



What works for you may not work for (Gen)Me: Limitations of present leadership theories for the new generation

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ABSTRACT

Scholars and practitioners alike have recognized that younger workers, collectively known as Millennials or GenMe, are different from workers in prior generations. Employees of this generation hold different expectations regarding the centrality of work to their lives and bring different personalities and attitudes to the workforce. As the number of Millennials in the workforce grows each year, the divide between them and their older counterparts becomes more salient, posing unique challenges for organizational leaders. In this paper, we explore how these changes may force the need for reconsideration of five of the most frequently used leadership theories in an effort to understand important boundary conditions and how leadership research must evolve to keep pace with a changing workforce.

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You know you are getting old when you use the oft repeated phrase, “The current generation is so much different than my generation.” For those of us with an interest in leadership, the implications of newer generations are quite substantial. New generations bring new ideas, new behaviors, and new ways of looking at the issues with which we have been concerned for years. A Google search of the phrase “managing Millennials” brings up thousands of articles, books, and websites offering advice to managers, indicating the concern that practitioners have in regard to leading the next generation. In terms of sheer size, this concern seems warranted as Millennials have outpaced Generation X as the largest age group in the workforce as of early 2015 (Brownstone, 2014). The term Millennials refers to people born between 1982 and 1999 (Twenge and Campbell, 2008), and other common names for this age cohort include GenY, nGen, and GenMe (Twenge, 2010).

Anecdotes from the popular press indicate that managers frequently bemoan the increasing lack of work ethic, narcissism, and sense of entitlement of employees in generations following the Baby Boomers. For example, Millennials are painted as the “selfie” generation, a generation who cares more about sharing pictures of themselves than about the contributions they make at work. Other more positive articles often highlight the creativity, technical ability, concern for social values, and inclusive attitudes toward diversity associated with Millennials. Although these viewpoints conflict, they indicate that there is clearly a perception that Millennials are most assuredly different than their predecessors with respect to ideas, behaviors and viewpoints, and that organizational leaders will have to lead these employees, by necessity, differently.

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In support of the perception that Millennials are different, a recent review by Lyons and Kuron (2014) provides evidence that attitudes and values have changed across the generations. Their findings echo Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance's (2010) study which showed that changes in work values have been quite dramatic from the Baby Boomers to the Millennial generation. Examples of changes include increases in the desire for leisure and work-life balance, (Twenge, 2010; Twenge and Kasser, 2013), individualism (Twenge and Campbell, 2012), and desire for greater support from managers (Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons, 2010). Research also illustrates the self-involved and narcissistic tendencies of Millennials (Twenge and Campbell, 2009; Twenge and Foster, 2010). In addition, the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions is not the same across generations (Lu and Gursoy, 2013). On the whole, these findings demonstrate that Millennials are, in fact, different from their predecessors. Furthermore, these results suggest that these generational differences may call for adaptations to our current theories of leadership.

Interest in how our theories of management must evolve over time is not new. Harvey and Buckley (2002) argued over a decade ago that paradigm shifts necessitate continual reevaluation and adaptation of management practices and research. For example, the authors identified obsolete terms including span-of-control and line/staff. Just as these phrases are no longer meaningful for managers in 2015, theories of management and leadership can become outdated as well. Indeed, Cooper, Scandura, and Schriesheim (2005) remind us that we “must be cognizant of the history of the field and the lessons it teaches” (p. 476). However, outdated or misinformed beliefs continue to live on through management lore (Buckley et al., 2015; Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006). Research continues to advance and researchers have suggested multiple ways of expressing various forms of leadership (e.g., Baur et al., 2016). Nomological networks that encompass variables related to dynamic work attitudes should be reexamined to ensure their continued relevance. Leadership is one important area of research in which changes in employee values urge us to engage in a reconsideration of our current theories.

Past research on the effectiveness of leaders has shown that leadership style can have an important impact on variables such as employee job satisfaction, motivation, and team performance (e.g., Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Studies have also linked employee-supervisor relationships with organizational commitment and decreased turnover intentions (e.g., Han and Jekel, 2011). These studies underscore the value of having able leaders in place in order to leverage human capital resources. And, leaders may need to play an even bigger role in attracting, motivating, and retaining today's employees for at least two reasons. First, Millennials are more likely to value working for supervisors they like than previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010). Second, post-Baby Boomer employees have very different work-related values and are more likely to quit than employees of yesterday if their needs are not met (Lu and Gursoy, 2013). These changes in the personalities, needs, and work values of Millennial employees not only highlight the importance of high-quality leaders, they call into question the application of current leadership theories to 21st century employees. Therefore, we suggest that the time has come to revisit theories that were developed before most of today's employees entered the workforce or were even born.

Following a brief discussion of how Millennials differ from prior generations, we examine the utility of current leadership theories when applied to this younger generation of employees. In doing so, we limit the scope of our review to five theoretical perspectives which have been identified as amongst the most frequently used of the 21st century (Dinh et al., 2014) which include three established theories – Transformational Leadership, Information Processing, and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) – and two emerging theories – Authentic Leadership and Ethical Leadership.

By considering current leadership theories in the context of a changing work force, we seek to make three important contributions to the leadership literature. First, we identify generational changes that have important implications for leaders in today's organizations. Second, we answer the call to reevaluate our ideas about leadership in the context of these generational differences (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). Third and finally, we offer a framework to guide future research regarding leadership in the face of a changing workforce.

Generation gaps

It is not uncommon for people to hold unfavorable perceptions of employees from younger generations (Deal, Altman, and Rogelberg, 2010). While some perceived differences are overstated (Deal et al., 2010) due to varying life stages (Lyons and Kuron, 2014), a growing area of research sheds light on the true differences between Millennials and the two previous generations, which collectively represent the overwhelming majority of today's workforce. Indeed, several important generational shifts which include changes in employee personalities, work attitudes, and values are of particular interest to leadership scholars because of the importance of these variables in work-related outcomes.

One such shift is in individual differences or dispositions. Notably, the Millennial generation seems to be more individualistic than their forbearers (Twenge, 2010). Furthermore, in contradiction to the commonly held belief that Millennials are more altruistic than previous generations (Twenge et al., 2010), empirical research suggests that younger generations are, in fact, less altruistic at work than earlier generations of employees (Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins, 2005) and have lower concern for others (Twenge, Campbell, and Freeman, 2012). As will be discussed in the next section, a rise in the proportion of individualists in the work force, especially in combination with fading levels of altruism, can have important implications for leaders in organizations.

Another important generational gap exists in employee attitudes toward work. Work centrality is becoming less and less important across the three generations, being least important to the Millennial generation (Twenge and Kasser, 2013). Employees in the younger generation value work-life balance and meaningful lives outside of work, including leisure activities, more than their

predecessors (Ng et al., 2010; Twenge, 2010). This change in how employees view their jobs and careers is likely to impact managers' abilities to lead and influence these employees.

