



Millennials and Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review

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Millennials and Leadership: A Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

In this article we report on the findings of a systematic review of the literature on leadership and the Millennial generation (alternatively known as Generation Y). The purpose of this systematic review was to further our understanding of this cohort by exploring how Millennials are defined and understood within the leadership literature. Inspired by the work of Hallinger (2013), we reviewed a ‘bounded set’ of journal articles ($n = 162$) published between 2000 and 2018. Data analysis focused on analysing identified modal trends as well as examining patterns of knowledge production. This article begins by situating our review in previous generational and leadership research. It then moves on to outline the method of review adopted, and our key findings. We reflect on the implications of these key findings for the recruitment, retention and professional development of Millennial leaders (both current and future). The paper concludes by identifying a series of issues requiring further research, discussion and debate.

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Introduction

There is a growing interest in understanding generational differences in diverse settings, particularly in the workplace (Howe and Strauss 2007; Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak 2000; Jorgensen 2003; Thompson 2017; K. Edge 2014; Murphy 2012). While traditionally this interest has focused on Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) and Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1978), increasing attention has been paid to Millennials (those born between 1979 and 1999) in recent years. As of 2019, 56 million workers in the United States were Millennials making them the most significant generational workforce (Fry 2018). Millennials accounted for 3 million more workers than those from Generation X. Similar patterns have started to appear internationally (Nye 2017).

Research on Millennials has become widely accepted in diverse occupational sectors, including healthcare (Koppel, Deline, and Virkstis 2017), business (Hershatter and Epstein 2010), marketing (Young and Hinesly 2012), and education (Galdames 2019). Although the concept of Millennials in the workplace has become a ‘trendy’ topic in academic research and the popular media, there is a distinct lack of empirical evidence related to Millennials and the characteristics they bring to their work. For instance, Millennials in the workforce are often described using a series of negative adjectives. They are characterised as needy and high-

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3 maintenance (Hershatler and Epstein 2010), as well as fragile and intolerant (Bodenhausen and
4 Curtis 2016). Furthermore, Millennials are often described as ‘job-hoppers’ who exhibit low
5 organisational commitment and are continuously in search of a ‘better job’ (R. Edge,
6 Cockerham, and Correale 2011). Yet such claims are frequently drawn from anecdotal data
7 that lacks scientific merit or rigour (Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg 2010; Murray, Toulson, and
8 Legg 2011). The current empirical body of research on Millennials is in short supply.

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14 Furthermore, as Deal, Altman and Rogelberg (2010) observe, the empirical research that does
15 exist ‘is often contradictory and sometimes confusing’ (191). Kowske, Rasch and Wiley (2010)
16 found that many of the characteristics attributed to Millennials in academic publications are
17 based on single case observations and opinions which encourage negative perceptions and
18 stereotypical assumptions. The authors remark ‘the popular press continues to bemoan the great
19 generational divide at work, especially concerning Millennials. For example, the workplace
20 has been described as a “psychological battlefield”, wherein buttoned-down, self-centred
21 Millennials clash with their stodgy, rule-abiding Baby Boomer bosses’ (265). Yet the few
22 research studies that have been conducted to date suggest that Millennial workers are more
23 similar to older generations than popular opinion suggests (Lyons, Schweitzer, and Ng 2015).
24 This research indicates limited generational differences.

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34 While there is no single definition of leadership (Gumus, Bellibas, and Esen 2018), traditional
35 approaches recognise leadership as ‘a process of social influence’ (Kruse 2013, 2) between
36 leaders and followers. Previous academic discussions have frequently focused on Millennials
37 as followers, and have mostly explored strategies to develop, recruit and retain young
38 professionals (Martin and Warshawsky 2017; Rodriguez and Rodriguez 2015). Despite the
39 oldest Millennials turning 40 years old in 2020, little is known about Millennials as leaders.
40 The present review was undertaken with the aim of furthering our understanding of the
41 Millennial cohort. It was particularly interested in the intersection between Millennials and
42 leadership.

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Given the lack of clarity surrounding Millennial leaders, we conducted a systematic review to
identify the evolution of research trends. Hallinger (2013) remarks that ‘well-crafted reviews
identify blind spots, blank spots and intellectual “dry wells” in the landscape of theory and
methodologies for subsequent research’ (127). We are in agreement and hope that our work
may help to move the conversation about Millennials and leadership forward. The review
reported on in this paper addressed the following exploratory research questions:

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1. What is the nature of the journal literature focused on Millennials and leadership?
 2. How are Millennial leaders defined and understood within the leadership literature?

We used a ‘topographic approach’ to analyse the Millennial and leadership literature. Topographic strategies ‘focus on observable features of studies such as volume, types of sources, conceptual models, research methods, and topics’ (Castillo and Hallinger 2017, 209). By analysing a significant amount of studies, we aimed to acquire a precise picture of the research concerned with Millennials and leadership. This is the first project that systematically reviews studies exploring the intersection between Millennials and leadership. Although we fully acknowledge the importance of conducting a future review focused exclusively on articles published in prominent journals, the purpose of this particular study was to conduct a comprehensive review of the ways in which the constructs of Millennial and leadership intersect. It was anticipated that such a review would reveal the extent to which Millennials and leadership are studied, highlight potential changes in research patterns over time, and pinpoint the direction of future research.

What is a Millennial?

Sometimes referred to as ‘Generation Y’, ‘Generation Me’ or ‘Generation Net’, Millennials are often (although not exclusively) described as the generational cohort born during the last two decades of the 20th century and therefore began they adult life in the new millennia (Howe and Strauss 2000; K. Edge 2014). During the last decade, this cohort has captured the attention of researchers and administrators as they have entered the workforce and demanded changes in the ways that employees are managed. In comparison with previous cohorts, Millennials are the topic of a large number of publications seeking to identify their characteristics, attitudes and behaviours (MacKenzie and Scherer 2019). A central component of the Millennial identity is their connectivity. They were the first generation born under the umbrella of the internet and, as such, have had almost unlimited access to information, digital resources and cutting edge technologies (Sessa et al. 2007). Having a formal digital persona has shaped Millennials’ mindsets, and fuelled a thirst for constant learning from diverse and less traditional sources (MacKenzie and Scherer 2019).

As discussed above, Millennials in the workplace are typically characterised by a series of attributes which are often negative in nature. While recognised as tech-savvy, multitasking and collaborative, Millennials have been labelled as demanding, fragile and intolerant (Bodenhausen and Curtis 2016). This has contributed to the idea that working with and leading

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3 this generation is a difficult chore. However, other studies have challenged these assumptions,
4 particularly those related to a lack of commitment and work ethic. Research has identified little
5 to no difference when comparing Millennials with previous cohorts (MacKenzie and Scherer
6 2019; Real, Mitnick, and Maloney 2010). Yet, research does indicate that Millennial employees
7 demand a different leadership style than previous cohorts. Sessa and colleagues (2007) found
8 a deep appreciation for honest and individual support among this cohort. They remark, 'big-
9 picture orientation does not appear in their top rankings; they want focus. Although they value
10 trustworthiness (trusted, dependable, trusting, candid and honest), they do not place it as high
11 as other groups' (Sessa et al, 2007, 60). Similarly, Fore (2013) argues that Millennials follow
12 leaders that can balance high performance while creating positive working environments.

