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Millennials Managed: How Millennials Perceive and Value Implicit Leadership Traits

An Honor Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the
Department of Management

By
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Under the mentorship of *Dr. Steven Charlier*

ABSTRACT

This project focuses on how Millennials (born between the early 1980s and early 2000s) perceive and value the implicit leadership traits of managers in today's business environment. The goal is to show that millennials perceive several implicit leadership traits such as Relationship-Oriented Leadership, Trust, Knowledge Demonstration, and Individualism as favorable while perceiving Justice Orientation and Confrontation as traits that bear negative consequences for job effectiveness and satisfaction. The research was done by distributing a survey to the National Millennials Community, a national organization comprised of over 200 members that span across the entire country, as well as a Georgia Southern Organizational Behavior undergraduate class and any persons that the Qualtrics survey was shared with using the URL provided at the end of the survey. The survey was designed based on traits learned by managers through education and experience rather than inherited, human traits that are derived from personality or personal life experiences. Through the findings of this survey, the research shows that Millennials have more complicated, diverse perspectives on each of these traits, however, they do value Relationship-Oriented and Trust-based relationship more so than Justice Orientation and Confrontation practices. This creates large implications for how managers are taught to execute human capital activities and gain job satisfaction and effective leadership from the Millennial generation.

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Introduction

Millennials, as of 2015, has become the largest share of people currently in America's workforce, with a majority share of over 53 million working or actively seeking employment (Fry, Pew Research Center, pewresearch.org). Because of this, many businesses, executives, economists, journalists, and scholars have taken special interest in studying the way this generation operates as a consumer, employee, stakeholder, etc. in today's economy. Many of the studies and critiques made have been used to draw assumptions about millennials, with a popularity rising in the "millennials killed (insert once popular product or activity here)" articles that place blame or prejudice upon those born in the millennial era, such as "5 Industries Millennials Are Killing (And Why)" (Josuweit, Forbes.com), "Here Are 28 Things Millennials Are Killing In Cold Blood" (Akbar and Regna, buzzfeed.com), and an actual list of articles titled "Millennials Killed List" found in Business Insider's website (businessinsider.com).

With increasing numbers of these assumptive positions published each day, there is little done in finding out what millennials actually want or desire, especially in the workplace. Some companies try to accommodate the culture of millennials by reframing their businesses to seem more post-modern and "with the times," while others strong arm their traditional ways of doing business. Still, not many studies have been done to find out what the average millennial in today's majority of the American workforce actually desires when working for a company. Found within the book *Millennials and the Workplace*, written by Pritam Singh, Asha Bhandarker, and Sumita Rai, the authors state, "[An] important factor of Millennials' workplace expectations, which is presented here, is their relationship with the immediate boss/senior/ supervisor. In fact, research... seems

to suggest that this relationship influences one's attitude towards the organization especially the intent to leave," (Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker, pg. 152-153). Taking this statement into account, this thesis will go into depth and show research as to how Millennials desire to be managed by their superior.

With companies investing heavily in current technologies and business operation tactics, it seems fitting they should also invest in effective human capital management that is tailored to the now majority of the present workforce. This article will delve into a specific view for millennials, and that view is how millennials want to be managed, led, and supported in their careers by a superior in the workplace. Finding the answers to this question can raise some heavy implications in how companies should or may need to adapt to the new workforce so as to maintain/increase job satisfaction and therefore increase employee retention. No matter what financial assets, technology, and advantages a company may have, the company should always consider effective human capital management to be among the highest of priorities when creating a healthy, working business that can secure economic longevity and stability.

Not only is this important to companies individually, but it also pertains to America as a whole. Referring again to *Millennials and the Workplace*, the authors write, "Understanding Millennials' expectations becomes much more critical in the coming decades as the war for talent becomes more severe on a global scale. This war for talent will get worse as most of the nations, particularly advanced countries become progressively grey, leading to greater demand and lesser supply of high quality talent," (Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker, pg. 98). So, in order for companies to retain employees, attract new talent, and sustain an effective human capital management advantage (and for America itself to retain the peoples who make up the majority of

its current workforce), it is most crucial that the heaviest consideration for the desires of these peoples should be taken into account.

Method

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

To create this study, a 35-question survey was made in Qualtrics, approved by the Georgia Southern IRB, and sent out to the National Millennials Community, an organization made to be a community of millennials from across America that could speak with companies, executives, and businesses about Millennials as a generation of employees, customers, and stakeholders. This community, with over 200 members across the United States, was found to be the ideal sample base to collect survey from, and it gave full cooperation to the study. The survey was also distributed to an Organizational Behavior undergraduate class to gain more responses for a greater sample size. Even more, at the conclusion of the survey, the survey takers had the option of sharing the Qualtrics URL with any and all persons they deemed appropriate in taking the survey as well, i.e., fellow millennials. A total of 169 surveys were collected, with 136 being viable. There were outliers, as some persons did not complete all the necessary survey points in the questionnaire, while others were outside of the age range for being a millennial (currently between the ages of 18 and 35). This age range, although arbitrarily chosen, was for adequate rationale, as those beginning at the age of 18 are beginning their college careers and, quite probably, beginning to take part in the workforce. As for the upper limit, many debates have been made as to when the millennial generation begins, but most studies concur the starting year resides in the early 1980s. The 35 questions created in the survey were based on the proposed traits from earlier, with each trait including 5 questions. These questions were standardized for each survey taker to be able to rate each question based upon their agreeableness to the statements provided, with a seven-point grading scale that ranged from 1 (meaning “strongly agree”) to 7 (meaning “strongly disagree”) and 4 as the midpoint (meaning “neither agree or

disagree”). These questions could then be easily analyzed on a standard scale and the data received could be easily transferable to quantitative data. The questions mentioned will be explained in for their accuracy and validity in the next section. From these standardized questions, the findings in the responses can be extrapolated to form some important implications in regards to the current perceptions millennials have on these implicit leadership traits.

