

THE PERCEPTION OF THE MILLENNIAL
GENERATION AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT
IN CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISM

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Abstract:

It is now increasingly accepted that human-caused global warming will have a strong effect on our climate. Many people out there expect the millennials – those who are born between roughly 1980 and 2000 – to be the new generation of young adults that will affect the social changes that are necessary in order to reverse global warming. Thus, in this paper I aimed to answer the following research question: “What are the implications of the common perception of the millennial generation for their involvement in climate change activism?”. In order to answer this question, I have provided my research with a theoretical framework based on Karl Mannheim’s *The Sociological Problem of Generations*, which he wrote in 1952. He laid out his recommendations for a deeper understanding of what it takes for a group of people to be regarded together as a generation. The research method I have used for this paper is a summative content analysis. Firstly, I have analyzed texts that portray the millennial generation in order to establish their characteristics. Secondly, I have analyzed texts as to establish the characteristics of climate change activism. Then as a final step, I have analyzed how the characteristics of the millennial generation and the characteristics of climate change activism align with each other. From this analysis, I concluded that millennials have characteristics that both make them more likely and less likely partakers in climate change activism. I therefore encourage those who perceive the millennial generation as a collective and communicate with them as such to emphasize their characteristics that positively align with the characteristics of climate change activism.

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2. INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change released their Fifth Assessment Report on climate change. In it, it was stated: “The atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O) have all increased since 1750 due to human activity” (IPCC 2014, 11). The report also predicted that the average temperature of our climate will be 2.6 to 4.8 Celsius degrees higher between 2080 and 2100 compared to today if we leave these current emissions unchecked. According to Carrington and Vidal, the scientists also concluded that “the global climate has already changed in many ways that are unprecedented in the past hundreds or thousands of years” (2013). Most importantly, the IPCC report stated that it is *extremely likely* that “human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century” (IPCC 2013). If we do not intervene, our lives will be inherently changed and the future of our planet as we know it will be in extreme danger. Therefore, as Naomi Klein states: “climate change has become an existential crisis for the human species” (2014, 15). Klein also argues – in agreement with scientists throughout the human ecology field – that “our economic system and our planetary system are now at war” (2014, 21) and “we need a Marshall Plan for the Earth” (2014, 5). In other terms, we need people all over the world to stand up and take a stand against climate change. This movement needs to grow in order for us to successfully reverse the global warming of our atmosphere. Activists will have to unite and demand from governments and corporations worldwide that they – from now on – will leave 80% of the fossil fuels in the ground (Briggs 2015).

Those who agree we are in need of a strong activist movement generally put a lot of trust in today’s young people. In every life-cycle it is commonly expected that the newest generation of adults will, as soon as they come of age, sweep into society and make the changes that need to be made. The new generation that is coming of age right now is the generation that is made up by the *millennials*¹ and they are commonly accepted to be born between roughly 1980 and 2000. Millennials now have ages ranging from 15 at the youngest until 35 at the oldest. Since I was born in 1990 myself, I am the perfect example of an average millennial, at least age-wise. I am currently 24 years old and I therefore spend a lot of time with other millennials, as

¹ The Millennial Generation is also known as Generation Y, Generation Me, Echo Boomers, and so on. For the purpose of this paper I have decided to consistently refer to them as *Millennials* since that was the term that was used throughout most of my sources.

they are my friends, my peers and basically the majority of my social network. In both my personal, professional and academic life, I find myself in many different groups. I have been part of largely activist groups but also of more conservative groups. Yet for the majority I would say I am part of quite mixed groups with millennials from lots of different educational and cultural backgrounds. In these groups, human-caused global warming is a commonly accepted scientific consensus and people are increasingly worried about it. Yet, for most people in my network this concern has no effect on their daily lives. They are not activists; they do not stand up and challenge their governments or corporations to stop climate change. To me, that seems irrational, since our generation comes of age in a time in which intervention is highly urgent. We are all growing up to be our societies' new leaders, whether in business or in politics, and we could use our common power for the better. If we start families, if we have children, those children will look at us one day and ask: what did you do to stop climate change? I feel we have a moral obligation to engage in activism, yet in my daily life I see so little people do so. However, I have obviously only encountered a small proportion of the global millennial generation and thus the motivation for me to look into this topic is merely based on my personal perception of the millennials. Therefore, I am intrigued to see how millennials are perceived throughout sources in general and how this perception aligns with common characteristics of climate change activism. That is why I came to the following research question:

“What are the implications of the common perception of the millennial generation for their involvement in climate change activism?”

In order to answer this research question, I will answer the following three sub questions:

- (1) what are the characteristics of the millennial generation according to common perception?
- (2) what are, according to climate change activism frontiers, the characteristics of climate change activism?
- (3) how do the characteristics of the millennials align with the characteristics of climate change activism?

I will answer these three research questions in the first, second and third part of the analysis respectively. However, before I do that, I will provide this research with a theoretical framework that will mostly be based on Karl Mannheim's essay *The Sociological Problem of Generations*. Afterwards, I will lay out my methodological approach. As I will explain thoroughly in that chapter, the method I have decided to use for this thesis is a *summative*

content analysis. I will use this method in both a quantitative and qualitative matter. Lastly, after the analysis, I will end this thesis with a conclusion in which I aim to answer the research question.

In the end, I hope this paper will be of service to those who are looking for a better understanding of the millennial generation with regards to climate change activism. This could be in the academic sphere but also in the professional sphere of for example environmental NGOs who are hoping to engage more with the millennial generation. It is my aspiration that this paper will bring up suggestions on how to deal with the millennials' perception when trying to involve them in – both online and offline – actions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first academic widely known to touch upon the concept of generations was the sociologist Karl Mannheim. He wrote a path-breaking essay in 1952 titled *The Sociological Problem of Generations* in which he laid out his recommendations for a more rich explanation of what it takes for a group of people to be regarded together as a generation. According to Mannheim (1952, 286), generations are one of the “indispensable guides to an understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements”. He states that if you want to obtain a more thorough understanding of the pace of social change, it is important you look into the concept of generations.