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14 Often characterised as 'job hoppers' (R. Edge, Cockerham, and Correale 2011), Millennials in
15 the workplace are frequently defined by their need for constant support and validation, their
16 attraction to value-oriented projects, and their desire for work-life balance (Bergman et al.
17 2011). Nonetheless, researchers have noted that these claims are often exaggerated and
18 unsupported by empirical evidence (Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg 2010; Murray, Toulson, and
19 Legg 2011). As mentioned above, the few studies that do exist argue for limited generational
20 differences, and show Millennial workers to be much closer to older generations than popular
21 opinion suggests (Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley 2010; Real, Mitnick, and Maloney 2010; Lyons,
22 Schweitzer, and Ng 2015).

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24 The imminent retirement of the Baby Boomer generation means that increasing numbers of
25 Millennials will need to step up to leadership positions across many organisations in the near
26 future. There is, therefore, an urgent need to identify and develop this new cohort of leaders.
27 Research suggests that this process may be complicated, however, by issues related to the
28 recruitment, organisational commitment and retention of Millennials (see, for example,
29 Thompson and Gregory, 2012). Despite the importance of leadership succession and
30 development, the concept of the Millennial generation as leaders is notably under-researched.
31 Indeed, previous studies have tended to concentrate on Millennials' role as employees and
32 followers (Graybill 2014; Nye 2017). While a handful of studies have started to note the slow
33 but increasing presence of the Millennial cohort in leadership roles (Fore, 2013; Al-Asfour and
34 Lettau, 2014; Nye, 2017), we argue that more empirical research is needed. Understanding
35 Millennials as leaders will not only help tailor their professional development opportunities but
36 also inform design strategies and policies focused on creating the organisational conditions
37 required to increase recruitment and retention (Fore 2013).

Methods

Our methodological approach follows the orientations provided by the systematic review research (Gough 2007). Aligned to the research questions outlined above our aims were twofold: (1) to chart the observable features of the literature, including publication volume, geographic distribution, types of articles, research methods, journal distribution, discipline, and topical foci, and (2) to understand how current research defines the Millennial generation. In light of the relevance of the age of birth for each cohort, we believed it was also important to analyse how different articles presented the generational age boundaries for the Millennial generation.

Scope of the review

As previous researchers have stated, there is no one way to conduct a systematic review but it is central to present how the search was conducted in a detailed and transparent way (Castillo and Hallinger 2017). Our purpose was to capture how the extended academic community was approaching the concepts of Millennials and leadership. Accordingly, we did not limit our scope to a bundle of previously selected journals, but we opened the search to a set of over 682 academic databases, including ABI Inform, JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, PsycInfo and PubMed.

Criteria for Selection

After refining search terms¹ and clarifying our inclusion criteria, a comprehensive search was conducted for the time period 2000 to 2018 to identify relevant English language publications. The decisions to include papers from 2000 onwards was based on a realisation that this was the year in which the oldest Millennials entered adulthood and, potentially, formal organisational contexts. Our initial discussions focused on whether or not to include articles published in non-peer-reviewed journals. Given the lack of clarity surrounding Millennials and leadership, and the overall aims of the project – to understand how the current body of literature characterises the Millennial generation – the decision was taken to include non-peer-reviewed articles. As we explore below, investigating the proportion of peer-reviewed articles in the corpus led to some interesting insights.

Our search yielded 174 papers. Screening of the documents indicated some duplicates, papers that were not written in English and some that were not relevant. This screening process led to

¹ The keywords “leadership” and “Millennial(s)” guided our search. Given the exploratory nature of the project, we aimed to conduct an open and inclusive search.

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3 a final corpus of 162 articles. Full texts of eligible publications were retrieved in preparation
4 for data extraction and analysis.
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6 7 Data extraction and Analysis

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9 We read each article with the goal of extracting information relevant to each of our research
10 questions. The following data was collected:
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13 [Insert Table 1]
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15 Research question 1 necessitated that we employ descriptive statistics to generate a series of
16 graphs aimed at identifying modal trends in patterns of knowledge production. To explore
17 research question 2 we followed a similar strategy to identify how the cohort boundary or birth
18 year of Millennials was detailed in the literature. A basic thematic analysis was performed to
19 establish the most common characteristics attributed to the Millennial cohort in our corpus. All
20 data were recorded in a shared Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and regular moderation meetings
21 took place to ensure rigour and quality.
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29 Results: Research Question 1

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31 In this first section, we respond to research question 1: *What is the nature of the journal*
32 *literature focused on Millennials and leadership?* Here we explore the publication volume, the
33 geographic distribution, the different types of article and the methods employed in the corpus
34 we analysed.
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38 Publication volume

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40 Our literature search generated 162 articles published between 2000 and 2018. The search
41 yielded no results published before 2005 and during the year of 2007.
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45 [Insert Figure 1]
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47 Even though the search scope included articles starting from the year 2000, there were no
48 available publications before the year 2005. Publications with a focus on Millennials and
49 leadership have spiked in the last three years, with 114 of the papers reviewed being published
50 between 2016 and 2018 (see Figure 1). With 70% of the corpus being published in this time
51 period, it is possible to suggest that there has been increasing interest in the topic of Millennials
52 and leadership in recent years. We argue that this highlights the timely nature of this review.
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58 Only 57% of the 162 publications included in this review were peer-reviewed. It is notable that
59 during the 2005 to 2018 time period there has also been a growth in the number of peer-
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3 reviewed articles focused on Millennials and leadership (see Figure 2). The prevalence of non-
4 peer-reviewed publications, however, suggests that the research quality of this corpus of
5 literature is variable. This finding supports Lyons and Kuron's (2014) call for enhanced levels
6 of rigour in research focused on generational differences at work.
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10 [Insert Figure 2]
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13 Geographic Distribution

14 Our analysis of the geographic distribution of articles concerned with Millennials and
15 leadership revealed a distinct lack of geographical spread (see Figure 3). Accounting for 85%
16 of the reviewed publications, the United States have authorially dominated this corpus of
17 literature to date. The few studies not conducted in the US originated from predominantly
18 Western societies (the United Kingdom and Canada, for example). Our analysis, then, aligns
19 with Williams and Turnbull's (2015) observation that much of the research focused on
20 Generation Y tends to be produced from a Western perspective. While we acknowledge that
21 the geographic distribution of articles may be different if we had incorporated articles written
22 in languages other than English, the absence of non-Western perspectives from this body of
23 literature represents a significant 'blind spot' (Heck and Hallinger, 2005: 238) in our
24 knowledge and understanding of the Millennial generation.
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39 Types of Articles

40 Each of the articles we reviewed was classified according to five distinct types: (1) empirical,
41 (2) conceptual, (3) case study, (4) review and (5) opinion. Those categorised as 'empirical'
42 were articles exploring the theme of Millennials and leadership that were based on findings
43 derived from quantitative, qualitative or mixed research methods. Applying the definition put
44 forth by Castillo and Hallinger (2018, 213), 'conceptual' papers were those that 'propose a
45 conceptual model, apply a conceptual model to analyse an issue, or analyse a policy, problem
46 or issue based on a combination of experience and/or selective reference to the literature'. 'Case
47 studies' were those that investigated the practices of particular organisations or initiative
48 related to the leadership of or enacted by Millennials. Papers classified as 'review' were those
49 drawing on an existing body of literature on Millennials and leadership. 'Opinion' pieces were
50 those papers based on the perceptions and views of individuals on the theme of Millennials and
51 leadership, and therefore contained no empirical data.
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[Insert Figure 4]

As can be seen in Figure 4, our analysis of study type revealed that 54% of our corpus comprised of papers classified as ‘opinion’ (see, for example, Miller, 2017; Currie, 2012). Our categorisation of the studies based on type revealed that empirical studies accounted for only 22%. Although empirical papers represented the second largest group, our analysis revealed a relative lack of empirical studies focused on Millennials and leadership. This trend suggests the need for significantly more empirical articles in this field if we are to develop our understanding of this group.

