

# **Understanding the Millennial Perceptions of Leadership and Management in New Zealand Schools**

By

Katherine Prokop

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Supervisor: Dr. Bradley Hannigan

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## DECLARATION

I, Katherine Prokop declare that the information contained in this research project is my own work and has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. The ideas presented are my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology.

\_\_\_\_\_Katherine Prokop\_\_\_\_\_

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_17-09-2023\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Abstract

Through prioritising young teachers' voices, this study investigated the perspectives of millennial teachers in relation to their values and priorities and how they prefer to experience leadership and management in the modern New Zealand education system. In the context of New Zealand education, there has been a general lack of academic study concentrating on the generational difference in leadership preferences, particularly regarding the millennial generation. This thesis examines the challenges and opportunities millennial teachers perceive their managers face in effectively leading and supporting them as individuals. The study aimed to investigate the perceived behaviours of non-millennial leadership by millennial teachers to learn more about the leadership preferences of millennial teachers. This allows a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by younger teachers in the modern workplace. The objective of this research was to gain a better grasp of this generation in the field of education by examining the various definitions and conceptions of millennials found in the academic literature relating to management and leadership. Using a qualitative approach, a purposive sample of New Zealand teachers were interviewed to gather narrative data. Ten millennial educators were interviewed to explore their perceptions of various challenges and opportunities faced by younger teachers in schools caused by existing leadership practices. It was found that teachers generally linked improved relationships across generational gaps, personal growth and progression within the teaching profession, and job sustainability to interpersonal leadership styles. Management behaviours such as authenticity, recognition of experience, communication, collaboration, empathetic leadership, and positive culture building all played a role in millennials perceiving leadership favourably. This research highlights the importance of understanding the needs and motivations of millennials in order for leaders to be successful when working with this generation.

**Keywords:** Millennial generation, leadership preferences, education management, generational differences, generational stereotypes, and archetypes.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Rationale

Many leaders are struggling with how to deal with millennials (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Milburn, 2019; Twenge, 2013). What has been successful with earlier generations of workers is not necessarily successful for millennials (Caraher, 2015). Furthermore, there is a misalignment between what some leaders think about millennials and what millennials believe about themselves (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2018). According to Smola and Sutton (2002), failing to properly address the different generational needs leads to miscommunications and misunderstandings which have the potential to reduce retention, productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction. However, managers who are aware of generational differences in the workplace are better equipped to create strategies, modify techniques and make use of the talents of all workers (Lyons et al., 2013). Management research on the topic has focused on comparing millennials and other generations to better understand work-related attitudes and leadership preferences (e.g., Chiesa et al., 2019; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Rudolph et al., 2021; Smith, 2018; Van Rossum, 2021). This study applies these insights in the context of educational management. Due to the nature of the education industry as a highly dynamic and politically contested environment (Williamson et al., 2020) no "one size fits all" (Campione, 2015) solution for managing millennial educators has yet been discovered.

The management of millennials has been an important topic in research since Howe and Strauss (2000) established foundations for understanding this generation. Millennials are often stereotyped negatively as needy, entitled, disloyal, creative, sensitive, and social (Marano, 2004; Perry, Hanvongese, & Casoninic, 2013), as well as passionate about work/life balance (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010; Perry, Hanvongese, & Casoninic, 2013). Hoffman's (2018) study identified reasons why millennials quit their jobs, and various scholars have suggested a deficiency approach, suggesting such strategies as mentoring (Knapp, 2017), promoting a strong work ethic and coaching (Molloy, 2018), creating a caring environment (Chillakuri & Mogili, 2018), and emphasizing teamwork and workplace learning (Baker et al., 2018) management strategies. Nevertheless, some research has identified more positive traits of millennials such as self-reliance, independence, and entrepreneurship (Martin, 2005). While numerous studies delve into the viewpoint of managers concerning millennials (Anderson et al., 2016; Donnison, 2007; Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), only a handful adopt the opposite approach (Graybill, 2014; Omilion-Hodges & Sugg, 2019). Acknowledging the diversity of the group, Lyons and Kuron (2013) stress the importance of recognizing changes in people's attitudes as they age, while Schewe et al. (2013) stress the importance of differences in millennial characteristics across geographical locations. Considering the complexity of these arguments, this study offers a microcosm that is nevertheless valuable to our understanding of management practices relating to millennial teachers in New Zealand. In a post-covid environment, where many young people are reexamining their relationship to work (Khor & Tan,

2023), an updated evaluation of the contemporary millennial in New Zealand education setting is expedient.

## **1.2. Significance of the Study**

Millennials present an intriguing and valuable research opportunity, as they are a thoroughly documented generation in both academic research and popular media. Thanks to the rise in social media technologies, it is now possible to record and retrieve almost every decision millennials have made in their developmental years (Liu et al., 2019). This gives researchers a greater understanding of millennials as a collective group than any other previous cohort.

It is important to examine the perspectives of millennial teachers and their attitudes towards leadership for a number of reasons. First, the millennial generation is set to become the dominant demographic in the teaching profession. By understanding a small sample's views on leadership, we can better understand how millennial teachers as a whole, might interact with their colleagues and managers. Schools in particular have generally maintained a traditional management structure status quo (Woods et al., 2019), so examining the viewpoints of teachers at this stage in their career can give valuable insights into how they may perceive leadership as they progress into higher positions. Investigating millennial teachers and their attitudes towards leadership and in the school setting is therefore essential to examining what changes may be necessary in the workplace to accommodate millennial teachers.

This research adds to the existing knowledge of how to effectively manage millennials in New Zealand's educational environment. It offers valuable insight into how millennial teachers perceive and experience school leadership by analysing their perspectives. This information may be used to inform how best to manage this distinct demographic group.

## **1.3. Background**

Within the education industry, millennial teachers face a challenging context due to the complexity of managerial systems. Teachers, who are often managers in their own right, are a relatively self-managing group, actively involved in faculty management, mentoring new teachers, and participating in syndicates and learning communities (Borko & Whitcomb, 2018). However, as government employees, they are subject to changes in syllabus and curriculum, including compliance with national standards, and are heavily influenced by the political climate (Fallon, 2019). Furthermore, school boards add another layer of complication to the management structure (Luciano et al., 2020). The presence of four different generations, each with a significant power imbalance, adds to the complication. The teaching workforce now has four leading generations: Silent, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials, with Millennials being the largest single group (Gong et al., 2018). Individuals born between 1981 and 1997 comprise the Millennial generation; however, some researchers have different start and end dates for this

generation (Frey, 2018). Because of the increased number of millennials in the workforce, there is an ongoing need to understand how to develop successful leadership strategies for this generation in the field of education (Tang et al., 2020). Millennials seek modern educational leadership strategies that are tailored to contemporary teaching practice, with a focus on understanding 21st-century learners, integrating technology, and emphasizing mental health (Suar et al., 2021). Unfortunately, education's traditional structure: hierarchical, and top-down management system limits modern adaptation (Maaitah, 2018). Improving recruitment and retention necessitates an understanding of how millennial teachers see themselves in this.

### **1.3.1. Personal Motivation**

The researcher's interest in the topic of generational difference in education leadership stems from a personal interest in and identification with the millennial identity. From the point of view of an experienced millennial teacher who left the school workplace due to a misalignment of values and disappointing management practices in the traditional education system, this study is crucial to the recruitment and retention of young teachers.

Exploration into how millennial-aged teachers see their growth and career advancement, and the management practices that support this is a further influencing factor. Our society has a worrying tendency to rely upon stereotypes such as 'Boomers,' 'Millennials' or the latest manifestation 'Gen Z.' For this purpose, the benefits to perpetuating these stereotypes is addressed in the literature review section of this thesis. From the perspective of a self-acknowledged millennial, there are common traits that can be identified and described from personal observations, it's apparent that productivity suffers when millennials feel misinterpreted or perceive criticism in their daily interactions, both in social and professional contexts. Now acknowledged more and more as a viable research base (Zimba et al., 2020), social media has an abundance of posts demonstrating the discontent of millennials with the actions of senior-level leaders who are members of the older generations. While individual experience does not speak for an entire generational membership, comparing leadership experience across even a small group can offer meaningful insight into current educational leadership practice in New Zealand schools.

## **1.4. Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how millennial teachers view leadership in New Zealand schools.

### **1.4.1. Research Questions**

- How do millennial teachers perceive leadership in the New Zealand Education System?

This overarching question drives the inquiry and is supported by the following sub-questions.

#### **1.4.2. Sub-Questions**

- RQ1: How do millennial teachers feel they are viewed by non-millennial staff members and senior teachers?

This question allows the gathering of anecdotal data to gain a deeper insight into how millennial teachers believe they are perceived by others including managers. This data becomes important for identifying areas of issue or leadership styles that either contradict or support this perception.

- RQ2: How do millennial teachers describe their experience of the leadership practices of non-millennial management?

The answer to this sub question is essential when describing the past and existing leadership practices in New Zealand schools. The sample is not just indicative of attitudes but gives these teachers a voice in improving the management of millennial teachers.

- RQ3: What leadership qualities do millennial teachers respond positively to?

This question is essential in identifying best practice and formulating approaches that will best support and motivate millennial teachers. It allows the researcher to draw conclusions as to what the future of management might look like in the education industry.

### **1.5. Thesis Organisation**

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents research questions based on the subject and rationale. Chapter two gives context to the research by introducing literature on generational theory and providing an overview of millennials in the workplace. Chapter 3 details the mixed methodological approach taken, as well as the specifics of the surveys and semi-structured interviews used to collect data. Chapter 4 outlines the thematic analysis method used to analyse the data, identify themes and report the results. Chapter 5 puts the results into context with other literature by looking at shared concerns and topics. Chapter 6 closes with an overview of the findings, suggestions, study limitations and avenues for further investigation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The subject of generational differences is often discussed in popular culture, and terms like "millennial" have entered widespread use (Weber, 2017). A search for the hashtag "millennial" returns 72,065 tweets on Twitter<sup>1</sup> in one day alone. Since most millennials rely on social media as their primary means of keeping up with the news and connecting with their peers (Flores, 2016, Zimba et al., 2020), it stands to reason that the term 'millennial' is widely accepted within the Western social zeitgeist. Academically, much has been written on the character (Szabó et al., 2021), beliefs (Hong et al., 2022), motives (Morrell & Abston, 2018; Tang et al., 2020), values (Weber, 2017), challenges (Abkhezr et al., 2018), and potential opportunities (Andretta & Della Porta, 2020) of the millennials. This literature has gained traction as marketers, employers, and educators attempt to comprehend the generation as they assume positions of societal responsibility (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). This chapter explores the dominant assertions made about millennials, identifies who is making these claims and why, and discusses their value for educational managers. Understanding prevailing perceptions about millennials, who formulates these, and their implications, is vital for educational managers as it informs decision-making, shapes policy and practice, fosters a conducive work environment, aids in conflict resolution, and prepares the education sector for the future. The following studies provide a contextual examination of millennial work-related characteristics as both managers and team members to determine work and management practices for younger generations. This chapter delves into management and leadership literature regarding millennials in the workforce, particularly focusing on education settings and worker perceptions.

### 2.1. Scope of the Review

This study's literature review contains four sections; (a) an overview of relevant theoretical perspectives of generational theory and other approaches to classifying interactions among cohorts (b) studies exploring the application of generational theory within business management (c) previous research conducted with similar objectives to those of this study (d) emerging themes and subjects of significance that may have industry relevance of the millennial generation in the field of management in education.

The approach to this study's literature review can be categorized as a scoping review (Mak & Thomas, 2022), aiming to map the key concepts, types of evidence, and gaps in research related to the role of the millennial generation in educational management. The review was organized into four thematic sections: an examination of generational theory and other cohort interaction frameworks; a look into applications of generational theory in business management; an overview of past studies with objectives akin to this study's; and a spotlight on emerging

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<sup>1</sup> As of January 2023, on the Twitter hashtag tracker <https://www.trackmyhashtag.com/>

themes and topics with potential industry relevance for millennials in educational management. The process of the review was exhaustive, consulting over 195 sources, including academic journals, books, and research projects, using both traditional and online research methodologies. The search for pertinent literature was carried out on reputable databases and the Google search engine. It employed specific search terms, like "millennial leadership," "millennial traits and characteristics," "millennial perspectives," combined with terms like "management," "engagement," and "workplace" to refine the focus. Boolean operators were used to ensure the breadth and depth of the search. After establishing a foundational understanding of millennial perspectives in the workplace, the search was then narrowed down by including context-specific terms such as "Education," "teachers," and "New Zealand." The results provided a comprehensive understanding of the topic, which shaped the study, thus reflecting the characteristics of a scoping review (Munn et al., 2018).

## 2.2. Generational Theory as a Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework has been identified through a review of previous research on generational studies, with a focus on generational perspectives in the workplace.

Practitioners may benefit from establishing techniques for working and engaging with a certain generation if they can categorise people into generations to anticipate their behaviour. The generational categorisation is characterised as "an attempt to distinguish a group of people in a time frame into distinct subgroups based on certain significant external events/forces" (Srinivasan, 2012, p.52). Two distinct viewpoints support contemporary generational research: the social forces perspective and the cohort perspective (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). In contrast to the cohort perspective, which bases generational membership only on birth year, the social forces perspective considers generations as groups of people formed by common experiences and societal events. The first generational studies provide evidence for both viewpoints, which typically define generations by their common historical experiences and cultural norms (Mannheim, 1952).

Those more recently popularized the concept of generation is not new. Mannheim (1952) first defined the term "generation" over 70 years ago as a means to investigate age-related differences and similarities. Both Mannheim (1952) and later Ryder (1965) theorised that important historical events and cultural shifts in a collective cohort's formative years influence behaviour at large, resulting in comparable patterns across notable periods. The Internet and the Great Recession, for example, are what Mannheim called "the trigger action of the social and cultural process" (1952, p.310) for millennials. Similarly, the Great Depression defined the Old Left in the 1930s, while the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War led to the New Left movements in the 1960s (McCurties, 2011). There is a consensus among scholars that significant life experiences such as these have established shared generational values (Lyons et al., 2019; Salazar & Diego-Medrano, 2019; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Therefore, the values are shown via

observable and foreseen actions and attitudes (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Edmunds & Turner, 2005). By categorising people into generations to anticipate their behaviour, managers might develop techniques for working with and engaging with a particular generation.