In order to be able to define a generation, Mannheim (1952, 288) wants to “clarify the specific interrelations of the individuals comprising a single generation unit”. The generation is not simply a concrete group in the sense of a community, since it continues to exist without its members being aware of each other. However, a generation is clearly also not defined by any features that are put in place to hold the group together, such as “a deliberate act of foundation, written statutes, and a machinery for dissolving the organizations” (Mannheim 1952, 289). If you then just simplify the concept of a generation, one could say that “the sociological phenomenon of generations is ultimately based on the biological rhythm of birth and death” (Mannheim, 1952, 290). Yet, even though a generation is based simply on that given biological fact, eventually a generation still cannot occur without “the existence of social interaction between human beings” (Mannheim 1952, 291), and therefore the concept of generations needs to be almost entirely understood in social terms rather than biological

terms. As Mannheim (1952, 291) states: “we must first of all try to understand the generation as a particular type of social location”.

According to Bryan S. Turner (2002, 13), Karl Mannheim’s essay indeed created a strong basis that was promising for future research in the sociology of generations, however “the topic remains strangely underdeveloped”. As June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (2002, 1) state: “Despite the importance of the notion of generations in common sense or lay understanding of cultural change, the study of generations has not played a large part in the development of sociological theory.” As of recently, the study of social stratification was mostly dominated by perceptions of social class, status, gender and race and the topic of generation was underappreciated (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 1). Thus, the concept of generations “has not been developed as a powerful tool of sociological analysis” (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 2). Edmunds and Turner (2002, 2) therefore encourage academics to look into “opportunities for exploring generation as a further collective identity deserving of attention as a way of understanding contemporary society”. Now that there is an “erosion of strong class theory, there is an opportunity to reconsider generations, especially in relation to politics and cultural change” (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 2).

According to Edmunds and Turner (2002, 2) there are several important social changes that have made the concept of generations more relevant in the field of sociology. Firstly, “the size and strategic location of the postwar generation has proved to be an important and highly visible aspect of social change in the twentieth century” (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 2). After the World War II, the *baby boomers* – the generation that came to maturity in the 1970s – were not a generation that was to be ignored as they are now widely accepted for having had a strong impact on both social and cultural change within their societies. Secondly, “the postwar generation was instrumental to the rise of modern consumerism, where generational audiences appear to be as or more important than social class or ethnic divisions” (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 2). Mass society is no longer a consumer category and marketing and advertising have been especially directed towards smaller niche groups, of which generations are the most significant ones; “trends in fashion are heavily influenced by generational lifestyle” (Edmunds and Turner 2002, 3). According to some, these changes in the consumption market have been established because social class declined as an indication of social location. Therefore, as Mannheim stated, it is now time to take the concept of generation and define that concept in

terms of social location, which is exactly what I will – partly – be doing in this research paper with regards to the generation of millennials.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Traditions of Content Analysis

In order to study both the shared characteristics amongst the millennials and the characteristics of climate change activism, I have decided to study these phenomena through both academic and non-academic literature. In order to do so, I will have to read and analyze these materials and find a method through which I can organize my findings. I have therefore been exploring content analysis as an appropriate method for this research paper.

According to Kimberley A. Neuendorf (2002, 1) content analysis can be defined as “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics”; nowadays many varieties of content analysis exist and an increasing group of academics is using the method for their research. Neuendorf argues that even though there are many methods out there that enable the analysis of messages, content analysis is special in regards that it attempts to meet “the standards of the scientific method” and fit within the “positivism paradigm of social research” (2002, 10). Therefore, she continues, content analysis has to meet certain criteria and amongst those criteria she mentions objectivity and an *a priori* design.

Neuendorf states that the “major goal of any scientific investigation is to provide a description or explanation of a phenomenon in a way that avoids the biases of the investigator” (2002, 11). At this point, I would like to deviate from Neuendorf’s approach to the method. As much as I do agree with her notion of analyzing texts in order to describe or explain a phenomenon, I do not entirely agree with her notion of objectivity. In this specific case, I, as the researcher, am part of the phenomenon that I am studying, since I am myself a millennial. I acknowledge that because of that, my views on the millennials will not be entirely objective, since I live with them on a day-to-day basis, as they are my peers, my friends, my colleagues, and so on. It is part of my daily life to experience millennials, and even though I will not reflect on these experiences as a means to answer my research question, I will however always bring these notions with me, whether I am reading or writing. I will indeed, as Neuendorf proposes, try to

avoid these biases, yet at the same time I am certain that I will not always be able to avoid them, since they are simply part of who I am.

A second requirement for proper content analysis is an *a priori* design: “all decisions on variables, their measurement, and coding rules must be made before the observations begin” (Neuendorf 2002, 11). I find this concept helpful in my preparation for the data analysis, since I do believe that the process will benefit from a clearly structured analysis scheme that has been set beforehand. However, I do believe that the specific variables have to arise from the texts themselves, so I do think that those cannot be set before the start of the analysis. Yet, I can however decide beforehand what type of variables I am looking for and what will be valid reasons to either in- or exclude them.

