consumers and then situate the document in a social context.

Therefore, generations should be understood in a Foucauldian sense as a discourse “which simultaneously reproduces knowledge and power through what is possible to think/be/do”, and discourse analysis should be understood as a method which enables us to grasp how “a particular knowledge of the world becomes common sense and dominant, while simultaneously silencing different interpretations” (Hay 2016, 248).

In this context, I understand the Gen Y discourse as the sum of the struggles and collaborations in naming, defining, and keeping the term relevant and profitable for the interested actors. Using ANT terminology, it is also possible to describe these struggles and collaborations as attempts to gain the authority to talk and/or act on behalf of or in the name of a generation. In that sense, all the actors (e.g., consultants, journalists, HR managers) and actants (e.g., quantitative data, research, advertisements) that contribute to the Gen Y discourse talk on behalf of this generation – who are apparently unable to get together and speak for themselves (for a detailed explanation of the concept of translation in ANT see section II.B.3.2).

In this chapter, I attempt to deconstruct the Gen Y discourse and examine how it reflects the cumulative efforts of various and diverse groups of actors to recruit allies) to keep the discourse relevant and profitable.

To this end, this chapter seeks to perform a detailed analysis of the significant texts and contributors to the Gen Y discourse. Since this is a popular discourse, coming in varied forms (political speech, academic analysis, small talks, workshops in organisations etc.), there is an abundance of contributions and contributors. I take three major indicators into consideration to decide which publications and actors to focus on.

The first indicator is the content of texts on Gen Y. While some texts give a more complete understanding of Gen Y (e.g., bestselling books by generation experts and some reports from large research and consultancy companies), others provide only a limited view of Gen Y and focus on limited aspects of the generation (e.g., most mainstream media and academic articles). The first type of texts represents a richer source to explore the generational discourse, and particularly the Gen Y narrative. Therefore, I concentrate more on these publications rather than those which do not explicitly intend to define Gen Y.

Second, as Gen Y is popularly discussed in the mainstream media, the popularity of publications on Gen Y and their authors is also important. I therefore assess their popularity based on their citation frequency, mainstream media presence, and the number of times these authors cite each other's publications.

Last, I consider the historical roles that actors in the Gen Y discourse have played in its evolution, to identify the most significant actors and their publications.

In this context, I first present the major actors of the generational discourse, their relations and interactions (context). Second, I focus on the four key dimensions of the discourse (naming, cut-off off points, distinctive features, and traits and prescriptions) and analyse the textual and rhetorical strategies that the authors employ (content). By rhetoric, I understand that "the impact of a message on the receiver is connected to how they experience the message. This means that the rhetoric in which the message is clothed is of importance. Rhetoric means in this regard not only how the message is put into words, but also the circumstances of its presentation." (Furusten 1999, 29).

IV.B. Protagonists in the Gen Y Discourse

In the section II.B.3. Generation Y as a management idea, I briefly explain how the Gen Y discourse can be considered within the management ideas⁵⁷; the actors that produce this discourse are mainly part of the business field, and most of the publications on Gen Y have direct or indirect references to "good management". By building an analysis of the Gen Y discourse in management ideas and fashions literature, I prove in more detail the extent to which the Gen Y discourse is a management discourse.

In this context, Kieser (1997, 56) notes that management fashions (or management ideas) are spread through the creation of an arena involving different groups of participants such as consultants, professors, managers, editors of management magazines, publishers, commercial seminar organisers

⁵⁷ As stated earlier, a management idea refers to "a broader discourse about what 'good' management looks like at a particular point of time. It can have a positive as well as a negative connotation" (Bort 2015, 46).

and organisers of internet forums. These fashions and discourses mainly spread through management books, magazines, courses and consultancy reports written and prepared by these actors (Brunsson 2009, 97).

S. Lyon et al. (2015) identify similar actors and mediums for the construction of generational discourses. They argue (2015, 346) that discourses regarding generational differences in the workplace have become very popular over the last decade, initiating a large number of academic articles and a much larger number of consultancy reports, popular books, magazine articles and media reports, and creating a new industry of consultants and public speakers on generational issues.

Within this context, it is possible to identify four major groups of actors who contribute to the construction of the Gen Y discourse: independent consultants who author popular books, consultancy companies that publish research reports, journalists who publish articles on business magazines and newspapers, and academics who author academic articles on Gen Y.

Table IV-1. shows the major actors and mediums used in the construction of the Gen Y discourse. In the following sections, I analyse in detail these major actors and their positions in the Gen Y discourse: Generation experts (IV.B.1.), multinational research and consultancy companies (IV.B.2.), mainstream media (IV.B.3.) and academics (IV.B.4.).

Table IV-1. Actors and their mediums contributing to the Gen Y discourse based on their influence. Source: Author.

| Source Material | Research Reports | Bestselling Books | Articles in Mainstream media and Business Magazines | Academic articles |
|-----------------|--|--|--|---|
| Actors | Multinational research and consultancy companies (e.g., Deloitte, Gallup, Pew Research, Universum) | Independent Consultants (also referred to as Generation Experts or Management gurus) (e.g., Howe and Strauss, B. Tulgan, J. Twenge, Van den Bergh) | Business Journalists/Columnists (e.g., Adage, Times, The New York Times, US Today) | Academics/ Professors (e.g., Eisner, j. Twenge) |

IV.B.1. Independent consultants as generation experts

Research on management fashions identifies independent consultants (also referred to as management gurus) who write popular books on managerial subjects as one of the most significant actors in the introduction and diffusion of new fashionable management ideas (Clark, Bhatanacharoen, and Greatbatch 2015; Abrahamson 1996; Madsen and Slåtten 2013; Clark and Salaman 1996; 1998). In that context, the academic literature on management gurus and independent

consultants provides a fruitful source to understand the major actors in the Gen Y discourse, which I analyse as *generation experts*. I use the term generation experts for the following reasons:

Firstly, although the management gurus' professional activities and their style of writing are very similar to those that I analyse in the following section, there are still some influential actors whose professional activities are not limited to managerial issues (e.g., Howe and Strauss).⁵⁸ Therefore, I believe labelling this group of people as "management gurus" could be misleading.

Secondly, another possible term for this group is "independent consultants" because all the figures that I analyse under the name of "generation experts" give consultancy on generational issues. However, I believe "independent consultant" as a term is too broad and not precise enough to highlight the position that this group of people occupy in the Gen Y discourse.

Concordantly, the term "generation expert" suits better, as it indicates where these actors try to position themselves – mostly in the mainstream media.⁵⁹

In the related academic literature, management gurus are defined as the influential figures who present fashionable management concepts and ideas via books, conferences, and seminars (Madsen and Slåtten 2013, 114). Most also provide consultancy services, diagnosing problems and giving advice according to the management fashion which they purvey. But management gurus mostly build their relationship with followers through their bestselling books (Clark and Greatbatch 2004). Thus, bestselling books become the evidence of their authority and expertise in managerial knowledge. Similar to management gurus in the management fashion arena, generation experts' contribution to the Gen Y discourse mainly consists of providing consultancy and authoring popular books on generational issues.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Additionally, there are no strict rules or criteria to decide who can be called a "management guru" and who cannot. Jackson (2001, 13) notes that management guru status is "ordained in large part by media attention and implies current or, at least, relatively recent wide-ranging popularity and, by extension, influence among practitioners, consultants, and academic audiences".

⁵⁹ I understand the word "expert" might also lead to some misunderstandings, as the word "expert" implies deep competence in terms of knowledge, skill, or experience, which is definitely not what I want to imply. Consistent with a constructivist approach, it should be understood solely as a term to signify how the actors position themselves and/or are positioned by other actors, and not to (pre)assign any value to their knowledge on generations.

⁶⁰ As I demonstrate in the following pages, generation experts play a very significant role in the construction and dissemination of generational discourses for two main reasons: Firstly, they mainly determine the content of the discourse. They regularly produce arguments answering the core questions of the Gen Y narrative - e.g., how to name the generation? What are the main traits of this generation? Why is it important to understand the generation? Secondly, they are constantly contributing to the popularity of the discourse via their presence in the mainstream media.

Books on Gen Y written by these experts deserve particular attention as they provide a more holistic view of the generation in question, while the majority of the mainstream media, academic articles and research reports focus only on one or two specific questions on Gen Y, such as the retirement situation of Gen Y (Lobosco 2018), their use of social media (Bolton et al. 2013) or their leadership styles (Chou 2012).⁶¹

A typical bestselling book on generational issues consists of answers to the following questions:

- Why is this subject important? (e.g., understanding Gen Y)
- Why are they different? What makes them different? (e.g., internet era and “overparenting”)
- How are they different? (generational traits)
- How should these differences be dealt with? (advice)

Thus, this holistic view presented by bestselling book writers covers nearly all the important arguments in the Gen Y discourse, and concordantly these books become a reference point in the construction of the discourse as well as the professional careers of generation experts.⁶²

Books on Gen Y written by these experts, as with other current bestselling business books, are readable and adopt “a non-theoretical language, providing managers with what appears to be an easy cure for their organisational woes and a clearly marked pathway toward personal success” (Brad Jackson 2001, 30). Most of the content (e.g., defining the newness of the era, describing the generational traits, recommendations based on these traits) and the rhetoric (e.g., use of anecdotes, aphorisms, examples from “successful” firms) of these books on Gen Y are very similar to each other and to other popular books by management gurus (see Collins 2012; Clark and Salaman 1998).

When I go over the number of times bestselling books on Gen Y are cited and their Amazon ranking, I note four prominent names: Howe and Strauss, Tulgan and Twenge (see Table IV-2. Generation expert information sheet. Source: Author. Thus, I focus on these four authors and their publications and analyse the construction of the Gen Y discourse through these generation experts’ publications (for a detailed explanation on how I identified these names see Appendix B.).

Two of these authors, Howe (born October 21, 1951) and Strauss (December 5, 1947 – December 18, 2007) first popularise the explanation of social phenomenon by the characteristics of generations in

⁶¹ There are also exceptions. For instance, most Pew Research reports provide a more detailed understanding of the generations. Cover stories of business magazines also provide a relatively holistic view of the generation in question.

⁶² As Crainer (1996, 14) indicates, although management books are an important component of the management fashion industry, their influence should not be exaggerated. This claim is also valid for the case of generational discourses. Generation experts gain their expertise via these books, but their popularity and influence mainly come through their interactions with other generational discourse actors, especially journalists.

the US. Both are best known for their book on social generations in American History, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, in which they examine 400 years of American history and identify 18 generations during this period. They argue that there are “four generational archetypes” that recur cyclically across these 18 generations according to the political and social conditions of their time (Strauss and Howe 1997, 19).

They also coin the term “Millennials” for the generation born around 1980. They have a very strong and formative influence on generational discourses, especially regarding management (Williams 2019, 373). This influence can also be seen in other generation experts’ publications. Kuran, Twenge, and Tulgan all mention Howe and Strauss in their books. Their strong presence in generational discussions can also be tracked in academic fields. According to google scholar (11.11.2019), their major work *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* is cited 2685 times and their other book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* 5186 times.

They also found a “publishing, speaking, and consultancy company built on their generational discoveries” (LifeCourse n.d.) named *Lifecourse* and create two different websites hosting discussions on generational issues: www.fourthturning.com⁶³ and www.millennialsrising.com.

Another important figure in the Gen Y discourse is Bruce Tulgan (born June 27, 1967). He is an American writer and consultant specialising in management training and generational diversity in the workforce. He begins his career as a “generation expert” by publishing a book titled *Managing Generation X* (1995). His first book on Gen Y (co-authored with C.A. Martin) titled *Managing Generation Y: Global Citizens Born in the Late Seventies and Early Eighties* was published in 2001. In 2009 he published a second book on Generation Y titled *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: Managing Generation Y* which became a bestselling. Like most generation experts, he also owns a consultancy company, RainmakerThinking, Inc., which has conducted longitudinal studies called "The Great Generational Shift in the Workforce" since 1993 to monitor "the impact of generational change"(RainmakerThinking, Inc. n.d.).

Jean Marie Twenge (born August 24, 1971) is an American professor of psychology at San Diego State University and an author, consultant, and public speaker (Twenge n.d.). She is mainly known for her books *iGen* (2017), *Generation Me* (2006, updated 2014) and *The Narcissism Epidemic* (2009, co-

⁶³ Howe and Strauss (2000, 310) explain their discussion website in their book: “Some of the voices in the sidebars come from a web discussion we’ve hosted, over the past three and a half years, at www.fourthturning.com. When we launched that site, we started a single forum with four topics. Since then, the site has blossomed into a massive, intergenerational town meeting, with over two hundred discussion topics and innumerable visitors, many of them teenagers. Our regular visitors have held two readers’ conventions, in Washington, D.C., and Nashville”.

authored with W. Keith Campbell). She stands out from the other major actors by her academic position and greater scientific engagement. She has more than 140 scientific publications to her name, which are increasingly being cited by other scholars. She also offers talks, seminars and consultancy to different audiences such as “college faculty and staff, high school teachers, military personnel, camp directors, and corporate executives” on generational differences (Twenge n.d.).

I classify Twenge under the title of generation experts rather than academics because the strong media presence, bestselling books and consultancy activities that she offers are more influential than her academic studies.⁶⁴ Similarly, she has more influence on media and on the construction of the Gen Y discourse than other academics who work in the same field.

Table IV-2. Generation expert information sheet. Source: Author.

| Author | Major Publications (Title/Year/Type) | About Authors | Authors' Companies |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Howe, Neil; Strauss, William | Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation (2000 Book) | American writers and consultants | LifeCourse Associates: Publishing, speaking, and consultancy company |
| Tulgan, Bruce | Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y (2009 Book) | American writer and consultant specialising in management training and generational diversity in the workforce | RainmakerThinking: Management research, training and consulting firm. |
| Twenge, Jean M | Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are more Confident, assertive, Entitled and more Miserable than ever Before (2014 Book) | Professor of psychology at San Diego State University, consultant, and public speaker. | Consultancy under her website: jeantwenge.com |

IV.B.2. Research and consultancy companies

While the first group of actors can be described as generation experts, the second group includes large research and consultancy companies which conduct surveys and publish reports on Gen Y. Williams (2019, 377) outlines the importance of consultancy companies on generational discourse:

Consultants and ‘gurus’ feature large in this literature [management fashions] as intermediaries or evangelists. In the case of the Millennial, the role of the fashion setter is made more complex by the multiple roles held by consultants. Gallup, for example, is a prominent commentator on generational change (‘Millennials don’t want to fix their weaknesses – they want to develop their strengths’: Gallup, 2016: 3) and is a leading purveyor of psychometric tests designed to measure these ‘strengths’.

⁶⁴ Twenge’s studies on generations are criticised by many scholars. For instance, Parry and Urwin (2021, 5) note that although there is no real evidence to support it, her studies implicitly assume that “every 20-30 years a new distinct generational category occurs”.

Consultancy companies have a very important role in generational discourses, but unlike generation experts, the services they provide are not limited to generational issues. These companies are also able to build their reports on Generation Y with data from surveys they conduct for market research. For instance, MarketresearchCO2 use their consumer panel research in Turkey, and the Pew Research Center (e.g., 2015a) use their data from the American Trends Panel, to publish reports on Millennials. Some of the bigger consultancy companies cooperate with the generation experts' consultancy companies mentioned above. When Pew Research Center announces that they will, for the first time, publish a series on Millennials, they acknowledge the work of Howe and Strauss (Keeter and Taylor 2009). Universum, another research and consultancy company (specialising in employer branding) that regularly publishes research on Millennials' perceptions of companies, collaborates with the renowned Turkish generation expert Evrim Kuran. By working with Evrim Kuran, a consultancy company gains the advantage of having an important and influential person at a local level who contributes to their reputation. Evrim Kuran benefits from the reputation of an MNC and also acquires enough sources to conduct research in Turkey – normally a difficult task for a local actor. It is also possible to track references from the generation experts' side. For instance, Twenge in her bestselling book refers to Pew Research, Gallup Inc. and PwC's research on Millennials.

Most large research and consultancy companies have publications on generational issues. In this chapter, I analyse the publications from five of these companies: Gallup Inc., Pew Research Center, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Deloitte and Universum. These large research and consultancy companies regularly publish surveys, reports and articles on generational issues. Table IV-3. shows the companies, their publications on Gen Y (which I focus on in this chapter) and a brief description of their activities. Of these five companies, Universum is relatively small and less well-known, but because of its particular importance in the context of Turkey, I include this company as well.

Table IV-3. Information sheet of multinational research and consultancy companies. Source: Author.

| | Name | Publications | About the Company |
|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Deloitte | Deloitte TTL | The 2016 Deloitte Millennial Survey (2016 Report) | Deloitte Global provides audit, consulting, financial advisory, risk management, tax, and related services to public and private clients spanning multiple industries. |
| | Deloitte Insights (Former Deloitte University Press) | A New Understanding of Millennials: Generational differences re-examined (2015 Report) | |
| | Gallup | How Millennials Want to Work and Live: Purpose, Development, Coach, Ongoing Conversations, Strengths, Life (2016 Report) | Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organisations solve their most pressing problems. |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Pew Research Center | Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends (2014 Report) | Pew Research is a nonpartisan think tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world. It conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, media content analysis and other empirical social science research. |
| Universum | Understanding a Misunderstood Generation (2017 Report) | Universum is a global employer Branding Leader. Conducting the world's largest research study on talent career expectations. |
| PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) | Millennials at Work: Reshaping the Workplace (2011 Report) | PricewaterhouseCoopers is a multinational professional services network of firms operating as partnerships under the PwC brand. |

IV.B.3. Journalists in business media

The third influential group of actors is journalists, especially those working for business magazines and newspapers. A number of studies on management fashions suggest that popular media has a key role in diffusing and legitimising management fashions (Mazza and Alvarez 2000; Chen and Meindl 1991). Journalists are less influential in (re)shaping the Gen Y discourse than the other actors mentioned above, but they are more influential in spreading the discourse to the masses; rather than shaping the discourse with new arguments and claims, they bring the topic onto the agenda by giving wide coverage to the views of generation experts, consultancy companies and managers. They are a group of actors who mainly transfer the discourse rather than develop it. But by transfer, I do not mean a process by which journalists simply reflect or report experts' or managers' views. Journalists also ask questions, highlight different aspects of the subjects, and quote other actors according to the points they want to convey. In sum, given their role in popularising and legitimising the discourse, journalists are indispensable actors in Gen Y discourse.

IV.B.4. Academics

Given the volume of academic articles written about Gen Y and the fact that generation (as a political identity or age cohort) has long been a subject of study in social sciences, it can be assumed that academics also have an important role in the construction of the discourse. However, there are few references to academics and their studies, compared to the references made to the other actors. On the contrary, we see a high number of references to generation experts' books in the academic articles on Gen Y. Additionally, in the evolution of the discourse in the US and in Turkey, we do not see any critical changes in the discourse made by an academic, except Twenge, who is not only an academic but also a consultant and a bestselling author.

Hence, it is hard to say that academics have a major influence on generational discourse. Most scholars writing on the subject of generations have only published a few articles on that issue, and do not specialise in generational issues, e.g., Richard P. Winter (2016) and Luscombe (2013).

It also seems that generational issues are not a major topic at the top business schools. On Harvard Business School's website, there is only the one teaching note on Millennials by Prof. Rosabeth M. Kanter, and generational issues are not part of her area of interest (Kanter and Cohen 2018).⁶⁵ Huczynski (1993, 445) describes the business school faculty as having a role in selecting which popular ideas students are exposed to, and it can be assumed that academics at business schools are not keen to contribute to the discourse around generations, at least in the US. This relative neglect of issues around Generation Y in the top business schools can be explained partly by a lack of "systematism" and a "specific academic jargon" (Furusten 1999, 18). Besides, Hirsh and Levin (1999, 207) show that when a broad concept or idea is used loosely to encompass and account for a set of diverse phenomena, it appeals more to the non-academic constituency and becomes less vulnerable to validity challenges.

In sum, the major actors in the Gen Y discourse can be grouped as generation experts, research and consultancy companies, journalists in the business media, and academics. The most significant of these groups is the generation experts who publish popular management and marketing books on generational issues, followed by multinational research and consultancy companies which publish surveys, reports and articles on Gen Y. They have the advantage of access to data from their surveys which they conduct for market research purposes. Moreover, their collaborations with national/local generation experts increase their influence. Journalists who work in mainstream business media and popular management magazines have an influential role in the dissemination of the Gen Y discourse. The fourth group of actors is the academics. Despite the considerable number of academic articles on Gen Y, their influence on the shaping and dissemination of the discourse is not as strong as the first three.

⁶⁵ This also confirms the findings of Barley et al. (1988) which indicate that a management discourse flows primarily from the field to the academy.

IV.C. Naming a Generation

Naming a generation is an important step in the construction of generational discourses. A number of different names/labels are used for the generation born around 1980, such as Echo Boomers, Gen Net, Digital Natives, Generation Next, Generation Why, and Generation Me. But among them all, only Generation Y and Millennials have survived until now.

In this sub-chapter, I mainly focus on these two, but I also consider “Gen Me” and “Digital Native” because of their importance in the construction of the generational discourse.

Millennials is the first term used to describe the generation born around 1980. It was coined for the first time by Howe and Strauss in their bestselling book *Generations* in 1991. Generation Y was coined by an *Advertising Age* editorial in August 1993 (Adage Editorial 1993). The term covered those aged 11 or younger and those who would be teenagers in the coming ten years. They were described as different from Generation X. However, after coining the term Generation Y, *Advertising Age* did not follow up with a theory or business practice such as a consultancy on it (unlike Howe and Strauss). Therefore, it is relatively hard to track the use of the term on Gen Y in a worldwide context as there are no concrete actors/institutions which we can point to directly. “Generation Y” began to be used in very different fields by very different actors; regarding Google trends, until 2013 the term “Generation Y” had always been more popular than “Millennials” (Figure IV.1) in the US.

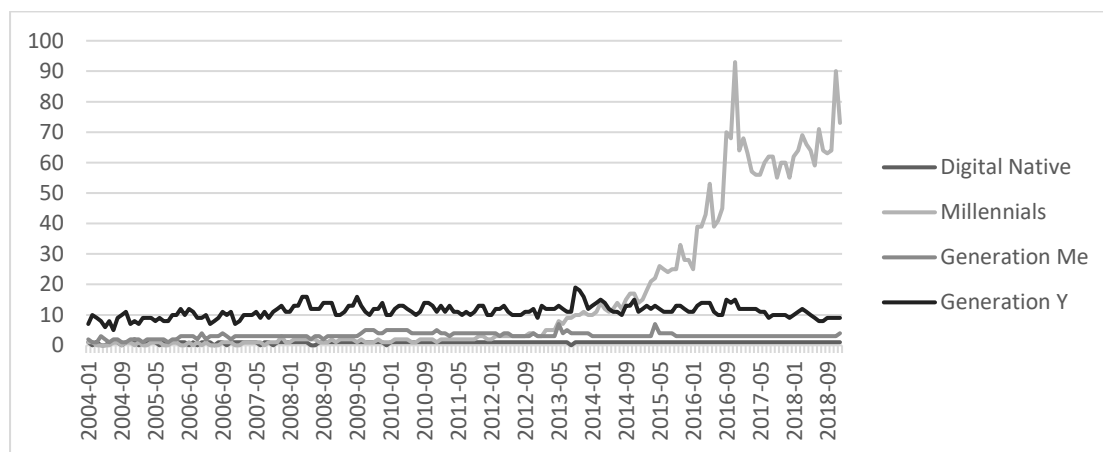


Figure IV.1. Google search queries on “Digital Native”, “Generation Y”, “Millennials” and “Generation Me” in the US (2004-2019). Source: trends.google.com. Accessed: 17/02/2021 (Numbers represent search interest relative to the peak popularity on the figure for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the highest point for the term).

After the rise in the use of the term “Generation Y”, Howe and Strauss publish a book titled *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), arguing that Millennials represent a disruption from the previous generation. Therefore, according to the authors, it is not appropriate to name them Generation Y, which implies a linear (or gradual) understanding of generations. The citation below

from their book clearly shows their promotion of the term “Millennials”, and how they compare this term to others:

Not X, Not Y—Call Them Millennials

...Some pundits—marketers, especially—dub these kids ‘Generation Y’, as though they were a mere Generation X2, South Park idiots beyond redemption, the ultimate price for America’s post-’60s narcissism. Others, giving them names such as Generation Dot Com, depict them as an exaggerated extension of America’s current mood of self-oriented commercialism... Look closely at youth indicators, and you’ll see that Millennial attitudes and behaviors represent a sharp break from Generation X, and are running exactly counter to trends launched by the Boomers. Across the board, Millennial kids are challenging a long list of common assumptions about what ‘postmodern’ young people are supposed to become.(Howe and Strauss 2000, 11).

In 2001, Tulgan published his first management book (co-authored with Carolyn A. Martin) on Gen Y entitled *Managing Generation Y: Global Citizens Born in the Late Seventies and Early Eighties*. They explain their choice of label and their discomfort about it as follows:

However, it soon became clear that the media had settled on the much catchier “Generation Y,” and so, as uncomfortable as we are with that, we have used “Generation Y” as a convenient shorthand, with utmost apologies to all the CyberKids, Wannabes, and N-Gens subsumed in this category. (Tulgan and Martin 2001, 12)

In 2002, Gallup for the first time referred to “Millennials” in an article (Gallup 2002) based on their “Gallup Youth Survey”, and in 2005 they published another article with the label “Generation Y” entitled “Marketing to China’s Generation Y”.

In 2006, the psychology professor Twenge published a book called *Generation Me* and for the first time coined the label “Generation Me”. The Gen Me label did not become as popular as the other two labels. She also adopted a modest position on the different labels:

They are sometimes called Gen Y or Millennials. I don’t expect the Generation Me title to replace these other labels, but it does nicely capture the group of people who grew up in an era when focusing on yourself was not just tolerated but actively encouraged. (Twenge 2014, 18)

Despite this modest statement in her book, her influence on generational discourse is still visible: For instance, Time Magazine, in May 2013, published a cover story entitled “The ME ME ME Generation”(Stein 2013). This cover story led to a public debate in the US.

Pew Research Center began its publications on the generation born around 1980 with the name “Next Generation” in January 2007 with an article titled “A Portrait of ‘Generation Next’” (Pew Research

Center 2007). This article was later included as a part of a series on Millennials. Two years later, in 2009, Pew Research Center announced its new series of reports named “Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next”. In the announcement of this series, they adopted a relatively timid position on labelling: “...generational names never stop being works in progress. The Zeitgeist changes, and labels that once seemed spot-on fall out of fashion. Millennials have also been described as Gen Yers or Gen Nexters. It’s not clear if any of these three labels will stick” (Keeter and Taylor 2009). In the same year, B. Tulgan published his second book on Gen Y entitled *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y*.

The adoption of a label was still an issue up to 2012. When we examine worldwide Google trends, we see that until 2014 Generation Y was more frequently searched for on google than Millennials, but the difference in popularity between these two labels started to decrease around June 2013 (Figure IV.2.). Similar results can also be found when considering the number of subscribers to Millennials and Generation Y groups on Reddit. Figure IV.3. shows that the Generation Y group had slightly more subscribers than the Millennials until 2014. From 2015 till 2019, the millennial label became significantly more popular than Generation Y.

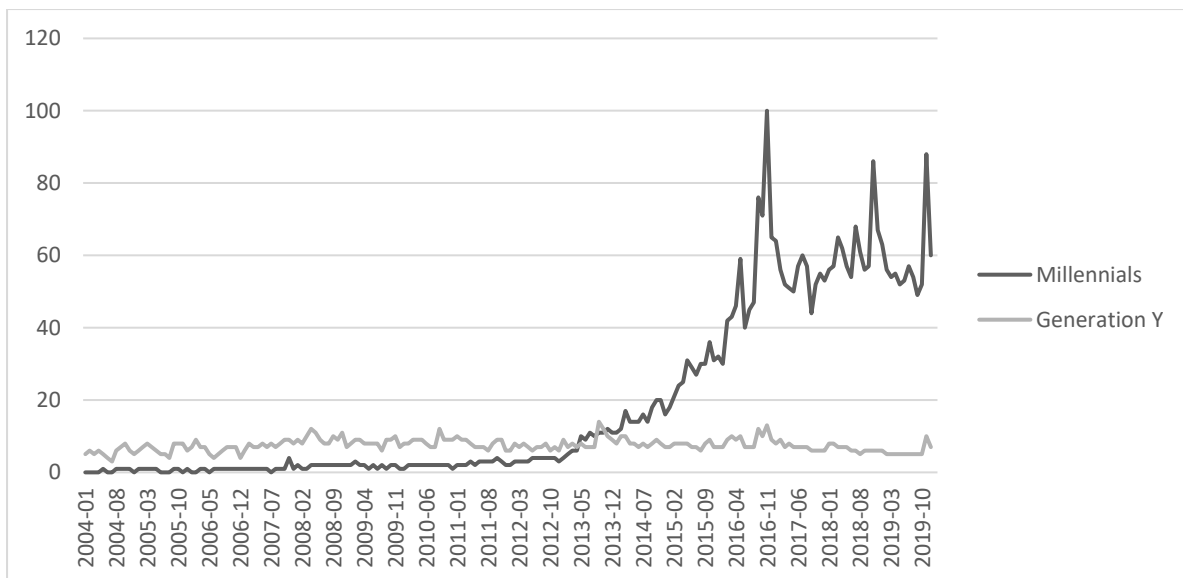


Figure IV.2. Google search queries on "Generation Y" and "Millennials" in US (2004-2019). Source: trends.google.com. Accessed: 25/11/2019 (Numbers represent search interest relative to the peak popularity on the figure for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the highest point for the term).

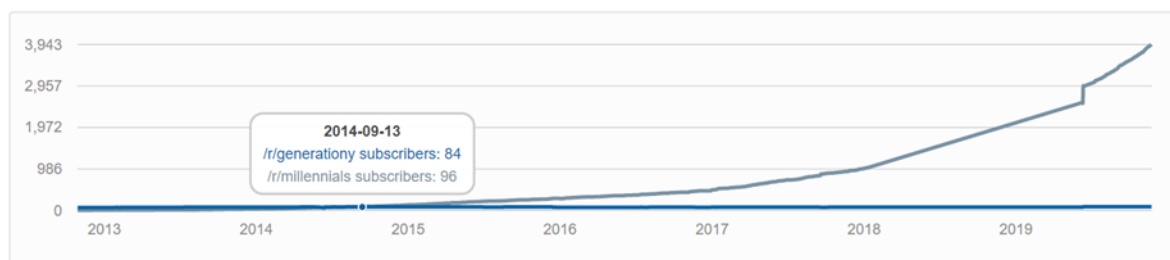


Figure IV.3. Subscribers to “Millennials” and “Generation Y” groups on reddit. Source: redditmetrics.com, Accessed: 25/11/2019 (Numbers represent the exact number of subscribers).

This change in the popularity of the two labels was explained by journalist Bruce Horovitz in *US Today*. In 2012, *Ad Age* “threw in the towel by conceding that Millennials is a better name than Gen Y” (Horovitz 2012). In 2014, Carmicheal (a former writer at *Advertising Age*) said that: “Generation Y was a placeholder until we found out more about them...In many ways, it’s not a better name, but I think that millennial at least gives you the sense that it’s a turning point — that there is something different going on within this generation and that they are living in times that are kind of a turning point as well.” (Raphelson 2014). In addition to these statements, in 2013, Wikipedia started to redirect Generation Y search queries to its article on Millennials (Wikipedia 2013).

In 2016, after the “Millennials” label had gained in popularity at the expense of Gen Y, B. Tulgan changed the name of his bestselling book from “Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y” to “Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Millennials” in a revised and updated edition. Tulgan uses a different strategy to solve the labelling struggle. Without naming Howe and Strauss, he suggests that the millennial generation is too broad in terms of age range, and divides it into two generations named Gen Y and Gen Z.

In 2018, Pew Research defined the cut-off points of Millennials, and at least in the US, Millennials became the dominant label for the generation born around the 80s. By defining the cut-off points of Millennials (and not Generation Y), Pew Research provided an important aid for researchers working on generational issues.⁶⁶

Naming the generation born around 1980 was a major step and was an ongoing process until very recently. Different actors coined and used various terms such as Echo Boomers, Gen Net, Digital Natives, Generation Next, and Generation Me. However, among all these labels, only Generation Y

⁶⁶ In Turkey, the term Generation Y has maintained its popularity, mainly because of the difficulty in translating “Millennials” into Turkish. Millennial is Milenyum in Turkish and is part of daily language, but for Millennials the only possible translation is “generation millennium” (milenyum kusagi) which is less catchy and more difficult to use. That is why despite frequent references to Howe and Strauss’s theory in Evrim Kuran’s interviews, speeches, and her book, she always uses the label Gen Y.

and Millennials proliferated and survived. In the case of the US, we see that the Millennials label became more popular than Generation Y after 2015. Figure IV.4. summarises the naming efforts of various actors who contributed to this process over time.

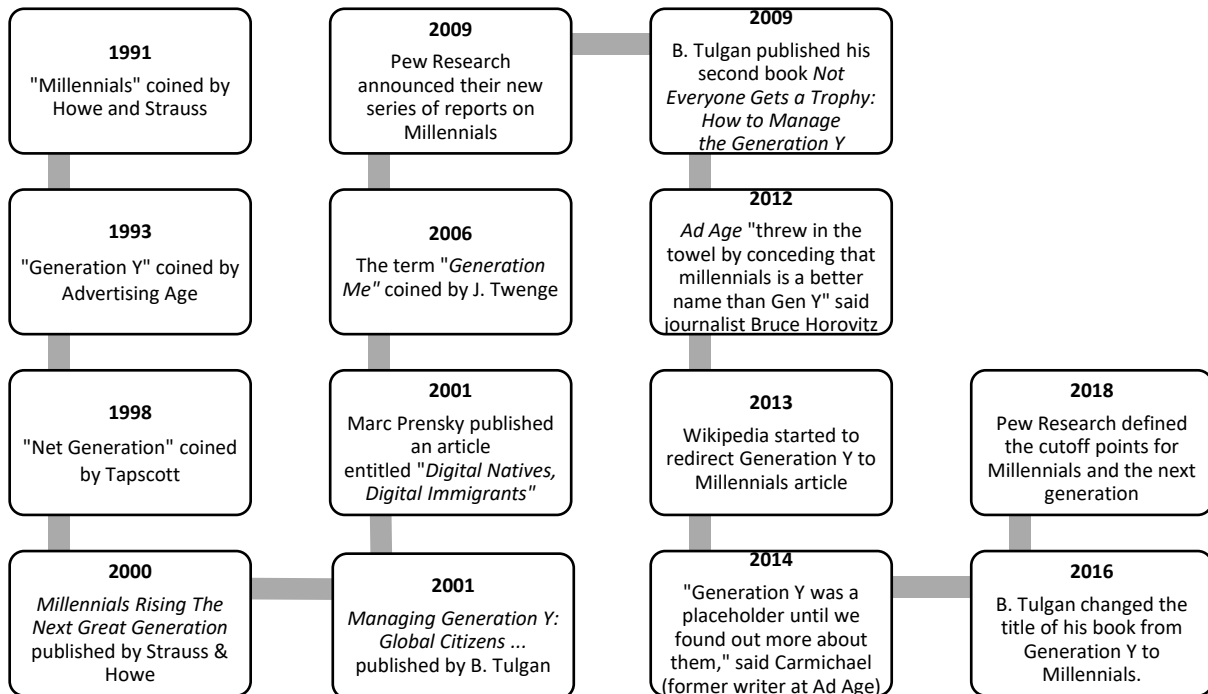


Figure IV.4. Chronology of the naming of the generation born around 1980. Source: Author.

IV.D. Defining Generational Cut-off Points and Major Distinctive Features

In this sub-chapter, I first explain how the age range and the length of that range are determined and how these cut-off points are justified by the various actors of the generational discourse. In the second part, I analyse the major features proposed to explain how this generation differs from previous generations and discuss the meanings of this part of the narrative within the Gen Y discourse.

IV.D.1. Generational cut-off points

Another task in generational discourse is to define the generational cut-off points (the age range and the length of that range) for the generation born around 1980. Divisions between the ages are arbitrary and the borders that define who is old and who is young are the results of struggles (Bourdieu 1993, 94). This is also the case when it comes to defining when a generation starts and ends. As shown

in Table IV-4., there is no exact consensus between the contributors of generation discourse.⁶⁷ The table also shows that Twenge, Tulgan and Pew Research Center change their cut-off points over time. In 2001, Tulgan in his book *Managing Generation Y: Global Citizens Born in the Late Seventies and Early Eighties* (co-authored with C. A. Martin) defined the age range of Gen Y as “1978-1984”, while in his next book *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y*, published in 2009, he changed these dates to “1978-1990”. Twenge changed the age range of Generation Y (or with her naming Gen ME) in the revised edition of her book *Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled and More Miserable Than Ever Before* from “1970-1999” (2006) to “1982-1999” (2014).

Table IV-4. Generational cut-off points and labels for the generation born around 1980. Source: Author based on the publications listed above.

| | Name of The Authors | Label | Cut-off Points |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|--|
| Generation Experts | Strauss, W.; Howe, N. | Millennials | 1982-2002 (2000) |
| | Tulgan, Bruce | Gen Y | 1978-1984 (2001); 1978-1985 (2002); 1978-1990 (2009) |
| | Twenge, Jean M | Gen ME | 1970-1999 (2006); 1982-1999 (2014) |
| | Tapscott, Don | Net Generation | 1977-1997 (2008) |
| | Van den Bergh, J.; Behrer, M. | Gen Y | 1980-96 (2016a) |
| | Cran, Cherly | Gen Y | 1984-1994 (2014) |
| | Prensky, Marc | Digital Native | 1980- (2001) |
| Research and Consultancy Companies | Deloitte Egitim Vakfi | Gen Y | 1982- (2013; 2015) |
| | Deloitte University Press | Millennials | 1980- (2016) |
| | Deloitte | Millennials | 1982- (2016; 2017b); 1983- 1994(2018a) |
| | Gallup | Millennials | 1980-1996 (2016) |
| | Pew Research Center | Millennials | 1981-1988 (2007); 1981-1996 (2014; 2015b) |
| | Universum | Millennials | 1984-1996 (2017) |
| | PwC | Millennials | 1980-2000 (2011) |
| | Ipsos TR | Gen Y/Millennials | 1982-1998 (2016) |
| | Edenred-Ipsos | Millennials | 1981- (2016) |
| Others | AdAge | Gen Y | 1980- (1993) |
| | US Census Bureau | Millennials | 1982-2000 (2015) |

It was important for expert writers to be the first in describing the “new” generation. Twenge and Tulgan, both focusing on the new generation’s relationship with work, defined the generation’s birth years as occurring earlier than the other authors in their first publications on the new generation. When Tulgan published his first book in 2000, the oldest member of Gen Y was 22 years old, according to his generational cutoff. And when Twenge published her book in 2006, the oldest member was 26

⁶⁷ National or international institutions responsible for producing data about people and economies might have an important influence on the consensus. Apparently, the US Census Bureau only officially refers to one generation, Baby Boomers (1946–1964), due to the surge in post-WWII births (Colby and Ortman 2014). On the other hand, the US Census Bureau (2015) published an article titled “Millennials Outnumber Baby Boomers and Are Far More Diverse” on their website in 2015 and defined the birth range as 1982–2000

years old. These relatively early starting points for Gen Y enabled the authors to be among the first authors/consultants to talk about the “new” generation in the context of work.

There is a discussion among contributors regarding the rationale behind the generational cut-off points. Authors do not directly and openly refer to other authors and research; instead, they mention some consensus or disagreement between unnamed actors, e.g., “there is a consensus that Generation X ends with the birth year 1977” (Tulgan 2009, 5), “as some have suggested...” (Howe and Strauss 2000, 39). This lack of explicit references makes it hard to follow the discussion between actors on defining generational cut-off points, but it can still be assumed that they are aware of other notable generation experts and their claims on the cut-off points of generations, given these experts’ strong media presence.

For instance, Howe and Strauss (2000, 39) criticise short generational cut-offs in their book:

Curiously, the rising media crescendo over Millennials followed the early-’90s media hype over Generation X by only about six or seven years. Does this mean, as some have suggested, that generations are getting shorter in today’s America? No. The average length of a generation, keeping time with the phases of the human lifespan, is still around twenty or twenty-one years. Thus, if the first Gen-X birth year can be located in the early 1960s, it is only natural to find the first birth year of the next generation in the early 1980s...Many of the original (1993-94) “Generation Y” stories referred to teenagers born between 1974 and 1980, cohorts which today are regarded as the late wave of Gen X.

One year later, Tulgan (2001, 8) in his first book on Gen Y (co-authored with Martin) defends the shorter age range and criticises the use of broader age ranges to identify a generation:

Those who refer to Gen Yers as “Echo Boomers”, children of the baby boomers, identify this generation as a huge one, spanning 20 years from 1978 to 1998. Others cut the gap to 10 years, defining Gen Yers as those born between 1978 and 1988. Since a generation is an identifiable age group with a shared historical experience, the time span of each new generation shortens as the pace of change accelerates... If we are to define the next generational group, or cohort, in any meaningful way, the time span must be shorter still, no more than seven years. That is why we have focused this study on those born between 1978 and 1984.

As can be seen in the quotation above, Tulgan legitimises his choice of a short timespan by referring to the broad definition of generation as an “age group with a shared historical experience”. He implies that the shared historical experience these days is mainly the “acceleration of the pace of change”. For him, the zeitgeist is the “rapid change”, and as generations are formed according to their shared experiences, we should assume that shared historical experiences differ quickly from one age group to another resulting in a shorter time span for generations.

In 2009, Tulgan published another book on Generation Y broadening the age range from 6 to 12 years. Although authors like Howe and Strauss identify it as between 15-20 years, Tulgan keeps to his argument of a “shorter time span for the new generations”. He accordingly defines the cut-off points of Gen Y and its relationship with the term Millennials as such:

Given the accelerating pace of change, I think this group is too large. I prefer to break the so-called Millennials into two cohorts: Generation Y (people born between 1978 and 1990) and, for now, Generation Z (anyone born between 1991 and 2000). (Tulgan 2009, 5)

Tulgan neither rejects nor fully approves of the term Millennials, nor the commonly accepted cut-off points for Millennials.⁶⁸ Instead, he maintains a position in discussions around the term Millennials, while also covering the rising interest in the next generation (labelled as Gen Z).

On the other hand, the academic Twenge prefers to justify her choices by mainly referring to the accuracy of the data, often using formulations such as “I do so under duress” or “the data support this observation”. Explaining the change of cut-off points from her previous work, she also refers to the resemblance (or gradual change) between late Gen X and early Gen Y:

In general, the data back up this common-sense logic, showing gradual changes with time, not sudden shifts that cleave one generation from the next...These cutoffs are a switch from the first edition when I defined Gen Me as those born 1970 to 1999. The post-1982 cutoff conforms to that used in previous books and articles, many of which have a different perspective on this generation. However, that decision was also made under duress, because in many cases those born in the 1970s and 1980s look fairly similar to each other. Gen X and Gen Me have a lot more in common than most people realise—the transition from Boomers to Gen X’ers was the more profound shift, and Gen Me has built on those trends. (Twenge 2014, 19)

Similarly, Tulgan (2009, 6) also highlights this gradual change between Gen Y and Gen X with simple metaphors: “Here’s the short story with Generation Y. If you liked Generation X, you are going to love Generation Y. Generation Y is like Generation X on-fast-forward-with-self-esteem-on-steroids”⁶⁹

⁶⁸ In 2016, when the millennial label gained an undeniable popularity compared to other labels in the US, Tulgan published a revised and updated version of his bestselling book and changed its name from “Not everyone gets a trophy: How to manage Generation Y” to “Not everyone gets a trophy: How to manage Millennials”. He kept the same idea for the generation but used a slightly different formulation (2016, 6–7): “The working definition of the Millennials has been all those born between 1978 and 2000. But 22 years is simply too large a time frame to capture just one generation, especially in this era of constant change. Like the massive Baby Boom (1946–1964), the massive Millennial cohort simply must be treated as two distinct waves, coming of age in two very distinct decades. We refer to the first-wave Millennials (those born 1978 through 1989) as ‘Generation Y’ and the second-wave Millennials (those born 1990 and 2000) as ‘Generation Z.’”

⁶⁹ When the next generation (Gen Z) joined the workforce, Tulgan made a change in his revised and renamed (From Gen Y to Millennials) book: “Here’s the short story with the Millennial Generation: If you liked Generation Y, you are going to love Generation Z. If Generation Y was like Generation X on fast-forward with self-esteem on

Another prominent actor in the discussion about defining cut-off points is the Pew Research Center. Their article “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Post-Millennials Begin” becomes popular in the mainstream media in the US. A close examination of their reports and blog articles from 2007 to 2019 reveals that they neither question nor explain their choice of 1981 as the starting point for the generation. As can be seen in Table IV-4., 1981 is always taken as the beginning of the Millennials/Gen Y. Instead, they focus more on the endpoints of the millennial generation. In an article *Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America’s largest generation* published in 2016⁷⁰, they avoid defining a clear endpoint to the Millennial generation:

Generations are analytical constructs and developing a popular and expert consensus on what marks the boundaries between one generation and the next takes time...The Center continues to assess demographic, attitudinal and other evidence on habits and culture that will help to establish when the youngest Millennial was born or even when a new generation begins. To distil the implications of the census numbers for generational heft, this analysis assumes that the youngest Millennial was born in 1997. (Fry 2016)

Two years later they announce the endpoint of the Millennial generation as 1996 in an article titled “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Post-Millennials Begin”.⁷¹ In this article, they legitimate their choice as follows (Dimock 2018):

Generations are often considered by their span, but again there is no agreed upon formula for how long that span should be [...] But for analytical purposes, we believe 1996 is a meaningful cutoff between Millennials and post-Millennials for a number of reasons, including key political, economic and social factors that define the Millennial generation’s formative years.

Like most of the contributors to the generational discourse, Pew Research Center also refers to 9/11, economic recession and the increasing use of the internet, social media, and computers as the “key political, economic and social factors”. Meanwhile, they continue to adopt a modest position on cut-

steroids...”(Tulgan 2016, 6). These narratives which mainly highlight the similarities of the “new” generation to the previous one are usually present during the beginning of the hype when the generation at stake is too young. As discussions and research increase, the spotlight shifts to the differences from previous generations. After 2016, a similar tendency is observable, this time between Gen Y and Gen Z. As there is not enough research and data, writers tend to expand on some distinctive features which form Gen Y characteristics (e.g., explosion of the internet) to the new generation (most of the time labelled as Gen Z) with an argument such as “Gen Y witnessed digitalisation, but Gen Z was born into it”. Similar to Tulgan in 2016, Van den Berg and Behrer added Gen Z to the title of his bestselling book (first published in 2011) and retitled it *How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generations Y and Z* (2016a), adding a new chapter on Gen Z.

⁷⁰ This article is no longer available on their website as of December 2019.

⁷¹ One year later, in 2019, they updated the name of the article as “Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Generation Z Begins” (Dimock 2019).

off points, underlining gradual change between generations – as is the case for Twenge and Tulgan (Dimock 2018):

Perhaps, as more data are collected over the years, a clear, singular delineation will emerge. We remain open to recalibrating if that occurs. But more than likely the historical, technological, behavioural and attitudinal data will show more of a continuum across generations than a threshold.

Thus, we can conclude that the prominent actors in generational discourse, despite the lack of consensus, commonly refer to some “key political, economic and social factors” in order to legitimise generational cut-off points (which I focus on in the next part). These factors cannot determine a precise age range for a generation, although studies on generations in political science and sociology also highlight the importance of founding events (or defining moments) such as revolutions (Bonnin 2004), wars (Wohl 1979; Prost 1977) or political protests (Mauger 1994), as they can only determine an approximate age range. A typical example of a “founding event” is the protests of May 1968. These protests have significant effects on participants and have become one of the most important identifications for generation 68 (Mauger 2009, 117–18). However, as can be seen in this example, founding events cannot determine exact and precise age ranges for a generation. They can only determine approximate age ranges, such as people who were young in May 1968.

In that context, a common strategy for authors is to adopt a modest position and highlight the inexact nature of defining cut-off points for generations. Another common strategy related to this inexactness is to underline gradual change or a “continuum” between generations.⁷² This idea of gradual change blurs the borders between generations, making them ready for future adjustments.⁷³

IV.D.2. Major features behind generational differences

“Why is this generation different to the others?” is an essential question for the Gen Y narratives. It can be found in every publication that aims to present a broader understanding of the generation in question. In this part of the narrative, authors try to explain what shapes the generation’s values, perspectives, traits, and attitudes. Foster, based on interviews with 52 Canadians aged 25 to 86, argues (2013a, 200) that the perception of generation is based on two interrelated assumptions: First, it is

⁷² Exceptionally, Howe and Strauss, always highlighted the radical change/shift of the Millennials and not a gradual change compared to Gen X; according to their generational theory, each generation is considered as “dominant” or “recessive”, and in that context contrary to Gen X and Gen Z, Gen Y (or Millennials) are considered a dominant generation characterised as having “independent behaviors and attitudes in defining an era”.

⁷³ It is also possible to blur these chosen age ranges with other claims. For instance, Cherly Cran at her conference in Turkey on Gen Y (2014) said that she herself is part of Gen X but feels more like a Gen Y member. Similarly, Turkish consultant Evrim Kuran in her book on Generations (2018, 59) says: “Even though I do not like to restrict generations within strict time periods and make strict definitions about them, to be able to define...”.

assumed that “older and younger people today possess fundamentally different attitudes about how a person should relate to his or her work”. Second, there is the assumption that generations should be understood as a “socio-historical dynamic” which “gets drawn into larger narratives about social change and progress primarily due to technological advancements”.

In this section, I first present the distinct features defined by influential actors in the Gen Y discourse, and then I argue that the perceptions described below by Foster are mainly built in this part of the Gen Y discourse with implicit and explicit claims.

The features that make Gen Y different from other generations consist of significant social, economic, and political events, technological changes, and parenting styles. The popular literature on Gen Y commonly refers to events such as 9/11, global warming and the great recession as defining moments for Gen Y.⁷⁴ More significant than these events are two distinct features which define this generation as different from previous generations:

The first is overparenting, often labelled as “helicopter parenting”. Helicopter parenting is the colloquial term that refers to “a unique patterning of parenting dimensions that result in a style both high in behavioural control and levels of warmth and support, and low in autonomy-granting” (Padilla-Walker and Nelson 2012). Tulgan states that (2009, 58) “It’s become almost cliché to say that Generation Y is over-parented. But they are...” and Howe and Strauss formulate the same idea:

Are they neglected? No. They’re the most watched over generation in memory. Each year, adults subject the typical kid’s day to ever more structure and supervision, making it a nonstop round of parents, relatives, teachers, coaches, babysitters, counsellors, chaperones, minivans, surveillance cams, and curfews.

The second feature is the digital or internet era. According to commentators on Gen Y, we are in a new era characterised by “digitalisation”, “explosion of the internet”, “Information revolution” etc. This new era changes people’s lives and shapes their characters, especially the lives and characters of those who have been familiar with these technologies since their childhood.⁷⁵ For instance, Gallup Inc. (2016, 9) describes the role of the internet in their reports as follows:

⁷⁴For the case of Turkey, there are also references to the introduction of the free-market economy and the opening of private TV channels.

⁷⁵ The idea of a new era caused by technological developments and the changes they have brought is not easy to contradict, especially considering the high number of articles which imply similar technological implications (for a discussion on technological determinism, see Murphie and Potts 2017). There is also another pair of labels which helps to strengthen the argument of a digital era, originally from the education field but appropriated by the practitioner literature: digital native and digital immigrant (cf. Prensky 2001).

The introduction and evolution of the Internet, Wi-Fi, laptops, and smartphones have enabled Millennials to instantly and constantly access entertainment, news, friends, strangers and nearly anything else. Millennials' hyper-connectedness has helped them gain a unique global perspective and transformed the way they interact, consume content, shop and work.

As can be seen in Table IV-5., in all the publications on Gen Y providing a general view of Generation Y, the "Internet/Digital Era" is given as a major feature defining this generation as different from previous generations. This new digital era is presented as an unavoidable social change.⁷⁶ This claim is additionally supported by the inherent assumption of the idea of generations. The idea of generations implies that within the human life cycle, younger generations occupy more powerful positions in every aspect of life, and they therefore change the world. Accordingly, young generations are the expressions of the new era and/or they determine it. However, for the authors it is not really important if young generations are expressive or determinative of the future as long as the target audience is convinced that a) they are in a new era which is different from the previous one, and b) this new era described by the actors adequately represents the future. Hence, in this part of the narrative, the authors textually fix the claim that this generation represents the future; understanding this generation is also understanding the future. In that sense, drawing in ANT terms, generational conflicts (due to generational differences) and becoming out-dated (due to the new era) are presented as one and the same problem. "Understanding the new generation" is presented as an obligatory passage point (OPP) to overcome problems.⁷⁷

In other words, in this part of the narrative, the Gen Y discourse explicitly problematises generational differences (e.g., How to work with Gen Y? How to deal with them? How to sell products to them?), and implicitly problematises becoming outdated and/or not being capable of adapting to the 'needs' of the future.

Overall, we can conclude that in this part of the narrative, in which authors define the features that differentiate Gen Y from previous generations, the message transmitted is that "we are in a new era, nothing will remain the same, and those who do not understand this era (and this generation) are

⁷⁶ Despite the differences between TQM and Gen Y as management ideas, it is interesting to see that they use the same rhetorical strategy. Two studies (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005; Ş. Özen and Berkman 2007) on TQM put forth similarly that the adoption of TQM is often presented as the "only alternative" or as the "only way to survive" (Ş. Özen and Berkman 2007, 845).

⁷⁷ The obligatory passage point can be seen as a narrow passageway which obliges actors to come together and focus on a certain topic, purpose, or a question. It is an essential element for the formation of a network. Hence, the OPP can be understood as an essential element of the translation process which "mediates all interactions between the actors within the network and defines the action program" (Callon 1984, 196).

doomed to be outdated”. By doing so, they highlight the importance of this topic and the key role (mainly providing consultancy services) that they have.

Table IV-5. Main distinctive features referred to by major actors. Source: Author based on the publications above (X shows that the reason is referred to at least once in the texts)

| | | Over-parenting | Internet Era | Self-esteem | Technologically adept | Well-educated |
|--------------------|--|----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Generation Experts | Tulgan and Martin (2001) and Tulgan (2009) | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Cran (2014) | X | X | X | X | 0 |
| | Twenge (2014) | X | X | X | 0 | X |
| | Van den Bergh (2016) | X | X | X | X | 0 |
| | Howe and Strauss (2000) | X | X | X | X | X |
| Consultancy | Universum (2017) | 0 | X | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Gallup Inc. (2016) | 0 | X | 0 | X | X |
| | Deloitte Education Association (2013) | 0 | X | X | X | 0 |

IV.E. From Description to Prescription: Generational Traits and Management Concepts

Williams (2019, 374) notes that “generations are taken to be empirical categories, each associated with a bundle of essential attributes” in the Gen Y discourse. Therefore, the presentation of traits “treats the rather amorphous category of generation as a clear, objective one whose composite character needs to be understood by its individual members” (2019, 374). In the Gen Y discourse, these traits are very similarly described no matter in which context or by whom they are described. Table IV-6. presents an overview of the traits commonly attributed to Gen Y. The generational traits presented in publications on Gen Y can be classified in three major categories: open minded / progressive, fun/friendly and need of immediacy. All the general and work-related traits are derived from these three themes. All the texts I analyse in this chapter cover at least two of the three aspects (to see how I identify and classify the generational traits given in this table, refer to III.C.3.).

Table IV-6. Generational traits in the Gen Y discourse. Source: Author.

| 3 Aspects | Open Minded/Progressive | Fun/Friendly | Need of Immediacy |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|
| General traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are open-minded/progressive (value diversity/freedom) questioning (everything) dislike hierarchy/question authority have strong ecological/social sensibilities. value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents/family are important to them want to have fun love to be social/are extroverts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner are impatient/get bored easily |
| Work-related traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see results prioritise work-life balance are globally mobile/like to travel ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey dislike formality and bureaucracy invest in themselves (education training) have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations like flexibility are hard to please/critical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are good team players want an entertaining work environment professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers like gamification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are lazy/not hard-working want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogbody want to feel appreciated (all the time) are reward-driven (want immediate and constant feedback) want to be promoted (too) fast/soon are job hoppers/not loyal |

Most of the time, the presentation of generational traits is followed up or included in the authors' prescriptions. Chiapello and Fairclough (2016, 200) define this "slippage from description to prescription" as a "central feature of guru style" of management gurus. Authors who focus on the generation's attitudes to work refer in their texts (implicitly or explicitly) to management concepts and practices in the form of advice. These management concepts and practices are always aligned with the generational traits that the authors attribute to them. For example, the impatient character of Gen Y translates to a prescription for managers who work with them to give them feedback "more frequently" or promote them "more often".

At first sight, the promotion of management concepts based on the traits of a generation who are beginning to dominate the workplace seems very reasonable. However, most of the cited practices and concepts are older than the "discovery" of these traits in Gen Y, and these concepts were there before Gen Y entered the workforce. Therefore, it is questionable whether knowledge on Gen Y is shaped by the knowledge of management practices and concepts, or the other way around. Williams (2019, 374), in his article on Millennials in HRM contexts, similarly notes that the arrival of Millennials as the next generation of employees encourages a re-examination of actual HRM practices. However, these practices already seem consistent with the existing precepts.

Before I present the generational traits and prescriptions from the main actors in the selected literature, I first present the rhetorical aspects of generational traits and their importance.

IV.E.1. Rhetorical aspects of generational traits

It may seem unusual to see concepts of linguistics and a focus on the rhetorical aspects of a discourse in sociological research, but consistent with a constructivist approach, I do not view texts (or publications) as a neutral container of content but as texts created by the cumulative efforts of actors in a specific context. Therefore, examining the rhetorical and linguistic aspects of the Gen Y discourse is essential to gaining a better understanding of the interests, intentions and strategies of the actors who contribute to the construction of the discourse (for a detailed discussion on semantic and social research see Latour 2017). It is also important to stress that the audience for the Gen Y discourse in its different forms (conference, reports, books etc.) make their main judgements in this part of the narrative. Hence, it is necessary to deepen our analysis and have a close look at the rhetorical and textual strategies that the actors employ according to their interests.