Employees of the more recent generations also have different motivational drivers than their predecessors. Results from several studies show that Millennials are more likely to be motivated by extrinsic rather than intrinsic rewards (Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010). Research suggests that this generation is highly sensitive to monetary compensation (Johnson and Ng, 2015) and that Millennials expect to be paid well and to be promoted quickly (Ng et al., 2010).

Lastly, although research has confirmed the suspicion that Millennials have a greater sense of entitlement, they are also more likely to appreciate accountability (Laird, Harvey, and Lancaster, 2015) and feedback from their supervisors (Graen and Schiemann, 2013). As such, they feel very comfortable challenging authority figures, but they also rely on praise and rewards from those same sources (Ahmed, Scott-Young, Ahmed, and Fein, 2013). Taken together, the findings from the research on generational gaps demonstrate that today's workforce is different and that these differences are likely to pose challenges for those called upon to lead within organizations. The next sections of this paper explore these generational gaps in terms of five major leadership theories.

Leadership gaps

It is widely established that in order to lead employees successfully, managers must utilize leadership styles and behaviors that match the situation, and the needs and abilities of the employees they are trying to influence (e.g., Fiedler and Garcia, 1987; Hersey and Blanchard, 1977; House and Mitchell, 1974; Shamir and Howell, 1999; Vroom and Yetton, 1973). In this paper, we explore five major theories of leadership, namely, Transformational Leadership, Information Processing, Leader-Member Exchange, Authentic Leadership, and Ethical Leadership, in terms of generational changes in the values and work attitudes of employees. Each of these theories has practical implications for managers who apply them in order to motivate and influence employees to meet organizational objectives. However, changes in the personalities, values, work attitudes, and motivations of employees may decrease their effectiveness in modern organizations. The following sections will highlight some of the lacunae of these theories for 21st century managers. In Table 1 we provide a summary of the changes that need to be addressed in the following sections.

Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is characterized by inspirational leaders who motivate employees through the achievement of group or organizational goals (Burns, 1978). In doing so, they exhibit the following four factors (Bass and Avolio, 1994). First, they exert *idealized influence* to attract followers who want to be like them. Second, they provide *inspirational motivation* through a shared vision that motivates others to participate in the collective. Third, they value creativity and welcome challenges that create situations which support *intellectual stimulation*. Lastly, through *individualized consideration*, they attend to the development needs of their followers and encourage personal growth. Through this process, transformational leaders often achieve increased outcomes (Bass and Avolio, 1990), in part by aligning employee behaviors to benefit the collective good and ignore personal interests (Kuhnert, 1994).

On the surface, transformational leadership may seem like an ideal style for the current work force. Research on today's employees suggests that they crave personal attention and feedback, and thus are likely to enjoy the personalized attention that

Table 1
Summary of influences of generational changes by leadership theory.

Generational change			Theoretical perspective			
Category	Change	Transformational leadership	Information processing	Leader-member exchange	Authentic leadership	Ethical leadership
Individual differences	Increased individualism	Difficult to encourage collective needs over self-interests (P1)	Differing dispositions lead to different attributions (P4)	Difficult to engage in high-quality LMX (P7)	Difficult to achieve value congruence due to desire for individualism (P10)	Difficult to reach consensus on ethicality due to individualism (P13)
Work values & attitudes	Decreased work centrality, increased focus on work-life balance	Less interested in the vision provided (P2)	Less likely to have leadership cognitions that are tied closely to organizational settings (P5)	More interested in work-life balance than in engaging in LMX (P8)	May be less interested in leaders with work values and more interested in leaders with leisure values (P11)	See morality differently and work situations as less morally intense (P14)
	More extrinsically motivated	Less motivated by idealized influence and inspirational motivation (P3)	More likely to attribute leadership as a function of providing rewards (P6)	Too focused on extrinsic rewards to invest the time to cultivate high quality LMX (P9)	Less motivated by the intrinsic outcomes that drive followership development (P12)	More likely to choose rewards over ethicality (P15)
	Increased entitlement	Less interested in being led by others (P16)	Less interested in being led by others (P16)	Less interested in being led by others (P16)	Less interested in being led by others (P16)	Less interested in being led by others (P16)

transformational leaders offer (Graen and Schiemann, 2013). However, these individuals are also more individualistic and less interested in working together to achieve common goals (Twenge et al., 2010). They want to stand out as individuals and achieve their own goals (Twenge, 2010). These traits and behaviors are problematic for today's leaders who must influence employees to suppress their own interests for the sake of the organization's goals. Their self-focus suggests that employees in the newer generation are less likely to be moved to action by idealized influence and inspirational motivation because they are less motivated to obtain a collective goal.

Unfortunately, the current model of transformational leadership provides little guidance to managers who must balance helping employees reach their own goals with the achievement of group goals. The current model conceptualizes each factor of transformational leadership as having an additive influence on performance (Northouse, 2012) and assumes that visionary leaders can inspire employees to care about the needs of the organization. Although transformational leaders may fulfill employees' desires for personal development through individualized consideration, the model doesn't explain how managers can translate individual employee performance to organizational performance when employees are more concerned with their own interests.

Proposition 1. *Because today's employees are more individualistic, transformational leadership is less effective in motivating them to put the organization's needs before their own needs.*

Another problem for transformational leaders is the change in employee attitudes about working and careers. Because today's employees are more likely to want to “work to live” than to “live to work” (Ng et al., 2010), managers may find it more difficult to motivate employees through an idealized vision. One of the assumptions of the transformational leadership model is that leaders can create a vision of the future that will inspire and motivate employees (Bass, 1991). However, when employees find work to be less central to their lives, they are also less likely to be influenced by leaders' appeals. Thus, managers who utilize a transformational leadership style may find that their attempts at motivation and encouragement are met with disinterest and even apathy.

Proposition 2. *The current theory of transformational leadership fails to adequately prepare managers to influence employees who see work as less central to their lives and who want more work-life balance than previous generations.*

Post-Baby Boomer employees are also more motivated by external factors (Twenge, 2010). This presents yet another challenge to the transformational leadership model. Under the current perspective, leaders can leverage followers' intrinsic motivations to rally for a cause. The growing value that employees of today place on extrinsic rewards makes it less likely that they will be motivated by the emotional and attributional appeals of charismatic leaders. Instead, these employees are more likely to seek the outcomes which provide them with the most benefit (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). Despite some mixed results regarding Millennials' work-based expectations in other domains, it is clear that they place great value on external validation in some form. In a survey of nearly 25,000 Millennials, approximately 70% of them held the expectation that they should be promoted within two years at a firm (Ng et al., 2010). Instead of valuing a reward system based on loyalty and “waiting your turn”, Millennials are more apt to value leader recognition and rapid advancement (Ng et al., 2010), including lateral promotions (Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley, 2010), and they are willing to leave their current organization to meet those expectations (Rawlins, Indvik, and Johnson, 2008). This inclination to obtain external rewards strains the application of the transformational leadership model.