As stated before, Neuendorf believes that all content analysis should be quantitative. She states: “a content analysis has as its goal a numerically based summary of a chosen message set” (2002, 14). Again, here I will have to deviate from Neuendorf’s approach. Even though I will start my analysis by quantifying, I still do feel that when my analysis would be solely quantitative, its answers would not be sufficient to answer my research question. As much as the numerically reflection of the message set will be helpful, it is essentially the *content* exactly that I am looking for in this content analysis, and that is why I am afraid that without a more qualitative perspective I will miss out on important aspects of the research.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, 1278) qualitative content analysis is indeed possible and it is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns”. They have distinguished between three distinct approaches for content analysis: conventional, directed and summative. For my research, I think the summative approach will be highly relevant because it starts out with “identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text” and thereafter it moves on to actually discovering “underlying meaning of the words or the content” (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 1283-1284). It is therefore that I will analyze my data in the tradition of a *summative content analysis* that will set out with a quantitative assessment and continue into a qualitative examination.

3.2 Summative Content Analysis as Applied in this Research

For this research paper, I will execute two content analyses. First, I will research academic and non-academic texts that portray the millennial generation in order to find traits that the millennials are commonly perceived to share. Secondly, I will examine texts from Naomi Klein, 350.org and Greenpeace in order to establish the characteristics of climate change activism. Then as a third and last step, I will see how the characteristics of the millennial generation and the characteristics of climate change activism align with each other. Since both the first and second step entail of a summative content analysis, I will discuss them at the same time for the purpose of this methods section. Also, I want to take as much an *a priori* approach as possible and will therefore set out the rules for both of these content analyses in the text below.

The materials I will analyze will be texts from both the academic as the non-academic sphere. These texts can be selected for several reasons: (1) they are widely regarded as influential on the topic, (2) they have been cited many times by other authors, (3) they are produced by important companies or organizations within the field, (4) they are written by important influencers on the topic, or (5) they are published by well-read media outlets.

With regards to the topic of millennials, I will sample these texts depending on their attitude towards the millennial generation, which could be any of these four: (A) they are making forecasts regarding millennials, (B) they are reflecting on millennials from an outsider perspective, (C) they are confirming millennial characteristics from an insider perspective, or (D) they are an outsider trying to appeal to millennials.

After the sampling of these texts, I start out by examining the work that is widely regarded as a highly important text on the phenomenon. In the case of the topic of the millennials, I will start by analyzing a book that has been written by Neil Howe and William Strauss in 2000 and that is foreshadowing the characteristics of the millennial generation. With regards to the topic of climate change activism, I will start out by analyzing a book by Naomi Klein that has been highly influential on the topic as of recently. While reading these works, I will note down all relevant variables that are mentioned by the author(s). I will continue to do so for every other work of text and whenever the variables correspond to a variable that is already coded, I will quantify the amount of times this variable is mentioned. In addition, in the first

part of the analysis I will note down whether the text agrees or disagrees with the variable. In the end a list will be provided with each variable and in what percentage of the text agrees or disagrees with the variable. This is, as I have mentioned before, the quantitative section of the summative content analysis that sets the foundation for the qualitative analysis that will follow.

For the next step, I will actually further describe each of the variables in terms of how they are explained by the different texts to give the reader a fuller understanding of what the variables actually signify. In addition, some of the variables might, in turns of content, counteract each other and it will therefore be necessary to therefore see in what sense the different works out rule each other and to what extent. Afterwards, it will be possible to connect the two content analyses and see how they correspond.

3.3 Limitations

Since there are no research methods that are perfect, this research method also has its limitations. The first most obvious limitation is that there have been many articles written on the millennial generation and thus the amount of work to sample from is endless. Therefore it will always be possible to analyze more articles and in that sense, this research will never be complete. However, considering the amount articles used for the analysis and the fact that they all write about the topic from different standpoints, the sample will be sufficient enough to reflect on the general consensus regarding these phenomena. Thus it will be possible to answer the research questions and obtain actual conclusions.

Secondly, it could be regarded as a limitation that some of the sources that I use in the first part of the analysis are from the United States and focus solely on the U.S. millennial generation. I would have indeed preferred to have used more reports on the millennial generation worldwide or articles that write about millennial generation in other continents, as they would be complementary to the U.S. articles. However, I do not feel that this limitation has a strong effect on my thesis, since the millennial generation is growing up in a global world and they are more globally connected to each other than any generation before then ever was. Therefore I am certain the U.S. articles serve as a precedent or at least a relevant indicator for millennials worldwide.

Lastly, as I have mentioned before, it is a limitation that I am myself a member of the millions of people that are part of the millennial generation. This could be regarded as a limitation because I might be influenced by experiences with peers, or even by I preferred image of my own generation that I would like to lay out, yet at the same time I think it is of actual value since I will better understand the texts written about the generation that is my own. I therefore believe the message of this paper will be strengthened, not weakened, exactly because it is written by me; a millennial.

4. ANALYSIS I: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

4.1 Sampled texts

Table 1: Texts used for Analysis I

Number	Type	Title	Author
1	A	Millennials Rising	Neil Howe & William Strauss
2	B	Millennials in Adulthood	Pew Research Center
3	B	Generation Q	Thomas L. Friedman
4	B	Why Millennials Will Save Us All	Joel Stein & Josh Sanburn
5	C	The Danger of Stereotyping Millennials in Sustainability	Joseph Harris-Confino
6	D	Connecting Across the Generations in the Workplace	Deloitte
7	D	Millennials and the World of Work: an Organization and Management Perspective	Andrea Hershatter & Molly Epstein
8	D	Generation Y: Slacktivists or Socially Conscious?	The Intelligence Group

For this part of the analysis I have studied eight different texts from several backgrounds. Each of them either fully describe the millennial generation or they vocalize their opinion on descriptions by others of the millennial generation. As stated before in the previous chapter, all of these texts can be categorized in each of these four types: (A) they are making forecasts regarding millennials, (B) they are reflecting on millennials from an outsider perspective, (C) they are confirming millennial characteristics from an insider perspective, or (D) they are an

outsider trying to appeal to millennials. In table 1 it is shown which texts exactly I analyzed and of which type each of these texts were. As it is shown, I have studied one text of type A, three texts of type B, one text of type C and lastly three texts of type D.