In this framework, the first remarkable rhetorical characteristic of generational traits is that they have a capacity to have multiple meanings (polysemous⁷⁸). This polysemous character of generational traits is one of the major factors qualifying the Gen Y discourse as ambiguous. By ambiguity, I understand and follow the definition Giroux (2006, 1228) uses to analyse management fashions: “However, ambiguity is first and foremost a textual and inter-textual phenomenon, realised in the choice – strategic or inadvertent – of polysemic words and equivocal grammatical structures, and in the use of certain tropes”.

The discursive ambiguity of fashionable management ideas plays a crucial role. Benders and Van Veen (2001, 37) note that the ambiguity of a concept potentially enables users to choose the elements that attract them, or which they can interpret as the core idea, or suit their purposes according to their interests.

Other researchers also show that linguistic ambiguities facilitate organisational communication (Eisenberg 1984) and organisational changes (Chreim 2005). Similarly, Scarbrough, Robertson and Swan note (2005, 206) that the ambiguity of a management discourse provides opportunities for professional groups to develop their own disparate perspectives on the discourse. Based on the same rationale, we can also expect ambiguity to have a key role in the construction of the Gen Y discourse.

Generational traits are often vague (e.g., “search for a meaning at work”) and broad (e.g., “want to have fun”), leading to different understandings of the generation in question. The vagueness and broadness of the described generational traits mean they can be interpreted and/or formulated as a

⁷⁸ Polysemous is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary as “having multiple meanings” (Merriam-Webster n.d.)

good or bad quality. One of the main themes of the generational traits, “need of immediacy”, is interpreted by authors in both a negative and positive way (M. A. Murphy and Burgio-Murphy 2008, 24): “Gen Y not only used to getting stuff fast, but they are also used to moving fast. They make quick decisions, want instant action, expect immediate results, and think for the short-term”.

The need of immediacy can be regarded as a negative trait such as “impatience”, “gets bored easily” or “short-term thinking”, or as a positive trait such as “being fast” and “swift-handed”. Similarly, “prioritising work-life balance” can be understood as “valuing leisure” or “not being a hard-worker” (Twenge et al. 2010, 1134).

This two-sided, or more precisely, dichotomous⁷⁹ ambiguity can also be found in a form of quantity difference. *Questioning generation* can be interpreted as *they question everything, or they question too much*. Table IV-7. presents some of these positive and negative formulations of generational traits which allude to similar qualities.

Table IV-7. Generational traits classified as rebellious (progressive) and spoiled. Source: Author

| | Rebellious (Progressive) | Spoiled |
|---------------------|---|--|
| | have (high) self-esteem | have (over) self-esteem |
| Immediacy | are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner | are impatient/get bored easily |
| | are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) | want to feel appreciated (all the time) want to be promoted (too) fast/soon |
| | willing to take initiative/are autonomous/self-reliant. are ambitious | want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody are entitled |
| Fun/Friendly | want to have fun like gamification want an entertaining work environment love to be social/are extroverts parents/family are important for them | professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers |
| | value directness/transparency/honesty | value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty |
| Open Minded | open minded (progressive, value diversity and freedom) | have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations |
| | have strong ecological/social sensibilities invest in themselves (education/training) | |
| | questioning dislike hierarchy/question authority dislike formality and bureaucracy ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey | question everything hard to please/critical are job hoppers/not loyal |
| | prioritise work-life balance want their work to be meaningful | are lazy/not hard-working |

These two poles of traits serve to present Gen Y as a generation that is progressive and/or spoiled. The progressive side of the generation is rebellious/civic-minded, friendly/fun, and fast. The spoiled side of the generation is Naïve/Unrealistic, Disrespectful, and Impatient (see Figure IV.5.). These are the main themes that dominate the Gen Y discourse, shaping the views of the audience.

⁷⁹ Dichotomy is defined by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary as “a division into two especially mutually exclusive or contradictory groups or entities” (Merriam-Webster n.d.).

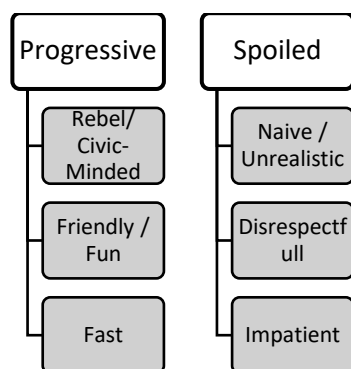


Figure IV.5. Major qualities implied in the Gen Y discourse. Source: Author.

These two apparently conflicting sides of the generation (progressive and spoiled) can come together without contradicting each other, thanks to the polysemic aspects of the generational traits. Accordingly, it becomes less important if the audience and contributors to the Gen Y discourse have a positive or negative opinion about the generation, as they affirm remarkably similar ideas as generational traits. What is important for the major actors is that the target audience is convinced that there are differences between Gen Y and previous generations; as mentioned in section IV.D.2., Gen Y narratives problematise generational differences as a source of conflicts.

In sum, I conclude that there is a particular type of ambiguity in the selection and definition of the generational traits. They have a dichotomous character which allows the producer of the discourse to catch the attention of their target audience. This dichotomous character eases the acceptance of claims within the Gen Y discourse whether the audience’s opinion of Gen Y is positive or negative.

IV.E.2. Generation experts

In this section, I focus on how generation experts (Neil Howe and William Strauss, Jean M. Twenge and Bruce Tulgan) describe Generation Y, as well as the rhetorical strategies in their major publications.

Howe and Strauss

According to Strauss and Howe (1997, 19), every generation has characteristics that make it specific and different from others. They identify 18 generations over 400 years in American History and put forth that there are four types of archetypes repeated cyclically within these 18 generations (see Table IV-8.). In accordance with their theory, Strauss and Howe claim that Millennials are “civic-minded”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Howe and Strauss (2000, 182) explain the civic-mindedness of the generation as such: “A new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, support for (rather than resistance against) civic institutions, and the tangible doing of good deeds. Surveys show that five of every six Millennials believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment—and that, far more

like the G.I. Generation (born between 1901 and 1924), the fourth generation preceding Gen Y (or Millennials).

Table IV-8. Archetypes in history Author: Strauss and Howe 1997, XX.

| Archetypes in History | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Archetype | Hero | Artist | Prophet | Nomad |
| Generations | Arthurian Elizabethan Glorious Republican — G.I. Millennial | Humanist Parliamentary Enlightenment Compromise Progressive Silent | Reformation Puritan Awakening Transcendental Missionary Boom | Reprisal Cavalier Liberty Gilded Lost Thirteenth |
| REPUTATION AS CHILD | good | placid | spirited | bad |
| COMING OF AGE | empowering | unfulfilling | sanctifying | alienating |
| PRIMARY FOCUS COMING OF AGE | outer- world | inter- dependency | inner- world | self- sufficiency |
| YOUNG ADULTHOOD | building | improving | reflecting | competing |
| TRANSITION IN MIDLIFE | energetic to hubristic | conformist to experimental | detached to judgmental | frenetic to exhausted |
| LEADERSHIP STYLE ENTERING ELDERHOOD | collegial, expansive | pluralistic, indecisive | righteous, austere | solitary, pragmatic |
| REPUTATION AS ELDER | powerful | sensitive | wise | tough |
| TREATMENT AS ELDER | rewarded | liked | respected | abandoned |
| HOW IT IS NURTURED | tightening | overprotective | relaxing | underprotective |
| HOW IT NURTURES | relaxing | underprotective | tightening | overprotective |
| POSITIVE REPUTATION | selfless, rational, competent | caring, open-minded, expert | principled, resolute, creative | savvy, practical, perceptive |
| NEGATIVE REPUTATION | unreflective, mechanistic, overbold | sentimental, complicating, indecisive | narcissistic, presumptuous, ruthless | unfeeling, uncultured, amoral |
| ENDOWMENTS | community, affluence, technology | pluralism, expertise, due process | vision, values, religion | liberty survival, honor |

Howe and Strauss (2000, 9) describe the generation as mainly rebellious with “good” intentions, meaning they will make the world (or the US) a better place:⁸¹

As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. Only a few years from now, this can-do youth revolution will overwhelm the cynics and pessimists. Over the next decade, the Millennial Generation will entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged—with potentially seismic consequences for America.

than older people, Millennials would impose extra civic duties on themselves, including taxes, to achieve results”.

⁸¹ This is understandable in the light of their generational theory as they attribute the “hero” role to Millennials based on their “historical” generational cycles. In that context, we can say that the revolutionary role of the Millennials was somehow already determined before they were born.

Compared to the rest of the literature on Gen Y/Millennials, Howe and Strauss create one of the most positive images for the generation born around the 1980s and position themselves against the pessimistic and cynical view on youth. Based on my coding, it is also possible to track optimism about Millennials. Table IV-9. shows the number of positive traits in their book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*. The generational traits which appear in their book more than one time are: high self-esteem, technologically adept, open-minded, love to be social/friendly, having strong sensibilities on social issues, and good team players - all of which draw an optimistic picture of Millennials/Gen Y.

Table IV-9. Traits attributed to Gen Y (Millennials) more than one time. Source: Author based on Howe and Strauss 2000.

| | |
|---|---|
| parents/family are important for them | 2 |
| have (high) self-esteem | 2 |
| love to be social/are extroverts | 3 |
| are good team players | 4 |
| open minded (progressive) | 5 |
| are technologically adept | 5 |
| have strong ecological/social sensibilities | 7 |

The theme of the “rebellious generation” is a common theme in the generational discourse. It is important to note what Howe and Strauss understand from the word “rebellious”, and how they interpret it as two of the first authors to write about Gen Y/Millennials. Howe and Strauss (2000, 223) describe the rebellious side of Millennials in not a radical but a very mild way (e.g., “support for rather than resistance against civic institutions”). They highlight Millennials’ “optimism”, “upbeatness”, “social sensibilities” and “open mindset”. Therefore, the revolution that they will bring to the world is not a sudden change with the overturning of institutions but a mild one leading to a better world for everyone.⁸²

Another notable point is that Howe and Strauss’s book does not mention any traits related to the need for immediacy (or impatience) - one of the most common themes in the rest of the Gen Y discourse.⁸³ They attribute a completely opposite trait to Millennials (Howe and Strauss 2000, 58):

Millennials will also correct for what today’s teens perceive are the excesses of middle-aged Boomers—the narcissism, impatience, iconoclasm, and constant focus on talk (usually argument) over action.

⁸² Howe and Strauss most probably intended to highlight the importance of Millennials and the changes they would bring by using the word "revolution" instead of "reform." "Reform" would better describe what they anticipate from Millennials, but it would temper the effect of a radical change in the Zeitgeist.

⁸³ Most of the time, the Internet Era and the “technologically adept” generational trait are considered to be the cause of the generation’s impatience or immediacy. However, this is not the case for Howe and Strauss. Instead, when they mention the internet and changes in technology, they refer to the globalisation of that generation: “Thanks to the internet, satellite news, porous national borders, and the end of the Cold War, they are also becoming the world’s first generation to grow up thinking of itself as global” (Howe and Strauss 2000, 18)

Overall, Howe and Strauss challenge negative views on youth, which in their opinion are promoted by the mass media and adopted by the older generations. They have a very optimistic and positive view. According to them, Millennials are more educated and more ethnically diverse than previous generations. They are very confident, selfless, tech-savvy and civic-minded.

When it comes to the promotion of a managerial practice or a concept, they only mention flexibility and innovation without any important emphasis on them. This lack of reference enables us to understand that their main interest, at least in that book, is not on managers or the business world.

Jean M. Twenge

Compared to Howe and Strauss, Twenge draws a negative image of the Generation born around the 1980s. It seems at first sight that she adopts an opposite position to Howe and Strauss. This opposition can be seen by looking at the titles of their books: While Howe and Strauss named their book on Millennials as *The Great Generation*, Twenge entitled her book *Gen Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*. Moreover, Twenge openly disagrees (2014, 21) with Howe and Strauss in this book:

My perspective on today's young generation differs from that of Neil Howe and William Strauss, who argued in their 2000 book, *Millennials Rising*, that those born since 1982 will usher in a return to duty, civic responsibility, and teamwork. Their book is subtitled *The Next Great Generation* and contends that today's young people will resemble the generation who won World War II. I agree that in an all-encompassing crisis today's young people would likely rise to the occasion—people usually do what needs to be done.

She adopts a sceptical position towards the supposed creativity of this generation, which is very often present in the rest of the literature (Twenge 2014, 88):

Perhaps this emphasis on individualism and uniqueness has other benefits, though - say, in more creativity. However, Kyung Hee Kim of the College of William & Mary found that the opposite was the case - younger generations are actually significantly less creative... How can this be when uniqueness is emphasised so much? Perhaps people want to be unique but cannot translate that desire into actual creative thinking. Kim points to the increased emphasis on standardized testing and the increased use of "electronic entertainment devices" as possible causes for the decline in creativity.

She is also sceptical of other common traits identified in the generational discourse - more specifically some of the traits described by Howe and Strauss. For example, she dismisses the traits "willingness to be social at work" and "good at teamwork":

The personality data showing more self-focus, less empathy, and more narcissism suggests that teamwork will not be high on their list... My view is that young employees may like feeling connected

with many people - partially due to their online social networking use - but that they will become frustrated with working in teams if their individual effort is not recognized. (Twenge 2014, 251)

In her academic article “Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing”, she states that contrary to Howe and Strauss, this generation does not have stronger ecological and social sensibilities than other generations. Therefore, they do not aspire to make a social impact at work (Twenge et al. 2010, 1134):

Gen Me was no more likely than Gen X or Boomers to value work that helps others or is worthwhile to society... In addition, the importance of intrinsic values declined slightly over the generations, suggesting that younger generations are not necessarily searching for meaning at work, as some have theorized (e.g., Arnett, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2003).

But in her bestselling book, she interprets the idea of “searching for meaning at work” differently. This interpretation also strengthens her idea of the narcissistic generation (Twenge 2014, 243):

Emphasizing meaning should also be approached differently. As young workers, many Boomers were on a quest for meaning and purpose. Gen Me sees things a little differently: work is meaningful if they feel meaningful. They don’t want to see themselves as cogs in the wheel and don’t want to do only what they’ve been told to do. They want to matter, to feel important, and to believe that they are having a personal impact. When they talk about wanting to help others, it’s often put in individualistic terms: “I want to make a difference”.

Twenge affirms that Gen Y/Gen Me want to have meaningful work, but contrary to Howe and Strauss, she defines “meaningful work” not as making a positive social change, but in individualistic terms like “not wanting to do only what they’ve been told to”, “make a difference” and “shine out”.⁸⁴ By doing so, she strengthens her main claim that the generation is individualistic/narcissistic and rejects Howe and Strauss’s “civic-minded generation” argument. At the same time, she affirms the presence of Howe and Strauss’ “searching for meaningful work”, but with a different interpretation. In addition, she covers other common traits such as “they ask for reciprocity/don’t easily obey”, “they want to steal the spotlight” or “they don’t like to be a dogsbody”.

In this way, we see that changing the descriptions of the stereotypes and traits commonly attributed to Gen Y is a useful (and common) strategy for generation experts to legitimise their views and show their “unique” contribution to the literature. But at the same time, by doing so, they affirm the commonly accepted traits about the generation in question, and therefore do not contradict the

⁸⁴ It is important to note that she uses this ambiguity more in her practitioners’ text than the academic ones which gives us an understanding of different values of different fields: In the academic field, being precise is more important than it is in the business field (Hirsch and Levin 1999, 207).

general Gen Y discourse (see Table IV-10. Generational traits which are common in Twenge and Howe & Strauss)⁸⁵. This is mainly possible because of the ambiguous (or more precisely *dichotomic*) character of the generational traits identified in the previous section (IV.E.1.).

In sum, Twenge explicitly mentions that her opinions differ from Howe and Strauss's opinions. In addition, she rejects some of the well-known traits attributed to Gen Y such as "being a good team worker", "having strong ecological and social sensibilities", and "wanting to have a social impact at work". She suggests that this generation is narcissistic and entitled (and therefore egoist), in contradiction with the selfless, civic-minded generation of Howe and Strauss. It can be assumed that there is disagreement between these major actors and that they represent two opposite poles in the Gen Y discourse, but at the same time, due to the polysemic character of the generational traits the overall representation of Gen Y does not differ much. For instance, both Twenge and Howe & Strauss confirm that this generation is self-confident (overly self-confident for Twenge) and that they are disobedient. While Howe and Strauss interpret these traits as rebellious and open-minded, Twenge sees them more as a sign of pamperedness. A cynical view of being rebellious would interpret it as pamperedness and naivety, whereas an optimistic view of being rebellious would interpret it as "not easily obeying" and "fighting for their rights". For instance, questioning the work that is assigned by the manager to the Gen Y employee can be regarded as a rebellious act challenging the hierarchy in the workplace, or it can be seen as a question of manners. However, as long as the "questioning" character of the Gen Y remains, it contributes to the Gen Y discourse because the audience perceives Gen Y as a spoiled and/or rebellious generation. Consequently, these seemingly contradictory positions do not harm the interests of the experts and continue to contribute to the generational discourse. Despite the different interpretations of generational traits by these three experts, the traits attributed to the generation are similar, leading to similar perceptions among audiences.

⁸⁵ This finding on the generational traits is consistent with that of Pritchard and Whiting (2014, 1620) who put forth that "attempts to contest or de-legitimate certain understandings of generational attributes act to reinforce the overall validity of the categorisations".

Table IV-10. Generational traits which are common in Twenge and Howe & Strauss. Source: Author based on Howe and Strauss 2000; Twenge 2014

| | Twenge (2014) | Neil Howe, William Strauss (2000) |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see result | X | X |
| they are more educated | X | X |
| are optimistic | X | X |
| prioritise work-life balance | X | X |
| have (high) (over) self-esteem | X | X |
| love to be social/are extroverts | X | X |
| open minded (progressive, diversity, freedom) | X (tolerant and belief in equality) | X (least prejudiced about race/ value diversity) |
| are technologically adept | X | X |
| like flexibility | X | X |

In addition, Twenge (2014, 251) advises managers to “offer flexible hours”, “give feedback more frequently” and “create more rungs on the ladder of career advancement, so promotion occur more often”. These prescriptions promoting flexibility and coaching practices align with the characteristics of the generation defined by the author.

Bruce Tulgan

An overall look into the traits that Tulgan describes shows that he uses most of the traits mentioned in the literature on Gen Y (see Table IV-11.) Compared with Twenge and Howe & Strauss, Tulgan has a more balanced view of the generation; slightly more optimistic than pessimistic, as he claims that with the right management, it is possible to “bring out the best in Generation Y” (Tulgan 2016, 9).

In his bestselling book (2009), Tulgan first presents the stereotypical negative traits of the Generation Y as “myth”, and then shows the “truth” about their traits.⁸⁶ He claims to challenge the “wrong” view of managers from previous generations. Most of the time, he does not fully reject the negative claim but tries to show that traits that seem negative may be positive in the right context or with proper management practices. For instance, Tulgan (2009, 12) remarks on the unwillingness of the generation to do the grunt work:

Myth #2: They won’t do the grunt work.

Reality: They are so eager to prove themselves – to you and to themselves – that they will do anything you want them to do. But they won’t do the grunt work, or anything else, if they start to fear that

⁸⁶ In the literature on Gen Y, it is common to present generational traits in the form of “myths and truths”. In these cases, myths refer to either “wrong” perceptions of the older generations or some traits commonly described in the generational literature. Most of the time authors are not precise enough in stating if these wrong perceptions are found among managers, or in the literature on Gen Y.

nobody is keeping track of what they are doing and giving them credit. They are not about to do the grunt work in exchange for vague, long-term promises of rewards that vest in the deep distant future.

Tulgan does not fully reject the idea that “they won’t do the grunt work”, but instead implies that this is the case when managers do not understand their new employees and their needs and do not act accordingly. Tulgan also covers other common traits of the generation; they are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) and they do not have blind loyalty to hierarchy but are looking for mutual benefits. Once again, we see that the dichotomic character of the generational traits serves to create an ambiguity which the author uses to demonstrate his contribution (newness or uniqueness) to the field while reaffirming stereotypical generational traits.

In his book *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y*, the only stereotypic trait about Gen Y that Tulgan fully rejects is that “they need work to be fun”.

Reality: Gen Yers don’t want to be humored; they want to be taken seriously. But they do want work to be engaging. They want to learn, to be challenged, and to understand the relationship between their work and the overall mission of the organization.

But in his previous book on Gen Y co-authored with Martin (2001, 88), instead of rejecting the claim “they need work to be fun”, he defines what “fun” is for them in accordance with his view on Gen Y:

Help Gen Yers find the fun in work, such as learning new skills, building relationships with impressive people, and achieving tangible results they can put their name on. You don’t need video-game breaks or practical jokes to make work fun.

Once again, it can be seen that generation experts make their own looser descriptions of generational traits (most of which are already very vague) to fit their views to the commonly attributed traits in the literature.

As with most of the Gen Y discourse, Tulgan refers to flexibility at work, home office/remote work, performance-based compensation and entrepreneurship. In addition to these well-known management concepts and practices, he invents his own management style and names it “in loco parentis management”. He defines (2009, 60) it as such:

I call this approach in loco parentis management...Take over the tutoring aspects of the parental role in the workplace without taking over the emotional part (at least mostly). Here’s what this means:

1. Show them you care.
2. Give them boundaries and structure.
3. Help them keep score.
4. Negotiate special rewards in very small increments.

In sum, we can say that Tulgan stresses nearly all the common traits found in the literature. Compared to Twenge, he takes a more optimistic view towards Generation Y, balancing Howe & Strauss' optimistic view and Twenge's pessimistic view.

IV.E.3. Research and consultancy companies

Research and consultancy companies usually avoid adopting a positive or negative position explicitly about the generation in question. They prefer to present statistics about generations. These statistics, most of the time, affirm and/or reject the commonly attributed generational traits in the literature. It is also possible to see the influence of the services that they provide in their reports. Their findings often legitimise managerial practices such as “employer branding”, “coaching” and “flexible work”.

Pew Research Center

Pew Research covers more than Millennials/Gen Y's relationship with work, as their audience is not limited to employers.⁸⁷ Their reports feature a variety of aspects and traits of Gen Y such as “religious behaviours”, “civic engagement” etc. In their report entitled “MILLENNIALS: A Portrait of Generation Next”, the generational traits that they highlight about Millennials the most are “confident”, “self-expressive”, “liberal”, “upbeat” and “open to change”. They also note that “this generation is more ethnically and racially diverse than older adults. They are less religious, less likely to have served in the military, and are on track to become the most educated generation in American history” (Pew Research Center 2010, 8).

Exceptionally, the report does not promote or directly refer to a management concept. The only reference is to innovation, of which it can be argued whether or not it is a management concept (Pew Research Center 2010, 25):

Technological change and generational change often go hand in hand. That's certainly the story of the Millennials and their embrace of all things digital. The internet and mobile phones have been broadly adopted in America in the past 15 years, and Millennials have been leading technology enthusiasts. For them, these innovations provide more than a bottomless source of information and entertainment, and more than a new ecosystem for their social lives.

The use of the word “innovation” here is limited to being enthusiastic about changes in the field of technology.

⁸⁷ Pew Research Center describes itself on its website as: “Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping the world. We conduct public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research.” (Pew Research Center n.d.)

PwC

As a prominent actor in the field of management, PwC focuses on Generation Y's attitudes to work. In their report entitled "Millennials at work – Reshaping the workplace" (PwC 2011), they highlight that this generation prioritises "work-life balance" and "fast career progression" over financial rewards; want "flexibility", to "experience as much training as possible", "strong diversity policies" at work, and "value frequent feedback".

As seen before, these traits legitimise some management concepts and take the form of advice for managers. For the case of PwC, the "impatience" of Gen Y is translated into the work context as "they want to be promoted too fast and/or too soon", leading to a recommendation for managers to create new ranks in hierarchies and find additional ways to reward and promote their employees:

Allow faster advancement: Historically, career advancement was built upon seniority and time of service. Millennials do not think that way. They value results over tenure and are sometimes frustrated with the amount of time it takes to work up the career ladder. They want career advancement much quicker than older generations are accustomed to. So, for the high achievers who do show the potential to rise up the ranks quickly, why not let them? A relatively simple solution, such as adding more levels, grades or other 'badges', could be enough to meet their expectations. (PwC 2011, 25).

It is notable that nearly all the findings of their research fit to and legitimise consultancy services that they provide such as "employer branding" and "corporate responsibility" (PwC 2011, 4):

The power of employer brands and the waning importance of corporate responsibility: Millennials are attracted to employer brands that they admire as consumers. In 2008 88% were looking for employers with CSR values that matched their own, and 86% would consider leaving an employer whose values no longer met their expectations.

Universum

With a similar focus and interest, Universum also promotes employer branding by emphasising generational differences in the workplace. In their report "Understanding a misunderstood generation", they recommend to employers and managers that their "employer brand message" should "truly resonates with Millennials' values as it is, rather than as it's imagined to be" (Universum 2017c, 21).

In that context, Universum also highlights similar traits to PwC. According to them, Millennials prioritise work-life balance and rapid career advancement over money and status. Their understanding of challenging work is not "working long hours" but rather "being involved in innovative work".

On the other hand, Universum challenges some of the traits which are popular in the Gen Y discourse. For example, the idea of Gen Y placing greater importance on their families and friends than previous generations is often translated to the work context as “the desire to involve family and friends in their professional life” and “Gen Y expect their managers to act as their families”. However, these attitudes are rejected in this report – “No, Millennials do not typically rely on friends and family input on career issues”(Universum 2017c, 15).

Gallup Inc.

Similarly, the Gallup Inc. report “How Millennials Want to Work and Live Gallup Millennials” focuses mainly on the generation’s relationship to work, emphasising commonly attributed generational traits in line with the services that they provide (Gallup Inc. 2016, 03):

Millennials don’t just work for a paycheck — they want a purpose...

Millennials are not pursuing job satisfaction — they are pursuing development...

Millennials don’t want bosses — they want coaches. The role of an old-style boss is command and control...

Millennials don’t want annual reviews — they want ongoing conversations...

Millennials don’t want to fix their weaknesses — they want to develop their strengths...

It’s not just my job — it’s my life...

Gallup repeats commonly attributed generational traits such as “don’t prioritise money”, “looking for purpose and career development”, “dislike hierarchies”, and “ask for instant and constant feedback”. The “employee engagement” and “manager development” services that they provide are in line with these different expectations of the generation. Management practices such as coaching and mentoring appear very often in the generational discourses, especially when generational traits like “dislike hierarchy” and “need constant and instant feedback” are underlined.

IV.E.4. Academics and academic literature

Before concluding this part, it would be complementary to have a brief look into the academic literature on Gen Y. The influence of popular literature on the academic literature on Generation Y can also be tracked by the proposed generational traits. Academic articles on Gen Y attribute remarkably similar, nearly identical generational traits to those proposed in the popular literature. Brille et al. (2012, 72–73) conduct a review of the literature examining the proposed generational traits for Gen Y in 17 academic articles on Gen Y:

- Seeking Meaning in the Workplace (Hyatt, 2001; Eisner, 2005; Yeaton, 2008)
- Need for Accomplishment (Eisner, 2005; Laize and Pougnet, 2007; Yeaton, 2008; Erickson et al, 2009; Josiam et al, 2009; APEC, 2009)
- Search for Feedback (Eisner, 2005; Erickson et al, 2009; Josiam et al, 2009; Yeaton, 2008; KPMG, 2010; Bourhis and Chênevert, 2010)
- Work-Life Integration (Eisner, 2005; Erickson, 2009; Josiam et al, 2009; Laize and Pougnet, 2007; Yeaton, 2008)
- Opportunism (Erickson et al, 2009; Josiam et al, 2009; Laize and Pougnet, 2007; Yeaton, 2008)
- Group Spirit, (Tapscott 1998; Zemke et al, 2000; Paré, 2002; Simard, 2007; Laize and Pougnet, 2007; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Yeaton, 2008; Josiam et al, 2009).
- Low institutional loyalty (Laize and Pougnet, 2007; Yeaton, 2008; Saba, 2009)
- Technophilie (Eisner, 2005; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Kimberly, 2009; APEC, 2009)

Within this framework, it can be stated that most of the academic literature on Gen Y does not make a new contribution to the generational discourse in terms of proposing new generational traits.

In sum, we see that the traits attributed to Gen Y, and the suggested prescriptions, are remarkably similar among the major actors in the discourse. The traits attributed to Gen Y can be grouped in three major categories: open minded/progressive, fun/friendly, and immediacy, and the overall presentation of generational traits implies that this generation is spoiled and/or rebellious. Besides, the ambiguous and dichotomous character of the generational traits enable the authors to engage their target audience whether that audience have a positive or negative view of Gen Y.

IV.F. Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter is to deconstruct the Gen Y discourse and examine how it reflects the cumulative efforts of various and diverse groups of actors to recruit allies keep the discourse relevant and profitable for them.

With this aim, I focus on the significant actors and their prominent texts on Gen Y. First, I identified the major group actors in the generational discourse and examine their interactions with other actors (IV.B.). There are four significant groups of actors: generation experts, journalists, large research and consultancy companies and academics, of whom the most significant are the generation experts who publish bestselling books and give talks, seminars, and consultancies on generational issues.

The second group of actors are the journalists who work for the popular business media. They publish articles and cover stories on generational issues, contributing to the dissemination and legitimacy of the generational discourse. They also collaborate with generation experts in interviews or by

publishing experts' articles. These kinds of collaborations are especially helpful for generation experts as it provides them important sources of legitimacy and popularity, but it is also important for the legitimacy of the Gen Y discourse and its acceptance.

The third group of actors is the large research and consultancy firms such as Pew Research, Deloitte TTL, Gallup Inc., and PwC. These firms conduct surveys and publish reports on generations. Due to their strong media presence and reputation, they play important roles in the evolution of the generational discourse, as we see in the process of defining the cut-off points for Gen Y. Accordingly, generation experts are keen to give references to surveys done by these companies to legitimise their claims.

The fourth group of actors is the academics. Despite the large number of articles they publish, it is hard to say that academics have a major influence on generational discourse. Most of the scholars writing on generations do not specialise in generational issues. Besides, generational issues are not part of the teaching programmes in most notable business schools. On the other hand, it is important for generation experts to have their expertise validated by scientists or scientific institutions. Thus, experts collaborate with academics by co-authoring publications, giving lectures in business schools and referencing academic articles.

After describing the context that the Gen Y discourse produces, I analyse the content of the discourse. I divide the significant actors' texts into four based on the key common topics (naming, cut-off points, major distinctive features, and generational traits) and present the authors' positions and arguments on these topics.

Tracking the efforts to name the generation clarifies the origins of the discourse and the alliances and struggles around the topic, and also tracks the actors' different rhetorical strategies to impose their label or adopt the one which becomes dominant.

Examining generational cut-off points, we see that there is no consensus on cut-off points until an influential and well-reputed research company imposes one. But even these big players are very timid and avoid adopting an assertive position on such a key subject. They highlight the inexact nature of the cut-off points and/or point to a gradual change between the previous generation and the next one. Therefore, the borders between generations are blurred, protecting the authors from critics (or counter arguments).

The next part is about the major features that differentiate this generation from previous generations. Two major features are highlighted: overparenting and the digital/internet era. Based on thematic analysis of the major publications on Gen Y, I suggest that the new era argument is common in all publications, and by highlighting this argument, the authors textually fix the claim "this generation

represents the future". Therefore, understanding this generation means understanding the future. This claim is strengthened by the implicit claim that young generations either determine or express the near future. In this context, presenting "generational conflicts" and "becoming outdated" as one and the same problem is the substantial message of the Gen Y discourse and is common to all significant publications on Gen Y.

Lastly, the authors present the traits attributed to Gen Y and suggest solutions according to the audience they want to influence. Generational traits are generally remarkably similar to each other. Most of the time, writers reject and/or redefine some of these traits⁸⁸, but they never question the existence or the "crucial" difference (and therefore the importance) of the new generation from previous generations. By doing so, as it is for management fashions, Gen Y experts and consultancy companies differentiate themselves from other actors while following and contributing to the popularity of the fashion. According to Kieser (1997, 63), these types of differentiation strategies in management fashions "increase the ambiguity and contradictions within the new fashion", and "ambiguity and contradictions open up new space for further articles that attempt interpretations, new books... and more myth creation".

By breaking down the significant texts of the Gen Y discourse into parts, with a comparative analysis according to the main topics (listed above), I obtain an outline of the Gen Y narrative (see Table IV-11.), which applies to nearly all the texts (books, reports, seminars and talks, magazine articles etc.) on Gen Y. It is even more applicable to (and therefore representative of) the texts that focus on management and work, which also dominate the Gen Y discourse.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ This finding on generational traits aligns with Pritchard and Whiting's (2014, 1620) argument that attempts to challenge or discredit some interpretations of generational traits help to strengthen the overall validity of these classifications.

⁸⁹This table is made with codes based on my content analysis (to see the detailed explanation on how I obtained this table, refer to section III.C.3.)

Table IV-11. Gen Y narrative flow as an employee. Source: Author.

| | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Distinctive Features | Zeitgeist | Internet Era and Overparenting | | |
| | Generational Traits | have (high) (over) self-esteem & are technologically adept & are more educated | | |
| Implicit Theme | | Spoiled and Rebellious Generation | | |
| 3 Aspects | | Open Minded/Progressive | Fun/Friendly | Immediacy |
| General Traits | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> open minded (progressive, want diversity, freedom) questioning (everything) dislike hierarchy/question authority have strong ecological/social sensibilities value (too much) directness, transparency, honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents/family are important for them want to have fun love to be social/are extroverts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner are impatient/get bored easily hard to please/critical |
| Work-related Traits | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see results prioritise work-life balance are globally mobile/like to travel ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey dislike formality and bureaucracy invest in themselves (education/training) have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations like flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are good team players want an entertaining work environment professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers like gamification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> want to shine/ steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody want to feel appreciated (all the time) are good at multitasking are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) want to be promoted (too) fast/soon are job hoppers/not loyal |
| Advice and Suggestions (Management Concepts and Practices) | | Flexible Working Hours/Open Working Space/Mentoring/Reverse-mentoring/Social Activities and Workshops/360-degree performance review/Home office/Shadow Board Employer branding/Digitalisation/Innovation | | |
| Promised Outcomes | | Innovative/Creative Employees/Low Turnover, High Emp. Satisfaction/Stay Up to Date | | |

Accordingly, the Gen Y narrative can be summarised as follows: The authors first present the internet era and overparenting as two new social phenomena that differentiate this generation from previous generations. These two major features explain other generational traits: “have (high) (over) self-esteem”, “are technologically adept” and “better educated”. Based on these distinctive features, the authors present other generational traits, which can be classified in three major categories: Open Minded/Progressive, Fun/Friendly, Immediacy. The overall presentation of the generational traits suggests that this generation is spoiled and rebellious and implies that this generation’s distinct traits are likely to cause conflict. To avoid conflict, different authors suggest different managerial ideas and practices to keep business up to date, support innovation and bring high satisfaction.

All in all, an analysis of the Gen Y narrative based on significant publications shows that the narrative is built on the assumptions; Gen Y differs dramatically from previous generations, these differences are likely to create conflicts, and as young generations represent the unavoidable future,

“generational conflict” and “becoming outdated” are one and the same problem. Therefore, the solutions provided by generation experts (and research and consultancy firms) for the generational conflicts are at the same time solutions to avoid becoming outdated. In this context, as Williams (2019, 378) points out, one of the most essential function of the Gen Y discourse is to frame preexisting beliefs on youth and the future with preexisting managerial ideas and practices, and to present them as the exigencies of the future within a more compelling story.

CHAPTER V. THE GEN Y DISCOURSE IN TURKEY

V.A. Introduction: Translation of the Discourse from the US to Turkey

In the previous chapter I show that the Gen Y discourse in the United States is mainly produced within management circles. I identify the actors contributing to the Gen Y discourse and examine the textuality and rhetorical strategies of the discourse. It is mostly described from the perspective of work, very similar to the way management ideas are produced. In this chapter, I explore the translation of the Gen Y discourse from the United States to Turkey.

Studies on the travel of management concepts have shown that national actors and institutions can significantly influence the diffusion and implementation of management concepts in different countries (e.g., Guillén 1994; Djelic 2001). Some researchers focus on the changes in the content of the discourse while moving from one national context to another, arguing that the discourse has to be (re)shaped based on the characteristics of the recipient context to ensure the acceptance of the trend (Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall 2002; Üsdiken 2004).⁹⁰ Additionally, several studies suggest that the ambiguous characteristics of a management discourse become even more ambiguous when it travels, easing acceptance of the discourse (Benders and Van Veen 2001; H. Giroux 2006; Swan 2004). Similar to Ercek and Say's (2008, 96) observations regarding the adaptation of total quality management discourse in Turkey, it can be anticipated that the Gen Y discourse must have gone (re)shaping when it has travelled from the United States to Turkey, and the ambiguous character of the discourse has facilitated its adoption.

Although the literature on the travel of management trends and discourses provides a useful starting point for considering generational discourses, caution is required because of the distinct use and understanding of the term 'generation'. In contrast to other management discourses, the Gen Y discourse (or Millennials) is formed around the idea of 'generation', an idea which is used and understood in a number of different ways. This diversity in the understanding and use of the term potentially affects the type of actors who can be involved in the translation of the discourse, and accordingly its content. The idea of a generation can be perceived as a birth cohort (this is how it is mostly used in the scientific community) – or it can be understood as an identification with a group (e.g., 68ers). These diverse usages of the term 'generation' provide an opportunity, when the national context of the discourse changes, for various new actors (e.g., politicians, youth movements,

⁹⁰ This is by itself inherent to the idea of translation of the ANT as all the acts of translation, by definition is not possible without transformation.

demographers, etc.) to involve themselves in and transform the Gen Y discourse. Therefore, management's dominance of the discourse is not taken for granted when the concept travels from one national context to another. Discourses originate and evolve within distinct social and cultural contexts. Hence, it is not reasonable to anticipate that they are translated uniformly by a consistent group of actors. Consequently, the same inquiries posed in the preceding chapter must also be directed towards texts on Gen Y generated in Turkey.

To this end, in this chapter, I first examine different bodies of literature (practitioner books, research reports, academic articles) on Gen Y published in or for Turkey, identifying the main actors (generation experts, academics, research and consultancy companies) and fields that produce and spread the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. Second, based on my content analysis of the mainstream media and business magazines, I present the evolution and popularity of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. Third, I analyse Evrim Kuran's understanding of Gen Y based on her book *From Telegram to Tablet: Five Generations of Turkey* (Telgraftan Tablet'e Türkiye'nin 5 Kusagi). I support these findings with the results of a content analysis of articles on Gen Y from the Turkish mainstream and practitioner media.

By doing so, I answer these questions:

- Who are the influential local actors that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey?
- How is the Gen Y discourse translated to the context of Turkey? How does it differ from the discourse in the United States?

V.B. Main Actors in the Gen Y Discourse in Turkey

In this sub-chapter, I identify the important actors in the Gen Y discourse in Turkey and discuss their impact on the construction of the discourse. To identify them, I examine four different bodies of texts (for a detailed explanation on research strategy see section III.C.)

1. Books on generational issues published in Turkish: I researched the type of publishers and the authors' professional backgrounds. I also cross-checked the writers' popularity with their presence, based on my content analysis of mainstream media and business magazines.
2. Articles on Gen Y in the mainstream media and business magazines that I analysed: I checked how often well-known actors in the Gen Y discourse are mentioned.
3. Academic publications in Turkish on Gen Y: I researched the academics who regularly wrote frequently cited articles on Gen Y and their presence in the mainstream media.
4. Interviews that I conducted: I reviewed how many times different actors such as Gen Y experts, consultancy companies and journalists are mentioned by my interviewees.

Based on this, I present the actors in the construction of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey and discuss their influence through the texts mentioned above.

V.B.1. Generation experts

Research on management fashions shows that they usually appear and spread via a popular book written by an influential author (Gill and Whittle 1993, 289). In the previous chapter, I show how bestselling books on Gen Y written by generation experts play an important role in the construction and dissemination of the Gen Y discourse.

Among the generation experts' bestselling books in English that I analyse in the previous chapter, only Twenge's books *Generation Me* (2009), *iGen* (2018), and Van den Bergre and Bahren's book *How Cool Brands Stay Hot: Branding to Generation Y* (2016b) are translated into Turkish.⁹¹ Despite this, it is hard to say that these authors are influential figures in the Turkish context. In fact, despite not being translated into Turkish, Howe and Strauss's books have a more significant influence on the Gen Y discourse in Turkey, through the prominent generation expert Evrim Kuran.

There are 19 books written by Turkish authors on generational issues in Turkish⁹² (see Table V-1.). None of these books, however, are published by a well-known publishing house. Nine of these 19 books are published by academic publishers. With the exception of Evrim Kuran, none of the authors are publicly known figures in Turkey, and among these authors, only Evrim Kuran and Inan Acilioglu are mentioned in the newspaper and business magazine articles on Gen Y that I analysed. While Evrim Kuran is mentioned in 19 articles (*Capital.com.tr* 1; *Hürriyet* 15; *Kariyer.net* 3), Inan Acilioglu is mentioned only once in *the Hürriyet*. Both authors are consultants who offer training on business-related subjects. Unlike Kuran, Acilioglu focuses on digitalisation rather than generational issues, and offers only two training programs on generational issues out of 12 (Acilioğlu n.d.). With his major focus on digitalisation and his low presence in the mainstream media, Inan Acilioglu remains a negligible actor in the evolution of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey.

We can therefore conclude that among these academic and non-academic writers, only Evrim Kuran can be considered an influential actor contributing to the translation of the Gen Y discourse from the US to Turkey. The absence of other names in the mainstream media (see section V.B.), alongside the

⁹¹ Twenge's books received a greater focus in the previous chapter than Van den Bergre and Bahren's book.

⁹² To gain an overview of the books on Gen Y in Turkey, I made a search query on the three most popular Turkish online bookstores (*ideefix.com*, *kitapyurdu.com*, *dr.com.tr*) with the terms "Y kusagi", "kuşak", "nesil", "milenyum". After eliminating the ones which use the term generation to refer to familial relations (e.g. *Generation of German-Turkish immigrant*), I obtained nineteen books on Gen Y. These books were published between 2008 and 2020.

repeated mentioning of her name by interviewees in my in-depth interviews, confirms that Evrim Kuran is the most influential Gen Y expert in Turkey. The only other name mentioned in my interviews is Ufuk Tarhan. Ufuk Tarhan offers courses on “generational management”, though the theme of ‘generation’ makes up a very small part of the courses she provides (Tarhan n.d.). She also identifies herself as a futurist, rather than a generation expert. Hence, in the third sub-chapter, I focus on Kuran’s narrative as a Gen Y expert to track how the Gen Y discourse is translated to the Turkish context.

Table V-1. Books on generations published in Turkey information sheet. Source: Author based on search queries on *ideefix.com, kitapyrdu.com, dr.com.tr*.

| | Year | Author | Title | Publisher |
|-----|------|--|--|---|
| 1. | 2008 | Özmağas, Utku | Millennial Generation in Our Poetry | Pan Yayıncılık |
| 2. | 2013 | Türk, Aycan | Dictionary of sociology for Generation Y | KAFEKÜLTÜR |
| 3. | 2014 | (Dr.) Kömürcüoğlu, Hüseyin | Understanding Generation Y: A study on Gezi Park | Doğu Kitabevi |
| 4. | 2015 | Aciloğlu, İnan | Generation Y at Work | Elma Yayınevi |
| 5. | 2016 | Arsu, Şerife Uğuz; (Prof. dr.) Yildirim, Mehmet Halit | Generation Y at Work: Generational Categorisations and Generation Y in every aspect | LAP Lambert Academic Publishing (academic) |
| 6. | 2016 | (Dr.) Çora, Hakan; (Dr.) Aydın, Samet | Generation Y Online Shopping Trends: Applications on Marketing and Management Organization | CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform |
| 7. | 2016 | Ünüsân Atak, Nagehan | Generations X, Y, Z and management of intergenerational differences | Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık (academic) |
| 8. | 2016 | Gürkaynak, Sabiha | I’m a generation Y mum! | Tuti Kitap |
| 9. | 2017 | (Dr.) Ünal, Mesud | Management of Generation Y and Z | Beta Basım Yayın (academic) |
| 10. | 2017 | Mercan, Nuray | Generation Y, Career and Psychological Capital Investment Model | LAP Lambert Academic Publishing (academic) |
| 11. | 2017 | Türk, Aycan | Generation Y (Y Kuşağı) | Kafekültür Yayıncılık |
| 12. | 2018 | (Dr.) İnce, Fatma | Intergenerational Effective Communication and Behaviour | Eğitim Yayınevi (academic) |
| 13. | 2018 | (Dr.) Konakay, Gönül | Generation Y Entrepreneurship Trends | Umuttepe Yayınları (academic) |
| 14. | 2018 | (Dr.) Karahasan, Fatos | The Youth are coming: What kind of world will Generation Y and Z build? What do young people think and expect in Turkey and in the World? What Do They Dream of? | CEO Plus Yayınları |
| 15. | 2018 | (Dr.) Sarioğlu, Elif Başak | Understand Generation Y and don’t change them: Communication and Millennial Generation in Corporate Life | Hümanist Kitap |
| 16. | 2018 | Kuran, Evrim | From Telegraph to Tablet: A Look at Turkey’s 5 Generations | Destek Yayınları |
| 17. | 2019 | (Dr.) Bakırtaş, Hülya; (Dr.) Divanoğlu, Sevilay U.; Akkaş, Cemil | Generation Y: What are their differences? How, What and Why do they buy? | Ekin Kitabevi Yayınları (academic) |
| 18. | 2020 | (Dr.) Ersöz, Serpil Gül | Work Values, Traits and Work Motivations of Generation Y | Gazi Kitabevi (academic) |
| 19. | 2020 | (Dr.) Kılıç, Sabiha; Bezgin, Leyla | Generational Analysis in Neuromarketing | Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık (academic) |

V.B.2. Mainstream media

As in the United States, mainstream media and practitioners' magazines in Turkey have an important influence on the Gen Y discourse, particularly by spreading it. This is also confirmed by my interviewees. When I asked them where they first heard about Gen Y, most answered "from business magazines" and/or "from mainstream media".

Most articles on generations in the popular press are published in the business and management-related pages of newspapers and popular business magazines. In *the Hürriyet*, 84 (59+25) of 195 articles on Gen Y are published in the *New Economy and HR* and *Economy* sections of the newspaper. After these business sections, there are 41 opinion column articles. Then there are 19 articles published in the *Sunday* supplement, 18 articles in the *Kampüs* supplement for university students, 13 articles in the technology section, 10 articles in the education section, 5 articles in the agenda, 3 articles in *Travel* and 2 articles in the *World* sections of the newspaper. This demonstrates that Gen Y is mainly discussed as a business topic. The distribution of articles on Gen Y in different sections of *the Hürriyet* also suggests that Gen Y is a popular subject for columnists.⁹³ Publication dates show that most of these opinion columns/articles were written between 2013 and 2014, coinciding with the Gezi protests (Figure V.1.). This shows that columnists can have an influential role in taking the Gen Y discourse from one field (managerial) and transposing it to another one (an actual political context).

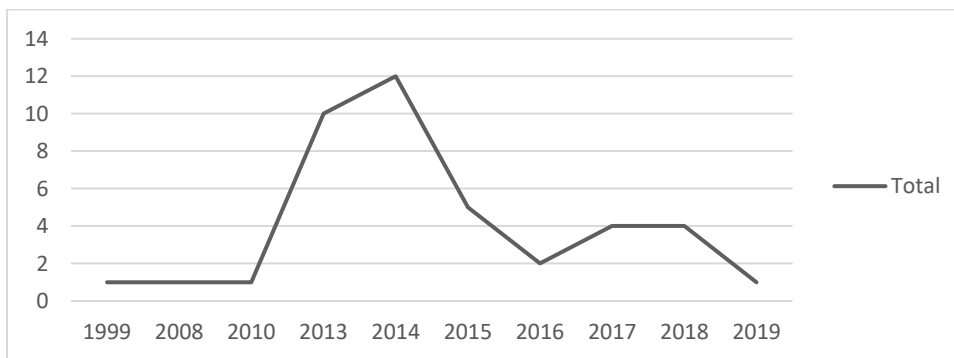


Figure V.1. Opinion columns on Gen Y over years in the *Hürriyet*. Source: Author based on *hurriyet.com.tr*.

⁹³ A note of caution is due here since Turkish newspapers contain more opinion columns than American newspapers. Sandikcioglu shows (2015, 74) that from 01 January 2015 to 31 May 2015, while Turkish newspapers *Hürriyet* (11,7), *Sabah* (10,5), *Milliyet* (10,4), *Zaman* (10,9) had 10 to 12 opinion columns every day, the *USA Today* (5,2), *The Washington Post* (9,5) and the *Daily Telegraph* (6,2) published less than 10 opinion columns a day.

V.B.3. Research and consultancy companies

As seen in the previous chapter, large research and consultancy firms have a significant influence on the construction of generational discourses in the United States. For an overview of the multinational research and consultancy companies in Turkey, I searched for articles on Gen Y published by Turkish mainstream media and business magazines to look for the companies mentioned in these articles. Table V-2. shows that of the prominent actors from the United States, Gallup and Pew Research do not have an important presence in the Turkish Gen Y literature. This is likely because neither of these companies works actively in Turkey and they do not conduct research on Gen Y covering Turkey. On the other hand, PwC, Deloitte, and Ipsos have offices in Turkey. Of these companies, only Deloitte and Ipsos make regular publications (research reports and blog articles) on Gen Y in Turkey.

Table V-2. Number of times main actors are mentioned in articles on Gen Y. Source: Author.

| | Capital.com.tr (out of 66 articles) | Hürriyet.com.tr (out of 195 articles) | Mediacat.tr (out of 69 articles) | Kariyer.net (out of 36 articles) | Totals |
|---------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Evrin Kuran | 1 | 15 | 0 | 3 | 19 |
| Deloitte | 3 | 10 | 1 | 4 | 18 |
| Universum | 1 | 10 | 0 | 2 | 13 |
| PwC | 2 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Ipsos | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Gallup Inc. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Pew Research | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Totals | 10 | 39 | 1 | 12 | 62 |

Deloitte publishes reports on generations more regularly than the others. Their first publication was the online research report ‘Generation Y and Innovation’ in 2013 on their Turkish website. Since 2015 they have published yearly research reports titled the ‘Deloitte Millennial Survey’. These reports are based on the results of a global survey conducted by Deloitte which also covers Turkey. They present an overview of the social, economic, and political aspects of the generation, though the focus is always on work (e.g., Deloitte 2017; 2015; 2018). There are also references to Gen Y in other studies and related publications covering Turkey such as their 2016 report ‘Global Human Capital Trends 2016’.

The second most mentioned company is Universum. Universum is far smaller and less influential than the other companies;⁹⁴ therefore, it is notable that it is one of the most-mentioned companies in the articles I analysed. Universum’s visibility in the Turkish mainstream media is likely due to their collaborations with Evrim Kuran. In Turkey, they are represented by Evrim Kuran’s consultancy

⁹⁴ For instance, while Universum employs approximately 200 people in 12 locations on 5 continents, Deloitte employs more than 10,000 people in 143 locations. (Universum n.d.; Deloitte n.d.)

company Dinamo. Their research reports on Millennials include Turkey. They also published a survey, 'Ideal Employers for Europe and Middle East Survey', for which they surveyed university students and presented the results as Gen Y's ideal employers. They also published a series on Millennials without a national focus in 2017, presented as "the first large-scale study of how millennial attitudes and actions vary across the globe and the implications for employers" (Universum 2017c; 2017a; 2017b). In short, Universum and the surveys they conduct mainly focus on the employee dimension of generations.

Another company mentioned in Turkish articles on Gen Y is Ipsos. It publishes a few reports and articles on Gen Y in Turkey. From 2016 to 2020, Ipsos published the 'Edenred-Ipsos Barometer' reports for work and the work environment in collaboration with Edenred. Most of these reports are published with a subtitle about Millennials at work, covering 15 countries including Turkey. Ipsos also conducts qualitative research specific to Turkey with four young trendsetters and two experts on youth (AYNA: *Onlar Y Kuşağı* 2012).

In sum, the presence of research and consultancy companies in the construction of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey demonstrates that these companies contribute to the popularity and the legitimacy of the subject. However, they are not crucial actors to the general public as they are not as visible in the mainstream media and do not contribute a significant change or critical addition to the discourse (as seen in the United States with Pew Research defining the cut-off points for Generation Y). This can also partly explain why Evrim Kuran is mentioned more often than these research and consultancy companies (see Table V-2.). Additionally, we see that the generation's relationship to work is highlighted more than other aspects in these large research and consultancy firms' reports on Gen Y.

V.B.4. Academics

Nine of the 19 books on generational issues are published by academic publishers and most of the writers of these publications have a PhD degree. Additionally, from 2010 until 2018, 121 MA and PhD theses on Gen Y were published, and between 2011 and 2018, 96 articles on the same topic were published in different Turkish academic journals in the scholarly database Dergipark.

At first sight, this high number of academic publications on Gen Y could be interpreted as evidence of academics' influence on the construction and translation of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. However, there are no academic figures who claim authority on generational issues. The two most cited academic articles on Gen Y written in Turkish are by Hatice Necla Keles and Zeki Yüksekbilgili. According to Google scholar (26.08.2020), Hatice Necla Keles's (2011) article "Y kuşağı çalışanlarının

motivasyon profillerinin belirlenmesine yönelik bir araştırma” (A study to determine Gen Y employees’ motivation profiles) is cited 183 times and Yüksekbilgili’s (2013) article “Turk Tipi Y kusagi” (Turkish Type of Gen Y) 110 times. Yüksekbilgili offers consultancy services and seminars outside of academia, but he offers only one seminar on generations, “Türk tipi Y kusagi” (Turkish Type of Gen Y), and it makes up only a very small part of his consultancy services. Despite the high number of citations they receive, neither Keles nor Yüksekbilgili has written a book on generations, nor do they present themselves as generation experts and/or researchers on generational issues (Yüksekbilgili 2014; Keleş n.d.). They are also not mentioned in the popular press articles I analysed. Their influence on the construction of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey is clearly limited.

Moreover, as with most other academic articles on Gen Y in Turkish, Keles’s articles (2011; 2013) cite popular press, such as the books of Tulgan (2000), Howe and Strauss (1993) or articles from *usatoday.com* (2012) and *The New York Times* (Deresiewicz 2011), without specifying whether they are scientific studies or not. This demonstrates that many of the academic discussions on Gen Y in Turkey are strongly influenced by the popular press.

The following three indicators suggest that academia’s influence on the construction of generational discourse in Turkey is very limited: a) the lack of a mainstream media presence for academics on generational issues, b) the lack of academic figures identified or self-identifying as experts on generational issues and c) the over-reliance in academic articles on popular press and opinion-based literature.

V.B.5. Conclusion

We can conclude that the actors producing the Gen Y discourse in Turkey and the fields in which the discourse is produced are not much different from those in the United States. As Table IV-3. illustrates, the major actors in Turkey are Evrim Kuran (an independent consultant and expert on generational issues), journalists and columnists in mainstream media and business magazines, and consultancy companies such as Deloitte, Ipsos, and Universum that publish reports on Gen Y. All of these actors focus on Gen Y’s relationship with work. Despite the high number of academic articles and books published by academic publishers on Gen Y in Turkey, academics do not have a big influence on the production and dissemination of the Gen Y discourse. In the translation process of this discourse, collaborations between local actors, exemplified by Evrim Kuran, and global entities such as Universum, significantly contribute to the media presence of both parties.

An overall look (see Table V-3.) at the significant actors in the Gen Y discourse in Turkey indicates that the discourse mainly takes place in business-related fields.

Table V-3. Actors and their mediums that contribute to the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. Source: Author.

| Source Material | Research Reports | Interviews in Mainstream media | Articles in Mainstream media and Business Magazines | Academic articles |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Actors | Multi-National research and consultancy companies (Deloitte, Gallup, Universum, Ipsos) | Generation Expert (Evrin Kuran) | Business Journalists/Columnists (e.g., Harvard Business Review, Mediacat, Hürriyet, Capital, Kariyer.net) | Academicians/Professors (Yüksekbilgili, Zeki, N. Keles Hatice) |

V.C. The Evolution and Popularity of the Term Gen Y in Turkey

In this sub-chapter, I present the results of my content analysis on the evolution and popularity of the term Gen Y in Turkey, with supportive data gathered from Google analytics. Based on my classification of the literature, I explain the evolution of Gen Y as a consumer, an employee, and an activist in the mainstream media, practitioner, and academic literature in Turkey.

V.C.1. Milestone for the term Gen Y in Turkey: Gezi Protests

Most people in Turkey, including researchers interested in youth studies, first heard of the term “Generation Y” during the Gezi Park protests.

The Gezi protests started on May 27, 2013, as a protest against the government’s plans to build a shopping mall similar in design to an old Ottoman barracks on the site of Gezi Park near Taksim Square. It begins as a spontaneous protest by a small environmentalist group. However, the excessive police response sparked outrage, and the demonstrations spread as did the number of demonstrators. The protests spread to other cities, with millions of people protesting within a very short period. About five thousand demonstrations take place all over the country. During the protests, five people are killed (by the end of August) and by 10 July more than 8,000 people are injured (Amnesty International 2013).

To understand and explain this unexpected incident, mainstream media asks, “who are these people that are protesting?”, and the first answer to this question was “Generation Y”.⁹⁵ A number of

⁹⁵ It is quite difficult to develop a profile of the people who took part in Gezi protests, considering its broad spread all over the country and the massive number of protesters. In this context, the limited number of surveys with limited samples (KONDA 2014; Kömürçüoğlu 2014; Ete and Taştan 2013) do not seem sufficient enough to represent a profile of all the protesters. However, despite the lack of empirical data, it is possible to find a range of academic literature on the Gezi uprising and the identity of the protestors (see, e.g., Can Gürcan and Peker 2015; Tuğal 2015; Yörük and Yüksel 2014).

newspaper and magazine articles and TV programs mention Gen Y within the scope of the Gezi protests. Moreover, within a very short period of time, Kafekültür publishing house publishes two books named *Generation Y* (Türk 2013a) and *Dictionary of Sociology for the Generation Y* (Türk 2013b). In this period, new types of actors and new ways of contributing to the Gen Y discourse emerge. Columnists in the mainstream media who mainly write on politics refer to Generation Y as a political actor (e.g., Günseli 2013; Beki 2014; Canikligil 2014; Babaoğlu 2013). Additionally, although youth associations have not made a significant contribution to the Gen Y discourse, one of them refer to themselves as Generation Y (IGD Board of Directors 2013). Besides, some young people call themselves the “Other Generation Y” because they do not support the Gezi protests (Menteş 2013), graffiti on the walls of Istanbul reading "You messed with the generation that beat cops on Grand Theft Auto", and some leftist groups propose the label ‘Generation resistance’ instead of ‘Gen Y’ to label this generation (Fraksiyon Dayanışma Ağı 2013). The representation of Gen Y as an activist and the involvement of actors related to this representation do not last, but it is notable how a discourse mainly discussed in business circles enlarges its limits from the business world to political discussions and diversifies the actors who contribute to its construction.