### **2.2.1. Ecological Systems Theory**

One way that managers may identify categorisations among their team members is by examining their interactions at micro and macro levels. Psychological theories, such as Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Theory of Development, focus on the interaction between individuals, within varying levels of contextual layers and have been extended to chronometric environments (Simões & Gouveia, 2008) – i.e. time-based experiences. Ecological Theory may be utilised to propose a dynamic social-ecological model of identity, characteristics, and shared perceptions in the workplace (Lyons et al., 2019). Despite these strong connections to this study's subject, adapting a social forces perspective, the Ecological theoretical model is inadequate for this study's context, as Bronfenbrenner's theory places a lesser emphasis on the chronosystem (Elliott & Davis, 2020) and limits us from thinking more critically and expansively from a cohort perspective within any given workplace.

### **2.2.2. Cross-cultural Adaptation Theory**

Cross-cultural adaptation, as described by Kim's (2001) theory, refers to the process by which individuals increase their psychological and functional competence in a new cultural environment. It involves learning and assimilating new cultural norms, values, and behaviors, as well as developing strategies to cope with cultural differences and overcome challenges. For example, when someone moves to a foreign country, they may initially experience culture shock and feel disoriented. However, through cross-cultural adaptation, they gradually learn the language, understand the customs, and adjust their behavior to align with the local culture. This process allows individuals to function effectively and feel psychologically comfortable within the new cultural context. Cross-cultural adaptation theory can also be applied when examining cultural misunderstandings between millennial teachers and non-millennial leadership. Just as individuals adapt to a new cultural environment, millennial teachers and non-millennial leaders may need to navigate and understand each other's generational values, communication styles, and work expectations. By recognizing and applying the principles of cross-cultural adaptation, both parties can increase their psychological and functional competence in bridging the generational divide, promoting effective communication, and fostering positive working relationships. Adaptive change also occurs at the generational divide and might be applied to consider how generational representatives adjust their communication and learn to adapt to one another's social needs through the enculturation process to engage one another (Salazar & Diego-Medrano, 2019). Due to the fact that all humans are born into an unknown environment and are consequently compelled to acquire a culture, adaptation is seen as a natural process that happens within the constraints of generation. In examining and understanding conflicts between millennials and non-millennial leaders, Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory provides a

valuable framework for analysis. Generational conflict has emerged as a key theme in the literature, highlighting the challenges that arise from differences in values, communication styles, and work expectations between these two groups. By applying Kim's theoretical framework, researchers can gain insights into the processes of adaptation and adjustment that occur as millennials and non-millennial leaders interact and work together. This lens allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural misunderstandings and conflicts that may arise, facilitating the identification of strategies and interventions to promote effective communication and collaboration between these generational cohorts. Through the application of Kim's framework, this study aims to shed light on the underlying dynamics of generational conflict and explore ways to bridge the gap between millennials and non-millennial leaders in the workplace. Though a number of studies link Cross-cultural Adaptation to productivity in the workplace (Haslberger, 2005; Jyoti et al., 2015), the link between the concept of culture and generation in this particular study would require a strong foundational understanding of the concepts of generation and various characteristics for each subgroup to be applied to the workplace with any accuracy. Because the millennial viewpoint is emphasised in the present research, Kim's Cross-cultural Adaption Theory is unsuitable as it investigates the nature of relationships between other generations in more depth than intended in this study.

### **2.2.3. Generational Theory**

Strauss-Howe's (1995) Generational Theory proposes a recurrent cycle of age categories termed generations, each with its own distinct behavioural characteristics associated with history. Strauss and Howe (1997) explore how these patterns are characterised by a cycle of crisis and recovery (Rogler, 2002). Each cycle consists of four stages: crisis, post-crisis, awakening, and post-awakening, all of which lead to a new crisis that serves as the start of the following cycle. Historian, Schlesinger (1999) writes in defense of a cyclical interpretation of history:

“A true cycle is self-generating... The roots of this cyclical self-sufficiency lie deep in the natural life of humanity. There is a cyclical pattern in organic in nature—in the tides, in the seasons, in night and day, in the systole and diastole of the human heart (Schlesinger, 1999, p. 27).”

Figure 1. Recent generations and their archetypes (adapted from Howe & Strauss, 1997).

Straus & Howe (2000), similarly, liken generational cycles to the seasons, noting grace periods and transitions where structures and shared values are resilient during phases of recovery from a past crisis, followed by a volatile political climate where new generational archetypes

Era	Unraveling (Post Awakening)	Crisis	High (Post Crisis)	Awakening
~ period	1990-2010	2010-2030	2030-2050	2050-2070
<b>Elderhood</b>	<b>Silent Generation</b> (adaptive) empathetic	<b>Baby Boomer</b> (idealist) wise	<b>Gen X</b> (reactive) tough	<b>Millennial</b> (civic) hubristic
	<b>Baby Boomer</b> (idealist) moralistic	<b>Gen X</b> (reactive) pragmatic	<b>Millennial</b> (civic) powerful	<b>iGen</b> (adaptive) indecisive
<b>Adulthood</b>	<b>Gen X</b> (reactive) alienated	<b>Millennial</b> (civic) heroic	<b>iGen</b> (adaptive) sensitive	<b>Generation Alpha</b> (idealist) indulged
	<b>Millennial</b> (civic) protected	<b>iGen</b> (adaptive) suffocated	<b>Generation Alpha</b> (idealist) indulged	<b>Generation Beta</b> (reactive) abandoned
<b>Youth</b>				

attack and undermine structures, setting the stage for a new catastrophe. They label four types of generations within each period as, "Idealist", "Reactive", "Civic" and "Adaptive."

## 2.2.4. Critique of Strauss-Howe's Generational Theory

The critique that Generational Theory is more akin to popular culture than social science has been raised by some scholars, including Macky et al. (2008), who argue that the work of authors like Strauss and Howe, who popularized Generational Theory, may be exaggerated and based on a lack of empirical evidence (Agati, 2012; Giancola, 2006; Twenge, 2013). While Generational Theory has its supporters, who see it as a valuable framework for understanding societal and cultural changes over time, there are scholars who believe that it lacks empirical rigor and relies too heavily on anecdotal evidence or subjective interpretations (Costanza et al., 2012).

The evidence on Generational Theory is mixed, with studies both supporting and challenging its claims. Some studies have found correlations between generational cohorts and certain characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes, while others have found conflicting or inconclusive results, suggesting the need for further investigation (Jauregui et al., 2020). Scholars caution against oversimplifying the impact of generational membership on professional perspectives and warn against the application of stereotypes (Hoover, 2009). It is important for future research to continue examining and scrutinizing Generational Theory to enhance our understanding of generational differences and their implications (Gills & Thompson, 2006;

Modelska et al., 2007). Therefore, while Generational Theory offers valuable insights into the unique experiences, values, and behaviors of different generations, it is necessary to approach it with a critical lens and conduct rigorous empirical studies to validate its claims and address its limitations. By doing so, we can further our understanding of intergenerational dynamics and avoid simplistic interpretations of generational effects in the workplace and society at large.

Generational Theory, despite its critiques, can still be considered an appropriate model for this study for several reasons. First, Generational Theory provides a framework for understanding the unique experiences, values, and behaviors of different generations, including millennials. By examining generational dynamics, this study can gain insights into how millennial teachers perceive leadership and interact with non-millennial staff members and senior teachers. While there may be debates about the empirical foundation of Generational Theory, it remains a widely recognized and influential framework in understanding societal and cultural changes over time. It has been used in various fields, including organizational behavior and leadership studies, to explore generational differences in the workplace. By adopting Generational Theory as a theoretical lens, this study can build upon existing knowledge and contribute to the literature on millennial teachers' perceptions of leadership.

It is important to note that this study recognizes the limitations and challenges associated with Generational Theory. It acknowledges the need for critical examination and empirical validation. By incorporating a critical perspective and conducting rigorous research, this study can contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on generational differences while also providing insights into the perceptions and experiences of millennial teachers.

### **2.3. What is a Millennial?**

This section provides an overview of the term "millennial" and its various names. It explains that millennials are individuals who were born in the last two decades of the 20th century and are part of the Hero (Civic) generational archetype within Strauss-Howe's framework. The purpose of this discussion is to provide orientation and context for understanding the millennial generation and its characteristics.

The relevance of this information to the thesis is that it establishes a foundation for exploring how millennial teachers perceive leadership in the New Zealand Education System. Understanding the unique qualities and values associated with the millennial generation, such as their focus on making reparations, achieving consensus, and valuing optimism and collaboration, helps frame the subsequent analysis of millennial teachers' experiences and perspectives on leadership. Additionally, the discussion of millennials' preference for connectedness, their embrace of technology, and their desire to make a positive impact on society highlights key aspects that may influence their interactions and expectations in the workplace, particularly in relation to leadership dynamics.

### 2.3.1. Introduction

The term "millennial," which also goes by the names "Generation Y," "Generation Me," and "Generation Net," refers to the generational cohort of people who were born during the last two decades of the 20th century (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Within Strauss-Howe's (2000) framework, millennials are considered to be within the Hero (Civic) generational archetype. They are focused on making reparations and achieving consensus in a culture that is "unravelling" and are committed to restoring institutions and value optimism and collaboration. The millennial identity places a premium on connectedness in all aspects of life. They value social connections (Voydanoff, 2013), embrace technology (Bonfield et al., 2020), seek multicultural experiences (Jyoti et al., 2015), prioritize teamwork (Mutteti & Nyariki, 2022), and strive to make a positive impact on society (Ahmad, 2019). They were the first generation to be born under the impact of the internet, and as a result, they have had almost unrestricted access to information, digital resources, and cutting-edge technology (Galdames & Guihen, 2020). It is this key difference that is thought to set millennials apart from older generations in the workplace (Ben-Hur & Ringwood, 2017).

### 2.3.2. Traits and Characteristics of Millennials

At the turn of the century, when the millennial generation's oldest member was 18, Howe and Strauss (2000) outlined the millennial generation's seven distinguishing features. These characteristics are as follows:

1. **Special.** Millennials are viewed as special, not only by themselves but by society. Winograd et al. (2011) discovered that millennial children were nearly always highly regarded by their parents and seen as the most essential component of a complete and happy existence. Because of this perception, a common stereotype of millennials is that they are needy, high-maintenance, delicate, and intolerant of others (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).
2. **Sheltered.** During their formative years, millennials are claimed to have been shielded from danger by an abundance of safety regulations and technology (Pew Research Center, 2010). Shelter, on the other hand, may be viewed negatively for, as Strauss and Howe (2000) put it, millennials have been trapped by wall-to-wall restrictions and overprotectiveness.
3. **Confident.** As a consequence of the above, it is generally agreed that millennials' inherent confidence because their parents fostered an atmosphere of encouragement and support (Pew Research Center, 2010). This can, however, often be conflated with neuroticism, narcissism, self-confidence, and self-assurance (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).
4. **Team-oriented.** Millennials are said to be the most connected generation (Pew Research Center, 2015). It has been noted that as they progress into leadership roles, millennials

become more inclusive leaders who collaborate with various groups with confidence (Murphy & Loeur, 2018).

5. **Achieving.** Millennials are succeeding as a consequence of increased academic standards and an ingrained feeling of responsibility (Mahmoud et al., 2020). In line with a cyclical structure of response to crisis, it is thought that millennials were shaped by their parents' dislike of what they thought were lazy attitudes in the 1960s and 1970s (Mahmoud et al., 2020). As a result, millennials are active in their learning attitudes. (Baxley, 2021).
6. **Pressured.** As a result of the trait above, millennials feel a sense of obligation to achieve and perform well. As managers, millennials are goal-oriented and demand regular sense of accomplishment as they work to disrupt the status quo, make a difference, and thrive in situations that are always changing (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021).
7. **Conventional.** Millennials are more conformist than rebellious. Despite this, millennials have been observed to protest based on austerity concerns, bringing with them the experiences of underprivileged social groups to overcome marginalisation barriers, network, and establish collective identities (Andretta & Della Porta, 2020).

The description of millennials by Howe and Strauss (2000) serves as a starting point for the current study to identify characteristics and popular perceptions in the workplace. It provides a starting point for identifying common traits and attitudes associated with this generation. By using their work as a reference, the study can delve into specific aspects of millennial teachers' perceptions of leadership in the New Zealand Education System. It is not the sole foundation but guides the research direction and helps contextualize the findings within existing literature. Further examining Strauss-Howe's (1997) archetypal descriptions of the "hero", traits of leadership, reputation, and nurturement begin to paint a picture of the current and future millennial worker and manager.

### 2.3.3. Millennials: Civic Heroes

According to Stauss and Howe (1997), The concept of a "hero generation" is one that is seen across the ages and is particularly relevant in the case of today's millennial generation. In *Millennials Rising*, Strauss and Howe (2000) point to three distinct features of a "hero generation" that can be seen throughout history. Firstly, hero generations are born and raised after a period of social spiritual awakening. Secondly, these generations follow an unsatisfactory youth cohort and serve to fill the void left by a departing elder generation. And finally, the growth of the hero generation is frequently the focus of parental dedication. It is believed that the millennial generation of today embodies these three themes, making the concept of a hero generation a reoccurring one throughout history.

	Leadership style	Is nurtured by	Nurtures by	Positive reputation	Negative reputation
<b>Baby Boomer (Idealist)</b> Prophet Archetype	righteous, austere	relaxing	tightening	principled, resolute, creative	narcissistic, presumptuous, ruthless
<b>Gen x (Reactive)</b> Nomad Archetype	solitary, pragmatic	under-protective	overprotective	savvy, practical, perceptive	unfeeling, uncultured, amoral
<b>Millennial (Civic)</b> Hero Archetype	collegial, expansive	tightening	relaxing	selfless, rational, competent	unreflective, mechanistic, overbold
<b>iGen (Adaptive)</b> Artist Archetype	pluralistic, indecisive	overprotective	under-protective	caring, open-minded, expert	sentimental, complicating, indecisive

Figure 2. Generational archetypes in recent history (adapted from Howe & Strauss, 1997).