4.2 Variables

Table 2: Variables Analysis I and their prevalence in the texts

Number	Variable	Percentage of texts that agree (%)	Percentage of texts that disagree (%)	Percentage of texts that make no mention (%)
1	Comfortable with technology	62.5%	0%	37.5%
2	Positive attitude	50%	0%	50%
3	Focus on family life	50%	0%	50%
4	Dislike for the ambiguous	50%	0%	50%
5	Passive agents of social change	50%	25%	25%
6	More inclusive towards minorities	37.5%	0%	62.5%
7	Bad economic circumstances	37.5%	0%	62.5%
8	Self-involved	37.5%	0%	62.5%
9	Global mindset	25%	0%	75%
10	No respect for authority	25%	0%	75%
11	Team-work oriented	25%	0%	75%
12	Politically independent	25%	0%	75%
13	Little religious affiliation	25%	0%	75%
14	Favorable of businesses	25%	0%	75%
15	Protective of the environment	25%	0%	75%
16	Community minded	25%	12.5%	62.5%
17	Highly educated	12.5%	0%	87.5%
18	Slow developers	12.5%	0%	87.5%
19	Fear of missing out	12.5%	0%	87.5%
20	Liberal views	12.5%	12.5%	75%

Throughout the analysis of these eight texts I have been listing several millennial character traits that I encountered and I have added to this list every time a text would bring up a new variable. For each variable I have noted down whether each text either agreed or disagreed with the content of the variable, and I would also note it down if the text made no mention of the variable at all. Since not all texts are full descriptions of the millennial generation, it was to be expected that most variables go unmentioned by most texts. I however have decided I find it important for the further purposes of the analysis to have all these variables mentioned in this chapter. All twenty variables are listed in table 2 together with their specific results, ranked on the percentage of texts that were in favor of the variable.

4.2.1 Comfortable with technology

Besides a 37.5% percentage that leaves the topic unmentioned, a percentage of 62.5% of the texts agree upon the notion that the millennial generation feels comfortable dealing with technology, which in most cases is specifically referred to as the technology of the internet. As Hershatter and Epstein so eloquently state: “by birth year, the Internet itself is a member of the Millennial generation” (2010, 212).

Howe and Strauss projected that “collegians and high school student will use the internet to build a whole new style of grassroots politics and erect electronic national arenas in which youths won’t just talk and run surveys, but organize, agree on action plans, and delegate authority” (2000, 315). Howe and Strauss therefore expected that millennials would become a generation of internet activists that would use the online space to globally discuss “political, economic, military and environmental issues of common concern” (2000, 315).

Pew Research Center describes them as “digital natives” (2014, 5) since they will be the first generation for which all the new technologies are something they actually grew up with, instead of it being new circumstances they had to adapt to. Therefore, when it comes to technology, Pew Research Center states that “they are the most avid users” (2014, 5). Hershatter and Epstein also confirm the notion of the millennials as digital natives, while describing members of older generations as “digital immigrants” (2010, 212). They agree with Howe and Strauss’ prediction that the millennials use technology to “capture, organize, and broadcast their thoughts, opinions, and experiences” (2010, 214). An example of this is, according to them, blogging, yet they also use reviews, social networks and other created

content to “endorse, recommend, and share, but also to reposition, vent, and complain” (2010, 215).

According to the Deloitte report on the millennial generation, millennials use their deep reliance on technology to ensure that “they can work flexibly anytime, anyplace” (2005). They embrace technology as an opportunity to arrange their life in terms of locality and time in such a matter that they feel comfortable with.

4.2.2 Positive attitude

50% of the texts agree that the millennial generation in general upholds a positive attitude towards their surroundings and even their future. According to Pew Research Center, “they are also somewhat more upbeat than older adults about America’s future, with 49% of Millennials saying the country’s best years are ahead, a view held by 42% of Gen Xers, 44% of Boomers and 39% of Silents”² (2014, 8). Besides, interestingly, most millennials, despite having grown up during the Great Recession of the early 21st century, are all “stubborn economic optimists” (2014, 10). Pew Research Center found in their surveys that 32% of millennials currently believe they have enough money to live the life they want and otherwise 53% expects to do so in the future. Arguably, this sense of economic optimism could be part of the naïve confidence of youths in general, but their general upbeat attitude towards their financial future is something to take notice of (2014, 10).

Deloitte explains that millennials expect “to work with positive people” and that they want the office “communication to be positive” (2005). Stein and Sanburn add to this that all psychologists agree on the notion that “millennials are nice” (2013). In addition, “they’re earnest and optimistic” (Stein & Sanburn 2013). Lastly, Friedman writes that he is impressed “because they are so much more optimistic and idealistic than they should be” (2007).

4.2.3 Focus on family life

² Generation X: 1960s-1980s, Baby Boomers: 1946-1964, Silent Generation: 1920s-1940s

According to 50% of the texts, millennials have a strong focus on family life and balancing their personal life with their professional life. The other 50% of the texts makes no mention of this however they also do not disagree with this notion.

Howe and Strauss in their work already projected that young adults would “be drawn most to products that combine their focus on family formation” (2000, 315). In addition, “they will evaluate institutions on the basis of how well they enhance their ability to fulfill their roles as parents, to raise children, and to provide for their households” (2000, 317). They will be favorable of institutions that are valuing and adding towards their family life and they will challenge the institutions that are not. In short: “family-making will become more popular and better facilitated by public policy” (2000, 318).