Once these statements were rated by the survey taker, he/she was then given the choice to rank each of the traits in terms of which he or she found the most/least important for a manager to have, with 1 being “most important” and 6 being “least important.” From this, the perceptions that the findings bring forth will carry with them the level of impact it may have on the millennial employee. In other words, the overall perceptions given for each trait will have a level of impact relative to the others when they are compared.

Measures

The measures used were derived from a selection of traits that are included in a study on Implicit Leadership Theory in tandem with articles that explored each of these traits in a more detailed investigation. Developed by Robert Ford in 1977, Implicit Leadership Theory focuses on the perceptions people make of the world and the responses they take in dealing with those perceptions (Rush, Thomas, Lord, pg. 1155). These include the expectations of an employee of a particular workplace, the perceived ideals of the workplace, and the reaction the employee makes based upon the difference between the expectations and the perceived ideals. The traits pertaining to leadership chosen this study were chosen with careful reason, as this article should apply to management styles and traits that apply to what a person in a management positions learns rather than what inherent traits a person is born with, such as extroversion and introversion, inner judgment or “gut-feeling” tendencies, etc. The selection of these traits can

give way to implications that apply to what a person learns through education and work experience rather than what a person gains from personal experiences in his or her individual, private life. Through this, implications on how persons are presently educated in terms of management techniques and skills can be made with more certainty.

To find these traits, an amassing of several peer-reviewed articles was collected and cross-referenced, finding commonalities within the articles in terms of what work experience and education-based traits were used in the study. From the comprised list, the traits that were found to be learned, distinct, and frequently studied were used in the study while omitting the rest (Table 2-1). This following section will describe what these traits are and how they apply to the business world within the scope of employer/employee relationships. Each trait was then given a score based on an algorithm that placed a weight on each number of responses for each trait based upon the ranking, i.e. 1, being “1st” or “most important,” was given the weight of 1, while 7, being “7th” or “least important,” was given a weight of 7, etc. For the equation, the number of responses for each placement in level of importance multiplied by the weight is denoted by “#position*weight.” The algorithm is as follows:

$$\text{Score}(Y) = (\#1^{\text{st}}*1) + (\#2^{\text{nd}}*2) + (\#3^{\text{rd}}*3) + (\#4^{\text{th}}*4) + (\#5^{\text{th}}*5) + (\#6^{\text{th}}*6)$$

This algorithm was applied to each of the traits and gave each trait a total. Base upon this algorithm, the trait with the lowest score of the six is the trait with the most importance, with each trait placing higher in score than the last being of less importance than the preceding. When comparing the difference of scores among the six selected traits, a statistical standard of 5% has been set to determine whether two traits are significantly different in value of importance with any percentage difference greater than 5% meaning that the two traits are significantly different in terms of importance value.

Relationship-Oriented Leadership

Relationship-Oriented Leadership applies to a generalization of a leader's amount of care in motivation, emotional stability, and overall welfare of employees in the workplace. Or, as found in an article "The Role of Task-Oriented Versus Relationship Oriented Leadership on Normative Contract and Group Performance," Relationship-Oriented Leadership can also be defined as a type of leadership that "involves unspecified obligations, favors the exchange of socioemotional resources, and presupposes that relationships do not have a specific aim and that they will be maintained in the long term," (Taberner, Chambel, Curral, Arana, pg. 1392). This includes engaging employees on an individual basis, making connections with employees on a personal level, and tailoring the workplace environment to create a healthy working structure for the employee. This has been seen as one of those most common traits studied in today's research field, and for good reason.

Throughout the present culture of America and more recently other countries, making personal connections with others has been made to be a huge point of value for most people of this generation of millennials. Millennials want to feel a sense of worth from others, often times actively seeking reinforcement through connections with family, personal friends, and colleagues. And with the advent of social technology, people have more access than ever to communication and share relationships that, before social networking, were next to impossible to maintain. Millennials want to feel the gratification from the online social scene to just as much of an extent as face-to-face connections, effectively increasing a person of this chosen generation's need for a connection to another that extends beyond the boundaries of the workplace. Therefore, it has become more important that someone in a position in which they have authority over a

millennial consider the millennial not just a subordinate or employee but also a person that desires these kinds of connections.

Knowledge Demonstration

Knowledge demonstration is how much a leader keeps up-to-date in current technologies, culture, news, and society as a whole and displays this knowledge to his/her subordinates in the workplace. With today's technology, people across the world have access to huge amounts of data and information, ranging from the daily news, current events, and pop culture to numerous sources for education. Also, most, if not, all large companies (50 employees or more) utilize some form of an information system to conduct the day-to-day business activities, such as buying materials and selling products, inventory management, accounting transactions, and operational activities. In a study by the ADP Research Institute, it is stated, "As the workplace evolves, knowledge and information sharing is vital for getting work done and remaining competitive," (ADP Research Institute, adp.com). Also, from an article from the University of Florida titled "Why Any Manager Should Know the Basics of IT," the writer claims "Every manager should develop some level of technological skills and knowledge in order to do their jobs effectively. They should also ensure that their employees understand the technology the company is using in order to maximize job performance," (Bisk, essentialisofbusiness.ufexec.ufl.edu). Also, in terms of understanding society and culture, Roger Trapp, author of an article on the Forbes website entitled "Why Successful Leaders Acknowledge Cultural Differences," he writes, "...in age of globalization, acknowledging – and understanding – cultural differences is more important than ever. This is particularly true for leaders..." (Trapp, forbes.com).