This significant increase in the interest in and use of the term during and right after the Gezi protests can also be tracked by google query trends (Google Trends n.d.) and by the number of articles about ‘Generation Y’ in the Turkish newspaper *the Hürriyet*.⁹⁶ These two sources are widely used and read in Turkey and are a valuable source on the general tendencies of Turkish society.

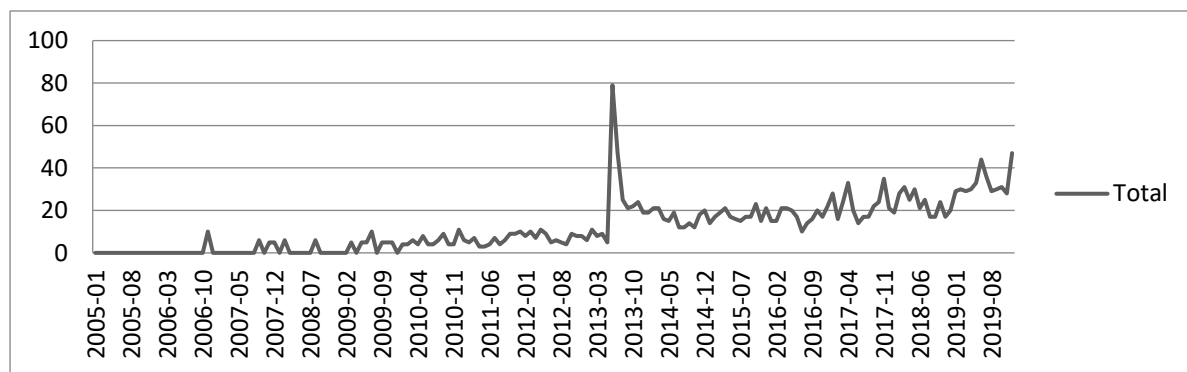


Figure V.2. Google search queries on “Generation Y” in Turkey (2004-2019). Source: trends.google.com. Accessed: 01/08/2019 (Numbers represent search interest relative to the peak popularity on the figure for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the highest point for the term).

⁹⁶ I chose the *Hürriyet* as a daily newspaper because the *Hürriyet* is one of the main newspapers (founded in 1948) in Turkey, and as of January 2018 had a higher circulation than any other newspaper in Turkey at around 319,000 (‘Tiraj | MedyaTava’ n.d.)

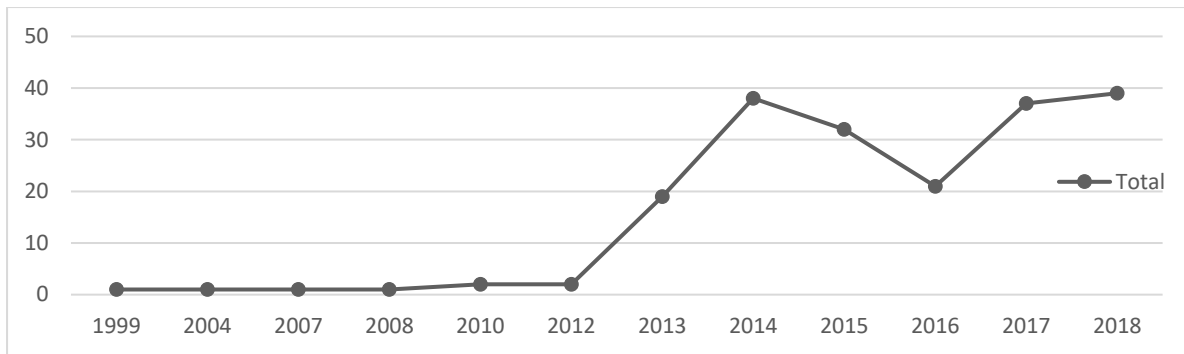


Figure V.3. Number of articles which include “Generation Y” in the *Hürriyet* over time (1999-2018). Source: Author based on *hurriyet.com.tr*.

These two figures (Figure V.2.,Figure V.3.) show that the Generation Y as a term gained popularity after the Gezi protests in 2013, though the term was already in use in the business world.

To verify if this increase is related to the Gezi Protests and not a coincidence with a worldwide trend on Gen Y, I also compare the search queries on ‘Generation Y’ in Turkey and in the United States⁹⁷ between 2005 and 2019 (Figure V.4.) on Google trends.

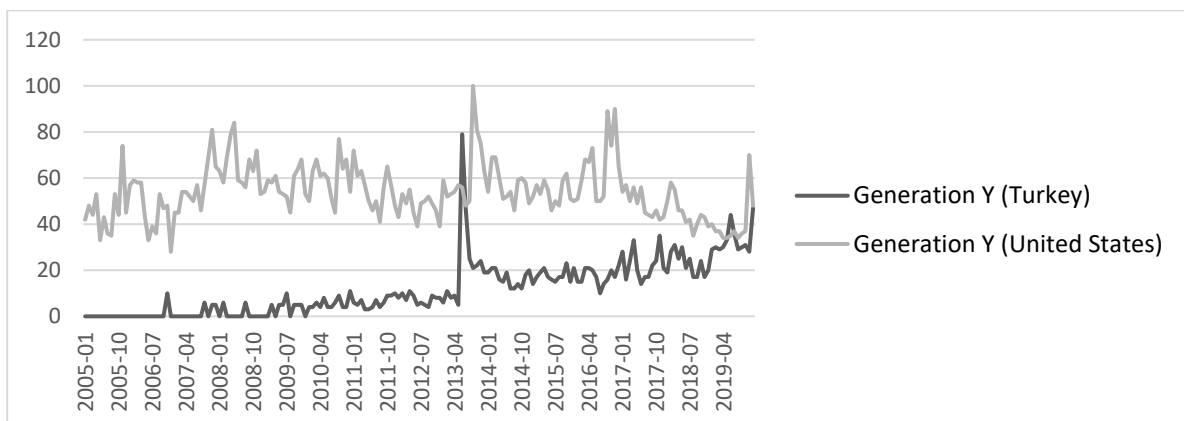


Figure V.4. Google search queries on “Generation Y” in Turkey and in the US (2004-2019). Source: *trends.google.com*. Accessed: 09/12/2019 (Numbers represent search interest relative to the peak popularity on the figure for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the highest point for the term).

Figure V.4. shows that the significant increase in the popularity of the term ‘Gen Y’ in Turkey is not related to any event in the United States; the significant increase takes place in Turkey before the United States.

A close examination of Google search trends for June 2013 in Turkey (Figure V.5.), clearly shows that search queries for Gen Y increase significantly during the period of 9-18 June 2013. This period overlaps with one TV discussion program on CNN Türk on 14.06.2013 (Akyol 2013) and two interviews in *the Hürriyet* newspaper on 09.06.2013 (Arman 2013a; 2013c) with Evrim Kuran, one of the foremost

⁹⁷ I chose the United States because the concept originated there, and because the United States has an important influence on Turkey, especially in management ideas.

Turkish experts on Gen Y. Accordingly, it is almost certain that Evrim Kuran is one of the most important actors to contribute to the significant increase in the use of the term ‘Generation Y’ in Turkey.

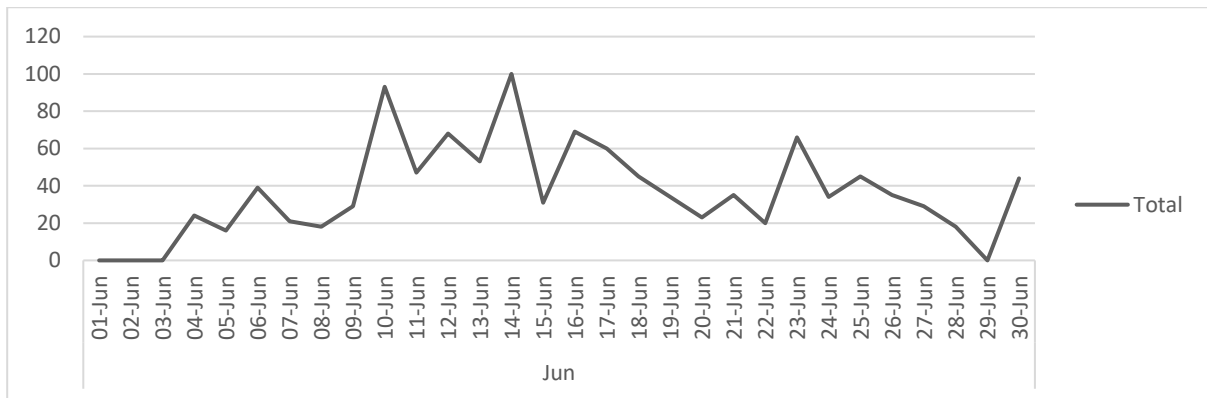


Figure V.5. Google search queries on “Generation Y” in Turkey (June 2013). Source: trends.google.com. Accessed: 09/12/2019 (Numbers represent search interest relative to the peak popularity on the figure for the given region and time. A value of 100 is the highest point for the term).

There is also a sharp increase in the number of master’s and PhD theses (from the Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education) and academic articles (from the database of Turkish Academic Journals Dergipark) on Generation Y in Turkey from 2013-18, as shown in Figure V.6. Figure V.7.

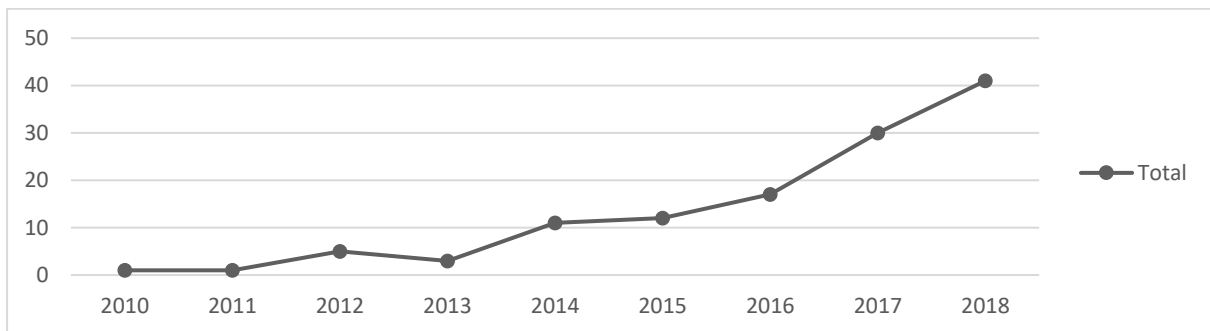


Figure V.6. Number of MA and PhD theses on Generation Y in Turkey over time (2010-2018) Source: Author based on tez.yok.gov.tr.

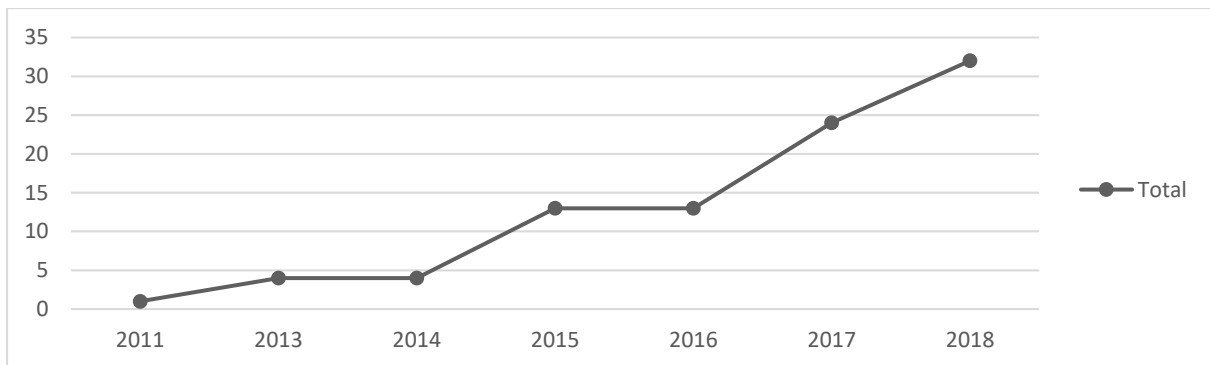


Figure V.7. Number of academic articles on Generation Y on Dergipark over time (2011-2018) Source: Author based on dergipark.org.tr.

On the other hand, the increasing use of the term Gen Y after the Gezi Protests is not as noticeable in popular business magazines as it is in other bodies of literature - with the exception of the HR Blog *Kariyer.net* (see Figure V.8.). The number of articles on Gen Y in *Mediacat* and *Capital* magazines increase significantly after 2015, rather than 2013. In the case of *Kariyer.net*, there is a significant increase in the use of the term “Gen Y” in 2013, though it is important to bear in mind the possible bias in this case as the oldest available data starts from 2013. It is therefore not possible to compare the increase with the previous years.

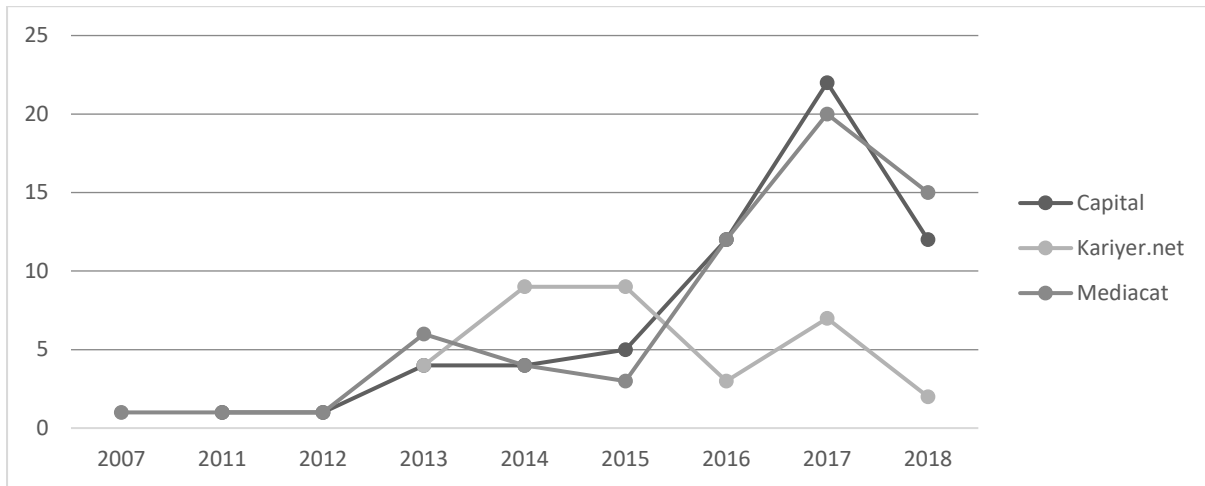


Figure V.8. Number of Articles on Gen Y in three business magazines over time (2007-2018). Source: Author based on *capital.com.tr*, *mediacat.com.tr*, *kariyer.net*

These results suggest that the Gen Y discourse gains popularity and widespread attention in Turkey in the years after the Gezi Protests in 2013. We can follow this trend through academic literature and the mainstream media, but not in practitioner literature. Although the impact of the Gezi Protests is not as obvious in the practitioner literature as it is in other bodies of literature, Figure V.2.-Figure V.8. show that Generation Y is still a current subject in Turkey.

V.C.2. Trends around Gen Y as a consumer, employee, and activist

The literature on Gen Y can be divided into three according to how the generation is defined - as a consumer, employee, and activist. The first type of text views the generation as a consumer and draws attention to the importance of this “segment” for the market, their consumption behaviours, and expectations from the brands. The second type of text defines the generation by its attitudes to work. This type of texts emphasises changes in the workplace with the coming of this “new” and “unusual” generation and focuses on the work-related expectations and values of the generation. The third type of text deals with Gen Y as an actor in politics. Gen Y is portrayed as a new type of voter/political actor, expressing political goals/wishes differently from previous generations. When the new generation is described as such, it also provides an easy explanation for new and unusual political events such as

the Occupy Movements in the United States or the Umbrella Movement in East Asia, especially for the popular press (e.g., Buchholz and Buchholz 2012) and some academics (e.g., Yun-han Chu and Welsh 2015).

To understand the evolution of these three dimensions, it is important to look closely at articles on Gen Y published in the media. I classify the articles and theses into three main categories: a) Gen Y as a consumer, b) Gen Y as an employee and c) Gen Y as an activist. I also create a category called ‘others’ for articles which do not fit into these three categories. Most of the articles classified as ‘others’ focus on health, education, and family issues of Gen Y.

V.C.2.1. Dominant dimension of Gen Y: an employee

Figure V.9. shows the percentage of articles in each category published in *the Hürriyet Newspaper*. Most of the articles (104 articles out of 195) describe Gen Y as an employee.

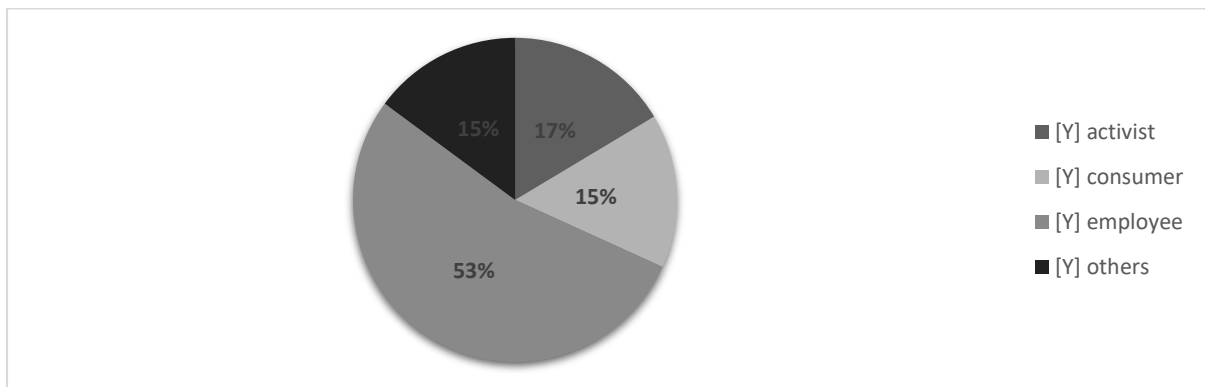


Figure V.9. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions in the Hürriyet (1999-2019). Source: Author based on hurriyet.com.tr.

This is also the case for the practitioner literature that I analysed; *Mediacat Magazine*, which focuses on advertisement and marketing issues (and is therefore more likely to describe Gen Y as a consumer), publishes 11 articles out of 69 on Gen Y in which they are described as an employee (see Figure V.10.).

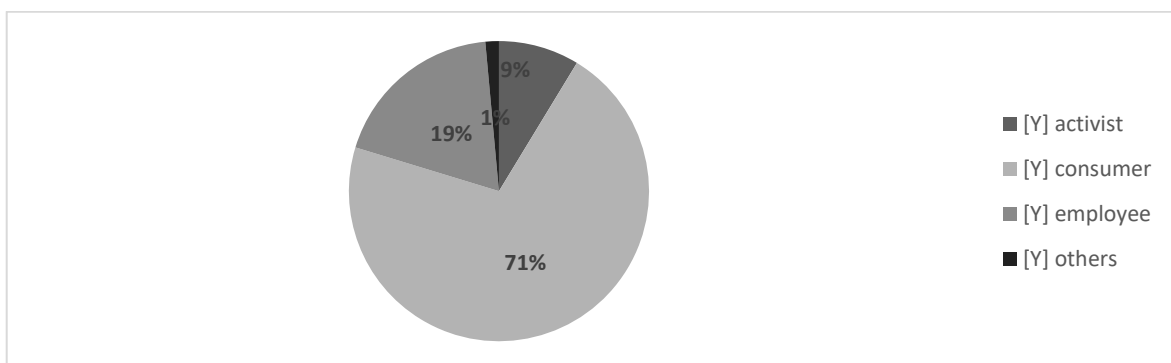


Figure V.10. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on Mediacat.com.tr (2007-2019). Source: Author based on mediacat.com.tr.

The HR blog *Kariyet.net* only publishes articles that describe Gen Y as an employee (36 out of 36). Figure V.11. shows that *Capital* magazine publishes significantly more articles describing Gen Y as an employee (50 articles out of 66) than as a consumer (14 articles out of 66). *Capital* does not have a specific focus but tends to give an overview of the business world and the economy.

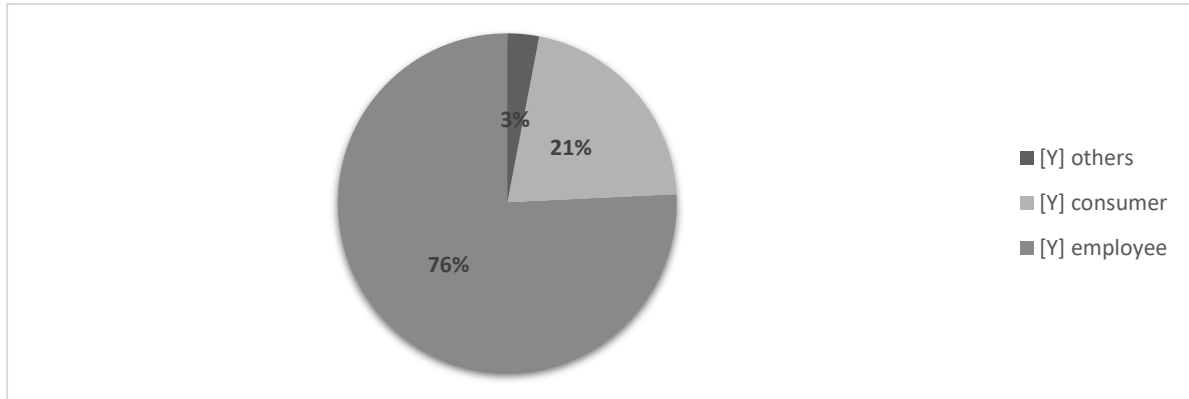


Figure V.11. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on *Capital.com.tr*. Source: Author based on *capital.com.tr*.

Academic literature on Gen Y shares important similarities with popular business magazines and mainstream media; the employee dimension of Gen Y is also dominant in academic literature. In the database of Turkish Academic Journals *Dergipark*, 54 out of 96 articles describe Gen Y as an employee (Figure V.12.), and 68 out of 121 master's and PhD theses written in Turkey on Generation Y also describe Gen Y as an employee (Figure V.13.).

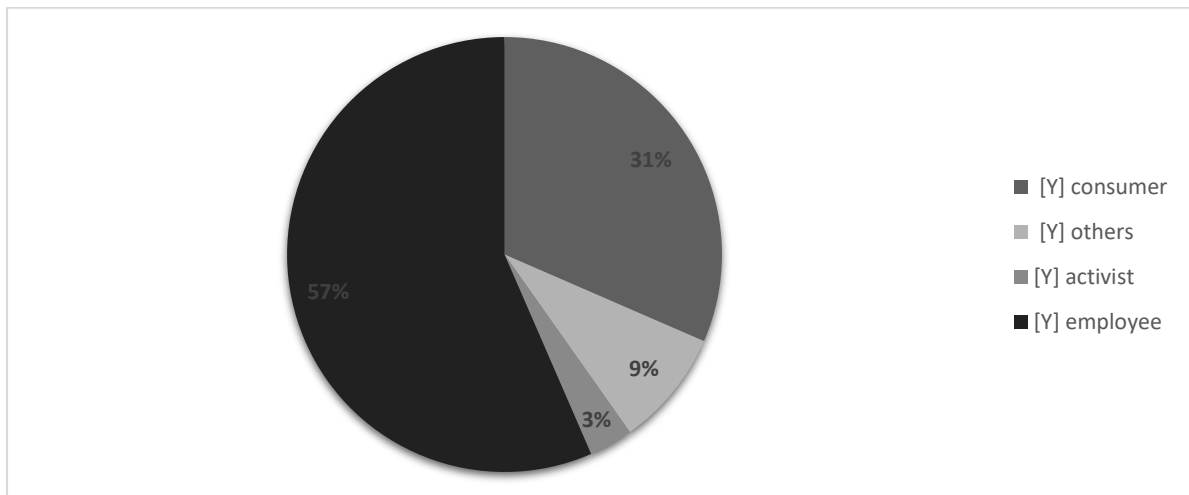


Figure V.12. Percentage of articles based on 3 dimensions on *Dergipark*. Source: Author based on *dergipark.org.tr*.

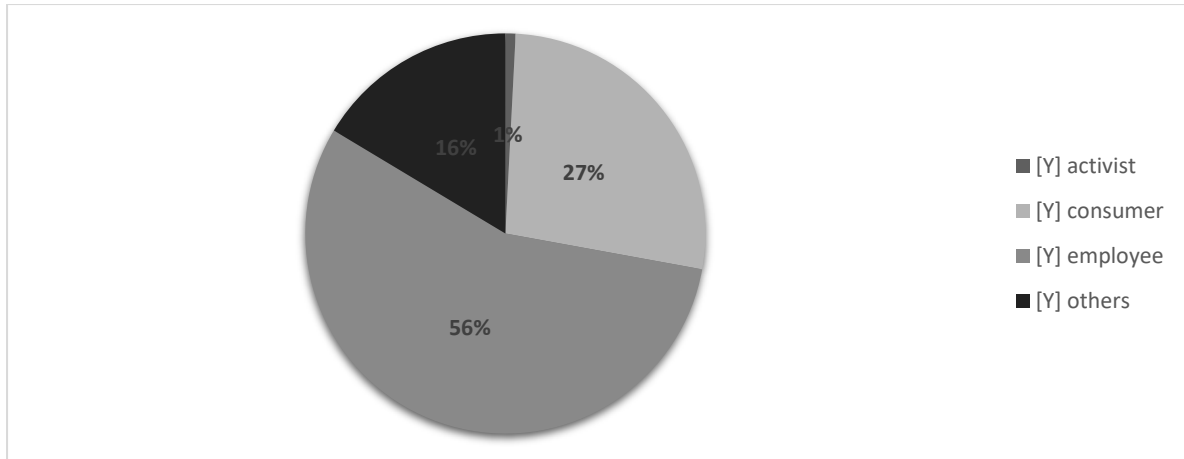


Figure V.13. Percentage of MA and PhD theses in Turkey based on 3 dimensions. Source: Author based on tez.yok.gov.tr.

In summary, Generation Y is mainly described as an employee in the mainstream media, by practitioners, and in the academic literature. This is also demonstrated by the greater reference in these articles to work-related traits compared to the activist, consumer, or employee traits of Gen Y (Table V-4.).

Table V-4. References to different types of Gen Y traits in the media. Source: Author.

| | Capital.com.tr | The Hürriyet | Mediacat.tr | Kariyer.net | Totals |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| Activism related traits | 13 | 100 | 23 | 17 | 153 |
| Consumer related traits | 11 | 35 | 18 | 5 | 69 |
| General traits | 87 | 312 | 95 | 84 | 578 |
| Work-related traits | 83 | 230 | 38 | 117 | 468 |
| Total | 194 | 677 | 174 | 223 | 1268 |

V.C.2.2. Evolution of Gen Y as a consumer, employee, and activist

In the evolution of the Gen Y, Gezi protests play a key role. They lead to a significant increase in the popularity of the term Gen Y, as the generation is defined as the major participants and source of the protests.

The mainstream daily newspaper *the Hürriyet* publishes 195 articles about Gen Y, 32 of which describe Gen Y as a political actor. Of all the literature I analysed *the Hürriyet* is the source that most frequently describes Gen Y as a political actor. This is understandable as *the Hürriyet* is the only mainstream newspaper among the sources I analysed – and it is expected that mainstream newspapers publish news and articles on political issues. But it is worth asking why the mainstream media chose to identify the protesters as Gen Y, rather than some other label.

When the Gezi protests were taking place, the mainstream media is extremely careful about not promoting the protests or criticising the government.⁹⁸ Most of the mainstream media focus in a relatively positive way on the demand for the protection of Gezi Park while ignoring the other social demands and police violence against the protesters. By doing so, the mainstream media and spokespersons for the government contribute to the creation of a division between protestors as “peaceful environmentalists” or “violent protesters”. The latter are criminalised and stigmatised by the mainstream media, especially by parts of the media with close relationships with the AKP Government (H. Özen 2015, 14). When police violence escalates, nearly all the Turkish mainstream media TV channels ignore the protests and chose to show irrelevant content (Kabaş 2015, 157–58). When police attacked protesters with tear gas and water cannons on 2 June 2013, CNN International broadcasted the protests in the streets while CNN Turk shows a documentary on penguins; this becomes a symbol used by protesters to criticise the mainstream media’s relationships with the government (Cooper 2020).

To better understand self-censorship in the mainstream media, it is important to note that the majority of mainstream media owners are (directly or indirectly) economically dependent on the AKP government.⁹⁹ This dependency leads media owners to be eager to please the government (Sözeri 2013) and avoid covering critical comments and news about the government. Concordantly, many journalists lose their jobs during and after the Gezi protests because of their comments critical of the government (Arslan 2013). Sözeri (2016) interviews eight journalists, noting that all the interviewees believe it is not possible to fairly cover the Gezi protests in the mainstream media (p.92). Therefore, they choose to disseminate breaking news through their social media accounts (some of them anonymously) (p.87) rather than the mainstream media.

For the mainstream media in this climate, explaining the Gezi protests with reference to a management discourse (Gen Y) was the least political (and therefore least risky) way to address a political movement that is against the government’s policies. As shown in Figure V.14., articles describing Gen Y as an activist begin to be published with the Gezi protests in 2013. And 2013 is the only year in which there are more articles describing Gen Y as an activist than those describing Gen Y as an employee. Later on, articles describing Gen Y as an activist decrease dramatically and almost disappear.

⁹⁸ For the list of media censorship during the Gezi Protests, see “Media Censorship and Disinformation during the Gezi Park Protests” (Wikipedia 2021).

⁹⁹ For a detailed explanation of the political economy of the media in Turkey, see Sözeri and Güney (2011); and for a detailed explanation of how self-censorship and activist journalism work at the Gezi Protests, see Sözeri (2016).

This decrease may be due to the worsening political atmosphere in Turkey, especially after the failed 2016 coup d'état. The mainstream media, having influenced the criminalisation of the Gezi protests, becomes more and more pro-government (see Algan 2017; Sözeri, Erbayasal Filibeli, and Inceoglu 2017). With the increasing number of lawsuits filed against protesters and supporters of the Gezi protests (see FLD 2021), there is an increasing reticence to make positive statements about the Gezi protests in general, or about Gen Y as a political actor, since they are considered the main actors of the Gezi protests.

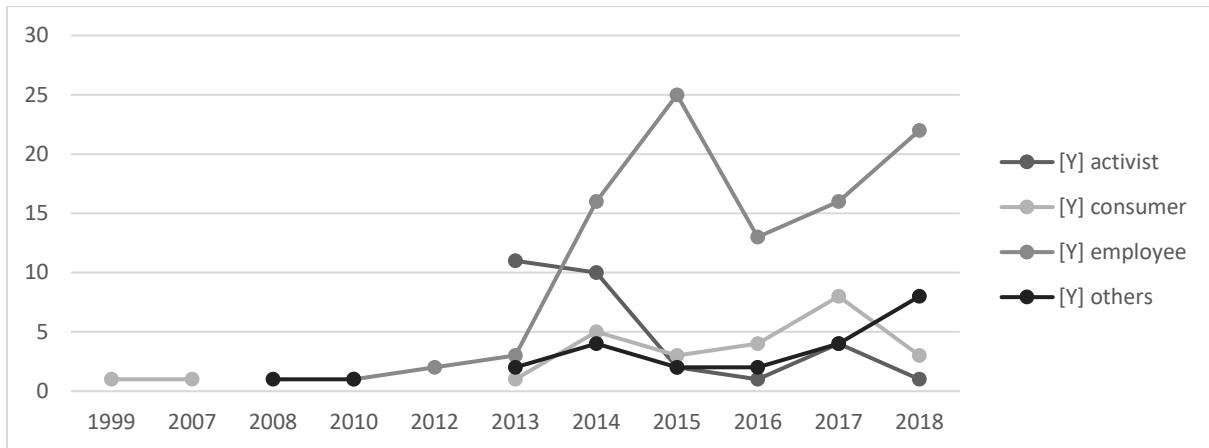


Figure V.14. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y in the Hürriyet over time (1999-2018). Source: Author based on hurriyet.com.tr.

Although the term Gen Y gained its popularity after the Gezi protests in Turkey, it is surprising that the practitioner and academic literature describe Gen Y as an activist very few times.

On *Mediacat*, there is only one article in which Gen Y is described as an activist or a political actor. However, this article is not related to the Gezi protests and/or Turkey, but to United States politics and Donald Trump (Kocası 2016). HR Blog *Kariyet.net* never conceptualises Gen Y as an activist and the word Gezi never appears in these texts. Articles on Gen Y in *Capital* do not highlight the political aspects of Gen Y either. This lack of interest can be explained by the specific interest of these business magazines; the political aspects of a generation and explaining a political movement are not among their and their readers' priorities. At the same time, there are always direct and indirect references to political issues in these magazines. In that context, the Gen Y discourse usually offers these magazines a safe ground to talk about politics (in the broadest sense). But as the discourse is increasingly loaded with political connotations from the mainstream media, highlighting political aspects of Gen Y becomes increasingly risky for business magazines.

Gen Y is also rarely described as an activist in the academic literature - in just one PhD thesis out of 121 and in 3 out of 96 articles published in *Dergipark*.¹⁰⁰ This might be because generation is not a popular scientific concept among anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists. Gen Y is a contested and very ambiguously defined concept, difficult for social scientists to defend, as indicated in the literature review (II.A.). Hence, it is understandable that Generation Y is mainly studied as an employee and a consumer rather than a political actor in the academic field. This also indicates that business and administration departments are dominant in the construction of the Gen Y discourse in the academic field.

Moreover, the absence of the Gen Y activist dimension in the academic literature (Figure V.15., Figure V.16.) and popular business magazines (Figure V.17. Figure V.18.), alongside the significant fall in the use of the term as an activist in *the Hürriyet*, suggest that references in Turkey to Gen Y as an activist represent a unique and temporary trend as the mainstream media attempt to explain the Gezi protests.

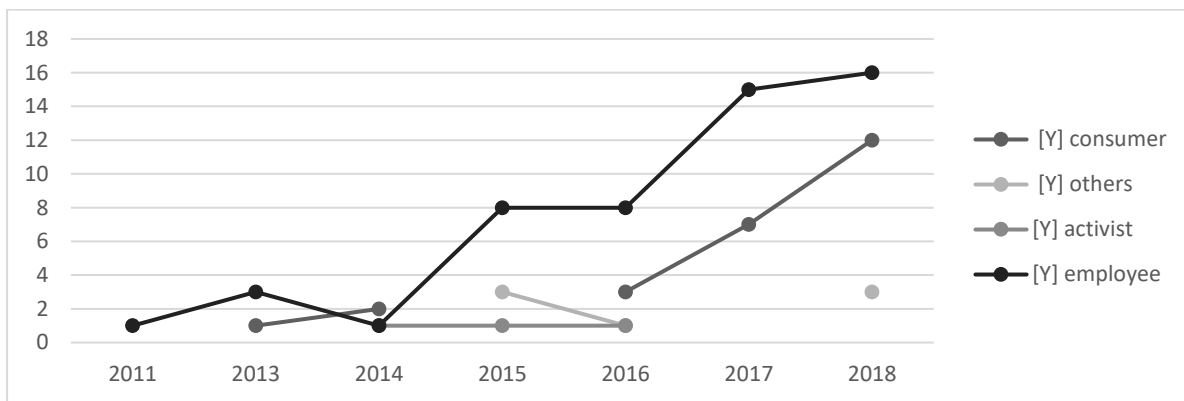


Figure V.15. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Dergipark overtime (2011-2018). Source: Author based on *dergipark.org.tr*.

¹⁰⁰ Looking more closely at the academic literature which describes Gen Y as an activist (Figure V.15 Figure V.16): There are only three articles dated 2014, 2015 and 2016 and one PhD thesis in the academic literature on Gen Y. *New Social Movements and The Resistance of Gezi* (Bayhan 2014) is the only academic article which refers to the Gezi Protests, and unlike most of the articles in the *Hürriyet* which describe Gen Y as an activist, the author positions himself against the Gezi Protests, defending the government's politics. The other two articles and the only thesis (Göktaş 2015; Çarıkçı and Göktaş 2016; Tüzüntürk, Taskin, and Tuncel 2015) focus on the perceptions and expectations of Gen Y, which can be considered as a part of political communication studies.

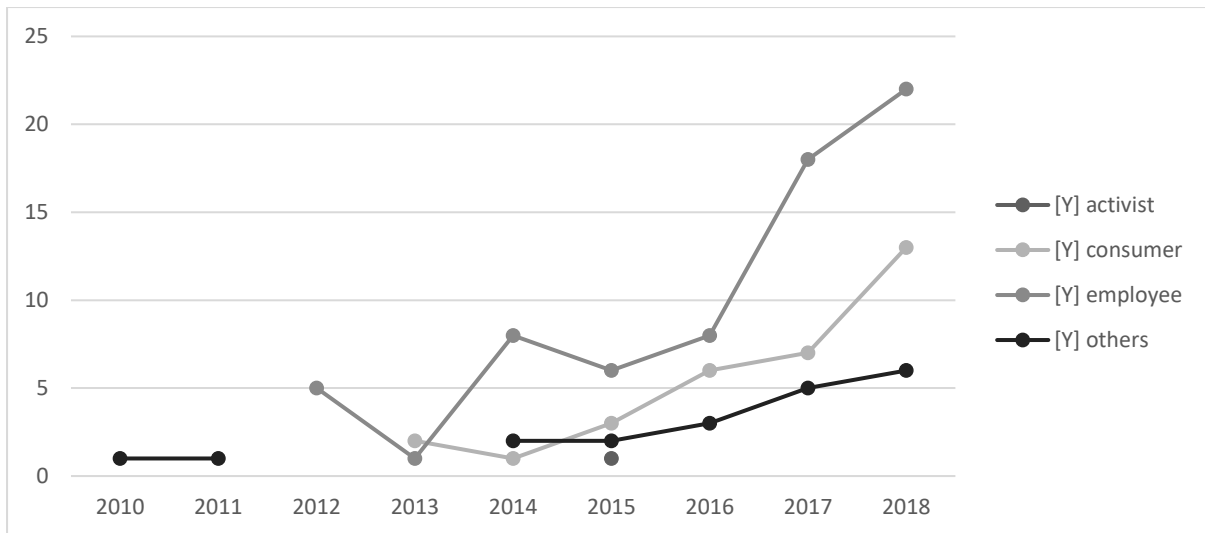


Figure V.16. Evolution of theses written in Turkey with different dimensions of Gen Y overtime (2010-2018). Source: Author based on tez.yok.gov.tr.

Besides, as shown in Figure V.14, Figure V.17, and Figure V.18., when the Gen Y term appears in *the Hürriyet* newspaper (1999-2007), *Capital* (2011), and *Mediacat*¹⁰¹ (2007-2010-2011) magazines for the first time, it is as a new type of consumer. This also corresponds with the global evolution of the Gen Y concept; Gen Y is mostly first introduced as a new type of consumer (with the exception of Howe and Strauss), but after a time, the employee dimension of Gen Y becomes dominant in the literature.

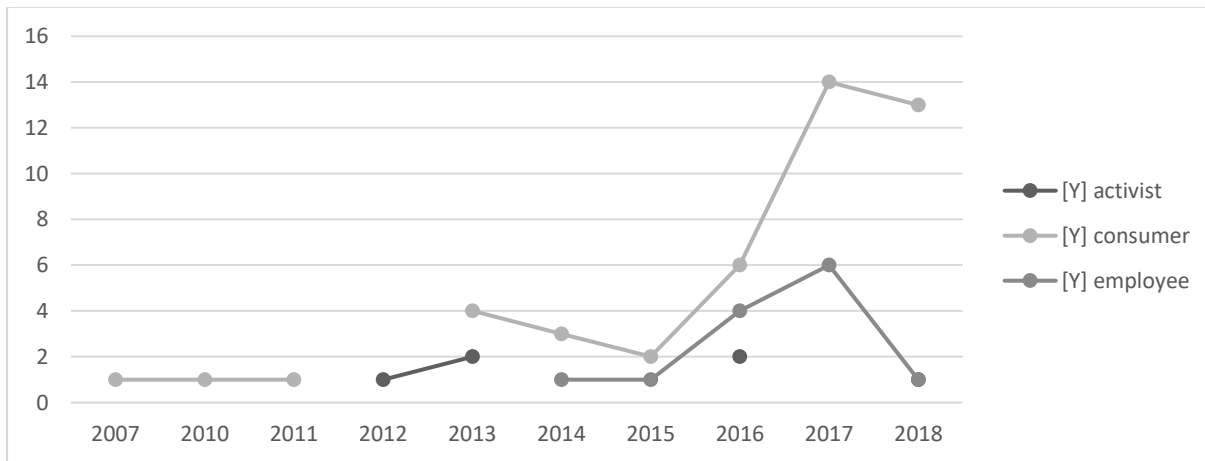


Figure V.17. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Mediacat.com.tr over time (2007-2018). Source: Author based on mediacat.com.tr.

¹⁰¹ I exclude *Kariyer.net* from this analysis; the articles that I managed to access start from 2013, which is relatively late, and it also contains articles on Gen Y which only describe Gen Y as an employee.

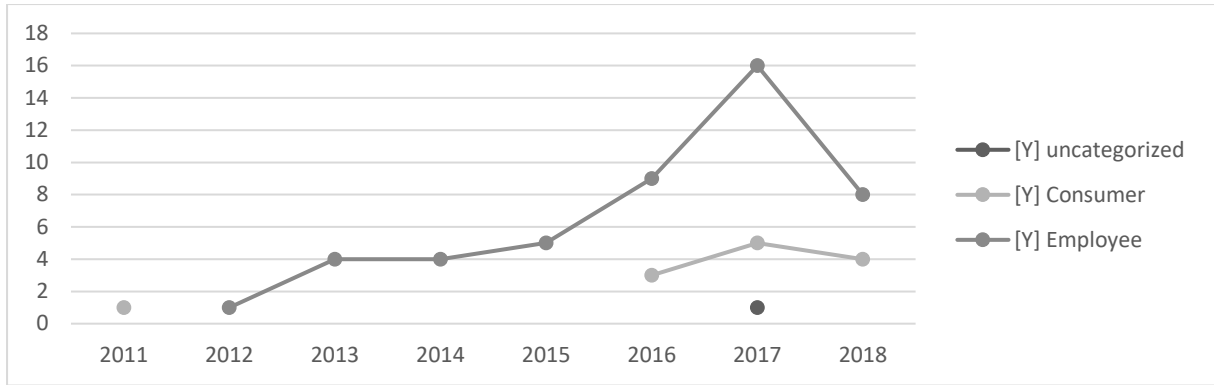


Figure V.18. Evolution of articles with different dimensions of Gen Y on Capital.com.tr over time (2011-2018). Source: Author based on capital.com.tr.

V.C.3. Conclusion

Overall, analysis of the different bodies of literature regarding how Gen Y in Turkey is described (consumer/activist/employee) shows that:

1. there is a similarity with the global evolution of the concept. Gen Y is introduced first as a new type of consumer then evolves into an employee.¹⁰²
2. with the Gezi protests, Gen Y becomes a political actor, mainly because the mainstream media tries to avoid directly criticising the government and its policies. This use of the Gen Y discourse to explain the Gezi protests significantly increases the popularity of the term. Additionally, Evrim Kuran plays an important role in this period in increasing the popularity of the term with her presence in the mainstream media.
3. after a short period, it is apparent in all bodies of literature that Gen Y is described less as a political actor and increasingly as an employee.
4. In academia, the topic remains current mainly in business and administration departments, and Gen Y is not discussed as a political actor. Reasons for this include the unsolid foundations of the concept of generation and the ambiguous definitions of Generation Y.

These findings suggest that Gen Y is defined and discussed mainly in business-related fields and as an employee. But interestingly, the popularity of the discourse increases dramatically because the mainstream media, in a climate of strong political pressure and self-censorship, uses the concept of Gen Y to explain the Gezi protests.

¹⁰² This account must be approached with some caution as the bodies of literature that I analyse (except the academic ones) do not include the very first introduction of the term Gen Y in Turkey. The earliest articles on Gen Y that I could find are dated 1999 in the *Hürriyet* (Berberoğlu 1999) and 2000 in the *Milliyet* newspapers (Uras 2000), and in both they are described as a consumer.

After identifying that the Gen Y discourse is still a current subject and situating it in the fields where it is mainly produced, it is now time to scrutinise how Gen Y narratives are translated to the Turkish context. In the next sub-chapter, I analyse Evrim Kuran's Gen Y narrative based on her book, and compare the results with the content analysis of mainstream and practitioner articles on Gen Y.

V.D. Translation of the Gen Y Discourse to the Turkish Context

Evrım Kuran is the most well-known generation expert in Turkey (see section V.B.1.). Tracking the development of the Gen Y discourse over time demonstrates her major influence on the growing popularity of the topic as a point of discussion (see section V.C.1.). This demonstrates her influential role in the translation of the Gen Y discourse to Turkey and legitimises my choice of her as the gatekeeper of the discourse in the country. In this context, I closely examine her narrative on Gen Y alongside supportive data from my content analysis of the Turkish mainstream media and business magazines.

V.D.1. Evrim Kuran and her book on generations

Evrım Kuran was born in 1976 in Ankara. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University, and an Executive Master of Business Administration degree from Sabancı University. She currently lives between Toronto and Istanbul. She describes (2018, 17) how she decided to study generations as such: "I am doing my master's degree and at the same time I am working as an English instructor at a university. I am young ... but my students are younger... and they are definitely different. I wonder how the institutional climate would be when they start working. Who will change who? Then I decide to start studying the parameters of Gen Y's organisational attractiveness. Of course, in those years generation as a topic was not as popular as it is today. Some asked me "Generation? What is it?", and some academics and supervisors told me to "leave these issues aside" and tried to convince me to follow another route. But I do not give up".

Similar to the generation experts I analyse in the previous chapter, Kuran presents herself as a consultant, keynote speaker, and a book writer (Kuran n.d.). In addition to these, Kuran also co-founds Dinamo Consulting in 2006, focusing on generational studies, employer branding, reverse mentoring, project finance, leasing and business development programs. The company has been the Turkey representative of Amembal & Halladay since 2006, Universum Global since 2013, Invigors since 2014, and Shangai Hanin Investment Consulting since 2014. The company also regularly organises employer branding conferences (Dinamo n.d.).

One of the most common ways for management gurus to build relationships with their followers is through writing bestselling management books (Clark, Bhatanacharoen, and Greatbatch 2015, 3). In the previous chapter I show that this is also the case for generation experts in the United States. However, unlike most generation experts and management gurus, Kuran does not gain her fame with a bestselling book on Generations, but mainly by her presence in mainstream and practitioner media. Already well-known in the business world, she becomes famous nationwide during the Gezi protests in Turkey in 2013. She publishes her first book on Generations in 2018 nearly 5 years after the Gezi protests.

Her book *From Telegram to Tablet* shares most of the typical styles and qualities of a popular management book: easy to read, has vague references, personal anecdotes and quotations from popular figures, and lacks precision (for a detailed analysis of popular management books see Furusten 1999). The book examines five generations in Turkey based on various sources of data such as The Global Youth Wellbeing Index by International Youth Foundation, Education at a glance by OECD, statistics by TUIK (Turkish Institute of Statistics), Research on Most Attractive Employers of Turkey by Universum and two studies she conducted in Turkey. She mostly emphasises the employee dimension in her book, although she also portrays the general outlook of Gen Y and writes about their political and consumer aspects.

In the book, there are references to Twenge and Howe & Strauss, mentioned in the previous sub-chapter (V.A.). Howe and Strauss are clearly more influential than Twenge. This influence can be tracked as she cites them more frequently than Twenge. But Howe and Strauss' influence is not limited to the times they are cited. When her book and TED talks are scrutinised (Kuran 2016a; 2016b), it becomes apparent that she embraces Howe and Strauss' repetitive cycles and archetypes of generations (e.g., Kuran 2016b, 2:57-3:10; 2018, 24) as a theoretical background. According to Howe and Strauss' theory of repetitive cycles and archetypes of generations, every generation has characteristics that make it specific and different from others. These specific characteristics are based on four generational archetypes found throughout human history (for an explanation of their theory, see section IV.E.2)

Evrin Kuran and Howe & Strauss also share a similar aim, summarised as "fighting against the negative stereotyping of new generations".¹⁰³ However, whereas Howe and Strauss do not focus on the

¹⁰³ Evrin Kuran (2018, 101) defines her mission as such: "To understand a generation, we should look at life through the realities of that generation not through our ideological towers. My mission in life is to bring those who judge a generation together with the realities of that generation". Meanwhile Howe and Strauss (2000, 309) explain why they wrote a book on Millennials as follow: "We decided to write *Millennials Rising* in 1998, a year before Columbine, as our own answer to the "Generation Y" negativity that was seeping into the media and marketing worlds"

employee dimension of Gen Y, Kuran does. It can be said that Evrim Kuran adopts Howe and Strauss's understanding of Gen Y, transposing it to the Turkish context with a focus on the employee dimension. The only unexpected aspect about her book (compared with popular management books) is the political references that she makes, allowing at least some of her readers to position her in the current Turkish political context¹⁰⁴. These political references are not explicit and are not direct; they are only noticeable to those already familiar with left and/or liberal milieus in Turkey. For instance, she quotes (2018, 146) Sukru Erbas, a leftist poet and writer, or paraphrases (2018, 150) Raket Dink's speech after the assassination of the Armenian Journalist Hrant Dink; "the darkness that creates murderers out of babies". She also refers (2018, 45) to the founder of the Turkish Republic as "a great visionary". Based on these political references, it is possible to assume that she is not in favour of the AKP, or the lifestyle promoted by them, especially after the Gezi protests.¹⁰⁵

V.D.2. Evrim Kuran's Gen Y narrative

To track the translation of the Gen Y discourse to Turkey, I examine Evrim Kuran's book under four aspects (as I do for the influential actors' texts from the United States in the previous chapter): *Cut-off Points, Major Distinctive Features, Generational Traits, Prescriptions and Management Concepts and Practices*. I also share the results of my content analysis of the Turkish mainstream media and practitioner literature, so as to compare Kuran's and the Turkish media's narrative with the major actors' narratives in the United States.

V.D.2.1. Generational cut-off points

Kuran defines (2018, 36) the generational cut-off points for Gen Y as 1980-1999, but like other generation experts, she also rejects precise cut-off points. She claims that cut-off points can change significantly according to geography, but the characteristics of Gen Y do not change much. Accordingly, she argues that "Gen Y characteristics" are more evident in the generation born in Turkey after 1985

¹⁰⁴ Here I refer to the narrow understanding of the political context and politics of actual political parties and the values defended by these parties. On the other hand, with a broader understanding of politics, all the books on Gen Y analysed have (mostly indirect) claims on politics. Howe and Strauss refer more directly to political issues, as politicians are also their target audience - but always with a "neutral" and/or "objective" tone.

¹⁰⁵ Although surveys on political values and lifestyles need to be interpreted very cautiously with regards to the Turkish political climate, we can refer to KONDA's research on polarisation in Turkey. KONDA (2019, 6) classified the Turkish population into 3 clusters based on their political values: Secularists, The Middles and Conservatives. Evrim Kuran can be positioned within the secularists cluster, defined as "a group with low perceptions of the individual freedoms they have (who feel limited), high levels of secularism and tolerance, as well as fears and a middle-low level of sensitivity to the rights of education in the first language, negative future expectations, and high sensitivity for the rights of women. They are demographically more modern, educated, and their relationship with religion is weak and [they make up a] high percentage of CHP voters [CHP is the social-democratic political party which is currently the main opposition party]" (KONDA 2019, 6).

than 1980. This idea of following 5 years behind is also parallel to the common understanding of modernisation in Turkey. This conception of modernisation presupposes that it is a linear line, and emphasises the idea of Turkey being behind western countries (Özbek 2004, 76). Within this framework, modernisation becomes equivalent to westernisation (for a detailed discussion see Cigdem 2007), and in that context, Turkey is perceived as a “developing country” following “developed countries” such as Germany, France, and the United States.

Nevertheless, she concludes that the generation’s problems are more important than the years when the generation starts and ends (Kuran 2018, 99). Her relatively flexible position on defining cut-off points is remarkably similar to the position of the influential actors in the Gen Y discourse in the United States. (see section IV.D.1.).

Evrin Kuran’s cut-off points are also the most common age range found in Turkish articles on Gen Y in the mainstream media and business magazines.¹⁰⁶ 12 articles out of 34 refer to Gen Y cut-off points as “1980-1999” and 8 articles as “1980-2000” (see Table V-5.).

¹⁰⁶ It is important to note that journalists do not usually propose their own cut-off points in these articles but refer either to the cut-off points of an expert or in a study.

Table V-5. Generational cut-off points in articles on Gen Y in *Hürriyet*, *Mediacat*, *Kariyer.net*, *Capital*. Source: Author.

| | Publication Year | Published by | Cut-off Points |
|---|------------------|--------------|----------------|
| (Berberoglu 1999) | 1999 | Hürriyet | 1979-1994 |
| (Güler 2012) | 2012 | Hürriyet | 1987- ? |
| (Zaimler 2013) | 2013 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Kuran 2013) | 2013 | Kariyer.net | 1980-1999 |
| (Arman 2013a) | 2013 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Sipahi 2013) | 2013 | Hürriyet | 1980-2000 |
| (Kaynak 2013) | 2013 | Mediacat | 1981-1995 |
| (Canikligil 2014) | 2014 | Hürriyet | 1977-1981 |
| (Mirac 2014) | 2014 | Hürriyet | 1977-2000 |
| (Hürriyet 2014) "Y Kuşağı internette marka tutkunu" | 2014 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Arman 2014) | 2014 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Aksu 2014) | 2014 | Kariyer.net | 1980-2000 |
| (Sükan 2014) | 2014 | Hürriyet | 1980-2000 |
| (Ceylan 2015) | 2015 | Kariyer.net | 1977-1997 |
| (Hürriyet 2015b) "5 farklı kuşak için tersine mentorluk" | 2015 | Hürriyet | 1977-1997 |
| (Çetinsaraç 2015) | 2015 | Kariyer.net | 1980-1999 |
| (Hürriyet 2015a) "Y kuşağı hangi mesleklere ilgi duyuyor?" | 2015 | Hürriyet | 1980-2000 |
| (Ries 2016) | 2016 | Capital | 1980-2000 |
| (Uçar 2017) | 2017 | Mediacat | 1980-1999 |
| (Kariyer.net 2017a) "Yeni bir dönemin başlangıcı: Y kuşağı liderler" | 2017 | Kariyer.net | 1980-2000 |
| (Kilic 2017) | 2017 | Hürriyet | 1982-2000 |
| (Capital Online 2017) 'Türkiye, 19 Avrupa ülkesi arasında ilk sırada' | 2017 | Capital | 1983-1999 |
| (Anlatan Adam 2018) | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1980- 1999 |
| (Türsen 2018) | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1980-1994 |
| (Hürriyet 2018a) "Burada herkes yönetici" | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Hürriyet 2018b) "Hangi kuşaksınız?" | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1980-1999 |
| (Arman 2018) | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1980-2000 |
| (Kotler 2018) | 2018 | Capital | 1980-2000 |
| (Coşkunarda 2018) | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1981-2000 |
| (E. Özen 2018) | 2018 | Hürriyet | 1983-2000 |
| (Capital Online 2018) "Bankalarda şube ve çalışan sayısı azaldı" | 2018 | Capital | 1984 -2000 |
| (Erdoğan 2019) | 2019 | Capital | 1980- 1999 |
| (Frey 2019) | 2019 | Capital | 1980- 1999 |

V.D.2.2. Major distinctive features

Regarding the major distinctive features shaping the traits of Gen Y, Kuran points to 9/11, global warming and the Internet Era as global features, and "prosperity" and "crisis" periods as specific features for Turkey (Kuran 2018, 97). She also refers to "helicopter parents" as another major feature in her book (Kuran 2018, 36) and one of her interviews (Arman 2013a). These major global distinctive features identified by Kuran are the same as those found in the US literature on Gen Y.

Most of the articles I analyse from the mainstream media and popular business magazines do not aim to give an overview on Gen Y, and few mention aspects of the Gen Y narrative such as distinctive features. Among those that do, the Internet Era is the most often cited distinctive feature in the four bodies of texts I analyse (see Table V-6.). This emphasis on digitalisation and the internet era fits the core and indispensable claim of the Gen Y discourse (identified in section IV.D.2.) that this generation represents the future and understanding them is an obligation to avoid becoming outdated.

Table V-6. Number of Gen Y articles which refer to the distinctive features at least once. Source: Author.

| | Being Well-educated | Overparenting | Internet/Digital Era |
|--|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Kariyer.net (out of 3 articles) | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Mediacat (out of 7 articles) | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| Capital (out of 13 articles) | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Hürriyet (out of 29 articles) | 6 | 11 | 14 |
| TOTAL (out of 56 articles) | 9 | 14 | 34 |

Evrin Kuran repeats the most common generational traits found in the Gen Y discourse, though with slightly different formulations. She identifies Gen Y as a generation with a higher need of immediacy who give importance to their parents and family (“they care more about their parents compared to previous generations”). She also describes them as a generation who are friendly and social (“who care about social connections”), technologically adept (“good at using technology”), process and fun driven (“focus on and enjoy the process more than the outcome”), civic-minded (“have a high tendency to influence and be influenced by the society they are in”), job hoppers (“it is predicted that they may change jobs more than ten times in their entire working life and can quit jobs before finding a new one), rebellious and progressive (“a generation who can rewrite the codes of both daily and professional life”) and good at multitasking (“they can multitask, do more than one job at the same time”) (Kuran 2018, 36,97,98). In addition to these traits, she claims that the major values of this generation are family, justice, and health (Kuran 2018, 98).