Yet, Pew Research Center has determined that millennials have actually been keeping a distance from the institution of marriage and in 2014 only 26% of the millennial generation was married. At that same time in their life-cycle, 36% of Generation X, 48% of the Baby Boomers and 65% of the Silent Generation were already married. However, a striking number of 69% of unmarried millennials state that they would have liked to already be married, yet they have delayed marriage because of their lower levels of income, since they believe that a solid economic foundation is a necessary prerequisite for a successful marriage. It is thus not surprising that amongst the millennial generation marriage has so far been more prevalent with the young adults that have higher incomes and obtained higher levels of education.

According to Deloitte, there has been a real revolution amongst youngsters, which entails of “a decrease in career ambition in favor of more family time” (2005). Besides that, they expect their employer to “pay close attention to helping them navigate work and family issues” both (2005). Lastly, Hershatter and Epstein have found that “millennials are more likely than previous generations to make career choices that provide a balance between security and stability and healthy work–life balance” (2010, 219).

4.2.4 Dislike for the ambiguous

A solid 50% of the texts believe that millennials have a dislike for the ambiguous and thus like to know which structures and sets of rules they find themselves in. Howe and Strauss already predicted that “entry-level youths will be attracted to solid companies with career

ladders and standardized pay and benefits” (2000, 314). And it is actually true, according to Stein and Sanburn, that “they embrace the system” (2013). Deloitte argues in their report that millennials like to find “long-term relationships with employers” (2005), perhaps be it on their own terms, because they like the safety that comes with such a relationship with their employer.

Hershat and Epstein argue that “millennial preferences for systems and structures present one of the largest challenges for organizations” (2010, 216). Not only in the workplace, but also in the educational setting do millennials experience a lot of anxiety if they work on a project without clear “guidelines, templates, or examples” (2010, 216). Millennials apparently have not had “much practice producing without explicit instructions, well defined criteria for success, and specific deadlines set by others” (2010, 216). It is therefore that most of them have “an inherent trust in organizations and a strong preference for the structures and systems that support them” (2010, 217). Yet, managers of these type workplaces often experience the constant need of millennials for structure “draining” (2010, 217).

4.2.5 Passive agents of social change

A widely discussed topic amongst most of the texts is whether or not the millennials are active agents of change. Only 25% seems to think that they are, whereas 50% shares the notion that millennials are more so passive agents of social change if they are agents at all.

Howe and Strauss foreshadowed in their book that when the first millennials will start attending university, the “colleges and universities will buzz with activity, change, new pressures and new arguments” (2000, 311). Howe and Strauss also believed that all the young voters would emerge as a new strong block of voters within politics and that they would surprise older people “with their activism and determination” (2000, 315). The Intelligence Group confirms this notion and writes that “the data show that they do indeed display signs of strong social awareness and activism” (2012).

However, according to Stein and Sanburn, millennials actually “embrace the system” and they have “less civic engagement and lower political participation than any previous group”

(2013). Using the example of Joseph Kony³, Stein and Sanburn argue that the millennial generation is informed but inactive: “they hate Joseph Kony but aren't going to do anything about Joseph Kony” (2013). Friedman is “baffled because they are so much less [...] politically engaged than they need to be” (2007). He writes: “when I think of the huge budget deficit, Social Security deficit and ecological deficit that our generation is leaving this generation, if they are not spitting mad, well, then they’re just not paying attention” (2007). Lastly, Harris-Confino, a millennial himself, argues that while there are definitely young people out there who are concerned with the state that our world is in and are actively trying to make positive change happen, he believes that there are a lot more young people who have no active interest at all in making the world a better place (2013).

4.2.6 More inclusive towards minorities

Whereas a 62.5% percentage makes no mention of millennials’ attitudes towards minorities, a 37.5% percentage agrees on the notion that the millennials will have a more inclusive attitude towards minorities. Howe and Strauss predicted that “dating across racial and ethnic lines will be more common” (2000, 312). They also believed that “racial and ethnic divisions will be supplanted by a new sense of societal cohesion. Transracial marriages and multiracial children will be more common, with less attention paid to the cultural differences once associated with various races and ethnic groups” (2000, 318). Stein and Sanburn argued that “millennials are more accepting of differences, not just among gays, women and minorities but in everyone” (2013). In the United States, due to the large wave of Hispanic and Asian immigrants that came to the country over last fifty years, the millennial generation has become the most racially diverse generation in U.S. history. U.S. born children of immigrants have now turned into young adults. This is, according to Pew Research Center, also “one of the key factors in explaining their political liberalism” (2014, 6).

4.2.7 Bad economic circumstances

Logically, seeing as the Great Recession took place in the early years of the new millennial, 37.5% of the texts argue that the millennial generation has been coming of age in bad economic circumstances. Pew Research Center writes that “millennials are also the first in the

³ In 2012, a short film on Joseph Kony – leader of guerilla group LRA in Uganda – spread virally on the internet.

modern era to have higher levels of student loan debt, poverty and unemployment” (2014, 8). They had lower levels of wealth and personal income than both Generation X and the Baby Boomers had at this same stage of their life cycles. Stein and Sanburn argue that even though millennials are financially responsible, their “student loans have hit record highs” (2013). However, they have less household and credit-card debt than any previous generation on record, which, according to Stein and Sanburn, might be explained by the fact that millennials live with their parents much longer than the generations before them. Harris-Confino, a fellow millennial, states that in the current economic hardship millennials are “constantly being bombarded with messages about how we will struggle to find jobs and own our own houses” (2013).