Proposition 3. *Because of the value they place on extrinsic rewards, today's employees are less likely to be motivated by transformational leaders' appeals to idealized influence and inspirational motivation.*

Information processing

The information processing perspective has grown from recognition that the attributions which followers make about their leaders are an integral part of the phenomenological experience of leadership (House and Aditya, 1997). This theoretical domain encompasses both follower and leader cognitions (Dinh et al., 2014), and within this perspective researchers have investigated the processes behind leadership attributions (e.g., Phillips and Lord, 1981; Lord, Foti, and De Vader, 1984), implicit leadership theories (e.g., House and Aditya, 1997; Offermann, Kennedy, and Wirtz, 1994), and the behaviors and decision-making processes which define leaders (e.g., Lord and Hall, 2005; Lord and Shondrick, 2011). The basic tenants of an information processing perspective posit that leadership exists in a social context (Pfeffer, 1977) and that leadership is conferred only through the perceptions of others (House and Aditya, 1997). With roots stretching over half a century (Martinko, Harvey, and Douglas, 2007), interest in leadership and followership cognitions continues to grow as scholars strive to determine the meaning of leadership (Dinh et al., 2014).

Much of the earliest research on leadership information processing focused on explaining leadership as an attributional process (Martinko et al., 2007). This work was built upon Heider and Kelley's attributional models which sought to explain how individuals interpret cues perceived from their social environments (e.g., Calder, 1977; Phillips and Lord, 1981). As perceivers attempt to make sense of the behaviors and dispositions of others, they attribute certain behaviors to leadership (Phillips and Lord, 1981). Leadership, then, is not understood through leader behaviors, but rather through followers' perceptions of leadership (House and Aditya, 1997).

Closely tied to work on attributions is research on implicit theories of leadership. As Offermann et al. (1994) noted, although scholars have difficulty in agreeing on a definition of leadership, the average person seems to have no problem identifying

leadership in everyday life. Drawing upon categorization theory, Lord et al. (1984) argued that individuals distinguish between leaders and nonleaders by evaluating the extent to which their attributes and behaviors are prototypical of leaders. Furthermore, Foti, Fraser, and Lord (1982) found that leadership prototypicality was associated positively with perceptions of leadership effectiveness. Subsequent research found support for their theoretical explanation of leadership categorizations (Lord et al., 1984).

Although much research on leadership and information processing focused on followers' cognitions, leader cognitions have been examined as well. This body of work has given us insight into how leadership skills develop relative to information processing ability (Lord and Hall, 2005) and how leaders make decisions (Dinh et al., 2014). Additionally, this research has demonstrated how leadership processes require differentiated knowledge (Lord and Shondrick, 2011).

The development of an information processing view has contributed uniquely to our knowledge of leadership through its emphasis on the role of follower attributions (Martinko et al., 2007). Because follower perceptions shape the experienced phenomenon of leadership, it is important to be aware that individuals may hold differing perceptions. In as much as leaders and followers process information about leadership differently, leaders will have less ability to influence and guide their followers (House and Aditya, 1997). Further, because perceptions are influenced by individual differences (Block and Funder, 1986; Lord, Phillips, and Rush, 1980) and past behaviors (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), the changing personality traits and experiences of younger workers are particularly relevant for the consideration of perception creation. Specifically, narcissism has been shown to influence individual's leadership perceptions (Judge, LePine, and Rich, 2006). Today's employees who are more individualistic are likely to make different leadership attributions than employees who are less individualistic.

Proposition 4. *Because of their individualism, today's employees hold different cognitions about leadership than previous generations.*

Information processing models of leadership also indicate that situational factors influence attributions of leadership (e.g., Lord and Smith, 1983; Lord, Brown, Harvey, and Hall, 2001). Lord et al. (1984) found that leadership prototypes vary across environmental contexts. This suggests that differences in the ways individuals perceive their surroundings are also likely to shape the attributions they make about leaders. Because work is less central to the lives of Millennials, organizational settings are likely to be imbued with less meaning for these employees. Other settings, such as home or places of leisure, may evoke stronger emotional attachment for them. As today's employees view places of employment differently, they may also make leadership attributions differently.

Proposition 5. *Because they place work in a different context, today's employees are less likely to have cognitions and attributions of leadership that are tied closely to being in an organizational setting.*

Perceptions of leadership are commonly linked to attributions of causality and responsibility for organizational events (Martinko et al., 2007). As previously discussed, the work motivations of the Millennial generation are generally more extrinsically focused on material outcomes, such as compensation, than previous generations (Hansen and Leuty, 2012; Twenge, 2010). Because of the importance they place on external outcomes, Millennials are likely to be sensitive to the receipt of these rewards. As a result, their attributions of leadership may be highly dependent upon their perceptions of their leaders' ability to award raises, promotions, etc.

Proposition 6. *Because of the value they place on extrinsic rewards, today's employees are more likely to attribute leadership to others as a function of the rewards that others can provide.*

Leader-member exchange

Since the early work by Graen and colleagues (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen and Cashman, 1975; Graen and Scandura, 1987), researchers have examined dyadic, one-on-one relationships between leaders and followers through the lens of the leader-member exchange perspective (Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell, 1993). LMX is based on social exchange (cf. Blau, 1964) vis-à-vis the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which suggests that when leaders provide discretionary resources to their followers, the latter will reciprocate in kind. At the 45th anniversary of LMX, researcher attention continues to increase (Anand, Hu, Liden, and Vidyarthi, 2011), and there is an acknowledgment that more work is needed (Schriesheim, Castro, and Coglisier, 1999; Uhl-Bien, Maslyn, and Ospina, 2012).

Like any social exchange, LMX requires mutual effort from both parties (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001). These exchange relationships are frequently categorized as either high quality, such that the employee is placed in the leader's in-group, or low quality, such that the employee is in the leader's out-group (Dansereau et al., 1975). Employees frequently become part of the in-group through their willingness to do more than the requisite job at hand for their supervisors (Graen and Schiemann, 1978). In exchange for their contributions to their work units, followers in the in-group receive additional resources, access to information, and are treated in a more collegial manner such that control and influence are more evenly balanced between the parties (Dansereau et al., 1975; Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, and Yammarino, 2001). Conversely, some employees may be content with a low-quality relationship or prefer not to extend themselves beyond the required tasks (Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001). The designation between the in- or out-group is made early in the relationship and remains relatively constant over time (Liden and Graen, 1980).