To examine the differences between descriptions of Gen Y in the United States and Turkey, I review the Table IV-11. In the new Table V-7.) below, traits written in bold indicate the traits found in descriptions of Gen Y in the United States, and confirmed by Evrin Kuran in her book, Ted-talks and interviews (Kuran 2018; Arman 2013a; 2013c; 2013b; 2017; Kuran 2016a; 2016b). The traits written in brackets show how Kuran expresses them in her own words. Table V-7 demonstrates the similarity of Evrin Kuran’s generational attributes to those of others in the generational discourse.

Table V-7. Traits of Gen Y as described by Evrim Kuran. Source: Author.

| 3 Aspects | Open Minded/Progressive | Fun/Friendly | Immediacy |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| General Traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are open-minded/progressive (value diversity/freedom) [and Justice] • questioning (everything) • dislike hierarchy/question authority • have strong ecological/social sensibilities [Civic-Minded] • value (too much) directness, transparency, honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents/family are important for them. • want to have fun [process and fun driven] • love to be social/are extroverts [Being social is important] | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Need of Immediacy] • are fast/go-getter/dynamic/fast learner • are impatient/get bored easily • hard to please/critical |
| Work-related Traits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see results • prioritise work-life balance • are globally mobile/ like to travel • ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey [Respect should be deserved] • dislike formality and bureaucracy • invest in themselves (education/training) • have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations • like flexibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are good team players • want an entertaining work environment. • professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers • like gamification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • want to shine/steal the spotlight/do not want to be a dogsbody • want to feel appreciated (all the time) • are good at multitasking • are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) • want to be promoted (too) fast/soon • are job hoppers/not loyal • are lazy/not hard-working |

Analysis of articles in the mainstream media and business magazines in Turkey confirms that the generational traits described in these media, as well as Evrim Kuran's understanding of Gen Y, do not differ dramatically from those in the United States. (see Table V-8.). The mainstream media and business magazines are less eager than Evrim Kuran to highlight the traits "parents and families are important for them" and "are good at multitasking". But besides these, it seems that Evrim Kuran's description of Gen Y does not differ much from the Turkish literature on Gen Y.

In sum, with respect to generational traits, the descriptions of Gen Y by Turkish business and mainstream media and by Evrim Kuran do not differ dramatically from the descriptions of Gen Y in the United States. In most publications in Turkish media and business magazines, Gen Y is mainly characterised by traits with positive connotations. The only exceptions are "job hoppers", "impatient" (e.g want to be promoted (too) fast/soon), and "professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them"; these traits are related to the distinctive features of overparenting or generally being 'spoiled'. This positive perspective on Gen Y is understandable. Up to this stage, only actors who speak in public and are mainly from the business world are analysed. Therefore, expressing directly negative opinions about a generation who include their employees and customers might be against their interests. Evrim Kuran and the Turkish media therefore emphasise positive (progressive) traits instead of negative

(spoiled) traits. However, as shown in the previous chapter, Gen Y traits have a dichotomous character which the audience can interpret as positive or negative.

Table V-8. Number of Gen Y articles in Turkish which refer to the traits at least once. Source: Author.

| | Mediacat (out of 69) | Kariyer.net (out of 36) | Capital (out of 66) | Hürriyet (out of 195) | Totals (out of 366) |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| are technologically adept | 11 | 11 | 14 | 41 | 77 |
| like flexibility | 6 | 18 | 13 | 34 | 71 |
| are innovative/creative | 10 | 13 | 14 | 27 | 64 |
| invest in themselves (education/training) | 3 | 13 | 14 | 25 | 55 |
| open minded (progressive, diversity, freedom) | 7 | 9 | 3 | 34 | 53 |
| are fast/go-getter /dynamic/fast learner | 6 | 10 | 15 | 17 | 48 |
| dislike hierarchy/question authority | 5 | 7 | 6 | 28 | 46 |
| have strong ecological/social sensibilities | 7 | 4 | 7 | 24 | 42 |
| value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty | 2 | 8 | 10 | 21 | 41 |
| want to have fun | 10 | 3 | 1 | 26 | 40 |
| are impatient/get bored easily | 6 | 3 | 6 | 23 | 38 |
| willing to take initiative / are autonomous/self-reliant | 1 | 10 | 9 | 16 | 36 |
| are job hoppers/not loyal | 1 | 8 | 4 | 22 | 35 |
| are globally mobile/like to travel | 5 | 7 | 5 | 16 | 33 |
| ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey | 2 | 7 | 4 | 20 | 33 |
| are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) | 1 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 32 |
| want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see result | 3 | 10 | 3 | 14 | 30 |
| prioritise work-life balance | 1 | 8 | 3 | 18 | 30 |
| love to be social/are extroverts | 6 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 27 |
| have (high) (over) self-esteem | 3 | 4 | 1 | 12 | 20 |
| want to feel appreciated (all the time) | 1 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 20 |
| dislike formality and bureaucracy | 0 | 7 | 2 | 10 | 19 |
| want to be promoted (too) fast/soon | 0 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 17 |
| want an entertaining work environment | 3 | 5 | 0 | 8 | 16 |
| questioning (everything) | 1 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 15 |
| have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 14 |
| are good team players | 1 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 12 |
| are ambitious/entitled | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 10 |
| like gamification | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 10 |
| professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers | 1 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 10 |
| parents/family are important for them | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 |
| are optimistic | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 |

V.D.2.3. Prescriptions and management concepts

As identified in the previous chapter, generational traits are nearly always followed by the authors' prescriptions and recommendations for older generations. This advice directly or indirectly refers to popular management practices and concepts. This is also the case in Evrim Kuran's book. In the sub-chapter "What are we to do with the new generation?" in Chapter V of her book, she gives the following advice to organisations and institutions (Kuran 2018, 113):¹⁰⁷

1. [Change your mindset] Detoxify thoughts: Get rid of old information even if it was useful in the past".
2. [Do not teach them, learn with them] "Cooperation: Set up models which you can learn together with them instead of educating them.
3. [Value Diversity] Diversity: Stop being monotypic; be open to diversities...the first step should be in the employment of staff. Get away from the principle "we employ only the graduates of such and such universities or only the ones with a high GPA. [Dislike formality] Then, cancel the dress codes. [Value freedom (of choice)] Respect different cultures and value freedom of choice.
4. [Want to have a purpose/want to have a meaning] Divine Purpose: Do not focus only on profit but on the purpose of your work; explain it to your employees.
5. [Mentoring/coaching] Psychological capital in a work climate: Change not only your buildings/offices but also your psychological climate [...] Employers should create an environment in which employees can become aware of their abilities. They should also support their employees when they cannot deal with ambiguities, and they should help them to see that they can overcome them.

These recommendations respond to stereotypical Gen Y traits, which in turn legitimise the recommendations - e.g., Gen Y don't like formality and prioritise their freedom, so employers should "cancel the dress codes"(Kuran 2018, 113–14). Hence, we can predict what kind of management concepts and practices she promotes based on her recommendations. For instance, she promotes coaching by saying "support them to deal with ambiguities" and reverse mentoring by advising to "not teach them, learn with them".

After these general recommendations, she also devotes a sub-chapter to reverse mentoring ("From an Apprentice to an Expert: Gen Y and reverse mentoring") and one to organisational storytelling ("Storytelling in the leadership of Gen Y").

Reverse mentoring is classified as a type of mentoring "defined as the pairing of a younger, junior employee acting as a mentor to share expertise with an older, senior colleague as the mentee"(W. M. Murphy 2012, 550). Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, is acknowledged for introducing a

¹⁰⁷ The sentences and phrases within brackets are my sentences and phrases. I formulated them for easy comprehension according to the Gen Y narrative codes from the previous chapter (see Table IV-11.).

formal reverse mentoring program in 1999 when he ordered 500 of his top managers to find young employees who could teach them about the Internet (Greengard 2002). Similarly, Kuran explains (2018, 119) reverse mentoring as “a young, new generation employee who has an entry-level job transfers his/her intuition about the new world of consumption and the new ways of working to an experienced manager from an older generation”; this management practice fits very well within the Gen Y discourse as it presupposes generational differences.

Though mentorship and coaching are common themes in Gen Y literature, none of the English texts on Gen Y analysed in the previous chapter (Twenge 2006; Twenge et al. 2010; Tulgan and Martin 2001; Tulgan 2016; Gallup Inc. 2016; Van den Bergh and Behrer 2016a; Howe and Strauss 2000; Universum 2017c; Pew Research Center 2010; PwC 2011; Deloitte 2016) promote “reverse mentoring”. There are, though, many articles in English written about generations and reverse mentoring (e.g., Jordan and Sorell 2019; Quast 2011; Greengard 2002), especially in business magazines. Similarly, of the Turkish articles on Gen Y that I analyse, 18 articles out of 366 mention reverse mentoring. So, promoting reverse mentoring in the Gen Y discourse is not something new or unique to Kuran. She (2018, 120) promotes reverse mentoring as a method for communication between generations, in which the younger generation can train the older generation, for example on the effective use of social media (which fits the typical Gen Y trait of ‘are technologically adept’). This is a common example from popular practitioner literature found in most of the discourse on Gen Y and reverse mentoring. Out of 18 articles on Gen Y in the Turkish mainstream media and business magazines that mention reverse mentoring, 11 state that Gen Y employees help their managers understand new trends, social media, and new technologies.¹⁰⁸

The term ‘storytelling’ has many different usages in business, such as organisational storytelling, business storytelling and corporate storytelling. Corporate storytelling can be broadly defined as “the purposeful and systematic application of story techniques in an organisation to deliver business outcomes” (Callahan et al. 2021). The term is used interchangeably for management and marketing purposes.¹⁰⁹ While the management use highlights the importance of stories within companies, and especially between managers and employees (e.g., Schawbel 2012), the marketing use of the term accentuates the importance of telling compelling stories to customers about products or services (e.g., Clerck 2014; Kappel 2018). Some companies offer consultancy and courses on storytelling - such as

¹⁰⁸ As these articles are mostly based on interviews with managers, this understanding of reverse mentoring also provides a first insight into what managers expect to learn from their younger employees – see Chapter VI.

¹⁰⁹ It is also important to distinguish between the practitioner management use of the term, and its use in academic research which focuses on the role of the narratives in organisations (e.g., N. Giroux and Marroquin 2005; Sole and Wilson 2002)

Storied or Storytelling Brand Strategy & Consulting, providing training on how to create good stories and how to use stories for marketing and management purposes (e.g., StoriedInc n.d.; Business of Story n.d.).

Corporate storytelling is not a particularly popular concept within the Gen Y discourse. None of the American writers I analysed mention storytelling as a prescription for Gen Y, though there are some articles on Gen Y and the importance of stories and storytelling in prominent English language business magazines such as Forbes (e.g., Giliberti 2016; Vogels 2019). In the Turkish Literature on Gen Y that I analyse, only two articles (Ayvaci 2017; Kurgu 2015) out of 366 refer to the importance of storytelling, both of them emphasising its importance in marketing to Gen Y. In contrast, Kuran highlights the importance of storytelling between employees and managers within companies, though clearly defining this. Kuran (2018, 123–25) suggests that today's business life is characterised by the bombardment of information; stories are very helpful tools to prevent employees from losing concentration while enabling them to easily comprehend messages. Thus, the importance of organisational storytelling is legitimised by the digital/internet era and the impatience/need for immediacy of Gen Y. Although Kuran devotes one sub-chapter to organisational storytelling, there are no references to organisational storytelling in her interviews in the mainstream media (e.g., Yağmur 2018; Arman 2014; 2013b; 2017; 2018; 2013c). Based on this, we can conclude that storytelling is not a dominant subject within the Gen Y discourse.

Explaining the expectations of Gen Y as a consumer (“what Gen Y ask from brands?”, Kuran (2018, 119) also promotes “employer branding”; “Care about your employer brand as much as you care about your consumer brands”. Employer branding describes a company's reputation as a place to work, as opposed to as a consumer brand. The ongoing company-employee relationship is conceptualised as a part of the company's image, and therefore part of the company's marketing activities (Ambler and Barrow 1996, 187). Employer branding is a common management concept promoted within the Gen Y discourse, especially common in multinational consultancy reports (e.g., PwC 2011; Universum 2017c; Gallup Inc. 2016) and business magazines and mainstream media in Turkey (e.g., Türsen 2015; Hürriyet 2018c; 2017; Başar and Özbiçakçı 2017; Sözer 2016; Karahasan 2017; Capital 2016; Kariyer.net 2017b). It is also notable that Universum, represented in Turkey by Evrim Kuran's consultancy company, specialises in employer branding. Universum regularly conducts surveys on employer branding on a global scale. Additionally, Evrim Kuran's company Dinamo (with the support of Universum) has organised the “People Make the Brand: Employer Branding Conference” every year since 2013 (PMB n.d.). Kuran explains the importance of this management concept, claiming that this generation is very civic-minded and expects companies to show consistency between the treatment of their employees and their brands' image (Kuran 2018, 118).

Kuran gives advice based on stereotypical Gen Y traits, indirectly legitimising other practices and concepts. She writes (2018, 126–28) that performance measurements should rely on Gen Y values such as “transparency” and “justice” and questions whether these evaluations satisfy Gen Y’s need for immediate and constant feedback. These identified traits and prescriptions legitimise practices such as coaching, mentoring and less hierarchical organisation structures.¹¹⁰ Overall, Kuran promotes more flexible and less formal organisations, with a special emphasis on “being fair”, “shared wisdom” and “solidarity”.

Kuran promotes “employer branding”, “reverse mentoring”, “corporate storytelling” and “flat organisations” (a less hierarchical structure with a less formal company culture). With the exception of organisational storytelling, these are all commonly promoted ideas within the Gen Y discourse; the management concepts promoted by Kuran (employer branding, flexible work, innovation, mentoring, and coaching) are not significantly different from those promoted by influential generation experts in the United States.

A greater diversity of management concepts can be found in articles on Gen Y in Turkish business magazines (Kariyer.net, Mediacat, Capital) and mainstream media (Hürriyet). This diversity includes recent management fashions such as “Industry 4.0” and “Digitalisation” (see Table V-9.). This also demonstrates the capacity and flexibility of the Gen Y discourse to promote many different management concepts and practices. The ambiguous character of the Gen Y discourse is not only a social lubricant eliminating tension between different points of view (H. Giroux 2006, 1230), but also serves to promote very different management concepts and practices within the same discourse.

Table V-9. Number of articles that refer at least once to one of the following management concepts. Source: Author.

| | Kariyer.net | Mediacat | Capital | Hürriyet | Totals |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Employer branding | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 8 |
| Industry 4.0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 11 |
| Corporate Social Responsibility | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 13 |
| Leadership | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 13 |
| Home office/Remote work | 3 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 14 |
| Reverse mentoring | 1 | 0 | 4 | 14 | 19 |
| Digitalisation | 3 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 23 |
| Sustainability | 5 | 3 | 13 | 9 | 30 |
| Innovation | 2 | 4 | 14 | 14 | 34 |
| Entrepreneurship/Start-up mindset | 3 | 3 | 6 | 22 | 34 |
| Mentorship/Coaching | 10 | 1 | 10 | 26 | 47 |
| Flexibility | 14 | 2 | 22 | 34 | 72 |
| Totals | 51 | 21 | 90 | 166 | 328 |

¹¹⁰ These management concepts (“employer branding” “organisational storytelling” and “reverse mentoring”) that she promotes as the best fit for Gen Y in the workplace are also part of the consultancy services that she provides through her companies (see Dinamo n.d.).

V.D.3. Conclusion

Like most Gen Y experts, Evrim Kuran is a management consultant who owns a consultancy company specialising in generational issues. Additionally, her consultancy company is a representative of Universum Global which regularly publishes research on Gen Y's perception of companies on a global scale. Unlike other Gen Y experts and management gurus, Kuran does not gain fame through a bestselling book on Generations, but mainly via her presence in mainstream media, especially in 2013 at the time of the Gezi protests. She publishes her first book on Generations in 2018, almost five years after the Gezi protests. The book examines five generations in Turkey. While she does portray the general outlook of Gen Y and writes about Gen Y's political and customer aspects in her book, she emphasises the employee dimension. The structure of her narrative (cut-off points, major distinctive features, generational traits, and prescriptions/advice), the rhetorical strategies used in her book (e.g., personal anecdotes, references to well-known companies, ambiguous choice of words), the way that the generation is described, the distinctive features which shape the generation's traits and the promoted management ideas are all very similar to those found in the Gen Y narrative in the United States.

Kuran describes Gen Y as a generation that asks for more recognition and equality in different parts of life. She characterises them as a tech-savvy, friendly, social, and civic-minded generation with a need for immediacy rooted in the digital era and the parenting style of their parents. These traits and the distinctive features they are rooted in do not differ significantly from the popular literature on Gen Y in the United States. She also mainly emphasises positive traits of the generation, presenting them to her audience as opportunities to learn from Gen Y; not only for more efficient communication but also to have a better and fairer world.

Analysis of the generational traits and theoretical references in her book also suggests that Evrim Kuran adopts Howe and Strauss's understanding of Gen Y, transposing it to Turkey with a focus on the employee dimension.

Analysis of articles on Gen Y in Turkish business magazines and mainstream media also supports the argument that both Evrim Kuran's narrative and the general Gen Y narrative in Turkey do not differ dramatically from that produced in the United States.

V.E. Conclusion

In the US, the Gen Y discourse is introduced and developed by several influential authors and consultants who are considered to be generation experts. In addition to these experts, multinational consultancy firms contribute and legitimise the discourse on Gen Y with the research and reports they publish on the subject. Bestselling books (by generation experts) published reports (by consultancy firms) and mainstream and business magazines disseminate and popularise the discourse. On the other hand, with the exception of Twenge,¹¹¹ academics writing on Gen Y have a limited influence on the construction of the Gen Y discourse (see section IV.B.4.).

In Turkey, we see similar actors in the construction and the translation of the Gen Y discourse. However, rather than several generation experts, only Evrim Kuran has a major influence on this discourse. And unlike in the United States, the discourse evolves in Turkey not through bestselling books but mainly through the presence of Evrim Kuran in the mainstream media, particularly during the Gezi protests. Despite the considerable number of academic articles on Gen Y, no academic figure has an important influence on the translation of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey. It is also not possible to find an influential group of people who identify themselves as Gen Y in Turkey.

My thematic analysis shows that the evolution of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey is similar but not identical to that in the United States. In the United States, Gen Y members are first mainly presented as consumers, with a later emphasis on the employee dimension. In the Turkish case, early articles on Gen Y highlight its consumer dimension but after a short while the employee dimension is introduced, and this then becomes dominant. However, with the unexpected Gezi protests, Gen Y starts to be described as an activist, and during and after the protests the term Gen Y gains significant popularity in Turkey due to the mainstream media's presentation of the protesters as Generation Y.

Nonetheless, this hype around the political use of Generation Y does not last long, and the employee dimension again dominates. An overview of publications in Turkey shows that the Gen Y discourse is still a current subject, mainly discussed as an employee in business-related fields.

Comparing the content of the Gen Y discourse in the United States and Turkey in generation experts' books, the discourses are remarkably similar with few significant differences:

a) The Gen Y narrative is composed of the presentation of the cut-off points, major distinctive features, generational traits, and prescriptions.

¹¹¹ In fact, Twenge gains her reputation with her bestselling books rather than her academic articles.

b) The rhetorical strategies employed in these books are nearly identical to those used in the management best sellers (e.g., personal anecdotes, references to well-known companies, ambiguous choice of words).

c) The description of the generation (the traits attributed to Gen Y)¹¹², for example, being spoiled and rebellious in a progressive way, is similar.

d) The solutions and promoted management concepts, and major distinctive features (the Internet Era, over-parenting, better education) that differentiate Gen Y are almost the same.

The Gen Y discourse in Turkey and the United States have a lot of common characteristics with management ideas, including the actors who produce them. This demonstrates that the Gen Y discourse does not change much either in context or content in translation from the US to Turkey.

The only peculiarity of the Turkish case is the use of the discourse by the mainstream media to explain a political phenomenon. The Gezi protests dramatically activated the discussions on Gen Y and spread the term beyond business circles to the rest of Turkey. Moreover, some actors which do not usually contribute to the Gen Y discourse, such as leftist groups or columnists writing on political issues, make comments on Gen Y during this time (although they do not have a long-lasting impact). This demonstrates how a discourse mainly produced by managerial accounts within business-related fields can go beyond these limits and be used in the political arena.¹¹³

Thus, in a politically repressive climate where self-censorship in the mainstream media becomes the norm, mainstream media uses the Gen Y discourse to explain the protests. By doing so, the mainstream media first attempts to move the focus of the news from “what they want” to “who they are”. This change of focus avoids contradicting the government, as the demands of the protesters are related to government policies. Secondly, as noted in chap IV, Gen Y is described with two major themes – rebellious and spoiled. This rebelliousness is never characterised as “radical”, “extreme” or

¹¹² However, here at this point I should highlight that Evrim Kuran emphasises the trait “the Gen Y care about their families and/or parents”, whereas this trait is not much present in the Turkish discourse around Gen Y in general.

¹¹³ Although it does not last long, we see that politicians continue to use generational discourse from time to time. For example, Erdoğan uses the term Generation Z in one of his statements. He says that generation Z do not know how bad the health system was before his government, and that we should tell them how Turkey was in the past (Cumhuriyet 2021). Similarly, it is possible to see generational references in politics in newspapers, e.g., “2023 strategy of AK Part has become clear! The target is Gen Z!” (Takvim 2020); “Student protests grow as Turkey’s young people turn against Erdoğan” (McKernan 2021); “Gen Z reply from CHP’s Özel to Erdoğan: They know the ones who build a palace for themselves” (Sözcü 2021).

“violent” but always as peaceful rebelliousness. This description of Gen Y therefore offers a safer and less political ground for the mainstream media to cover and explain the Gezi protests.¹¹⁴

This is not the first social movement to be covered by journalists and academics with generational terms. A review of the academic literature on generations shows that the most influential works in social theory (e.g., Wohl 1979; Mannheim 2011; Bonnin 2004) mainly describe generations as political actors. Within this literature, social movements like May 68 are usually considered as one of the major formative experiences for the self-identification of a generation. However, it is my contention that the generation labels which have become popular in the last decade such as Gen Y, Gen X, and Baby Boomers are more often described as consumers and employees than political actors. It is notable that while the Gezi protests are presented as the consequence of a gap between the expectations of the “new” generation and the “old” way of doing politics, Generation 68/May 68 is seen as a moment of generational identity formation. Therefore, other political uses of generation terms such as 68ers provide a limited example to compare with Gen Y and the Gezi protests. Nevertheless, this comparison provides another example of generation being used to understand and/or explain a political phenomenon, demonstrating how a discourse defined by business can provide a legitimate explanation for political events to the public.

Despite this political use of the Gen Y discourse in Turkey, it does not differ much in content from the discourse in the US. Though academic and popular articles characterising Gen Y as activist appear during the Gezi protests, their number decreases drastically within two years. The activist aspect of the Gen Y discourse, unique to Turkey, does not have a lasting influence.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the Gen Y discourse in Turkey, as is the case in the United States, does not share many of the characteristics of a scientific concept or a political or social group identity. Instead, the discourse, including the actors who produce them, has a lot of common characteristics with management discourses. Consequently, it can be affirmed that the Gen Y discourse in Turkey does not change much, either in terms of context or content, until it begins to be used in companies.

¹¹⁴In one of the first interviews on the Gezi Protests with Evrim Kuran, she was asked if this generation is apolitical. She answers “they are political in a different way” (Arman 2013a). Ironically, the discourse is actually used to explain a political event in a less political way due to the fears and concerns of the mainstream media.

CHAPTER VI. GENERATION Y AT WORK: THE CASE OF TURKEY

VI.A. Introduction: Translation of a Discourse to Work-related Practices

The Gen Y discourse consists of over-generalisations and overly broad and ambiguous claims with a lack of empirical proof. It is not a well-founded discourse in the scientific literature (II.A.), nor in the popular business literature (Chapter IV. and V.). However, from a constructivist perspective, what is implied by the Gen Y discourse to be true and/or right in one social context may be seen as false and/or wrong in another (for the epistemological position that I adopt, see section. II.B.).

The usefulness of a discourse does not depend solely on the accuracy of the arguments, but also on how these arguments are interrelated with the context and the actors within that context. There might be insufficient empirical data to prove that Gen Y is significantly different from other generations. It might not even be possible to methodologically distinguish generational effects from other types of effects, such as the age effect. This may mean that the concept of generations is of limited use in understanding or explaining the world. From a positivistic perspective, the idea of generation should be rejected. From a constructivist perspective, however, the question of (scientific) validity may remain unanswered, as the main focus is on how people perceive and instrumentalise the idea of generations.

In the previous chapters, I identify and focus on the Gen Y discourse in two different contexts. First, where it originated and gained its popularity - the US (Chapter IV.). Next, I examine the Turkish context, using articles on Gen Y in Turkish mainstream media and popular business magazines (Chapter V.). Chap IV and V rely on text-based data, such as bestselling books and magazine articles, and focus on the discursive and rhetorical aspects of the discourse. Drawing on Chiapello and Gilbert's (2013, 248–49) distinction,¹¹⁵ I analyse the Gen Y discourse in Chapters IV and V in its "circulant state"; its macro form which intervenes at large (e.g., national) scales. And in this chapter, I analyse the "registered state" of the discourse in its micro form, specific to a company and the company's internal context. It is a significantly different context, with different actors with different interests. In the

¹¹⁵ The distinction made by Chiapello and Gilbert (2013) on studies of what they call management tools (which can be extended to management discourses) is in line with my constructivist theoretical background (especially its epistemological assumptions) as it is founded on Foucault's distinction between "dispositifs de discipline" and "dispositifs de gouvernement" (Chiapello and Gilbert 2013, 248). It is a useful distinction which goes beyond the classical macro and micro division, as it is more able to highlight the relation between "macro" and "micro". As Chiapello and Gilbert (2013, 248) note, in organisation studies, critical and institutionalist approaches mostly focus on the circulant states whereas interactional approaches focus on the registered states (for a detailed explanation on how I integrate that distinction into my research, see Circulant state and registered state of a management idea under section II.B.3.).

circulant state, major actors (such as consultants) aim to develop the Gen Y discourse into products to sell, such as workshops, books and consultancies. Within the company (in its registered state), HR staff, managers, recent and long-standing employees, and older or young employees can become active players who (re)produce and shape the Gen Y discourse. These new actors may have different interests and positions from those in the circulant state. Changing contexts from the circulant to the registered state leads to questions of what is considered to be true, right, and useful within companies (as it may not be the same for every context and actor).

The Gen Y discourse is mainly produced for the business world and is usually presented as required knowledge for better management. Accordingly, companies provide an important field of research if the Gen Y discourse does serve any practical end, and the analysis of both the circulant and registered contexts is of particular importance.

In this chapter, I analyse how the actors in this new context relate to and instrumentalise the Gen Y discourse.

It is important to (re)position the Gen Y discourse among other management discourses (see also II.B.3.). The literature on management discourse mostly focuses on management strategies with more direct and concrete implications, such as TQM, Lean and QM. These strategies propose changes to organisational structures, new tools, and new techniques within companies. Literature on total quality management commonly suggests tools and techniques, such as failure mode and effects analysis, benchmarking, statistical process control, and the use of different diagrams (Dale, Dehe, and Bamford 2016, 181). The Gen Y discourse promotes different management concepts and practices, including changes to organisational structures, and the use of techniques such as reverse mentoring. However, these promoted practices are very diverse and are not necessarily related to each other. The link between the Gen Y discourse and its promoted practices is also more indirect and flexible than that between other management discourses (TQM, Lean, QM) and their practices.

Managerial practices suggested for Gen Y are conditional and indirectly promoted. It is suggested that Gen Y does not like hierarchical workplaces, so managers should develop fairer evaluation management practices. Experts and consultants on generations promote a wide variety of pre-existing managerial ideas and practices (e.g., reverse mentoring, employer branding and flat organisations) to prevent generational conflict within companies. The ambiguous and flexible nature of the discourse encourages this great diversity of managerial ideas and practices (see section IV.F.).

This chapter examines the role and use of the Gen Y discourse in companies in Turkey, with a focus on how employees relate to the discourse within companies, and the relationship between the Gen Y discourse and managerial practices.

The research data in this chapter are drawn from 26 in-depth interviews and two participant observations (for a systematic presentation of the data see section III.C.). Both participant observations are from workshops about the business world. The first is Cheryl Cran's workshop, "Gen Y in the business world". Cheryl Cran is a leadership expert and consultant. The second is Özgür Sav's online workshop, "Managing Gen Y and Z" organised by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry. Özgür Sav is a consultant and speaker. The selected interviewees are senior employees of companies which have invested into the Generation Y discourse in its most common forms (soft-skill training and consultancy) and/or research and claim that they have changed their management and HR strategies according to the needs of Gen Y.

Interviews are conducted with employees of MNCs in Turkey (MarketresearchCo1, CosmeticsCo, FMCGCo, FoodCo, TelecommunicationsCo, BankingCo, MarketresearchCo2) and large Turkish companies with strong ties with MNCs (MachineryCo, AutomotiveCo, BeveragesCo). Considering the expense, it is less likely that small companies with smaller budgets spend their money on Generation Y workshops or consultancies. Ercek (2006, 649) also confirms that it is mostly companies with higher budgets that participate in these workshops. In general, it tends to be larger and older manufacturing companies with developed ties to foreign capital that have enough time and resources to implement these ideas.

However, with a focus on the instrumentalisation of the Gen Y discourse within companies, my research also extends to several small and middle-size companies (ConstructionCo, BeddingCo, ConsultancyCo1, ConsultancyCo2, ConsultancyCo3, RealEstateCo). The HR manager of the ConstructionCo is very enthusiastic about the Gen Y, noting that the bosses of her companies do not give enough attention and resources to the subject. BeddingCo implements the Gen Y club, a social activity club, which receives some attention from the Turkish business media. Similarly, RealEstateCo's HR campaign is published in international and national business magazines, underlining the importance of real-estate preference to Gen Y.

My interviews are not limited to any industry or sector, as the discourse is broad and popular enough to cover nearly every industry. The interviewees work or have worked in many different industries, from consumer goods to construction companies (for further detail see Appendix C.). Ten of the interviewees work in HR related positions, and six of the interviewees work in marketing-related departments or consultancy companies. Four of them are from two multinational market research companies and the rest of the interviewees come from other fields (sales, after-sales, IT, and business journalism).

All of the interviewees work or have worked as white-collar workers, and they all have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, mostly from reputable public universities in Turkey. Twelve of the 26 interviewees are men and fourteen are women. The interviewees were born between 1955 and 1990.

This chapter is divided into two main sub-chapters: the interviewees' views on and the influence of Gen Y in their work-life, and management practices. In the first sub-chapter, I present an overview of the interviewees' opinions on generational categories, particularly Gen Y (VI.A.). This sub-chapter is built on all the interviews I have conducted.

The second sub-chapter (VI.B.) deals with four management practices that are particularly relevant for tracking how managerial practices are labelled, informed, and/or legitimised by the Gen Y discourse. The four management practices are identified and examined through the following case studies: workshops on in FMCGCo, TelecommunicationsCo, MachineryCo, CosmeticsCo, MarketresearchCo1, BavaragesCo (VI.C.1.), the social activity club in BeddingCo (VI.C.2.), the Gen Y Board, and reverse monitoring in FMCGCo (VI.C.3.).

VI.B. How Do Employees Relate to the Gen Y discourse?

Generation Y and generational differences receive extensive media coverage. Moreover, the discourse is constructed by managerial accounts and mainly emphasises the employee aspect of the generation. It is very unlikely that an employee, especially a white-collar worker in Turkey who works in a large company, has not heard of or read about Gen Y and generational differences.

Despite the abundance of articles published on generations, there are very few articles that question the existence of generational differences in the workplace (see section II.A.3.). Costanza et al. (2015) conducted a meta-analysis based on 19 surveys on this topic, concluding that "there is no meaningful difference among generations on the work-related variables". Despite the lack of scientific evidence, many people are convinced that generational differences exist.¹¹⁶ This is especially true of white-collar workers exposed to the Gen Y discourse in its various forms. My field research also confirms this. Seventeen of the twenty-six interviewees explicitly state that Gen Y is different from other generations. However, views of generational theories and generational differences are remarkably diverse and nuanced. It is necessary to go beyond the acceptance or rejection of generational categories, and closely examine how individuals reflect on generational categories and adapt them into their work life.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed and significant study on the use of the idea of generation in the work context see Foster (2013a).

In this sub-chapter, I examine how employees relate to the Gen Y discourse in the workplace. I focus on the narratives of my interviewees and the varying perceptions and uses of the terms “generations” and “Gen Y”.

A generation is generally defined as a “form of age group consisting of those members of a society who were born at approximately the same time”(John Scott and Marshall 2009). Birth years are the essential components of the idea of generation and provide the means to assign individuals to a generational group. However, there is no consensus about the cut-off points of Gen Y (see section IV.D.1.). The major authors of the field adopt modest positions, highlighting the inexact nature of defining generational cut-off points. There are different forms of semantic change¹¹⁷ to the term “Gen Y”. These semantic changes provide a focus to examine the use of the Gen Y discourse in companies in general, and particularly how employees relate to the Gen Y discourse at work.

Semantic changes to the term Gen Y can be tracked in two ways: firstly, through its interchangeable use and secondly, through identification and self-identification in the generational narrative. The interviewees, similarly, to most popular articles on Gen Y, use the term interchangeably with the terms “new employees”, “young employees”, “subordinates” and “inexperienced employees”. In this way, nearly any opinion or experience (especially in the workplace) about these qualifications can be related to the Gen Y discourse. These different terms can overlap (e.g., older generations being superior and younger generations subordinate); the interchangeable use of these terms is understandable as their meanings do not dramatically change in the workplace.

However, there are also cases in which these qualities do not overlap. At CosmeticsCo, a multinational cosmetics company, most of the employees (including management) are relatively young. Selin, the HR manager of the company, recalls that the idea of having training on Gen Y originated in the complaints of a 27-year-old team leader about his 25-year-old staff. This young manager said that he finds his 25-year-old colleagues “weird”. Despite the small age gap between the employees, and despite being members of the same generation, training on Gen Y is thought to be beneficial. The generations are perceived more as a matter of “newcomers vs. old-timers” or “managers vs. subordinates” rather than a qualifier of an age group.

In addition to these semantic shifts in the term Gen Y, there is also another significant shift that arises in the context of identification and/or self-identification with a generation. Although there is limited

¹¹⁷ Semantic shift or change is defined by *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* as follows: “Usually of change in the meanings of words. Types include extension or widening of meaning and restriction of meaning, ameliorative and pejorative changes; also figurative changes which involve a metaphor or some other of the traditional figures of speech” (Matthews 2014).

research on self-identification in generational cohorts, existing research (Lyons and Kuron 2013, 213) shows that those in the millennial age group are unlikely to identify themselves as Millennials or Gen Y. At the same time, we do not see any influential organisations whose members consist only of Gen Y, or organisations which claim to speak on behalf of this generation.

The generational identification and self-identification problems reported in interviews provide important insights into how the interviewees relate to Gen Y and the discourse built around it. Ece (marketing manager of CosmeticsCo) recalls a workshop in which Evrim Kuran tells her and the other young managers: “I listen and listen to you and cannot believe that you belong to Gen Y. You have got so used to working with Gen X that you are no longer members of Gen Y. You have become Gen X.” Cheryl Cran, the Gen Y expert, tells a conference on Gen Y in Turkey (2014) that she herself is a member of Gen X, despite feeling more like a member of Gen Y.

In the major texts on Gen Y (see Chapter IV.), the authors first define an age range for Gen Y/ Millennials. They then assign traits to that group on the assumption that people born at approximately the same time are shaped by similar events and conditions in a similar way. Being born in a specific time range is the cause of the generational traits described in the literature. However, the examples above demonstrate semantic change, and the term Gen Y refers primarily to a set of traits instead of an age range. This is observable, especially in the contexts where there is an identification or self-identification problem.

Born in 1987, Ece sees herself as a bridge between Gen Y and X, although she is considered a member of Gen Y due to her birth year. She makes a distinction between her private and work life in terms of generational identification:

I feel that I am in between Gen X and Y. During the workshop, I realised that my private life and work life are very different from each other. At work I have adapted myself to Gen X and I do not question much. But I do not treat my subordinates like them. So, I have transformed some of the Gen X traits. And I have not carried these Gen X traits into my private life.

For Ece, Gen Y is mostly about having clear borders between work and personal life and questioning the work and authority of her managers.

Aylin (business and customer process manager at TelecommunicationsCo) is considered as Gen Y due to her birth year (1984). However, she sees herself as a part of Gen X, using the term “our time/period” in relation to Gen X.

For example, I do not like fast and constant change like Gen Y. It is not something that I look for. Or the importance that Gen Y gives to the environment, society, etc. was not the same in our period. For instance, you see a group of people campaigning for the environment. This was not so popular in our time. Another example: in my time, working for a tobacco company was something prestigious, but now those companies have difficulties in finding young people from new generations to employ.

From Aylin's perspective, members of Gen Y are firstly characterised by their environmental sensibilities and need for immediate and constant change. When it comes to work attitudes and expectations of Gen Y, she mentions her subordinate, born in 1993:

I have a subordinate who was born in 1993 and I see him getting bored quite often. We don't get bored when doing operational tasks. If the task includes writing data manually or making observations, we do them. We don't say "ahhhh this is drudgery, donkey work". But when I ask a Gen Y to do such a task, they say "Isn't there another way to do it?". They try to avoid such tasks. When I see that they are bored, I try to turn those tasks into games most of the time.

Although she is within the same generational cohort as her subordinates, she attributes typical Gen Y traits to her younger subordinate: "they get bored easily", "they want to have fun", "want an entertaining work environment" and "they do not like to do repetitive tasks". She identifies herself with the work values attributed to Gen X.

Ömer, HR manager of ConstructionCo, provides an opposite case. She says that according to her birth year she belongs to Gen X, but her understanding of work is more similar to Gen Y: "For example, even when there was no talk of Gen Y and their traits, I never let anyone interfere with my one-hour lunch breaks. If I have a one-hour lunch break, it means it is my right to have that one hour". Ömer emphasises "the prioritisation of work-life balance" trait of Gen Y as a trait she has in common with Gen Y.

While Aylin, Ömer and Ece see their cases as exceptions, Didem (business development representative at ElectronicsCo) sees the incompatibility of generational belongings as demonstrating a lack of consistency in generational theories, giving it as the reason for her scepticism about them:

I don't think generations are very different from each other. While reading the general traits of Gen Y in an article, I thought I was reading about myself, although I was born in 1976, that is, although I am considered a part of Gen X. Traits attributed to Gen Y such as "they are spoiled by their families, therefore, they are demanding and they want to start from the best position" are not very different from the traits I have. I would also like to start from the best position. Therefore, I think it is a bit exaggerated, I mean this Gen Y issue: "how can we deal with Gen Y?", "Gen Y is this and that". I think it is exaggerated.

These examples of self-identification show how the understanding of generational labels such as X and Y is not limited to and not strictly defined by the birth years of its members. In the cases above,

Gen Y is regarded as a set of traits, instead of a birth cohort. Together with the interchangeable use of the term Gen Y, these traits can be grouped (see Table VI-1.) as the major dualities which the Gen Y discourse is built on.

Table VI-1. Main dualities within the Gen Y discourse in work context. Source: Author.

| | Gen Y | Gen X |
|---|--|--|
| Interchangeable uses of the term Gen Y | Youth | Old age |
| | Newcomer | Old-timer |
| | Inexperienced Employee | Experienced Employee |
| | Subordinates | Managers |
| Generational Traits | Disobedient (questioning) | Obedient |
| | Unable to withstand hardship/ Impatient/ Looking for fun (at work) | Hard worker/ Patient/ Serious and formal |
| | Open Minded/Flexible | Conservative/Strict |

These dualities are the main themes that my interviewees relate to in the Gen Y discourse. Stereotypes about generations and other dualities can also be the subject of the Gen Y discourse. Perceptions of Gen Y are not limited to an age group and can be used interchangeably with the terms “newcomers”, “youth in general” and “subordinates”, and with some generational traits such as “disobedient”, “impatient”, “open minded/flexible”, ¹¹⁸ and “looking for fun”.

Purhonen (2016a, 110) notes that “if there is no linkage of any kind between age and the concept of generation, there are hardly any reasons left to call this particular principle of classification a ‘generation’”. This is a valid argument within the scientific community. Yet, in the working life of white-collar workers, there are still reasons to recall generational categories, though they are not always linked to any particular age group. My interviewees’ issues with generational identification and self-identification indicate that generational categories can also be perceived as a set of traits (mostly related to work) instead of an age group. Parallel to Foster’s (2013a, 212) argument, employees use generational distinctions and discourses to differentiate their approach to work and work-related values from others’.

Most of the interviewees take one or two major traits of Gen Y and position themselves somewhere in the generational discourse based on their perception of work and work values. Thus, age (or birth

¹¹⁸ Mannheim (1972, 298^1) writes about the dichotomy of “progressive youth” and “conservative elders”: “It must be emphasised that this ‘ability to start afresh’ of which we are speaking has nothing to do with ‘conservative’ and ‘progressive’ in the usual sense of these terms. Nothing is more false than the usual assumption uncritically shared by most students of generations, that the younger generation is ‘progressive’ and the older generation *eo ipso* conservative. Recent experiences have shown well enough that the old liberal generation tends to be more politically progressive than certain sections of the youth (e.g., the German Students’ Associations, etc.”. This quotation by the founder of generational sociology reminds us that the presumption of younger generations being more progressive than older ones is deeply embedded in widely held beliefs.

year), the key element of the concept of generation as a scholarly concept, might have a secondary importance. The key elements of a concept might change when its context changes.

Employee narratives built around Gen Y provide employees with a way to differentiate their work from others'. In this way, they can interpret attitudes to work that they may not fully understand or feel comfortable with. The Gen Y discourse provides quick answers to questions like "why don't the newcomers work without questioning and complaining, as I did when I was a new employee?" or "why is my manager so interested in what I wear?". But more importantly, work traits selectively attributed to a generation (such as being obedient/disobedient or giving more/less importance to "work-life balance") match with employees' personal work experiences, adding credibility to the concept among employees.

Approaches to generational categories are remarkably diverse and nuanced (see Table VI-2.). Some interviewees criticise the generational distinctions. Other interviewees criticise the generational categories but assign Gen Y traits described in the literature to "newcomers". It is very difficult to standardise these views on generational categories without changing their content dramatically.

Despite all these limitations, Table VI-3. shows a broad view of the traits most attributed to Gen Y by the interviewees (in a binarized form). These traits are the same as those found in the popular Gen Y literature, both in English and Turkish. Additionally, these traits have the same dichotomous aspect as the popular literature on Gen Y, enabling the interpretation of these traits as both positive and negative (see section IV.E.1. Rhetorical aspects of generational traits). This finding is consistent with Williams (2019, 385); opinions of Millennials (Gen Y) emerge as "part work-problem and part work-hero", indicating a similar dichotomous view.

The traits referring to Gen Y's relations with their managers (see Table VI-3.), classified as "open-minded/progressive", are more prominent (e.g., ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey; dislike hierarchy/question authority; have unrealistic or high expectations) than other groups of traits (Fun/Friendly, Immediacy).

Moreover, the interviewees assign more negative traits to Gen Y than is typically found in the literature on Gen Y (see Chapters IV. and V.). The older managers interviewed (who do not work in HR) may have felt freer to express their negative opinions of young employees, while consultants and experts on generations claim to have a mediator role between generations. It is also likely that people

are more careful when they give talks and interviews or publish articles in the public sphere than when interviewed by a PhD candidate.¹¹⁹

Table VI-2. Views of interviewees on generational theories, Gen Y, and their self-identification with generations. Source: Author.

| Alias/ Birth Year/ Gender | Views on generational theories and Gen Y | Self-Identification with generations | Position/ Rank/ Title | Company |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------------|
| Tolga 1978 M | A relatively critical point of view on Gen Y and generational theories. | He does not explicitly mention which generation he belongs to, but acknowledges some differences between his personal attitudes (from the years that he was a new employee) and Gen Y attitudes | Human Resources Director, Turkey at BeveragesCo | BeveragesCo (9 years) |
| Sezgin 1955 M | Disagrees with generational and age differences (He does not think that there is a dramatic difference between generations; has a very sceptical position) | No identification | Co-founder / Consultant | ConsultancyCo1 (12 years) |
| Yildirim 1980 M | Rejection of work-related generational theories (based on the similarities between stereotypes on newcomers/ old-timers and Gen X/ Gen Y) | No identification | Assistant Professor | Private University (5 years) |
| Can 1976 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly negative feelings on Gen Y | He does not explicitly identify himself with Gen X, but distinguishes himself from the next generation based on their extensive use of social media | Country Marketing Director and Football Category GM | SportsCo (12 years) |
| Ece 1985 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. | Between Gen Y and Gen X | Group Product Manager | CosmeticsCo (8 years) |
| Naira 1985 F | Slightly negative feelings on Gen Y (but she mostly refers to “newcomers” as Gen Y) | She uses the distinction of new generations/old generations, and considers herself among the old generation | After Sales Support Specialist | TelecommunicationsCo (5 years) |
| Tuba 1987 F | Sceptical view on generational theories: a useful concept for the business world but has manipulative aspects too | No identification | Insight Partner | MarketresearchCo2 (7 years) |

¹¹⁹I tried to avoid explicitly asking interviewees whether they identify themselves with a generational cohort and whether they like Gen Y or not. When such questions on Gen Y are asked explicitly, interviewees tend to refer to the popular literature rather than their own experiences and opinions.

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Burcu 1969 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly positive feelings | She does not explicitly identify herself with Baby Boomers, but distinguishes herself from Generation Y | Learning and Development Consultant (Formerly) HR Manager | MachineryCo (22 years) |
| Ceren 1975 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly negative feelings | She does not explicitly identify herself with a generation, but distinguishes herself from Gen Y | Manager, Consumer Products & Services Practice Staffing and Recruiting | ConsultancyCo2 (6 years) |
| Gülsene m 1969 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. First negative, then positive feelings. Appreciates as a concept | Gen X (1969) | Qualitative Group Manager | MarketresearchCo1 (7 years) |
| Cefagül 1976 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations, but only mentions it in relation to job-hopping | She does not explicitly identify herself with any generation. | HR Business Partner | AutomotiveCo (4 years) |
| Didem 1976 F | Rejection of generational theories. Sees them as a product made by consultants to sell to companies. | Gen Y (although she rejects generational theories, she thinks her traits are more like Gen Y than Gen X) | Business Development Representative | ElectronicsCo (4 years) |
| Ömer 1971 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Agrees with Gen Y Literature. Positive feelings | Gen X (1971) as a birth cohort but sees herself more as Gen Y | HR Manager | ConstructionCo (2 years) |
| Onat 1986 M | Rejects generational theories, especially in the work context, and believes that everyone is unique and should be treated accordingly | No identification | Founder and CEO | RealEstateCo (1 year) |
| Hakan 1982 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Agrees with Gen Y Lit. Positive feelings | Gen Y | Co-Founder & General Manager - FinTechCo (Formerly) HR & Quality Systems Manager | FinTechCo (1 year) BeddingCo |
| Nebahat 1956 F | Sceptical view on generational theories. Rejects the idea that the needs and expectations of employees differ according to generations. | No identification | Founder/ Consultant | ConsultancyCo3 (8 years) |
| Ayşe 1972 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Negative feelings | Gen X | Director of Custom Research | MarketresearchCO1 (13 years) |
| Gözde 1965 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations (but using different generational labels). Negative feelings | She identifies herself as the yuppie generation; the generation before Gen Y | Adjunct Lecturer | Private University (3 years) |
| Selin 1985 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Positive feelings | Gen Y | Senior HR Generalist | CosmeticsCo (5 years) |
| Harun 1982 M | Rejection of generational theories. | No identification | HRIS Specialist | AutomotiveCo (5 years) |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------------|
| Özgür 1978 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Neutral feelings | Gen X | Senior Research Manager | MarketresearchCO1 (6 years) |
| Aylin 1984 F | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly negative feelings | Gen Y as a birth cohort but sees herself more as Gen X | Business & Customer Process Manager | TelecommunicationsCo (2 years) |
| Barış 1977 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly negative feelings | Does not explicitly identify himself with Gen X, but distinguishes himself from Gen Y | Corporate Communication and Marketing Manager + Freelance consultant | ITconsultingCo (4 years) |
| Anthony 1968 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Positive feelings | Does not explicitly identify himself with any generational label, but distinguishes himself from Gen Y | VP HR manager | FMCGCo (13 years) |
| Muzaffer 1990 M | Acknowledges the differences between Gen Y and other generations. Slightly positive feelings | Gen Y | Digital Marketing Specialist | BeddingCo (5 years) |
| Sayat 1981 M | Slightly sceptical view on generational theories but at the same time acknowledges some differences between Gen Y and other generations. | He does not explicitly identify himself as Gen Y | News reporter in HR supplement | Mainstream Newspaper (7 years) |

Table VI-3. Gen Y traits most frequently mentioned by interviewees. Source: Author.

| Generational Traits | Totals |
|--|---------------|
| ask for reciprocity/don't easily obey | 18 |
| are impatient/get bored easily | 16 |
| dislike hierarchy/question authority | 15 |
| have (unrealistic)/(high) expectations | 14 |
| want to have fun | 13 |
| professional & personal life distinction is blurry for them/expect parenting from managers | 13 |
| want to have an impact and meaningful work/make a difference/see result | 12 |
| innovative/creative | 12 |
| want to feel appreciated (all the time) | 11 |
| are technologically adept | 11 |
| dislike formality and bureaucracy | 11 |
| have (high) (over) self-esteem | 10 |
| are fast /go-getter/dynamic/fast learner | 10 |
| want to be promoted (too) fast/soon | 10 |
| value (too much) directness/transparency/honesty | 9 |
| questioning (everything) | 9 |
| want an entertaining work environment | 9 |
| not ambitious/not hard worker | 8 |
| love to be social/ are extroverts | 8 |
| are job hoppers/not loyal | 8 |
| are ambitious/entitled | 7 |
| invest in themselves (education/training) | 7 |
| like flexibility | 7 |

| | |
|--|---|
| have strong ecological/social sensibilities | 6 |
| open-minded (progressive, likes diversity, freedom) | 6 |
| prioritise work-life balance | 5 |
| are globally mobile/like to travel | 5 |
| like customisation | 5 |
| are reward driven (want immediate and constant feedback) | 4 |
| like gamification | 4 |
| willing to take initiative/are autonomous/self-reliant | 4 |
| parents/family are important to them | 1 |

VI.C. Translation of the Gen Y Discourse to Management Practices

Although one of the recommendations from the Gen Y discourse to redesign the workplace according to the expectations of Gen Y, there are few formal management practices¹²⁰ explicitly aimed at Gen Y. Most management practices aimed at young employees (such as leisure activities and MT programs) are portrayed as practices for Gen Y. One of the most common practices is workshops on Gen Y. Workshops establish the first in-person connection between consultants on generations and the employees of companies. Otherwise, it is hard to find common management practices which explicitly refer to Gen Y.

I examined articles on Gen Y in the Turkish practitioner literature to find potential cases (some of these articles are published as a part of companies PR activities)¹²¹. I contacted the companies mentioned in these articles via professional networking platforms. I conducted in-depth interviews with companies that responded and formed the following cases. I examined four different management practices labelled and/or informed by the Gen Y discourse: workshops on Gen Y, the Gen Y social activity club in BeddingCo, and reverse mentoring and the Gen Y Board in FMCGCo.

The first practice is workshops on Gen Y. On a formal level, workshops are one of the most common ways that employees encounter the term Gen Y and the discourse built around it, especially in large companies which can afford such soft-skills training. The second management practice is the Gen Y social activity club at BeddingCo. Rather than just one management practice, it is a social activity club accommodating several practices. The third and fourth management practices are the Gen Y Board and reverse mentoring, both of which are implemented in the same MNC company, FMCGCo.

¹²⁰ I rely on the distinction between work-related practices and management practices. Work-related practices include formal and informal practices and can be performed by all employees, from managers to interns. They may be written or oral and extend from a formal document to small talks. Management practices refer to all formal and quasi formal practices, usually held or organised by the HR department.

¹²¹ The magazines that I analysed do not provide any information about whether the articles are based on a PR bulletin or PR campaign; this can be surmised from the content of the articles, though not with complete certainty.

VI.C.1. Workshops on Gen Y

Workshops provide a more structured narrative on Gen Y and provide a better way to track the use of the term in the workplace, compared to examining the influence of the abundant number of articles about Gen Y on employees. I conducted interviews with 11 employees who attended workshops on Generations. All but one work in MNCs (TelecommunicationsCo, AutomotiveCo, CosmeticsCo, MarketresearchCo1, BeveragesCo, and FMCGCo), and only one works in a large Turkish company with strong ties with foreign capital (MachineryCo). They all have managerial positions in their companies. Additionally, I interviewed two freelance trainers interested in generational issues who plan to give workshops on Gen Y.

Workshops on Gen Y and generations are mostly considered as a part of soft-skills training. Cambridge Business English Dictionary (2023) defines soft skills as “people’s abilities to communicate with each other and work well together” while Collins English Dictionary (n.d.) defines it as “desirable qualities for certain forms of employment that do not depend on acquired knowledge: they include common sense, the ability to deal with people, and a positive flexible attitude”. In the organisational context, soft skills training is presented as the opposite of hard skills or technical training. Technical training is mostly concerned with the content of the work and requires more expertise than soft skills training. Soft skills training is mostly concerned with general topics and trends, and is usually given in the form of conferences, talks and workshops. Soft skills training includes workshops on topics such as “Gen Y”, “leadership skills”, “innovation”, “communication skills”, “coaching styles”, and “leadership”. Based on a survey conducted by Arthur Andersen (2000), Aycan (2006, 174) identifies the most popular training topics as “effective teamwork and communication” and “leadership and project management”, adding that training is one of the most important responsibilities of HRM departments in Turkey.

While technical training has a direct impact on work, the main aim of soft skills training is to give trainees a “new vision” which is supposed to have a long-term effect on their professional lives. Ece’s (product manager at CosmeticsCo) explanation of the impact of these workshops on her work-life balance is in line with this view:

These soft-skills workshops are not things that change your life from one day to the next. They do not contribute directly to the effectiveness of the employee or the company. However, we work in such a busy and stressful work environment under such time constraints that we do not think about what we do and why we do it. Although I cannot say that these workshops have given me a new and wonderful vision, it is a fact that they have enabled me to think about what I do and why I do it. They have helped me to develop self-awareness of the things that I should have thought of before.

Aylin (service design manager at TelecommunicationsCo) also states that soft-skills workshops do not have an instant impact. People see the impact of these workshops in time and with more experience. She also emphasises that with the stress and heavy workload, she does not have time to listen and understand her subordinates, but these kinds of workshops help her to take a moment to reflect on these issues.

As the Gen Y discourse does not directly promote particular technical practices, but instead presents knowledge to manage young employees effectively and adapt the workplace to the future, it is reasonable to define workshops on Gen Y as soft-skills training instead of technical. This supports the idea that unlike other management discourses such as TQM and QC, the Gen Y discourse does not require or promote technical and precise changes in the companies. The link between managerial practices and the Gen Y discourse is indirect and flexible.

Moreover, the assumptions presented in Gen Y workshops can often be found in other soft skills workshops, especially those related to leadership, coaching, and mentoring, as they focus on superior-subordinate relations.

To examine how the Gen Y discourse is translated into soft-skills training, I first briefly present two workshops that I have participated in and explore the major claims of these workshops, drawing on the findings in Chap IV.

The first workshop is Cheryl Cran's conference, "Gen Y in the business world" held in a five-star hotel in Istanbul on 29.01.2014. Most of the attendees are managers and HR specialists working in big companies in Turkey. The workshop with simultaneous translation is organised by the professional training and coaching company, PDR Group. In its promotional bulletin for the conference (PDR Group 2014), they present Cheryl Cran and the content of the training as such:

In the workshop 'Gen Y in Business World', Cheryl Cran, whose books have broken sales records, will present employee retention strategies for Gen Y and motivational leadership strategies for department managers who work with Gen Y. She will also share some of her significant practices and examples in the international field.

Cran's presentation mainly highlights the importance of being open-minded and flexible when working with Gen Y, and it is presented as the most effective way to have happy and innovative employees.

At the beginning of her presentation, she demonstrates the importance of the subject with demographic statistics and projections, such as “Gen Y consists of % of the World population” and “in ten years’ time % of the company managers will belong to Gen Y”.

She also requires the active participation of attendees. She divides the attendees into smaller groups and asks them to write down the following three questions related to ways of working with Gen Y, and discuss these questions amongst themselves:

1) Whenever there is a problem, your Gen Y employee goes and talks to the boss, not you. What would you do as a manager?

2) A Gen Y employee asks for promotion after three months. What would you do?

3) A Gen Y employee works well and does a great job but is always late to work. What would you do?

The first question assumes that Gen Y do not acknowledge the hierarchical structure of the company, the second question assumes that Gen Y are impatient and want to be promoted too fast and too soon, and the third question assumes that Gen Y are not punctual and (therefore) require flexible working hours. The traits attributed to Gen Y and the strategy to present these traits are nearly identical to those found in books by generation experts (see, e.g., section V.D.2.).

The second workshop is organised by the Istanbul Chamber of Industry and held online free of charge on 02.11.2020. The speaker Umut Sav is a consultant, speaker and educator. The aim of the workshop does not differ much from Cran`s:

The first aim of the workshop is to enable the attendees to develop the leadership skills necessary to retain Gen Y and Z employees, whose working styles and habits are different from previous generations’. The second aim is to provide the necessary information to the attendees to establish the right communication with Gen Y and Z in an interactive environment. (ISO Akademi 2020)

Both workshops emphasise that new generations are different from previous ones, necessitating the development of appropriate leadership and communication skills to retain them.

Cran and Sav both promote their workshops to managers as necessary knowledge for the retention of Gen Y and Z employees. Working on the assumption that managers from older generations are different from Gen Y and Z employees, they both claim that this leads to generational conflicts which cause increased turnover rates among young employees. Both imply that the difficulties of retaining young employees are mainly due to generational conflicts, ignoring other possible factors such as poor working conditions and low wages. All possible conflicts between old and young people, newcomers

and old-timers, and managers and subordinates are presented as generational conflicts, although these conflicts may not necessarily be due to generational differences.

Additionally, by mostly giving these workshops to managers, both Cran and Sav imply that high turnover rates and low satisfaction levels among young employees are due to different perspectives and communication problems between young and old generations; older generations do not understand younger generations and do not know how to communicate with them.