### 2.3.4. Opportunities for Millennials in the Workforce

Millennials are the first totally digital generation who do not regard services like Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube as exceptional (Dian Veronika Sakti Kaloeti; Rouli Manalu, 2021) These "digital natives" regard the technology environment as the norm (Prensky, 2001). Staying connected is part of millennial culture, and it's uncommon for someone in this generation not to own at least one electronic communication device. This means that, when compared to their older counterparts, millennial teachers generally adapt to new digital tools with relative ease (Bonfield et al., 2020). They see technology as a tool rather than a replacement for interactions, which positions them to potentially be better communicators, if not in terms of quality, then in terms of quantity, frequency, and efficiency. According to Strauss- Howe's (1997) archetypal traits for leadership, a millennial leadership style such as expansive leadership may be reinforced even more by the use of technology.

### 2.3.5. Challenges for Millennials in the Workforce

Challenges for millennials in the workforce arise from their unconventional approach to work-life balance, their inclination to prioritize job fit over traditional career progression, and their tendency to navigate the uncertain economic climate through alternative means. It is commonly known that millennials work to live rather than work to live (Carney, 2019). They feel that life is about living, not working, and they want to maximise their jobs as quickly as possible. On the millennial viewpoint, Caraher (2015) states, "It's not a question of whether or not they are right for the job, it's a question of is the job right for them," Caraher (2015) writes on the millennial attitude (p. 27). Millennials believe they are very competent, but they dislike the

prospect of ascending the corporate ladder. This explains why they are a generation that is famously difficult to retain, and they struggle to find significance in their professions (Smith, 2018).

Millennials and Generation Z, unlike previous generations, represent a new period of expanding economic disparity, enormous debt, and increasingly uncertain career prospects (Kurz et al., 2018). Despite the recent uncertain economic climate, millennials have earned a reputation as 'job hoppers' (Festing & Schäfer, 2014), reacting to the current recession in alternative ways (Burstein, 2013). Instead of seeking stability in the workplace, millennials prefer to move back in with their parents, postpone marriage, delay the purchase of their first houses, or begin their own enterprises (Carney, 2019).

## **2.4. Generational Studies in the Field of Applied Management**

This section will contextualise Strauss-Howe's model within the realm of Applied Management, a well-developed convention for Generational Theory. Researchers in their respective fields of anthropology (Brammer et al., 2012), sociology (Schäfer, 2014), and social psychology (Hung et al., 2007) have long debated the idea of generations and their impacts on the work environment. While some researchers view Generational Theory as a cognitive model for education (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), others believe it belongs more squarely in the realm of sociology (Bean et al., 2013; Codrington, 2008; Grabowsky et al., 2020). The following studies explore the millennial generation based on its distinctive traits. Most importantly for this study, sociological theories align with a wide range of disciplines and business applications, including labour market analysis and commercial recruitment agencies, and may be an effective way for today's business management to improve HR functions and create a more enabling workplace for employees of all generations.

### **2.4.1. Millennials as Human Resources**

Several publications in the field of human resources have incorporated Generational Theory when developing a system of motivation and incentives (e.g. Jeffries & Hunte, 2004), enabling businesses to increase employee productivity (Beasley, 2017), reducing staff turnover (Nikitochkina, 2021) and attracting new employees (Curran, 2017). While some academics studying Generational Theory from a management viewpoint (Riggio & Saggi, 2015; Zabel et al., 2017) warn against making human resource choices based on generational assumptions, Lyons et al. (2015), believe that stereotypes are necessary for recognising organisational attitudes and identity. They argue that by substituting the more neutral term "archetype" for the stigmatised term "stereotype," researchers in this field may tie generational knowledge to a wider body of work on social identity and social categorisation theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The general consensus within this field is that the working population is aging (Hayes, 2008; Urick et al., 2017), and several generations coexist in the workplace (Toivanen, 2021). It is agreed that generational disparities influence how workers interact with one another as well as on

organisations' human resource management practices, emphasising the significance of this research and the relevance of addressing generational diversity in the workplace.

#### **2.4.2. Leadership of and by Millennials**

Researchers have used Generational Theory to consider leadership among generations extensively (Chung, 2016; Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021; Howe & Strauss, 2000), however they are only recently beginning to examine the type of leadership paradigm that millennials demand for corporate entrepreneurship to thrive (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Intergenerational conflict (Beekman, 2011) and detrimental impacts on communication and working relationships (Grieve, 2020) are extensively emphasised when considering how generations vary in their beliefs and attitudes towards leadership. Compared to earlier generations, millennials' worldviews, attitudes toward authority, and work-related outlooks are distinctive (Mahmoud et al., 2020). As millennials take on more managerial roles, literature in this field is being redefined by alternative perspectives on various leadership styles, their underlying beliefs, and how these styles may impact a workplace.

#### **2.4.3. Relevance to the Education Industry**

This current study aims to examine whether the perceptions and stereotypes observed in previous studies conducted within business and marketing contexts are also present in the education industry. The rationale for investigating this is based on the notion that teachers, who work closely with younger generations, may have different experiences and perspectives compared to those in other industries. Therefore, there is a potential for disparity in the stereotypes and perceptions of millennials and other generational cohorts within the education industry. By exploring this aspect, the study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of generational dynamics and their implications in the educational context.

### **2.5. Millennials in the Education Industry**

Despite the well-researched field of millennial education (Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2015; Holman, 2021) and increased student engagement when adopting a learner-centered approach, there is a shortage of material specifically exploring millennial teachers' traits and characteristics, leaving a lack of consensus on how best to manage them within the New Zealand context. There is a paucity of material explicitly exploring traits and characteristics of millennial teachers (Dass et al., 2022), although the generation's features and behaviour are constant across the workforce (Roberts, 2019). This highlights a gap in the existing literature, as the study of millennial teachers and their distinct characteristics within the education industry is relatively underexplored. Despite this gap, it is believed that many of the features and behaviors associated with millennials are likely to be consistent across different sectors of the workforce, including the education sector. Therefore, general findings and insights from studies conducted in other

industries can provide a starting point for understanding millennial teachers, even though there may be specific nuances and considerations that are unique to the education context.

Roberts's (2019) case study focused on millennials in the teaching profession, highlighting their unique advantages and difficulties. The researcher interviewed 15 participants using open-ended questions that allowed for flexible and unrestricted responses to examine the breadth of millennials' experiences and perceptions (Roberts, 2019). As Roberts' (2019) research objectives are similar to the purpose of this thesis, the method of qualitative data collection and thematic data analysis has been closely replicated.

## 2.6. Millennials in the Workplace

Many unfavourable stereotypes about millennials in the workplace have gained traction. They have been described as having a number of negative attributes, like demanding, fragile, and intolerant (Baker Rosa & Hastings, 2018), but they've also been called tech-smart, multitasking, and collaborative (Galdames & Guihen, 2020). This has contributed to the widespread belief that this generation is difficult to work with and lead. These beliefs, especially those related to a lack of dedication and work ethic, have been called into doubt by other studies (Dalton, 2012). When millennials are compared to earlier generations, research has shown little to no change (Muselman, 2021; Schullery, 2013). Nonetheless, research indicates that millennial workers need a different leadership style than prior generations. Major differences recognised are a value for honest and genuine help (Ngayo Fotso 2021) and a preference for personal growth (Chopra & Bhilare, 2020).

There has been empirical research on generations, their experiences, and the values they hold (Parry & Urwin, 2021), notably research on generational differences (Rudolph et al., 2018). There is inconsistency in the findings regarding the question of whether there are generational differences in work behaviours (Lowell & Morris Jr., 2019; North, 2019), and the results are likewise inconsistent on the topic of whether or not work values are shaped by the experiences of different generations or whether or not they emerge naturally through time (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

### 2.6.1. Perpetuation of the Millennial Stereotype

In a meta-analysis, Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007) and Perry et al. (2013) reviewed over 105 academic publications regarding the four generations in the workplace and their commonly associated stereotypes. Their investigation found a consensus about generational perspectives and varying perceptions of millennials in the workplace, which forms the foundational assumptions upon which this study was conducted. Van Dellen (2019) assimilated these perceptions to build a Likert-type scale survey that examined whether millennials identified with the traits: entitled, disloyal, lazy, needy, sensitive, creative, multi-tasker, passionate, values work/life balance, and social. This tool has been used both to prompt discussion around

perceived stereotypes of millennial teachers and as a quantitative gauge to what extent participants do or do not identify as millennials.

Nine of the ten stereotypes examined by Van Dellen (2019) were found to be strongly associated, showing that managers believe the most prevalent stereotypes about millennials. It offered data to corroborate claims that older generations have ingrained stereotypes about millennials, such as the notion that they are lazy (Finkelstein et al., 2013, Hernandez, 2019), creative (Bowen, 2004), and value work-life balance (Finkelstein et al., 2013). Professionals (both millennials and non-millennials) expressed sensitivities to what they believed was an inaccurate characterisation of the millennial generation often depicted in the mainstream media.

This researcher's main critique of the work of Van Dellen's (2019) is that a millennials' inability to identify strongly with their generational stereotypes may be either a result of a lack of self-awareness, or a negative response to the social stigma surrounding millennials.

## 2.7. Emerging Themes in the Literature

Millennials are often perceived as having high expectations in terms of not only their careers (Ng et al., 2010; Sims & Bias, 2019), but also their personal lives – they strive for meaningful experiences, value connection with others, and have a different attitude to traditional definitions of success (Larasati et al., 2019). There are generational differences in the way millennials view work (Hui et al., 2020), with many seeking 'work with purpose' (Toivanen, 2021) and wanting to work more flexibly, while at the same time focusing on sense of accomplishment and impact (Supanti & Butcher, 2019). Moreover, a collective leadership approach is a natural progression for team-oriented millennials (Srinivasan, 2012). The central themes explored in millennial literature reveal broader implications for the current understanding of work and life values that will have deep implications for our understanding of success.

### a) The Millennial Teaching Persona

The views of millennial-aged teachers on their own teaching persona can provide a valuable insight into the contemporary educational environment, as we gain deeper understanding into how they bring their personal beliefs and values into their professional practice (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019). Empirical research on the traits and characteristics of millennials shows that the "Civic Hero" archetype is defined by a commitment to social justice initiatives and an unwavering dedication to making the world a better place by working to effect positive change (Howe & Strauss, 1997). They are also adapting quickly to new technology (Stephens, 2021), and this is due to the fact they have been exposed to technology since they were young (Kari Mercer Dalton, 2012). Millennials also have a greater interest in social and humanitarian issues (Brammer et al., 2012) and strive to have a sense of purpose when it comes to their career choices. They value creativity and unconventional approaches to problem-solving (Pew Research Center, 2010) and are more likely to prioritize working for an organisation that

has a positive impact on society. Millennials like to challenge authority (Twenge, 2013), value collaboration (Srinivasan, 2012), and could be seen to be more risk-taking (Carney, 2019). They also place higher priority on work-life balance than previous generations. This generation understands the power of creativity, unconventional approaches and challenge(CemDuran, 2022), and they view these qualities as essential tools in their quest to create a more just and sustainable future. Examining millennial-aged teachers' views on their own teaching persona provides a unique insight into the modern educational workplace. Exploring common characteristics can give us a better understanding of how the new generation of teachers is bringing their own personal beliefs and values into the classroom.

**b) Applying Millennial Values to Management**

Smola and Sutton (2002) found in their detailed investigation that "generational work values do differ" and "indicate that work values also change as employees age" (p. 363). Van Rossem (2019) found the same conclusions, citing a reduction in company loyalty and an increasing inclination to relate one's feeling of self-worth to one's work. When analysing workplace ideals, evidence indicates that millennials put greater weight on their own ambitions than the aims of the organisation as a whole (Dawn & Powers, 2013). Furthermore, rather than immediately tying them to job ambitions, millennials see such values as lifestyle aspirations (Morrell & Abston, 2018).

**c) Millennial Perceive Leadership as Collective**

Even though the millennial generation is highly educated (Kilber et al., 2014), the majority of academic literature is still written from the perspective of older generations. Millennials have been described as having a more diverse approach to leadership in the business setting (McCleskey, 2014). They are more willing to accept new roles (Putriastuti & Stasi, 2019) and have a strong desire to be a part of collective decision-making process (Folarin, 2021). Millennials tend to favour a collaborative style of leadership and build upon the unique strengths of their colleagues (Payton, 2015). They are viewed as less egocentric than Baby Boomers (Smith & Aaker, 2013) and focus more on the team or organization as opposed to the individual (Payton, 2015). A key trait that millennial leaders possess is the ability to be interpersonally competent (Graybill, 2014) to be able to understand the perspectives of their colleagues and bridge the gap between organizational goals and the needs of their employees.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this exploratory study is to investigate and comprehend the viewpoints and encounters of millennial teachers regarding their managers and school leadership. An exploratory and interpretive approach was employed to understand the subjective experience of the participants. The methodology used was inductive and qualitative, and involved the collection of data through semi-structured interviews. Subsequently, the collected data underwent thematic analysis in order to derive meaningful interpretations of the findings.

This chapter provides an overview of the various methods used in the study for data gathering, sampling, qualitative research, and data analysis. The methods employed are crucial in ensuring the study's accuracy and validity (Tharenou et al., 2007), as they provide a framework for the research design and execution. The goal of this section is to give the reader a clear understanding of how the research was conducted, as well as the rationale behind the chosen methods. By identifying these key components of the study, the reader can gain insight into how the research was designed and implemented, and how the data was analysed to answer the research question.