Research Methods

As outlined above, papers classified as ‘empirical’ comprised the second largest group of publications after ‘opinion’ pieces. We organised each of the 35 ‘empirical’ papers according to the methods of research they employed (see Figure 5). Of the 35 articles reviewed, 26 of those were quantitative in nature. Surveys were conducted in 19 of the quantitative studies (see, for example, Lewis and Wescott, 2017; Bodenhausen and Curtis, 2016). Qualitative studies (8) were relatively rare, and only one mixed methods study was found. In the qualitative studies reviewed there was a clear preference for interview-based studies (see, for example, Meng et al. 2017; Koppel et al. 2017). Overall, our analysis revealed a) a relative lack of empirical papers focused on Millennials and leadership, and b) a clear preference for quantitative methods of research in those empirical studies that do exist. Like Lyons and Kuron (2014, 151) we suggest that a ‘greater qualitative understanding’ of Millennials and leadership, as well as the study of generations in the workplace more generally is needed. This is an argument that we return to in the discussion section of this paper.

[Insert Figure 5]

Discipline and topical foci

While a number of disciplinary areas and fields of study were represented in our corpus, the majority of publications originated from the fields of business, healthcare and management (30.2%, 12.3% and 11.7% respectively). Other disciplines, particularly those of a less corporate nature, were not so strongly represented (see Figure 6). For instance, only two publications could be found from the field of education ($n = 2$), the disciplinary area in which we are both based. We found the lack of publications focused on leadership and the Millennial generation surprising in the light of school workforce data that shows the cohort of teachers with

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3 leadership responsibility in England is getting younger (DfE, 2018). This is a finding that
4 mirrors international trends (K. Edge 2015).
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7 [Insert Figure 6]
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9 After determining the frequency of articles from each disciplinary area, we classified each
10 paper according to the central topic discussed (see Figure 7).
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13 [Insert Figure 7]
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16 We found that a significant number of papers focused on managing generational differences in
17 the workplace (n=44). This is perhaps not surprising given the substantial body of work focused
18 on generational difference and leadership (Rudolph, Rauvola, and Zacher 2018). Indeed,
19 scholars working in this area have established that each generation understands and implements
20 leadership differently which, in turn, demands that organisations adapt (Lyons, Schweitzer, and
21 Ng 2012). The second most common topic of discussion concerned leading Millennials (n=42).
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24 These papers tended to characterise Millennials as in need of direction and leadership as
25 opposed to leaders in their own right. Indeed, only 12 papers in our corpus focused on the topic
26 of Millennials as leaders of organisations and institutions. Other notable topics of discussion
27 included the retention (n = 19), recruitment (n = 19) and professional development (n = 18) of
28 the Millennial generation. This concern can perhaps be linked to the characterisation of
29 Millennials as ‘job hoppers’ which was discussed earlier. We also identified a small pocket of
30 work concerned with the Millennial generation and gender (n = 3). The authors were left
31 wondering whether this may be the start of a body of academic literature concerned with what
32 could be termed ‘genderation’ or the intersection between gender identity and generational
33 attributes.
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46 Results: Research Question 2

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48 In this section of the paper, we respond to research question 2: *How are Millennial leaders*
49 *defined and understood within the leadership literature?* Here we explore the age range and
50 characteristics attributed to the Millennial cohort in the corpus we examined. Following on
51 from the previous section, we will also consider the extent to which Millennials are
52 characterised as leaders, aspirant leaders or followers in the literature we analysed.
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3 Just under half of the articles we reviewed (43%) categorised the Millennial cohort by birth
4 year. Eleven of these articles defined the Millennial cohort as people born between 1980 and
5 2000 (see Figure 8). This was the most common specific year range in our corpus. As can be
6 seen in Figure 8, authors designated a variety of age ranges to this generation. There are 28
7 combinations across 69 articles. 18 of the proposed age ranges are referenced only once by a
8 single publication. The earliest birth year attributed to the Millennial cohort was 1977 and the
9 latest birth year was 2005: a 28-year range. Our analysis, then, revealed that: (1) the majority
10 of the articles did not categorise the Millennial generation by birth year, and (2) when
11 considering those authors that did refer to Millennials as people born in a specific year range,
12 there appears to be no agreed categorisation. We believe these to be noteworthy findings
13 requiring further investigation.
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23 Previous studies dealing with the inconsistency of the generations age range have found
24 similar patterns (Costanza et al. 2012). Exploring the literature concerned with generations
25 and leadership, particularly matures, Boomers, Xers and Millennials, Rudolph, Rauvola and
26 Zacher (2018) identified a similar scenario across multiple publications which compromised
27 analytical precision. They remark ‘not only does this lead to a lack of continuity across the
28 leadership and generations literature, but, as aforementioned, these arbitrary generational
29 groupings are implicitly conflated with chronological age’ (55).
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35 [Insert Figure 9]
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38 As discussed earlier, the majority (68.5%) of the literature we reviewed positioned Millennials
39 as followers or employees in the workforce. For instance, Hall’s (2016) work focuses on ‘the
40 rise of Millennials in the workforce’, and the ways in which ‘managers must consider how to
41 effectively communicate with these employees’ (35). Here, as in many of the papers we
42 reviewed, Millennials are characterised as employees who have recently joined the workforce.
43 Yet, as noted earlier in this paper, Millennials are getting older and, in some occupational
44 sectors, leaders are getting younger (see, for example, DfE, 2018). Only 19 of the papers we
45 reviewed focused on the Millennial cohort as current, active leaders. Interestingly, 24 of the
46 papers we analysed positioned Millennials as aspiring or potential leaders thereby suggesting
47 that the shift from employee to employer is a future possibility for Millennials as opposed to
48 current reality. Interestingly, a small number of studies (n=8) did not explicitly characterise
49 Millennials as leaders, aspiring leaders or followers. Their leadership remained ambiguous.
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Characteristics

We adopted a basic thematic approach to identify the characteristics and traits commonly attributed to the Millennial cohort in our corpus. A total of 51 papers characterised the Millennial generation as technologically proficient (e.g. Graybill, 2014; Rodolfo, 2017). This was the most common characteristic or trait used to describe the Millennial generation in the body of literature we analysed. Other characteristics included:

- A preference for collaborative working (n=31; e.g. Stefanco, 2017; Barbuto and Gottfredson, 2016);
- Actively striving to achieve a work-life balance (n=22; e.g. Woods, 2016; Hackel, 2017);
- A values-oriented approach to work (n=21; e.g. Sweet and Swayze, 2017; Marcinkus Murphy, 2012);
- A need for feedback from and open dialogue with superiors (n=16; e.g. Gardner, 2017; Vanmeter et al. 2013); and
- The search for purposeful work in a diverse workplace (n= 12; e.g. Urick, 2017; Gladis and Gladis, 2015).

As highlighted earlier in this paper, not all of the traits commonly attributed to the Millennial cohort are positive in nature. Indeed, our analysis found that 10 of the analysed articles explicitly referenced a tendency among Millennials to ‘job-hop’ or stay in a position or organisation for only a short period before moving on (see, for example, Ferri-Reed, 2013; Schlichting, 2012). This was often taken as evidence of either a) disloyalty and a lack of commitment to employers, or b) ambition and a desire to move up the career ladder quickly.