Although Sav's training includes Gen Z, it is remarkably similar in content to Cran's training. They both use rhetorical strategies typical of management gurus and consultants. Gurus legitimise their stories by either making themselves or another authority figure the central character. This means that the events depicted are experienced by someone of significance (Clark, Bhatanacharoen, and Greatbatch 2015, 237–38). Cran and Sav make use of similar rhetorical strategies, such as storytelling and making themselves the central character of these stories. Both of them utilise their personal stories and give examples from their parents and children to illustrate generational differences.

Cran and Sav also illustrate their arguments with examples from well-known companies (Cran refers to Apple and Starbucks, Sav refers to Hugo Boss and Turkish arms industries) as “best practices” to support their claims. This is consistent with Kieser's observations (1997); presenting best practices from famous companies is a very common strategy for consultants and gurus. In this respect, best practices are often encapsulated in gurus' promises, strengthening their arguments.

However, unlike Cran, Sav mentions Howe and Strauss a couple of times and recommends two books by Evrim Kuran on generational issues.

Overall, these two workshops do not differ much from the Gen Y discourse and related narratives analysed in Chapters IV and V. In both workshops, the internet era and overparenting are identified as major causes of the differences between Gen Y (and Z) and previous generations. The way Cran and Sav describe Gen Y is also remarkably similar and in parallel to the popular literature on Gen Y. They both first emphasise the traits perceived as negative, such as being impatient, tech addict, not loyal, not hard working, and a dislike of hierarchy and formality. Then, they show the positive sides of these traits, such as being fast, technologically adept, innovative, flexible, questioning, fun, and open to diversity. Cran and Sav often illustrate these traits by comparing Gen Y (and Z) to themselves (who are older than these generations) in work life (e.g., how they used to work hard until late hours at night, how they obeyed their managers). They both imply that this generation is spoiled and/or progressive and note that these distinct traits are likely to cause conflict.

To avoid conflict, they advise managers to be more understanding, open to communication and more flexible towards their subordinates. This is presented as more than a suggestion. They imply that this young generation will take older generations' positions/status (as they get older) and that they represent the future. Therefore, while the form of the messages/implications looks like a suggestion, the content seems more like a threat: managers must adapt yourselves to this young generation.

Gen Y workshops sell knowledge on Gen Y in the work context to companies (mainly to managers and HR personnel); it is sold as the key to reducing turnover rates among young employees, increasing their satisfaction, and increasing employees' innovation and creativity. The outcomes promised by these workshops also imply an increase in the control that managers and HR departments have over new/young employees.¹²² However, the promises of these workshops may not always overlap with their adoption in work life. These promises are interrelated with various assumptions that enable the Gen Y discourse to have different purposes and functions from those promised.

The decision to order training sessions on generational issues is usually made by HR departments. HR managers tell me that employee turnover rates have increased worldwide, a growing problem for companies which cannot retain the staff they have invested in with costly training and other educational activities. The argument that "losing them due to wrong management caused by generational differences is costly" justifies the use of soft-skills training on Gen Y. Employers see the high costs of "wrong management" and order these workshops. In fact, this argument is a general one and is applicable to nearly any type of soft skills training in any work context. This necessitates a closer examination of how the decision to order training on Gen Y is justified within companies.

Tolga, HR manager at BeveragesCo, says that he came across the term "Gen Y" about 6-7 years ago in business magazines. Since then, he has gradually observed indicators within the company in agreement with the claims of the Gen Y discourse. He adds that they have also started to see discontent among young employees in employee satisfaction surveys and exit employee interviews. He explains this discontent by generational differences and managers' lack of understanding towards young employees:

¹²² A very similar observation is made by Reed and Thomas (2020) in their case study in which they adopt a Foucauldian approach on the training on generation within companies. They suggest (2020, 13) that generations are conceptualised as "radically different" cohorts that need to be managed accordingly. Hence, these trainings provide the 'objective' knowledge of managing these cohorts to the HR personnel and managers.

Most of the sales department managers in the company are part of Gen X, and the sales representatives are part of Gen Y. The staff from Gen Y have different expectations of work from previous generations and these differences cause discontent among both generations. When managers do not understand their employees' motivations, worldview, etc., they compare them with themselves and conclude that they were not like them when they were at their age (thinking they were different in a better sense) and feel discontented about their employees' work and/or attitude.

He exemplifies these generational differences with the changing dress code policy of the company:

Wearing suits was obligatory and there was no permission to have a beard. Because I was promoted in a short time, I have been able to observe staff closely at all levels. For example, the dress code was an issue which caused unease and discomfort among employees, especially the young employees. They did not want to wear suits. At first, all the managers said "no" to this demand. But then some of them said "yeah, why not?" and wanted to change the dress code. Gradually, dynamics in the company started to change. But the top management continued to object to it despite the increasing discontent of the young employees. Then, a new CEO was appointed from Europe. He cancelled the dress code. It pleased almost all the employees. Now there is no dress code, but I cannot say that the old traditional Turkish managers are happy with it.

The traits "dislike formality" and "like flexibility" attributed to Gen Y in the popular business literature - are translated to the case of BeveragesCo. New employees prefer casual clothing while older (or "traditional") managers prefer formal attire. According to Tolga, this difference is not limited to the preference of clothing but is also a question of perception of organisational hierarchies. It reflects the limits of the power of managers over their subordinates. Tolga compares the power of managers in the past and at present:

The old generations 15-20 years ago were like soldiers. For example, they tell stories about an Ankara sales manager of the time. He sits in his office all day even after regular work hours and nobody can leave and go home until he leaves. Sometimes he has retailers in his office, and they play backgammon and drink whisky until 11.00 pm and all the employees who work under his management have to wait until he leaves. Of course, this was 15-20 years ago. Employees who had just started work in those years are now sales managers, etc. Of course, now nobody, no manager does such things or behaves like that, but from time to time they remember the old days and their experiences with their managers.

Anthony, the former HR manager of FMCGCo, also points to the changing expectations of young employees and conservative attitudes of older managers towards change as the reasons for the discontent of young employees in the finance department:

We had a big problem within our finance function. In the finance leadership team, we had a lot of people leaving that department because the younger generation was saying basically, you know, the job doesn't suit me. So, they were coming in now and having to do a lot of number crunching for their first year. And they were getting bored and didn't see the point and didn't see how it was contributing to their career. Yet the finance directors were saying: `look, this is how you do it. This is basically...you need to do this. This is how I learned it and how I got to my position. And you can't be a good finance professional without doing your apprenticeship.

Burcu, the former HR manager at MachineryCo. She explains the need for knowledge of Gen Y in companies based on the differences of Gen Y from the older generations. She views these generational differences as a problem, and she formulates this problem as a question of strict management:

Imagine that a recently graduated young employee who is more familiar with technology and has more technological competence than the manager starts work, and the sullen manager tells him to work in the way he asks him to because it is how things work at that company. We worked with such managers under strict rules, having almost no initiative. But at present, the level of development is very different, not only in Turkey but all over the world. Therefore, it is important to manage a department/company by letting the employees have more initiative, listening to them, and involving them more in the work.

Burcu gives an example to emphasise the generational differences she has experienced personally. A young and brilliant employee at her company wants to quit and Burcu tries to convince her not to. She wants to quit because she expects to be promoted immediately and become a manager, despite not having enough experience. As Burcu tries to convince her, the employee says things that make Burcu angry, but she manages to stay calm. After one or two meetings with her, she decides to stay, and work at different posts. At present, she still works at the same company.

Burcu explains the change of her personal attitude toward Gen Y with the example of the first meeting she has with that employee, in which she gets angry. She defines it as a turning point in her career as a manager. After returning home after the meeting, she thinks about the situation and concludes that she got angry because of the generational differences; the differences between Gen Y and her own generation (Baby Boomer):

You should not be angry. Your own generation does not have only positive traits but also some negative traits compared to their generation. A different generation is coming. Tomorrow you will not be here, but they will. Therefore, you should be patient and learn to manage them. Since then, in similar situations I have always approached the young employees with this viewpoint and recommend it to all managers who complain about Gen Y employees. I tell them that they cannot manage Gen Y by ignoring or shouting at them. You should understand them. The time you grew up is so different from the time they grew up. Therefore, you cannot expect them to have the same expectations you have.

Selin, HR manager of CosmeticsCo (who identifies herself as a part of Gen Y), also underlines the differences between her generation and the previous ones. She defines the employees of the previous generation as “yes-men”. She states that Gen Y has more expectations of mutual respect and interest between managers and subordinates. According to her, these expectations can be seen as a lack of devotion to the company by older generations, but she sees them as a question of being an individual and asking for reciprocity.

The HR managers of BeveragesCo, FMCGCo, MachineryCo and CosmeticsCo – Tolga, Anthony, Burcu and Selin,¹²³ identify generational differences as the source of conflict between managers and employees. To solve this conflict, they underline the responsibility of managers (from previous generations) instead of young employees. This is an argument in line with the observations of Isikli (2016, 113) on the new management approach and generational discourse. According to her, “the duality is created by the definition of newcomers, namely ‘Generation Y’. Employees in the new era are defined as rule breaking and not loyal to the old values. They are forcing out old-fashioned managers who are used to working within a hierarchy”.

Burcu legitimises this argument with the premise that in the near future, young generations will occupy the majority of the places that older generations occupy now (“Tomorrow you will not be here, but they will”). This reference to the future and the unavoidable change which comes with new generations is consistent with the major assumption of the Gen Y discourse (see section IV.F.): The changes and conflicts which come with the entry of Gen Y to the workforce are the exigencies of the future.

Similarly, Tolga considers workshops and practices on Gen Y as a pretext to make changes in the company according to the necessities of the future. He points out that visionary company management see that Gen Y will continue to join their companies. He adds that “at the same time they are our consumers and will continue to be our consumers. In the future, after Gen Y, other

¹²³ Drawing on the popular generation literature, they are all from different generations: Tolga is from Gen X, Selin is from Gen Y, Burcu and Anthony are Baby Boomers

generations will come, and they will require changes as well. Now, the code name is 'understand Gen Y' or 'new era leadership' or 'this and that', whatever the code name is, the important thing is that Generation Y is not happy with the present company culture. So, there is a need for change. If they were happy with it, there would be no need for change. So, it is actually an excuse for change".¹²⁴

At MarketresearchCo1 (a multinational market research and consultancy company), generational conflicts are brought to the agenda of HR personnel through the conflicts experienced by managers and their subordinates in their work relationships. Ayşe (born in 1972), director of the custom research department, gives examples of superior-subordinate conflict. She has encountered some difficulties in working with her young employees. She mentions that the major difficulty she faces in her relationship with subordinates is that they expect her to be tolerant and helpful as if she was their parent, and they always question everything all the time instead of working hard like she does. She begins to search on the internet and finds literature on Gen Y and workshops offered by Evrim Kuran. She asks the HR department to research such workshops. In Ayşe's own words, "the HR department at that time used to approach young employees in naively positive ways, such as considering them and their different attitudes as 'fantastic' or 'fun'". After two years, the HR department is convinced that these trainings would be beneficial for the company and sends Ayşe and Özgür to one of Evrim Kuran's Gen Y workshops. After receiving training on Gen Y, they make presentations on the topic to the other managers in the company.

During the interview, conducted after she has received training on Gen Y, Ayşe continues to express her negative views of Gen Y and criticises the positive views of the HR department towards them. She expresses her negative views of young employees in a sarcastic way. Her colleague Özgür (senior research manager in the same company) reminds Ayşe of her reaction in the first Gen Y workshop they participate in together: "Remember, in the first training session you said 'I cannot be concerned with anyone so much and spend my time on them. If I can carry out the duties myself, so can they. And they should'".

During the same interview, Özgür presented himself as a more understanding manager towards Gen Y than Ayşe. But he also admits that for a very long time, even after these workshops, managers who belong to Gen X would tolerate Gen Y rather than appreciating them. This attitude of theirs lies in the assumption that they are "right" and the young employees who belong to Gen Y are "wrong".

¹²⁴ Tolga's view about change in companies also grasps one of the principal functions of the managerial labels and fashions described in the academic literature in an indirect way. Czarniawska-Joerges and Joerges (1988, 174), argue, for example, that management trends assign significance to the numerous alterations required within organisations and contribute to fostering a favourable atmosphere for their implementation.

However, he states that now his perception is changing, and he is beginning to see the positive sides of the new employees' work-related traits.

Similarly, Gülsenem, the quantitative research manager in the same company, sarcastically mentions that the young generation dislike hierarchies and want to be treated as equals to their managers and the older generations:

They like to be equal... For example, some of them feel uncomfortable even when they call me 'Gülsenem Hanım' (Ms. Gülsenem). They want to call me just by my name, but they cannot say it openly and directly. Actually, I do not mind it at all. I do not mind how they call me, just by my name or with the title "hanım" (Ms.) in a formal way.

Gözde, a former group product manager of FoodCo and currently a freelance trainer on innovation and adjunct lecturer in a private university, compares the superior-subordinate relationship in her time when she worked as a young subordinate with the relationship of Gen Y as subordinates:

For example, you say something, and they answer you back immediately. In my time superior-subordinate relationship was different. But in the American type of companies, relationships were not so formal. I always worked in such relaxed environments. But even in such companies you had to be careful when you objected to your superior, you had to be diplomatic. This generation objects immediately and sharply. You ask them to do something. They say "No, I will not do it". There cannot be such a thing as "I will not do it". Then, you should either fire them or shepherd them....it is really difficult.

Critics of Gen Y generally focus on Gen Y's dislike of formality and hierarchy and their directness that can be considered impolite or disrespectful. They also criticise Gen Y for not being patient and hard-working enough. They mostly express these critiques by building comparisons between when they were young and the present when Gen Y is young.

These statements suggest that HR managers (from previous generations) identify managers' strict and commanding attitudes as the main source of generational conflict, while managers of other departments tend to identify the attitudes of young generations as the source of conflict. While the HR managers emphasise the strictness of the older managers and the rebellious/disobedient character of Gen Y, managers from other departments highlight how Gen Y always question the responsibilities/duties given to them by their managers rather than accepting them and complain that Gen Y are not hard-working enough. This difference reflects the difference in the roles and interests of HR departments from other departments. For HR departments, employee satisfaction and turnover rates are important indicators of the success of the department; for other departments these can be

considered as secondary indicators. Additionally, Gen Y workshops give new responsibilities to managers, such as understanding the needs of their subordinates whether they are personal or professional. But both parties accept that there are differences between young and old employees and identify these differences as generational differences. They underline the attitudes that different generations have towards the hierarchies in the companies they work for. My interviews demonstrate that the demand for these workshops in companies mostly emerges from superior-subordinate relationships.

All the interviewees see workshops on generational issues as useful, regardless of their opinion on the source of the conflicts. But the extent to which they find them useful varies. Özgür states that although he does not have any serious problems with Gen Y, the workshop on Gen Y has helped him understand the reasons behind Gen Y's behaviour. He explains that "this topic is actually triggered by my colleague Ayşe. I do not have much difficulty in my relations with them (Gen Y). There is nothing that disturbs me. However, this workshop has enabled me to understand the reasons behind their behaviors/attitudes. We have understood what reaction we will get when we do something". Furthermore, he states that after the training, he feels that "change" that responds to the needs of the new generations is an obligation. The older generation must see and accept it. He explains "change" as such: "this is how I thought after the training: if we do not change for them (Gen Y), then because they are the future, we will have difficulties in the continuity of the work. We will either be 'secretive' like the former socialist states, do not open up, and stay as we are and close up the company in the near future, or change and guarantee the continuity of the company".

Gülşenem does not mention any serious conflicts with her subordinates, but similarly states that the training and knowledge on Gen Y in general has helped her to become more tolerant and have better communication with her young employees.

On the other hand, Ayşe, who is very critical of Gen Y's attitudes to work, is sceptical about the outcomes of the training.

I have not internalised the changes advised in these workshops to eliminate the conflicts with young employees, but I try to understand this generation. I am on the practical side of it. If putting a swing in the office will help and create a difference, OK let's do it. I prefer to stay on the rational and practical side and try to see what we can do.

Ayşe acknowledges that the training has helped her to see the differences between herself and her young subordinates as a problem specific to a whole generation, not to the employees that she is trying to deal with. She used to think that the problems she encounters with young

employees/subordinates originate from their personality traits, but after the workshop she “realises” that it is not a personality trait in her subordinates but a common characteristic trait of the whole generation. When viewed this way, she suggests there is not much to do other than accepting these attitudes and tolerating them.

Ece, the marketing manager at CostmeticsCo, is much younger than the managers at the other companies. She is part of Gen Y (born in 1985), but considers herself as a bridge between Gen Y and X. She argues that the general outcome of these workshops is to raise awareness of superior-subordinate relations:

Our biggest problem is awareness. For example, my managers never did anything for me or for my generation. They did not ask how I felt or if things were alright with me. If they did, they did it because they had to. We motivated ourselves. We built our own world. But at present, my subordinates need feedback. They constantly ask me how they are doing and if their work is good or not. They ask what they should do more or better to be promoted to higher positions. They demand guidance from me. I do not always ask them how they feel or how they are; maybe I should. I should ask these questions which personally I prefer not to be asked. But such things motivate them.

Independent of her birth cohort, Ece implies that newcomers/new subordinates expect more personal and close attention from their managers, contrary to her experience as a subordinate. This reflects the view that Gen Y expect their managers to be like their parents. In the popular literature on Gen Y, this claim is referred to as “they are friendly and sociable” along with “they want to feel appreciated”.

Similarly, Aylin (service design manager at TelecommunicationsCo, born in 1984) notes that as she works more with young subordinates, she sees how accurate and useful the knowledge that she has acquired in these workshops is.

For example, now I have an employee who was born in '93 and I see that she is bored with operational tasks. But we are not bored with such tasks. If the task requires processing manual data or observation, we take all these as “things to do” and do them. We do not say this is drudgery. But when I ask the Gen Y employees to do something like that, they say “Do I have to do this? Isn't there another way to do it?”. They try to avoid such operational duties. When I see this, when we see that they are bored, we try to entertain them by turning such tasks into games.

Typical traits of Gen Y (impatient/need to be entertained/dislike to do repetitive tasks) fit to Aylin's personal experiences, and the advice related to these traits (gamification of the work process) given

in workshops seems applicable and useful for her in the relationship she has with her young subordinates.¹²⁵

Independent from their views on self-identifications and relations with Gen Y, the interviewees are convinced that a) the young generations are different from them, and b) as they attain more positions in the workplace, the older generations are obligated to change their attitudes towards them.

Accordingly, the changes to management styles which come with the new generations are a “fact” that they cannot take back. Older managers have no option except tolerating and/or adapting to this “fact”. Indeed, the main function of Gen Y workshops in particular and of the Gen Y discourse in general is to impose these two arguments as “facts”.

Anthony, the former HR manager of FMCGCo, explicitly points out that the changes mentioned in these workshops are presented as obligations: “Managers did not necessarily like it, but they did understand that they needed to make some adjustments and they did make some adjustments”.

Tolga is quite positive about the outcomes of Gen Y training. He requires all managers in the company to take these Gen Y workshops. These workshops are added to leadership training in his company. Although they do not do anything specific to measure the outcomes of these workshops, he observes some obvious changes in managers’ attitudes towards their subordinates. They have started to approach them differently, in a more responsible way. He adds that training on Gen Y has increased his empathy towards this generation, and that if he did not have this knowledge on Gen Y, he could complain about them more.

Selin and Burcu also identify developing “empathy” and “understanding” as the main outcome of the workshops. Selin says “there were people who liked to label young people as Gen Y and assumed that they were spoiled and hard to please; after these workshops, these people understood the reasons behind Gen Y’s attitudes and tried to lose their prejudices about them”. Burcu adds that you do not need to be familiar with the knowledge on Gen Y to answer a young person who asks what they are going to be in three years in the recruitment interview, but the knowledge on Gen Y helps you to act more rationally and be more reasonable in cases of conflicts.

Selin elaborates on the outcome of Gen Y training:

¹²⁵ What is interesting about Aylin’s view is that although she was born in 1984 and is part of Gen Y, she considers herself as someone with the Gen X mindset.

After the training, people tried to be more understanding of each other, not only to Gen Y. Although the focus is on Gen Y, it's not only Gen Y but generational differences in general. We have become more aware of certain things. Now we think about what we have done and how we can do better. Now, we try to understand each other more. This is my personal opinion about the outcomes of these workshops.

All the HR managers interviewed state that these workshops mainly help managers to be more understanding and tolerant towards their subordinates.

The content of Gen Y workshops shows that training on Gen Y is marketed as the key to reducing turnover rates among young employees, increasing their job satisfaction, and making them more innovative and creative. Generation experts who provide training on Gen Y imply that knowledge of Gen Y increases the control of managers and HR departments over new/young employees/subordinates.

In contrast, my in-depth interviews indicate that in practice, these workshops push managers/older generations to accept the “unavoidable changes” which come with new generations and convince them that they must adapt themselves to these changes. Gen Y workshops in particular and knowledge of Gen Y in general work to influence managers rather than young employees.¹²⁶ Young employees do not need to change because they represent the future. This indicates the inconsistency in the presentation and the practice of management ideas and workshops. Although these workshops are promoted to managers as a way to learn how to work with their younger employees to get the best work from them, they serve (at least from the HR perspective) as a means to change managers' attitudes towards their subordinates. Within the frame of critical organisational studies, managerial ideas and management discourse are considered to be a tool of domination and/or discipline (Chiapello and Gilbert 2013, 63–89). Workshops on Gen Y may seem to provide managers and employers with the necessary knowledge to make Gen Y work more efficiently and/or be more obedient. However, my interviews show that workshops on Gen Y focus on changing managers' attitudes (who are mainly from previous generations).¹²⁷

¹²⁶ As I show in the literature review, Rudolph et al. (2018, 48) make a critical review of the academic articles on generational theories of leadership, arguing that as there are very few empirical studies, the majority of articles are based on theoretical assumptions instead of empirical evidence. The critical academic literature on generations and generational differences at work shows that there is not enough empirical support for the argument that supervisors should adapt their leadership style according to different generations (Costanza et al. 2020; Rudolph, Rauvola, and Zacher 2018).

¹²⁷ In this context, although I accept that managerial ideas and discourses are tools to dominate and discipline subordinate employees (as argued in critical organisational literature), the case of Gen Y shows that

This one-sided expectation of change is noticed by older generations and managers, leading to expressions of annoyance: “Gen Y should also understand the older generations”. Tolga notes that Gen Y workshops are mainly given to older managers, leading to discussions among managers over why Gen Y are not required to understand previous generations. However, he says that despite these discussions, workshops help the managers (who mostly belong to Gen X) to adopt to Gen Y’s attitudes.

The essential assumption of the Gen Y discourse is that Gen Y represent the future (see Chapter IV.). Although the older generations expect some kind of mutual reciprocity for different generations to understand each other, it is more likely that employers and the business world in general expect older generations to understand Gen Y and change according to their expectations.

Therefore, the need for training on Gen Y emerges mainly from conflicts between managers and their employees, and accordingly the participants of these workshops mostly focus on the differences between the ways Gen Y and older generations work and establish superior-subordinate relationships. While most HR managers identify the strictness of “old-fashioned” managers as the main source of conflict, managers from other departments tend to identify generational traits of their subordinates such as being “impatient”, “spoiled” or “not hard-working enough”, and their expectations from their managers “to be like their parents”, as the main sources of conflict.

Regardless of their opinion on the source of these conflicts, all the interviewees are satisfied with these workshops to varying degrees, noting that they are helpful in understanding the young generations. Overall, they all agree on two major assumptions of the Gen Y discourse: a) this generation is different and b) as they attain more and more positions in their careers, the older generations are obliged to change their attitudes towards them. Accordingly, workshops on Gen Y primarily serve to change the attitudes of old-fashioned managers, no matter who or what generation is identified as the sources of generational conflicts.

On the other hand, the Gen Y discourse presents Gen Y’s traits in an essentialist way, and it is (pre)supposed that as they get older, they will acquire more power and capacity to change the world according to their traits and values. This argument implies that this switch of power is unavoidable, as previous/older generations gradually lose their power and/or their capacity to influence society. Therefore, the rise of Gen Y and the change that they bring is unavoidable. Gen Y represent the unavoidable future (see Table VI-4. for the summary of the assumptions and the related reasoning).

management ideas might refer to more nuanced power relations. Therefore, it is important to seek a more subtle analysis of management ideas.

Table VI-4. Assumptions and reasoning behind the major claims of the Gen Y discourse. Source: Author.

| | New Generations | Future |
|---------------|---|---|
| Step 1 | New Generations are dramatically different from previous generations | There is a big change coming (The future will be very different from the way it is now) |
| Step 2 | The population of new generations increases, and they continue to attain more important positions in work and social life | The more that new generations attain important positions in their careers, the more they reflect their differences on work and social life. |
| Step 3 | This social mobility is unavoidable as older generations lose their important positions in work and social life (e.g., from retirement/death) | Therefore, a new social order (or zeitgeist) is unavoidable. |
| | In this context, new generations are both the transporters and representatives of this change/future. | |

VI.C.2. Gen Y Social Activity Club

In this section, I examine the translation of the Gen Y discourse to several management practices at the Gen Y Club at BeddingCo. BeddingCo is a family-owned Turkish company with limited resources and without much experience of recent management practices, but with a desire to adapt some quality management standards to be competitive outside of Turkey. My examination and analysis are based on in-depth interviews I conducted with Hakan and Muzaffer,¹²⁸ as well as various written materials related to the Club (Employee Satisfaction Survey, Code of Work and Constitution of BeddingCo Gen Y Club).

BeddingCo is a Turkish company specialising in bedding and home textiles. They have several factories, many stores, and more than 1,000 employees. They also export their products to other countries. The company is family-owned and is founded in the 1970s. In the last decade they take important steps to renew their organisational structure and corporate identity. They receive the Turquality¹²⁹ certification, increasing the company's exports by benefiting from government incentives.

BeddingCo is a typical family-owned Turkish company with limited resources and without much experience of recent management practices. The company is in its infancy in terms of formal

¹²⁸ I first noticed the Gen Y Club in an interview with Hakan, human resources and quality systems manager at BeddingCo, published in a monthly Turkish business magazine. I contacted Hakan through a professional networking platform and interviewed him in his office. At this time, he had left BeddingCo and was working as a freelance consultant and co-founder and general manager of a small start-up on financial technologies (FinTechCo), where our interview took place. Muzaffer, one of his former employees at BeddingCo, also joined the interview. Later in December 2020, I conducted another in-depth interview with Muzaffer (Hakan was born in 1982 and Muzaffer in 1990 and they both consider themselves as Gen Y).

¹²⁹ Turquality is a Turkish accreditation system, intended to raise the levels of companies to higher international standards/benchmarks and develop awareness of internationally accepted values such as quality and novelty (Turquality n.d.). Turquality is mostly viewed by practitioners (e.g., GirişimciKafası 2019) and academics (e.g., Askin 2016, 211) as a kind of total quality management program sponsored by the Turkish government.

structures, but the management have the desire to adopt quality standards to be competitive outside of Turkey and benefit from government incentives.

BeddingCo employs Hakan as the organisational quality systems manager when the company attempts to modernise and export more goods in accordance with Turquality standards. One and a half years later, he is promoted to the position of human resources and quality systems manager and establishes the Gen Y Club.

Hakan first thinks of the Gen Y Club when he starts work as an HR manager at BeddingCo. He conducts a satisfaction survey in the company. He says the results were striking: satisfaction levels are low in general, but the most striking results are related to the question “What do you want to change in the company?”. The answers given to this question make him understand that the majority of the company think that there are no social activities in the company; they are only asked to work, and this makes them discontented. Employees also ask for education and training opportunities even more than payment adjustments. As the satisfaction survey that they prepared is loaded with the Gen Y discourse,¹³⁰ it is unsurprising that the results confirm typical traits of Gen Y such as “they are less money oriented”, “they want to invest in their self-development and receive educational opportunities” or “they want to have fun”. Based on these results, Hakan decides to implement a club to organise social and professional activities within the company. He was heavily influenced by the Youth Club in his previous company, HeatingCo.¹³¹ The HeatingCo Youth Club features picnics, sport activities and tournaments for young employees in the company, as well as conferences on topics such as leadership.

Hakan is also influenced by the literature on Gen Y, which has gradually become a trending topic in business during that period. Hakan notes that articles about Gen Y shed light on his personal experience (as a member of Gen Y), especially on his relationship with his managers. He has been interested in the subject since the first time he heard about it. The percentage of staff from Gen Y at

¹³⁰ To have a broader view of employee satisfaction surveys which might have a key role in the implementation of HRM practices informed by the Gen Y discourse, I interviewed two persons from the HR department of AutomotiveCo with experience in carrying out and evaluating employee satisfaction surveys. They confirm that, first, Gen Y does not represent the whole generation but mostly a privileged group (white-collar workers) within that generation. Because when HRM departments work mostly with blue-collar workers, topics like “how to work with Gen Y” or “generational conflicts” become a secondary concern. Secondly, comparing the surveys and their practice in AutomotiveCo and BeddingCo, it is striking how much the BeddingCo employee satisfaction survey is loaded with Generation Y discourse.

¹³¹ HeatingCo is a company which is older, larger and with more strong ties with foreign capital than BeddingCo.

BeddingCo is significantly high (54 per cent) when he becomes HR Manager.¹³² He explains that it was important to create the club because of the differences and importance of Gen Y:

This is how I see it. When we analyse Gen Y, we see that the time we grew up in is different; it is the time of internet technologies - therefore we have a different mould. This difference enables us to learn quickly but also causes us to get bored quickly. We are not people who can adapt to 8 a.m.- 6 p.m. working hours like Generation X. We are not also people who can be happy just with an increase in salary. With this in mind, as well as the fact that the management of this company will consist of people from Gen Y within 5-10 years - and because I myself belong to Gen Y, I have given great importance to this issue.

He creates a club where Gen Y can organise professional and social events, as was the case at his former company with the HeatingCo Youth Club. But Gen Y Club in BeddingCo additionally aims to train young employees for managerial positions in the future by providing a simulation of the company.

The Gen Y Club is a social development club which sees the future of BeddingCo in hard-working, dynamic, innovative and ambitious Gen Y employees (born in 1980 and after) who hold a bachelor's degree and have a feeling of belonging to BeddingCo. Its aim is to enable Gen Y employees to easily adapt to teamwork, and to train them to become experts and managers in the future. Another aim of the Gen Y Club is to develop a corporate culture which is based on warm and family-like relationships. BeddingCo Gen Y Club is an administration simulation which has its own logo, board of directors, committee chairpersons and a budget. It consists of young employees who volunteer to take part in it.

Hakan designs this club as a small company within a company, with its own budget, board of directors, annual action report, etc. The club consists of seven different committees: training, social activities, arts, sports, project development, innovation, and information technologies.

The main mission of the Training Committee is to organise workshops in accordance with the proposals of the members, making these trainings easily accessible by offering discounts to its members. The Training Committee organises an excel workshop in response to the high demand of the employees. They also seek discounts for their members from language schools for English language learning, and universities for MA programs. The Sports Committee organises football, rafting, paintball, and bowling tournaments. The Art Committee organises tours to museums and various historical sites. The Innovation Committee presents new ideas and projects related to the goods they produce and sell. In each committee there is a mentor from Gen X who is in a managerial position. Hakan sees this mentorship system as a way for Gen Y and Gen X to integrate, and states

¹³² Although it is not mentioned by Hakan, it can be assumed that labelling an HRM practice with a term from a trendy topic such as Gen Y both eases the implementation of such youth clubs in companies and reinforces their visibility in the popular press and practitioner literature.

that if he did not establish this system, Gen X staff would most probably feel excluded. Committee members are responsible for the budgeting and the organisation of activities. Club members sometimes access these activities free of charge, but usually at a discount rate.¹³³ Employees who are not members pay the full price.

Members must be born in 1980 or after and be a graduate of at least a two-year college degree. The basis for these requirements lies in the aims and objectives of this club. One of the main aims of this club is to train young employees and equip them with managerial skills to be managers in the future. The blue-collar workers who constitute the majority of the workforce cannot be a member of the club,¹³⁴ and white-collar Gen X managers can only take part as a mentor, not as a member. Muzaffer notes that the number of members is around 40. However, anyone could participate in activities organised by the club.

One aspect of the Gen Y Club bears similarities to management trainee programs with a relatively long history in Turkey. Berke et al. (2000, 241) notes that the first known “management trainee program” is implemented by Interbank in 1983.¹³⁵ These programs usually include the recruitment of “talented” fresh graduates or soon-to-be graduates and provide them with training while they work in different departments and/or positions within the company to prepare them for managerial positions. These kinds of programs provide a faster promotion track within the hierarchy of the company.

The Gen Y discourse provides many claims to legitimise these kinds of managerial practices. The idea that “this generation is impatient and therefore expects to be promoted quickly” or “they are more interested in investing in themselves with training rather than money” legitimises management

¹³³ Despite being a large company with a substantial budget, Hakan notes a reluctance to allocate funds for social activities, leaving participants to cover the expenses themselves: “Yes you want to organise social activities in companies, but you cannot. Why? Because there is no budget for that. You want to celebrate a birthday but there is no budget for that. You collect money among friends and buy a cake. The financial turnover of this company is about 200 million TL. But they do not have a budget for these things. I ask for a budget of 50,000, although the total budget for the activities we organize is to 250,000. Say an activity costs 50 Lira, but because we do it in large numbers, it costs us 40 Lira. We make it 20 Lira for club members and 50 Lira for the guests. So, the 10 Lira finances the members’ discount rate. After we applied this system, the number of activities increased significantly”.

¹³⁴ The club is not inclusive for blue-collar workers because of the educational requirements. Although blue-collar workers can participate in activities organised by the Club, it is very unlikely that blue-collar workers will participate in these events, due to the type of activities and their costs. The only time that blue-collar workers are mentioned by Muzaffer and Hakan in this context is the fast-breaking meal during Ramadan, which is paid for by the company and organised in the factory. This is also consistent with the idea that the Gen Y discourse tends to ignore working class members of the generation and generalises the more privileged members to the whole generation. The Gen Y Club, by excluding blue-collar employees, follows the same pattern (of manipulation) which exists in the Gen Y discourse.

¹³⁵ Tüzüner (2014, 451) notes that the MT program of Interbank functioned as a “school” in the banking sector, and some of the most influential managers in Turkish banking were educated/trained there.

trainee programs. At BeddingCo, Gen Y employees within the club can use more initiative and make impactful decisions (while being monitored by mentors and the boards); this is in line with Gen Y's expectations defined in the popular Gen Y literature.

As with the provision of training, the organisation of sports activities and cultural events (and the free time of employees by the company) also reflects typical Gen Y traits such as "they want to have fun" and "their distinction between professional and personal life is blurry". Similarly, the members of the Innovation Committee have the opportunity to introduce their ideas about products to top management. This practice aligns with the idea that "Gen Y want to be listened to and appreciated".

Alongside the mentorship and the innovation committee, the Gen Y Club offers new channels to its young members to interact with managers and get the chance to show themselves. Muzaffer acknowledges that as a young employee, he feels appreciated and taken seriously. Members can develop new ideas and are allowed to implement these ideas. As I illustrate in detail in the next sub-chapter, the HR practices labelled and designed around the Gen Y discourse are often legitimised with the argument that they provide a space for young employees to express themselves to previous generations and/or managers. These practices are presented as steps toward a more democratic or progressive company, as young employees gain the opportunity to express themselves and are therefore better represented.

After creating the Gen Y Club, turnover rates decrease, and employee satisfaction increases (especially regarding social activities and training). Hakan receives positive feedback from employees. Muzaffer, at that time a new young employee of BeddingCo, confirms that positive impact. He emphasises the benefits of having social activities with other colleagues and managers, and the opportunity to get to know each other closely. It becomes easier to reach colleagues from other departments when information or assistance is needed. He adds that as a young employee, he feels he is appreciated and taken seriously, and he can conceive of new ideas that he can work towards implementing.

One year after the implementation of the Gen Y Club, Hakan leaves the company. Muzaffer and his colleagues take it over and continue the Club for another year and a half. After 2.5 years the Gen Y Club became inactive, with the exception of the Social Activity Committee within the club which still operates. Both Muzaffer and Hakan avoid giving details about why the Club became inactive, referring only to "managerial issues". Hakan believes that if he stayed one more year in the company, it is likely that the Club would have become sustainable and would still be functioning. The fact that the Gen Y Club does not last long can be partly explained by the attempt to implement several human resources management practices simultaneously, using very few people with very limited resources and corporate experience.

When examined with a focus on what companies do with the Gen Y discourse, the Gen Y Club case demonstrates how the discourse legitimises managerial practices within the company (mainly for white-collar workers) such as mentorship, management trainee programs, organisations, and the planning of leisure time and training. In more formal and institutional companies, the organisation of these kinds of practices is the responsibility of HR departments. In this case, these responsibilities are given to young employees (who want to show/prove themselves in the company), supervised by HR staff and mentors.

Ercek (2006, 668) distinguishes between two types of companies when considering the transition from personnel management to human resources management¹³⁶ in Turkey.

Bigger and older manufacturing firms with well-developed ties with foreign capital generally jumped on the HRM bandwagon earlier, and thus had enough time and resources to appropriate the essence of such ideas. Hence, for those Turkish firms with ties to foreign partners, rhetoric-reality discrepancy meant very little. However, for latecomers, the traditional scenario of Turkish business; domestic ownership, infancy of formal structures, small size, and disengagement with foreign capital, elicited a rather decoupled profile. HRMisation is no more than changing name tags under the isomorphic pressures of gaining legitimacy and, therefore, traditional employment relations tend to linger on under fancier impressions.

In that context, BeddingCo appears more like the second type than the first: latecomers with disengagement with foreign capital and domestic ownership. The implementation of the Gen Y Club and similar management practices can therefore be seen as an effort towards the HRMisation of BeddingCo and the adaption of Turquality standards. Though it is hard to assess the extent of rhetoric-reality discrepancy in the case of BeddingCo, Gen Y Club is presented as a practice which makes the company more inclusive for younger generations by giving them more space to express themselves and take initiative within the company. However, it also transfers the responsibility and organisation of training and social activities (typically the responsibility of HR departments in corporates/MNCs) to young employees, regardless of their experience and workload. This creates extra workload for young employees who want to stand out.

VI.C.3. Gen Y Board and Reverse mentoring

In the previous part, I present the BeddingCo case to show the translation of the Gen Y discourse to different management practices under the name of Gen Y Club in the family-owned Turkish company

¹³⁶ Friedman (2000, 319) defines the difference between HRM and PM as such: "Human Resources Management (HRM) term replacing personnel management implies that personnel managers should not merely handle recruitment, pay, and discharging, but should also maximise the use of an organisation's human resources".

BeddingCo. In this part, I examine first, the case of the Gen Y Board (Y-Board), an advisory board which consists of young employees,¹³⁷ and second, reverse mentoring practices in FMCGCo Turkey. Contrary to BeddingCo, FMCGCo is one of the largest multinational consumer goods companies whose history goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. They have a wide range of products from food to beauty and personal care. It has tens of thousands of employees all over the world. Therefore, compared to BeddingCo, FMCGCo has far more significant experience and resources to implement the latest management practices and HR policies.

Gen Y Board

Anthony, the former HR manager of FMCGCo Turkey, defines what the Y-Board is as a question of representation of the Millennials (or Gen Y) in the company: “It is almost like a shadow executive board or a shadow board of younger employees who want to represent the voice of the Millennials in the company. They give us feedback and get involved in working on different things”.

Grouping young employees in order to get feedback from them on work-related issues appears in some of my other interviews, too. There are similar examples of it in other companies such as SportsCo and MachineryCo whose managers I interviewed. For instance, Can, the marketing manager of SportsCo, mentions a similar practice in his company. However, he tells that although they have never defined or name the young employees as the Gen Y, they believe that these young employees could give good feedback, so they always listen to them. They set up a group consisting of relatively new and young employees to give them feedback and ideas about what to do to increase the motivation of the young employees. This group attend meetings with the management. In line with this practice, Burcu (MachineryCo) says that the CEO of the company has created a group consisting of employees under the age of 30 with his own initiative. He makes meetings with them and follows their suggestions.

However, the particularity of the Y-Board among them all is that firstly, it is done in a more formal way and under the label Gen Y. Secondly, the Y-Board is explicitly presented as a board which aims to represent the young generations.

¹³⁷ I first noticed the Y-Board in an interview with the HR manager of FMCGCo Turkey in one the mainstream Turkish newspapers. In this article, the Y-Board is described as an advisory board which consists of Generation Y. The board regularly meets and discusses the new trends and opinions and problems of young employees and consumers with the executive board. After reading this article, I contacted the HR manager of FMCGCo Anthony via a networking platform and had an interview with him on Skype. When I interviewed him (11.11.2019), he had already quit his job at FMCGCo and was working as a freelance HR strategist. But because he was working at FMCGCo during the time the Y-Board was set up, developed, and started working, he told me about the process in detail.

The idea of creating such a board in FMCGCo comes from the two management trainees in the HR department. They share this idea with one of their managers and after that, they prepare a proposal, share it with the CEO and present it to the executive board. Then, they present it to the rest of the company in one of the “town hall meetings”.

Contrary to BeddingCo case, the implementation of the Gen Y Board in FMCGCo is not legitimised by the results of the employee surveys or some open conflicts between the young and older employees (as it is in the case of MarketresearchCo1 which is the major reason to have trainings on the Gen Y) but it is legitimised by referring to the image that the company wants to create in the public eye. According to Anthony, the idea of the Y-Board coming from the two management trainees is very much in line with the vision of FMCGCo as a progressive company which values diversity within the company. Consequently, the proposal of the two management trainees is accepted by the top management. Thus, FMCGCo Turkey becomes the first one to implement such an idea in FMCGCo globally.¹³⁸

After it is accepted, in order to choose who to be in the Y-Board, they call for nominations among the Gen Y employees. The nominees are asked to prepare a short video about themselves and post it on their Instagram accounts. Then, all the employees of the company watch those videos and elect the ones that they want to be in the board.

As can be seen, FMCGCo conducts a sort of election process to choose the members of the Y-Board, whose aim is to represent the voice of the Gen Y in the company. It can therefore be said that the Gen Y discourse becomes explicitly and officially a matter of representation and democracy in this case. Within this framework, it is important to question who becomes members of the board via an election based on voluntary self-nomination and held within hierarchical structures where employees are mostly tied with dependency relationships (e.g., managers and subordinates). In other words, how fairly such a board can represent the Gen Y in the company (e.g., gender wise, department wise) is a critical question to ask.

To make the above-mentioned points related to the election of the members of the Y-Board and the representation of the Gen Y in the company clear, I ask Anthony whether they put any criteria or

¹³⁸ Anthony explains that the idea of the Y-Board later revamped globally from being a Gen Y board to a sort of employee representative group without any age restriction within FMCGCo. According to him, this change is made because of the concerns raised by managers due to strong discrimination laws in some countries and the fact that these kinds of age restrictions can be considered as discrimination.

quotas to be a nominee/candidate and if he thinks, at the end, the members of the board represent the young employees in the company. His answer is as follows:

We didn't set any [criteria]. We were hoping for a representative view across various departments. We wanted representatives from all the different functions that we had in the company. And we wanted... We didn't set an age, but we called board by virtue of calling it that. You know, people understood that it was more for people's age profile. We didn't specify one definite age. So, no. And in the end, we left ourselves with the right to select who we felt [...] If we had too many people from one department that, you know, we would have said, okay, there's too many people from finance and marketing and we need some more people from sales.

As Anthony points out, although the top managers do not put any criteria for the candidacy of the Gen Y board, they keep their right to decide who to be in the board among the elected ones to have a “better” representation of the Millennials in the company. And in this context, the concern of fair representation is limited to the diversity of the departments and the diversity of ages. Anthony notes that at the end, according to the top management the results are balanced enough so they do not feel the need to interfere.¹³⁹

In the end, we did get a good representative representation across all departments. We got mainly sort of many people of an age profile... They were probably like 24 to 30 years old. [...] So, we've got quite a strong group.

Anthony makes an additional comment about the profiles of the members of the Y-Board which indicates that the Y-Board may not only be about the representation of the young employees within the company but also about training the future managers:

The other thing. I had quite a strong point of view, but I got sort of argued down. [...] I also wanted the right to make sure that we were selecting people that, you know, were people that had potential to move to higher positions throughout their career. But in the end, the board sort of said, let's not overlay that as a factor. Whoever gets elected, let them be elected, regardless of, you know, whether we believe that they have potential to go on to other things. Because I also saw this as an opportunity to develop future board members. That's the way I was looking at it, giving these people an experience of representing the employees, but also, you know, working directly with the board, getting a feel for what it would be like to be sitting on the board in the future or in a leadership team. I was also looking at it as a development

¹³⁹ I additionally asked him if there was also a balance in terms of gender. He answers that it is balanced, there are a few more women than men but it is also the case among the young employees in the company. He notes that they recruit 60 percent women and 40 percent men but not because there is a quota but because women do better at job interviews and show “a bit more initiative and a bit more maturity”.

tool. The board's view was, you know, whoever gets elected, let them be elected. And unless we have problems with quotas from one department being too many, then we wouldn't step in and get involved in the decisions. Let the employees elect who they want, which I think was the right decision at the end of the day.

Anthony sees the Y-Board (similarly to the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo) as an alternative to management trainee programs that help top management find high potential candidates for higher positions in the future and teach them managerial skills. In an interview with the Turkish press, Anthony states that one of the main ideas behind the Y-Board is “to strengthen the decision-making skills of the young generation to create a less hierarchal working environment”. Since “decision making” is an important managerial skill, strengthening this among young employees may also qualify as training them for future managerial positions.

Anthony explains that although selecting and training future managers within the Y-Board is not a priority for the executive board, the nominees who want to be a member of the Y-Board see it as “an opportunity” to raise their profile and get noticed at work. He thinks the nominees are ambitious people who have serious potential to rise to higher positions within the company hierarchy.

Various management concepts and practices are intertwined within the practice of the Y-Board, and they can easily be legitimised by referring to Gen Y traits such as “Gen Y dislike hierarchies” and “Gen Y want to be heard and listened to by their managers”. This argument legitimises a board that claims to represent Gen Y within the company (an example of flat corporate culture). In addition, the same board is seen as a tool to find and train young talented employees for higher managerial positions (similar to management trainee programs).

Once the Y-Board is set up, its members are asked to draft proposals, especially of projects that they think would make a difference for the company. Some ideas, such as launching a new brand, are more business related. Others, such as having a quiet room in the company where people could go and have a quiet time to relax without their phones or laptops, are more related to the office environment and improving employee welfare. They also draft some environmentally friendly ideas such as reducing the use of plastic bottles and paper cups in the company.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ These two ideas from the Y-Board can be considered in relation to the traits attributed to Gen Y. On the one hand, the idea of reducing waste fits perfectly to typical qualities/traits such as ‘their environmental sensibilities are higher than those of other generations’. On the other hand, the same literature tends to describe them as dependent on their mobile phones and information technologies, in contrast with the idea of a quiet room without phones.

To carry out these ideas, the Y-Board have three different options. First, they can discuss these ideas with the mentor/sponsor appointed to them by top management. The sponsor is one of the marketing vice presidents who mentors and guides Y-Board members in the projects that they want to realise. Second, they can put a topic on the agenda of the executive board, as they have access to board meetings. Third, they can approach the CEO who would “always make time for them”.

There is a kind of a mentor/sponsor in the Y-Board, as is the case of Gen Y Club in BeddingCo. However, in the Y-Board case, the sponsor’s/mentor’s role is to guide the members of the Y-Board and mediate between them and the CEO and top management. The Y-Board in FMCGCo seems more participatory than Gen Y Club in BeddingCo, as it facilitates greater access between young employees and top management. But in both cases mentors or sponsors (who are managers) have the role of a gatekeeper between young employees and the top management.

Overall, the Y-Board provides new channels for young employees (on the Y-Board) to communicate with top management. The Y-Board is presented as an effort by the company to become more “diverse” and “progressive” by giving young employees a new space to express their views.

Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring is another significant managerial practice often promoted in the Gen Y discourse in Turkey and adapted by FMCGCo Turkey. Anthony starts it in the company. He notes that when the marketing team begins looking for a way to innovate their product range for “new millennial generations”, he takes that as an opportunity to start a reverse mentoring program:

So, I used the opportunity to say, okay, if you're going to do that, you know, most of the people in the marketing team are 30 plus, the leaders are 40 plus. So how can they know what the younger generation wants? You need to talk to them. And maybe this reverse mentoring thing is a good way to generate some ideas. So, we did that.

FMCGCo Turkey is the first branch of FMCGCo to implement reverse mentoring across all its locations all over the world, just as it is the case with the Y-Board. Typical Reverse mentoring programs consist of young employees mentoring older managers (mostly on technology and new trends), but in FMCGCo, they do it in a slightly different way. Rather than use their own young employees, they recruit 50 university students from outside the company. Anthony explains that they do not want to do it with their own young employees because they are already “thinking like FMCGCo people”. With the help of a software program, these 50 university students present themselves online and the managers (FMCGCo leaders) choose the “reverse mentors” they would like to work with. They meet

regularly (once a month) to discuss different topics to understand the young generation's preferences and expectations.

As with the Y-Board, reverse mentoring facilitates direct communication¹⁴¹ between the vice-presidents of the company and university students, who while not a part of the company are presumed to represent the young generations.

One of the crucial functions of Gen Y workshops is to change the attitudes of "old fashioned" managers by convincing them that this generation represent the inevitable future (see section VI.C.1.). Reverse mentoring also serves this purpose. This creates a space for young generations to express themselves or be recognised within the company, as well as aiming to change the "biased" attitudes of managers towards young generations positively.

For example, I had tried to get more interns into the company to work on specific projects. But a lot of the managers in the company would say, yeah, it's not going to work for me because, you know, they're coming from university. They're young and inexperienced. They'll work part time. I don't know that they can really contribute in the same way. I need a full-time employee. You know, get me someone full time. [...] So, by setting up this reverse mentoring process, a lot of the managers who had a bias changed their mind because they understood that a lot of them had great experiences to bring in. A lot of them, even though they were working part time, they would work very hard. They were very committed and would work very hard in their own time. So, it helped break down a lot of barriers and that continued to work well.

These management practices enable strict managers with high and fixed expectations on recruitment to gain a broader view of young people with different educational backgrounds and little or no experience. Managers who only want to recruit graduates of reputable universities with 5-7 years' work experience become much more open and willing to recruit students from different universities with no work experience. Anthony notes that this change of mindset has two major positive effects. First, the company becomes more attractive for young talents; by being less strict on recruiting criteria, the company is regarded as a more inclusive company and improves its "employer brand".¹⁴² Second, it enables the company to enlarge its talent pool.

¹⁴¹ Direct does not necessarily imply a better representation of the young employees.

¹⁴² Employer branding is a common concept promoted mainly by Evrim Kuran and Universum, the company through which she represents the Gen Y discourse in the Turkish Context (see section V.B.). Anthony states that in the last seven or eight years they were on top of the best employer brand lists thanks to these managerial practices related to young employees, based on surveys published in the Bloomberg Turkey Magazine, and the global survey of Universum whose research FMCGCo globally buys. In this context, the network formed around the Gen Y discourse in Turkey does not seem so large and diverse; it seems that in many different contexts,

The “biased” attitudes of managers towards young generations are not limited to recruitment policies, but also include work environment related issues in FMCGCo. Anthony gives the example of a disagreement about the open-plan office or designated workstation which challenges the views of the older members of the executive board. There is a sort of open office for young employees, and discussions of whether they should also give up the idea of designated desks for them. Older members of the executive board are against this idea as they value personalised workstations for all white-collar workers, giving reasons such as putting photos on their desks and knowing where to sit. However, after discussions with the Gen Y board, they realise that young employees do not care much about having personalised and designated workstations.¹⁴³ It becomes clear that it is the older staff members who actually insist on that idea, despite using younger employees as an excuse for personalised workstations, saying that it is the young employees who want designated desks, not them.

Similar to the Gen Y workshops examined in this chapter, other management practices developed and adopted around the idea of Gen Y do not only aim to improve working conditions or fulfil the expectations of the young employees, but also aim to change the conservative attitudes of older managers towards their subordinates and managerial changes in the company. In line with this, Anthony notes that HRM practices such as the Y-Board and reverse mentoring change managers’ biased views towards young employees and also enable them “to learn about new apps and social media, online delivery and new start-ups, thanks to the interactions with the young generations”.

Besides, new technologies (especially social media) and recent developments in the business world, such as start-ups and entrepreneurship, are among the most common themes of the Gen Y discourse (see section IV.E.). Companies' claims that they attach weight to youth under the label of Gen Y run in parallel with the claim that they are up to date with recent developments in technology and the business world.

Evrin Kuran often appears (in mainstream media as an expert of generations, in companies as a trainer/speaker and consultant).

¹⁴³ For the implementation of the new system, the HR department becomes the pilot department. They move on to a long bench style desk where employees come, find a place, sit down, plug in their laptops, and start working.

VI.C.4. Conclusion

I examine three management practices labelled, informed, and legitimised by the arguments of the Gen Y discourse within the context of three examples: the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo, and the Gen Y Board and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo Turkey. While FMCGCo is one of the largest multinational consumer goods companies, with significant experience and resources to implement the latest managerial practices, BeddingCo is a family-owned Turkish company with limited experience of HRM practices and without any strong ties with foreign capital.

The Gen Y Club in BeddingCo. organises both out-of-work activities (such as tours and football matches) and activities directly related to work (such as workshops about work and life). These kinds of organisations are usually the responsibility of HR departments, but in the Gen Y Club these responsibilities are transferred to young employees who are willing to take initiative and would like to prove themselves to their managers. Additionally, innovation and technology committees which function under the Gen Y Club enable its members to present their new ideas about the products that they produce and sell. Meanwhile, as the Gen Y Club is designed as a simulation of a company with its own regulation, structure, and budget, it also functions as a management trainee program developing young employees' management skills.

The Y-Board in FMCGCo is an advisory board which aims to represent young people within the company. Like the innovation and technology committees in the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo, the Y-Board also allows its members to express and implement their new ideas about work and the products that they produce and sell. Therefore, the Y-Board is designed as a new space for young employees to express themselves to top management. The Y-Board also functions as a program for its young members to develop their management skills and provides them with an opportunity to raise their profile.

In addition to the Y-Board, FMCGCo also adopts reverse mentoring as a management practice related to generational issues. Reverse mentoring usually operates by pairing a manager with a young employee as a mentor to share their opinions/thoughts about new trends and technologies with the manager. However, at FMCGCo, they use university students from outside the company as mentors. These university students represent young consumers rather than young employees, and the main purpose of the practice becomes updating older managers about new trends and technologies and the expectations of young generations as consumers.

However, with the exception of reverse mentoring, these management practices are older than the birth of Gen Y as a concept. This contradicts the most typical claim of the Gen Y discourse; “Generation Y is dramatically different from the previous ones; therefore, we should redesign the workplace and work-related practices according to the need of this generation”.

The Gen Y Club, the Y-Board together and the reverse mentoring practice in FMCGCo are all presented as progressive practices which contribute to the representation of young employees, creating more space for young employees to express themselves. In this context, one of the typical traits of Gen Y - ‘a progressive generation who does not like hierarchical relationships and who wants to be listened to’ - is legitimised by these practices.

Yet, it is important to question the progressive claims of these companies, considering the very precarious working conditions and high unemployment rates among youth in the country.¹⁴⁴ The extent to which companies in Turkey can provide a fair and progressive work environment is a crucial question regarding the use of the Gen Y discourse in companies.

The first limitation on these kinds of progressive practices, observed in both the Gen Y Club and the Y-Board cases, is the mediating role of some managers. These managers are called mentors or sponsors, and they mediate between top management and young employees. However, these managers also decide which ideas are worth presenting and how they should be presented to top management. Therefore, these mediators function as gatekeepers.

The second limitation is on the fair representation of young employees in the company. This is due to societal conditions in the country. Turkey’s working conditions are very precarious and the unemployment rate is very high, especially for young people. In the private sector, there is neither job security nor unions or work councils to improve unfair working conditions for white-collar workers such as non-paid extra working hours. It can be expected that these precarious conditions affect the relationship between managers and subordinates. It is highly likely that young employees prioritise their personal interests and professional future over their representation as a group/as a whole and try to avoid conflicts with their superiors.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Based on Eurostat statistics, Turkey’s unemployment rate in 2019 was 13.7 percent, while the EU27’s was 6.7. When it comes to youth (persons aged 15-24) unemployment rates, in Turkey it is 25 %, while in EU27 it is 15 %. More importantly, as of 2019 full-time employment in Turkey is 48.5 hours per week, while in EU27 it is 40.9 hours per week on average. Compared to European countries (EU27), Turkey has the longest working hours.

¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Harun (HR specialist at AutomativeCo) is sceptical of management practices in which younger employees can take initiative and share their ideas about work. He says that most of the time, employees come with ideas they know will please the managers. They do so to build good relationships with the managers, who have an important influence on the promotion of employees. He also adds that in Turkish corporate life there is the culture of “nobody likes the contrarians/interferers”.

In that context, that both practices are seen as a kind of management trainee program by HR managers who implement them may support the aforementioned societal limitations. By definition, MT programs are based on the selection and training of young employees with the potential to occupy managerial positions in the future. Consequently, MT programs rely more on the personal career interests of employees than the interest or representation of a group of employees. Though the Y-Board and the Gen Y Club are designed as progressive practices which allow young employees to represent and express themselves, they are limited by the precarious work conditions. Therefore, both the Gen Y Club and the Y-Board have an additional objective - to select and train “talented” young employees for managerial positions.

Furthermore, the Y-Board and reverse mentoring are not only aimed at Gen Y, but also at their older managers (as is the case with workshops on Gen Y). Since Gen Y is represented as the future in the Gen Y discourse, older generations are expected to learn from them and change. More direct interactions between Gen Y and managers from older generations are perceived as a means to update older managers on current trends and technologies, as well as to alter their “conservative” attitudes towards young employees and potential changes in the working environment.

VI.D. Conclusion

In this chapter, the translation and instrumentalisation of the Gen Y discourse within companies in Turkey is examined and presented in four sub-chapters: a) introduction to the translation of a discourse to work-related practices (VI.A.), b) the ways in which employees relate to the Gen Y discourse in the work context (VI.B.), c) translation of the Gen Y discourse to management practices (VI.C.), and d) conclusion and overall assessment of the chapter (VI.D.). The third sub-chapter, which examines the translation of the Gen Y discourse to the management practices, has four parts: a) workshops on Gen Y in Turkish companies (VI.C.1.), b) the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo (VI.C.2.), c) the Y-Board and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo Turkey (VI.C.3.), and d) conclusion (VI.C.4.).