4.2.8 Self-involved

37.5% of the articles agree that the millennial generation is a generation of mainly self-involved people. Stein and Sanburn even go as far as stating that according to the National Institutes of Health, 58% more college students scored higher on a narcissism scale in 2009 than in 1982. This implies that “the incidence of narcissistic personality disorder is nearly three times as high for people in their 20s as for the generation that's now 65 or older” (2013). When millennials grew up, their parents were always highly supportive of them and would applaud them when they performed or simply just participated as they were expected to. Now, a study has shown that “millennials got so many participation trophies growing up that [...they] believe they should be promoted every two years, regardless of performance” (2013). It is exactly, according to Stein and Sanburn, what millennials are most famous for besides narcissism: “entitlement” (2013). Additionally they are constantly looking for approval, they even “post photos from the dressing room as they try on clothes” (2013).

Millennials are perceived as “trophy kids who spent their childhood receiving gold stars and shiny medals just for showing up” and were therefore “indoctrinated from their earliest moment to seek approval and affirmation” (Hershatter & Epstein 2010, 217). According to the report by Deloitte, millennials believe “they can learn quickly, take on significant responsibility and make major contributions” (2005). The millennial generation has been raised “to feel valuable and very positive about themselves” and therefore the employer should provide “a work environment that rewards extra effort and excellence” (Deloitte 2005). It might be therefore, as stated by Hershatter and Epstein, that these employers often

find their millennial employees “high-maintenance” and “needy” and they experience it as tiresome to constantly have to give them the feeling of “reassurance” (2010, 217). While millennials constantly seek “guidance and direction”, managers find themselves in the “unenviable position of having to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing people who were presumably hired to help them” (2010, 217).

4.2.9 Global mindset

According to 25% of the analyzed texts, millennials are part of a global world and therefore have a global mindset. Howe and Strauss already stated in 2002 that as much as “millennials share a national location in history, kids around the world today share a global one, based on both cultural and family trends as well as changes in geopolitics and technology” (2000, 288). Stein and Sanburn argue that even though every country has a different set of millennials, internationally speaking these millennials are still highly similar because of “globalization, social media, the exporting of Western culture and the speed of change” (2013).

4.2.10 No respect for authority

A percentage of 25% of the texts agree on the notion that millennials have little to no respect for authority. The Deloitte report states that the millennials generation responds “poorly to those who act in an authoritarian manner and/or who expect to be respected due to higher rank alone” (2005). Stein and Sanburn explain that it is not so much the case that millennials dislike authority, it is simply that they disregard it and have less experience with it. It is for that reason that “they’re the first teens who aren’t rebelling”, since “they’re not even sullen” (Stein & Sanburn 2013).

4.2.11 Team-work oriented

25% of the texts that have been analyzed state that millennials prefer to work in groups or teams. According to Howe and Strauss “the Millennial solution will be to set high standards, get organized, team up, and do civic deeds” (2000, 66) and millennials will “rebel against

individualism by stressing teamwork” (2000, 316). The Deloitte report agrees and argues that millennials “prefer to learn in networks, teams, or swarms” (2005).

4.2.12 Politically independent

According to two of the texts that are analyzed, millennials are politically independent and they rarely stay loyal to a specific political party. Pew Research Center states that 56% of millennials describe themselves as “politically independent” (2014, 4). In the United States, only 31% of the millennial generation thinks that there is “a great deal of difference between the Republican and Democrat parties” (2014, 11). Therefore Pew Research Center argues that millennials have a different relationship with politics than the generations before them, since they are less likely to identify with a specific political party. According to Stein and Sanburn, “their world is so flat that they have no leaders which is why revolutions from Occupy Wall Street to Tahrir Square have even less chance than previous rebellions” (2013).

4.2.13 Little religious affiliation

Just as 25% of the texts argue that millennials have little political affiliation, the same percentage argues that millennials have little religious affiliation. According to the report by Pew Research Center, 29% of the millennial generation state they are not affiliated with any religion (2014, 4). This quite sets them apart from other generations that are in older age groups, especially since they are also “less likely to say they believe in God” (2014, 13). Stein and Sanburn argue that “they’re not into going to church, even though they believe in God, because they don’t identify with big institutions” (2013). However, it should be noted that it has happened before that young adults “develop a stronger belief in God over the course of their lives” (Pew Research Center 2014, 13).

4.2.14 Favorable of businesses

According to 25% of the texts, the millennial generation is favorable of the businesses and the corporate as a whole. Pew Research Center states that “they are about as likely as their elders to have a favorable view of business” (2014, 7). Furthermore, Stein and Sanburn found that the millennials are “probusiness” (2013).

4.2.15 Protective of the environment

Only 25% of the articles mentions the attitude of the millennial generation towards the environment. However, these two articles do argue both that millennials are protective of the environment. According to the Pew Research Center, 32% of the millennials “describe themselves as environmentalists” (2014, 14). The Intelligence Group concluded in their report that 44% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I try to practice being green in my daily life” (2012).

4.2.16 Community minded

25% of the texts agreed on the notion that millennials are community minded, though there was also one article that opposed itself towards this perception. Howe and Strauss predicted that for millennials “the shift will focus on the needs of the community more than the individual” (2000, 67). In addition they stated that millennial politics will center around “issues of community” (2000, 316). The Intelligence Group stated that 73% of the millennial generation “will base their vote for President based on who will make the world better overall” whereas 27% of them “will base their vote on who they think will make their personal situation better” (2012). However, these thoughts have to be contrasted with Stein and Sanburn who argue that “millennials lack the kind of empathy that allows them to feel concerned for others” (2013) and will therefore always have trouble understanding the other’s point of view and thus coming to a communal understanding of the what are the right steps to undertake for the society as a whole.

4.2.17 Highly educated

Only one article mentioned the level of education most millennials have obtained or will obtain in the future. The Pew Research Center stated that in the United States, the millennials are the best-educated cohort of young adults in history since more than a third of young adults aged 26 to 23 have a college degree of minimal four years (2014, 9).