Managers are expected to have equal or more knowledge in the workplace, whether that be the technologies used in the workplace, the current climate of society and culture that may give external pressures to the company, and the ability of the manager to be able to internalize the knowledge and use it to impact the workplace in a productive way. With this in mind, it is clear that knowledge demonstration would be an important trait to include in the study.

Justice Orientation

Justice Orientation can be described as how closely a leader follows a “justice” policy in managing and leading employees, with codes of conduct and comparable, equal punishments to any transgression in the workplace. The issue in question is whether a manager uses a more distributive justice, such as an evaluation and punishment basis that is consistent with any comparable transgression between two or more employees, or the manager uses a more case-by-case or selective justice, meaning the manager takes determines a course of justice based on the individual’s situation. While this may seem as an antithesis to relationship-oriented leadership, it is not but rather simply a different way of managing. A manager can be both if the right circumstances make it beneficial, such as a foreman of a factory who must keep strict guidelines and codes of conduct for maximum efficiency of production as well as maintaining a base of safety for the workers to operate in. In most cases, justice orientation translates to how closely a manager follows the company’s policies, regulations, and standards set for its employees. Of course, it is important for a manager to operate within the scope of these policies and standards, as it is the way a company desires and demands how its employees operate. To go against this could be detrimental, or at the least, disruptive to the business’ operations. In recent years, we have seen companies such as Google, Zappos, Facebook, and Spotify have taken the approach to create comfortable and even fun work environments, with the work itself being only a part of the

overall experience. These companies have seen value in making the environment as comfortable and pleasing as possible to employees just as much as having the employee work effectively. They see the state of the workplace environment having a direct correlation to employee effectiveness. With this new take on workplace environment also comes a new way of operating within the business, with employees being able to complete tasks in whatever manner they see fit. As long as the effectiveness of the completed task is sufficient, these companies are satisfied with the employee's performance. Justice orientation would not fit as a means of management, as it contradicts the lax, "laid-back," free flowing environment the company produces. Whereas these companies may have standards, they are much less vigorous and restricting compared to other companies. This would eliminate the effectiveness of a manager using justice orientation to maintain or increase employee performance. And with these companies being some of the world's leading in size, market shares, and productivity, businesses in America and across the world are beginning to revolutionize their own business environments in the hopes of gaining the same employee satisfaction and effectiveness. Therefore, it is important for a manager in today's business environment to be able to balance their justice orientation techniques (or amount of) when working for a business.

Trust

Trust, put simply, is the amount of trusting behavior a leader places in his/her subordinates. This includes giving an employee autonomy to complete his or her daily tasks, giving an employee agency and authority in certain situations (such as a business meeting or group project), and entrusting an employee to carry out any and all activities required and supplementary of the job. Managers take different approaches in leading employees, with some keeping close supervision to the performance of his or her employees, while others give

complete autonomy and agency to the employee, with even more being somewhere between. Trusting behavior is something people of all ages would strive to have in the workplace, however, in more recent years, the importance and significance of the value may have grown to a more significant degree. According to authors Dennis and Michelle Reina, in their article “Trust & Betrayal in the Workplace: Building Effective Relationships in Your Organization,” they state that trust, on the part of the manager, “...increases creativity and critical thinking, necessary factors for flexible and adaptive work environments,” (Reina and Reina, pg.3). As it will be evident later in the study, trusting behavior is largely considered to be one of the most important traits millennials look for in a manager.

Confrontation/Collision Avoidance

Confrontation is the propensity of a leader to approach an employee directly in the event the employee is not performing to business standards, with collision avoidance being the tendency of an employee trying to avoid that confrontation. Confrontation includes a manager confronting an employee in the workplace to criticize, critique, and possibly reprimand an employee if the employee is not performing adequately. This can be closely related to “reward/punishment” practice that managers use to motivate and incentivize employees, specifically the “punishment” side of the practice. While this practice may automatically sound as though it can create increased hostility or dissatisfaction in the workplace, according to research done in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology by the American Psychological Association, “... although both confrontation and avoidance coping will be ineffective strategies for preventing recurrence of incivility, confrontation will lead targets to be more likely to forgive and psychologically ‘let go’ of the mistreatment,”(Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais, Bozeman, pg. 3). This is an important trait to study, as it delves into the perspectives millennials have when

being given criticism or a reprimanding for not performing well or not behaving or acting within a company's approved code of conduct while in the workplace. If millennials prefer confrontation over avoidance, future failure in performance may decrease, and acts of incivility may increase in the workplace, effectively creating a safer, more effective environment for employees to perform and interact in.

Collectivism/Individualism

Collectivism v. Individualism, in the scope of the business world, is how a leader measures and rewards employee performance, either individually or as a group. In most cases in America, employees are evaluated on job performance individually with little or no emphasis on the company's workforce as a whole. According to Singh, Bhandarker, and Rai, "Millennials also desire to work in a place where their performance and contribution are amply recognized and rewarded," (Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker, pg. 154). This is mainly due to America's culture, which is based heavily on freedoms of the individual, as well as the ability of the individual to pursue and achieve his or her goals, achievements, and desires. Even in the case of a group project, the overall work of the group is not measured as much as an individual's performance within that group. However, in the case of countries like Japan and China, collectivism reigns as the majority trait, largely due to the collective nature of their culture, with the individual emphasized far less than a group's or an entire company's performance (hosted-insights.com). This is important to study, as this binary of traits can show what change, if any, has come in recent years with the millennial generation. Knowing the implications of this binary can help businesses adapt to the change of how employees want to be evaluated or reaffirm and even reinvigorate the present desires of employees in terms of evaluation.