Research has demonstrated that when employees and managers have high LMX relationships (i.e. the employee is in the leader's in-group), employees experience many beneficial career outcomes such as more frequent communication, performance

feedback (Harris, Wheeler, and Kacmar, 2009), and promotions (Liden, Sparrowe, and Wayne, 1997). Further, they have positive perceptions of fairness and justice (Scandura, 1999; Sias and Jablin, 1995; Vecchio, Griffin, and Hom, 1986) and, as part of the decision-making process (Wayne, Liden, and Sparrowe, 1994), they are able to impact the allocation of resources, thereby decreasing perceptions of organizational politics (Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, and Anthony, 1999). Benefits also accrue to the organization as these employees are less likely to leave, have increased organizational commitment and overall satisfaction as well as satisfaction with their supervisor, and are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (Ballinger, Lehman, and Schoorman, 2010; Gerstner and Day, 1997; Ilies, Nahrgang, and Morgeson, 2007; Wayne, Shore, and Liden, 1997). Lastly, primary, as well as meta-analytic, results suggest that employees who have high-quality relationships with their supervisors outperform their coworkers (Gerstner and Day, 1997; Settoon, Bennett, and Liden, 1996).

Under an LMX model of leadership, managers are likely to find it difficult to lead employees in the midst of changes across generations. The personality characteristics of today's employees will make it difficult for leaders to reap the rewards from high-quality exchanges with their subordinates. Specifically, Millennials are focused more on individual accomplishments than employees of previous generations (Twenge and Foster, 2010). Similar to its negative influence on the efficacy of transformational leadership, this increased level of individualism will undermine the LMX model. Employees who are more individualistic are less likely to be interested in building social relationships in addition to the tasks that are required of them, even while expecting managers to give them more attention and praise (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). Managers who have operated with an LMX style are unlikely to reciprocate with more self-interested employees because these employees are not willing to give anything back. This will ultimately lead to low-quality LMX relationships which result in less favorable outcomes to the employee and organization with one exception – networking (Granovetter, 2005).

High-quality relationships are more likely to emerge when the subordinates are more extroverted (Nahrgang, Morgeson, and Ilies, 2009) because being in the in-group requires more interaction (Dansereau et al., 1975). However, Millennials are finding new ways to collaborate and communicate, including computer-mediated communication (Pearson, Carmon, Tobola, and Fowler, 2010). While potentially effective at delivering messages, brief and informal correspondence such as that frequently received in emails, web memos, text messages, social media, and e-bulletins will decrease the opportunity for a high-quality relationship such that they do not allow for the establishment of mutual trust and can be perceived as disrespectful – two established hindrances to high-quality LMX (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; Lau and Cobb, 2010; Liden and Maslyn, 1998; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner, 1998).

Proposition 7. *Because of the communication patterns of today's employees, leaders will find it difficult to engage them in high-quality leader-member exchanges.*

One of the assumptions of LMX theory is that leaders will be able to engage employees in not only the work at hand, but also in going beyond the formal job description to help the leader (Graen and Schiemann, 1978). However, today's employees are likely to resist this higher level of engagement because it will require them to invest more time and effort in work than they would like to. In fact, Millennial employees acknowledge that their perceptions of work-life balance differ from their supervisors (Gilley, Waddell, Hall, Jackson, and Gilley, 2015) in that work does not occupy as central of a place in the lives of today's employees (Dharmasiri, Ammeter, Baur, and Buckley, 2013; Ng et al., 2010). Managers who are accustomed to achieving outstanding performance through high-quality LMX relationships may be disappointed to find that Millennials value maintaining work-life balance more than supervisor favor.

Proposition 8. *Today's employees, who place a high value on work-life balance, will be less likely to seek out high-quality leader-member exchange relationships.*

On one hand, employees who are more extrinsically motivated may find the reciprocal nature of LMX relationships appealing. Because employees are increasingly motivated by extrinsic factors (Hansen and Leuty, 2012; Twenge, 2010; Twenge and Kasser, 2013), they may see exchange relationships with their managers and supervisors as a practical way to obtain valued rewards. On the other hand, many of the benefits that employees in high-quality LMX relationships obtain are only indirectly related to external rewards such as higher salaries. Because the value of these relationships increases over time (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995), Millennials, who are quick to chase extrinsic rewards by changing jobs (D'Amato and Herzfeld, 2008; Johnson and Ng, 2015), may be too impatient to cultivate a high-quality relationship with their manager in order to achieve the extrinsic rewards they seek. Especially given that many of these employees are more egoistically focused, they may believe that it is easier and quicker to obtain desired outcomes working for themselves.

Proposition 9. *Because today's employees place a high value on extrinsic rewards, they are less likely to take the time to cultivate high-quality leader-member exchange relationships.*

Authentic leadership

Despite having ancient roots in Greek philosophy (see Erickson, 1995; Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley, Brown, and Evans, 2006), authentic leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003), is one of the newest approaches to leadership, and it provides an important perspective into the tradeoffs associated with aligning one's actions to mimic other popular and effective styles of leadership or remaining true to one's self. Indeed, while authenticity is recognized as an important characteristic in other leadership styles such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1990; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Burns, 1978; Howell and Avolio,

1992), the direct study of authentic leadership is a seeming rebuttal to the recommendations of prior decades to alter behaviors in order to adapt to the most recent trends in leadership as well as an outcry against unethical behaviors (Cooper et al., 2005; Luthans and Avolio, 2003). Authentic leadership emerged from the positive organizational behavior movement (e.g., Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003; Nelson and Cooper, 2007) to provide a deeper investigation into the beneficial aspects of organizational life. In doing so, then, authentic leadership is similar to Kernis' (2003; Kernis and Goldman, 2006) concept of authentic functioning as is based on being true to one's self and is centered on self-awareness and attitude-behavior congruence. As such, authentic leaders have been suggested to be aware of who they are as well as the values they hold and are able to consistently behave in ways that are in agreement with these beliefs (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May, 2004). Researchers consider the development of authentic leadership to emerge from this idea of self-awareness and internalized moral compass (Shamir and Eilam, 2005) in addition to balanced processing and relational transparency (Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang, 2005; Luthans, Norman, and Hughes, 2006).

While on the surface authentic leadership may seem to suggest a reversion to a trait-approach to leadership such that being consistently authentic harkens to the genetic makeup that creates the individual differences which allow leaders to act uniquely in myriad contexts, researchers have noted that leaders are more strongly guided by their prior experiences and major events which shape and develop their authenticity (Avolio, 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005). It is by reflecting on these prior events that leaders can become more keenly aware of their values and beliefs by assessing which events were most impactful to them as well as how their reactions suggest their fundamental beliefs. Indeed, then, authentic leaders frequently consider their leadership role as a mission or vocation such that they accept roles that allow them to be true to themselves and impact situations in alignment with their beliefs (Humphrey, 2014). In this way, then, authentic leadership is suggested to be trainable (Avolio, 2005) in much the same way as other leadership styles.