4.2.18 Slow developers

In the article by Stein and Sanburn, the slow development of millennial young adults was an issue that frequently came forward. According to them, the development of the millennial generation is stunted as “more people ages 18 to 29 live with their parents than with a spouse, according to the 2012 Clark University Poll of Emerging Adults” (Stein & Sanburn 2013). It is argued that millennials have “put off life choices because they can choose from a huge array of career options, some of which, like jobs in social media, didn't exist 10 years ago” and therefore have slowed down their development in adulthood (2013).

4.2.19 Fear of missing out

As of recently, a new abbreviation has hit the millennial generation: “FOMO” (Stein and Sanburn 2013). This is quite interestingly a term that describes the millennials fairly well, according to 12.5% of the texts. It implies that due to the fact that millennials have grown up in a world of abundance, millennials now always have a fear of missing out. As Stein and Sanburn state: “they might look calm, but they're deeply anxious about missing out on something better” (2013).

4.2.20 Liberal views

The last variable is one that is not mentioned by 75% of the articles. However, 12.5% agrees on the notion that the millennial generation holds quite liberal views, whereas the other 12.5% does not agree on this notion. According to the Pew Research Center, millennials stand out for their “liberal views on many political and social issues, ranging from a belief in an activist government to support for same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization” (2014, 4), all of which issues on which millennials engage views far more liberal than those of their elders. In the United States, the millennial generation “stood out in the past two presidential elections as strikingly Democratic” and they “continue to view the Democratic Party more favorably than the Republican Party” (2014, 11). It is the first generation in which “liberals are not significantly outnumbered by conservatives” (2014, 11). However, Friedman opposes entirely on this notion and writes that he is astounded that millennials are so much less radical than they need to be (2007).

5. ANALYSIS II: CHARACTERISTICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVISM

5.1 Sampled texts

For the second part of the analysis, I have examined texts from three different sources. Firstly, and mostly, I have analyzed Naomi's Klein book *This Changes Everything*. Secondly, I have tried to confirm the variables that I found in this book by looking at the websites from both the environmental organizations Greenpeace and 350.org.

5.2 Variables

Table 3: characteristics of climate change activism

Number	Variable	Mentioned by Naomi Klein	Mentioned by Greenpeace	Mentioned by 350.org	Percentage mentioned (%)
1	Mass social movement	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
2	Need for deep democracy	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
3	Offline action	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
4	Globally connected	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
5	Focus on solutions	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
6	Reinvestment from fossil fuels	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
7	Distrust of the economic	Yes	Yes	No	66%
8	Anti-extraction	Yes	Yes	No	66%
9	Greener personal life	Yes	Yes	No	66%
10	Rethinking	Yes	Yes	No	66%
11	Selflessness	Yes	Yes	No	66%
12	Grassroots	Yes	No	Yes	66%
13	Communitarian views	Yes	No	No	33%
14	No technology as a solution	Yes	No	No	33%

While analyzing texts from these three sources, I have established 14 variables that describe climate change activism according to both Klein, 350.org and Greenpeace. All of these 14 variables can be found in table 3. For each of the variables I have noted down whether they have been mentioned by each of the three sources and following the percentage of how many texts they have been mentioned by. It should be noted that all of the variables have been informed by Klein's book and therefore 100% of the variables have been mentioned in this source. In addition, this table differentiates from the table in the first part of the analysis in the

sense that whenever multiple sources mentioned a variable, they all agreed more or less on the content of the variable. Therefore, table 3 is organized differently from table 2.

5.2.1 Mass social movement

All of the three sources agree on the notion that climate change activism is going to take place or already takes place in the shape of a mass social movement. As Klein puts it: “only mass social movements can save us now” (2014, 450). Organization 350.org writes on their website that the only way they believe meaningful action on climate change will take place is “if we can counter the power of the fossil fuel industry with the power of people taking collective action.” (n.d.a). Lastly, Greenpeace states that their political power comes from their members and that it is Greenpeace’s work to ensure that concerned citizens can take effective action and have their voices heard (2014c).

5.2.2 Need for deep democracy

Klein writes that the climate change movement will be driven by “a deeper form of democracy, one that provides communities with real control over those resources that are most critical to collective survival – the health of the water, air, and soil” (2014, 295). Greenpeace adds to this that they believe “peaceful direct action and civil disobedience are a fundamental part of our democracy” (2014c). As 350.org explains: “we think the climate change is about power – but just not the kind of power that runs our cars and keeps the lights on” (n.d.a). Climate change activists will challenge the power relations and fight for these relations to become more deeply democratic.

5.2.3 Offline action

All the sources agree on the notion that climate change activism will not only have to take place in online spaces, but also in offline spaces. Klein quotes Scott Parkin from the Rainforest Action Network who stated: “people are hungry for climate action that does more than asks you to send emails to your climate-denying congressperson or update your Facebook status with some clever message about fossil fuels” (2014, 296). According to Parkin, a new movement has started that is against the establishment and opposes themselves from the elites; they will form a new generation that will stand in front of “the bulldozers and

coal trucks” (2014, 296). Indeed, 350.org writes that their main goal is to “facilitate strategic offline action” (n.d.a) and Greenpeace marks that “sometimes the best way to get something done is to go out there and stand up for what you believe in, no matter what” (2014c). On the specific section of the Greenpeace website where the organization proposes to the audience several ways of getting engaged with climate change activism, they encourage the public to start volunteering for Greenpeace in their country: “we can use help – from envelope stuffing to banner painting” (2014b). On top of that, they also write that in several countries they offer action and non-violence trainings for people who wish to become activists.