Results

Findings

The findings of this survey will be given in accordance to the overall sample (n=136) of the survey submissions. Each trait will have a value based on the majority of how the questions were answered, such as a case in which the majority of survey takers voted in favor of relationship-oriented leadership. Once these values are established, the level of importance will be given so as to depict the weight, or severity, of the perception.

Perceptions

Relationship Oriented Leadership. Based upon the findings in the 5 questions pertaining to Relationship-Oriented Leadership, the majority of survey takers valued relationship-oriented leadership in a positive, that is, they found this trait to be a favorable characteristic to for a manager to have when leading people in the workplace. With an average of 77.94% of responses showing some to strong agreeableness to the statements provided, all of which are biased in favor of the trait (Table 1-1). Two of the statements bring forth some interesting data. Statement 3, although holding 65.45% majority in agreement, has a noticeable 25.01% in disagreement, 17.65% of the 25.01% responding with some disagreement. With a one-in-four possibility of an employee reacting negatively to a manager performing the same amount of work as an employee, this has interesting implications that, although peripheral, could hold some importance. Also, Statement 5 was the most dividing statement in relationship-oriented leadership. While a majority of 52.21% responded that a manager should strive to create relationships outside of work, 29.41% of the responses were neutral while another 18.38% disagreeing to the statement, with over 10% of the 18.38% moderately or strongly disagreeing.

Statistically, this means 1 in 10 millennials may find that having a relationship with his or her superior may negatively affect their satisfaction in the workplace.

Knowledge Demonstration. All five questions included in the Knowledge Demonstration portion are designed to be agreed on in favor of knowledge demonstration. From the findings among these five questions, an average of 84.26% of the responses are shown to be in agreement with knowledge demonstration being a positive trait that a manager should have in the workplace (Table 1-2). Of these question, question 1 shows some critical data, with a combined percentage of 31.61% showing no favor or to be in disagreement with a manager being required to know as much about technological as his/her employees. The more interesting factor here is not so much the disagreement. Rather, it is that nearly 20% of the responses show apathy to this statement, implying they do not care if a manager knows as much about technology as employees. This is of interest, as 91.17% percent of the responses answered in some degree of agreeableness in having a sense of respect for a manager if/when he/she were to display a working knowledge in the workplace. So, while just over 9 in 10 employees would show respect for a manager for demonstrating knowledge, just less than 7 in 10 desire the manager to have some form of authority by expertise, that is, authority that stems from having a better working knowledge than others in the workplace.

Justice Orientation. Within the findings of the responses of the five statements in favor of Justice Orientation, the majority of responses, with an average of 61.03%, are in favor of justice orientation being a positive trait for a manager to have (Table 1-3). While 82.36% show agreeableness to a manager strictly following the policies of a company, 38.23% of responses disagree to a manager punishing an employee for negative job performance regardless of excuse with a majority of 50.73% of responses being in disagreement of a manager punishing an

employee for a first-time, minor offense. If a manager is strictly following company policy, and that company calls for punishment on an employee for a first-time offense, no matter the severity, this can raise some serious challenges for the manager.

Trust. In the case of trust, the data shows a more complex, diverse set of response percentages in terms of agreeableness (Table 1-4). Questions 1, 2, and 4, all possible factors in a manager having little to no trust in employees, all show an average majority of 58.82% in the responses being in favor of the statements. This could imply that almost 6 in 10 millennial employees have a positive response to a manager having less trust in them, with another average of 17.16% of responses being apathetic to the idea. This leaves a possibility of an average of almost 80% of employees who wouldn't be opposed to the idea of a manager showing little trust and using close supervision. This directly contradicts the findings from authors Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker, who state that two of the factors millennials desire in a work environment are that it "urges trust and transparency," and "Gives autonomy and freedom to express my views," (Singh, Rai, Bhandarker, pg. 155). Also, question 3, which pertains to employees trusting the manager, 93.37% agreed that a manager should be heavily involved in an employee's evaluation. This data plausibly directs to millennials being understanding of trust incongruence, with the employee placing a lot of trust in the manager and expecting little in return. However, even more troubling, when the survey takers were asked whether they would rather work for a manager that provides autonomy versus one that uses close supervision, the responses were in a heavy majority of 80.89% in favor of having a manager that grants autonomy. To remedy this conflict among the data gathered, a rationale can be made to say that close supervision/autonomy may not be related in a cause-effect relationship with trust/lack of trust according to the perceptions of millennial employees. It may be that, although millennials are willing to be closely monitored, they feel as

though managers may wield this power but wouldn't use it unless a strong case for probable cause may influence or force the manager to use that power.

Confrontation/Collision Avoidance. In terms of confrontation, the responses are mixed at best (Table 1-5). In terms of frequent and direct confrontations, most responses showed favor in a manager practicing this form of incentivizing employees to perform better or to cease any incivility that employee may have shown in the workplace, with 74.27% of responses in favor of frequent criticism from the manager and 86.02% in favor of direct confrontation versus indirect communicating (such as email, phone, letter, etc.). Another important point of interest is how a slight majority of responses (44.85%) show that a manager having the availability to confront an employee, regardless of what the employee is engaged in, would have a negative effect on an employee's perception of the manager.