Discussion

Our review revealed a predominantly quantitative body of research originating mainly from the United States. We found that the majority of what has been written about the Millennial cohort and leadership is located in the fields of business, healthcare and management. In 2012, Thompson and Gregory remarked that significant empirical research was needed in relation to the Millennial generation in the workplace. The findings of our review suggest that this is still the case. Only 22% of the papers in our corpus were empirical in nature thus leading us to believe that the current evidence base related to Millennials and leadership is limited in quantity. Furthermore, the prevalence of ‘opinion’ pieces which contained no empirical data published in non-peer-reviewed journals in our corpus raises significant

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3 questions related to the quality of existing publications related to the Millennial cohort and
4 leadership.
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7 Interestingly, our findings related to the Millennial cohort echo the literature of the 1990s
8 describing the challenges of managing GenXers (Kupperschmidt 1998; Stone-Johnson 2016).
9 For instance, in an opinion piece about the massive difference between cohorts and the
10 uniqueness of generation X employees, Losyk (1997) wrote:
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15 The loyalty and commitment to the workplace that previous generations had are gone.
16 Generation X'ers watched their grandparents slave away only to received a gold watch
17 and pension upon retirement [...]Their parents' dedication to the company has been
18 repaid with downsizing and layoffs. Young people feel there is no such thing as job
19 security [...] they can't believe that their boomer bosses spend 60 or more hours a week
20 at a job that they constantly complain about. They strongly believe there is life after
21 work (41).
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27 However, these type of opinions that are based on personal experience or limited cases
28 studies clash with the findings of more rigorous research. Two-decades ago, Karp, Sirias and
29 Arnold (1999) discussed the negative stereotypes about young employees, and found similar
30 and, in some cases, even more positive work-oriented characteristics in GenXers than
31 Boomers:
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37 Often characterised as being lazy, arrogant, unreliable, and cynical, Generation X is
38 considered to be anything but team-oriented. A pilot study of 398 people from six
39 organisations across the country using the Team Orientation and Behavior Inventory
40 discovered Generation X to be significantly more team-oriented than baby boomers
41 (30).
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46 Our findings strongly suggest the cyclical nature of generation research; the youngest cohorts
47 are frequently seen as initially difficult but this perception eventually changes over time when
48 a new generation enters the workplace. Mirroring this evolution, the perspectives of leaders,
49 aspiring leaders and followers also gradually shift over time. Our systematic review
50 illustrates this point as slowly but steadily more publications are considering Millennials not
51 only as the leaders of tomorrow but as the leaders of today.
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Limitations of the study

Based on the relatively under-researched nature of the topic, the decision was made to include non-peer-reviewed literature. However, the variable quality of the literature reviewed is an important limitation of this review. Limiting the scope of a future review concerned with the Millennial cohort and leadership to a bounded set of peer-reviewed journals should be considered in subsequent work. Furthermore, our review focused on papers written and published in English. Although it was necessary to restrict our search in this way, we believe that a search that included publications written in languages other than English may yield significant results relating to the Millennial generation and leadership. Likewise, the inclusion of grey literature and student theses may also prove fruitful.

Future Research

We believe that future researchers would benefit from addressing the limitations presented in many of the studies reviewed here. We have noted the lack of empirical research concerned with leadership and the Millennial generation. More rigorous research with a clear scientific methodology is needed to move the field beyond opinion pieces and descriptions of particular case studies. We also found that there appears to be no agreed categorisation related to the specific year range in which the Millennial cohort were born. As presented earlier, studies not only significantly differ on their birth range but many studies work without a clear concept of birth range thus building arguments that could easily represent other cohorts. We suggest that further work should focus on agreeing an explicit and standard definition related to the year of birth of Millennials. Based on the most frequent age range found in this review, we strongly suggest considering the definition of Millennials as those born between 1980 and 2000.

The current findings suggest that there are three directions in which future research concerned with the Millennial cohort and leadership might usefully proceed. Firstly, further qualitative research in this field could uncover the stories behind the statistics related to the Millennial cohort and leadership. Secondly, research in more diverse geographical contexts, disciplines and industries is needed to allow for a deeper understanding of the particular characteristics underpinning Millennials as a generation. Lastly, we suggest that greater attention is paid to the concept of Millennials as leaders by not only exploring their uniqueness as a leadership cohort, but also identifying their similarities with GenXer and Boomer leaders.

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Figures

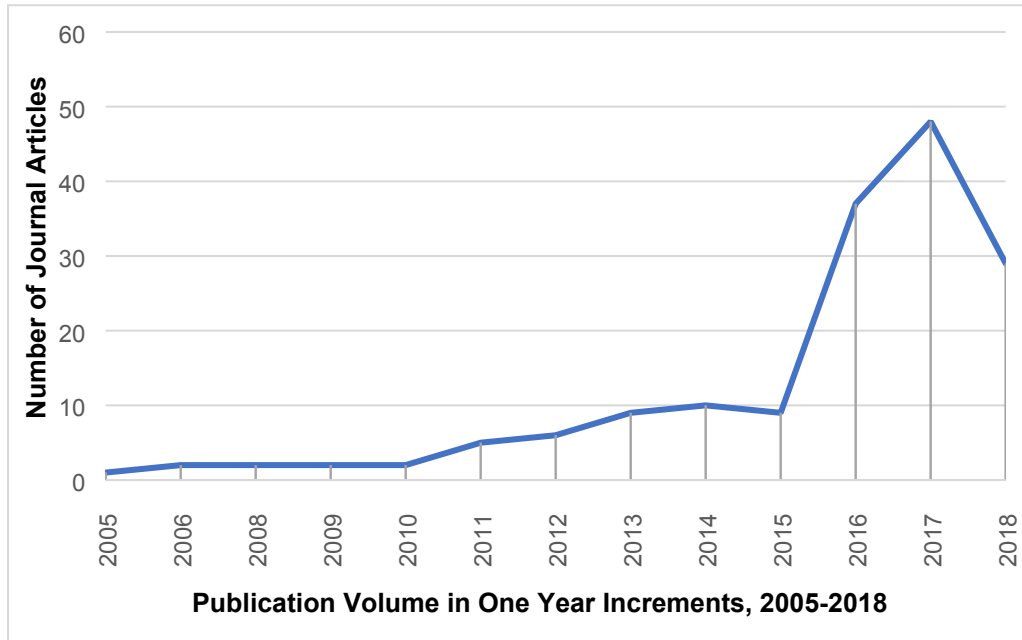


Figure 1: Publication volume of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership, 2005–2018 (n=162).