Authentic leadership has been found to be positively related to follower performance (Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, and Avey, 2009; Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, and Wu, 2014), both in-role as well as extra-role (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner, and Sels, 2015). In support of the interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership, important mediating mechanisms in these relationships include stronger feelings of identification and empowerment by the followers toward an authentic leader (Leroy, Palanski, and Simons, 2012). Additionally, authentic leaders are able to impact team in-role and extra-role performance through trust, psychological capital (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009), positive affective tone (Hmieleski, Cole, and Baron, 2012), teamwork, and team authenticity (Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun, and Frey, 2012). In addition to performance-related outcomes, authentic leadership has been found to be associated with positive outcomes for leaders and followers alike. Authentic leadership has been found to be related to ethical (Brown and Treviño, 2006) and transformational leadership (Spitzmuller and Ilies, 2010) as well as leader psychological well-being (Toor and Ofori, 2009) and positive modeling (Henderson and Hoy, 1983). Likewise, followers of an authentic leader experience more satisfaction and commitment (Jensen and Luthans, 2006), increased engagement (Giallonardo, Wong, and Iwasiw, 2010), increased group support (Wong and Cummings, 2009), and more trust in their leader (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Wong, Spence Laschinger, and Cummings, 2010). Finally, the dimensions of psychological capital were found to positively predict authentic leadership (Jensen and Luthans, 2006).

While authentic leadership suggests an external reflection of internally held beliefs, researchers have also suggested that the interactions with others, including followers, help to shape the perceptions of the requisite leader identity (Sparrowe, 2005). Indeed, researchers considering an interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership (e.g., Eagley, 2005) consider it as a process between a leader and his or her followers such that each party influences the other. Surprisingly, while researchers have recognized the importance of followers in developing authentic leadership (e.g., Eagley, 2005) as well as the need for authentic followership (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, and Dickens, 2011; Ilies et al., 2005; Shamir and Eilam, 2005), the attention has been given, almost universally, to the development of leadership at the expense of the followers (Algera and Lips-Wiersma, 2012; Avolio and Reichard, 2008; Gardner et al., 2011). Indeed, while the attention has been very leader-centric (Yammarino, Dionne, Schriesheim, and Dansereau, 2008), Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt (2009) noted that leaders and followers alike can vary on their levels of authenticity, and Shamir (2007) recognized that followers are active participants in the leadership process. As such, the role of followers is likely underestimated in the study of authentic leadership (Leroy et al., 2015) as is the impact on followers as key desired outcomes of authentic leadership include the development of followers and promotion of authentic followership (Avolio and Gardner 2005). In a recent examination of the role of followers and authentic followers, Leroy et al. (2015) found that authentic followership and authentic leadership predict follower performance, as mediated by followers' need satisfaction and that the followership and leadership have an interaction effect.

According to Avolio and Gardner's (2005) model, authentic leaders inspire followers to examine their own beliefs and values. When followers hold beliefs that are congruent with those of their leaders, they will identify with their leaders and will seek to be like them. This presents an interesting paradox for leaders of Millennials. Because this generation places a high value on individualism (Twenge and Campbell, 2012), they may not want to conform to the values of another, even a trusted leader. This means that by leading followers to develop a sense of self-clarity, leaders create a situation in which followers move away from their leaders. Relatedly, employees who hold high opinions of their own leadership abilities (Judge et al., 2006) may be less likely to see the importance of coming together with an authentic leader.

Proposition 10. *Because today's employees are more individualistic, it is difficult to achieve the value congruence that is vital for authentic leadership.*

Authentic leaders are motivated by self-awareness and the opportunity to lead in a way that is authentic to their developed selves (Avolio et al., 2004). For some leaders, behaviors such as coming early and staying late will be a reflection of their internal

beliefs about the importance of work in their lives. To the extent that they value work centrality, authentic leaders may experience a disconnection with Millennial employees who want more leisure and less work (Twenge and Kasser, 2013). This incongruity in values will undermine the leader-follower relationship which is based on value identification and emulation (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

Proposition 11. *Because today's employees place a high value on work-life balance, they may be less likely to want to emulate leaders with a strong work ethic.*

Authentic leaders' attempts to help followers become self-aware may also encounter another challenge. In general, authentic leaders strive to develop followers' authenticity by appealing to intrinsically held values (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio and Gardner, 2005), which conflicts with members of the Millennial generation (Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010). Because of their focus on external rewards, Millennials' goals and motives may run counter to the ideas espoused by authentic leadership. It may be particularly difficult for younger employees to identify with and desire to follow leaders who are intrinsically motivated when they don't share the same values.

Proposition 12. *Because today's employees place a high value on extrinsic rewards, they will be less interested in the intrinsic outcomes offered by authentic leaders.*

Ethical leadership

Another emerging theory in the field of leadership is ethical leadership, which draws upon an understanding of both ethics and leadership in order to explain how leaders behave ethically and promote moral behavior amongst their followers (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Interest in theories of ethical leadership was driven in large part by corporate scandals at the turn of the millennium which highlighted the need to understand not just how leaders should behave, but also how their behavior influences ethical decision making in organizations (Brown, Treviño, and Harrison, 2005). In this way, then, it is not enough for leaders to behave ethically; they must lead others to do so as well (Brown et al., 2005).

At a high level, ethical leadership can be categorized as a theory of moral leadership alongside servant leadership, spiritual leadership, and authentic leadership because of its focus on doing the right thing (Brown and Treviño, 2006; Dinh et al., 2014). Digging deeper, ethical leadership is also related to transformational leadership (Brown et al., 2005) through idealized influence which occurs when leaders influence followers by demonstrating moral and ethical behavior (Avolio, 1999). Modeling appropriate behavior is a hallmark of an ethical leader (Brown et al., 2005). In addition, ethical leaders employ transactional leadership styles as they implement ethical standards and ensure compliance with them (Brown et al., 2005). Although related to other leadership styles, ethical leadership is also unique (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006). While transformational leaders can behave unethically or immorally, ethical leaders use their idealized influence only for altruistic purposes (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leadership is also associated with leaders who are perceived to be honest (Treviño, Hartman, and Brown, 2000) and who treat their employees fairly (Treviño, Brown, and Hartman, 2003).