Collectivism/Individualism. Between these two types of employee activities and evaluation (reward/punishment), the majority of responses show to be in favor of individualism over collectivism, with an average of 67.94% (Table 1-6). While there are some considerable responses that show either apathy or some form of disagreement, all five sets of responses to the statements direct to individualism as the more favorable form of management that a superior should implement in the workplace. This shows congruence with the findings in the Hofstede "Country Comparison Tool," which shows individualism among the peoples in the United States being among the highest in the world (Hofstede Insights, hofsted-insights.com).

Value

Comparable Value. With the final survey question, the survey takers rated each trait in terms of most importance to least. The weighted scores (Table 2-1) place Trust as the trait that the survey takers found to be the most important trait for a manager to have in the workplace,

with Relationship-Oriented Leadership following close behind at only a difference of 5.8%. Within the scope of statistics, this may be somewhat of a significance within the realm of a very large corporation, but, in most cases, it can be said these two traits are of similar to equal importance. Knowledge Demonstration, being 114 points (39.17%) higher than Relationship-Oriented Leadership and 147 points lower (36.30%) than Justice Orientation, holds distance from the more important traits as well as the three latter traits (Figure 1-1 displays this distance), placing it in a level of importance significantly lower than the first two traits but much greater than the latter three. With Justice Orientation being only 4.7% greater than Collectivism/Individualism, it is safe to assume that, statistically speaking, they are within the realm of being comparable to each other and of similar importance. However, at a value of 53 points greater than Justice Orientation (a difference of 9.2%), it can be said that Confrontation/Collision Avoidance has a significant difference in level of importance in that it is lower than Justice Orientation.

Implications

Millennials, when presented with these six traits in implicit leadership, may vary in some instances, but, for most of the traits, hold a strong consensus and direction in terms how they perceive these traits. In terms of Trust, Millennials value autonomy in the workplace. They want to be able to perform a task in the way(s) they deem appropriate for the situation, although they have little to no problem with the manager being able to closely supervise and critique their performance of the task. It can be implied that Millennials want a balance of freedom in the workplace while simultaneously being monitored on their performance and want constant feedback from their superior. This can actually be supported by the research done by Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker, as their findings show that, while Millennials want autonomy and freedom to express themselves and try new ways of performing, they also want to be criticized and evaluated on their performance (Singh, Rai, Bhandarker, pg. 99). In terms of comparing these perceptions, Millennials look for this as one of the most important for a manager to exemplify.

With Relationship-Oriented Leadership, Millennials favor a manager that uses the practices within Relationship-Oriented Leadership; they want a manager who takes time to get to know them as an individual and relates to them on some level other than just the workplace setting, including being sensitive to an employee's life experiences outside of work and building relationships with the employees outside of the workplace environment. Millennials also value a manager that who they can relate to in terms of the job, such as the manager performing the same amount of work as his/her employees and is held to the same standard of performance. In terms of importance, this type of implicit management, along with Trust, is one of the most important to them when compared to other traits.

Millennials, to a lesser degree of importance, also value Knowledge Demonstration. They desire a manager who has not only basic level competency in the workplace but also has a working and adequate knowledge with current technologies and the present-day culture, politics, and society of the world and be able to internalize that information. With Millennials being the most ethnically and culturally diverse generation, the most educated generation, and the most technologically savvy, they want a manager who has a comparable to greater amount of expertise in the fields of cultural awareness, education, and technology (Frey, Brookings Institution, brookings.edu) (Pew Research Center, pewresearch.org) (Murphy, Bentley University, bentley.edu).

Although not as valued as other traits in the Implicit Leadership Theory, the idea of individualism is still a favorable trait for Millennials. Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, a professor at Clark University, found in the 2014 Poll of Established Adults (within the millennial age range) that the three greatest factors in becoming an adult were “accepting responsibility for self, financial independence and making independent decisions,” (Arnett, Clark University, clarku.edu). Millennials want a manager who will foster and reward the individualistic values that they share including ways to be recognized as an individual and valued for their duties and actions individually. It can even be said that Millennials value trust so importantly because they want to be validated by that trust as a testament and/or accolade to their character.

Lower in levels of relative importance to other traits are Justice Orientation and Confrontation/Collision Avoidance. Within the scope of Justice Orientation, Millennials favor management that treats their shortcomings and faults on an individual basis and gives them leniency in making mistakes. As stated in an article from leadershiptraq.com, “...but for twenty-first century tasks, the mechanistic punishment... doesn’t work,” (Ukleja, leadershiptraq.com).

Millennials desire for managers to make conscious efforts to help them, as an employee, learn from their mistakes and grow from those lessons to become stronger, more developed and capable workers. When working with Millennial employees, a manager must make conscious efforts not only allow but also help employees grow, learn, and change in the workplace. This includes when that employee makes mistakes.

As with Confrontation/Collision Avoidance, Millennials appreciate a manager who can face an employee directly in the workplace and address the issues involving that employee. This is not to say that Millennials are able to tolerate coercive or abrasive leadership. Coercing a Millennial employee has proven to be ineffective in incentivizing an employee and only decreases job effectiveness. This is supported by research findings in “Multilevel Influence of Destructive Leadership on Millennial Generation Employees’ Innovative Behavior,” by Xuanfang Hou of Jiangxi Normal University. According to this study he performed on 223 Millennial employees across three different companies, Xuanfang found that Millennials react negatively to coercive and confrontational leadership, feeling as though their innovative ideas and drive for creativity is being stifled (Xuanfang, pg. 1114). And, referring back to the Singh, Rai, and Bhandarker article, “Millennials would like to embrace a workplace where there is plenty of opportunity for learning, growth, and development,” (Singh, Rai, Bhandarker, pg. 154). The desires of Millennials cannot be realized when a manager uses blunt coercion. A manager must take the right approach in confronting a Millennial employee. Millennials value a manager that will address the faults in a face-to-face conversation, provide constructive criticism, and help the employee grow and develop.