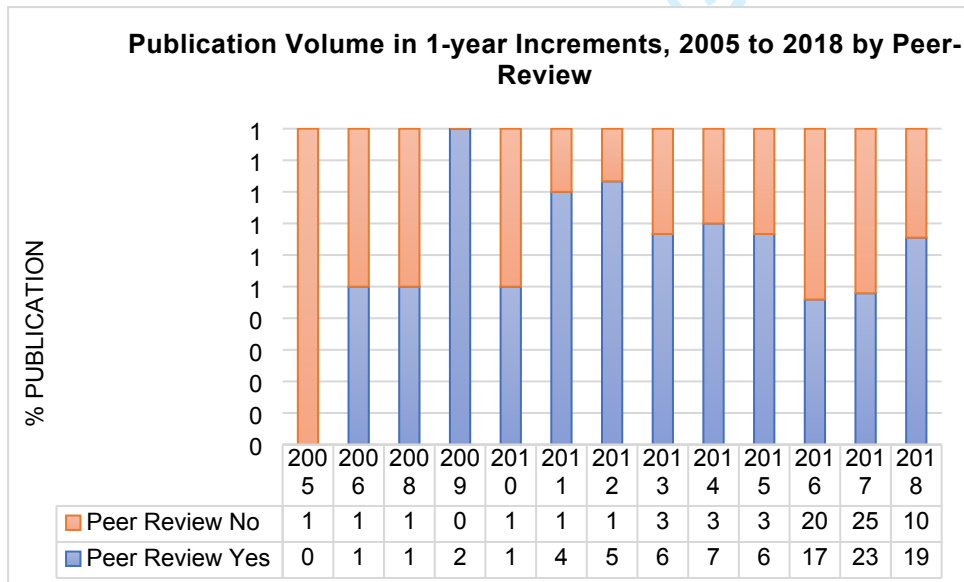
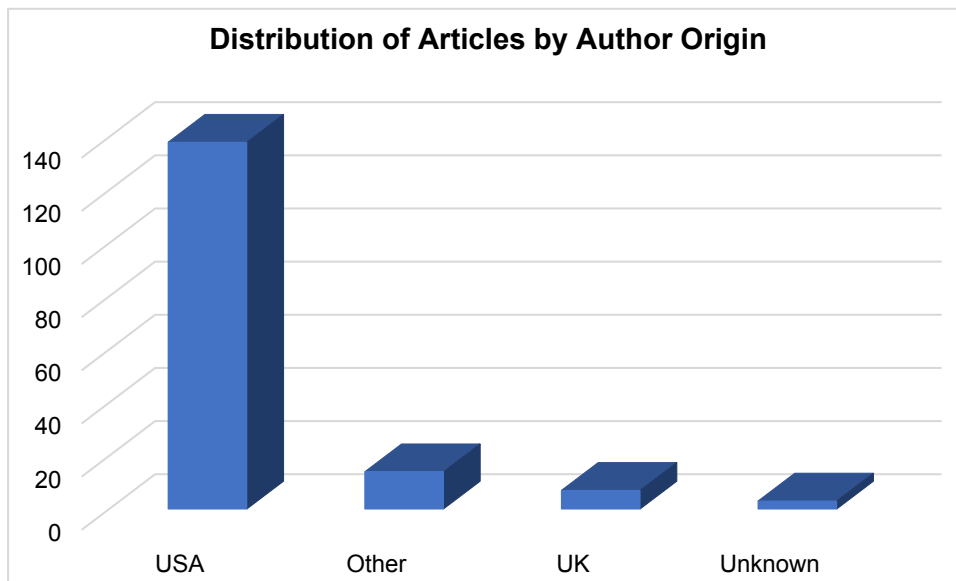
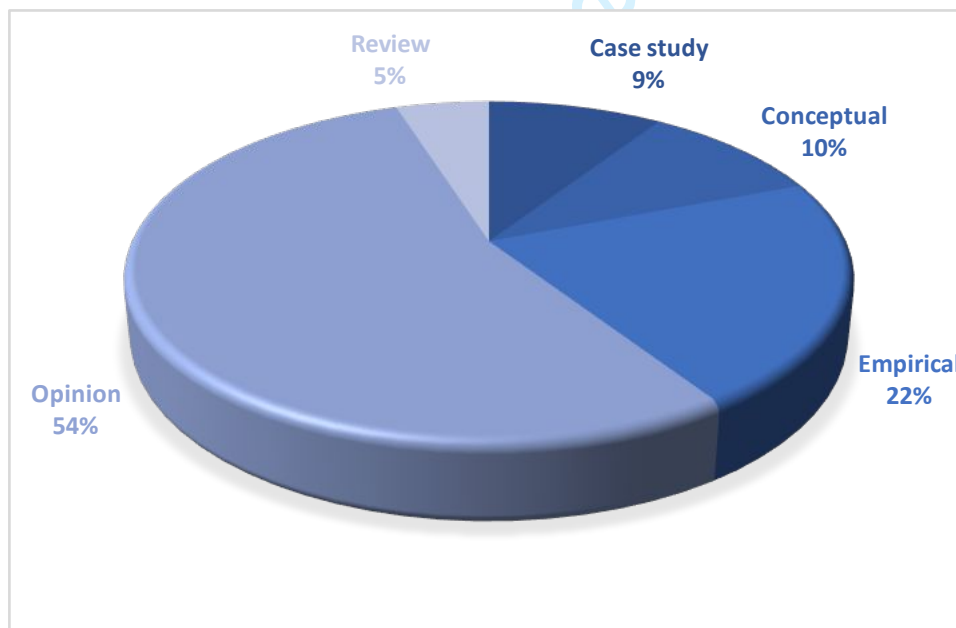


Figure 2: Publication volume of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership by peer-review, 2005–2018 (n=162).



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Figure 3: Distribution of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership by author origin, 2005–2018 (n=162).



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Figure 4: Breakdown of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership by study type, 2005–2018 (n=162).

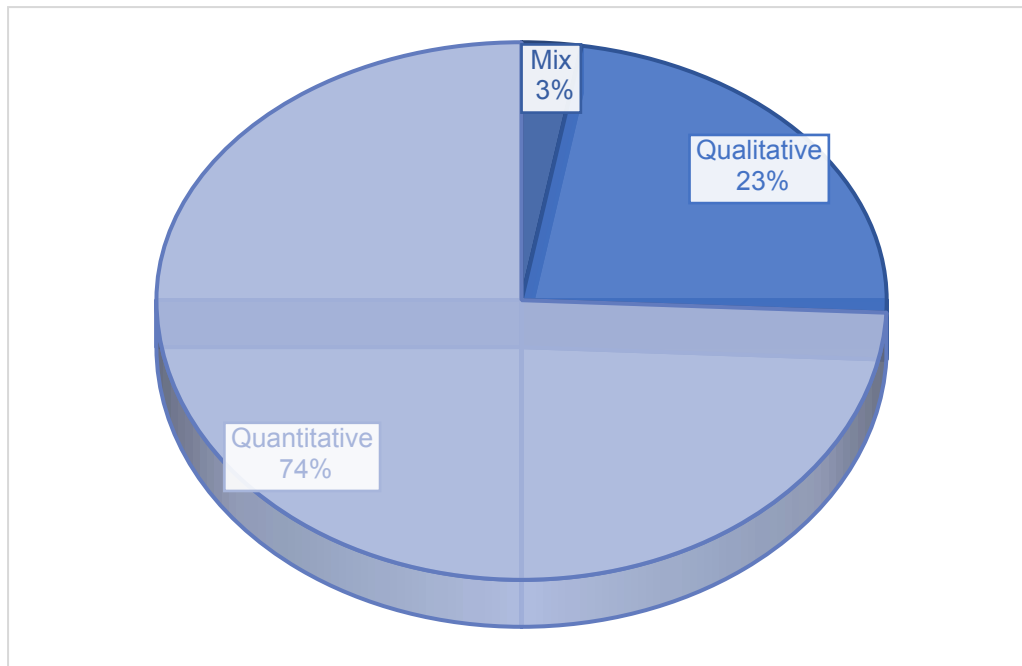


Figure 5: Distribution by research method of empirical articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership, 2005–2018 (n=35).