In sub-chapter VI.B., I examine how employees relate to the Gen Y discourse in the work context. Based on the narratives of my interviewees, I focus on the semantic change of the terms “generation” and the “Gen Y”. My interviewees use the term Gen Y interchangeably with the terms “new employees”, “young employees”, “subordinates”, “employees with and without experience” and “youth”.

The generational identification and self-identification problems and confusions of my interviewees demonstrate that generational categories can also be perceived as a set of (mostly work-related) traits, rather than an age-group (or a birth cohort). This shows that, parallel to Foster’s (2013a, 212)

argument, employees use generational distinctions and generational discourses to differentiate their approach to work and work-related values from others.

Alongside the interchangeable use of the term Gen Y, these varying traits of Gen Y are the main dualities through which the interviewees relate to the Gen Y discourse in the work context. These dualities also help employees interpret other employees' attitudes by differentiating themselves and their approach to work, making generational issues more credible and convincing to employees.

The overall views of my interviewees show that the traits they attribute to Gen Y do not differ dramatically from those attributed in the popular Gen Y literature (both in Turkish and English). Traits which refer to Gen Y's relationships with their managers (which I classify under the title "open minded/progressive") come into prominence among the other two (fun/friendly and immediacy). These traits attributed to Gen Y by the interviewees also have the same dichotomous character as those found in the popular literature on Gen Y, enabling the interpretation of these same traits as positive or negative (see section IV.E.1.). However, my interviewees attribute more negative traits to Gen Y than is typically found in the Turkish and English Gen Y literature analysed in Chapters IV and V. This difference could be due to the mediator role of the consultants and experts on generations, as well as the probability that people are more careful in their language when they give interviews and publish articles than when they give an interview to a PhD candidate.

In the third sub-chapter (VI.C.), I focus on the translation of the Gen Y discourse to managerial practices. In chapters IV and V, I show how the influential actors of the Gen Y discourse suggest pre-existing managerial ideas and practices to avoid generational conflicts, keep business up to date, support innovation, and provide high job satisfaction, especially among young employees. The Gen Y discourse is used as a discursive resource to legitimise and promote management ideas and practices by the consultants and generation experts. In light of this, and based on the interviews I conducted, in this sub-chapter I examine the use of the Gen Y discourse, and its translation to different managerial practices within companies.

My research shows that formal managerial practices promoted by the Gen Y discourse can mainly be found in large Turkish companies with strong ties to foreign capital and MNC branches in Turkey. These practices mainly aim white-collar workers and tend to ignore blue-collar workers and the white-collar workers who are in more precarious work conditions, such as after-sales departments.

In contrast to the major argument of the discourse that Gen Y is radically different, most of the companies which refer to Gen Y as a concept only introduce workshops on Gen Y for managers, and do not introduce specific and formal organisational changes. In most cases, the discourse seems to lead to no organisational changes, but works simply as a legitimisation device to make managers more

attentive to employees. In a few cases such as Gen Y Club and the Y-Board, the Gen Y discourse leads to more formal and varied practices.

In this context, I analyse four different practices: workshops on Gen Y in several Turkish companies, the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo, and the Y-Board and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo Turkey.

The most common formal introduction of generational categories and the concept of Gen Y in companies is through workshops on generations. The need for training on Gen Y mainly emerges from conflicts between managers and their employees, and accordingly the participants of these workshops mostly focus on the differences in how Gen Y and older generations work and establish superior-subordinate relationships. While HR managers usually identify the strictness of “old-fashioned” managers as the main source of conflict, managers from other departments tend to mention the negative traits of their young subordinates. This reflects the different priorities and interests of different departments within companies. HR departments prioritise employee satisfaction more than other departments, as it is one of the main criteria of success for an HR department. HR departments can also be more influenced by management fashions and gurus that often advocate a shift “from 'command-and-control' to 'facilitate-and-empower' forms of organisation and work” (Ezzamel, Lilley, and Willmott 1994, 454).

Most interviewees understand “old-fashioned managers” to mean strict, distanced, and formal managers who expect some sort of dedication for work from their employees. These old-fashioned managers do not like their decisions or directives questioned, and they express their discontent with their young subordinates by claiming that they question everything, expect too much, and are not hard-working and patient enough. They usually express these critiques by building comparisons between when they were young and the present day when Gen Y is young. Similarly, Foster (2016, 376) distinguishes two discourse strategies among young and older employees as “entitlement and materialism”: while young people are seen (at worst) as overly entitled or (at best) as prioritising work-life balance; older people are seen as devoted to work because (at worst) they prioritise money or (at best) because work is virtuous.

These negative traits of both older generations and Gen Y show that the discourse is nourished by stereotypical views of the young and the old at work. Taken together with the other stereotypical view that young people are more progressive than older generations, this demonstrates that the Gen Y discourse is based on common stereotypes (which existed long before the birth of the Gen Y discourse) and can be seen as one of the reasons why the Gen Y discourse is a convincing discourse for many people.

In general, the Gen Y discourse (and particularly workshops on Gen Y) convince those managers who are unhappy with their subordinates to accept that the problems they encounter do not arise from the personalities of the employees but from the generation that they belong to. Adopting such a view helps older managers accept or at least tolerate their subordinates' attitudes.

Regardless of their opinion about the sources of the problems they encounter, all the interviewees were satisfied with these workshops to varying degrees, and they suggest that they are useful for understanding the young generations. Overall, they all agree on two major assumptions of the Gen Y discourse: a) this generation is different and b) as they attain more and more positions in their careers, the older generations are obliged to change their attitudes towards them.¹⁴⁶ In this context, workshops on Gen Y serve primarily as a tool to change the "old-fashioned" views of managers, no matter who or what generation is identified as the source of generational conflicts.

This is an interesting contrast to the academic literature, in which management discourses are mostly seen as a tool for managers and employers to ensure more control over their employees.¹⁴⁷ (for a general presentation of the critical approach of management tools, see Chiapello and Gilbert 2013, 61–63). In the case of Gen Y, management practices (such as workshops on Gen Y, reverse mentoring and the Y-Board) are designed to change mainly the "mindset" of older managers.

Based on the traits attributed to Gen Y (and in an indirect way to previous generations), workshops encourage managers to be less strict/more flexible; less hierarchical and less formal, and more friendly and caring towards their subordinates.

What is striking here is that these kinds of change (or at least expectation of change) in the ways of managing employees are not new. There are many management concepts, such as leadership and mentorship, which have been advocating similar values for good management since 1980 (Ezzamel, Lilley, and Willmott 1994, 455; Barley and Kunda 1992, 382). Additionally, there are other academic works which have already observed similar tendencies within corporate life (e.g., Boltanski and Chiapello 2011; Sennett 2010; 2009; Barley and Kunda 1992) as a changing aspect of capitalism.

¹⁴⁶ It is important to note that these assumptions align with what I identify as the major claim of the Gen Y discourse in the analysis of major English texts on Gen Y (see section IV.F.): "this generation represent the future", so "generational conflicts" and "becoming outdated" are one and the same problem.

¹⁴⁷ For instance, based on one case study, with a Foucauldian perspective Reeds and Thomas (2020, 13) argue that: "HR and managers attempt to shape employees' conduct through translation of the discourses of generations into relevant incentive packages for workers" – This was also my presumption before I conducted the interviews.

Workshops on Gen Y show that some management practices are labelled, informed and/or legitimised by the Gen Y discourse. In this context three different practices are analysed within two companies (the Gen Y Club in BeddingCo, the Y-Board and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo Turkey).

The Gen Y Club in BeddingCo. organises both out-of-work activities (such as football tournaments and picnics) and activities directly related to work (such as excel courses and mentoring). These kinds of organisations are usually the responsibility of HR departments, but in the Gen Y Club they are transferred to young enthusiastic employees who would like to prove themselves to their managers. Additionally, innovation and technology committees which function under the Gen Y Club enable its members to present their new ideas. The Gen Y Club also functions as a management trainee program, preparing young employees for future managerial positions.

The other management practice analysed in this chapter is the Y-Board in FMCGCo. It is an advisory board where young employees in the company are represented. Like the Innovation and Technology Committee in the Gen Y Club, the Y-Board also gives its members the opportunity to report and implement their new ideas about work and the company's products. Moreover, the Y-Board provides a new space for young employees to express themselves to top management. On the other hand, the Y-Board also functions as a program to help its young members develop management skills for managerial positions in the future.

Reverse mentoring is another management practice related to generational issues applied by FMCGCo. Reverse mentoring usually involves pairing an older manager with a young employee who mentors the older manager with opinions/information about new trends and technologies. But FMCGCo makes a change to this practice. They pair managers with university students from outside the company instead of young employees who work for the company. In this way the practice becomes more related to the consumer dimension of the younger generation rather than the employee dimension. The main aim of the practice is to update older managers about new trends and technologies and the expectations of the young generations (mainly as consumers).

However, all of the management practices except reverse mentoring are older than the birth of the Gen Y discourse. This creates a discrepancy with the most typical claim of the discourse that "we should rethink everything we used to do because Gen Y is totally different from previous generations".

Another weakness of the management practices informed by the Gen Y discourse is that they are entirely aimed at white-collar workers. This is in line with how Gen Y is described in the literature. Similarly, within the companies that I conducted interviews, the Gen Y discourse and related HRM practices is more prevalent in departments such as human resources, marketing, and purchasing, than

in sales and aftersales departments. For instance, in the sales and aftersales departments, only managers receive this soft skills training. Meanwhile, HR, Marketing and Advertising departments contain mostly well educated, urban, westernised employees, with a minority of persons from more modest low-income family backgrounds who managed to get into the reputable universities. This phenomenon might be explained by the need for good English skills at these departments, especially in the MNC and/or international companies.¹⁴⁸ Taken together, Gen Y represents a smaller and more privileged group than it claims to encompass.¹⁴⁹

Overall, the findings of this chapter suggest that the Gen Y discourse is instrumentalised within companies in two major ways that contrast with its circulant state¹⁵⁰:

- a) as a hype label to legitimise and promote management practices, most of which are pre-existing. This hype label allows companies to present themselves as a progressive company which values its young employees in the eyes of the public.
- b) as a tool to change managers' strict and sceptical attitudes towards changes at work in general, and towards their subordinates in particular.

¹⁴⁸ In Turkey, speaking a foreign language fluently is not common. Most people who speak fluent English learn it either at foreign/private high schools or at reputable universities.

¹⁴⁹ But it is important to bear in mind that this critique is not only valid for Gen Y, but also the idea of generations and youth in general. Generations and youth are often criticised as concepts which represent a smaller group of people than they claim to encompass – usually more privileged members of society (Bourdieu 2002; Kriegel 1979; Mannheim 2011; Zaim 2006).

¹⁵⁰ This is also consistent with Benders' and Veen's (2001, 40) perspective on management fads and their applications within organisations: The interpretive flexibility of a concept enables diverse variations to emerge from the interpretations and actions of various actors. These actors may not genuinely embrace a fashionable concept but may exploit its popularity for unintended purposes. Fashion adopters are not merely trendsetters or imitators but rather active agents who employ their own judgments and motivations to determine how to implement fashionable rhetoric.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION: REASSEMBLING GENERATION Y

If what is to be assembled is not first opened up, de-fragmented, and inspected, it cannot be reassembled again. (Latour 2005, 251)

The main argument of this dissertation is that Generation Y, along with other widely used generational labels, is a contested scientific concept, predominantly constructed and disseminated by management and consultancy sources employing strategies similar to management fashions (e.g., ambiguity) and accompanied by common sense assumptions (e.g., youth represent the future). The discourse surrounding Generation Y extends beyond addressing generational conflicts or elucidating youth movements; it is presented as a panacea,¹⁵¹ providing solutions for all present and foreseeable future issues related to the “new” era—an era marked by digitalisation and the internet into which Generation Y was not only born and by which it has been shaped, but which has also actively been shaped by this generation.

To reach this conclusion, the journey of this dissertation has revolved around heeding the advice of the opening quote by Latour: open up, de-fragment, and thoroughly examine Generation Y as both a concept and a subject of discourse. Now, as the culmination of this exploration, it is time to reassemble the pieces of this panacea.

As mentioned in Chapter II., I have not strictly adhere to the approach of Actor-Network Theory.¹⁵² However, I present the first three sub-chapters in the form of a monologue, as it is not uncommon for ANT scholars to use alternative writing styles beyond conventional forms of academic writing (e.g., Latour 1991; 2000; 2005, 141–56; see also, Alworth 2016). The choice to employ this unconventional writing technique in the conclusion is primarily motivated by the aim to captivate the reader's attention. Furthermore, the use of a monologue provides a relatively straightforward means to illustrate my position within this dissertation, especially concerning ANT.

¹⁵¹ The term “panacea” refers to a hypothetical solution or remedy that is believed to cure all problems or difficulties (Collins Dictionary 2023a). It is often used to describe an approach or proposal that is considered to be a universal fix for complex issues or challenges (Hoed 2003). The concept of a panacea suggests an idealised solution that can address diverse problems in a comprehensive and effective manner. However, panacea is often seen as unrealistic or overly simplistic in academic discussions, as complex issues usually require multifaceted and context-specific approaches (Örtenblad 2015a).

¹⁵² There are two primary considerations that led me to hesitate to categorize my approach as an ANT approach: the limited presence of non-human actors or actants in the study, and the stronger emphasis on the discursive dimensions rather than the actors themselves. Although it may not currently exist, I believe it would be more accurate to characterize the methodology I employ as ethnography-oriented discourse analysis rather than discourse-oriented ethnography.

The initial section of this chapter provides a concise overview of the theoretical framework of the research, the conceptual tools utilised, the primary aim, and the research questions that guide the study, along with a summary of the research (VII.A.). The subsequent section presents the main findings of the study (VII.B.). The third section comprises two discussions that are based on these findings. The first discussion examines the claim of novelty associated with the discourse and seeks to answer the guiding question of the research: How can we make sense of the continued emphasis on and popularity of generational labels despite the lack of evidence and theoretical foundation (VII.C.1.)? In comparison, the second discussion delves into the management concepts and practices advocated by the Gen Y discourse, covering their significance and relevance in the context of Turkey. With this, I aim to shed light on the concealed explanations and perspectives embedded within the Gen Y discourse (VII.C.2.). Lastly, the fourth section explores the research process itself, discussing its significance, limitations, and potential avenues for future exploration (VII.D.).

VII.A. Theoretical Framework and Research Overview

The story of this dissertation revolves around a social science student, and that would be me, who finds himself deeply intrigued by the potential of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). I make the deliberate choice to employ its approach in the study of “Generation Y”. As a doctoral candidate, I do harbour certain reservations regarding the political implications inherent in Latour’s philosophy and underlying assumptions. However, I see this methodology as a tool of value, one that can aid me in comprehending the manner by which a seemingly feeble concept manages to achieve pervasive acceptance across various spheres encompassing academia, business, media, and the realm of politics.

To guide this quest, I refer to Czarniawska (2017), who provided comprehensible elucidations of ANT and its methodology. Considering her adeptness in the realm of management and organisational studies, where conversations concerning Generation Y and other generational designations hold a prominent position, I opt to adhere to her counsel. This ensures that my work remains consistent with ANT’s research framework and enables me to concisely encapsulate the core of my dissertation.

Let us begin with the basics, I mutter to myself. Czarniawska (2017, 157) asserts that the goal of social science studies should be to investigate how things, people, and ideas become interconnected and assembled into larger units. According to ANT, the term “social” cannot be definitively “discovered” or quantified as a thing in and of itself; rather, the object of examination is an intricate web of interrelations. I adapt the objective of my research based on this: to understand how things, people, and ideas come together to form a distinct group known as Generation Y—a classification that aids in comprehending and interpreting the world.

As I continue my reading, I come across Czarniawska's (2017, 157) assertion that an ANT study begins with the "preliminary identification of actants", which encompasses not only actors but also any other "beings or things that act and are acted upon". Intrigued, I revisit the definitions of actants and actors: within the context of ANT, an actor takes on a semiotic definition—an actant—representing something that engages in action or is attributed with agency by others. This definition does not imply any specific motivation of individual human actors; instead, it encompasses anything that is acknowledged as the origin of action (Latour 2017, 7). In simpler terms, an actor is an "actant endowed with a character", often possessing an "anthropomorphic" quality (Akrich and Latour 1992, 259).

This differentiation stands as one of the fundamental facets of ANT, yet it also poses a challenge to my confidence in my dissertation. I recognize the necessity for a confrontation and ponder: *What and who are the actants that construct/assemble Generation Y?* I delve into contemplation regarding the diverse contributors involved in the construction or assembly of Generation Y: consultants, consultancy reports, statistics divided by age groups or generational labels, academic articles on Gen Y, business news and political news on Gen Y, journalists, employees, and managers who talk about generations, management practices that use the label Gen Y, youth experts, etc. Every articulation of Generation Y is part of this assemblage. This means the Gen Y discourse is not shaped merely by actors and actants with a public presence; non-public figures, such as employees and managers in companies, also play a role in shaping the discourse surrounding Generation Y.

Meanwhile, the abbreviation "etc." captures my attention. It reminds me of what Butler (1999, 182–83) conveyed regarding the significance of "et cetera" in the context of identities:

The theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed "etc." at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete. This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated "etc." that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the supplement, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. This illimitable et cetera, however, offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing.

The concept of "illimitable et cetera" strikes a chord with me as I contemplate the actors and actants contributing to the construction of the Gen Y discourse. There is an inherent abundance of actants and expressions awaiting identification and description. Consequently, it becomes apparent that I require specific focal points and criteria to constrain the data for analysis—a moment of significance (presumably) for any doctoral student. I return to my dissertation, where I outline the research design:

My focal point is the construction of Gen Y as a discourse and its translation to the Turkish context. To limit the data, my guiding principle has been the significance of the actors and texts that contributed to the construction of the discourse. The major indicator I have made use of is the recognition received by the actors and their publications that played a historical role in the evolution and popularisation of the Gen Y discourse in the US and Turkey.

Moving ahead, I read that, as per Czarniawska (2017, 157), ANT advances by tracing the connections between observed programs and antiprograms of action “until it is clear how some actants became actors or even macro-actors, elucidating the process of building a network”. I revisit my notes to reaffirm the definitions of these two concepts, as they hover vaguely in my memory. Programs of action represent the objectives of actors engaged in the construction of Generation Y, while antiprograms of action encompass the contradictory goals of other actants. The differentiation between programs and antiprograms hinges on the perspective of the chosen observer (Akrich and Latour 1992, 261). I ponder the reason for my imperfect recollection of these concepts, which offer a seemingly valuable and straightforward way to narrate the discourse of Generation Y. The initial explanation that surfaces is that these concepts were used by ANT’s scholars in earlier works (Latour 1999; Akrich and Latour 1992), rather than ANT’s seminal works. However, more importantly, my conceptualisation of the research subject encompasses both the programs and antiprograms of action. I understand the Generation Y discourse to be the sum of struggles and collaborations in the process of naming, defining, and maintaining the term’s relevance and profitability for the interested actors. Consequently, the collective efforts involved in designating, defining, and upholding the term’s significance and profitability are the programs of action in the construction of Gen Y, whereas the efforts that jeopardise its import and premium are the antiprograms of action. For instance, in the context of my research, the actors engaged in the construction of Gen Y share an objective: to validate, substantiate, and demonstrate the utility of generational classifications in interpreting societal shifts based on youth behaviour. In contrast, antiprograms of action challenge or refute this assertion, for example, academics who contend that the categorisation lacks scientific credibility, or journalists who argue that these labels are imported from the United States and thus ill-suited for the Turkish context. With a growing sense of confidence, I come to understand the potential of structuring my dissertation employing ANT’s terminology. I revisit Czarniawska’s (2017, 157) assertion with a renewed sense of assurance:

[The ANT research program] continues by tracing connections between observed programs and antiprograms of action until it is clear how some actants became actors or even macro actors, elucidating the process of building a network. If this network acquired a distinct and stable character, it 'speaks in one voice' – that of its spokesperson. In companies, that person is usually the CEO, chairperson of the board of directors, or chief communication officer.

In the case of Generation Y, I discern that consultants, consultancy companies, academics, journalists, and various other voices assume the role of spokespersons for this generation. They delineate and expound upon their attributes and aspirations at both national and international levels. However, I acknowledge that members of Generation Y themselves very rarely possess a direct voice within this ongoing conversation.

However, a sense of scepticism leads me to question whether this network has indeed developed a distinctive and steadfast character, articulating a unified viewpoint. I think to myself: *Yes, it does appear that numerous individuals acknowledge the presence of a generation marked by shared characteristics. Nonetheless, this notion demands a more thorough investigation.*

Translation

So far, everything seems to be going as planned. *Why don't I try to explain the thesis and its findings in the terms of ANT's translation?* I think to myself. The idea of translation holds a pivotal position within ANT, to the extent that what is presently recognised as Actor-Network Theory was once termed the sociology of translation (Akrich, Callon, and Latour 2013; Callon 1984). Akrich, Callon, and Latour (2013, 12–13) articulate the definition of translation as follows:

By translation we mean all the negotiations, intrigues, acts of persuasion, calculations and violence by which one actor or force allows itself or is given the authority to speak or act on behalf of another actor or force: "your interests are our interests", "do what I want", "you can't succeed without going through me". As soon as an actor says "we", he translates other actors into a single will for which he becomes the soul or spokesperson. He begins to act for many and not just for one. They gain strength.

While reflecting on ANT's idea of translation, I realise that I may not have given sufficient attention to the aforementioned quotations: "your interests are our interests', 'do what I want', 'you can't succeed without going through me'. As soon as an actor says 'we', they translate other actors into a single will for which they become the soul or spokesperson". With a touch of nostalgia, I quietly say to myself: *Indeed, when I first read this, I thought that this idea of translation seemed quite suitable to understand Gen Y but that was years ago, at the very beginning of the dissertation. I wonder: Is it still possible to say the same thing?*

As I progress, I contemplate that it would not be incorrect to state that the primary focus of this dissertation revolves around the idea of translation, that is, the struggles and collaborations of different actors to have a say or to talk on behalf of Gen Y. *Yes, I am telling a translation story*, I boast to myself. Yet, I realise that when I do so, I am essentially trying to convince myself. Promptly, the concept of the obligatory passage point (OPP) within the translation process, as mentioned in Chapter IV, springs to my mind.

OPP is a part of Callon's four moments of the translation process, usually linked to the initial (problematization) phase of a translation process. I halt and revisit the notes I've taken concerning this subject, engaging with Callon's four moments of translation: (1) Problematization, (2) Interesement, (3) Enrolment, and (4) Mobilisation.¹⁵³ Czarniawska (2017) exemplifies these four moments of translation based on the famous story of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum 2008):

Problematization

"In Callon's terms, the story begins with problematization, in which an initial set of actants defines or redefines a problem and offers itself as a solution" writes Czarniawska (2017, 157). *Alright, I have arrived at the heart of Generation Y as a discourse*, I say to myself and try to rephrase the predicament and the resolution proposed by the Gen Y discourse within my thoughts:

The world is on the threshold of a big change, a.k.a. digitalisation, and if we do not understand that change, we will fail. This change has shaped the young people and now these young people are the carriers of this change. As a result, understanding the youth means understanding the zeitgeist. Due to this change, we encounter new problems such as the new social movements (e.g., the various Occupy movements, BLM), high turnover rates in companies, and digitalisation itself, which supposedly will lead to millions of unemployed. Therefore, it is a problem for everyone who needs to or at least anyone who feels the need to keep up with this change.

"The acceptance of the goal is an obligatory passage point for entering the network: 'We must go to Oz.'" says Czarniawska (2017, 157). At this point, I ask myself: *What is the obligatory passage point for Gen Y discourse?* and find the answer: *To stay up to date and to understand the needs of the future, we need to understand Generation Y because they represent and shape the future at the same time.*

¹⁵³ It is important to bear in mind that as Shiga (2007, 42) points out the delineations among different translation stages may be more flexible than Callon's model suggests, yet it proves valuable in illustrating how claims and projects undergo a metamorphosis into technological facts and artefacts, without assuming social, natural, or technological realities as fixed entities.

Interessement

I continue to read Czarniawska (2017, 157). The next step after the obligatory passage point is interessement. This is when each entity that has passed through the passage point is locked into place, so that its reciprocal relations are invested with some interest. In *The Wizard of Oz* narrative, Dorothy's desire is to go back to her home in Kansas, while the Scarecrow seeks a brain, the Tin Man longs for a heart, and the Lion yearns for courage. These characters are locked into place and their reciprocal relations are invested with interest.

As I immerse myself in Czarniawska's illustration, a multitude of actors and their varied roles and interests in shaping Gen Y swirl within my thoughts. Within the pages of my dissertation, I attempt to reframe their contributions, intertwining them into cohesive narrative:

Some companies need to look young; some HR personnel need to increase young employees' satisfaction or change the strict attitudes of their older managers; some consultants want to sell consultancy about generational conflicts; some Public Relations departments try to attract business journalists' attention with their new management practices they claim to have developed for Gen Y in order to gain publicity in practitioner magazines; business journalists need an eye-catching title or a news topic for their audience; young employees need arguments for their managers when they want a change in the company. Research companies, on the other hand, dress up their (already existing) panel data with generational labels to publish and sell them as new trend reports or reports on generations in an easy and inexpensive way. In the meantime, management scholars need to be cited more and can achieve this by publishing research about a topic everyone is talking about, and mainstream media can cover political events and identify the actors of these events as Gen Y, which underlines mainly the age while hiding the other possible aspects.

Enrolment

Czarniawska (2017, 157) adds: "On their way to Oz, adventures on the road force them to align and coordinate. Callon calls that process enrolment".

Czarniawska's words resonate within my thoughts as I delve deeper into the concept. Like a group embarking on a grand adventure towards the mythical land of Oz, Gen Y (as a discourse) faces numerous trials and tribulations along the way. These experiences force them to come together, align their goals, and coordinate their actions. Drawing inspiration from *Wizard of Oz*, I start to piece together the puzzle of Generation Y's journey:

The first challenge for Generation Y was finding an appropriate name. The generation born around 1980 needed a widely recognised and accepted label. Several names were suggested, including Millennials, Gen ME, digital natives, Net generation, and Generation Y. The term "Millennials"

originated from the bestselling book “Generations” written by Howe and Strauss in 1991. It was the first time this term was used to describe the generation born around 1980. On the other hand, the label “Generation Y” was first coined in an editorial in Advertising Age in August 1993.

At the outset of this journey, generation experts and consultants employed a strategy of mentioning all the labels but advocating for their own preference. However, as the generation gained popularity, actors in the US eventually aligned themselves with one specific name: Millennials. Unlike the US, in Turkey, Generation Y has been the most popular label right from the beginning.

The second challenge revolved around determining the cut-off points for Generation Y. When does a generation begin and end? How should these years be determined? Does it truly make sense that someone born in 1980 belongs to Generation Y, while another person born in 1979 belongs to Generation X?

Until recently, there was no consensus on these dates. Different actors, driven by varying motivations and interests, defined these birth years differently. Academics working with quantitative data need to be precise in their analysis. Hence, it is more convenient for them to independently delimit the age ranges of a generation based on the data they have when their aim is to demonstrate the existence of significant differences between generations.

On the other hand, consultants specialising in generational issues adopt a relatively cautious and flexible position regarding the birth years and use the “gradual change” argument to address the question: Does it truly make sense that someone born in 1980 belongs to Generation Y, while another person born in 1979 belongs to Generation X? This argument suggests that there is a gradual transition between generations. For instance, according to Twenge (2014), the level of entitlement gradually increases within Generation Y. Therefore, based on this rationale, although someone born in 1980 is officially considered part of Generation Y, it is likely that this individual exhibits more characteristics of Generation X compared to someone born in 1997.

Contrary to these antiprograms that question the validity of birth cohort as a scientific concept and criticise the absence of consensus regarding the age range of Generation Y, some writers prioritise being among the first to speak on behalf of this generation in their respective fields. This also entails defining the age interval as early as possible. For instance, in his popular management book, Bruce Tulgan (2001) defines Gen Y as people born between 1978 and 1984, which represents significantly early birth years and relatively short intervals for Generation Y. However, these years allow him to be one of the first to discuss the generation born around 1980 as a new type of employee.

The confusion and debates surrounding the cut-off dates of Generation Y were largely resolved when Pew Research, a prominent actor on research, publicly established the definitive years for Gen Y (1980–1996) in 2018, citing their survey data as the basis for their determination.

Meanwhile many other attacks/adventures have taken place. Many scholars have raised concerns about the empirical and theoretical shortcomings of the concept (Chap II.A.). Leftists and feminists have argued that the notion of generation merely masks underlying class and gender conflicts. Nationalists have rejected the concept as a foreign import from the US, while anti-capitalists have dismissed it as a mere consumer profile.

Mobilisation

Czarniawska (2017, 157) concludes the story of the journey, stating, “And then they come to Oz and mobilize: they speak as one, and successfully confront the Wizard, because together, they are larger than the Wizard. A successful translation took place on the road”.

I contemplate.

The major actors who have contributed to the construction of Generation Y differentiate themselves from each other by rejecting some generational traits or distinctive features. However, they provide a similar overall representation of Generation Y:

First and foremost, this generation is described as technologically adept and socially connected. They are seen as progressive, civic-minded, and fun. On the other hand, they are often characterised as spoiled, unrealistic, impatient, and lazy. These traits are believed to stem from their upbringing, as they have grown up with easy and fast access to information and products, leading to a sense of entitlement.

Most importantly, I observe that in order to present a unified position, these actors agree on certain assumptions:

- Generations exist and exhibit significant differences from one another.
- Generation Y is shaped by and at the same time is shaping a new era or zeitgeist, characterised by digitalisation.

Therefore, understanding Generation Y is crucial to understanding the needs of the future, as they represent the future themselves. By doing so, these actors start to talk on behalf of the generation born around 1980 and become the spokesperson of this age group, who cannot get together and talk for themselves.

I ponder, *I think I can present my thesis as a consistent (and hopefully interesting for many) translation story* and feel a little relieved. However, as I am crafting the conclusion, I recognise the need to provide a more detailed and systematic overview of my findings.

VII.B. Findings

VII.B.1. The Key Actors in Different Contexts

Let me first present the major actors and the contexts in which they participate, I address my imaginary audience and start to write:

The research involves the analysis of three distinct contexts. The first context examined is the United States, which is the origin of many popular generational discourses, including that of Gen Y. This analysis, presented in Chapter IV, focuses on the circulant state of the discourse, drawing upon books, newspaper and magazine articles, and research reports.

In this context, the Gen Y discourse involves four key groups of actors: generation experts, journalists, large research and consultancy companies, and academics. Generation experts hold the most influential position, publishing books, giving talks, and offering consultations on generational issues. Journalists contribute to the dissemination and legitimacy of the discourse through articles, collaborations with experts, and coverage of generational topics. Research and consultancy companies play a significant role by conducting surveys and publishing reports, influencing the evolution of the generational discourses. Academics have limited influence despite their large number of publications, but their validation is important for the other generation experts, who collaborate with them through co-authorship, lectures, and referencing their academic articles. When examining the construction of a generation, it is inevitable to consider the generation itself as a significant actor. However, Lyons's (2017, 213) research puts forth that the use of common generational labels in people's discussions, such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Millennials, is observed to be quite inconsistent. Lyons notices an age-related pattern where younger participants exhibit a reduced tendency to identify with a specific generational group, even if it corresponds to their age category. The lack of identification with generational labels among Gen Y is significant in view of the considerable time, effort, and resources invested in targeting them.

The second context investigated is Turkey, where the Gen Y discourse follows a unique trajectory. The term Gen Y only gained prominence in Turkey during the 2013 Gezi protests, as it was used to explain and interpret the unprecedented nature of these events in mainstream media. Chapter V explores the

circulant state of the Gen Y discourse in the Turkish context, utilising text-based data such as bestselling books, academic and magazine articles, and research reports from consultancy companies.

In the Turkish context, a similar constellation of actors involved in shaping and disseminating the discourse surrounding Generation Y can be observed. However, in contrast to the United States, where multiple generation experts exert influence, the discourse in Turkey is primarily influenced by a singular and prominent figure: Evrim Kuran. Rather than relying on bestselling books as a medium, the evolution of the discourse in Turkey has been primarily driven by Kuran's presence in the mainstream media, particularly during the Gezi protests. Despite the existence of a significant number of academic articles addressing Generation Y, no academic figure holds substantial sway over the construction and dissemination of the discourse in Turkey. Furthermore, a distinct and influential cohort of individuals self-identifying as Generation Y is not discernible within the Turkish context.

The third context under scrutiny is the realm of companies in Turkey, as they play a significant role in Gen Y discourse production, often leading to the adoption of various management practices. Chapter VI centres on examining the discourse in its registered state within these companies. This analysis is based on 26 in-depth interviews and two participatory observations. The interviews serve to explore how individuals within these companies perceive, relate to, and use the Gen Y discourse in their work lives. Furthermore, the same interviews and observations have also led to the identification of four cases where Gen Y knowledge is explicitly and formally integrated into managerial practices. These cases include Gen Y workshops in six companies, the establishment of a Gen Y social activity club in BeddingCo, and the implementation of the Y-Board and reverse mentoring in FMCGCo.

During the circulant state, primary actors, including consultants, endeavour to transform the discourse surrounding Generation Y into marketable products such as workshops, books, and consultancy services. Within the organisational context, when transitioning from the circulant state to the registered state, various individuals assume active roles in (re)producing and influencing the discourse. These actors encompass HR personnel, managers, both long-term employees and new hires, as well as representatives of different age groups within the workforce. Their diverse perspectives and interests reshape the discourse.

My fieldwork observation suggests that the problems and misconceptions surrounding generational identification and self-identification among the interviewees show that generational categories could be viewed as a collection of traits primarily related to work, rather than an age group or birth cohort. This observation also aligns with Foster's (2013a, 212) argument that employees utilise generational distinctions and discourses to distinguish their work approach and values from those of others.

Consequently, there is a confusion of generational identification based on birth years and self-identification with popular generational labels among the interviewees.

Moreover, mere self-identification is insufficient for an individual to become a significant contributor to the construction of a generational discourse. It is also crucial for members of a generation to actively engage in formal or informal organisations where they can voice their perspectives and be heard. In this context, there has been no notable group or organisation to date that explicitly claims to represent the voices of Generation Y. Therefore, Gen Y proper—all people born in Turkey around 1980—is not a significant actor directly contributing to the construction of the Gen Y discourse.

Having read through my words, I notice a touch of rigidity, lacking a relaxed tone. Nevertheless, I see it as a fitting summary and a necessary element. I decide to continue and ask myself: *What should I write about next?* and answer: *Now that I have presented the findings on the contexts and actors, the focus should be on the content. What is the most important finding in terms of content? Is the discourse of Generation Y a management discourse? Perhaps, but that is not where I should start.* I decide that assumptions should be the first point to refer to and I start writing.

VII.B.2. Assumptions and common claims of the Gen Y discourse

Assumptions, assumptions, contextual implicit, and explicit assumptions, I murmur to myself. The memory of becoming preoccupied with uncovering assumptions in every explanation over the past few years resurfaces, and I recall how I began to perceive nearly everything as a collection of assumptions. A smile tugs at my lips. *I hope I have not turned into an idealist;* I think to myself. Yet, understanding that pondering these matters is not feasible given the constraints of time and energy, I divert my attention back to my thesis. My recollection then takes me through the evolution of the entire process:

I started the journey by conceptualising Generation Y not as a mere demographic category but as a construction and a matter of discourse. To shed light on this phenomenon, I have conducted a discourse analysis, influenced by ANT's discourse-oriented ethnography to explore how Generation Y is articulated in three distinct contexts.

I have come to realise that discourse analysis is the key to revealing the contextualised assumptions of this discourse. During my pursuit of a comprehensive summary of the assumptions and premises of the Gen Y discourse, I have uncovered two major axes of assumptions. The first axis revolves around the definition of a generation and its conceptualisation as a birth cohort. The second axis of assumptions stems from identifying Generation Y as a young generation.

Subsequently, I continue to document the assumptions of the Gen Y discourse, itemising them one by one:

Gen Y is primarily defined by birth years (e.g., people born from 1980 to 1996), which implies that the concept of a generation itself is based on individuals born within specific and consecutive years. If this were the sole definition of Gen Y, however, there would be no meaningful distinction between a generation and an age group. Nonetheless, the definition of Gen Y goes beyond birth years and includes a narrative of a “new” era that this generation has experienced from childhood until now. In this context, the concepts of generation and birth cohort designate “a group of people who have lived through a specific period of time and shared common historical experiences” (Statt 2004a). Thus, the cohort-based understanding of generation comprises two crucial elements: age and the shared formative experiences during a particular stage of life.

In line with this definition, the cohort-informed view of generation assumes that:

- Generations are defined by quantifiable boundaries—specific birth years—and considered sufficiently homogeneous to be observed and hold significance. Based on this perspective, the discourse surrounding Generation Y assumes greater diversity between generational groups than their inherent diversity. Experiencing significant and formative events at similar ages implies a causal influence in shaping similar attitudes, traits, and values among the generation that shares these experiences.
 - On the one hand, this argument assumes that developmental events occurring early in a person’s lifespan have a greater impact on the formation of stable traits like personality, attitudes, and values compared to experiences later in life. In other words, individuals are significantly influenced by their youth experiences, which play a major role in shaping their character (as commonly argued).
 - On the other hand, it assumes that category membership determines individual attributes, which is also a deterministic point of view. Hence, generational identities are perceived as fixed and unchanging (McDaniel 2002, 100–101), given that individuals have no control or choice over their birth timing. Consequently, adopting a cohort-informed view on generations is prone to producing explanations that are biologically deterministic (and essentialist).
- Another implicit assumption related to this conceptualisation is that simply being born in consecutive years within a society automatically categorises individuals as part of a generation. This is often the case in popular and academic accounts, where the formative

experiences and their effects on individuals are not clearly identified. Following this line of reasoning, a new generation is believed to emerge approximately every 20 years and is expected to be distinct from the previous ones. In other words, generations are not occasional or context-specific phenomena that appear at certain stages of history, but rather continuous and ongoing entities.

Based on these assumptions, it is argued that Generation Y is also notably distinct from other generations, often without requiring strong empirical evidence or a theoretically coherent basis for support. Upon reaching this stage, the idea that differences give rise to conflict becomes intertwined with the claim of Generation Y's distinctiveness from other generations. As a result, an implicit assertion emerges that intergenerational conflicts are unavoidable due to these generational differences. Consequently, the initial takeaway suggests that understanding Gen Y is crucial to mitigating intergenerational conflicts.

Furthermore—the argument goes—this generation is not merely distinct from previous ones; the very era into which Gen Yers were born and have been raised is also markedly different and new. The technologies they are exposed to, such as the internet, computers, mobile phones, and social media, significantly differ from those of the previous times. Yet this argument is common to generational discourses (White 2013, 228) and is based on a deterministic perspective that views technology as the primary driving force behind social change.

Building upon the aforementioned implicit assumption (that differences cause conflict), it can be inferred that the emergence of this new era is likely to give rise to conflicts for those who do not comprehend the demands it entails, i.e., previous generations.

In this context, by being born and raised in this new era, Generation Y represent the embodiment of this era, carrying its values, aspirations, and potentials. In other words, young generations are both influenced by and influential in shaping the present and future. Therefore, Gen Y should be regarded as the representative of the close future.

This argument, which is the essence of Gen Y discourse, is further reinforced by the notion that generations succeed one another, with a new generation born approximately every 20 years, while older generations retire and pass away. As a result, younger generations will assume positions of leadership as future presidents, politicians, managers, and bosses, while the older generation steps back.

Overall, the assumptions and related claims that Gen Y discourse is founded upon can be summed up:

Generation Y is significantly different from the previous generations. These differences are likely to generate conflicts. As young generations represent the inevitable future, “generational conflict” and “becoming outdated” are essentially synonymous issues. Therefore, the solutions provided by generation experts (along with research and consultancy companies) for addressing generational conflicts also serve as strategies to maintain relevance, i.e., avoid becoming outdated. In this context, as Williams (2019, 378) points out, the essential function of the discourse surrounding Gen Y is to integrate existing assumptions about youth and the future into established managerial principles and practices, presenting them as the requirements of the future through a more persuasive narrative.

I read through my writing and reflect *I think it turned out well. Now, what should I do next? Up until now, I have outlined the actors shaping the Gen Y discourse and the major assumptions and claims of the discourse in general terms. I suppose it is time to delve deeper and discuss the findings. It is time to be more assertive*—something that, admittedly, I am not particularly fond of.

VII.C. Discussions

VII.C.1. Illusion of novelty and the success of the Gen Y discourse

Equipped with a thorough exploration of the major assumptions and claims of the Gen Y discourse, I will now delve deeper into the construction of Generation Y. Based on my findings, I intend to question and scrutinise the distinction between what merely seems novel and what genuinely constitutes novelty. Furthermore, I aim to discern if the latter can offer a rationale for the extensive adoption of the discourse.

During my exploration of the three contexts, a common thread runs through the assumptions and claims of the Gen Y discourse. It is interesting to observe that not only written accounts but also the oral articulations of experiences regarding Generation Y echo each other—with variations yet tell a similar story. Despite the nuances, these narratives across different contexts and countries collectively paint a coherent picture.

The central theme that emerged from these assumptions revolves around the idea of newness. Generation Y is seen as a new generation, living in a new era or zeitgeist. Meanwhile, businesses are adapting new models. Consequently, the prominent voices in the Gen Y discourse present fresh tips, advice, and prescriptions for success, emphasising the need to adapt, avoid conflicts with younger generations, and stay up to date.

However, upon analysis, a key revelation unfolds within my dissertation. Generation Y discourse and the accompanying management practices are not as groundbreaking and novel as acclaimed. Despite

the enthusiastic endorsement of novelty, I uncover the assumptions and preexisting practices that counteract the assertion of complete novelty.

I recognise the profound implications of this discovery within my research. Now, my task entails a comprehensive exploration of the specifics, documenting the facets frequently presented as fresh, even though they do not genuinely bear novelty:

Not new: Gen Y traits

First and foremost, the majority of the traits attributed to Gen Y are not unique to Gen Y. Some old and common stereotypes about youth are presented as Gen Y traits. For instance, older managers exhibit a reluctance to have their decisions or directives challenged, and they express their dissatisfaction towards younger subordinates by accusing them of questioning everything, having unrealistic expectations, and lacking diligence and patience. These criticisms are often articulated through comparisons between their own youth and the present era, wherein Generation Y is young. Similarly, Foster (2016, 376) identifies two discourse strategies employed by younger and older employees, namely “entitlement and materialism”: Young individuals are perceived, at worst, as excessively entitled or, at best, as valuing work-life balance; whereas older individuals are perceived as dedicated to work because, at worst, they prioritise monetary gains or, at best, because work is considered virtuous. And this is the case not only within the companies but also in mainstream media and business magazines.

Kitch’s (2003) work also sheds light on the fact that many generations, despite being perceived as distinct from one another, are portrayed in a strikingly similar manner over time in the mainstream media. For instance, when Baby Boomers or Generation X were initially discussed, they too were depicted as rebellious and entitled, much like Generation Y is now. This discovery unveils a pattern in how generational traits are portrayed in the media, a pattern that repeats itself with the emergence of each new generational label. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Rauvola, Rudolph, and Zacher (2019, 5–6) on consistent repetition of generational characteristics in media discourse.

These trait attributions associated with both older generations and Generation Y reflect the perpetuation of stereotypical perceptions of the young and the old in the workplace. When coupled with the additional stereotype that portrays young people as more progressive and rebellious than older generations, it becomes evident that the Generation Y discourse is rooted in long-standing common stereotypes that predate the emergence of the Generation Y.

Not new: Advised management practices

The Gen Y discourse includes claims about the necessity for new management practices. According to management consultants and authors who focus on Gen Y, managers and companies are encouraged

to revise their understanding of management in response to the distinctive attitudes and expectations of this generation compared to the previous ones. The prescriptions and advice offered by these consultants and authors often incorporate or build upon the depiction of generational traits, as evidenced by the prevalent characteristic of the management-guru style (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002, 200). Moreover, these recommendations frequently pertain to long-standing management practices and concepts such as mentorship and flexible working hours.

Despite the limited presence of management practices explicitly designated for Gen Y in Turkish companies, I have analysed four distinct management practices that are presented and considered to be for the Generation Y. These practices include workshops on Generation Y, the Gen Y social activity club in BeddingCo, as well as reverse mentoring and the Y-board implemented in FMCGCo. With the exception of reverse mentoring, all the management practices predate the emergence of the Gen Y discourse. This inconsistency challenges the prevalent assertion within the discourse that management must reconsider all its previous approaches due to the stark dissimilarities between Generation Y and its predecessors.

Not new: Management ideology

It is also noteworthy that the types of changes promoted in the Gen Y discourse are not novel either. Numerous management concepts, such as leadership and mentorship, have been advocated for as similar principles of effective management since the 1980s (Ezzamel, Lilley, and Willmott 1994, 455; Barley and Kunda 1992, 382). Moreover, previous scholarly works have already identified comparable trends within the realm of corporate life, as evidenced by studies conducted by Boltanski and Chiapello (2007), Sennett (2009; 2010), and Mills (2002, 235), indicating an evolving aspect of capitalism rather than anything new about the newest generation to participate in it.

Oh, hold on, I say to myself, reflecting on the ideas presented in the previous paragraphs about the false claim of newness in the Generation Y discourse. It reminds me of the ANT's approach to the idea of innovation. Innovation is typically defined as "the introduction of new ideas, methods, or things" (Collins Dictionary 2023b). However, Akrich et al. (2002, 205) shed a new light on the idea by defining innovation as "the art of interessement, an increasing number of allies who will make you stronger and stronger." ANT's definition of innovation does not revolve primarily around inventiveness or newness. In line with this, ANT distinguishes between two different types of explanations for the success of innovations:

One emphasising the innovation's intrinsic qualities, the other on its capacity to create adhesion between numerous allies (users, intermediaries, etc.). In the first case, we use the term "diffusion model" (the innovation becomes widespread due to its intrinsic properties); in the second case, we use the term "model of interessement" (the fate of the innovation depends on the active participation of

all those who have decided to develop it) [...] The model of diffusion restricts the work of elaboration to the limited circle of the designers responsible for the project; the model of *interessement* underlines the collective dimension of innovation. In the former, the majority of actors are passive; in the latter, it is active. In the former, the innovation is either taken up or left; in the latter, adoption is synonymous with adaptation. (Akrich, Callon, and Latour 2002, 208–9)

But they are not discussing a concept or a discourse; they are discussing innovative physical products such as the design of the famous Macintosh or Edison's high resistance filament, I murmur to myself, contemplating the passage I have just read. The words linger in my mind, and in doubt I ask myself, Can I really use this approach on innovation for the Gen Y discourse?

I ponder the ideas put forth by Latour, the notion of disregarding the boundaries between the human and the non-human, the discursive and the real, and things and words. *Why can't I approach Gen Y as if it were an innovation?* With these thoughts swirling in my head, I engage in a silent dialogue with myself. Uncertainty hangs in the air, yet I cannot resist the urge to give it a try. Perhaps it will yield fruitful insights, or perhaps not. If the latter proves true, I will leave it out of my dissertation—an exhausting strategy I have employed throughout the entire dissertation.

Leaning back in my worn-out office chair, I mutter to myself, *So I guess I have made it clear. There is not much novelty in the intrinsic qualities of Gen Y and the discourse that surrounds it. The qualities attributed to this generation are not significantly different from those ascribed to the youth in general, not only in contemporary times but throughout history, generation upon generation.*

Then, a question emerges in my mind: *What is particularly new about Generation Y and popular generational labels? Maybe the novelty should be searched for among the forms of participation by all those who have decided to develop the discourse.*

Okay let's start (again) with the basics, I murmur as I start to put my thoughts into writing:

Generation Y is primarily a classification, or rather a subcategory, within the broader concept of generations. While social generation, in general, is a classification predominantly created and discussed within academic and scientific communities, Generation Y is predominantly constructed by business circles.

Business circles adopt and transform the idea of generation from academia into a management concept. Therefore, what is noteworthy and new here is that the individuals and entities contributing to the development of this classification include management gurus, consultants, consultancy companies, management book publishers, business journalists, managers, and HR departments, rather than social scientists or social theorists like Mannheim, who typically work in universities or

research centres. In line with this, it can be assumed that their interests, networks, strategies, styles, and the norms within their field are different than those of academics, at least to some extent.

I come to understand that this difference, which stems from the pursuit of novelty in the Gen Y discourse, also holds the key to understanding the starting point of this dissertation: Despite the widely acknowledged weaknesses of generational categories in analysis and practical application, how has the Gen Y discourse gained such significant prominence and influence?

Returning to the realm of ANT, I remember the statement of Akrich, Callon, and Latour (2002, 209) in their article where they explain the key success of innovations: “adoption is synonymous with adaptation”. This quote resonates with me: *Hence, the easy answer is that the Gen Y discourse is easily adaptable. But why is it so readily embraced and considered by many as a means to adapt?*

That is the underlying query that demands further exploration. My thoughts whirl as I contemplate this puzzle. I revisit my notes on the findings: Ambiguity¹⁵⁴ is one of the major answers—a quality which is not so much desirable within the academic communities but common for management fashions.

First and foremost, I reflect on the different conceptualisations of Generation Y, noting the intermingling of different understandings of what constitutes a generation by the prominent actors. On the one hand, it is defined based on birth years—an ostensibly objective criterion aligned with scientific statistics. On the other hand, anecdotal examples rooted in kinship structures, such as parent-child relationships, are often employed to illustrate generational differences.

Moreover, Generation Y is presented as carrying the spirit of the age, akin to the influential 68ers. The presence and interchangeable use of three distinct and not very compatible understandings of generation within the Gen Y discourse (kinship, birth cohort, and socio-historical agency) creates an ambiguity that endorses the adoption of the discourse as it creates new spaces for new interpretations.

While the birth cohort perspective reinforces the scientific and objective nature of the concept, examples grounded in kinship structures make it easier for audiences and potential allies to relate to and grasp generational differences. Additionally, presenting Gen Y as a form of socio-historical agency enables speakers to assert that this generation represents the new zeitgeist while fostering a sense of belonging among those described.

¹⁵⁴ Ambiguity refers here to something that is unclear or can be understood in multiple ways (Merriam-Webster n.d.).

I ponder to myself: *This could be one of the unique aspects (therefore new) of the Gen Y discourse. Consultants and writers on Gen Y, especially, manage to amalgamate distinct conceptualisations of generations that cannot be reconciled in academic discourse where clear and distinct definitions are prioritised.*

Moreover, the traits associated with Gen Y are also characterised by ambiguity and vagueness. These common qualities of generational traits allow for very diverse interpretations and definitions of Gen Y. For instance, from a positive perspective, Generation Y is seen as self-confident, friendly, and having been raised by parents who treat them as friends. Consequently, they question hierarchies and are reluctant to follow orders unless they understand the underlying reasons and benefits. Their impatience necessitates immediate feedback and conversations with experienced individuals about their career prospects, indicating an expectation of reciprocity and mutuality. Alternatively, a negative perspective suggests that Generation Y is excessively self-confident if not brazenly entitled, due to being brought up to think they are special and unique by their parents. Consequently, they expect their managers to display a similar attitude by prioritising their well-being, both personally and professionally. Their disregard for hierarchies, experience, and formalities necessitates convincing explanations for assigned tasks. Additionally, their impatience precludes waiting for annual reports to assess their performance, requiring managers to provide constant and immediate feedback with a positive focus.

These discursive ambiguities ease the adoption and adaptation of the discourse. Ambiguity is often cited as an explanation for how management ideas transform into management fashions (e.g., H. Giroux 2006; Erçek and Say 2008; Kelemen 2000) and contribute to the success of management gurus (e.g., Collins 2012; Clark and Salaman 1998). However, what sets Generation Y apart is that it is perceived as a scientific concept, supported and legitimised by certain statistics. It is an ambiguous yet “scientific” term at once.

Another ambiguous and particular aspect of Gen Y discourse that might explain its success is the diversity of the uses and meanings of Generation Y, as I highlighted in Chapter VI. Depending on the context, Generation Y might mean:

- An age group (e.g., people born between 1980–1996)
- Today’s young adults
- New employees
- Young employees
- Subordinates

- Even independent of any age references, it might designate an attitude towards work (e.g., employees who prioritise work-life balance).

This slippery diversity in what Gen Y designates eases the adaptation and adoption of the discourse. In line with these meanings, the Gen Y discourse serves different functions and various ends. Based on my fieldwork, it is evident that there is a considerable variety of managerial approaches in implementing Gen Y concepts in companies. Gen Y workshops, for example, are used not primarily for designing young employees, but rather as a tool to change strict managerial attitudes and address older managers who resist organisational changes. From the perspective of these managers, the issues they face with their subordinates, such as perceived indulgence or high expectations, are made less personal and framed more as challenges associated with an entire generation that supposedly represents the future.

Moreover, the discourse surrounding this ambiguous “scientific” term legitimises itself by referring to youth stereotypes and to commonsensical arguments and assumptions of the generation idea itself, which makes it hard to disagree.

As can be seen, the Gen Y discourse, despite emphasising newness and a new zeitgeist in its program of actions, incorporates many ideas, practices, and ideologies that are not necessarily new. However, the actors involved, the fields they come from, and the strategies they employ are new when Gen Y is viewed as a scientific concept. This particularity of the Gen Y discourse also explains to some extent its widespread popularity.

I stop writing for a moment and am pleasantly surprised to see how smoothly the findings, ideas, research questions, and aims come together without deviating from the theoretical framework.

VII.C.2. Lost in translation: Questioning Gen Y discourse and its premises

In this section, I embark on a new journey, exploring the perspectives on the world and workplace presented by the Gen Y discourse and associated management practices. Moreover, I will investigate the implications of these perspectives within the Turkish context. Through this investigation, my aim is to reveal the alternative viewpoints that are overshadowed by the discourse.¹⁵⁵

I uncover that the Gen Y discourse represents not only a generation born around 1980; it also paints a vision of a better workplace and improved companies. Diligently, I scrutinise the work-related traits attributed to Gen Y and the management concepts and practices that supposedly align with these

¹⁵⁵ In this section, I must admit that I deviate from the constructivist perspective as I question the accuracy of the representation of Generation Y in the Turkish context. This is mainly done by comparing and contrasting the data from Eurostat with the implications from the Gen Y discourse.

traits. From the texts on Generation Y that I have analysed, four management ideas and practices have often emerged: 1) employer branding, 2) flexibility, 3) innovation, and 4) mentoring and coaching.

In the course of my research, I have ascertained that employer branding is justified in the literature by the perception that Generation Y views companies like consumer brands. This leads to the recommendation that employers should prioritise employee satisfaction, mirroring the importance placed on satisfying buyers. This idea finds support in the traits attributed to Generation Y, such as having high-expectations, being confident, rebellious, and civic-minded.

The claim that Generation Y expects less strictness, and less formality leads to the concept of flexibility being touted as desirable for managers to exhibit towards their younger employees. The concept encompasses practices such as the home office, flexible working hours, and remote work. The need for flexibility is linked to traits such as impatience and rebelliousness, and with freedom being associated with the desire for workplace flexibility.

On the other hand, innovation is portrayed as an inherent quality of Generation Y or a potential outcome if prescribed management practices are implemented. The emphasis on innovation and creativity leads to an implicit assumption that all work should strive to be innovative, making it a primary objective for businesses. This claim is supported by traits such as the generation's aversion to menial tasks and their desire to make an impact or difference.

The discourse also frequently refers to mentorship and coaching practices as aligning well with the traits of Generation Y. As a generation that rejects hierarchical relationships and taking orders, it is implied that they prefer mentors and coaches over traditional bosses and managers. These practices offer advice, training, and assistance rather than strict orders, placing greater value on experience rather than ranks, titles, or age.

My examination in Chapter VI reveals that the managerial practices seemingly designed for younger generations facilitate interaction between young employees and older managers, predominantly from preceding generations. This leads to the argument that the Generation Y discourse legitimises practices that encourage engagement between young and older employees. Examples of such practices include mentorship initiatives within the social activity club at BeddingCo, the implementation of Gen Y Board.

I pause, taking a deep breath, and begin pondering the concepts laid out in the Gen Y discourse. In a tone tinged with scepticism, I ask myself: *So, what is wrong with all these concepts and practices promoted within the Gen Y discourse that seek a workplace with more care, attention, and, to some extent, representation for young employees?*

As I contemplate further, a cynical and sarcastic answer emerges within me: *Probably nothing—as long as we neglect the contexts in which they are recommended and fail to question the shifting focus of the discourse from one aspect to another.*

As I mull over the response, I am reminded once again of the profound impact that discourses hold. Discourses possess the power to shape our perceptions, beliefs, and actions, effectively creating and reinforcing knowledge and authority. They dictate what we accept as reality, while simultaneously marginalising or concealing alternative viewpoints (Hay 2016, 349–51). With this realisation, I acknowledge that I must now delve into the discussion that alternative viewpoints are marginalised by the Gen Y discourse.

The scholarly literature on the very idea of generations already provides important insights. According to Purhonen (2016a, 109) and White (2013, 228), the concept of generations initially emerged as an alternative to the notion of social class, offering a fresh perspective on social change and progress in the late twentieth century. Over time, it has become intertwined with the idea of zeitgeist or other concepts of delineating what is deemed crucial within a particular era. Consequently, as a result of struggles related to classification, the concept of generations becomes contentious. Additionally, it carries elitist undertones, as it implies the existence of a vanguard or “the elite” that claims to represent an entire generation, thereby creating a counterpart—the remaining individuals within the same peer group who are presumed to be represented as “the masses”.

Building on this perspective, Purhonen (2016a, 108) argues that attributing generational interpretations to a social movement from an external standpoint, particularly with the intention of categorising it as a “generational movement,” can be viewed as a strategic effort to undermine and diminish the political agenda and overall significance of the movement. In parallel, Aboim and Vasconcelos (2014, 180⁴) argue that focusing solely on youth can undermine the importance of youth mobilisation, portraying it as a trivial and disengaged form of rebellion. They suggest that this is evident through the widespread use of depoliticised generational labels (e.g., Gens X, Y, Z) to categorize younger generations, as popularised by writers such as Howe and Strauss.