### 3.1. Exploratory, Interpretative Research

This study is founded on the interpretive research paradigm, primarily focusing on understanding the subjective experiences of the participants. A research paradigm is essentially a worldview that guides how research should be conducted, and in this context, the interpretive paradigm was chosen as it aligns with the study's goals. As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994), a researcher's paradigm critically shapes the research methodologies and theoretical frameworks they employ. As a result, the researcher's selection of a paradigm is critical in setting the stage for the investigation. Because the "what," "how," and "why" of the research should be reflected in the selected paradigm (Carson et al., 2001), the choices made by researchers regarding their methodology and epistemology are influenced by their paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The interpretive paradigm was selected for several reasons:

- 1) **Subjective Experience:** Given the study's emphasis on subjective experiences, the interpretive paradigm is ideal as it values individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations (Bearman, 2019).
- 2) **Understanding Context:** This paradigm allows for a comprehensive understanding of the context in which the participants operate, which is crucial in this study as it deals with generational perspectives in specific social and professional contexts (Finkelstein et al., 2013).

- 3) **Flexibility:** The interpretive paradigm is adaptable to the complexities and variations of human behavior (Abkhezr et al., 2018), thus well-suited for a study involving diverse individual perspectives.
- 4) **Rich, Qualitative Data:** This paradigm often results in rich, qualitative data that provides deeper insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and motivations (Bearman, 2019)-key elements in this study.

In essence, the interpretive research paradigm sets the stage for a more nuanced and contextual exploration of the millennial generation's experiences in educational management. The four paradigms that make up qualitative research are: positive research, post-positivism, critical theory, and interpretative. The interpretative paradigm is the most fitting for this type of study thanks to its explorative nature.

In this paradigm, the researcher acknowledges that understanding is a result of a collaborative construction between the researcher and the study participants. This means that the researcher does not merely act as an objective observer, but instead participates in the knowledge construction process (McIntosh & Morse, 2015), acknowledging their own influence on the interpretation of the data. It further implies that the participants are not just passive subjects of the study, but active contributors to the research process (Costa et al., 2016), providing their unique perspectives and experiences. According to Tracy (2013), knowledge and reality are co-constructed through the interpretative paradigm which relies on communication, interaction, and practice. Hence, understanding millennials' roles and experiences in educational management evolves from dynamic dialogues and practices between the researcher and participants, emphasizing the shared creation of meanings and realities. Burrell and Morgan (1979) suggest that a researcher's fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge, as well as their philosophical perspective, will always impact on the study's findings. Under Burrell and Morgan's (1979) insight, the study operates within an interpretive paradigm, emphasizing the co-construction of knowledge and reality through interactions. This philosophical stance directly influences data collection, analysis, and the resultant findings, reflecting the intricate interplay between the researcher's beliefs, methodology, and outcomes.

Exploratory and interpretive research practices indeed go hand in hand, as they both seek to uncover deeper meanings and insights about a given phenomenon. Exploratory social research, as defined by Stebbins (2001), aims to learn more about human behaviour and the context in which it occurs. The objective is to discover "what's occurring now" and to study social phenomena with few preconceptions. Exploratory methods often place more weight on attempting to infer a hypothesis from the available data (Stebbins, 2001). Researchers commonly choose an exploratory approach when they have access to existing literature and theory (Stebbins, 2001), but little specific knowledge of the context of study. Following Stebbins' (2001) exploratory research method, this study sought to investigate a social phenomenon (i.e., perspectives on educational leadership) in a controlled setting (i.e., the New Zealand schooling system as a workplace). Together, exploratory and interpretive research aims to navigate

unfamiliar terrains and provide in-depth insights into participants' perceptions, creating a comprehensive picture of complex phenomena.

The review of the literature finds a scarcity of work on the issue of generational preferences for management and leadership, particularly in the New Zealand context, with few studies adopting an explicitly millennial viewpoint. An exploratory technique was chosen to expand on knowledge of the subject and area of emphasis. An open-ended approach (Mattelmäki et al., 2011), exploratory research even leaves the door open for the possibility that the presumed phenomenon does not in fact exist (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). By questioning the existence of presumed phenomena, it minimizes bias and fosters unbiased findings, opening up new paths of inquiry and avoiding unnecessary resource allocation on potentially non-existent phenomena. For the present study, this means that millennials might not have had any distinct perceptions about leadership or recommendations for effective leadership. Throughout this study, the flexibility of an exploratory approach has been paramount, as seen in the use of semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding (Makri & Neely, 2021), the re-examination of research literature (Swedberg, 2020), and an inductive and open approach to data analysis (Nagaraj, 2020).

Interpretivism and exploratory research are ideal for this study, particularly in capturing perceptions within educational contexts, as demonstrated by Peel (2020). Echoing Buttermore's (2010) work, this approach allows for genuine data collection and adaptable methodologies, enhancing comprehension of intricate issues. Qualitative methods, as suggested by Tharenou et al. (2007), enable a nuanced understanding of management's human aspects, crucial for effective policy. Using an inductive design without fixed hypotheses, this research employs thematic analysis to elucidate participant perspectives on school leadership.

### **3.2. Strategies**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of teachers regarding management in New Zealand schools, with a particular focus on millennial teachers' views on leadership. The study employed a qualitative, interpretative, exploratory multiple case study design, with the overarching goal of answering the research question, "What are millennial teachers' perceptions of leadership in the New Zealand Education System?" This decision was based on the understanding that a study's objective is shaped by its subject and research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

#### **3.2.1. Qualitative Methodology**

Based on the understanding that data-gathering techniques should align with the research question (Charmaz, 2014), the researchers chose a qualitative methodology for this study, expecting it to yield the richest data. As qualitative research is commonly used to comprehend the perspectives and behaviours of individuals (Savage-Austin & Honeycutt, 2011), interviews

were selected as the approach for gathering participant perceptions (Gephart, 2004; Kalman & 2019). Moreover, the qualitative methodology was chosen to satisfy this study's objectives to gather anecdotal data of participant experiences of current leadership practices and give a voice to previously unheard individuals and to reveal the deeper meanings that teachers attach to their experiences.

The suitability of a qualitative multiple case study design was based on its ability to comprehend the relationship between a context, process or system, and experiences within a sample (Ruslin et al., 2022). This design is ideal for obtaining a thorough understanding of a specific aspect of the educational domain instead of the entire population (Köhler et al., 2022), making it well-suited for targeting particular groups, in this case millennial teachers. Based on Yin's (2003) assertion that the case study model is suitable for examining contemporary phenomena, particularly when contextual and process-related questions are central, the research design for this study was selected accordingly. The case study model allows for an in-depth examination of each case individually, without manipulating the link between phenomena and context, making it the appropriate choice for this research.

Recent years have seen a growth in the use of qualitative and ethnographic research methods in education, providing a level of detail previously unattainable through quantitative research (Harwati, 2019). While quantitative research remains relevant, it no longer dominates research in the education and management industries (Bleiker et al., 2019). According to Hillocks (2006), this rise in the use of qualitative research can be attributed to the recognition by researchers and educators of the socially embedded nature of understanding (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978). For this reason, the qualitative exploratory multiple case study design was chosen as the ideal methodology to explore millennial teachers' perceptions of leadership in the New Zealand Education System. This approach allowed for a deep understanding of their experiences and perspectives, which was the aim of the research. This approach to understanding differs from a normal understanding by seeking a deeper comprehension of participants' experiences and perspectives, acknowledging the influence of context, and appreciating the diversity of individual viewpoints. It aims to uncover subjective meanings and interpretations, resulting in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Behler, 2020). A quantitative approach was deemed unsuitable as the focus was on exploring real-life events with in-depth questions directed at millennial-aged teachers to comprehend emerging and dynamic ideas.

When deciding whether to take a qualitative or quantitative approach, it is important to bear in mind the criticism that qualitative analysis is sometimes perceived as "soft" or subjective (Rajasinghe et al., 2021). This is important as it prompts researchers to ensure methodological rigor, address biases, consider mixed methods approaches, and effectively communicate the strengths and limitations of qualitative research. The process of coding qualitative data for thematic analysis lacks mathematical systematicity, thereby rendering the results susceptible to scrutiny (Lochmiller, 2021). It is imperative to acknowledge the coding researcher's bias while

interpreting the findings. Acknowledging the coding researcher's bias while interpreting findings is crucial to enhance validity, minimize distortion, promote reflexivity, and ensure consistency in the analysis process. The objectivity of quantitative data is often perceived to be in contrast to the subjectivity of qualitative data (Casula et al., 2021). However, this perception is dependent on the research design and potential biases that may be present in the formulation of research questions I do not see how this is logically linked to the above (Hammer & Berland, 2014). According to Johnson et al. (2020), enhancing the quality and validity of research necessitates the contemplation of various aspects such as the rigour of data collection and the credibility of the researcher. In light of the aforementioned criticisms of qualitative methodology, this study employs reflective and reflexive practices to address and rectify any subjectivity issues (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

### 3.2.2. Inductive Reasoning

This study adopted an inductive approach to support the exploratory approach where preconceptions from theory do not influence the findings. By adopting an inductive approach, this study avoids the influence of preconceived notions from theory, enabling an exploratory exploration where findings emerge from the data itself. The researcher used an inductive approach to analyse data, as the themes were created from the "bottom-up" around the data that was acquired (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Inductive reasoning is often used in qualitative research, as it involves moving from specific observations of individual events to more generalized theories and conclusions (Woo et al., 2017). Researchers employ an inductive approach to detect recurring patterns and themes in data by starting with specific observations and measurements (O'Kane et al., 2021). This process allows for the development of preliminary identification of themes, which can be explored further, and the outcomes of this inquiry may eventually lead to the creation of more comprehensive theories or overarching conclusions (Creswell, 2005).

The inductive reasoning employed in this study aligns with its exploratory nature and objective of theory development based on the collected data. Bryman and Bell (2011) categorize the relationship between theory and research into three approaches: inductive, deductive, and abductive. Inductive reasoning involves collecting and analyzing data before developing theories (Woo et al., 2017), allowing for new insights and perspectives to emerge. Unlike deductive reasoning that tests hypotheses derived from existing theories, the inductive approach promotes adaptability throughout the research process (Tharenou et al., 2007). By remaining open to unexpected findings, this study aims to generate new theories and attain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Hence, the employment of inductive reasoning is appropriate in achieving the study's objectives.

### 3.3. Participant Selection Strategy

Participants eligible for this study were millennial-aged (25-40) teachers with experience teaching in New Zealand. Patton (2002) suggests that researchers use a purposive sampling strategy when selecting participants to help achieve the study's goals. Because of the importance of specific aspects of the sample in this study, the researcher utilised a deliberate sampling technique (i.e., millennial-aged teachers working in the New Zealand education system). Purposive sampling in this case relied on predetermined criteria, such as age (between 25-40), experience (registered or beginning teachers), and country (New Zealand), when selecting participants to take part in interviews. Emails, social media, and a google form were used to promote the study to attract volunteers and gather contact information, with participants chosen from the information provided.

The approach for this study involved qualitative research, which commonly employs small sample sizes for information-rich cases (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). In this case, a participant pool of ten was deemed suitable. In this case, the selected recruitment strategy yielded a sufficient pool of participants for the research, but the first round of recruitment was insufficient to meet the sample size, step, and saturation targets, therefore a second round was conducted. The data collection process, conducted over 12 weeks between June and September 2022, faced challenges due to the busy reporting requirements for teachers during the second half of the year. Thus, the researcher believes that the data collection process took longer than anticipated.

### 3.4. Data Collection

The study presented follows a qualitative research strategy, including the primary method of using the semi-structured interview. In the educational context, qualitative data gathering frequently uses semi-structured interviews (Aditya, 2021; DeJoseph, 2012; Gast et al., 2017)). The information gleaned affords more detailed understanding of views, opinions, and behaviour of participants (Brown & Munger, 2010). This study's data comprised online interviews performed through the conferencing software Zoom.

#### 3.4.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to address the research question and investigate complex themes while inviting participant to reflect on management in schools. In keeping with the exploratory approach described earlier, interviews aided in gaining insights into participants' behaviours and experiences (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Semi-structured interviews are an appropriate choice for data gathering when the interviewer is previously unaware of the specific dynamics, the participants, or necessary follow-up questions to ask (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). This enabled the researcher to gather rich and nuanced data, capturing the participants'

reflections on management in schools and uncovering valuable insights related to the research topic.

The use of semi-structured interviews in this study aligns with the principles of the interpretive paradigm and offers distinct advantages over structured or unstructured interview formats. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to cultivate a discursive understanding of the participants' self-interpretations of situational meanings or motives for action, as noted by Hopf (2004). The interactive nature of semi-structured interviews allows the responses of the interviewees to shape the subsequent questions posed, facilitating a deeper exploration of the participants' subjective experiences. This approach is particularly well-suited for the present study, which aims to gain an understanding of the subjective experiences as perceived by the participants. By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher can elicit rich and nuanced insights, capturing the participants' unique perspectives and interpretations of their experiences, thereby enhancing the overall depth and validity of the findings (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This is especially appropriate for the present study, in which the researcher seeks to gain an understanding of subjective experiences as perceived by the participants.

The semi-structured interview format offers several advantages, such as the ability to customize questions to align with the individual's experiences, promote spontaneity, and build rapport between the interviewer and interviewee. Additionally, the semi-structured interview format is recommended to encourage a safe and comfortable environment for participants to discuss sensitive information (Dolgov & Thrun, 2009). According to Adams (2015), the semi-structured interview format is preferable to focus groups when discussing sensitive topics such as negative past experiences, as it encourages participants to be more truthful than they might in a group setting. It also provides prepared questions to guide the conversation and open-ended questions to encourage participants to share information (Bearman, 2019). Furthermore, the interviewer can request elaboration and follow-up on any emerging insights (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Many of the participants found the experience to be positive and thought provoking.