Limitations and Further Study

Although there was some valuable data and some interesting implications that were brought forth in this article, there are some limitations created in the study that must be brought forth. None of these directly nullify the study, but they are in need of address. Demographics was a huge point of interest to consider and analyze. To see the breakdown of the various perceptions and the relative values as they pertained to the gathered demographics such as gender (male vs. female), occupation status (employed vs. unemployed), field of study in education (major), and education status (currently a student vs. not) would've provided a more detailed and comprehensive study that could bring forth more implications to be explored.

Comparatively speaking with regards to other observed theses, this one has a somewhat small sample size. Given more time, more survey takers could've been recruited and some of the incomplete surveys could've been given time to be completed. In tandem with this subject, the availability window for people to take the survey was very small, which may have restricted some interested participants from finding an appropriate time to take the survey.

Another large limitation was the small selection of traits created in the study. There are multiples of traits that exist within the realm of Implicit Leadership Theory. Further study with more traits to consider could bring forth much more data and more, even larger implications. Given more consideration, the number of traits that are explored in the survey study could've been greatly increased.

Lastly, some questions asked in the survey were supplemental. And, after consideration, it was determined these questions were not pertinent to the study as a whole. This set of questions more so pertained to company policy involving dress codes and policies on haircut, piercings, tattoos, etc. These questions, although approved by the GSU IRB to use in the study,

had no significant impacts on the selected traits. Also, these questions didn't involve management traits as much as it involved the perceptions of Millennials on established company policies and how they would react to them. These questions could be the start of a study that goes in depth to study the subject.

Conclusion

The research provided in this thesis revealed that Millennials, from the mindset of an employee, perceive Relationship-Oriented Leadership, Trusting Behavior, Knowledge Demonstration, and Individualism to be favorable Implicit Leadership Traits, with Justice Orientation and Confrontation to be positive traits as well if used judiciously and constructively. Of these selected traits, Millennials find trusting-behavior and Relationship-Oriented Leadership to be the most important traits for a manager to have in the workplace, as understanding a Millennial employee on a personal basis and entrusting them to do well in the workplace gives them the necessary positive feedback they need to be successful and satisfied in the workplace. In accordance with increased job satisfaction, the retention rate of Millennial employees within a company has a greater probability of avoiding high turnover rates, retaining young talent, attracting more employees of the Millennial age, and ultimately gaining important human capital management advantages and being a successful business.

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FIGURES AND CHARTS

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | Percentage of 1-3 Responses | Percentage of 4 Responses | Percentage of 5-7 Responses |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. A manager should be involved in the work experience of his/her employees. | 99.26% | 0.74% | 0.00% |
| 2. A manager should be sensitive to and help an employee in terms of the employee's welfare, inside and outside of work. | 87.50% | 6.62% | 5.88% |
| 3. A manager should be required to do the same amount of work as an employee in a project. | 65.45% | 9.56% | 25.01% |
| 4. A manager should be held to the same standards as the employee in terms of a project. | 85.30% | 3.68% | 11.03% |
| 5. A manager should strive to create relationships with an employee outside of work. | 52.21% | 29.41% | 18.38% |

Table 1 - 1 Perceptions on Relationship-Oriented Leadership

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | Percentage of 1-3 Responses | Percentage of 4 Responses | Percentage of 5-7 Responses |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. A manager should have more technological competence than his/her employee(s). | 68.38% | 19.85% | 11.76% |
| 2. A manager should be required to take courses in current technologies in the case he/she doesn't have an adequate level of competence. | 88.97% | 7.35% | 3.69% |
| 3. A manager should have a working knowledge of the current political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental situations of the country and the world the company is involved in. | 88.24% | 9.56% | 2.21% |
| 4. A manager should openly demonstrate his/her working knowledge in the workplace frequently. | 84.56% | 12.50% | 2.94% |
| 5. You feel a sense of respect if a manager displays his/her working knowledge to his/her employee(s) in the workplace. | 91.17% | 6.62% | 2.21% |

Table 1 - 2 Perceptions on Knowledge Demonstration

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | <i>Percentage of 1-3 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 4 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 5-7 Responses</i> |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. A manager should strictly follow the reward/punishment policies a company has in place. | 82.36% | 8.09% | 9.57% |
| 2. A manager should punish any employees if they have negative job performance, no matter the excuse. | 44.85% | 16.91% | 38.23% |
| 3. A manager should enact punishment on a first-time offender of company policy if the policy broken was minor (i.e. dress code violation, late to work, etc.) | 32.35% | 16.91% | 50.73% |
| 4. A manager should enact punishment on a first-time offender of company policy if the policy broken was major (i.e. stealing office supplies, harassing another employee, etc.) | 87.50% | 6.62% | 5.89% |
| 5. You, as an employee, would find it more beneficial to work under a manager who is strict on company policy rather than a manager that is lax on company policy. | 58.09% | 19.85% | 22.05% |

Table 1 - 3 Perceptions on Justice Orientation

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | <i>Percentage of 1-3 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 4 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 5-7 Responses</i> |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. A manager should have the ability to monitor an employee's computer activity while on company time. | 62.50% | 13.97% | 23.53% |
| 2. A manager should be able to view and scrutinize an employee's job performance at any given time, no matter what task he/she is currently involved in. | 55.14% | 17.65% | 27.20% |
| 3. You expect a manager to be heavily involved in an employee evaluation. | 93.37% | 2.21% | 4.41% |
| 4. A manager should care more about how an employee completed task rather than the completion of the task itself. | 58.82% | 19.85% | 21.33% |
| 5. You prefer to work for a manager that gives employees more autonomy rather than supervise and direct them in completing a task. | 80.89% | 11.76% | 7.36% |