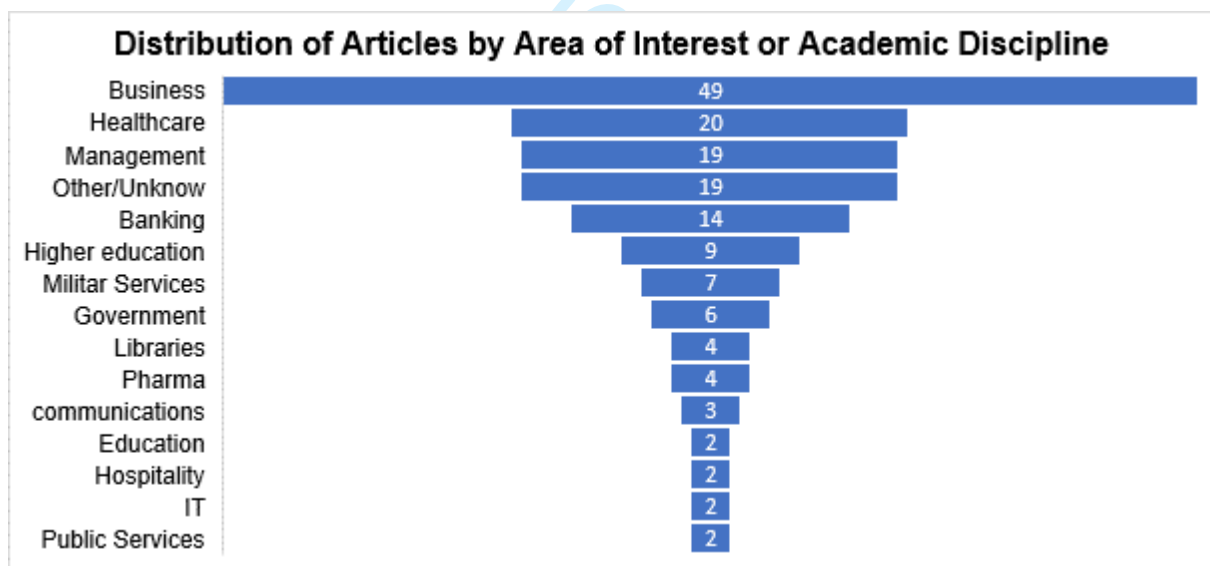


Figure 6: Distribution of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership by area of interest or academic discipline, 2005–2018 (n=162).

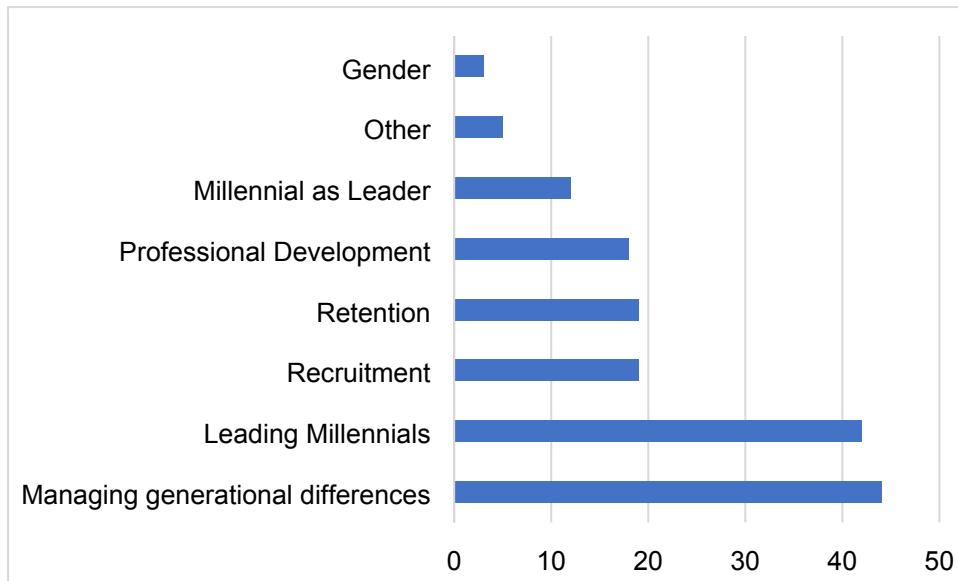


Figure 7: Distribution of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership according to topical foci, 2005–2018 (n=162).

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Age range

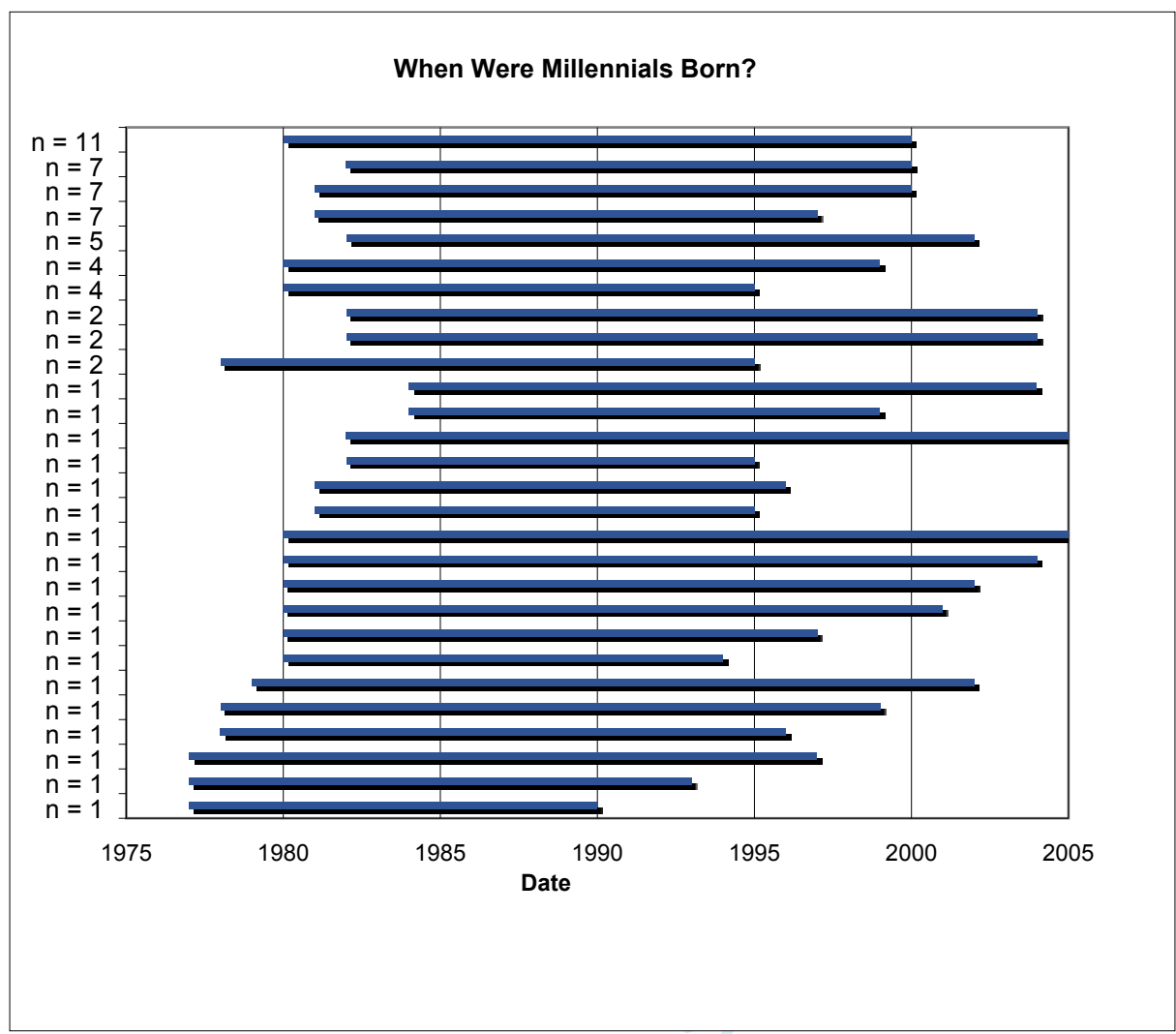


Figure 8: Distribution by categorisation of birth year of articles published on the theme of Millennials and leadership, 2005–2018 (n=69).