### **3.4.2. Limitations**

The research employed the semi-structured interview format to explore the research question, which offers several advantages but also comes with limitations. However, these limitations can be addressed, as demonstrated in previous research projects (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Ruslin et al., 2022). One limitation faced in this study was the researcher's lack of experience with this type of data collection. To mitigate this limitation, a piloting process was conducted to familiarize the researcher with the interview process and ensure the appropriateness of the semi-structured interview questions for the study's purpose (Behler, 2020). It was crucial to formulate questions that align with the research objectives and elicit relevant information (Roberts, 2020). To enhance interviewing skills, the researcher extensively studied relevant literature. By addressing these limitations, the researcher aimed to ensure meaningful insights and gather valuable data through the semi-structured interview approach.

Further limitations can arise due to the interviewer's ability to create a comfortable and secure atmosphere while pursuing topics of interest to the participant. To make data collection more convenient for both the researcher and participants, online data collection was chosen. Online research has the added advantage of being less intrusive and attracts a larger percentage of the possible population (Andrade, 2020; Dillman et al., 2014; Manzo & Burke, 2012). By conducting interviews through online conference calls, the researcher was able to reduce travel costs, schedule interviews at the most convenient times and locations, and reach a more geographically diverse sample of the New Zealand millennial population (Engward et al., 2022; Jones & Abdelfattah, 2020; Lobe et al., 2020). Effective data collection, according to Vagel (2014), requires conducting interviews in participants' natural environment. Given that the participants were 'digital natives' (Bennett, 2012), allowing millennials to attend the interviews via Zoom presented a beneficial design solution. To put participants at ease, the researcher began the interviews by building a rapport with the respondent (Dawson, 2019).

The semi-structured interview method can also be time-consuming (Opdenakker, 2006), and logically challenging. Semi-structured interviews require significant time investments due to their open-ended nature. The interview process involves engaging participants in meaningful conversations, allowing them to express their thoughts and experiences in depth. This qualitative approach prioritizes rich data collection, which necessitates longer interview durations compared to structured or closed-ended interviews. Additionally, the subsequent analysis of the interview data can be time-intensive, as it involves transcribing, coding, and interpreting the extensive qualitative data obtained from the interviews. It proved difficult to find a suitable time for both the researcher and participants, in some cases. The sample size and composition of interview groups can also limit the precision of data collection (Aung et al., 2021). Obtaining a significant sample size was challenging due to the time commitment required for participating in interviews. To manage time better, the interview agenda and questions were designed and shared with participants ahead of time. Participants were asked about their most convenient contact times, and the researcher developed a schedule based on their availability. An interview guide with a set of questions was used to ensure that the conversation remained relevant and minimised distractions from the topic (Jamshed, 2014). To eliminate biases, the interview questions contained open-ended inquiries (Noble & Smith, 2015). Before conducting the interviews, the recording technology was tested to ensure that no data was lost (Dawson, 2019).

### 3.4.3. Pilot Interview

A pilot interview with semi-structured, open-ended questions was conducted to ensure that the study's questions were relevant and understandable to the industry under study (Maxwell, 2013). The primary objective of the pilot interview was to validate the questions and procedures utilised in the actual study and to ensure that appropriate responses were obtained to address the research questions. During the pilot interview, the researcher solicited the participant's feedback to ensure that the questions' wording and order were clear and logical.

Despite initially intending to conduct interviews that would last approximately 45 minutes, the researcher realised that each interview would not exceed 25 to 35 minutes with the initial questioning technique. After encountering these initial difficulties, the researcher implemented alternative methods, including a short questionnaire, adding prompts to interview questions to encourage participants to provide more detailed responses. The researcher, in consultation with the supervisor, developed a Likert scale survey to be given to teachers to prompt discussion about the characteristics of the millennial generation in the workplace. The interviewer subsequently included additional prompts in their questions, such as "Why do you think that happened?" and "Can you give me an example of what that looked like?" (See Appendix B), which helped to elicit more extended responses.

The experience gained from the process of conducting a pilot interview was crucial for conducting each participant's interview session effectively. The researcher was able to improve their interview skills to provide ample time for each participant to respond fully to each interview question.

#### **3.4.4. Procedure**

Ethical approval for this research was obtained. The researcher prepared a question guide based on the research questions before the interview to direct discussion (See Appendix B). The interview guide was divided into two sections: key topics and follow-up questions. The major topics constituted the core principle of the research question and participants were encouraged to contribute their opinions and ideas. There were 10-15 open-ended questions in the question guide, including invitations to share anecdotal evidence to support their reflections. Interviews lasted between 30mins-1:45mins. In addition to suitability for millennials, for location and pandemic safety reasons, interviews were held over Zoom and recorded to capture the discussion. Following the interview, the recordings were transcribed into text and shared with the participants for confirmation. Participants were asked to participate in a single interview, after which the member-checking process was followed where the material gathered during interviews was shared with participants for checking and, if desired, further elaborated on.

### **3.5. Data Analysis**

To generate research results, this study performed a thematic analysis of data. The thematic analysis described the process of coding the themes derived from the material gathered during the interviews (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) propose that a thematic analysis is a method for identifying, examining, and presenting themes present in data. The researcher can next analyse the frequency with which these themes appear throughout the whole text once they have been systematically identified (Nowell et al., 2017). Through this study, the researcher recognised various participants' views and found knowledge based on similarities and variations in their understanding (Cassell et al., 2006). The data was addressed inductively, and themes emerged from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Miles et al., 2018).

Maguire and Delahunt's (2017) six-step analytical approach was founded on Braun and Clark's (2012) work, detailing how to examine how the codes and themes in research. Using this design method, the researcher was able to go through transcriptions, add notes, annotations, and comments on significant facts, and locate key themes more easily. Braun and Clarke (2012) suggest that the accessibility and flexibility of thematic analysis make it a preferred method for researchers. Thematic analysis is adaptable to various qualitative research questions, regardless of their methodological assumptions (Brown, 2018). The method proved beneficial by offering a systematic process for coding and analysing qualitative data that can be applied to future theoretical contributions (Peel, 2020). The researcher used the coding software tool NVIVO to as part of the review process to recognise any data points that may have been missed. NVIVO provided a platform for organizing and managing the coded data, enabling the researcher to navigate through different codes, retrieve specific data segments, and perform cross-referencing. It facilitated efficient data exploration and analysis, supporting the researcher in identifying key findings, generating insights, and drawing conclusions. The data was analysed according to the following steps:

### **Step 1. Data Immersion**

The researcher was initially immersed in the data through the transcription process, enabling first interpretations and general impressions. Multiple times, the researcher reviewed the transcripts and data to holistically absorb broad meanings (Braun et al., 2019). Reflections on the content of the interview started soon after each interview's conclusion and continued in depth while the transcript was produced. This meant that the researcher did not have to wait until all interviews were finished to apply the information gained from one interview to the next. This is a phase in an iterative process in which the researcher repeatedly returns to the data to make conclusions, generate initial hypotheses, and revise initial opinions (Tracy, 2013).

### **Step 2: Generating Initial Codes**

The researcher began by reviewing the transcripts and implementing a primary layer of coding consisting of data-driven initial surface-level codes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Silverman, 2021). The focus was on the most critical aspects of participants' perceptions of their behaviours, expectations, and overarching trends related to the quality of interactions between millennials and leadership (See Appendix C). As Blair (2016) notes, codes can be applied to data, which is then transformed into useful categories and analysed by the researcher. In order to commence the coding process, the researcher conducted an analysis of the transcripts and identified the various elements that were present in the data, including the behaviours and expectations of the participants, as well as the themes that were related to the quality of the interactions between managers and subordinates. The study employed a constant comparative method, a technique that entails juxtaposing data with data, data with code, and code with code to discern resemblances and disparities (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). For example, all

participants mentioned micromanagement, which became linked with the theme of autonomy and trust.

### **Step 3: Generating Initial Themes**

During the coding process, the researcher categorized and compiled all relevant codes and extracted data to identify possible themes indicative of patterns in the study subject (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (See Appendix D). The coding process was iterative and reflective to ensure that the codes are grounded in the data rather than imposed in a predetermined set of categories (Tracy, 2013). In the preliminary coding phase, the researcher identified 63 codes and then sorted them by similarity to identify three primary themes: empowerment, collaborative leadership, and a humanistic management style. Subsequently, the codes pertaining to each theme were amalgamated and reclassified into two tiers of subthemes: (1) perceptions (both adverse and favourable) that are pertinent to each principal theme, and (2) codes that comprise these perceptions. The researcher intentionally avoided the use of analysis software at this stage to explore areas of interest subjectively.

### **Step 4: Reviewing Themes**

Using the NVIVO tracking system, the researcher was able to eliminate certain themes and introduce new ones in response to data availability. NVivo enabled the creation of links between different themes, facilitating the identification of relationships and connections within and across themes. The ability to tag, categorize, and link data in NVivo enhanced the analysis process by capturing the complexity and interdependencies present in the dataset. Themes were analysed using the coded data level as a starting point (data extracts) (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Topics touching on political or macro-level structural management issues, for example gender and race, in education in New Zealand were deemed outside of the scope of this study.

After conducting an analysis of the primary codes and identifying initial themes, the researcher became aware that the categorization process posed a risk of erasing the unique characteristics of each participant. Given that the study focused on the subjective narratives of manager-subordinate interactions and the contextual factors that shaped them, it was critical to preserve each participant's individuality. As a result, the researcher opted to re-examine the transcripts in order to identify distinctive concepts that would delineate each participant's individuality and work environment, while simultaneously upholding the authenticity of each interview.

### **Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

This step involved deconstructing overarching themes into their component subthemes, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2021), in order to define the themes in a way that was consistent with the study's overarching exploration. The results of the thematic coding were analysed in light of the research questions and compared to relevant ideas drawn from the

existing literature. Consistency with the rest of the study and providing sufficient insights to answer the research question were both crucial. As a result, a unified model was developed to account for everything learned. The themes which emerged were empowerment, collaborative leadership and a humanistic approach to management.

## **Step 6: Reporting Findings**

The next stage was to compose the results chapter after identifying the themes. The results chapter that followed explained the facts and was intended to develop an argument and put into the context of each research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **3.6. Quality**

For research to be valuable and conveyable to future uses, it needs to meet certain quality requirements. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four principles upon which trustworthiness relies: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The quality measure approach of 'trustworthiness' has been chosen for this study as it is extensively referenced in literature as a means of ensuring a high quality of data (Anney, 2014; Gergen, 2014; Hennik et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2019; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is particularly important when it comes to interpretative, inductive methodology (Corley et al., 2021), which is deliberately more subjective to capture specific and individualised experience.

### **3.6.1. Credibility**

Morse (2015) highlights that credibility, which is crucial in determining research reliability, can be enhanced by describing the researcher's experiences and verifying research findings with participants (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Past approaches emphasise the importance of participants' experiences being recognizable to those who have shared similar experiences (Morse, 1991). Similarly, Beck (1993) suggests that researchers should summarize participants' accounts and ensure their interpretations align to maintain credibility. However, more recent approaches recognize the importance of retaining the authenticity of the participant voice (James & Busher, 2006). The credibility of qualitative research can be enhanced through rigorous data collection and analysis techniques, the researcher's credibility and dependability, and philosophical beliefs or paradigm-based preferences. Harddie et al. (2010) also emphasize the importance of consistent questioning in semi-structured interviews, enabling data from one interview to inform the next and facilitating the inductive construction of knowledge. Noble and Smith (2015) indicate that member checking, which provides authentic, participant-approved samples for examination, is the most critical step in the data analysis strategy and confers "truth value" to the study. With this in mind, in order to contribute to the reliability of data collection procedures (Candela, 2019; Harper & Cole, 2012), participants in the study were given a transcript of their interviews to clarify uncommon terms and idioms, and ensure the transcript accurately represented their responses.

### 3.6.2. Transferability

In qualitative research, the focus is on transferability rather than generalization, as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985) and backed by Slevin and Sines (1999). Researchers understand that their interactions with participants shape participants' understanding of reality, leading to varying perspectives on the world. Thus, the focus on transferability rather than generalization in qualitative research aims to provide rich and contextualized descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation, capturing the complexity and diversity of perspectives within a specific context. Schofield (1993) recommends including extensive background information on the research context and phenomenon in order to facilitate knowledge transfer. The researcher enhanced transferability by presenting detailed participant selection criteria, comprehensive literature review, a findings chapter, and an extensive discussion linking findings to literature. Authentic qualitative research should employ additional data collection methods like audio recording and note-taking during interviews for future research replicability (Miles et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that preserving participant confidentiality and anonymity takes precedence over sharing raw data. Raw data, including audio recordings and detailed notes, contain sensitive and personal information that should be handled with utmost care and ethical consideration. Therefore, in the reporting of research findings, the researcher typically presents the analyzed and summarized data rather than sharing the raw data itself. The diverse professional backgrounds of the participants provided a variety of perspectives of leadership, and the selection method enabled the inclusion of participants with varying levels of education experience, which contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting the participant millennial teachers' experiences (Myers, 2019). As per Lincoln and Guba (1985), the study can be replicated, however should not be generalised or seen as representative of all millennial teachers in New Zealand.

### 3.6.3. Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research refers to the consistency and stability of the data under similar conditions with the same sample (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). To ensure dependability, the researcher employed various strategies. An inquiry audit strategy, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985), involved engaging a non-biased colleague to discuss emerging themes, interpretations, and coding decisions. Standardized interview questions were used to maintain consistency, while allowing some flexibility due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews. The code-recoding process, which included regular data analysis and coding sessions, further enhanced dependability by ensuring continuous refinement and accuracy in data interpretation (Shenton, 2004). These strategies collectively aimed to minimize idiosyncrasies, reduce variability in interpretation, and increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the research findings.

### 3.6.4. Confirmability

Confirmability, which encompasses credibility, transferability, and dependability, is a crucial aspect of qualitative research (Thomas & Maglavy, 2011). Maintaining objectivity is an important component of research, ensuring that the study accurately reflects the participants' perceptions and judgments without undue influence from the researcher's biases or assumptions (Gentles et al., 2015). In qualitative research, it is recognized that completely eliminating the researcher's bias is not feasible or desirable. Instead, researchers are advised to be aware of their biases and their potential impact on the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

In this study, the researcher, as an interpretivist, acknowledged their subjectivity by recognizing their own interests, values, and motivations that could influence the interpretation and conclusions drawn from the data. The researcher's background as a teacher and a fellow millennial was acknowledged as relevant in the study's introduction. To enhance confirmability, the research process was thoroughly documented, from the study's inception to its final form, with each step of data analysis clearly highlighted to justify the study's validity.