Early empirical and conceptual work on ethical leadership utilized Bandura's (1977, 1986) social cognitive theory to explain how ethical leaders influence followers (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006). One of the ways in which ethical leaders promote ethical behavior is through modeling appropriate behavior (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006). As employees view leaders behaving in ethical ways, employees can learn to discern between correct and incorrect actions in a given situation. In order for employees to learn vicariously through their leaders' actions, they must attend to their leaders' behavior. Their attention will be drawn to their leaders in part by the leaders' positions within organizations. Followers will also be more likely to attend to their leaders' behavior when they perceive that their leaders are worthy role models. Ethical leaders engender these perceptions because they act altruistically and fairly. Further, because leaders' values impact organizational values (Carlson and Perrewe, 1995; Schminke, Ambrose, and Noel, 1997; Treviño, 1986), the establishment of an ethical organizational culture, which facilitates discussion of ethical topics, highlights the importance of ethical decisions, and rewards appropriate behavior, can be developed and perpetuated (Brown et al., 2005; Brown and Treviño, 2006).

One of the difficulties of encouraging ethical behavior is that employees are not always aware that they are facing an ethical dilemma (Trevino and Brown, 2004). Moral awareness, a recognition of the ethical nature of the situation, is necessary for employees to engage in ethical decision-making (Barnett, 2001). And, when employees become morally aware, they are more likely to look to their leaders for guidance (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Perceptions of moral intensity, which drive moral awareness, are a function of an employee's understanding of the potentially harmful outcomes and a strong social agreement about the appropriate, or ethical, behavior (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

Increased individualism amongst employees may lead to less social consensus around ethical norms, causing employees to have dissimilar perceptions of moral intensity in the same situations. For example, an older employee may believe that it is unethical of an organization to pay for birth control and a younger employee may believe that organizations whose insurances do not cover abortions or birth control are violating basic human rights. Beyond generational differences in moral norms, individualistic employees of the same generation may not even agree about whether or not an issue has an ethical dimension. One employee may perceive a situation involving harm to the environment as an ethical issue while another employee may be more concerned about the ethicality of benefits for same sex partners. When employees experience moral intensity differently, some

employees will become morally aware, while others will not. Ethical leadership is unlikely to influence employees' ethical decision making if employees do not perceive moral intensity in a situation (Brown and Treviño, 2006).

Proposition 13. *Because today's employees are more individualistic, they are more likely to have dissimilar perceptions of morally intensity, making them less likely to look to ethical leaders for guidance in ethical decision making.*

Attempts by ethical leaders to elicit ethical behaviors may also be stymied because of the decreased value that younger employees place on work (Twenge and Kasser, 2013). One of the factors which drives moral intensity, and in turn moral awareness, is a recognition of a situation's potentially large consequences for an organization and its stakeholders (Brown and Treviño, 2006). When employees place a lower value on workplace centrality, they are less likely to be cognizant of the negative organizational outcomes which could occur as a result of unethical behavior.

Proposition 14. *Because today's employees see work as less central to their lives, they are less likely to perceive situations as morally intense, making them less likely to look to ethical leaders for guidance in ethical decision-making.*

Research on ethical leadership suggests that it is positively related to the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, and Salvador, 2009), job dedication (Brown et al., 2005), relationship behaviors and leader-member exchange (Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia, 2010). Further, when ethical leadership is present, employees generally perceive that they are being treated fairly and with respect, and they are usually satisfied with their leaders and rate them as effective (Brown et al., 2005). However, although ethical leaders may enjoy positive relationships with their followers, when they attempt to cultivate ethical behavior, they may find it difficult to motivate Millennial employees who are more concerned with receiving tangible rewards (Hansen and Leuty, 2012; Twenge, 2010; Twenge and Kasser, 2013). In fact, research suggests that these employees may be even more likely to succumb to the temptations to be unethical if such behavior is likely to lead to pay-offs (Ethics Resource Center, 2011).

Proposition 15. *Because today's employees place a high value on extrinsic rewards, they will be less likely to respond to ethical appeals to do right by the organization and its stakeholders.*

General challenges

In addition to the theory-specific shortcomings discussed above, another generational gap may pose some challenges to leaders in general. Employees of the Millennial generation seem to want to redefine relationships between supervisor and employee. Because of their upbringing, these employees have an almost conflicted relationship with authority (Ahmed et al., 2013). Their sense of entitlement leads them to perceive themselves as not needing direction or leadership from others (Laird, Harvey, and Lancaster, 2015), but they also require a lot of positive feedback (Graen and Scheimann, 2013). This can be confusing for managers and our current leadership theories offer no guidance for overcoming this push-and-pull. For example, managers who offer employees leadership in an LMX style may be astonished when they encounter entitled employees who expect to immediately receive all of the benefits of high-quality LMX relationships without putting in any time or effort required to develop such relationships. Likewise, transformational leaders may be surprised to find that their employees appreciate their attention, but not their vision.

Millennials' sense of entitlement is also problematic for other leadership theories. Just as individual differences lead to differing perceptions of leadership (Lord et al., 1980), entitlement is also likely to affect the leadership attributions Millennials make. Because they feel they deserve to have things their way (Twenge and Campbell, 2009), Millennials may be less willing to see themselves as subordinate to managers. They may also be less sensitive to situational cues that organizations have traditionally used to signal leadership such as titles, policies, and symbols (Pfeffer, 1977), because they perceive that they are as important, or even more important, than others in the organization. Furthermore, when younger employees perceive that guidance from their authentic leaders or ethical leaders about values and ethical choices is a criticism of their abilities or beliefs, they are likely to respond poorly to such influence (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman, 2004).

Proposition 16. *Our current leadership theories will be challenged by employees who want to redefine the leader-follower relationship in way that is more palatable to their sense of self-entitlement.*

Discussion

Several of our most widely researched theories of leadership may be stretched by the changing dispositions and values of the work force. We would contend that generational shifts have dictated a reevaluation of the applicability of many of our classic leadership approaches how they might be useful in leading the newest generation of organizational entrants. Given the generational shifts that have been discussed, managers and future researchers need to be mindful of both the adequacy and adaptability of these theories for the latest organizational entrants.

Practical implications

This paper has important implications for leaders in organizations, ranging from those in leadership positions to HR personnel. Managers who have applied these theories successfully in the past may not experience the same levels of success today and in the future. They may also find themselves struggling to engage a workforce that views work as less central to their lives. Additionally, many managers who leverage group goals and teamwork to achieve high performance may find that younger employees are less interested in working together.

Although we have focused on the potential incongruence between current theories of leadership and the workforce of the 21st century, leading Millennials also offers several opportunities. For instance, younger generations have been exposed to more technology, helping them leverage technological opportunities more easily (Deal et al., 2010). And, having begun their work lives in a more diverse labor market (Lyons, Ng, and Schweitzer, 2014), these employees may exhibit fewer biases when making hiring decisions and performance evaluations. Similarly, Millennial employees are more likely to come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds (Lyons et al., 2014), giving their employers a competitive advantage in the global marketplace for products and services. Managers who can overcome the challenges posed by the new attitudes and values of the Millennial generation will be able to capitalize on these favorable characteristics of today's employees.