I contemplate that these critiques are applicable to the Gen Y discourse as well. Furthermore, I express that while the designation “Gen Y” encompasses a multitude of connotations, applications, and fulfils diverse objectives, it also neglects several pivotal elements that contribute to comprehending shifts in society and identities. The first thing that comes to my mind is the Gezi protests in Turkey. During the protests, the mainstream media exercised extreme caution in its coverage, avoiding explicit endorsement or criticism of the government due to the prevailing climate of censorship and self-censorship. In this context, the protests were often portrayed as an unexpected and unprecedented

social movement led by Gen Y. Doing so allowed for the marginalisation of some groups who took part and a flattening of the oppositional demographic. Thus, by framing the Gezi protesters as part of a single “new” generation, journalists aimed to present the demonstrations in a less politically charged and, consequently, less risky manner. However, this portrayal led to the need for a further division of the protestors into two distinct categories: “peaceful environmentalists” and “violent protesters”. While the former group was depicted as representing Gen Y, the latter faced criminalisation and stigmatisation, especially from media outlets closely aligned with the AKP Government. This division perpetuated a dichotomy that oversimplified the complex dynamics of the protests and marginalised certain voices within the movement.

As I reflect on the uses of the Gen Y discourse during the Gezi protests, I acknowledge that this is not the sole instance where alternative viewpoints are silenced or marginalised. Curiously, I pose the question to myself: *What else might the Gen Y discourse be overlooking?*

In most cases, the Generation Y discourse tends to ignore factors such as social class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, instead offering up a homogeneous age group. Furthermore, since the concept of generations and the discourse surrounding Gen Y prioritise birth cohorts as the primary element for explaining and understanding social change, it implies that other dimensions may be disregarded.

I find support for this argument in Foster's observations (2013a, 212), who rightly warns about the dangers of using the Generation Y discourse to differentiate people's approaches to work-life balance. Such usage can obscure the changing employment dynamics and increasing precarity in the job market, potentially reinforcing broader discourses that advocate for “flexibility” while devaluing the idea of “lifetime employment”. This, in turn, can lead to the argument that young workers actually prefer precarious employment. Foster emphasises that these discourses tend to prioritise individual concerns and subjective projects while neglecting the evolving contexts in which they exist.

As I ruminate on this matter of “evolving contexts”, I discern that the current condition of the discourse in Turkey still revolves around common descriptions of Generation Y in the US. It can be argued that this generation is perceived to possess certain privileges, allowing them to prioritise work-life balance over financial concerns. This suggests that they may have sufficient financial resources through personal means or parental support to cover expenses such as rent, and health insurance, and remain free from burdens such as credit debt, among others.

Another prevalent trait described in the current discourse is that Generation Y individuals tend to resist hierarchical relationships with their managers and frequently express grievances about their work and superiors. This implies that they may not fear losing their jobs, as if formal mechanisms like work councils, unions, and labour laws impose restrictions on the power of managers and bosses.

To gain a deeper understanding, I have considered fundamental statistics regarding the working situation and conditions in Turkey to assess the accuracy of the description of Generation Y. According to data from Eurostat, Turkey had an unemployment rate of 13.7 percent in 2019, whereas the average in the EU27 stood at 6.7 percent. Specifically, in terms of youth unemployment rates (individuals aged 15–24), Turkey recorded a rate of 25 percent, while the EU27 had a rate of 15 percent. Additionally, it is worth noting that, as of 2019, full-time employment in Turkey averaged 48.5 hours per week, whereas, in the EU27, the average was 40.9 hours per week. In comparison to European countries within the EU27, Turkey has the longest working hours.

Moreover, it strikes me as noteworthy that the unemployment rate does not vary significantly based on educational attainment. For example, according to 2020's Eurostat data, the unemployment rate among university graduates aged 20–64 stands at 12.7 percent in Turkey. Meanwhile, for those with primary education or lower, the rate is only slightly lower at 12.6 percent.

As I contemplate this data, I find myself intrigued by the question: *Who might this Gen Y person be that values flexibility and innovative tasks over strict and repetitive ones, and prefers mentors and coaches over traditional managers, while also showing no fear of job loss?* The answer could lie in someone with specialised qualifications that are highly sought after in the job market. On the other hand, it is possible that this individual does not have to work regularly due to their (presumably) inherited wealth. Additionally, they must not have dependents or familial responsibilities that require financial support. In essence, they are likely to be someone who enjoys certain privileges that afford them the luxury to prioritise these preferences in their professional life.

Taking into account the working conditions and job market in Turkey, I would argue that describing the entire Generation Y cohort with these specific characteristics is an oversimplification and not an accurate representation. Acknowledging this insight may not be deemed groundbreaking, as I have admitted right from the outset of my dissertation.

However, the evidence is clear that the portrayals put forth for the Gen Y do not encapsulate the entire breadth of this age cohort. Instead, they appear to characterise a more limited, privileged subset within this generation—an assessment frequently echoed in critical academic conversations surrounding youth and generational studies. I have ascertained through my research that the delineations of Gen Y predominantly encompass individuals hailing from the upper-middle-class, who demonstrate “westernised” and secular ideals, frequently originating from well-educated and prosperous families.

So, while the representations of Gen Y do not accurately represent the whole age group, it may not be entirely inaccurate for the specific contexts where it is primarily discussed and developed, such as the business world.

In line with this, all the management practices related to Gen Y that I have observed during my fieldwork are specifically targeted towards white-collar workers, rather than blue-collar workers. For instance, the lack of inclusivity of the Gen Y Club at BeddingCo stems from its educational requirements. While blue-collar workers have the opportunity to take part in the Club's activities, the nature and cost of these events make it highly unlikely for them to participate. The only instance where blue-collar workers are mentioned in this context is during the company-sponsored fast-breaking meal organised in the factory during Ramadan, as noted by Muzaffer and Hakan. This example aligns with the idea that the Gen Y discourse tends to disregard lower-class members of the generation and generalize the privileges of the affluent to the entire cohort. In this context, the exclusion of blue-collar employees by the BeddingCo Gen Y Club follows the same pattern of manipulation present across the Gen Y discourse.

The other management practices I have investigated, such as the workshops on Gen Y and reverse mentoring, as well as the Gen Y Board, are all conducted exclusively for white-collar workers. Likewise, Harun, the HR specialist at AutomativeCo, who primarily focuses on blue-collar workers, maintains a sceptical stance toward the definitions of Gen Y. Harun firmly believes that Gen Y related management practices are certainly not made for the blue-collar workers in their factory.

On the other hand, Generation Y discourse and related management practices do not even encompass all white-collar workers in Turkey. Rather, the discourse and practices are predominantly for those from departments that hire highly qualified employees, such as advertisement and marketing departments, and not necessarily those in after-sales roles. Additionally, it does not apply to all companies that work with white-collar employees but mostly to multinational corporations (MNCs) and large Turkish companies that have strong connections with foreign capital.

In practice and at the discursive level, the representations of Generation Y do not include blue-collar workers, or white-collar workers in small and medium-sized Turkish companies, and white-collar workers in departments where their work is considered unskilled, such as call centres and after-sales departments.

However, this false and narrow representation of Gen Y still works in broader cases and contexts, because the representation of Gen Y does not merely cover a privileged group. The representation also addresses the necessities of the future. Therefore, the accuracy of the representation becomes less important as long as it convinces people that it represents the future, giving it discursive power

to influence and bring about desired changes. Not all interests directly align with the Gen Y discourse, however. Due to the substantial ambiguity and vagueness of the discourse, it becomes easier to shape Gen Y traits and mix them with the representation of the future that we desire others to adopt.

I pause in my writing and revisit the preceding two paragraphs, preparing myself to compose the concluding statement for this discussion:

Therefore, I contend that the Gen Y discourse, despite its self-promotion of more egalitarian and equitable workplaces, serves as an antiprogram of action to the agenda of creating a fairer world and workplace. It is important to recognize, however, that all antiprograms of actions have the potential to be transformed into programs of action for “fairness”—if we gain an understanding of their underlying mechanisms and foundations. By comprehending the inner workings and the factors contributing to the success of these antiprograms of actions, we can hopefully harness their potential to drive the advancement of fairness.

VII.D. Reflection on Research Process

In this section, I explore the significant contributions that my PhD dissertation makes to the field of knowledge (VII.D.1.). I also delve into the limitations of the research identified and propose potential directions for future investigation (VII.D.2.). Finally, I present a brief summary of the main points discussed and emphasise their overall significance (VII.D.3.).

VII.D.1. Contribution to knowledge

The main goal of this dissertation is to examine the construction of Gen Y (as a discourse) and its translation to the Turkish context.

The argument presented in this dissertation, along with its epistemological framework, does not directly align with management strategies and human resource departments. It advocates for a critical examination of the claims and practices surrounding generational categorisations, which are frequently promoted by management consultants and portrayed in popular media, specifically in regard to Generation Y. It promotes a sceptical stance towards these portrayals, particularly for practitioners and decision makers who align themselves with the interests of workers, such as unions and workers’ organisations, which may contemplate using generational classifications.

The most significant and primary contribution of this dissertation to academic knowledge is its conceptual framework. Previous studies on (social) generations predominantly approach generations as distinct groups of individuals, relying primarily on quantitative methods such as surveys and

longitudinal research. Besides, critical discussions on generations in academia are often constrained to examining the coherence of the concept and the reliability of the empirical evidence, neglecting broader perspectives. Only a few scholars explore generations as social constructs or examine them through the lens of discourse and representation.

In this context, the conceptualisation of generations as a social construct allows me to examine the narratives and discourses constructed around the idea of Generation Y. Consequently, representations of generations play a central role in these studies. This perspective provides a better understanding of how generational discourses are used and reveals the implicit assumptions they share with other narratives and discourses in our daily lives. Hence, by embracing constructivist approaches to generations, an alternative sphere of knowledge appears, changing the essential questions of research: How do we perceive and engage with the notion of generations? What are the functions and potential uses of the concept of generation? How do certain generational labels reach wide recognition and acceptance? What types of representations of generations are portrayed?

The constructivist approach enabled me to identify remarkable similarities between the discourse on Generation Y and management discourses, mainly in the strategies employed to sustain their relevance and profitability. As a result, this research goes beyond generations to touch upon organisations and fashionable management ideas.

In addition, this similarity helps me to elucidate the popularity and widespread adoption of the Gen Y discourse. Thus, my dissertation contributes to academic knowledge by revealing that the widespread popularity and substantial adoption of a nebulous idea like Gen Y can be attributed not to its inherent explanatory power but predominantly to the relationships and actors involved in its production and dissemination.

At first glance, my focus on understanding the popularity and acceptance of generational labels among different audiences may seem contradictory to the goal of contributing to critical literature. It may appear that the intention is merely to comprehend the “success” of an idea to replicate it in various contexts. This perspective does not align with the preference of many critical organisation studies (COS) and critical management studies (CMS) scholars who analyse management ideas as tools of control within companies or examine broader organisational narratives to uncover the assumptions and practices that perpetuate inequalities. Such preferences often lead critical scholars to reject management concepts and ideas as instruments of domination and control. While it is difficult to disagree with this perspective, it is still beneficial and important to closely examine these concepts to understand their functioning, their purpose, and their creation before rejecting them. By delving into these questions, an enhanced understanding of organisations and organising in general can be

achieved. Consequently, they facilitate the development of counterstrategies or, employing ANT's terminology, antiprograms of actions.

In line with this perspective, management discourses are frequently perceived as tools utilised by managers and employers to exert increased control over their employees in critical management and organisation studies (e.g., Reed and Thomas 2020). However, the management practices I have investigated, including Gen Y workshops, reverse mentoring, and the Y-board, primarily target the mindset transformation of older managers rather than centring on Generation Y itself. This particular finding, along with the parallels observed between management fashions and the Gen Y discourse, contributes to the fields of COS and CMS by offering a more nuanced comprehension of management concepts.

On the other hand, research based on diffusion models of management practices and dichotomies, such as central/peripheral countries, often lead to arguments assuming a linear progression where the global north is ahead while the global south strives to catch up. In the case of Gen Y, this perspective can be exemplified as follows: Gen Y is considered coherent and empirically valid in the US, but not in Turkey due to Turkey's unique process of modernisation,¹⁵⁶ which differs from the industrial revolution in Europe and the absence of a "proper" bourgeoisie. Such claims and research frequently overlook the relationship between the global south and north. In this sense, I believe that ANT's relational ethnography, which disregards categories like modern versus premodern or developed versus non-developed, and instead focuses on following the actors and actants, allows one to avoid such dichotomous conclusions. Moreover, in my exploration of the origins of the Gen Y discourse in the first chapter, I have been able to demonstrate that the claims and assumptions do not differ significantly between the two countries, and more importantly, the type of actors who contribute to the construction of the Gen Y discourse are nearly identical.

Moreover, reflecting on the strengths of this approach, the research provides valuable insights into the representations and instrumentalisation of Gen Y in various fields and media sources. The inclusion of multiple data sources helps to ensure a better understanding of the construction of popular generational labels. Hence, this dissertation makes a contribution to the scholarly literature on generations by providing an in-depth examination of Generation Y as a social construct.

¹⁵⁶ As I argue in Chap V, a similar conception of modernisation also exists in Evrim Kuran's narrative on generations. As a famous Turkish generation expert, she has argued that "Gen Y characteristics" are more evident in the generation born in Turkey after 1985 while the US's Millennials already start in 1980. That 5-year gap between the two countries implies that Turkey lags behind the US by five years.

VII.D.2. Research limitations and future directions

During my research, I came to realise that the construction of the Generation Y discourse is closely intertwined with other popular generational labels. Since my focus was solely on Gen Y, I had limited opportunities to observe the relationship between its construction and the discourses surrounding other generations. Therefore, conducting a comparison and examining the relationship between each generational discourse could yield significant outcomes and insights on the following topics:

Firstly, it could be helpful to investigate the similarities and differences in the definitions and descriptions of other generations in comparison to Gen Y. Understanding how these definitions have evolved over time and discerning the distinctiveness of the Gen Y discourse in relation to other generational discourses could provide valuable insights.

During the research process, I have also encountered several methodological challenges and made various decisions. One of the challenges is that the methodology in this research leans more towards description rather than explanation. As a result, it avoids making generalisations and broad claims. Consequently, questions arise as to the social impact of the research. It becomes challenging to translate the findings into actionable policies.

Another challenge of this approach is the absence of clear or objective indicators that can guide the researcher on where to focus, to what extent, and, perhaps most importantly, when to stop. Particularly with the ANT approach, the researcher must consider numerous entities (both human and non-human) across different dimensions (discursive and practical). This means that the researcher constantly needs to make conscious choices regarding which actors and actants to prioritise. While this grants significant freedom to the researcher, it can also lead to a state of mental exhaustion and uncertainty.

In my case, I have chosen to focus on “Generation Y” as a label, which has provided a multitude of options to explore. However, it could have been less complicated to select a specific actor, such as a generation expert or a research centre, and concentrate solely on them. Nonetheless, I am aware that it would be challenging to find an actor who would be willing to undergo such scrutiny by a PhD student.

Acknowledging the limitations of my research, this dissertation sets the stage for several potential areas of future investigation. I believe further exploration on the following paths is warranted to deepen our understanding of the subject matter:

Focusing on the uses of generational labels in various fields, such as trade unions, political parties, policy makers, and organisations and investigating how these labels are employed within these contexts would provide valuable insights.

An avenue of research that involves conducting an ethnographic study on the production of statistics and research reports on generations would be enriching. Such a study would allow us to understand how statistics are utilised to create generational categories. Similarly, engaging in participant observations of the work lives of generation experts and consultants, as they are one of the major actors of the generational discourses, would provide a better view of the translation process.

Exploring the construction of generational labels by journalists and publishers, along with their potential uses and functions, would also be highly enlightening, considering their crucial role in popularising and legitimising generational categories. In this regard, I see two potential avenues for future research. The first avenue pertains to examining the political stance of news directors and the functions of news related to generational labels. For example, during an interview, a reporter from the business section of a well-known newspaper in Turkey mentioned that Gen Y news is often influenced by the policies set by the section's managers. If they are not inclined to cover issues like worsening working conditions or unemployment rates, lighter subjects like Gen Y tend to be prioritised. The second avenue relates to investigating business-related practices, specifically PR campaigns that make use of generational labels. These campaigns often rely on a network of alliances among journalists, PR companies, and their clients.

By exploring these areas of inquiry, future research can enhance our understanding of generational discourses, their interrelationships, as well as the construction of generational identities, and provide valuable insights into the implementation and translation of generation-related management practices. I hope that future research in these areas will build upon the foundation I have laid with this dissertation and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

VII.D.3. Final remarks and significance

In this dissertation, I began with the presupposition that Generation Y is a theoretically weak classification that is empirically overgeneralised and highly misleading. With this in mind, I posed the question: How can we understand the persistent emphasis and popularity of generational labels despite the lack of evidence and theoretical grounding?

To address this inquiry, I adopted a methodology that suspends discussions of validity and the weakness of the classification, and instead focuses on the construction of the phenomena. In other words, my methodology shifted the focus from why individuals and organisations believe in this vague

and poorly established categorisation to the individuals and processes involved in constructing Generation Y within different contexts.

Based on this exploration, I argued that despite scholarly controversies surrounding the concept, Generation Y is presented as a scientific construct based on birth cohorts. Therefore, the legitimisation, the validity, and the reality of the concept rely first on its scientificity. Furthermore, the notion of generation has a long-standing history, primarily confined to common sense, everyday life, and academia. The Gen Y discourse capitalises on these connotations to legitimise and facilitate its adoption, drawing upon, for example, the view of generation as kinship structures and youth as a driving force in shaping history. This is further intertwined with the idea that Generation Y is born and raised in an era marked by digitalisation, widespread internet use, and personal computers. Consequently, the discourse not only appeals to those interested in defining and understanding young generations but also to those seeking to define and comprehend the near future or the new era.

On the other hand, this “scientific” concept is primarily constructed and propagated by business and management practitioners. As a result, similar strategies employed for fashionable management ideas are also used to validate the Gen Y discourse and make it profitable. In this regard, the ambiguous and polysemous qualities of the discourse ease its adoption, allowing for multiple interpretations and serving diverse ends.

In this context, my main argument revolves around the idea that Generation Y is a scientifically disputed concept primarily constructed and disseminated by management and consultancy accounts. In line with this, understanding Gen Y, like many other fashionable management ideas, is presented and instrumentalised as a panacea for present and near future problems.

Consistent with this argument, I have positioned myself against the uncritical acceptance of generational categorisations often promoted by management consultants and portrayed in popular media. Instead, I have advocated for a critical examination of these claims and practices, particularly for practitioners and decision-makers aligned with the interests of workers.

On the other hand, contrary to the preference of many critical scholars in the academic community who reject management concepts as tools of control, it is still important to closely examine these concepts before rejecting them. The constructivist approach enables a deeper comprehension of organisations and their dynamics, offering the opportunity to formulate counterstrategies or antiprograms of action.

Additionally, I have found out that the Generation Y discourse in the US and in Turkey are not significantly different from each other, challenging the assumption that it is coherent and valid only in

certain contexts. The use of ANT's relational ethnography helps to avoid dichotomous conclusions based on global north-south distinctions.

Returning to the initial question of this study, it is now possible to state that despite all the weaknesses of the Generation Y concept, its widespread adoption can be explained by the specific way it is constructed: Generation Y is presented and considered a "scientific" concept that is adopted and adapted within business networks, utilising management fashion strategies, and accompanied by significant and commonsensical assumptions and connotations. One of the most important assumptions is that this generation was born and raised in a new era that they are both shaped by and helping to shape. Therefore, understanding Generation Y is presented not only as a means of avoiding generational conflicts or of comprehending youth movements. Being able to understand this birth cohort is assumed to have implications for all aspects of the present and near future related to the "new" era. In addition to the intertwined solutions offered by the discourse, the ambiguous and polysemic descriptions of Gen Y and the "new" era make it easier for various actors to shape and instrumentalise the discourse according to their interests.

As a closing paragraph, let me summarise the "success" of Generation Y as a weak idea using a food recipe analogy, despite the inherent risk of oversimplification and potential misunderstandings:

Imaginary Recipe: Widespread Adoption of a Weak Idea

Ingredients:

- Textually: Science, commonsense, personal experiences, a bad memory, vagueness, and ambiguity to allow diverse interpretations and usage of knowledge.
- Emotionally: Fear of becoming outdated and contradicting with science and commonsense.
- Socially: Assembly of different actors and the disorganisation of antiprograms, mostly remaining within their sub-fields. Lack of public voices.

Instructions:

1. Start with a solid foundation of scientific terminology and references to lend an air of credibility to the idea. This will help convince individuals that the concept is rooted in scientific principles.
2. Blend in generous amounts of commonsense reasoning and relatable personal experiences. By appealing to people's everyday observations and experiences, the idea becomes more relatable and persuasive.
3. Add a dash of bad memory, selectively ignoring or downplaying past failures or criticisms of the idea. This helps to create an illusion of consistency and reliability, making it easier for individuals to accept and adopt the concept.
4. Sprinkle in a healthy dose of vagueness and ambiguity. By leaving room for multiple interpretations, the idea becomes adaptable to various contexts and allows individuals to mix it according to their own preferences or needs.
5. Stir in emotional elements, particularly the fear of becoming outdated and falling behind the latest trends. This fear motivates individuals to embrace the idea as a means of staying relevant and avoiding being left behind.
6. Introduce different actors from various fields, such as researchers, consultants, reputable journalists, and experts. Their endorsement and collaboration create a sense of social validation and authority, further promoting the widespread adoption of the weak idea.
7. Keep the antiprograms loosely organised and confined to their respective sub-fields. By limiting their influence and reach, the dominant narrative of the weak idea remains unchallenged, allowing it to proliferate unchecked.
8. Finally, ensure that public voices opposing the weak idea are minimised or suppressed. This lack of diverse perspectives prevents critical discourse and hinders the formation of counterarguments, further facilitating the widespread adoption of the weak idea.

Note: This imaginary receipt is intended for illustrative purposes only and does not endorse or encourage the promotion of weak ideas.

APPENDIX A. Interview Guide

I constructed my field research as ethnographic research which asks primarily “how” in order to have an understanding of “why”. Therefore, it was important not to be too strict with the questions and let the participants speak more freely. That is why all my questions are open ended and I do not follow the guidelines strictly.

After having two explanatory interviews based on a different interview guide which more openly focused on Generation Y discourse, I realised that my participants were more keen than usual to use Generation Y as a term and repeat the discourse in a non-reflexive way. That is why for the rest of the interviews I tried not to mention the term Generation Y before the interview and refer more to youth. I also preferred to start my interviews by asking them first to describe me what they do at work in detail as much as possible. That helped to get over the clichés on Generation Y.

I organised my questions on Generation Y in three main sections: "Personal History with the Concept of Gen Y," "The Process of Commodity and Operationalisation of Gen Y Knowledge," and "Concrete Expression of Gen Y Knowledge at Work." In addition to these three main titles, I also asked them hypothetical questions tailored to the interviewees' job roles and their relationship with the Gen Y. For instance, I presented the question "If you were tasked with researching Gen Y, how would you approach it?" to a researcher employed in a market research company.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Abbreviations: [HR] Human Resources, [M] Marketing, [PR] Public Relations, [RC] Research Companies, [Ed] Trainers/Consultants

Interview Guide

Work-Life

- What is their job title, and what does their job entail in detail?
- What is the formal description of their role, and how does it translate into practical tasks?

Personal history with Gen Y as a concept

- When and how did they first encounter the concept of Gen Y?
- How and from which sources did they acquire knowledge about it?
- What were their initial reactions to the concept?
- From what other sources did they get more information about it?
- How did their understanding of Gen Y evolve over time and from additional sources?

The process of commodification and operationalisation of the knowledge Gen Y

- How did they integrate their knowledge of Gen Y into their work and professional life? How was it done?
- What methods were employed, and what specific considerations were prioritised during this process? What were the aims? (Target group, budgeting, pricing, etc.) How was it done?
- What feedback or responses did they receive as a result?
- What were the outcomes, and how were they measured? Could improvements have been made?
- If they lacked knowledge about Gen Y, how might their work and work-related decisions differ? What would be their chances of making wrong decisions in employing personnel? Why? (HR) What would be the probability of failure of their marketing and/or publicity strategies? Why? (M) Did they reorganize their work life and their research practices after they gained knowledge on Gen Y? What sort of reorganisation did they make? (RC)
- Is there any gap between readings and real work-life practices (in terms of Gen Y)? If yes, could they give examples?
- If there is such a gap, do they think it is related to the national context?
- Are there disparities between their readings and real work practices concerning Gen Y? If so, could they provide examples?

Hypothetical Gen Y [RC]

- How do they perceive research on Gen Y?
- Have they conducted or considered such research?
- If they were to undertake future research, how would they design it? What would set their research apart?
- How would this hypothetical research differ from studies focused on youth in general?
- Do they believe that the concept of Generation Y might have been developed for financial gain? Why?

Concrete Expression of the knowledge Gen Y in Life

- What are the five most distinctive traits of Gen Y according to them?
- Are there any aspects of Gen Y literature that do not align with their personal experiences? If so, what are they?
- Could they share instances from their life that reflect Gen Y characteristics? (Which qualities are accentuated? How do they describe Gen Y?)
 - What are the drawbacks of their disloyalty, of their changing jobs every three years? Concrete examples of it?
 - Creative/Innovative
 - How do they define and assess qualities like creativity and innovation?
 - Is creativity universally essential, or are there roles where it is less critical?
 - How do they measure and evaluate creativity?
 - Self-esteem (Is it only the case for Gen Y?)
 - Power (Is it only the case for Gen Y?)
 - Technological authority (When and where is technological authority significant?)
 - Immediacy (Is it only the case for Gen Y?)
 - Customisation (Is it only the case for Gen Y?)
- Do these Gen Y characteristics resonate with the Turkish case and their individual experiences? Which aspects stand out?
- What age range is most suitable for defining Gen Y, and why?
- Have they encountered alternative terms for Gen Y? What are their thoughts on these terms and their differences?
- What if we used the word "youth" instead of "Gen Y"? What would be different? What would it change?
- Given the chance, would they redefine "Gen Y"? How?

Personal Demographic information

- Education
- Professional career, including companies and positions.
- Characteristics of their current company: sector, employee demographics, management style, etc.

APPENDIX B. Identifying bestselling books on Gen Y

Identifying the most influential bestselling books within the Gen Y discourse in a quantifiable manner is a challenge due to several factors. One primary reason is the absence of comprehensive services that track book sales and enable users to categorise them based on specific topics. The Nielson BookScan service, predominantly employed by the publishing industry and media to continually monitor book sales in the US, remains the singular option. However, it comes at a high cost and has faced criticisms regarding its accuracy (see Andrews and Napoli 2006; Laliberte 2017; Milliot and Zeitchik 2004)

The second reason that makes it difficult to identify bestselling books on generational issues is that there are many different nominations for the generation born around 1980 (Net generation, Gen Y, Millennials, digital natives, Gen Me). Therefore, for instance, a search query on Millennials will not include the publications on “Generation Me” or “digital natives”. But most of the bestselling books on generations, no matter how they label the generation, use the word “generation” in their titles. Hence it makes sense to do the search queries with the word “generation” but this time, the results include other uses of the term generation (e.g., to generate, the generation which refers to familial relations, etc.) instead of its use as a birth cohort (see section II.A. for the different conceptualisations of generation).

Regarding the obstacles mentioned above, this is how I proceeded: Firstly, with the help of a software program (Harzing’s Publish or Perish), I exported the first 1000 results of the search query with the keyword “generation” in Google Scholars to CSV format.¹⁵⁸ Then, in excel I sorted these results based on the number they were cited. After that, I excluded every type of publication (e.g., articles, conference papers) other than books. In the end, I manually excluded the academic books and compilations as well as all the books which do not refer to generation as a birth cohort (e.g., the ones that refer to generation as positions in family lineages, members of a specific movement within the age cohort such as hip-hop generation) because I was looking for bestselling books on generations (as birth cohorts) only.

After this query, I obtained the ten most cited books which contain the word generation in their titles on Google Scholar and the result is as follows:

¹⁵⁸ Among other indexes of academic works such as Scopus and Web of Science, I chose Google scholars because it indexes non-academic publications more than the others.

| Authors | Name of the publication | Number of citations |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Tapscott, Don | Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation | 6851 |
| Howe, Neil, Strauss, William | Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation: | 6076 |
| Tapscott, Don: | Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World: | 4943 |
| Palfrey, John, Gasser, Urs | Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives | 4315 |
| Twenge, Jean M | Generation Me - Revised and Updated: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled | 2962 |
| R Zemke, C Raines, B Filipczak | Generations at work: Managing the clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in your workplace | 2328 |
| Howe, Neil, Strauss, William | Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069 | 1289 |
| Tulgan, Bruce | Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage the Millennials | 556 |
| Tulgan, Bruce | Managing Generation Y | 538 |
| Sheahan, Peter | Generation Y | 426 |

Table C-1. Source: Author based on Google Scholar, Accessed 09/01/2021.

Since the table above (B-1) mainly shows the popularity of these publications in academia, I also checked the Amazon bestselling book ranks of these 10 books (retrieved 10.01.2021) and listed them according to their ranks to have a better view of the popularities of these books. With the data that I obtained; I made the table below (B-2.).

| Authors | Name of the publication | Amazon Bestselling Rank | Google Scholar |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------|
| Howe N, Strauss W | Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069 | 52,328 | 1289 |
| Tulgan B | Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage the Millennials | 339,028 | 556 |
| Howe N, Strauss W | Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation: | 454,155 | 6076 |
| Twenge, J. M. | Generation Me - Revised and Updated: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled | 523,146 | 2962 |
| Palfrey J, Gasser U | Born digital: How children grow up in a digital age | 557,457 | 44 |
| Palfrey J, Gasser U | Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives | 1,020,471 | 4315 |
| Tapscott D | Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World: | 1,407,352 | 4943 |
| Sheahan p | Generation Y | 1,538,345 | 426 |
| R Zemke, C Raines, B Filipczak | Generations at work: Managing the clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in your workplace | 2,149,123 | 2328 |
| Tapscott D | Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation | 2,300,431 | 6851 |
| Tulgan B, Martin C | Managing Generation Y | 4,577,084 | 538 |

Table C-2. Source: Author based on amazon.com, Accessed 10/01/2021.

As can be seen in the table above, Howe and Strauss are in the first rank among the authors of the bestselling books on generations. Tulgan with his two different publications and Twenge with one publication follow them. After them, Palfrey and Gasser appear in the fourth and fifth place, but I

excluded them because when I examined their books, I found out that they claim that their research is more on a population who are familiar and well- acquainted with digital technologies from early ages on rather than a generation (Palfrey and Gasser 2008, 23).¹⁵⁹ Moreover, as can be seen in table B-3, they are not mentioned by the other famous writers of the Gen Y discourse. Therefore, I decided not to take them into account, and I chose to focus on the authors of the first three publications based on their rank at Amazon Books as examples of generation experts: Howe & Strauss, Twenge, and Tulgan.

| Table B-3. Cross-references between bestselling book authors in their major publications | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------|
| | Twenge et al. (2010) | Tulgan (2009) | Tulgan& Martin (2001) | Twenge (2014) | Howe, Strauss, (2000) | Zemke et al (2013) | Tapscott (2008) | Palfrey &Gasser (2008) | Totals |
| Tapscott | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Howe & Straus | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Tulgan | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Twenge | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Zemke | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Palfrey &Gasser | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table B-3. Source: Author

¹⁵⁹ The original statement of the authors is as follows: “Rather than calling Digital Natives a generation—an overstatement, especially in light of the fact that only 1 billion of the 6 billion people in the world even have access to digital technologies—we prefer to think of them as a population” (Palfrey and Gasser 2008, 23)

APPENDIX C. Interviewee Demographics, Company Info Sheet, and Data Lists

| Table C-1. Interviewee demographics | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------|---|--------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Alias | Significance | Position / Rank / Title | Company | Former Company | Gender | Birth Year | Bachelor (Ed.) | Length of Interview |
| Ömer | Has an HR perspective/ is only informed by popular business magazines and media | HR Manager | ConstructionCo | Education Industry (HR Trainer), Electronics Company (Assistant Manager HR), Telecommunications Co (Assistant Manager HR) | W | 1971 (~) | Public Uni., Ankara | 153 min. |
| Özgür | Quantitative researcher / Had a workshop on Gen Y | Senior Research Manager | MarketresearchCO1 | | M | 1978 (~) | Public Uni., Istanbul | 73 min. |
| Ayşe | Had a workshop on Gen Y | Director of Custom Research | MarketresearchCO1 | | W | 1972 | Public Technical Uni., Ankara | 66 min. |
| Gülşenem | Qualitative researcher / Had a workshop on Gen Y | Qualitative Group Manager, | MarketresearchCO1 | | W | 1969 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 71 min. |
| Tuba | Did research on Gen Y for a FMCG / Has a political perspective | Insight Partner, | MarketresearchCo2 | MarketresearchCO1 (Assistant Research Executive) | W | 1987 | Public Technical Uni., Istanbul | 90 min + 103 min. |
| Burcu | Has an HR perspective /Had a workshop on Gen Y / | Learning and Development Consultant (Formerly HR Manager) | MachineryCo | | W | 1969 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 148 min. |
| Ece | Had a workshop on Gen Y (as a Gen Y herself) | CosmeticsCo Group Product Manager | CosmeticsCo | Food and Beverage Company (Marketing Intern) | W | 1985 (~) | Public Uni., Istanbul | 148 min. |
| Selin | Organised and had a workshop on Gen Y (as a Gen Y herself) | Senior HR Generalist (Consumer Products Division, Finance, Export) | CosmeticsCo | Hypermarkets Chain (Compensation and Benefit Specialist) | W | 1985 (~) | Private Uni., Ankara | 44 min. |
| Tolga | Had a workshop on Gen Y Young Employee & / Worked abroad | Human Resources Director, Turkey | BeveragesCo | SportsCo (Corporate Responsibility Manager) | M | 1978 | Public Technical Uni., Istanbul | 67 min. + 74 min. |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|--|-----------------------------|--|---|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Yildirim | Worked with young employees/ Worked as a head-hunter/ has sales experience | Assistant Professor | Private Uni. | FMCGCo (Sales Supervisor) Home appliances (Sales Representative) | M | 1980 | Private Uni., Istanbul | 105 min. |
| Cefagül | Has an HR perspective/ Works with blue collars | HR Business Partner | AutomotiveCo | | W | 1976 (~) | Public Uni., Izmir | 44 min. |
| Harun | Has an HR perspective/ Works with blue collars | HRIS Specialist | AutomotiveCo | | M | 1982 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 44 min. + 35 min. |
| Onat | Organised research and published report on Gen Y (for a PR campaign) | Founder and CEO | RealEstateCo | | M | 1986 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 72 min. |
| Hakan | Started the Gen Y social activity club/ Is pro Gen Y friendly management | Co-Founder & General Manager - FinTechCo | FinTechCo | BeddingCo (HR and Quality Systems Manager) | M | 1982 | Public Technical Uni., Istanbul | 155 min. |
| Naira | Works with young employees/ Has an after-sales perspective/ Has a different social background/ Was part of a 360-performance review | After Sales Support Specialist | TelecommunicationsCo Turkey | Telecommunications Company (Sales Accounting Analyst) | W | 1985 | Public Uni., Çanakkale | 128 min. |
| Aylin | Works with young employees/ was part of a 360-performance review | Business & Customer Process Manager | TelecommunicationsCo Turkey | Banking (Business Development Supervisor) | W | 1984 | Public Uni., Ankara | 50 min. |
| Sezgin | Has an HR perspective/ Has experience in banking industry/ has distant view on generational labels | Co-founder/ Consultant | ConsultancyCo1 | BankingCo (HR Manager) | M | 1955 | Public Uni., Ankara | 110 min. |
| Nebahat | Has an HR perspective / Has experience in coaching and leadership | Founder/ Consultant | ConsultancyCo3 | BankingCo (HR Manager) | W | 1956 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 154 min. |
| Didem | Has cynical view on Gen Y | Business Development Representative | ElectronicsCo | FoodCo (Assistant Product Manager) | W | 1976 (~) | Boğaziçi Uni., Istanbul | 110 min. |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|---|----------|------------------------|----------|
| Ceren | Has an HR perspective/ has experience in recruitment | Manager, Consumer Products & Services Practice Staffing and Recruiting | ConsultancyCo2 | Staffing and Recruiting Company (Senior Consultant) | W | 1975 (~) | Private Uni., London | 71 min. |
| Gözde | Trainer on Innovation | Adjunct Lecturer | Public Uni. | Freelance Trainer and Training consultancy | W | 1965 | Public Uni., Istanbul | 163 min. |
| Bariş | Planning to give Gen Y training | Corporate Communication and Marketing Manager + Freelance consultant | IT Services and IT Consulting Company | Private Uni. (Corporate Communication and Relations Manager) | M | 1977 (~) | Private Uni., Istanbul | 94 min. |
| Anthony | Started Y-Board and reverse mentoring | Vice President of HR | FMCGCo | | M | 1964 (~) | Public Uni., Australia | 79 min. |
| Sayat | Reporter at newspaper HR supplement | News reporter | Business Magazine | Mainstream Newspaper | M | 1981 | Private Uni., Ankara | 168 min. |
| Muzaffer | Worked for the Gen Y social activity club | Digital Marketing Manager | Digital Advertising Agency | BeddingCo Group Digital Marketing Specialist | M | 1990 (~) | Distance Learning | 81 min. |

Table C-1. Source: Author.

| Table C-2. Company information sheet | | | | |
|--|--|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| Companies | Industry | Products/Field | Area Served | Headquarters |
| CosmeticsCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Personal care | Cosmetics | Worldwide | EU |
| MarketresearchCO1 (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Market research | | Worldwide | EU |
| SportsCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Apparel, Accessories, Sports equipment | Sports equipment, athletics and recreational products | Worldwide | US |
| BeveragesCo (Big Turkish company partnering with an MNC) | Food, Beverages and Bavarage Bottling | Beers, malt drinks, low alcohol drinks and soft drinks | Worldwide | Turkey |
| MachineryCo (Big Turkish company partnering with an MNC) | Machinery | Steel manufacturing, car distribution, energy generation and logistics | 5 Countries | Turkey |
| FinTechCo | Information Technology and Services (FinTech) | Cash MACHINE technologies, banking solutions and financial technologies | Turkey | Turkey |
| BeddingCo | Retail (Bedding) | Bedding and furniture | 48 countries | Turkey |
| AutomotiveCo (MNC partnering with a big Turkish company) | Automotive | | Worldwide | Turkey |
| BankingCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Banking Financial services | | Worldwide | UK |
| TelecommunicationsCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Telecommunications | Fixed line telephones, mobile phones, broadband, digital televisions, internet televisions and IPTVs | Worldwide | UK |
| MarketresearchCo2 (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Market Research and Public Opinion Research | | Worldwide | EU |
| RealEstateCo | Real Estate | Platform for medium-term rental of furnished apartments | Worldwide | EU |
| ConsultancyCo1 | Management Consulting and Training | | Turkey | Turkey |
| ConsultancyCo2 | Human Resources Consulting | Search, selection, and executive search | Turkey | Turkey |
| ConsultancyCo3 | Management Consulting and Training | Management, banking, and hr | Turkey | Turkey |
| FoodCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Food processing | Food and beverage | Worldwide | EU |
| ElectronicsCo (Subsidiary Company of an MNC) | Consumer Electronics | Electronic products | Worldwide | US |
| FMCGCo (Turkish branch of an MNC) | Consumer goods and FMCG | Foods, beverages, cleaning agents, beauty, and personal care products | Worldwide | UK |
| ConstructionCo | Engineering & Construction | | 6 Countries | Turkey |

Table C-2. Source: Author based on LinkedIn and official websites of the companies.

| Table C-3. PhD and MA theses on Gen Y in Turkey | | | |
|---|------|---|--|
| Authors | Year | Title | Field |
| Zühal Yiğit | 2010 | X ve Y kuşaklarının örgütsel tutumlar açısından incelenmesi ve bir örnek olay | Business Administration |
| Hatice Toruntay | 2011 | Takım rolleri çalışması: X ve Y Kuşağı üzerinde karşılaştırmalı bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Nihan Oğuz | 2012 | İşveren markası ve kabiliyeti cezbetme üzerine etkisi | Business Administration |
| Didem Sever İşçimen | 2012 | Y kuşağı çalışanların iş yaşamından beklentilerinin karşılanma düzeyi ile kurumsal bağlılık arasındaki ilişki ve bir örnek uygulama | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; Business Administration |
| Sevda Şen Bezirci | 2012 | Farklı kuşaklardaki hemşirelerin meslekten ve işten ayrılma niyetleri ile iş doyumlarının incelenmesi | Nursing |
| Ayşe Asli Çorum | 2012 | Y kuşağına yönelik insan kaynakları uygulamaları ve bir şirket örneği | Business Administration |
| Gözde Özbek | 2012 | The association between work-personal life interface and employees' organizational attitudes and psychological well-being | Psychology |
| Hülya Tutuş | 2013 | Handling consumer confusion in the Turkish GSM sector through wom | Business Administration |
| Elif Findik | 2013 | Y kuşağında mobbing algısı üzerine bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Firuze Aydın | 2013 | Y kuşağının internet üzerinden turizm ürünü satın alma alışkanlıkları üzerine bir araştırma | Tourism |
| Zeynep Hatipoğlu | 2014 | Örgütsel bağlılık ve iş tatmini arasındaki ilişkinin X ve Y kuşaklarına göre farklılıklarının incelenmesi | Business Administration |
| Ayşe Gözde Koyuncu | 2014 | Hastanelerde hizmet kalitesi algısı: Doktor ve hemşireler ile yapılan bir çalışma | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations |
| Semra Mert Haydari | 2014 | Farklı kuşaklardaki hemşirelerin meslekten ve işten ayrılma niyetleri ile örgütsel ve mesleki bağlılıklarının incelenmesi | Nursing |
| Melih Baran | 2014 | Y kuşağının zorunlu askerlik hizmetinden beklentilerinin analizi | Defense and Defense Technologies |
| İlknur Kuru | 2014 | Y kuşağı ve iş yaşam dengesi | Business Administration |
| Melda Çelik | 2014 | Hizmet sektöründeki y kuşağı çalışanlarının iş hayatındaki beklentileri (İstanbul örneği) | Business Administration |
| Yelda Bektaş | 2014 | X ve Y kuşaklarının çalışma yaşamından beklentilerinin karşılanma düzeyi ile örgütsel bağlılıkları arasındaki ilişki: Ankara'da bankacılık sektöründe bir örnek araştırma | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations |
| Ali Ceylan | 2014 | X ve Y kuşağı öğretmenlerin ideal liderlik algıları: Fatih ilçesi ilköğretim okullarında bir uygulama | Education and Training; Business Administration |
| Ömer Usta | 2014 | Kuşak farkının iş değerleri üzerindeki etkisini incelemek üzere bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Serpil Karaaslan | 2014 | Kuşaklararası farklılıkları örgütler üzerinden anlamak: Bir alan araştırması | Public Relations |
| Hasan Faruk Pancar | 2014 | Güvenlik birimlerinde çalışan X ve Y kuşaklarının iş tatminini etkileyen faktörler | Business Administration |
| Pinar Göktaş | 2015 | Siyasi liderlerden beklenen liderlik ve iletişim tarzları: Y kuşağı üzerine bir araştırma | Political Science; Communication Sciences; Business Administration |
| Muhammet Hamdi Mücevher | 2015 | X ve Y kuşağının birbirlerine karşı özellik ve etkileşim algıları: SDÜ örneği | Education and Training; Business Administration |
| Kübra Aygenoğlu | 2015 | X ve Y kuşaklarının kurumsal iş hayatında insan kaynağı açısından stratejik yönetimi | Business Administration |
| Nisa Ekşili | 2015 | Y kuşağı özelliklerini belirlemeye yönelik bir ölçek geliştirme çalışması: Okul yöneticileri üzerine bir araştırma | Sociology; Business Administration |
| Zeynep Erdoğan | 2015 | Exploring generation Y via attitudes towards economy, education, and marriage | Sociology |

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|-----------------------|------|---|---|
| Onur Öztürk | 2015 | Marka yayma başarısını etkileyen öncüllerin belirlenmesine yönelik Bursa ilinde bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Nadin Özçelik | 2015 | The effects of corporate social responsibility on Y - generation consumer purchase decision and social media influence | Business Administration |
| Ebru Özden | 2015 | Yönetim kuramları bakımından günümüz okul yöneticilerinin yönetim anlayışları | Education and Training |
| Füruzan Özçelik | 2015 | Kuşaklararası motivasyon farklılıklarının iş tatminine etkisine yönelik bir çalışma | Business Administration |
| Meryem Tekin | 2015 | Çalışma yaşamında kuşaklar ve işe yönelik tutumlarının incelenmesi | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; Business Administration |
| Ülgen Öz | 2015 | XYZ kuşaklarının özellikleri ve Y kuşağının örgütsel bağlılık düzeyi analizi | Business Administration |
| Vehbi Alparslan | 2015 | Satın alma karar sürecinde etnosentrizm ve X & Y kuşağındaki tüketiciler üzerine CETSCALE ölçeği ile karşılaştırmalı bir analiz | Business Administration |
| Duygu Aydın Aslaner | 2016 | Understanding new generation consumers in the Turkish consumption society: Research on shopping practices and buying behaviors of generations X and Y | Communication Sciences; Business Administration |
| Demet Leblebici Aydın | 2016 | Investigation of work-life balance differences within generation X and Y | Business Administration |
| Halime Özer Baltacı | 2016 | İletişim becerileri ve empatik eğilim arasındaki ilişkinin X ve Y kuşaklarına göre farklılıklarının incelenmesi ve bir uygulama | Communication Sciences |
| İnci Usta | 2016 | Y kuşağının kişilik özelliklerinin kariyer eğilimine etkisi üzerine bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Ece Kaynak | 2016 | Türkiye'de çalışan Y kuşağında iş tatmini - motivasyon ilişkisi | Business Administration |
| Elif Karagöz Üstün | 2016 | Y kuşağının prototipik markalara karşı marka güveni ve marka farkındalığı üzerine bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Seher Aytaş | 2016 | Demografik değişkenlerin farklı kuşak ayrımlarında örgütsel sinizime etkisi | Business Administration |
| Özgün Arda Kuş | 2016 | Bir pazarlama aracı olarak mobil pazarlama: İstanbul ili kapsamında Y kuşağının mobil pazarlamaya bakış açısı | Business Administration |
| Hatice Çoşkun | 2016 | Devlet ve vakıf üniversitelerinde Y kuşağı kişilik özelliklerinin girişimcilik yatkınlığı ile ilişkisi | Education and Training; Business Administration |
| Hatice Zeybek Sayın | 2016 | Y kuşağı üniversite öğrencilerinin beş faktör kişilik özellikleri ve liderlik algıları arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesi | Psychology |
| Merve Bako | 2016 | The leadership style preferences of academics from different generations: Baby Boomers, generation X, generation Y, and generation Z | Business Administration |
| Kevser Hazal Tatarhan | 2016 | Sağlık sektörü çalışanlarının işten ayrılma niyetinde kuşaklar arasındaki farklılıklar | Hospitals; Health Care Management; Business Administration |
| Kaniye Oya Şalap | 2016 | Çalışma yaşamında kuşaklar: Kuşakların iş ve özel yaşam dengesine ilişkin yaklaşımları | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations |
| Muammer Akten | 2016 | Y ve Z kuşaklarının turizm algıları ve konaklama işletmelerinden beklentileri | Tourism |
| Cevat Sercan Özer | 2016 | Sosyal medyayı kullanan kurumların itibar yönetimine ilişkin Y kuşağının algısı | Public Relations |
| Nazlı Özmen | 2016 | Y kuşağının internet alışveriş eğilimleri | Business Administration |
| Esra Selçuk Çınar | 2016 | Farklı kuşaklardaki hemşirelerin çalışma ortamları algısı ile işten ve meslekten ayrılma niyetinin incelenmesi | Nursing |
| Serpil Gül Ersöz | 2017 | Y kuşağı mensuplarının iş değerlerinin ve kişilik özelliklerinin iş motivasyonları üzerindeki etkisi | Business Administration |
| İrem Kaptangil | 2017 | Y kuşağı çalışanların lider üye etkileşimi ve örgütsel sinizm tutumlarının incelenmesi: Türkiye ve Kanada örneği | Business Administration |
| Betül Solmaz | 2017 | Kuşaklar ve çalışma değerleri: X ve Y kuşağı akademik personelinin çalışma değerlerine bakışı | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations; Business Administration |

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| Elif Başak Sarioğlu | 2017 | Y kuşağının karakter analizi üzerinden işe alım süreçlerinde iletişimsel engellerin araştırılması | Communication Sciences; Business Administration |
| Damla Aktan | 2017 | Mindful consumption and Generation Y: Comprehension, conceptualisation, and communication | Business Administration |
| Sevgi Atam | 2017 | Y kuşağı çalışanlarda kurum içi uygulamaların kurumsal imaj algısına etkisi | Business Administration |
| Emine Özge Kaplan | 2017 | Y kuşağının otantik ve bütünleştirici liderlik algılarının ortaya konulmasına yönelik bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Serçin Korkmaz | 2017 | (Y) kuşağında liderlik tarzı beklentisine etki eden kişilik faktörü üzerine kesitsel bir çalışma | Psychology; Business Administration |
| Sirma Ekiz | 2017 | Kamu kurumlarında Y kuşağının liderlik beklentilerine etki eden demografik faktörler üzerine bir çalışma: Adana Büyükşehir Belediyesi örneği | Business Administration |
| Aylin Genç | 2017 | Y kuşağının motivasyon beklentileri ve örgütsel bağlılığına yönelik bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Emel Yılmaz | 2017 | Y kuşağının iki farklı döneminin tercih ettiği liderlik tarzı üzerine görgül bir araştırma: Seyhan Belediyesi örneği | Public Administration; Business Administration |
| Onur Çelemler | 2017 | Frederick Herzberg'in çift faktör kuramı'nın X ve Y kuşakları açısından değerlendirilmesi | Business Administration |
| Kristina Theresa Flach | 2017 | Die rolle von auslandseinsatzten im kontext der karriereziele der Türkischen generation Y | Public Administration; Business Administration |
| Ece Asmafiliz | 2017 | Y kuşağı üyesi sosyal medya kullanıcılarının marka tercihinde sosyal zekânın etkisi | Business Administration |
| Neriman Eralp | 2017 | Türkiye'de y kuşağının sosyal sorunların çözümüne katılımlarında KSS projelerinin rolü | Public Relations; Sociology; Communication Sciences |
| Azizhan Esiroğlu | 2017 | Akademisyenleri motive eden faktörlerin belirlenmesi: Farklı kuşaklara yönelik bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| İlknur Turna | 2017 | Çalışanlarda iş yaşamı dengesinin Y kuşağı açısından incelenmesi | Business Administration |
| Sevgi Acar | 2017 | X ve Y kuşağı öğretmenlerinin iş tatmini: Konya ili okullarında bir uygulama | Education and Training; Business Administration |
| Ali Şahin Danişman | 2017 | X ve y kuşaklarının dışarıdan kahvaltısı satın alma davranış farklılıkları | Business Administration |
| Tülay Bozkurt Tuna | 2017 | X ve Y kuşaklarının iş motivasyon dayanakları ve bir alan araştırması | Business Administration |
| Çiğdem Mandali | 2017 | X ve Y kuşağını motive eden faktörler ve örgütsel vatandaşlık davranışı açısından karşılaştırması | Business Administration |
| Pelin Baycan | 2017 | Sosyal medyanın Y kuşağı satın alma davranışı üzerindeki rolü | Business Administration |
| Onur Terzi | 2017 | Mobil pazarlamanın Y kuşağı tüketici davranışları üzerine etkileri: Muğla ili örneği | Business Administration |
| Gürkan Çelik | 2017 | İlköğretim branş öğretmenlerinin eğitim teknolojileri kullanım düzeylerinin incelenmesi | Education and Training |
| Ersin Demir | 2017 | Kentsel kültürel turizmde ağ toplumu ve paylaşım kültürünün turizm coğrafyası yaklaşımıyla değerlendirilmesi: İzmir örneği | Geography; Tourism |
| Hasan Asiğbulmuş | 2017 | Medya-siyaset ilişkisi bağlamında X ve Y kuşaklarının siyasal davranışında sosyal medyanın etkisi: Gaziosmanpaşa ilçesinde bir araştırma | Political Science; Communication Sciences |
| Yiğit Sebahattin Bozkurt | 2017 | Kuşak farklılıklarına göre internetten satın alma ve turizm alışkanlıkları | Tourism; Business Administration |
| Zeynep Ergün Doğanbaş | 2017 | Dönüşümcü liderlik ile iş tatmini arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi: Kuşaklar arası farklılık | Business Administration |
| Yunus Badem | 2017 | X ve Y kuşağı çalışanların işe bağlılıkları bakımından değerlendirilmesi: İstanbul'da bulunan medya takip merkezlerinde bir alan araştırması | Business Administration |
| Ekin Tükek | 2017 | X ve Y kuşaklarının işveren markası ve örgüt içi iletişimine yönelik algıları: Aile işletmesi örneği | Communication Sciences; Business Administration |

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| Bahar Paçacıoğlu | 2018 | Üç farklı kuşaktaki evli kadın ve erkeklerin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine ilişkin tutumları ile aile işlevleri arasındaki ilişki | Sociology |
| Ayşegül Kutluk Bozkurt | 2018 | Planlanmış davranış teorisi kapsamında yerli y kuşağının destinasyon tercihlerinde davranışsal niyetlerinin belirlenmesi (Antalya örneği) | Tourism |
| Amra Kozo | 2018 | Influence of organizational culture on work engagement among generation X and Y in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey | Business Administration |
| Sercan Edinsel | 2018 | Kişiliğin ve örgütsel kariyer planlamanın bireysel kariyer planlama ile kariyer memnuniyeti üzerine etkisi: Bankacılık sektöründe Y kuşağı üzerine bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Mehtap Yücel | 2018 | Kuşakların sosyal medya kullanımının yiyecek içecek işletmesi tercihleri üzerine etkisi | Tourism |
| Hande Arıkan Kiliç | 2018 | Kuşaklara göre tüketicilerin satın alma karar stillerinin tekrar satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkileri: Giyim sektöründe bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Hilmi Etcı | 2018 | Sendikal kriz çıkmazında sendikalara yönelik algı ve Y kuşağı: Eskişehir örneği | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations |
| Nurettin Gürçan | 2018 | Türk kültüründe paternalist liderlik davranışlarının izleyenlerin duygusal bağlılıkları üzerindeki etkisi: Y kuşağına yönelik bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Filiz Tutgun | 2018 | Metropolde (İstanbul kentinde) yaşayan X ve Y kuşağı kadınlarının internette satın alma davranışlarının karşılaştırılması | Business Administration |
| Şenay Şener | 2018 | X ve Y kuşaklarının çatışma yönetimi stratejilerinin incelenmesi üzerine lojistik sektörde bir çalışma | Psychology |
| Aysu Aysel | 2018 | Kuşakların tüketim davranışlarında değişim üzerine bir inceleme | Public Relations; Business Administration |
| İrem Deveci | 2018 | Örgütsel sinizmin X ve Y kuşağı çerçevesinde değerlendirilmesi: Antalya yöresinde 5 yıldızlı otellerde uygulama | Tourism |
| Öznur Silahşor | 2018 | X ve Y kuşakları kadınlarının giysi tercihleri | Fine Arts |
| Hasan Emin Gürler | 2018 | Havayolu ulaşımını tercih eden x ve y kuşağı müşterilerin memnuniyet düzeylerinin ölçülmesi | Transportation |
| Safa Göçmen | 2018 | X ve Y kuşaklarının yönetim algıları: Kurumsal işletmelerde nitel bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Gizem Büyükkalaycı | 2018 | Y kuşağının etnosentrik eğilimlere göre yerli ve yabancı ürünlere karşı satın alma davranışı: Afyonkarahisar örneği | Business Administration |
| Derya Özboyacı | 2018 | Y kuşağı çalışanlarının iş hayatındaki motivasyon kaynakları: hizmet sektörü üzerine bir uygulama örneği | Business Administration |
| Ayşe Yildirim | 2018 | X ve Y kuşaklarının esnek çalışmaya olan bakış açıları: Bir alan araştırması | Labour Economics and Industrial Relations |
| Emre Kömürcü | 2018 | Sosyal medyanın Y kuşağı tüketicilerinin satın alma davranışlarına etkisi | Business Administration |
| Büşra Ergin | 2018 | X ve Y kuşağının algıladığı örgütsel destek ve lider-üye etkileşimi arasındaki farklılık: Kardemir A.Ş.'de bir uygulama | Business Administration |
| Ebru Demir | 2018 | Marka bağlılığı ve tüketicilerin kişilik özellikleri ilişkisinin incelenmesi: Y kuşağı üzerine bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| Hatice Körelçiner | 2018 | X ve Y kuşağı çalışma yaşam kalitesi üzerine bir uygulama | Public Administration; Business Administration |
| Zafer Gençalp | 2018 | Online alışverişte plansız satın alma davranışı: Y ve Z kuşaklarının karşılaştırması | Business Administration |
| Ekim Akkuş | 2018 | Özdeşleşme ve davranışsal sadakat bağlamında X ve Y kuşağı taraftarları üzerine bir inceleme | Business Administration |
| Arman Baran | 2018 | X ve y kuşağı mensubu satış danışmanlarının motivasyon faktörleri arasındaki farklılıklar; otomotiv sektöründe bir araştırma | Business Administration |