By acknowledging and managing the researcher's bias, providing transparency in the research process, and documenting the steps taken to ensure confirmability, the study aimed to uphold the credibility, transferability, and dependability of the findings, fostering trustworthiness in the research outcomes.

### 3.6.5. Ethical Considerations

Before beginning any study, researchers must take ethical considerations into account (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). This is necessary to protect participants and organisations from harm. Due to the sensitive nature of this research, numerous measures were taken to protect the participants' safety and confidentiality. Prior to conducting any research, ethical clearance (refer to Appendix A) was secured, and participants were provided with a detailed information sheet and consent form to ensure their comprehension of their involvement in the study. On the information sheet, participants were given the researcher's and primary supervisor's contact information so they could ask questions and learn more about the study. Upon reviewing a consent form that outlined their rights with respect to the confidentiality of their information, the participants provided authorization for the interview to be recorded and transcribed. Participants were also asked verbally at the beginning of each interview if they were comfortable with being recorded. After transcription was complete, participants received a copy of their transcript and were given the option to change or remove any portions they did not wish to be made public. To protect participants' privacy, organisation names in the transcript were redacted and each participant was given a non-gendered pseudonym during transcription. Digital data was stored on a server that only authorised personnel could access. Finally, standard procedure dictates that all study-related data must be deleted 7 years after the conclusion of the research (NMIT, 2020).

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter will present the analysis and findings gathered from our primary research methods, interviews and surveys. For the purpose of anonymity and confidentiality, participants of the research are referred to by their designated name alongside non-gendered pseudonyms. Drawing from the three research objectives outlined, recurring themes have been identified according to the data collected through primary methods. The following section includes thematic data analysis, as well as a presentation of the identified emerging patterns.

To construct the emergent themes of the study, the interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Through this, the research questions and three sub-questions posed were examined, and the results of the analysis have been laid out and discussed in further detail.

### 4.1. RQ1: How do millennial teachers feel they are viewed by non-millennial staff members and senior teachers?

At the outset of the interviews, the discussion commenced by presenting the participants with ten typical traits associated with millennials, as outlined by Roberts (2019). These traits, including entitlement, disloyalty, laziness, creativity, multitasking, passion, valuing work-life balance, neediness, sensitivity, and sociability, served as a discussion prompt for the interviews. They provided a framework for exploring participants' perspectives and experiences related to these societal perceptions. By addressing these traits, it facilitated a broader discussion that encompassed the emergence of three main themes: energetic and enthusiastic, un-disciplinary, and changemakers.

#### 4.1.1. Energetic and Enthusiastic

The recurring theme among the participants' accounts was the perception of younger teachers as enthusiastic and energetic. Eight of the respondents noted that younger teachers tend to be more enthusiastic and energetic about teaching. Dylan remarked that despite some of the older teachers considering them as lazy, millennials are "*the hardest working people I've ever met.*" Harper shared an experience of young teachers becoming disillusioned with the system, saying they became "*quite passionate when they got in there, just really excited about where education was going... [but] got into the cogs of the school system, discovered how far behind everything was and how slowly it moved.*" Billie's experience was that the enthusiasm of younger teachers may deteriorate over time, suggesting they start "*vibrant and energetic and keen to learn*" but become "*run down or burnt out.*" Morgan said that younger teachers are often seen as "*quite enthusiastic, highly motivated, eager, keen to learn., show great initiative, be quite self-driven, and maybe naive as well.*"

The general sentiment expressed by the participants was that older teachers often viewed them as being too eager and optimistic, making it difficult for the experienced educators to reconcile these feelings. The division between generations emerged as the participants discussed how their older colleagues viewed their own enthusiasm and ambition as something that needs to be moderated. Unfortunately, many of the participants felt that these older mindsets, combined with the expectation on them to remain energetic to be demanding.

#### **4.1.2. Undisciplined**

The analysis of responses supported a prominent theme centered on the divergent disciplinary beliefs held by older and younger teachers. Responses indicated that older teachers are seen by millennial aged teachers to perceive a need for a stricter, more immutable set of rules and regulations when it comes to discipline, whereas younger teachers were thought to prefer a more congenial, flexible approach. Four of the respondents discussed how disciplinary beliefs and practices seemed to differ between older and younger teachers. Harper described how "to a lot of older teachers, there might look like a bit of a loose ship. They are more used to like rigid stuff and more sort of, like, structured *discipline*". Rory echoed this sentiment, explaining that "*they want us to be harder on students and have clearer boundaries...because you won't get the respect you need*". This rigidity reflects an underlying belief in the possible effectiveness and utility of strict, outcome-oriented disciplinary methods, versus the idea that success in discipline comes from in-depth analysis of each and every situation with an understanding of what is most likely to benefit the student. Morgan argued that "*they want more structure than our generation wants. More instructions and regulations and clear role descriptions*". Jordan touched upon the importance to millennial teachers in "*embedding positive behaviours early in life to serve them onwards*", noting that "*a lot of older teachers see students having fun are not taking it seriously*". This seems to be at the core of the disparity between older and younger teachers in terms of disciplinary beliefs.

Additionally, there was a general perception that older teachers believe younger teachers do not follow the rules. Millennial-aged teachers may believe that their older colleagues are too constrained by obsolete rules and methods of instruction and are unwilling to take risks or incorporate new approaches and technologies into the classroom.

#### **4.1.3. Changemakers**

The transformation of the education system was notably characterized by the perspectives of the respondents, with a prominent theme being the impact of technological advancements, new pedagogical approaches, pandemic-related issues, behavior management challenges, and heightened parental expectations. The education system is changing rapidly and, according to nine out of ten respondents, this change is largely due to advances in technology, new pedagogy and pandemic related issues, along with more challenging behaviour management and higher parental expectations. Anyone who has worked in the education sector can relate to Rory's

comment: “*We’re living in a completely different world of connection, media and stimulation and we’re pushing kids uphill*”. Four of the respondents were appointed as ‘changemakers’ in their respective schools. Jordan notes that as “*I’m the only one in my school who was digitally literate, I kind of ended up trailblazing any ground-breaking and innovative learning practice*”.

Although there’s an understanding that technological tools can aid in the classroom, it is clear from eight of the respondents, that many senior teachers are hesitant to introduce such technology due to insecurity and fear of the unknown. Taylor’s comment is reflective of this, “*After three years I’m still attempting to teach our principal how to use Google Calendar*”. In contrast, millennials who were born into a digital world, have an innate understanding of how to use and benefit from technology and are usually the ones leading digital initiatives.

However, it was also highlighted, by two respondents, that the capacity for much needed change in the system was not supported by management. Riley noted that “*The capacity for change wasn’t as high as it should have been*”. As an example, eight of the respondents highlighted the generational divide between millennials and non-millennials, which has significant impacts on the ability of teams to generate creative and impactful changes in an ever-changing educational system. Quinn demonstrated this with their comment, “*There is such a difference between millennial teachers compared to non-millennial teachers*”.

#### **4.1.4. Young not Inexperienced**

The theme of age and experience was prominent in the discussions. Five participants discussed the differences between being young and being inexperienced. Three of them felt as though they were being condescended to by their senior teacher colleagues. Harper, one of the participants, mentioned that “*just by default, when you look young people take a little while to kind of take you seriously or sort of warm up to your suggestions.*” Three participants reported that despite having an established background in the education system, they were treated condescendingly upon entering the teaching profession due to their age. Rory felt that he “*needed to earn [his] place.*” Both Harper and Rory felt their senior teacher colleagues saw them with a “*student lens,*” undermining their authority. Harper shared that “*they use the term millennial, and they associate those terms with millennials, but I think often they just mean young people. without realizing that millennials are 40 now. So it’s kind of like that, ‘those young people and their entitlement’ sort of thing.*” This anecdote highlights how assumptions can be made about young people and their level of experience.

Ultimately, the discussion surrounding young people versus inexperience touched on some interesting insights about how age and experience can be misinterpreted and wrongly imposed upon others. Harper’s anecdote highlighted a need for greater understanding by recognizing how the term millennial is often linked with negative stereotypes rather than an actual understanding of how their past work and life experience may vary.

#### 4.1.5. Differing Professional Expectations

The theme of professionalism and generational differences became evident in the discussion, as participants shared their experiences and perspectives on the expectations and behaviors related to work ethics in the workplace. In a discussion on burnout prevention, five participants talked about protecting themselves by focusing on the essentials of their job. Taylor, an older millennial manager, highlighted the hard work ethic gap between the younger and older generations, remarking that “*a lot of the younger ones coming in want leadership to do everything for them.*” They were not alone in this belief though - four other participants spoke about how they felt that non-millennial colleagues saw them as unprofessional. Rory questioned the professional expectation of a 9-5 job, noting that “*I don't actually need to be here, because I've actually got what I needed to get done.*” This view of working more smarter not harder is what can make millennials feel as though they are being seen as unprofessional. Jordan went on to note the differences between older and younger generations, mentioning that teachers would turn up hungover which “*never happened with older teachers*” while Riley observed that millennial lives are more out in the open with social media adding that “*it's socially acceptable for millennials to be drunk on Facebook.*” Rory shared that being professional was of great importance to them as, “*there are serious aspects of our job, but at the same time there has to be balance and there has to be humour.*” Non-millennial managers may take a millennial's sense of humour seriously and view it as unprofessional. Taken together, the discussion points could be challenging for non-millennial teachers to reconcile.

### 4.2. RQ2: How do millennial teachers describe their experience of the leadership practices of non-millennial management?

The data indicates that millennial-aged teachers describe current leadership practices in the education workplace as authoritarian, change-adverse, and micromanaging. This data also provides evidence that leadership behaviours were not the only factors impacting millennial-aged teachers' progress within the education system, but rather the structures themselves which were described as restrictive and regressive. As many examples of negative leadership practices drawn from past experiences were anecdotal in nature, this research question was approached with aspects of narrative analysis. Data collected revealed a number of key insights and common themes surrounding negative leadership practices as they are experienced in the workplace.

#### 4.2.1. Authoritarian

The discussions among the participants revolved around the theme of transitioning from traditional authoritarian leadership approaches to more progressive and transformational styles. The participants identified a need for a shift away from traditional authoritarian leadership approaches, towards a progressive and transformational one. Nine participants in the study expressed a need for leadership that pushed past traditional, authoritarian approaches. Across all

conversations, an emphasis was placed on inspiring, motivating and supporting others, rather than simply asserting one's will. Rory's comment, "*the relationship with non-millennial teachers is very much defined by a clear power boundary,*" underlined the issues millennials have with the idea of explicit authority that exists in the current systems.

The data revealed that millennials believe current systems of promotion and recognition should be based on merit rather than tenure. This need for justification in management actions to extended beyond communication to leadership itself. Dylan's assertion that "*leadership isn't standing up front and cracking the whip*" echoed the feelings of many that leadership should come from a place of reflection and followership. Harper's explanation especially demonstrated this idea, that "*I need to know why we're going there so I can figure out the best way to get there,*" stressing the importance of a clear rationale and understanding of the "endpoint" in order to engage their commitment to a cause. Similarly, Quinn shared an experience of "*Getting pressured to do things that they felt were important. But I couldn't see why it was important. And then they couldn't even tell me why it was important.*" There were numerous accounts of current authoritarian practises, and millennials emphasised the need to be reflective practitioners in their followership and to have a rationale for leadership decisions.

#### **4.2.2. Change-Adverse**

The prevalence of tenure-based systems in educational institutions, which favor long-serving individuals and resist change, is a key theme discussed in relation to the promotion of traditional values by managerial staff. The promotion of traditional values within educational institutions by managerial staff can be largely attributed to the prevalence of tenure-based systems which tend to privilege those who have been with the institution for a long maximum and are therefore likely to be less open to change. Millennials have come to be recognised as great agents of change due to their readiness to adopt new ways of thinking and their flexible attitude to school systems. This is best evidenced by Quinn's statement that "*What I thought was important or did for my students, didn't fit the traditional way they wanted to operate*". Morgan highlighted the older demographic's reluctance to embrace change by saying "*the older we get, the less we like change*". Billie agreed, noting that teachers who have been at the same school for a while are more likely to be "stuck in their ways" and less likely to be open to change. This issue is closely linked to a promotion system based on tenure, as it often means that these teachers who are set in their ways end up in management positions. Harper adds to the discussion by elucidating how generational differences affect attitudes to change, noting "*the more difference you've been exposed to in your life, the more open you are to, to further changes.*" Billie then theorised, "*I wonder if maybe this the certain field of work the ones that maybe stay in the longest are the ones that are open to change and open to learning.*" Taking these various perspectives into consideration we see that accepting change is a key factor in both millennial leadership and the ability of older generations to learn and stay in their role.

#### 4.2.3. Micromanaging

The theme of micromanagement and its detrimental effects on millennial teachers emerges as a significant topic of concern. The issue of micromanagement is one that constantly arises in literature (Ben-Hur & Ringwood, 2017; Dr. Michael Castro, 2020; Mtsweni, 2019) with modern, young professionals, particularly in the teaching field (van de Ridder et al., 2020). This theme was present in eight out of ten of the most recent interviews conducted. Harper summed up the damaging impact on millennials, saying that “*if you supervise the methods, you can't hold people accountable for the results*”. Morgan had the same experience, stating that “*constant checking on my work and constant, kind of like a parent saying, do this, do that. have you done this?*”, while Jordan recounted feeling “*inexperienced and incapable*” due to the lack of autonomy from their micromanager. This lack of trust is not the only damage that micromanagers can cause; Dylan highlighted the increased tasks that are expected of a young teacher, saying “*it's so much pressure...I think being a beginner to teaching, you have the standard to meet too and you're like, I need to do everything.*” This burden of meeting such high demands can be especially taxing for beginner teachers, leaving them feeling unsupported or burnt out. It is clear that the negative impact of micromanagement in the workplace is a major topic of issue for millennial teachers.