Recommendations for adapting current leadership theories

While we have noted numerous boundary conditions with the application of the focal leadership theories to the changing workforce, with some reframing and minor adjustments, the utility of these theories can be maintained for the management of Millennials. First, although transformational leaders may find it difficult to engage Millennials by appealing to a sense of community to achieve common goals (Twenge et al., 2010), goal setting may still be effective. Revisiting the dimensions of transformational leadership, especially *intellectual stimulation* and *individualized consideration* (Bass and Avolio, 1994), can offer some insight into how to motivate and manage generations entering the workforce. Because younger generations tend to be motivated by meaningful, challenging work (Wesner and Miller, 2008) and the potential for individual achievement (Twenge et al., 2010), and because they desire personalized feedback (Graen and Schiemann, 2013), it is possible that reframing goal-setting initiatives such that individual goals align with organizational objectives could work well for motivating Millennials. Further, linking long-term extrinsic rewards to the established goals when possible may also activate Millennials' drive to succeed (Twenge, 2010).

Second, the information processing perspective relies on the attributions that followers make of leaders (House and Aditya, 1997; Pfeffer, 1977). With respect to the focal cohort of followers, it may be that because Millennials place such importance on extrinsic rewards (Hansen and Leuty, 2012) that they perceive those with the power to control resource allocation (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) as more leader like. In other words, Millennials may be more receptive to those who use position power - doling out rewards and punishments - as opposed to those who use personal power, which relies upon knowledge and likeability (French and Raven, 1959). Given that the use of position power is not readily applicable to many organizational contexts, this poses a particularly novel challenge for leaders of Millennials. However, there are instances in which position power can be granted to an employee in an emergent leadership role that might increase the likelihood that Millennials will view that person as an authority figure. For instance, granting reward power to a team leader may alter Millennials' perceptions of that person, who they might otherwise view as a peer. Additionally, leaders can provide external rewards such as public recognition or praise that do not cost the organization anything but that may fulfill the validation that Millennials crave (Ng et al., 2010).

Third, the nature of social exchange has transformed dramatically since the advent of LMX (Dansereau et al., 1975). Due to the drastic changes in communication styles and media, Millennials view concepts and acts of communication in different ways than their superiors. Specifically, Millennials prefer to use computer-mediated or text-based communication (Pearson et al., 2010). This new way of communicating aligns with the trends of globalization in business, but also complicates the process of building relationships. It is unlikely that this trend will reverse (Alsop, 2008), but leaders can use the new, text-based communication skills of Millennials to their advantage. For instance, while it is unlikely that Millennials will develop deep-rooted relationships with others using new media, Millennials can develop an expansive network of shallow connections (Granovetter, 2005), which could be leveraged for various positive organizational outcomes, including organization-to-organization partnerships, resource acquisition, or marketing initiatives. In addition to integrating the changing landscape of communication, leaders may also be well served by clarifying expectations of what qualifies as high-level performance. Millennials tend to think highly of themselves (Twenge, 2010), and, as such, they may assume they are already included in the in-group composed of exceptional performers. As a result, Millennials may not feel they need to work harder to gain favor with their leaders.

Fourth, even relatively new areas within the leadership domain can benefit from some minor alterations that could improve ethical behavior in all followers, not just Millennials. Younger generations appear to be more driven by rewards, especially extrinsic rewards (Hansen and Leuty, 2012), and, as such, may be more likely to be tempted to act unethically if the rewards associated with doing so greatly overshadow the consequences of behaving ethically. Generally, ethical behavior is not rewarded; it is simply expected. One potential solution suggested in the ethical decision making literature to increase adherence to ethical guidelines and promote an ethical culture is to incorporate metrics for ethical behavior into formal performance management systems (Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds, 2006). Pairing this with leaders' behavior modeling may increase the likelihood that Millennials will view the leader as an authority figure because the leader is modeling a pathway to extrinsic rewards. Additionally, leaders themselves may opt to create their own informal award for ethical behavior. Again, this low-cost option fulfills Millennials' desire for achievement and recognition (Ng et al., 2010).

Finally, authentic leaders may discover that finding value congruence with their Millennial workforce is difficult (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). A potential reason for this lies in diverging ideas of careers and work (Sullivan, 1999). Baby Boomers perceive that those who expend a great deal of effort and spend more time at the office possess a stronger work ethic (Twenge, 2010) than those who do not. In a commissioned study at Bentley University (2014), Millennials reported that they agreed their work styles did not fit within the tenets of effort-based definitions of work ethic. However, this may be in large part due to Millennials' tendency to focus on results, embodying the phrase "work smarter, not harder". Even though Millennials may feel very invested in their work, their own work values may still be misaligned with their leader's values because they are fundamentally different. Alsop (2008) suggests that adapting firms to incorporate some aspects of results-only work environments (ROWEs) offers a unique solution. ROWEs offer flexibility to how, when, and where work is completed (Ressler and Thompson, 2008), and, therefore, have the potential to emphasize the strengths of Millennials who tend to be creative and appreciate autonomy (Alsop, 2008). Some large organizations that frequently hire younger employees, including GAP Inc., have incorporated the core concepts behind ROWEs into their organizations for the reason listed above.

Recommendations for human resource management

In addition to the potential adaption of how to apply established leadership theory in new ways, research suggests several ways to adjust human resources practices in order to avoid leadership pitfalls and leverage the potential of the Millennial generation. Human resource practices can help managers across all leadership styles develop more successful leader-follower relationships with Millennial employees. Preselection (Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese, and Carraher, 1998), realistic job previews (RJP) and expectation lowering procedures (ELP: Baur, Buckley, Bagdasarov, and Dharmasiri, 2014; Buckley et al., 2002; Wanous, 1992) can influence Millennials' expectations about not only the job itself, but also about factors such as extrinsic rewards and work-life balance. Millennials entering the workforce are often still figuring out which job characteristics are the most appealing to them (Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, and Ng, 2015), and pre-hire interventions may shape their preferences by exposing them to aspects of jobs which they had not considered. It is especially important to offer Millennials upfront and realistic information about compensation and career paths as this generation appears to have unrealistic expectations about how quickly they will move up the corporate ladder and earn pay increases (Ng et al., 2010). Through preselection, RJP, and ELPs, Millennials can self-select out of organizations and jobs which they may find unappealing, increasing the likelihood that those who accept jobs have attitudes and values that align with the organization and hiring manager.

Socialization and on-boarding processes are another valuable opportunity to introduce Millennials to the values and work attitudes more commonly held by Baby Boomer and Gen X employees. Through socialization within the organization, employees internalize organizational values (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). For ethical leaders, socialization can increase Millennials' moral awareness, giving ethical leaders more influence over these employees (Butterfield, Treviño, and Weaver, 1996) and for authentic leaders, it can drive value congruence that is so vital to a successful leader-follower relationship (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Interest in transformational leaders' visions of the greater good can also be increased through socialization, especially when orientation programs give employees contact with the beneficiaries of their work (Grant, 2012).