Millennials: Leaders or Followers?

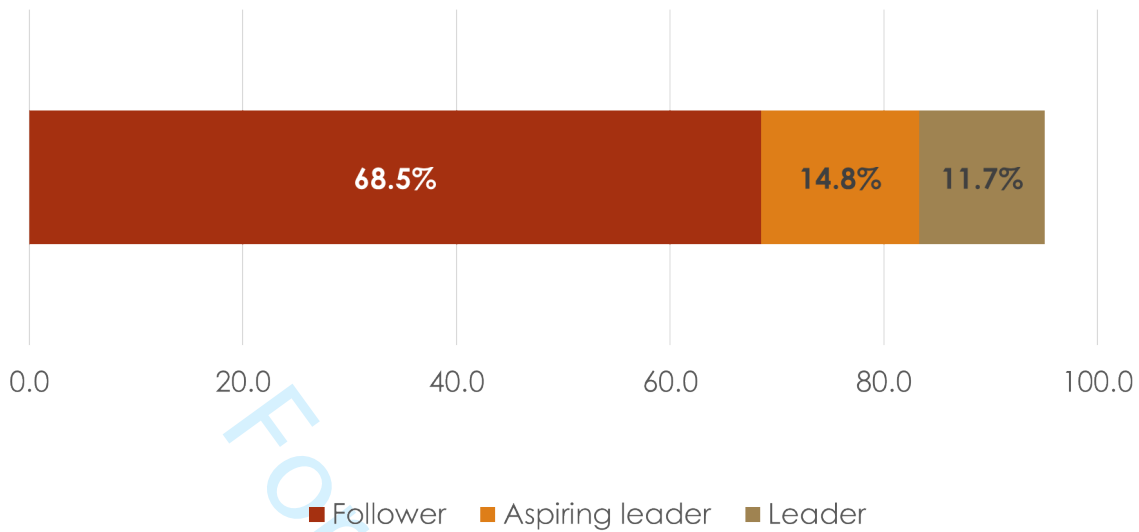


Figure 9: Distribution by position (i.e. follower, aspiring leader or leader) of articles published on the theme of Millennials and Leadership, 2005–2018 (n=154¹).

¹ Eight cases were excluded as they did not explicitly refer to Millennials as (active/potential) leaders or followers.

Table

Research Question	Relevant Data
What is the nature of the journal literature focused on Millennials and leadership?	Publication volume; geographic distribution of articles; types of articles; methods of data collection; journal distribution; academic discipline; topic of article.
How are Millennial leaders defined and understood within the leadership literature?	Millennial age range; characteristics attributed the Millennial generation.

Table 1: Data Extraction

Appendix

List of the articles included in this review

Year	Title	Author
2005	The talent pool	Spragins, Ellyn
2006	The world at their fingertips	Leyland, Richard
2006	Engaging Generation	Galagan, Pat
2008	All I'm askin' is for a little respect: How can we promote civility in our classrooms?	Baker, Susan D ; Comer, Debra R ; Martinak, M Linda
2008	Millennials Expect a Lot from Leaders	Hastings, Rebecca
2009	Guess Who's Coming to Work: Generation Y. Are You Ready for Them?	Barnes, Ginny
2009	Leadership: The Perils of Denial and Gen F	D'Aprix, Roger
2010	Millennials at Work: What We Know and What We Need to Do (If Anything)	Deal, Jennifer ; Altman, David ; Rogelberg, Steven
2010	When Gen Y Runs the Show	Pratt, Mary

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4	2011	Tomorrow's Leaders
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6	2011	Is your facility struggling with millennial nurse retention?
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11	2011	Mentoring for the Millennial
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14	2011	Mind the gap: technology, millennial leadership and the cross-generational workforce
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18	2011	Leading No Matter Where You Sit
19		
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21	2012	Reverse mentoring at work: Fostering cross-generational learning and developing millennial leaders
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25	2012	Generation Y in Healthcare: Leading Millennials in an Era of Reform
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27	2012	Generation or culture?
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33	2012	Engaging Workers from All Generations
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35	2012	If you don't do good, it will be harder to do well'
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2012	Leading a Multigenerational Workforce: Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Millennials	Cahill, Terrence ; Sedrak, Mona
2013	Reverse Mentoring- Something for Everyone!	Kulesza, C S "Bud" ; Smith, Daniel
2013	Is the Millennial Generation Ready to Lead?	Sinar, Evan
2013	Leadership-motivated excellence theory: an extension of LMX	Graen, George B ; Schiemann, William A
2013	Onboarding Strategies to Supercharge Millennial Employees	Ferri-Reed, Jan
2013	Generation Y's Ethical Ideology and Its Potential Workplace Implications	Vanmeter, Rebecca ; Grisaffe, Douglas ; Chonko, Lawrence ; Roberts, James
2013	Bridging the Millennial Divide	Kirchner, Matthew
2013	Mastering millennial leadership development	Lykins, Lorrie ; Pace, Ann
2013	Leadership Training for Millennials	Dinkel, Ann
2013	Bring Generations Together by Leveraging Millennial Affinity Groups	Miah, Kiyona ; Buckner, Stephen
2014	Millennializing the Workplace	Ferri-Reed, Jan
2014	Engaging Adventist Millennials: A Church Embracing Relationships	Jenkin, Clint ; Martin, A
2014	One Size Doesn't Fit All	Peotter, Elizabeth

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4	2014	Millennials among the Professional Workforce in Academic Libraries: Their Perspective on Leadership
5		Graybill, Jolie O.
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7	2014	Comment and Discussion
8		Anonymous
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10	2014	America's Purpose and Role in a Changed World: A Symposium
11		Gershman, Carl ; Gjelten, Tom ; Grebowski, Sarah ;
12		Hayden, Michael ; Muravchik, Joshua ; Rieff, David ;
13		Zantovsky, Michael
14		
15	2014	Training the Next Generation of Ranchers
16		Brockman, Matt
17		
18	2014	Developing Millennials Into Your Firm's Next Generation of Leaders
19		Mcdonald, Paul
20		
21	2014	Close-Up: Welcome to advertising, the Millennials way
22		Klein, Debbie
23		
24	2014	The Millennial Generation and National Defense: Attitudes of Future Military and Civilian Leaders
25		Kelty, Ryan
26		
27	2015	Lead Us!
28		Mabrey, Michael
29		
30	2015	Unlocking the secrets of the downtown of tomorrow
31		Fry, Meg
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33	2015	Generation Y - challenging clients for HRM?
34		Kultalahti, Susanna ; Viitala, Riitta
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36	2015	Millennial Generation Perceptions of Value-Centered Leadership Principles
37		Maier, Thomas ; Tavanti, Marco ; Bombard, Patricia ;
38		Gentile, Michael ; Bradford, Berkita
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2015	Metaphors for today's leadership: VUCA world, millennial and "Cloud Leaders"	Rodriguez, Alejandro ; Rodriguez, Yolanda
2015	Leading Millennials: An Approach That Works	Hinote, S ; Sundvall, Timothy
2015	Developing Millenials as Leaders	Dinkel, Ann
2015	Coaching through Questions?	Gladis, Steve ; Gladis, Kimberly
2015	Critical reflections from the millennials on the global action against dementia legacy events	Newman, Kristine ; Booi, Laura
2016	Transformational Leadership and Employee Involvement: Perspectives from Millennial Workforce Entrants	Bodenhause, Casey ; Curtis, Catherine
2016	Millennials and Your Business	Krupiensi, James
2016	Organisational Ambidexterity and the Multi-Generational Workforce	Woods, Kathryn
2016	Human Capital, the Millennial's Reign, and the Need For Servant Leadership	Barbuto, John E. ; Gottfredson, Ryan K.
2016	Become a Talent Magnet	Doffing, Matthew
2016	Next Generation	Diesing, Genevieve
2016	The end of 'dinosaur' leaders?	Magee, Kate
2016	The Shift in Generational Leadership	Goings, Amy Morrison