#### 4.2.4. Restrictive Management and Progression Structures

The theme of a stagnant career progression and an uninspiring hierarchy within the education system is a shared concern among the participants. The participants in the discussion identified a lack of career progression within the education system and the presence of a rigid and uninspiring hierarchy, noting that this issue has a real impact on the retention of millennial teachers for the future. Six participants discussed the difficulties of career progression in education. In particular, they highlighted a lack of available options beyond team leader and principal. Harper shared thoughts on how positions within the educational system can therefore create a daunting hierarchy, “*Your position on your ladder determines how much weight your ideas and opinions get, and then everyone on the same rungs is usually treated equally. You have to work to get to the next rung and if you're on top, you can choose to respect those below you.*” Similarly, Jordan shared an opinion that these systems often remain male-dominated and the role for young women becomes to “*placate their egos.*” As a cohort who are particularly focused on continuous learning, this can be a significant challenge for millennial teachers. Rory also observed how returning to the educational system can bring a sense of disappointment that change is not as prominent as one may have hoped. He remarked, “*It's just having the foresight to see how slow things are moving. I came back to the education system quite excited and it's still the same old.*” Dylan added to this sentiment, saying “*I don't want to do this for the rest of my life.*” The participants provided a clear snapshot of potential challenges, highlighting the presence of a rigid and uninspiring career progression as a major detriment that has grave implications for the retention of millennial teachers.

### **4.3. RQ3: What leadership qualities do millennial-aged teachers respond positively to?**

#### **4.3.1. Empowerment**

The theme of empowerment emerged organically from the discussions, as all six participants expressed a shared belief in the significance of autonomy, trust, and personal growth in shaping their experiences. Six participants in this study all spoke positively about autonomy, trust, and personal growth. Morgan stated, “*People are interested in living their best life and performing well in their life and career, and as a teacher, that is a great goal to strive for.*” Dylan spoke to the growth they felt having a principal they trust, recognize, and believe in them: “*You’re putting effort in for me--I’ve only been here for a term, and you just show that growth.*” Billie was appreciative of being offered the chance to try out new things and explore areas they might not have previously considered. Jordan spoke to how this trust and autonomy made them feel more responsible for themselves as a professional; “*It’s my responsibility to look after myself so I can do the job well. When that became a priority that wasn’t just important to you, but also leadership, and that was genuine.*” The importance of autonomy, trust, and personal growth are paramount for fostering a positive, productive, and enjoyable workplace, as Quinn summarised “*If my leaders believe in me, I will meet that expectation, if they don’t, I’ll just give up.*” The participants also spoke about career progression as a positive driving force for personal growth and autonomy.

#### **4.3.2. Collaborative Leadership**

The theme of collaborative leadership and effective feedback is prominent in the participants' discussions, as they emphasize the importance of establishing meaningful relationships, understanding the end goal, and embracing a distributed leadership model for successful management. Most participants agreed that in order to be a successful manager, collaborative leadership must emphasise effective feedback and observations, recognising that the establishment of meaningful relationships and an awareness of the end goal are essential. Effective feedback and observations were consistently identified by the five participants as a key feature of collaborative leadership. Harper highlighted that for successful collaboration, it is important for “*everyone [to] have an understanding what the end goal is*”. Rory further echoed this statement by underlining the importance of relationships in defining any leadership dynamic, emphasising that, “*You’re not in a hierarchy, you’re in a relationship.*” Taylor also pointed out the importance of relationships as a central driver for successful collaboration, particularly when working with millennials.

Following this, the participants agreed that distributed leadership models and a collaborative approach is essential to creating genuine learning partnerships and capitalizing on everyone's strengths. Harper underscored the importance of a distributed leadership model, explaining its “*that whole kind of Ako concept of like, everybody's got something to add to the*

*team dynamic.*" Jordan and Morgan both spoke about the importance of a collaborative approach when it comes to leadership, with Morgan specifically emphasising the need for "*peer-to-peer conversations*" over "*observations and telling everyone what they need to do*". Similarly, Jordan highlighted the value of alternating times of observation in order to learn from one another and appreciate different perspectives, thus creating a "*genuine learning partnership*" with educational leaders.

#### 4.3.3. Humanistic Approach

The theme of humanistic leadership, characterized by creating trusting relationships and valuing the voices of subordinates, emerges from the participants' discussions. The humanistic approach to leadership focuses on the relationships between leaders and their subordinates (Sengupta et al., 2020), with an emphasis on creating an environment of trust and mutual respect. This was evidenced by the specific term '*seen and heard*', which was on five separate occasions by the participants in the study.

The participants spoke about the kind of leader they desired, with qualities such as empathy and understanding. Morgan's words, "*younger teachers want to be seen and heard, appreciated, trusted*" encapsulated their idea of a supportive leader. Additionally, Jordan spoke of a leader who embodied the core values of strength, empathy and understanding. This was also reflected in Jessie's words, "*in education they're not trying to make money, they're trying to educate,*" indicating a leader who puts the emphasis on education, instead of on turning a profit.

The participants spoke of their personal ethics and values outside of work - seven respondents talking about family, work life balance and other commitments outside of work. Harper described their ideal leader as one who "*cares about their team as people first and understand that they can't do their job if like, their well-being isn't first.*" Taylor stressed the importance of balancing work and family commitments, which are especially important for "*working in a sustainable job with manageable practice and expectations.*" Empathetic leadership and understanding of individuals' needs was an important theme of the study, with a focus on creating an environment of care and respect.

#### 4.3.4. Conclusion

The research conducted in this study showed that millennials place a high value on work-life balance, change, understanding from other generations, empathetic leadership, and empowerment. These values reflect current trends in the workplace and point to the need for organizations to increase support of employees' needs in order to ensure job satisfaction and loyalty. Work-life balance is prized by millennials, as they desire a better balance between their professional and personal lives. Millennials tend to embrace change, valuing the ability to continually adapt their skillset to meet the demands of the changing economy. They recognize the value of intergenerational understanding, which requires organizations to bridge the gap

between different generations. Millennials seek leadership styles that are empowering and driven by empathy, providing them with a sense of purpose and a genuine appreciation for their contributions in the workplace. To effectively capitalise on millennials' values and motivations, organizations must understand and embrace these key attributes.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher will review the purpose and theoretical framework of the study, reintroduce the methodology and analyse the themes and sub-themes developed in the data. The three major themes of the study, (a) the millennial teacher persona, (b) prioritising values for work and life, and, (c) millennials perceive leadership as collective, will then be discussed and situated within the current literature. To conclude, implications for practice and recommendations for further investigations will be presented.

### 5.1. Research Objective

The aim of the current research was to investigate the leadership preferences of millennial-aged teachers in New Zealand's education system. Through quantitative and qualitative research methods, the study was designed to construct the opinions of millennial-aged teachers concerning which type of leadership style they prefer in their school environments. This is an applied management topic because it directly pertains to the field of management and leadership within educational institutions.

### 5.2. Interpretation of Findings

This study aims to provide valuable insights into specific existing practices that can effectively address the needs and preferences of millennial-aged teachers in the education system of New Zealand. Recognizing the diversity of experiences and perspectives within this generation, the study acknowledges that a singular approach may not work universally for all millennials. To account for this, multiple lenses, such as Generational Theory by Strauss and Howe (2000), are employed to construct a comprehensive understanding of millennial teachers. By combining common management strategies and emerging themes from the data, the study offers practical guidance and recommendations for implementing effective practices that can maximize the potential of millennial teachers in the educational context.

This research is grounded in Generational Theory, which provides a framework for understanding how formative experiences shape a generation's beliefs and values. These shared beliefs and values carry over into adulthood and influence intergenerational perceptions. By adopting the lens of Generational Theory, specifically the Heroic Civic archetype (Strauss & Howe, 2000), this study aims to identify themes that describe current perceptions of millennials in the New Zealand education system. Additionally, comparisons can be drawn between the findings of this research and Roberts' (2019) study, which also explored millennials in the teaching profession. In Roberts' work, themes such as positivity, fulfillment, and knowledge emerged, indicating that millennial teachers seek meaningful connections in their role and active engagement within the workplace.

### 5.2.1. Perceptions of Millennial Teachers

The key finding of this study is that millennial-aged teachers perceive themselves as change agents who possess the ability to make an immense positive impact in their daily workloads, local communities, and even on the world (Hervian Aldino & Franksiska, 2021; Espinoza & Ukleja, 2016). They believe in their capacity to use technology and critical thinking to work more efficiently and prefer to have the autonomy to choose the methods they deem most appropriate to achieve desired outcomes (Paukert et al., 2021). This finding is supported by previous literature that suggests millennials are highly educated and confident in their abilities (Baum, 2019; Peres & Mesquita, 2019; Persson, 2019).

However, millennial teachers may experience pressure to maintain a "tech-savvy" persona and keep up with the ever-changing technology landscape (Ngotngamwong, 2019; Petersen, 2021). They are often at the forefront of educational technology in schools and are well-suited to facilitate its use (Alugar, 2021; Szabó et al., 2021). While they demonstrate proficiency in using technology, not all millennial teachers consider themselves digital natives or possess advanced IT capabilities (Hardika et al., 2020). The majority, however, acknowledge disparities in technology use and attitudes between younger and older teachers (Taylor, 2014). This finding aligns with existing literature that suggests millennials feel pressured to take on digital technical roles at a disproportionate rate (Mandić & Vuković, 2022).

Another key finding of this study is that millennial teachers often experience a cycle of enthusiasm and disillusionment due to the inefficiencies and rigidity of the education managerial system (Oh & Reeves, 2014). They may feel "run down" or "burned out" as a result (Oh & Reeves, 2014). Nonetheless, millennial teachers are perceived by others as hardworking, passionate, highly motivated, and eager to learn (Wieck, 2008). These findings highlight the compatibility issues between younger and older teachers' methodologies and the need for greater support and understanding from educational leaders (Oh & Reeves, 2014).

Millennials also express a strong desire to be taken seriously and to contribute to positive change in the world (Maiers, 2017). They bring fresh ideas and innovative approaches to the classroom, embodying the changing face of education (Wieck, 2008). However, they may face challenges in reconciling their idealistic aspirations with the perceptions and expectations of their non-millennial managers (Maiers, 2017).

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide insights into how millennial-aged teachers perceive themselves and how they believe they are perceived externally. These findings align with existing literature on millennials' characteristics, values, and aspirations in the education field. Understanding millennial teachers' self-perception and external expectations is crucial for creating supportive environments that maximize their potential. By recognizing their strengths, addressing their challenges, and providing them with the necessary support and autonomy, educational institutions can harness the innovative and forward-thinking perspectives

of millennial teachers for the benefit of the education industry (Nabawanuka & Ekmekcioglu, 2021).

### **5.2.2. Applying Millennial Values to Management**

Millennial-aged teachers in New Zealand prioritize work-life balance, meaningful work, personal development, and a compassionate approach to teaching. They seek a career path that allows them to achieve personal fulfillment and maintain a healthy balance between their work and personal lives, aligning with the characteristics and values associated with the millennial generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This finding is supported by the literature, which emphasizes millennials' desire for wellbeing, self-fulfillment, and a life beyond work (Weber, 2017).

Moreover, millennial-aged teachers express a strong desire for career advancement and personal growth, investing heavily in personal development and learning to reach their career goals (Lyons et al., 2012). However, they perceive limited options for career progression within the New Zealand education system, potentially due to remuneration, time commitment, and the wage structure system acting as obstacles (Lyons et al., 2012). This finding highlights the misalignment between millennials' drive, high expectations, and passion for advancement and the existing career opportunities available to them in the education sector.

The study also reveals that millennial-aged teachers approach teaching with a more relaxed and compassionate attitude, prioritizing lifelong learning and fostering meaningful interactions with their students (Wilson & Gerber, 2008; Mackinem et al., 2022). They value diversity, ethical beliefs, and a flexible approach to discipline, emphasizing collaboration, open-mindedness, and individualized learning (Hong et al., 2022; Souffrant, 2020; Ćinjarević et al., 2019). This finding aligns with the generational characteristics of millennials, who are products of a globalized and interconnected world, appreciating diversity and embracing different cultures (Fadilah & Pandin, 2021; Perruci, 2011).

The relevance of these findings lies in understanding the aspirations and needs of millennial-aged teachers in order to create supportive and fulfilling work environments. It is crucial for educational institutions and organizations to provide career advancement opportunities, support personal development, and foster a collaborative and flexible teaching environment that aligns with millennials' values and teaching ethic. By recognizing and addressing the unique perspectives and characteristics of millennial teachers, educational institutions can harness their potential and create positive learning experiences for students.

### **5.2.3. Millennial Perceive Leadership as Collective**

There were several correlations between the obtained data and the literature about millennials in the workplace and their management preferences. Even though the findings indicate that millennial teachers have a great deal of respect for older teachers and traditional

approaches to education, they are keen to bring about change within the profession and to mould it in their own distinctive manner. Thusly, millennials might be considered as entitled, due to their desire to participate in workplace decision-making.

The attitude of entitlement may be reflected in Millennials' perception that they should be included in workplace decision-making (Becton et al., 2014; Howe & Strauss, 2000), as literature suggests they were in their families while growing up (Donnison, 2007). Millennial teachers also seek management positions and crave leadership and specialisation opportunities (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Harrison et al., 2017; Kroth & Young, 2014). Many participants shared that they are eager for promotion structures that are based on their personal competencies, not merely on tenure, as this is seen as outdated and archaic.

The millennial generation has a different perception of the position of the role of a manager or leader to other generations (D'Amato & Macchi, 2019). Millennials want their managers to be partners, as opposed to the conventional hierarchy of superior over subordinate. All participants emphasised the significance of having positive, personal relationships with leadership. They shared anecdotes illustrating how this approach has resulted in greater job satisfaction at their respective schools. Leaders must have patience, compassion, and the capacity to be open-minded and sincerely appreciate the opinions of others in order to build meaningful connections (Morrell & Abston, 2018). Educational leaders who take the time and make the effort to cultivate connections are more likely to inspire and engage teachers (Stephens, 2021). According to the participants of the research, school leaders have been effective in establishing these personal ties because they provide support and understanding, as well as forge deep, personalised bonds with the teachers.