Table 1 - 4 Perceptions on Trust

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | <i>Percentage of 1-3 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 4 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 5-7 Responses</i> |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. A manager should constantly keep an employee informed of any and all mistakes he/she makes in the workplace. | 74.27% | 8.09% | 17.65% |
| 2. A manager should be able to confront an employee and address the employee's mistakes in public, regardless of who may be present. | 31.62% | 9.56% | 58.82% |
| 3. A manager should critique an employee's mistakes and provide solutions on how to fix those mistakes and prevent them from happening again. | 96.33% | 2.21% | 1.48% |
| 4. A manager should immediately address any mistake an employee makes to the employee, regardless of what the employee is currently doing. | 41.91% | 13.24% | 44.85% |
| 5. You would rather a manager address the mistakes of an employee directly to the employee, rather than address the mistakes over an indirect form of communication. (i.e., email) | 86.02% | 11.03% | 2.94% |

Table 1 - 5 Perceptions on Confrontation/Collision Avoidance

| <i>Statement and Percentage of Responses Grouped by Agreeableness (1-3 being Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree, 4 Being Neither Agree or Disagree, 5-7 being Somewhat Disagree to Strongly Disagree)</i> | <i>Percentage of 1-3 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 4 Responses</i> | <i>Percentage of 5-7 Responses</i> |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. In a project, each employee should be evaluated in his/her job performance on an individual basis rather than have the team evaluated as a whole. | 68.39% | 21.32% | 10.30% |
| 2. An employee should be rewarded on an individual basis for outstanding job performance, rather than a team be rewarded as a whole for the same level of performance. | 70.59% | 19.85% | 9.56% |
| 3. You find a greater sense of accomplishment in acting on your own, as opposed to acting as part of a group or team. | 67.65% | 18.38% | 13.97% |
| 4. In terms of the business, it is more beneficial to evaluate, reward, and punish employees of a sales force on an individual basis rather than as a group. | 68.38% | 18.38% | 13.23% |
| 5. You would rather work in a job where you carry out tasks on your own rather than work with a group. | 64.70% | 16.91% | 18.38% |

Table 1 - 6 Perceptions on Individualism/Collectivism

| <i>Trait</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>Weighted Scored</i> | <i>Rank</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------------|-------------|
| Trust | 54 | 32 | 28 | 11 | 7 | 4 | 275 | 1st |
| Relationship-Oriented Leadership | 45 | 40 | 22 | 14 | 8 | 7 | 291 | 2nd |
| Knowledge Demonstration | 19 | 33 | 31 | 22 | 16 | 15 | 405 | 3rd |
| Collectivism/Individualism | 7 | 13 | 24 | 30 | 34 | 28 | 552 | 4th |
| Justice Orientation | 7 | 12 | 18 | 30 | 31 | 38 | 578 | 5th |
| Confrontation/Collision Avoidance | 4 | 6 | 13 | 29 | 40 | 44 | 631 | 6th |