2016	Developing your Leadership Skills	Anonymous
2016	Role Call: Five Easy Steps for Retaining Top Teachers	Clement, Mary
2016	Generation Y - The Management Conversion Paradigm	Crisan, Lucian
2016	Millennials: Burden, Blessing or Both?	Barsh, Joanna ; Brown, Lauren ; Kian, Kayvan
2016	#Leadership (Hashtag Leadership)	Warfield, Rafiel
2016	The Future of Millennial Law Enforcement Leadership	Tyler, John
2016	The transition to practice of Direct Entry Clinical Nurse Leader graduates	Shatto, Bobbi ; Meyer, Geralyn ; Delicath, Timothy A.
2016	The Giving Generation	Agovino, Theresa
2016	Know Your XYZs: Understanding and harnessing multigenerational talent	Ferri-Reed, Jan
2016	Preparing Future Leaders To Take the Reins	Wubbe, Eileen ; Dizenzo, Alexis
2016	Exploring the Workplace Communication Preferences of Millennials	Hall, Ashley
2016	Professional Identity, Career Commitment, and Career Entrenchment of Midlevel Student Affairs Professionals	Wilson, Maureen ; Liddell, Debora ; Hirschy, Amy ; Pasquesi, Kira
2016	Millennials: Who they are, what they want, & why you need them	Diesing, Genevieve

2016	Satisfying the workers who appreciate galloping change	Meola, C
2016	The voices of tomorrow	Mccabe, Sean
2016	How to achieve a win/win for both employees and corporates	Sheth, Mitesh
2016	News driven by technology, new journalism report finds	Smith, Todd
2016	Next-Gen	Burtka, Allison
2016	At Your Service-Leadership That Truly Inspires	O'Connell, Wendy ; Gibbons, David
2016	Leadership through the eyes of the millennial	Anonymous
2016	Q&A with Wells Fargo's Franklin Codel and Brad Blackwell	England, Robert
2016	Interpersonal Skill Development	Bailey, John
2016	Generational Mentorship: What Millennial Mentees Want	Seheult, Erin
2016	Fleet offers future leaders prime, hands-on experience	Anonymous
2016	How to counter the growing disengagement with engagement programs	Greatwood, Mike
2016	Recruiting and Retaining the Next Generation of Financial Management Professionals	Ferguson, Adrienne ; Morton-Huddleston, Wendy

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4	2016	Will Your Workplace Work for Millennials?
5		Hahn-Griffiths, Stephen
6	2016	Retaining new graduate nurses in practice; under-pinning the theory of reciprocal
7		role modelling with 'routinisation' theory and transition shock
8		Hoare, Karen
9		
10	2016	Banking on the Future of New Jersey
11		Bergeron, Tom
12		
13	2017	The Multi-Generational Nursing Workforce: Analysis of Psychological Capital by
14		Generation and Shift
15		Sweet, Johanna ; Swayze, Susan
16		
17	2017	Managing Millennial Communication Professionals: Connecting Generation
18		Attributes, Leadership Development, and Employee Engagement
19		Meng, Juan ; Reber, Bryan ; Rogers, Holley
20		
21	2017	Having a voice in the game
22		Miller, David
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24	2017	WWE Leadership
25		Meyer, Samuel
26	2017	Leading with Compassion: The Key to Changing the Organizational Culture and
27		Achieving Success
28		Friedman, Hershey ; Gerstein, Miriam
29		
30	2017	Perpetuating Greatness In Northeast Pennsylvania
31		Gardner, Dave
32		
33	2017	Chief Nursing Officers Roundtable
34		Anonymous
35	2017	Millennial-ize Your Recruiting
36		Roepe, Lisa
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38	2017	Today's Leadership
39		Wagner, Karen
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2017	Meet the not-so-average supply chain Millennials	Daniels, Jennifer ; Tillman, Joe ; Trebilcock, Bob ; Aschenbrand, Judd
2017	Shifting to a Next Generation Workplace	Lawson, Michael
2017	Multi-Generational Workforce: Four Generations United in Lean	Lewis, Lorinda ; Wescott, Harold
2017	Leadership in Pediatric Surgery from a Trainee's Perspective	Zimmer, Julia
2017	“I will change the world”: The Intersection of Social Change and Male College Athletes’ Leadership Perspectives	Fuller, Rhema D ; Harrison, C. Keith ; Lawrence, S. Malia ; Eyanson, Jeff ; Mcardle, Danielle
2017	Beyond Boundaries: Millennial Women and the Opportunities for Global Leadership	Stefanco, Carolyn J.
2017	Putting Mentoring in Reverse	Lytle, Tamara
2017	Inspiring millennial loyalty requires a change in mindset	Lake, Stacy
2017	What works for you may not work for (Gen)Me: Limitations of present leadership theories for the new generation	Anderson, Heather J. ; Baur, John E. ; Griffith, Jennifer A. ; Buckley, M. Ronald
2017	Organizational justice and millennial turnover in public accounting	George, Jessie ; Wallio, Stephanie
2017	Mentorship Through the Lens of Servant Leadership: The Importance of Accountability and Empowerment 1	Norris, S ; Sitton, S ; Baker, M

2017	The charge of the white brigade	Hirsch, Peter Buell
2017	Leading a Multigenerational Workforce	McNally, Kimberly
2017	Climbing the Stairs to Leadership: Reflections on Moving Beyond the Stained-Glass Ceiling	Barnes, Joanne
2017	The Aging of the Sandwich Generation	Urlick, Michael
2017	Things to Stop Doing When Managing Millennials	Wendover, Bob
2017	Resilience of Millennial Leaders in the Indian I.T. Industry	Bargavi, N ; Samuel, Anand ; Paul, P
2017	No one's saying change is easy	Bennett, Molly
2017	Innovative tools and techniques to overcome HR challenges globally	Rao, M.S
2017	From Diversity to Intergenerativity: Addressing the Mystery and Opportunities of Generation X	Whitehouse, Pj ; Flippin, CS
2017	Performance reviews adapt to millennial mode	Elliott-Engel, Amaris
2017	Continuing Education In-house	Gardner, Dave
2017	The Generation Gap	Barnes, Jake
2017	Leaders still need people skills	Sladack, David

2017	Q&A: Michael Summerfield	Michael Summerfield
2017	What keeps you up at night?	Fournier, Ron
2017	Why Does Training Mean So Much to Millennials?	Hackel, Evan
2017	What the Best Leaders Do to Stimulate Growth and Performance	Roth, Tom
2017	Guiding Principles for Creating Value and Meaning for the Next Generation of Nurse Leaders	Martin, Erik ; Warshawsky, Nora
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