In line with this relationship-based preference for interactions, millennial-aged teachers have expressed a desire for professional learning communities and the opportunity to create a culture that emphasizes collaboration. Review of the data indicates that many participants favour meaningful observations and feedback in addition to peer-to-peer conversations. By creating a collaborative culture, millennial-aged teachers feel that they are better able to provide their students with an engaging and enriching educational experience.

### 5.3. Summary

**Research Question 1:** How do millennial teachers perceive leadership in the New Zealand Education System?

Millennial teachers perceive leadership in the New Zealand Education System as hierarchical, but they desire a more collaborative and inclusive approach. They value positive and personal relationships with leaders and appreciate leaders who exhibit patience, compassion, and open-mindedness.

- Participants expressed a desire to be included in decision-making processes and felt that their opinions should be valued.
- They shared anecdotes about leaders who prioritized building personal connections and how this positively influenced their job satisfaction.
- Millennial teachers spoke favorably about leaders who demonstrated qualities such as empathy, understanding, and respect.

**Research Question 2:** How do millennial teachers feel they are viewed by non-millennial staff members and senior teachers? How do millennial teachers describe their experience of the leadership practices of non-millennial management?

Millennial teachers feel that they are perceived as young and inexperienced by non-millennial staff members and senior teachers. They desire to be taken seriously and contribute their unique perspectives and ideas. They also experience challenges in bridging the generational gap and find some non-millennial management practices to be rigid and ineffectual.

- Participants expressed a strong desire to be valued for their expertise and contributions, despite their age.
- They mentioned instances where their ideas and suggestions were dismissed or not taken seriously by older colleagues.
- Millennial teachers highlighted the need for more flexibility and openness to change in management practices.

**Research Question 3:** What leadership qualities do millennial teachers respond positively to?

Millennial teachers respond positively to leaders who exhibit qualities such as empathy, understanding, open-mindedness, and respect. They value leaders who prioritize meaningful relationships, create a collaborative culture, and provide opportunities for professional growth and development.

- Participants emphasized the importance of leaders who listen to their concerns and value their opinions.
- They spoke favorably about leaders who fostered a collaborative environment and encouraged peer-to-peer conversations and feedback.
- Millennial teachers appreciated leaders who supported their continuous learning and provided opportunities for career advancement based on personal competencies.

The objective of this study was to provide insights into the leadership perceptions of millennial teachers in the New Zealand Education System. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the objective was successfully met. The research questions were answered, providing a comprehensive understanding of how millennial teachers perceive leadership, how they believe are viewed by non-millennial staff members and senior teachers, and the leadership qualities they respond positively to.

The findings align with the theoretical position adopted at the start of the literature review, particularly the literature on millennials in the workplace and their management preferences. The findings confirm the importance of inclusive decision-making, positive relationships with leaders, collaborative culture, and opportunities for professional growth and development, which are consistent with the theoretical perspectives on millennial characteristics and preferences.

## Chapter 6: Conclusions

### 6.1. Conclusion

This study provides insights into the perceptions and experiences of millennial teachers in the New Zealand Education System, shedding light on a select group of individual's views of leadership and their interactions with non-millennial staff and senior teachers. The analysis of interviews revealed key themes that offer important understandings of millennial teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and preferences.

One significant theme is the generational divide between millennial teachers and their older colleagues. While millennial teachers are often seen as energetic and enthusiastic, there can be a disconnect between their optimism and the perceptions of more experienced teachers. Their eagerness and ambition may be misunderstood or undervalued, posing challenges in bridging the gap and fostering positive relationships in the workplace.

Another important finding is the divergence in disciplinary beliefs and practices between millennial teachers and their older counterparts. Millennial teachers tend to prefer a more congenial and flexible approach to discipline, while older teachers lean towards stricter and more rigid rules. These differences can lead to tensions and difficulties in finding common ground in disciplinary approaches.

Additionally, millennial teachers see themselves as change-makers within the education system, embracing technological advancements and new pedagogical approaches. They recognize the need for change to address behavior management challenges and meet heightened parental expectations. However, they often encounter resistance from non-millennial colleagues and management who may be more change-adverse and hesitant to adopt new practices.

Furthermore, millennial teachers desire leadership qualities that empower them, such as autonomy, trust, and personal growth. They respond positively to collaborative leadership approaches that emphasize effective feedback, observations, and a distributed leadership model that values everyone's strengths. A humanistic approach to leadership, characterized by building trusting relationships and valuing the voices of subordinates, is highly valued by millennial teachers.

Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of millennial teachers' perceptions in the New Zealand Education System. It highlights the importance of bridging the generational divide, embracing change, and adopting leadership practices that empower and support millennial teachers. By recognizing their impact, supporting their professional development, and creating inclusive and engaging work environments, educational institutions and leaders can effectively cater to the needs and aspirations of millennial teachers.

The findings of this study not only confirm but also extend the existing theories on millennial characteristics, preferences, and workplace dynamics, aligning with the literature on millennials in the workplace and their management preferences. Findings align with the theoretical framework of Generational Theory, which provides a valuable lens for understanding the dynamics of different age groups in the workplace, particularly in managing multi-generational staff (Cushing, 2019). By incorporating Generational Theory, this study provides insights into common management practices and emerging themes, enhancing our understanding of different age groups and their values (Magni & Manzoni, 2020).

In conclusion, the findings of this study have practical implications for educational institutions and leaders in the New Zealand Education System. Understanding millennial teachers' perceptions of leadership and their preferences can inform the development of more inclusive and effective leadership practices. By embracing change, fostering positive relationships, and empowering millennial teachers, educational institutions can create supportive and engaging work environments that meet the needs and aspirations of millennial teachers.

## 6.2. Recommendations

There is a growing body of study on the characteristics of millennials (Brammer et al., 2012). However, there is a notable shortage and absence of study on the leadership style preferences of the millennial teachers in the present literature (Chou, 2012). This study aimed to uncover the preferred leadership styles of millennials and give information on how leaders may engage more effectively with this generation. The findings of this study reveal that educational leaders may have great success working with millennial instructors by using the strategies listed below:

1. Educational leaders should foster support and understanding for millennial teachers in both personal and professional matters. They desire a leader who is compassionate and demonstrates a genuine concern for their welfare.
2. Leaders should cultivate a strong partnership with millennial educators to build a personalized bond between them.
3. Educational leaders should provide millennial teachers with feedback to validate their efforts and make them feel valued.
4. Opportunities should be offered to millennial teachers as a way of recognizing their skills and abilities while providing them with personal and professional development.

5. All decision-making processes should be transparent to ensure millennial teachers are aware of the reasons behind such decisions and can better comprehend their expectations.
6. Educational leaders must establish trustful relationships with millennial teachers by giving them autonomy and freedom to make professional judgments.

Implementing the strategies of building relationships, providing value, and setting clear expectations for millennial teachers can be highly beneficial for both the school and the teachers. This generation of educators crave meaningful relationships, to feel valued, and to have a sense of certainty when it comes to expectations. If school leaders take the time to cultivate these strategies, they will see increased satisfaction and support from their millennial teachers, as well as open themselves up to new ideas and approaches to working with this generation of educators. Without these strategies, however, millennial teachers may become frustrated, dejected, and ineffective in their roles due to their unhappiness. To ensure that millennial teachers feel valued, supported, and capable, school leaders should take steps to cultivate relationships, ensure they feel valued, and provide clear expectations.

### **6.3. Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the focus on a select group of millennial teachers in the New Zealand Education System, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and populations. The study relied on self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be subject to individual biases and interpretations. Additionally, the study did not explore the perspectives of non-millennial staff members and senior teachers in depth, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between different generations in the workplace.

### **6.4. Future Research**

Recommendations for future research include expanding the sample size to include a more diverse range of millennial teachers and incorporating the perspectives of non-millennial colleagues and senior teachers. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to examine the long-term effects of leadership practices on millennial teachers' job satisfaction, retention, and professional growth.

Future research related to educational leaders and millennial teachers should investigate the full effect of leadership strategies on the performance and motivation of millennial teachers. Determining the intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic factors that motivate millennial teachers would further the research on this dynamic relationship. It would also provide insight into the perceptions educational leaders have of the millennial teacher, allowing for more effective communication and collaboration. Additionally, research into the effects of technology on the

relationship is important as it has been found to be both beneficial and detrimental to the relationship. Finally, studying the differences in generational values of educational leaders and millennials, and how these divergences affect collaboration and communication, could offer valuable information on improving the rapport between these two entities. Collectively, investigating these areas further could provide more comprehensive insights that aide the understanding of the educational leader and millennial teacher relationship.

The quality of educational leadership can have a tremendous impact on the performance of millennial teachers (Connolly et al., 2019). By understanding the individual differences of teachers, leaders can establish the needed relational leadership that gives value to the perspectives and views of teachers. This, in turn, can lead to investigations on how to best manage millennial teachers to foster quality instruction. Connecting performance and leadership styles will contribute to the development of a guide for best practices that is tailored to the individual needs of each teacher, choosing the most suitable approach for each situation. This can be done through a differentiated approach that takes into account the unique needs of each teacher, guaranteeing an effective learning environment.

Future research should be developed to provide more clarity on how educational leadership affects teacher performance. This could include understanding teacher perspectives on reform and innovation and recognizing individual teacher's perspectives in order to enhance the validity of the findings. It might even be beneficial to investigate the effect of different leadership styles on the classroom environment and student engagement, and how this can be used to better support teachers. Additionally, providing support and guidance on appropriately implementing the best practices identified through research should also be considered. Through further exploration on this subject, managers should have access to sufficient evidence in order to make well-informed decisions on how to appropriately lead millennial teachers.

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## Appendices:

### Appendix A: Ethics Approval



To: Katie Prokop  
From: Hannah Emms-Healey  
Subject: Ethical Approval  
Date: 16/05/21

Kia ora Katie,

I am pleased to inform you that your application for ethical approval Category B has been approved and your data collection may proceed under the conditions outlined in your ethics application.

The ethical approval number for your research project is **2022-RES904-02**

Please refer to this letter in the body of your thesis and attach this letter as an appendix.

Good luck with your upcoming data collection.

Atawhai nui atu,

Hannah Emms-Healey

Curriculum Manager, NMIT.

## Appendix B: Question Schedule

### Semi-Structured Discussion Questions

- As part of the Pre-interview survey, you marked yourself against ten (10) typical millennial traits and how well they did or did not describe you. Do you think these traits truly reflect how society sees millennials?
- What does a typical younger teacher look like to you?
- What characteristics do you think you share with that perception?

### How do teachers within the millennial age group feel they are viewed by leadership?

- Can you give me some examples of when you have felt that your managers have treated you differently, or unequally, because of your age?
- What told you that you were being treated this way because of your age?
- How do you think younger teachers want to be treated by leadership? In your ideal world, what would the perfect leader look like?
- How do you think that might differ from how older teachers prefer to be led?

### How do millennial teachers describe the leadership behaviours of non-millennial educational leaders?

- How would you describe your relationship with older leaders? How do you get on with older leaders?
- Tell me about a time when you've been dealing with an older educational leader and you feel that you've been listened to, or they have led you. What behaviors did they demonstrate?
- Tell me about a time when you've been dealing with an older educational leader and you felt as though you were not important, or were given negative feelings? What behaviors did they demonstrate?
- Tell me a story that you think highlights generational differences of working with educational leaders. How did that make you feel?
- What sort of leadership strategies do you find work well with you?
- Tell me about a time when leadership has influenced your performance in the classroom.
- Tell me about a time when you have felt satisfaction and support from leadership.

### Reflection on Interview:

- Please tell me about your reflections from our initial interview.
- Have you reconsidered any of your previous answers on leadership?
- Do you wish to add any additional details to your information provided?

## Appendix C: Initial Codes



\*The marks are labelled by code. Size shows the sum of number of references. Colour shows the sum of files.

## Appendix D: Thematic Grouping of Codes

Name	Files	References	Name	Files	References
Change	9	23	Generational Differences	8	33
Changemakers	4	8	Authoritarian	6	23
Changing role of teachers	8	22	Learning attitudes	7	26
Globalisation	4	7	Open, closed-mindedness	7	28
Technology	8	17	Security, predictability	6	8
Empowerment	6	21	Status Quo	7	16
Career progression	5	12	Stereotypes	8	29
Reward	5	9	Theory based practice	4	6
Transparency	2	2	Why, reflective practice	9	16
Condescension	3	4	Perceptions of leadership	8	67
Creativity	2	7	Appreciated, valued, recognition	6	28
Enthusiastic, self-driven	8	21	Authenitc, genuine	3	10
Observations	4	11	Collaboration	4	15
Personal growth	5	12	Communication	4	12
Experience, inexpereince	5	21	Credit	1	1
Trust	5	21	Culture	3	3
Expectations	5	20	Empathy	6	11
Appraisals	3	4	Feedback	1	1
Job Descriptions	2	11	Heard, seen	6	16
Paperwork	1	1	Positive work envirnoment	5	7
Professionalism, unprofessionalism	5	19	Proactive, follow through	4	6
Micromanaging	8	22	Relationships	8	20
Prove yourself	2	3	Confrontation	1	1
Eudcation Management	1	1	Sensitivity	3	3
Age diversity	5	6	Social	6	15
Collaboartive leadership	5	12	Straightforwardness	5	15
Curriculum	3	4	Support	5	9
Funding, PD	1	1	Verbalised	1	7
Hiring practices	5	8	Work-life balance	5	8
Management structures	6	19	Family	3	10
			Priorities, self-respect, entitled	7	23
			Sustainable practice	5	6

### Revised Themes

Name	Files	References
Change	10	66
Educational Management	9	46
Empowerment	10	157
Generational Divide	10	197
Perceptions of Leadership	10	177
Work-life Balance	10	42