Organizations can also decrease the negative impact of the individual differences which are more pronounced in the Millennial generation through socialization procedures. Consideration of all of the people who are part of one's life and one's successes can increase social awareness (Twenge and Campbell, 2009). At an organizational level, socialization processes that focus on the ways in which different departments, teams, and individuals are interrelated and dependent upon one another, can overcome individualistic tendencies through the creation of superordinate goals (Sherif, 1958). Individual differences and past experiences can color employees' perceptions of leadership (Lord et al., 1980; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978), but socialization processes can shape the ways employees view their leaders, helping even individualistic employees come to recognize their managers as leaders.

Performance appraisals offer an additional avenue to build influence with Millennial employees. Millennials prefer frequent and direct communication with their supervisors (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010) and crave individualized feedback from others (Twenge and Campbell, 2009). They are also likely to respond favorably to feedback from managers that supports their autonomy while providing mentoring (Winter and Jackson, 2014). To the extent that managers can utilize performance feedback as a coaching tool that meets these needs, managers can develop powerful relationships with their Millennial employees.

One of the keys to leading Millennials successfully is an awareness of the attributions managers make when working with employees who have different backgrounds and who hold different values. For example, managers of previous generations may be tempted to interpret Millennials' desire for more information and feedback as a sign of disrespect (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010). Similarly, when Millennials exhibit their preference to work to live and not live to work, managers may mistakenly attribute this attitude to laziness or lack of initiative. Organizations can help managers overcome these attribution errors to recognize the value of Millennial employees by offering education and training to managers.

Creating reverse mentoring opportunities is another practice which can help organizations and managers benefit from the expertise of Millennial employees (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). Because Millennials have grown up with technology and social media applications, they navigate the digital world with ease (Hershatter and Epstein, 2010), and older employees often seek to improve their own skills by associating with younger employees (Chaudhuri and Ghosh, 2012). In addition to transferring valuable knowledge throughout the organization, reverse mentoring also helps younger employees, acting as mentors to more senior employees, learn valuable leadership skills (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012). Through the mentoring process, Millennials may come to identify with their mentees (Humberd and Rouse, 2015), leading to them adopt some of the values and attitudes of their mentees. Higher retention of Millennials is another important organizational benefit of reverse mentoring programs (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012).

Directions for future research

The generational gaps discussed in this paper do not signal the demise of our current leadership theories. Indeed, the age cohort effects discussed herein provide researchers with interesting avenues of future research and even the possibility of developing new theories of leadership that will better suit the 21st century workplace. At the very least, these theories need to be adapted in order to address the changing personalities and values of employees, and, as of yet, there have been scant attempts to do so (Lyons and Kuron, 2014). This paper serves as a guide for the important variables that need to be considered as scholars design and conduct leadership research in current organizations.

In addition to the changes highlighted in this paper, other factors may impact how we conceptualize leadership in the 21st century. The section below discusses several other areas for further investigation. Research on these factors will also add to our understanding of how leadership is changing in today's organizations.

In a comparative review of publications in cohort workforce dynamics from 1965 to 1975 and 1998–2008, Wesner and Miller (2008) found that, in their transition to the workforce, Boomers and Millennials were alike in many ways. Most relevant in this case is the desire for meaningful, challenging work. Wesner and Miller (2008) reported that Millennials are equally loyal to their employers when their work is congruent with those values. In fact, Millennials report higher instances of overall satisfaction with their job and their organization when they are recognized for their contributions to the organization, provided timely career advancement options, and given options to develop professionally and in a leadership capacity (Cahill and Sedrak, 2012; Deal et al., 2010; Kowske et al., 2010; Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). In short, Millennials and Boomers are quite similar in some respects – both groups value meaningful and challenging work. However, it's critical to evaluate what qualifies as meaningful and challenging to both cohorts in order to gain a richer understanding of where the generations divide. Future research should explore the ways in which leaders can provide Millennials with jobs and careers that meet these desires.

The ever-increasing number of Millennials in the workplace continue a trend that many managers would like to see reverse direction. The phenomenon of “job hopping” (cf. Saxena, 2012) is unsurprisingly concerning to leaders. Employees who have more experience in the workforce tend to have longer tenure in a particular position, and the gap in tenure between more and less experienced workers is widening over time. In short, the average tenure of workers aged 55 to 64 was approximately 3.5 times that of workers aged 25 to 34 in 2014, which is up slightly from congruent comparisons ten years prior (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Research on leading Millennials may further our understanding of why employees leave and how leaders can mitigate this tendency.

Although it has been suggested that younger workers are more likely to be comfortable with boundaryless careers and more open-ended employment relationships (Sullivan, 1999), researchers have noted that ambiguous situations are very stressful for members of the Millennial generation (Twenge and Campbell, 2008). It is likely that leaders will need to provide more structure in both jobs and career paths for employees than they have in the past in order to reduce turnover. For instance, task type may be an important contextual factor to consider in future research on Millennial job hopping.

This paper has considered the effects of generational gaps from the perspective of leaders of a changing workforce. However, Millennials are beginning to join the management ranks, so it is also important to consider how leaders may be different because of these generational shifts. For example, managers from these generations may not be interested in investing in their followers through LMX or transformational leadership. And, Millennial managers may have overinflated views of their own leadership abilities (Judge et al., 2006). Future research should explore the ways in which Millennials' individual differences and work attitudes impact their tenure as managers.

Just as past researchers have considered the effects of differences for Gen X and Millennial employees, today's researchers should also turn an eye to the upcoming generation. As of yet, this generation has no commonly used name, but some people born after the end of the Millennial generation are beginning to call themselves Gen Z (Geck, 2006). And, as has occurred in previous generational changeovers, managers are already worried about what the future holds. For example, practitioners believe that the next generation will be less likely to be formally educated and will have an even stronger sense of entitlement (Alsop, 2015). Only time will tell, but leadership scholars need to keep the next generation in mind as theoretical advances in leadership are pursued.

In conclusion, the workforce is changing and, likewise, leadership theories must change. Empirical research on generational gaps outlined in this paper points to several lacunae in our major theories of leadership. As Fiedler (1964) suggested over a half of a century ago, effective leadership occurs when the leader's skills and personality match the situation. Because of substantive changes in the values and attitudes of today's workers, our current theories face the crisis of becoming less applicable to the leadership contingencies of 21st century organizations. Instead of viewing these generational gaps as dangers to the science of leadership, we urge researchers to embrace these changes as fecund new opportunities to add to our knowledge of leading individuals in organizations.

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