Table 2 - 1 Values of Selected Implicit Leadership Traits

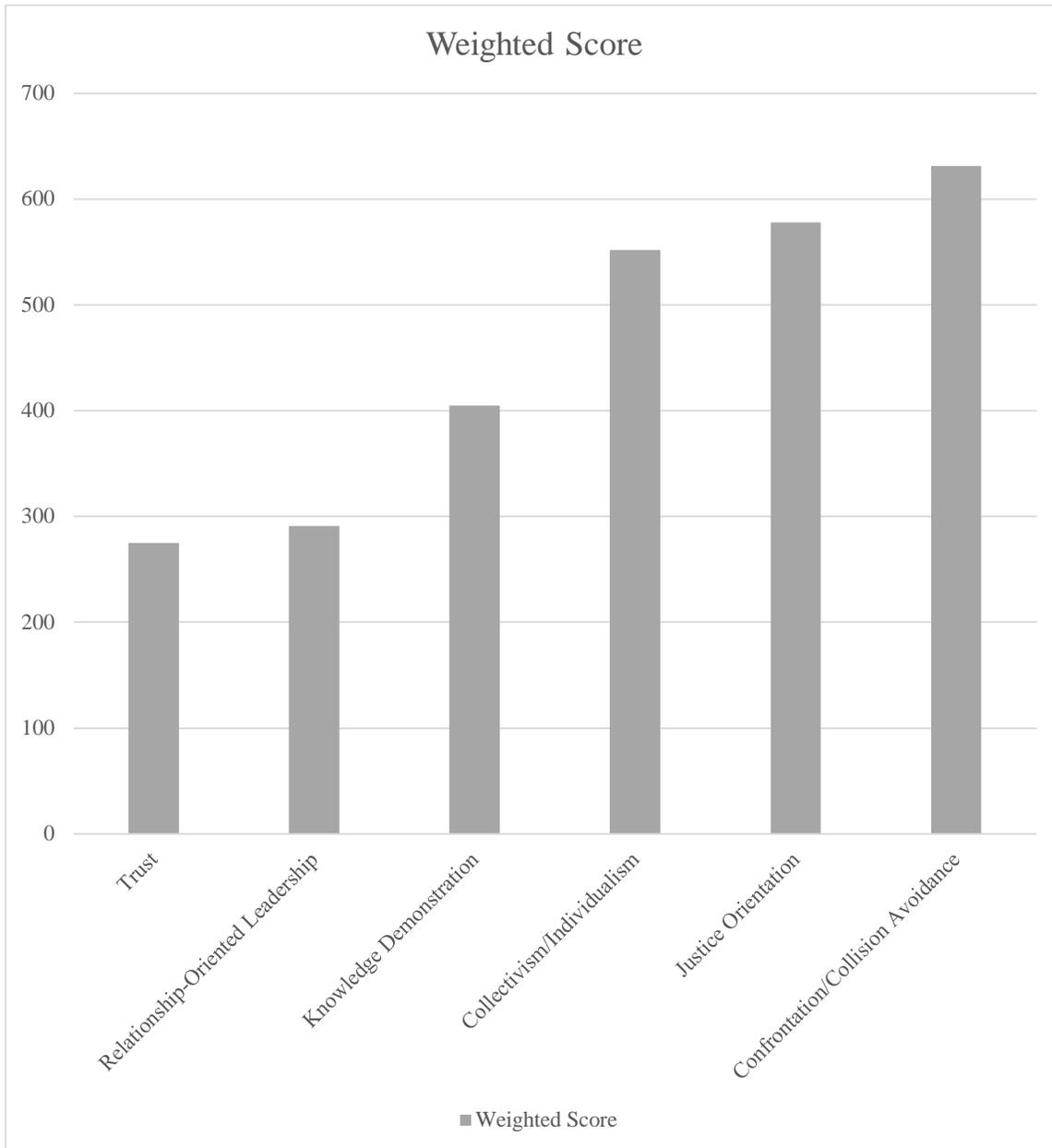


Figure 1-1 Weighted Scores of the Selected Implicit Leadership Traits

Table 2-1 Selection Process of Alternative Traits Found in Selected Articles

| Alternative Factors for Study | Inherent or Learned? | Individual Trait or Partial? | Frequency of Occurrence in Articles | Usable? |
|---|----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Self-esteem: How much pride/self-worth/self-confidence a leader has for one's self. | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 2. Charisma: the amount of strength/weakness a leader has in terms of personality (i.e., introversion, extroversion, shyness, forwardness) | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 3. Dedication: The measure of how much a leader is involved and caring in an employee's current task and overall work. | Inherent/ Learned | Partial within the scope of Relationship-Oriented Leadership | - | No |
| 4. Sensitivity: how sensitive a leader is to an employee's "work life," that is, how carefully a leader evaluates an employee's emotional climate inside and outside the workplace | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 5. Relationship-oriented leadership: a generalization of a leader's amount of care in motivation, emotional stability, and overall welfare of employees | Learned | Individual | High | Yes |
| 6. Supporting Characteristics: the tendency of a manager to aid the employee, from making small gestures of sympathy to going out of his/her own way and/or well-being to aid the employee | Learned | Partial, could be included in Relationship-Oriented Leadership | - | No |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------|-----------|-----|
| 7. Knowledge demonstrating: how much a leader keeps up-to-date in current technologies, trivia, pop culture, and society as a whole and displays this knowledge to his/her subordinates | Learned | Individual | Medium | Yes |
| 8. Justice Orientation: how closely a leader follows a “justice” policy in managing and leading employees, with strict codes of conduct and comparable punishments to any transgression. | Learned | Individual | Medium | Yes |
| 9. Assertiveness: how much a leader asserts his/her own opinions in the workplace, even at the expense of losing popular opinion from the employees | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 10. Trust: the amount of trusting behavior a leader places in his/her subordinates. Measurement can range from no trust (strict supervision to complete autonomy) | Learned/ Inherent | Individual | Very High | Yes |
| 11. Impulsive behavior: the measure of impulsive behavior a leader has (I.e. making business decisions quickly based on “gut feeling”) | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 12. Risk-taking tendencies: how often a leader will take chances or risk business welfare in an effort to gain advantage or advance the company | Inherent | - | - | No |

| | | | | |
|---|----------------------|--|-----------|-----|
| <p>13. Formal/Informal culture breeding: how much a leader steers the workplace culture to include formal requirements for employees (i.e. suit and tie vs. t shirts and cargo shorts, tattoos/no tattoos, piercings, hair styles/colors, communication formalities, etc.)</p> | Learned/ Inherent | Could be partial within Justice Orientation | Low | No |
| <p>14. Collision avoidance/confrontation: the tendency of a leader to approach an employee in the event the employee is not performing to business standards (i.e. confronting the employee in public, private, over email, in a typed or written letter, or other indirect means)</p> | Learned | Individual | Medium | Yes |
| <p>15. Collectivism/individualism: the measure of how a leader measures employee performance (collectivism: the entire employee base performance is measured as a collective/ leaders measure employee performance on an individual basis and reward employees individually).</p> | Learned | Individual | Very High | Yes |
| <p>16. Time patience: how strict/lax a leader is on performance measures involving time (deadlines, speed of operations, training time, etc.)</p> | Inherent | - | - | No |
| <p>17. Masculinity/femininity: how much a leader exhibits masculine behavior (money, success, and competition being important)/ feminine behavior (supporting others, emotional welfare, and sensitivity being important)</p> | Inherent | - | - | No |

| | | | | |
|--|----------|---|---|----|
| 18. Attractiveness: how physically attractive a leader is and how it can create approval, admiration/ distraction, intimidation from employees. | Inherent | - | - | No |
| 19. Self-esteem: How much pride/self-worth/self-confidence a leader has for one's self. | Inherent | - | - | No |