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| Sevgi Hatice Aşkar | 2018 | X ve Y kuşağı bireylerinde bağlanma stillerinin yaşam doyumuna ve kişiler arası ilişkilere etkilerinin karşılaştırılması | Psychology |
| Meryem Erdal | 2018 | Personel bulma ve seçme süreçlerinde sosyal medya ağlarının rolü: X ve Y kuşakları açısından bir inceleme | Business Administration |
| Ahmet Melik Çinkiliç | 2018 | X ve Y kuşağı mensubu öğretmenlerin mesleki etik algılarının karşılaştırılmasına ilişkin bir alan araştırması | Education and Training; Business Administration |
| Ali Akin Zengin | 2018 | Algılanan liderlik stiline iş yaşam kalitesi üzerine etkisi: X ve y kuşakları arası karşılaştırma | Business Administration |
| Neşe Yılmaz | 2018 | Yeni tüketici: Perakendecilikte inovasyon ve tüketim kültürü çerçevesinde online tüketim alışkanlıklarının incelenmesi araştırması | Business Administration |
| Şefika Ergin | 2018 | Z ve Y kuşakları arası sınav kaygısı karşılaştırması: Adana ili örneği | Psychology |
| Eda Sultan Arar | 2018 | Akademik personelde kuşaklararası iş etiği algısının işyeri sapma davranışları ile ilişkisi | Business Administration |
| Süleyman Çelik | 2018 | Marka aşkının elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişime ve tekrar satın alma niyetine etkisi | Business Administration |
| Şenay Şan | 2018 | Medya iletileri perspektifinden Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne giriş süreci ile X, Y, Z kuşaklarının birliğe bakış açılarının ve tutumlarının değerlendirilmesi | Journalism |
| Turgay Doğan | 2018 | Y kuşağının girişimcilik eğiliminin belirlenmesi ve stratejik yönetim: Telekomünikasyon sektöründe çalışanlar üzerinde bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| İlkay Can Bağcı | 2018 | Kuşak farklılıklarına göre iş yaşam dengesi algısının araştırılması: Kahramanmaraş'ta çalışan avukatlar örneği | Business Administration |
| Nergis Ecenur Kahveci | 2018 | Y kuşağının iş yeri seçimini etkileyen faktörler: İşveren markası ve sosyo demografik özellikler | Business Administration |
| Gizem Akinci | 2018 | Generation Y preferences at the workplace in relation to job satisfaction & organizational commitment | Business Administration |
| Meltem Candemir Ögmen | 2018 | Antecedents and consequences of Turkish Millennials' e-loyalty; A structural equation modeling application | Business Administration |
| Göksu Günay | 2018 | Kariyer çapaları ve kariyer tatmini arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesine yönelik X ve Y kuşağı çalışanları üzerinde bir araştırma | Business Administration |
| İbrahim Yikilmaz | 2018 | The comparison of y and z generation's entrepreneurship tendencies in terms of entrepreneur's personality characteristics: An empirical study on university and high school students | Business Administration |
| Yaşar Sevimli | 2019 | Türkiye'deki tatlı tüketim alışkanlıkları: Y kuşağının (18-25 yaş arası) incelenmesine yönelik bir araştırma | Nutrition and Dietetics |

Table C-3. Source: tez.yok.gov.tr, Accessed 11/03/2019.

| Table C-4. Academic articles on Gen Y in Turkey | | | |
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| Name | Year | Title | Journal |
| Keleş, Hatice Necla | 2011 | Y Kuşağı Çalışanlarının Motivasyon Profillerinin Belirlenmesine Yönelik Bir Araştırma | Organizasyon ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Keleş, Hatice Necla | 2013 | Girişimcilik Eğiliminin Kuşak Farkına Göre İncelenmesi | The Journal of Social Economic Research |
| Yüksekbilgili, Zeki | 2013 | Türk Tipi Y Kuşağı | Electronic Journal of Social Sciences |
| Yücebalkan, Benan; Aksu, Barış | 2013 | Potansiyel İşgücü Olarak Y Kuşağının Transformasyonel Liderlerle Çalışabilirliğine Yönelik Bir Araştırma | Organizasyon ve Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Elif Okan, Neva Yalman | 2013 | Türkiye’de Tartışmalı Reklamlar: Kuşaklar Arası Karşılaştırma | Hacettepe University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences |
| Gungordu, Aybegum; Ekmekcioglu, Emre Burak; Simsek, Tugce | 2014 | An empirical study on employer branding in the context of internal marketing | Journal of Management Marketing and Logistics |
| Mihalis Kuyucu | 2014 | Y Kuşağı ve Facebook: Y Kuşağının Facebook Kullanım Alışkanlıkları Üzerine Bir İnceleme | Electronic Journal of Social Sciences |
| Köse, Sevinç; Oral, Lale; Tetik, Hilmiye TÜresin | 2014 | Y Kuşağının Birinci ve İkinci Yarısında İş Değerlerinin Karşılaştırılması Üzerine Bir Araştırma | HUMANITAS- Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Bayhan, Vehbi | 2014 | Yeni Toplumsal Hareketler ve Gezi Parkı Direnişi | Birey ve Toplum Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Serçemeli, Arş. Gör Murat; Kurnaz, Arş. Gör Ersin; Özcan, Arş. Gör Muhammet | 2015 | Y Kuşağı Öğrencilerinin Muhasebe Eğitime Bakışı: Atatürk Üniversitesi İİBF’de Bir Araştırma | Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi |
| Tüzüntürk, Selim; Taşkın, Çağatan; Tuncel, Cem Okan | 2015 | Kıbrıs Okuryazarlığının ve Kıbrıs Sorunu Algısının İstatistiksel Analizi: Türkiye’deki Y Kuşağı Örneği | Sakarya İktisat Dergisi |
| Adıgüzel, Orhan; Batur, H. Zeynep | 2015 | Schein’in Kariyer Değerleri Perspektifinde Öğrencilerin Kariyer Tercihlerini Etkileyen Faktörler Üzerine Bir Araştırma: Isparta İli Fen Lisesi Öğrencileri Örneği | Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Yüksekbilgili, Zeki; Hatipoğlu, Zeynep | 2015 | Organizational Justice Perception According to Generations | Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences |
| Mustafa Taşlıyan, Ahmet Eytmiş, Enise Gündüğüdu | 2015 | Y Kuşağı İş Yaşamından Ne Bekliyor | Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi |
| Çetin, Canan; Karalar, Serol | 2015 | X, Y ve Z kuşağı öğrencilerin çok yönlü ve sınırsız kariyer algıları üzerine bir araştırma | Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Taşkın Dirsehan | 2015 | Y Kuşağının Sosyal Sorumluluk Düzeyi: Kâr Amacı Gütmeyen Kuruluşlar (KGK) Açısından Bir İnceleme | İstanbul Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Göktaş, Pınar | 2015 | Y kuşağı bakış açısıyla öğrenci sorunları ve çözüm önerileri: Isparta Meslek Yüksekokulu Örneği | International Journal of Social Sciences and Education Research |
| Hamedoğlu, Mehmet Ali; Özden, Ebru | 2015 | Yönetim Kuramları Bakımından Günümüz Okul Yöneticilerinin Yönetim Anlayışları | Sakarya University Journal of Education |
| Gürbüz, Sait | 2015 | Kuşak Farklılıkları: Mit mi, Gerçek mi? | Journal of Human and Work |
| Torun, Yasemin; Çetin, Canan | 2015 | Örgütsel Sinizmin Kuşaklar Bazında Değerlendirilmesi: Kuşaklara Göre Örgütsel Sinizmin Hedefinde Ne Var? | İş ve İnsan Dergisi |
| Yüksekbilgili, Zeki; Akduman, Gülbeniz | 2015 | Kuşaklara Göre İşkoliklik | Adıyaman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi |
| Yüksekbilgili, Zeki | 2015 | Türkiye’de Y Kuşağının Yaş Aralığı | Electronic Journal of Social Sciences |
| Pınar Başgöze, Nalan Bayar | 2015 | Eko Otellerden Hizmet Satın Alımında Kuşaklar Arası Farklılaşmalar Üzerine Bir Çalışma | Sosyoekonomi |
| Mert Şencan, Merve Nur; Karabekir, Münire; Tozlu, Emine | 2016 | Y Kuşağının Girişimcilik Algısının Ölçümüne Yönelik Bir Araştırma | International Journal of Academic Value Studies |
| Kayabaşı, Aydın; Taşkın, Ercan; Kayık, Mustafa | 2016 | Y Kuşağının Türk ve Yabancı Firmalara Yönelik Algıları: Çok Boyutlu Ölçekleme ile Analizi | Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |

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| Dinçer Ölçüm, Soner Polat | 2016 | Evaluation of Teacher Image on the Basis of Generations | Journal of Teacher Education and Educators |
| Gülay Bulgan, Pınar Göktaş | 2016 | Y Kuşağının Engelli Turistlere Bakış Açılarının Değerlendirilmesi: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Isparta Meslek Yüksekokulu Örneği | Süleyman Demirel University Visionary Journal |
| Akgemci, Tahir; Çevik Tekin, İlknur | 2016 | Y Kuşağı Çalışanların İş Değerlerinin Araştırılması: Konya İli Sanayi İşletmelerinde Bir Uygulama | Journal of Organizational Behavior Research |
| Sari, Sema; Gürsoy, Samet; Özmen, Mehmet | 2016 | Y Kuşağının Çevrim İçi Satın Alma Davranışları | Bitlis Eren Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi |
| Armagan, Ece Aksu; Küçükkambak, Selçuk Efe | 2016 | Y Kuşağı Tüketicilerinin Moda Bloglarına Yönelik Tutumunun Satın Alma Niyeti Etkisi Üzerine Bir Araştırma | İstanbul Üniversitesi İşletme Fakültesi İşletme İktisadi Enstitüsü Yönetim Dergisi |
| Onat, Osman Kürşat; Akın, Osman | 2016 | Y Kuşağı ve Muhasebe Eğitimi- Durum Tespiti ve Öneriler; Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesinde Bir Araştırma | EUL Journal of Social Sciences |
| Saracel, Nüket; Taşseven, Özlem; Kaynak, Ece | 2016 | Türkiye’de Çalışan Y Kuşağında İş Tatmini-Motivasyon İlişkisi | Social Sciences Research Journal |
| Yalçın, Osman; Sökmen, Ahmet Burak; Kulak, Hatice | 2016 | Kuşakların Temel Özellikleri ve Hava Harp Okulu Uygulamaları | Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları |
| Murat Koc, Linda Ozturk, Adem Yıldırım | 2016 | An Empirical Study on the Generation X and Y for Determining Organizational Commitment Differences | PressAcademia Procedia |
| Hakan Kılınc | 2017 | Anadolu Üniversitesi Açıköğretim Fakültesi öğrenenlerinin Anadolom eKampüs öğrenme yönetim sistemine ilişkin görüşlerinin kuşaklar bağlamında incelenmesi | Açıköğretim Uygulamaları ve Araştırmaları Dergisi |
| Kuyucu, Mihalis | 2017 | Y Kuşağı ve Teknoloji: Y Kuşağının İletişim Teknolojilerini Kullanım Alışkanlıkları | Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi |
| Tüzüntürk, Selim | 2017 | Uyum Analizi Kullanarak Y Kuşağı Akıllı Telefon Kullanıcılarının Tüketici Davranışlarının Anlaşılması: Bursa Örneği | Marmara Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi |
| Başoğlu, Melih; Edeer, Aylin Durmaz | 2017 | X ve Y Kuşağındaki Hemşirelerin ve Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Bireysel Yenilikçilik Farkındalıklarının Karşılaştırılması | Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Büyükbayram, Ayşe; Arabacı, Leyla Baysan; Arabacıoğlu, İlkay; Ayyıldız, Canan; Acar, Kazım | 2017 | Psikiyatri Kliniğinde Çalışan X ve Y Kuşağındaki Hemşirelerin Alkol-Madde Bağımlılığı ve Ruhsal Bozukluğu Olan Bireylere Yönelik Tutumları | Journal of Dependence |
| Hacı Yunus Taş, Mehmet Demirdöğmez, Mahmut Küçüköğlü | 2017 | Geleceğimiz Olan Z Kuşağının Çalışma Hayatına Muhtemel Etkileri | OPUS International Journal of Society Research |
| Aydın, Hatice; Biçer, Derya Fatma | 2017 | Ülke İmajının Yabancı Menşeli Ürün İnancı ve Satın Alma İsteği Üzerindeki Etkisi ve Farklı Ülke İmaj Algılarının Karşılaştırılması | Journal of Management and Economics Research |
| Kiliç, Hande Arıkan; Kiliç, Serkan | 2017 | Y Kuşağı Tüketicilerinin Alışveriş Stilleri: Cinsiyete Göre Bir Araştırma | Journal of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences |
| Aytaş, Seher; Barutçu, Esin; Taş, Mehmet | 2017 | Demografik Değişkenlerin Farklı Kuşak Ayrımlarında Örgütsel Sizinme Etkisi | Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi |
| Demirgil, Zeynep; Mucevher, Muhammet Hamdi; Akçakanat, Tahsin | 2017 | İşkolikliğin Kuşaklara Göre Karşılaştırılması: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Akademisyenleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma | MANAS Journal of Social Studies |
| Bekmezci, Mustafa | 2017 | Nesillerin Karşılaştırılması ve İş Dünyasında ‘y’ Kuşağına Kuramsal Bir Bakış | Toros Üniversitesi İİSBF Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Ekşili, Nisa; Antalyalı, Ömer Lütfi | 2017 | Türkiye’de Y Kuşağı Özelliklerini Belirlemeye Yönelik Bir Çalışma: Okul Yöneticileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma | Humanities Sciences |
| Fatma KARASU, Rukuye AYLAZ | 2017 | X ve Y Kuşağı: Hemşirelerin Meslek Dayanışması ile İş Doymu Arasındaki İlişki | Journal of Health Science and Profession |
| Bayramoğlu, Gökben; Şahin, Menekşe | 2017 | Y Kuşağının Kariyer Eğilimleri ve İstihdam Beklentilerinin Araştırılmasına Yönelik Bir Alan Araştırması | Çalışma İlişkileri Dergisi |

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| Kelgökmen İlic, Derya; Yalçın, Buse | 2017 | Y Jenerasyonunun Farklılaşan İş Değerleri ve Liderlik Algılamaları | Journal of Yaşar University |
| Sümeyye Kalaycı, Elif Kökçel | 2017 | Y Kuşağının Teknoloji ile İlişkisi: Ön Lisans Öğrencileri Üzerinde Bir Araştırma | Bilge International Journal of Social Research |
| Terzi, Onur; Kizgin, Yıldırım | 2017 | Mobil Pazarlama Uygulamalarının Y Kuşağı Açısından Değerlendirilmesi: Muğla İli Örneği | Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research |
| Emine Çobanoğlu, Taşkın Dirsehan | 2017 | Y Kuşağı Tüketiciler Tarafından Kullanılan Çeşitli Sosyal Ağ Sitelerinin (SAS) Belirleyicilerine Yönelik Ampirik Bir İnceleme | ONERI |
| Kızıldağ, Duygu; Metin, Selda | 2017 | Kuşakların Kariyer Beklentilerinin Farklılaşması: Otomotiv Sektöründe Bir Araştırma | Mustafa Kemal University Journal of Social Sciences Institute |
| Konakay, Gönül; Demirkaya, Harun; Altaş, Sabiha Sevinç; Morkoyunlu, Arzu Yüce; Özmen, Ayfer | 2017 | Y Kuşağının Girişimcilik Eğilimlerinin Demografik Değişkenler ile İncelenmesi | Uluslararası Turizm, Ekonomi ve İşletme Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Kaderli, Yusuf; Armağan, Ece Aksu; Küçükambak, Selçuk Efe | 2017 | Y Kuşağının Kompulsif Satın Alma Davranışına Etki Eden Faktörler Üzerine Bir Araştırma | İstanbul Üniversitesi İşletme Fakültesi Dergisi |
| Göksel, Aykut; Güneş, Gülden | 2017 | Kuşaklar Arası Farklılaşma: X ve Y Kuşaklarının Örgütsel Sessizlik Davranışı Bağlamında Analizi | Gazi University Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences |
| Mehmet Ali Sungur, Nurhayat Duyar, Hacer Yıkılmaz, Recep Boyacı, Hacı Murat Urhan, Gökhan Çetin, Tunahan Arıkan, Şeyma Nur Çiçek, Tuğçe İspaha | 2017 | Evlilik ve Eş Seçme Tutumuna Kuşakların Etkisi: X ve Y Kuşaklarının Karşılaştırması | Toplum ve Sosyal Hizmet |
| Başar Altuntaş | 2017 | Y Kuşağının Mobil Öğrenme Uygulama Tercihini Etkileyen Faktörlerin İncelenmesi | Journal of the Human and Social Science Research |
| Nurcan Boyacıoğlu, Sultan Özkan, Nurdan Gezer, Özge Aba, Meryem Tekel, Kevser Teyek | 2018 | X ve Y Kuşağındaki Kadın Hastaların Erkek Hemşire Algısının Değerlendirilmesi | Journal of Nursing Science |
| Dölekoğlu, Celile Ö.; Çelik, Onur | 2018 | Y Kuşağı Tüketicilerin Gıda Satın Alma Davranışı | Journal Of Agriculture and Nature |
| Zengin, Ali Akın; Hatipoğlu, Zeynep | 2018 | Algılanan Liderlik Stilinin İş Yaşam Kalitesi Üzerine Etkisi: X ve Y Kuşakları Arası Karşılaştırma | Research of Financial Economic and Social Studies (RFES) |
| Göncü, Semih | 2018 | Kullanımlar ve Doymalar Yaklaşımı Çerçevesinde Y Kuşağının WhatsApp Kullanımı Üzerine Bir İnceleme | TRT Akademi |
| Onurlubaş, Ebru; Öztürk, Derya | 2018 | Sosyal Medya Uygulamalarının Y Kuşağı Satın Alma Davranışı Üzerine Etkisi: Instagram Örneği | OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi |
| Aydın, Hatice; Yılmaz, Özer | 2018 | Online Alışverişte Bilişsel Çelişki Davranışlarının İncelenmesi | Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi |
| Ebru Özmen | 2018 | Sosyal Medya ve Modanın Dijitalleşmesi Arasındaki İlişkiyi Tanımlamaya Yönelik Bir Durum Çalışması: Y Kuşağı Örneği | Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi |
| Salih Aydın, Fırat Tufan | 2018 | Sürdürülebilirlik ve Yeşil Kavramları Bağlamında Y Kuşağının Satın Alma Davranışları | Journal Of Selcuk Communication |
| Şafak Gündüz, Tuğrul Pekçetaş | 2018 | Kuşaklar ve Örgütsel Sessizlik / Sessizlik | The Journal of Business Science |
| Bahattin AKA | 2018 | Bebek Patlaması, X ve Y Kuşağı Yöneticilerin Örgütsel Bağlılık Düzeylerinin Kamu ve Özel Sektör Farklılıklarına Göre İncelenmesi: Bir Araştırma | Süleyman Demirel University Visionary Journal |
| Ahmet Ayhan, Selda Saral Güneş | 2018 | Farklı Kuşakların Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Faaliyetlerine Yönelik Tutumları: X ve Y Kuşakları Üzerine Betimsel Bir Analiz | Galatasaray University Journal of Communication |
| Akün, F. Aslı; Ordun, Güven | 2018 | Hatalı Karar Bağlılığı: Y Kuşağıyla İlgili Bir Araştırma | R&S- Research Studies Anatolia Journal |

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| Gülşen Işık, Nuray Eğelioğlu Cetişli, Yasemin Tokem, Dilan Yılmaz, Aylin İlhan | 2018 | Hemşirelerin Bireysel ve Profesyonel Değerlerinde Kuşaklararası Farklılıklar / Personal and Professional Difference between the Generation of Nurses | Journal of Health Science and Profession |
| Hatipoğlu, Zeynep; Dündar, Gönen İlkar | 2018 | Örgütsel bağlılık ve iş tatmini arasındaki ilişkinin x ve y kuşaklarına göre farklılıklarının incelenmesi | Yorum Yönetim Yöntem Uluslararası Yönetim Ekonomi ve Felsefe Dergisi |
| Murat Bolelli | 2018 | Narsistik Kişilik Özelliklerinin İşe Bağlılığa Etkileri: Örnek Bir Araştırma | Gazi Journal of Economics and Business |
| Muhammet Hamdi Mücevher, Ramazan Erdem | 2018 | X Kuşağı Akademisyenler ile Y Kuşağı Öğrencilerin Birbirlerine Karşı Algıları | Süleyman Demirel University Visionary Journal |
| Kalfaoğlu, Serap | 2018 | X ve Y Kuşaklarının Kariyer Uyum Yetenek Düzeylerini Belirlemeye Yönelik Bir Araştırma | Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi SBE Dergisi |
| Bayramoğlu, Gökben | 2018 | X ve Y Kuşağının Liderlik Davranışı Açısından Karşılaştırılması | Ege Academic Review |
| Azak, Arife; Savaş, Burcu; Tamer, Ayşe | 2018 | Y Kuşağı Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Klinik Çalışma Ortamından Beklentileri | Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Dergisi |
| Gemlik, Nilay; İlter, Pınar; Bektaş, Gülfer | 2018 | Y kuşağı orta düzey hastane yöneticilerinin üst yöneticilerinden beklentileri üzerine nitel bir araştırma | Health Care Academician Journal |
| Gönül, Konakay | 2018 | Y Kuşağı Değerlerinin Kariyer Tercihleri Açısından İncelenmesi | Girişimcilik ve Kalkınma Dergisi |
| Göktaş, Pınar; Değirmenci, Burcu | 2018 | Y Kuşağının Yaşam Tarzının Kariyer Değerleri Üzerindeki Rolü: Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi Araştırması | Journal of Suleyman Demirel University Institute of Social Sciences |
| Kişi, Nermin | 2018 | Yenilikçi Bir Mentorluk Yaklaşımı: Tersine Mentorluk | The Journal of International Scientific Research |
| İrem Paker Tükel | 2018 | Y Kuşağı Temsilcilerinin Aile Algıları Üzerine Bir Analiz | Journal of Academic Inquiries (AID) |
| Güven Ordun, F. Aslı Akun | 2018 | Kişilik ve Duygusal Zekâ: Y Kuşağıyla İlgili Bir Araştırma | R&S- Research Studies Anatolia Journal |
| Uyar, Süleyman; Yelgen, Esin | 2018 | Muhasebe Eğitimi ve Y Kuşağı | Journal of Accounting and Taxation Studies |
| Danışman, Ali Şahin; Gündüz, Şafak | 2018 | X ve Y Kuşaklarının Dışarıdan Kahvaltı Satın Alma Davranış Farklılıkları | Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi |
| Yazıcı, Belgin | 2018 | Yeni Lüks Kavramı Bağlamında Y Kuşağı ile Evrilen Tüketim ve Y Kuşağının Lüks Kavramına Bakışı | Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi |
| Bayrakdaroğlu, Funda; Özbek, Çağlar | 2018 | Kadınların Tüketim Alışkanlıklarının Kuşaklararası Boyutu | Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research |
| Arklan, Ümit; Kartal, Nurullah Zafer | 2018 | Y Kuşağının İçerik Tüketicisi Olarak Youtube Kullanımı: Kullanım Amaçları, Kullanım Düzeyleri ve Takip Edilen İçerikler Üzerine Bir Araştırma | Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Elektronik Dergisi |
| Çelebi, Şemsettin Ozan; Bayrakdaroğlu, Funda | 2018 | Y Kuşağı Tüketicilerinin Bilinçli Tüketim Davranışları Üzerine Bir Araştırma | Journal of Research in Entrepreneurship Innovation and Marketing |
| Binbaşıoğlu, Hulisi; Türk, Mevlüt | 2018 | Y Kuşağının Yiyecek-İçecek İşletmesi Tercihlerinde Sosyal Medyanın Etkisi | Turizm Akademik Dergisi |
| Birdir, Sevda Sahilli; Toksöz, Derya; Birdir, Kemal | 2019 | Yeşil yıldız uygulamaları: Y kuşağı örneği | Journal of Tourism Theory and Research |
| Özlem Aşman Alıkcı, İnanç Alıkcı, Asuman Özer | 2019 | Dijital Romantizm: Y Kuşağının Romantik İlişkilerinde Sosyal Medyanın Rolü Üzerine Bir Araştırma | Journal of Erciyes Communication |
| Çınar, Dilaysu | 2019 | Nüfuzlu Pazarlama Yoluyla Yapılan Reklamlara Karşı Tüketici Şüpheliği: Y Kuşağı Üzerinde Keşifsel Bir Araştırma | Trakya University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science |
| Bilgiler, Hidaye Aydan Silkü | 2019 | Y Kuşağının İnternette Alışverişe Yönelik Tutumları: Nicel Bir Araştırma | Journal of Erciyes Communication |
| Aybike Tuba Özden | 2019 | Pozitif Algnın ve Tüketici Karar Verme Tarzlarının Y ve Z Kuşakları Açısından Karşılaştırılması | Gazi Journal of Economics and Business |

Table C-4. Source: dergipark.org.tr, Accessed 21/03/2019.

| Table C-5. Kariyer.net İK Blog articles on Gen Y | | | |
|--|------------------|--------------------|--|
| | Publication Year | Author | Title |
| 1. | 2013 | Aksu, Yeşim Sarier | Yeni çağın İK uzmanı profili nasıl olacak? |
| 2. | 2013 | Kuran, Evrim | İşe alım sadece işe alım değildir! |
| 3. | 2013 | Nogay, Pınar | 2014'te gündem konusu Y Kuşağı olacak |
| 4. | 2013 | Kalak, Begüm | Y Kuşağının dikkatini çekin! |
| 5. | 2014 | Kariyer.net | Best A.Ş kapsamlı İK çalışmaları yürütüyor |
| 6. | 2014 | Aksu, Yeşim Sarier | Yetenekli adaylar "esnek çalışma" diyor |
| 7. | 2014 | Çakar, Banu | Ben inovatifim ama çalıştığım şirket değil! |
| 8. | 2014 | Aksu, Yeşim Sarier | İş başvuruları artık çok daha mobil! |
| 9. | 2014 | Aksu, Yeşim Sarier | "Beni kategorize etme" |
| 10. | 2014 | Nogay, Pınar | Şirketler yeni nesilden uzun soluklu çalışma hayatı bekliyor |
| 11. | 2014 | Gök Has, Selmin | Motivasyon içimizden gelir |
| 12. | 2014 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | Çalışanın ilk gününü hafife almayın |
| 13. | 2014 | Çubukçu, Ceren | Y Kuşağı Çalışanlardan En İyi Verimi Almanın Yolları |
| 14. | 2015 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | Ücret yönetiminde şeffaflık ve adalet bekleniyor |
| 15. | 2015 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | İşten ayrılan çalışanlarınıza sormanız gereken 3 soru |
| 16. | 2015 | Kariyer.net | Artık gençler üst düzey yöneticilerin mentoru |
| 17. | 2015 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | Eğlenerek çalışmak sizin için ne kadar önemli? |
| 18. | 2015 | Ceylan, İrem | Oyun artık işin bir parçası |
| 19. | 2015 | Ceylan, İrem | Düşük maaş istifa sebebi |
| 20. | 2015 | Ceylan, İrem | 2020'de beş kuşak bir arada çalışacak |
| 21. | 2015 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | 2015'in en trend İK konusu "liderlik" oldu |
| 22. | 2015 | Çetinsaraç, Melike | Ayaydın Miroglio Grubu'nda çalışanlar her sürece dahil |
| 23. | 2016 | Akgün, Mehlika | İş yerinde öğrenme şeklinin değiştiğini gösteren 3 trend |
| 24. | 2016 | Parlar, Zafer | Türk yöneticileri ne motive eder? |
| 25. | 2016 | Çalık, Çiğdem | Genç bir yöneticiniz mi var? |
| 26. | 2017 | Çalık, Çiğdem | Çalışanlar kaygılı: Acaba bir gün emekli olur muyuz? |
| 27. | 2017 | Çalık, Çiğdem | Bizim için her çalışan geleceğin potansiyel yöneticisidir |
| 28. | 2017 | Çalık, Çiğdem | Çalışanlara sunulan seçme özgürlüğü yaratıcılığı tetikliyor |
| 29. | 2017 | Editor | İnsanların hayatına dokunuyoruz |
| 30. | 2017 | Akduman, Gülbeniz | Şirketlerde mutluluk yönetimi ama nasıl? |
| 31. | 2017 | Editor | Çalışanlarınız söze değil eyleme inanıyor |
| 32. | 2017 | Editor | Yeni bir dönemin başlangıcı: Y kuşağı liderler |
| 33. | 2018 | Editor | 2018'de gençler işverenlerden ne bekliyor? |
| 34. | 2018 | Akgün, Mehlika | Başarımızın sırrı "Mutlu çalışan = Mutlu müşteri" yaklaşımımız |
| 35. | 2019 | Karaalioğlu, Merve | Yönetici çalışan ilişkisi nasıl olmalı? |
| 36. | 2019 | Akgün, Mehlika | Sevilen bir yönetici olmanın 10 yolu |

Table C-5. Source: kariyer.net/ik-blog/, Accessed 27/06/2019.

Table C-6. Mediacat articles on Gen Y

| | Publication Year | Author | Title |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | 2007 | Mediacat | Dijitalleşmenin etkisi bir kuşak sonra görülecek |
| 2. | 2010 | Mediacat | Durex, Y Kuşağı'ndan yaratıcılık bekliyor |
| 3. | 2011 | Mediacat | Sosyal medya televizyon izleyicisini etkileyebiliyor mu? |
| 4. | 2012 | Mediacat | 'Y Kuşağı' İnternet Çağının Yeni 'Hippi'leri |
| 5. | 2013 | Mediacat | Internet Explorer'dan 90'larda çocuk olanlara... |
| 6. | 2013 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Absolut geçmişle bağlarını koparıyor |
| 7. | 2013 | Kasarcı, Haluk | "Seçim kampanyaları online'da da olmalı" |
| 8. | 2013 | Kaynak, Alev | Siyasi İletişim Zirvesi başladı |
| 9. | 2013 | Mert, Ozan | Pepsi, Y kuşağını çözdü |
| 10. | 2013 | Kasarcı, Haluk | Superman'den THY'ye jet yanıt |
| 11. | 2014 | Ajans Başkanı | Reklam sektöründe yaşanan unvan enflasyonu |
| 12. | 2014 | Mediacat | Türkiye'nin en kapsamlı Y kuşağı araştırması |
| 13. | 2014 | Kuru, Ali | Intel'den Sheldon'ı şaşırtan teknoloji |
| 14. | 2014 | Özkan, Pelin | Reklamcılar için kısa kısa... |
| 15. | 2015 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Ex'ten next olur mu? |
| 16. | 2015 | Özden, Irmak | İyi bir kariyer için bilmeniz gereken beş gerçek |
| 17. | 2015 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Y Kuşağı ve platformlar başrolde |
| 18. | 2016 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Facebook'tan ajanslara bir deste içgörü |
| 19. | 2016 | CMO Perspektifi | 'Millennial'lar ne ister?' |
| 20. | 2016 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Kreatifler Donald Trump'a karşı |
| 21. | 2016 | Medicat | MediaCat yaza hazır |
| 22. | 2016 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Y Kuşağı'na İncil'i okutmak: Bible Emoji |
| 23. | 2016 | CMO Perspektifi | 'Sahici' |
| 24. | 2016 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Donald Trump şu anda çevrimiçi |
| 25. | 2016 | Dülger Özöğretmen, Tuğba | 'Her hafta yeni bir patronumuz var' |
| 26. | 2016 | Mediacat | Sakızlarla Y Kuşağı |
| 27. | 2016 | Mediacat | Markalar Nasıl Genç Kalır |
| 28. | 2016 | Mediacat | Yaratıcılığın peşinden git, yorulmadan! |
| 29. | 2016 | Mediacat | Dijital video reklamları revaçta |
| 30. | 2017 | Mediacat | P&G Türkiye'ye yeni ofis, yeni felsefe |
| 31. | 2017 | Kasarcı, Haluk | TBWAİSTANBUL SXS'W'da |
| 32. | 2017 | Gabralı, Zeynep | 8 maddede dijital göçebelik |
| 33. | 2017 | Dülger Özöğretmen, Tuğba | Airbnb'nin Çince ismi hayal kırıklığı yarattı |
| 34. | 2017 | Arsıanoğlu Öncü, Sultan | Borusan'dan toplumsal eşitlik çağrısı |
| 35. | 2017 | Uçar, Sencer | Y Kuşağı Facebook'tan vazgeçmiyor |
| 36. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Y Kuşağı kadınlarının önceliği aileleri |
| 37. | 2017 | Tuncay, Yavuz | Mary Meeker bize neler söylüyor? |
| 38. | 2017 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Air France'tan Y Kuşağı'na özel havayolu markası |
| 39. | 2017 | Arsıanoğlu Öncü, Sultan | İtibar kazandıran 3 formül |
| 40. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | IKEA'nın yeni rakibi Amazon |
| 41. | 2017 | Kaynak, Alev | 6 kadın liderden 6 değerli içgörü |
| 42. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Google sanata soyunursa... |

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| 43. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Türk medyasına çizgi dışı bir bakış |
| 44. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Dijital evrene arkadaşlık molası |
| 45. | 2017 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Y Kuşağı ebeveynlere acımasız gerçekler |
| 46. | 2017 | CMO Perspektifi | Doğal içerik kraldır |
| 47. | 2017 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Sir Patrick Stewart ile emoji oyunu |
| 48. | 2017 | Mediacat | "Video 2018'de burada ancak yarın yok" |
| 49. | 2017 | Mediacat | Mavi'nin yeni reklam yüzü Benu Soral |
| 50. | 2018 | Mediacat | Cannes Lions 2018'in ilk gününden satır başları |
| 51. | 2018 | Uçar, Sencer | Yankı fanuslarını kırmak |
| 52. | 2018 | Dülger Özöğretmen, Tuğba | Vasata razı olan kötüyle yetinir |
| 53. | 2018 | Mediacat | Tüketici değişirse her şey değişir |
| 54. | 2018 | Mediacat | JOON iletişim ajansını seçti |
| 55. | 2018 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Her gününüz kutlu olsun |
| 56. | 2018 | Ağırdır, Bekir | Gençler hakkında |
| 57. | 2018 | Hadımlı, Gönül | "Çünkü yapabilirsiniz!" |
| 58. | 2018 | Hadımlı, Gönül | Stratejiniz doğru mu? |
| 59. | 2018 | Ağırdır, Bekir | Yerelleşme yerelleştirme |
| 60. | 2018 | Mediacat | Kara Cuma'nın yükselişi |
| 61. | 2018 | Özkan, Nazlı Selin | "Rahatsızlık dönüşüm getiriyor" |
| 62. | 2018 | Uçar, Sencer | H&M'den ilham kaynağı Instagram kullanıcıları olan bir marka |
| 63. | 2018 | Uçar, Sencer | Taksiyle git, muzla öde |
| 64. | 2018 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Evian'dan bebeklere veda |
| 65. | 2019 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Gökyüzünde gerçeküstü bir deneyim |
| 66. | 2019 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Plastik distopyadan kaçış |
| 67. | 2019 | Kocasu, Arzu Nilay | Para hakkında konuşma zamanı |
| 68. | 2019 | Uçar, Sencer | Birleşik Krallık Ordusu'ndan gençlere davetiye |
| 69. | 2019 | Mediacat | Trendi yakalama zamanı |

Table C-6. Source: mediacat.com, Accessed 09/07/2019.

| Table C-7. Capital articles on Gen Y | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Publication Year | Author | Title |
| 1. | 2011 | Capital | Y Kuşağına sosyal medyadan ulaşıyoruz |
| 2. | 2012 | Capital | Yetenek ihracatı patlar mı? |
| 3. | 2013 | Capital | İşin ömrü 3 yıla indi |
| 4. | 2013 | Capital | Patronlardan geçiş dersleri |
| 5. | 2013 | Capital | Kapı açan özellikler |
| 6. | 2013 | Capital | Yeni mezunlara odaklanıyoruz |
| 7. | 2014 | Capital | Formayı ıslatan yükselir |
| 8. | 2014 | Capital | Neleri yönetmek zorlaştı |
| 9. | 2014 | Capital | Aktif gençleri tercih ediyoruz |
| 10. | 2014 | Capital | C'lerin yeni profili |
| 11. | 2015 | Capital | Sosyal Yükseliş |
| 12. | 2015 | Capital | Yeni Mezundan Müdürlüğe 6 Yıl |
| 13. | 2015 | Yavuz, Hande | Sosyal medyanın tek İK ajansı |

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| 14. | 2015 | Capital | Eski nesil patronlar ne kadar teknolojik? |
| 15. | 2015 | Capital | Terk edilen kurallar |
| 16. | 2016 | Capital | Yeni nesil CMO dönemi |
| 17. | 2016 | Karahasan, Fatoş | Dönüşüm liderliğiyle büyümek |
| 18. | 2016 | Capital | Sosyal medyada 2016 trendleri |
| 19. | 2016 | Capital | En ağır fatura |
| 20. | 2016 | Capital | En ilginç mülakatlar |
| 21. | 2016 | Capital | Ücretin yerini yönetici aldı! |
| 22. | 2016 | Capital | Y kuşağı şirketleri zorluyor |
| 23. | 2016 | Ries, Al | Sosyal medyanın etkisi az |
| 24. | 2016 | Branson, Richard | Y kuşağı, girişimciliğin yaşamsal olduğunu düşünüyor |
| 25. | 2016 | Capital | Terfi süresi kısalıyor mu? |
| 26. | 2016 | Capital | Koç Holding'den yeni İK sistemi |
| 27. | 2016 | Capital | En rahatsız koltuk |
| 28. | 2017 | Aydın Ayvacı, Özlem | Değişime liderlik yapmak istiyoruz |
| 29. | 2017 | Karahasan, Fatoş | WhatsApp nasıl reklam alacak? |
| 30. | 2017 | Gözütok Ünal, Nilüfer | Turizmi geleceğe taşıyacak |
| 31. | 2017 | Capital | Türkiye, 19 Avrupa ülkesi arasında ilk sırada |
| 32. | 2017 | Capital | Geri dönüş hesapları |
| 33. | 2017 | Capital | Kelebek'in yeniden doğuşu |
| 34. | 2017 | Dumansızoğlu, Nil | "Bugünü değil geleceği de yakalıyorlar" |
| 35. | 2017 | Erdoğan, Yasemin | Yeni "İK" gerçekleri |
| 36. | 2017 | Capital | Yapısal dönüşüm |
| 37. | 2017 | Capital | Takipteki yeni kitle |
| 38. | 2017 | Aydın Ayvacı, Özlem | Eleştiriyi beslenenler |
| 39. | 2017 | Dumansızoğlu, Nil | Deneyimlerimi kitaplaştırmak istiyorum |
| 40. | 2017 | Capital | CEO'ların kültüre uyumlu aday profili nasıl? |
| 41. | 2017 | Sözbilir, Aslı | Gençlerin sıkılmalarına fırsat vermiyoruz |
| 42. | 2017 | Gözütok Ünal, Nilüfer | Yurt dışı yatırımlara ağırlık vereceğiz |
| 43. | 2017 | Capital | Yarının liderleri Uludağ'da buluştu |
| 44. | 2017 | Gözütok, Nilüfer | Liderlik formülleri |
| 45. | 2017 | Capital | Asım Bey'den iş dersleri |
| 46. | 2017 | Gözütok Ünal, Nilüfer | CEO'nun girişim stratejisi |
| 47. | 2017 | Yavuz, Hande | Daha hızlı olmak gerek |
| 48. | 2017 | Tarcan Aksakal, Ayçe | Farka dikkat! |
| 49. | 2017 | Gözütok Ünal, Nilüfer | Yeni göç dalgası |
| 50. | 2018 | Capital | "Beş yıldızlı otele doyduk" |
| 51. | 2018 | Capital | MOOV by Garenta ile saatlik kiralama |
| 52. | 2018 | Adavis, John | CEO değişikliğinde Ralph Lauren'den neler öğrenebiliriz? |
| 53. | 2018 | Capital | Bankalarda şube ve çalışan sayısı azaldı |
| 54. | 2018 | Capital | 40 Yaş Altı 40 Genç Ceo Araştırması Ödül Töreni |
| 55. | 2018 | Gözütok Ünal, Nilüfer | Yeni proje dönemi |
| 56. | 2018 | Capital | CEO yolu kısalıyor |
| 57. | 2018 | Capital | Çeşitlilik öncüleri! |

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|-----|------|-----------------------------|--|
| 58. | 2018 | Erdoğan, Yasemin | Şaşırtan gelişme |
| 59. | 2018 | Aksakal Tarcan, Ayşe | Ayrılan yeşil ışık! |
| 60. | 2018 | Capital | En Beğenilenlere giriş zorlaştı |
| 61. | 2018 | Kotler, Philip | Marka aktivizmi ve markalaşmanın bir sonraki aşaması |
| 62. | 2019 | Capital | Dijital avatarınız olsun ister misiniz? |
| 63. | 2019 | Frey, Thomas | Bankacılık sistemimiz ölüme mahkum mu? |
| 64. | 2019 | Dumansızoğlu, Nil | Doğru lider başarı getirir |
| 65. | 2019 | Oral, Ceren; Yeniova, Gözde | Sigortanın 2019 vizyonu |
| 66. | 2019 | Erdoğan, Yasemin | 4 Kuşaklı dönüşüm |

Table C-7. Source: capital.com.tr, Accessed 10/07/2019.

| Table C-8. Hürriyet articles on Gen Y | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|--|
| | Publication Year | Author | Title |
| 1. | 1999 | Berberoglu, Enis | Kod adı "Y kuşağı" |
| 2. | 2007 | Hürriyet | İnternet patladı ama gazete ve TV'ler yine temel haber kaynağı |
| 3. | 2008 | Kas, Nilüfer | Beyin bilinci yüksek çocuklar |
| 4. | 2010 | Cakmakci, Nuran | Şampiyonlardan sadece 233'ü Robert dedi |
| 5. | 2010 | Bilgin, Demet Cengiz | 'Evet efendimci' yalakalar CEO'ları kriz körü yaptı |
| 6. | 2012 | Güler, Hülya | Dünya 'dizi' gibi Türkiye'yi izliyor |
| 7. | 2012 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Lise mezunu ev kadınları arıyor |
| 8. | 2013 | Beki, Akif | Esad için savaşan Türkler |
| 9. | 2013 | Arman, Ayşe | Bu pazar, Dünya Barış Günü'nde Boğaz'ın iki kıyısında beyazlar içinde el ele! |
| 10. | 2013 | Bilgehan, Zeynep | Bu gençlerin endişesini anlamazsan güme gidersin |
| 11. | 2013 | Sipahi, Deniz | Bu gençler partisiz |
| 12. | 2013 | Arman, Ayşe | Babasından sonra işten çıkarılan Ege Dündar: Nerede yer bulursam orada yazacağım |
| 13. | 2013 | Hürriyet | Avea'dan 'gizli' Twitter operasyonu |
| 14. | 2013 | Özdil, Yılmaz | Arabistanlı Lawrence |
| 15. | 2013 | Beki, Akif | Ah Mandela ah |
| 16. | 2013 | Cengiz, Demet | Reçeteyi yazdı Oscar'ı kaptı |
| 17. | 2013 | Arman, Ayşe | Gençleri sevmediğimizi biliyordum ama bu kadarını tahmin etmiyordum! |
| 18. | 2013 | Arman, Ayşe | Yaşasın Y kuşağı! |
| 19. | 2013 | Arman, Ayşe | Y kuşağına devam... |
| 20. | 2013 | Türsen, Selim | Genç isyanının ekonomik nedenleri |
| 21. | 2013 | Mengü, Nevşin | İran'da çer-çöp devrimi |
| 22. | 2013 | Aytulu, Gökçe | Y kuşağının ilk küresel lideri Camila |
| 23. | 2013 | Cakmakci, Nuran | SBS'nin geleceği |
| 24. | 2013 | Zaimler, Binnur | Y kuşağı Hürrem gibi tükenmişlik ağına takılacak |
| 25. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Finansın tahtına hızlı tüketim ve internet şirketleri oturdu |
| 26. | 2014 | Beki, Akif | Evet tabii ya kurtuluş koalisyonlarda |
| 27. | 2014 | Hürriyet | En çok 'zenginlerin' fotoğraflarına bakılıyor |
| 28. | 2014 | Şehirlioğlu, Ceren | Dur, bi' selfie çekme! |

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|-----|------|-----------------------------|---|
| 29. | 2014 | Koca, Gönül | Demokrasinin esası güne ayak uydurmaktır diyerek kravatsız konuştu |
| 30. | 2014 | Devrim, Serdar | Çalışanın Serdar Abisi cevap veriyor |
| 31. | 2014 | Mirac, Zeynep | Cumaları camiide değil AVM'de buluşuyorlar |
| 32. | 2014 | Beki, Akif | Bir Gezi efsanesinin sonu |
| 33. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Bahçeli'den önemli açıklamalar |
| 34. | 2014 | Gümüş, Nilgün Tekfidan | A'dan Z'ye Gezi |
| 35. | 2014 | Sükan, Ece | 6 nokta atışıyla trend turu |
| 36. | 2014 | Koca, Gönül | 23 yaşında 10 milyon dolarlık şirket yönetiyor |
| 37. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Tüm ilçe halkı bizim insan kaynağımız |
| 38. | 2014 | Öztel, Zeynep Mengi | Teknolojiden korkmayın |
| 39. | 2014 | Zeynep, Miraç; Iren, Mehmet | Sömestrciler ne ister? |
| 40. | 2014 | Capa, İzzet | Son Mohikan'ın ardından |
| 41. | 2014 | Arman, Ayşe | Sevişmek mi çalışmak mı? |
| 42. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Personel yönetiminden stratejik İK'ya |
| 43. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Önce çocuklarınıza liderlik edin |
| 44. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Koçsistem iç sponsorlukla çalışanları destekliyor |
| 45. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Kendimizi gençlere uydurmaya çalışıyoruz |
| 46. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | İş ortamından yaşam alanına |
| 47. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Hürriyet İK 1000. sayısını kutladı |
| 48. | 2014 | Beki, Akif | 'Somuncu baba' kaç puan? |
| 49. | 2014 | Arman, Ayşe | 'Oy ve Ötesi' uyarıyor: Sandığına ve oyuna sahip çık |
| 50. | 2014 | Özkök, Ertuğrul | 'Alfa erkek' ekonomisi çöküyor |
| 51. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Üniversitelilerin tercihleri uluslararası şirketler |
| 52. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Y Kuşağı internette marka tutkunu |
| 53. | 2014 | Beki, Akif | Kürt solu Cihangir'i çözmüş |
| 54. | 2014 | Tartan, Aynur | Unutmamalı, o güzel günleri... |
| 55. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Yeteneği elden kaçırmamanın yolları |
| 56. | 2014 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Y kuşağı ne ister? |
| 57. | 2014 | Hürriyet | Türkler araç alırken neye bakıyor |
| 58. | 2014 | Canıklıgil, Razi | Y kuşağı, Obama'ya sırtını çevirdi |
| 59. | 2014 | Öndes, Önder | Y-Z dönüşümüne hazır mısınız? |
| 60. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Feminizm ünvan aslolan hümanizm |
| 61. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | E-öğrenme ile bilginin yeri ve zamanı yok |
| 62. | 2015 | Öndes, Önder | Dünya, iki harfin eline geçecek: Y, Z |
| 63. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Duygusal becerilerden yoksun Y kuşağı İK'cılarını tedirgin ediyor |
| 64. | 2015 | Ergu, Elif | DNA'mız sağlam |
| 65. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | Çok iş değiştirmenin artıları eksileri |
| 66. | 2015 | Arman, Ayşe | Çıraklarından öğreniyor |
| 67. | 2015 | Portre, Elif Kurgu | Babam bana acımadı ben çocuklarıma kıyamam |
| 68. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Artık işveren değil çalışan seçiyor |
| 69. | 2015 | Arman, Ayşe | "Bunu beraber yaptık, bu sizin hakkınız!" dediler 27 milyon doları, 114 çalışana paylaştırdılar |
| 70. | 2015 | Arman, Ayşe | Akademisyen Asena |
| 71. | 2015 | Ergu, Elif | 2016 model Caddebostan |
| 72. | 2015 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | 10 şirket 600 yönetici ihraç etti |

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| 73. | 2015 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Şirketler kıyafet yönetmeliklerini yırtıyor |
| 74. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Şimdi transfer zamanı |
| 75. | 2015 | Özdemir, Sadi | Şekerleme ihracatına 'lokum' desteği |
| 76. | 2015 | Arman, Ayşe | Şehrin iyi hali için kolları sıvadılar |
| 77. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | Sürdürülebilirlik: Tercihten çok zorunluluk |
| 78. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Oyun oynayarak işe alışıyorlar |
| 79. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Nitelikli işsizlik artırıyor |
| 80. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Kendisi Y bakış açısı X |
| 81. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | İşinden bıkanlar |
| 82. | 2015 | Demirkol, Nihat | "Koçum Benim" enflasyonu |
| 83. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağına göre geleceğin sektörleri teknoloji, medya ve telekomünikasyon |
| 84. | 2015 | Hürriyet | 2016 için 10 sıradışı tahmin |
| 85. | 2015 | Ekti, Ayşegül | Yeni yılda tek derdimiz uzay projeleri üretmek olsun |
| 86. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | Yetenek rekabeti giderek artıyor |
| 87. | 2015 | Iren, Mehmet | Yuccie'yi öğrendik, işte sıradakiler |
| 88. | 2015 | Hürriyet | 5 farklı kuşak için tersine mentorluk |
| 89. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Yeni kuşak işyerinde esneklik arıyor |
| 90. | 2015 | Türsen, Deniz | Türkiye'de sadakat, liyakatin önünde |
| 91. | 2015 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağı hangi mesleklere ilgi duyuyor? |
| 92. | 2016 | Oskay, Çınar; Karakut, Sebati | Geleceğin lideri Canel devrimin mirasını taşıyabilecek mi? |
| 93. | 2016 | Hürriyet | Eskişehir ekonomisinin yol haritası çıkartıldı |
| 94. | 2016 | Yarma, Elvan | Çocuğunuzun her anını sosyal medyada paylaşmak doğru mu? |
| 95. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Başvuru beklemiyoruz biz adaya gidiyoruz |
| 96. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Babalara da doğum izni var |
| 97. | 2016 | Özçelik, Burcu | 5500 kişiye iş fırsatı |
| 98. | 2016 | Hürriyet | Telefon rehberi yerine IP rehberi |
| 99. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Sıkı çalışan ortak oluyor |
| 100. | 2016 | Capa, İzzet | Memleketimden esnaf manzaraları |
| 101. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Koton'da değişim rüzgarları |
| 102. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Kadın Ar-Ge'ci arıyor |
| 103. | 2016 | Özbey, Savaş | İşte 30'un altında en iyi 3 şefimiz |
| 104. | 2016 | Hürriyet | İş hayatında Y kuşağı ve kadın konuşuldu |
| 105. | 2016 | Hürriyet | Honda, yeni Rebeli ile başkaldırıyor! |
| 106. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Hedef Türk-Kore ortak kültürü |
| 107. | 2016 | Türsen, Deniz | Gölge yöneticiler iş başında |
| 108. | 2016 | Hürriyet | 10 milyon barajını aştı |
| 109. | 2016 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | İnternette akıllı alışveriş için uzmanından 10 tavsiye |
| 110. | 2016 | Benmayor, Gila | Türkiye'de sanayi devrimi'nin adımlarını bir kadın yönetiyor. Zeynep Keskin: 'Treni yakalayabiliriz' |
| 111. | 2016 | Türsen, Deniz | Ya bir gün müdürler yok olursa... |
| 112. | 2017 | Hürriyet | CEO'larla bir gün! |
| 113. | 2017 | Kızılkaya, Emre | Bitcoin çakılsa bile 'blok zinciri' yeni toplumsal sözleşmemiz olabilir |
| 114. | 2017 | Sezer, Soner | Bir tek dileğim var: Mutlu ol yeter! |
| 115. | 2017 | Özbey, Savaş | Bıktım ya. Yıldım... Dünya beni buna hazırlamadı! |

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| 116. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Bankacılık işlemleri artık mobil cihazlardan yapılıyor! |
| 117. | 2017 | Cakmakci, Nuran | Bahar Akıngüç Günver: Online eğitimi iyi kullanmalı |
| 118. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Avi Alkaş: Yarını çok iyi okumamız lazım |
| 119. | 2017 | Kizilkaya, Emre | Akşener'den Acun'a Türkiye'nin Facebook portresi |
| 120. | 2017 | Cakmakci, Nuran | Akıllı telefonsuz yıllarla Harvard'da 1 milyonluk burs |
| 121. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Açık iletişim fark yarattı |
| 122. | 2017 | Türsen, Deniz | 64 ülkede araştırıldı! Türklerin yüzde 81'i bunu hayal ediyor |
| 123. | 2017 | Hürriyet | 2023 yılında 1 milyar insan 5G'ye bağlanacak! |
| 124. | 2017 | Ergu, Elif | Samuray destekli sağlık 'Rönesans'ı |
| 125. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Samsung'tan yepyeni telefon: Galaxy On7 Prime |
| 126. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Kerhen kariyer |
| 127. | 2017 | Bilgici, Yenal | Kadıköy yükseliyor çünkü insanın ruhuna sesleniyor... |
| 128. | 2017 | Zeyrek, Deniz | İyi reklam |
| 129. | 2017 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | İş-özel yaşam entegrasyonuna inanıyoruz |
| 130. | 2017 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | İşe önce dinlemeyle başladık |
| 131. | 2017 | Hürriyet | İş dünyasının X kuşağıyla imtihanı |
| 132. | 2017 | Hürriyet | İK'cılar değişime uyum sağlamalı |
| 133. | 2017 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Gençler online staj yapıp bankacılık oynuyor |
| 134. | 2017 | Arman, Ayşe | Gençler gelecekte ne istiyor? |
| 135. | 2017 | Kilic, Deniz | 'Y kuşağına sıra dışı miras kalacak' |
| 136. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağı söze değil eyleme inanıyor |
| 137. | 2017 | Başar, Buğu Begüm; Özbıçakçı, Erkmen | X ve Y kuşağının kariyer yolculuğu üzerine uzman görüşü: İnan Acıloğlu |
| 138. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Gelecek nesil konuşamayan cihazı 'bozuk' sanacak |
| 139. | 2017 | Türsen, Deniz | Türklerin aklında girişimcilik var |
| 140. | 2017 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Yeni CEO'nun gündemi kültür değişimi |
| 141. | 2017 | Arslan, Güliz | Müzikte yükselen yeni dalganın sizi alıp götürmesine hazır olun |
| 142. | 2017 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Y Kuşağı için itici güç YOLO* |
| 143. | 2017 | Hürriyet | Yeni nesil turiste yeni otel markası |
| 144. | 2018 | Arman, Ayşe | Bu iş yerinde uyku odası var |
| 145. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Gençler en çok pazarlama alanında çalışmak istiyor |
| 146. | 2018 | Türsen, Deniz | Genç kuşak esnekliği seviyor |
| 147. | 2018 | Arman, Ayşe | Evrin Kuran'ın kitabı 'Telgraftan Tablete' çıktı... Bir kuşağın diktiği ağacın gölgesinde öteki kuşak serinler... |
| 148. | 2018 | Oskay, Çınar | Doğu Ekspresi: 'Doktor Jivago'yla Arzu Film arasında bir yolculuk |
| 149. | 2018 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Çeşitlilikte örnek oldular |
| 150. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Burada herkes yönetici |
| 151. | 2018 | Dede, Musa | Beyoğlum! |
| 152. | 2018 | Hürriyet | ASELSAN en çekici işveren seçildi |
| 153. | 2018 | Özen, Erdoğan | 21. yüzyılın seyahat ve tatil trendi: Gemi seyahatleri |
| 154. | 2018 | Hürriyet | 2018'de gençler şirketlerden ne bekliyor? |
| 155. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Türk internet kullanıcıları çevrimiçi tehditle yüz yüze! |
| 156. | 2018 | Yağmur, Özge | 'Telgraftan Tablete' kuşaklar arası iletişim: Evrin Kuran |
| 157. | 2018 | Coşkunarda, Gizem | Sağa kaydırmadan önce düşün! |
| 158. | 2018 | Kalayci, Nurdan | Öğrencilerin yerine hep biz düşünüyoruz! |

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| 159. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Milenyum kuşağı yaptığı işte anlam arıyor |
| 160. | 2018 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Mağazacılıkta kariyer var |
| 161. | 2018 | Hürriyet | İşte buna 'Yeni Nesil İş Modeli' diyoruz: BİİS |
| 162. | 2018 | Anlatan Adam | Hem mutlu hem umutlu! |
| 163. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Hangi kuşaksınız? |
| 164. | 2018 | Gence, Hakan | Hakkımda bilinen en büyük yanlış, ailemin zengin sanılması! |
| 165. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Gençlere şirketlerden beklentileri soruldu |
| 166. | 2018 | Acikalınlı, Tansel | 'Orta Dünya'nın büyülü köyü: Hobbiton |
| 167. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Yiğit Sal: Büyük dönüşüm dijital medyayla yaşandı |
| 168. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Yeni mezunlar, dijital kimlikleriniz hazır mı? |
| 169. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Y ve Z kuşağı danışma kurullarında |
| 170. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağı, kendine imkân tanıyan işverenle çalışmak istiyor |
| 171. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağı artık Twitter'dan iş başvurusu yapıyor |
| 172. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Üniversite gençlerin aşka bakışını değerlendirdi |
| 173. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Uzaktan çalışmaya artan talep şirketleri harekete geçirdi |
| 174. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Twitter kapılarını açtı, eleman arıyor! |
| 175. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Türkiye'nin en çekici işverenleri araştırması 2018 başladı |
| 176. | 2018 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Bilgide akışta olmak değerli |
| 177. | 2018 | Hürriyet | Y kuşağı yöneticisinden teşekkür bekliyor |
| 178. | 2019 | Hürriyet | E-ticarette 1 TL'lik yatırıma 6 TL'lik ciro dönüşü oluyor |
| 179. | 2019 | Hürriyet | E-ticaretin bugünü ve geleceği konuşuldu |
| 180. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Dijital çağda alışveriş yeni yollar arıyor |
| 181. | 2019 | Türsen, Deniz | Çalışanları ne tutuyor? |
| 182. | 2019 | Özkök, Ertuğrul | Böyle bir kadının aşk mektupları yakılır mı |
| 183. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Astım 'Y kuşağı'nda daha tehlikeli |
| 184. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Alışılmışların en yabancısı: Hedonutopia |
| 185. | 2019 | Türsen, Deniz | Startup'larda İK'ya dikkat |
| 186. | 2019 | Şehirlioğlu, Ceren | Sosyalist Sindirella ABD başkanı olacak mı? |
| 187. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Önceliğimiz ülkemiz |
| 188. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Orta yaş üzeri Facebook, genç kuşak Instagram kullanıyor |
| 189. | 2019 | Özbey, Ipek | İstanbul'da her soruna bir masa kuracağım |
| 190. | 2019 | Dha, Aa- | İlk müjdemiz dedi ve duyurdu! Üniversite öğrencileri, hocalar... |
| 191. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Hedef 50 milyon turist |
| 192. | 2019 | Sözer, Burcu Özçelik | Gençler yöneticilere mentorluk yaptı |
| 193. | 2019 | Türsen, Deniz | Z kuşağı iş hayatına atılıyor |
| 194. | 2019 | Hürriyet | Üniversiteden mezunların hayat boyu eğitim fırsatı |
| 195. | 2019 | Cakmakci, Nuran | Veliler çocukları hiç üzülmesin istiyor |

Table C-8. Source: hurriyet.com.tr, Accessed 07/08/2019.

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