5.2.4 Globally connected

Climate change activism already is – and will even be more so in the future – globally connected through the spaces of the internet. Klein writes that we are all “significantly less isolated than many of us were even a decade ago” (2014, 466). All the structures that have risen from neoliberal progress have provided the climate change movement with new tools to unite, of which social media is currently being the biggest example. All these structures have helped activists to find a community “despite the fragmentation of postmodern life” (2014, 466). People who are part of the movement are constantly engaged online in a loud and giant global conversation that has no precedent in the history of social movements. Greenpeace encourages their members to become “cyberactivists” and join their global movement online (2014b). They write: “our long list of victories prove that when we speak with one voice, we can change the world” (2014b). You can sign up for their newsletter or even receive action alerts through e-mail, all for free. 350.org also heavily relies on “online tools for leverage” (n.d.a) and tries to empower the global movement by creating several digital platforms where people can organize themselves.

5.2.5 Focus on solutions

In Klein’s book, she writes a lot about the climate change movement’s newly obtained positive attitude towards trying to balance both the challenging of current systems as well – at the same time – thinking of new systems to replace them by. She states: “in the past, people committed to social change often believed they had to choose between fighting the system

and building alternatives to it” (2014, 403). In the 1960s, the green movement divided themselves amongst those who dropped out of the current system and lived their ecological utopian lives with likeminded souls and those who continued to challenge the establishment. They were separated as “the activist and the exodus” (Klein 2014, 403). However, today’s activists do not get to decide between either of these options. Due to poor economic circumstances and structural exclusion they came to realize that they will never come to any result if they do not provide economic alternatives to the schemes they are opposing. Klein writes: “some of the most tangible responses to the ecological crisis today come not from utopian dropout projects, but rather are being forged in the flames of resistance, by communities on the front lines of the battles against extreme extraction” (2014, 404). And thus, “dropping out and planting vegetables is not an option for this generation” (Klein 2014, 405). No longer can the negation of the current system and the development of alternatives be separated; they have to happen simultaneously. The climate change movement is “neither a movement of negation [...], nor solely of protection”, rather it is a “constructive movement, actively building an alternative economy based on very different principles and values” (Klein 2014, 405). It is thus the emergence of “positive, practical, and concrete alternatives to dirty development” that will be the most powerful tool in effecting change (Klein 2014, 413). 350.org describes the same type of movement that is organizing themselves around creating “the solutions that will ensure a better future for all” (n.d.b). Greenpeace traditionally has a strong emphasis on the negation of the establishment, however, they also suggest to their audience concrete ways forward, for example they encourage people to become part of the solar generation. They write that their activism is “centered around clean energy solutions for the future” (2014b).

5.2.6 Reinvestment from fossil fuels

This variable has only been mentioned by Klein as a specific character of climate change activism, however, it should be noted that even though both Greenpeace and 350.org make no mention of these practices in their mission statements, they do both have campaigns running that encourage the divestment of fossil fuels and the investment in renewable energy. According to Klein, this is a tactic that is “spreading with startling speed” (2014, 353). Not only have local activists challenged important organizations such as businesses, faith organizations, municipal governments, to divest from fossil fuels, this approach has also been applied as a strategy by many student activist groups on university campuses worldwide.

Klein argues that “young people have a special moral authority in making this argument to their school administrators: these are the institutions entrusted to prepare them for the future; so it is the height of hypocrisy for those same institutions to profit from an industry that has declared war on the future at the most elemental level” (2014, 354). The most exciting aspect of this relatively new tactic is the fact that after organizations have decided to divest from fossil fuels they will be encouraged to invest in renewable energy: “participants aren’t just calling on public interest institutions like colleges and municipalities to sell their holdings in the companies that are wrecking the planet, they are also asking them to reinvest that money in entities that have a clear vision for the healing process” (Klein 2014, 401).

5.2.7 Distrust of the economic

Before the climate change movement took upon its current shape, the movement “wasted precious decades attempting to make the square peg of the climate crisis fit into the round hole of deregulated capitalism” (Klein 2014, 20). The movement tried to negotiate with corporate partners and they would discuss the ecological crisis with them in the business language of risk assessment, in an attempt to balance dangerous levels of pollution against the notion of economic growth and need for profit. Klein writes: “these assumptions about acceptable levels of risk were taken so deeply for granted that they formed the basis of the official climate change discussion”(2014, 335). And thus the actions that were necessary for deep change were constantly balanced against the risk those actions would pose towards our countries’ GDPs, “as if economic growth still has a meaning on a planet convulsing in serial disasters” (Klein 2014, 335).

However, activists have started to communicate about the ecological crisis in their own language and started to steer way from any such type negotiations with the corporate. There might be plenty economic arguments that can be used to convince companies to stay away from fossil fuels, yet that is not the dialogue that should take place any longer. Rather, the climate change movement will win their battles by “by asserting that such calculations are morally monstrous, since they imply that there is an acceptable price for allowing entire countries to disappear, for leaving untold millions to die on parched land, for depriving today’s children of their right to live in a world teeming with the wonders and beauties of creation” (Klein 2014, 464). No longer do activists have any trust in businesses to clean up

the mess they have brought the Earth into. As Greenpeace puts it: “corporations can be among the worst environmental offenders” (2014c). Therefore, Greenpeace sees it as part of their mission to pressure companies to adopt sustainable measures.

5.2.8 Anti-extraction

Two out of the three sources mention that the climate change movement has, and will have even more in the future, a strong focus on anti-extraction activism. Klein writes: “communities with strong ties to the land have always, and will always, defend themselves against businesses that threaten their ways of life” (2014, 309). Greenpeace writes that carbon dioxide is the most significant global warming gas and therefore they will as an organization always put emphasis on “going to the source of the problem - hanging a banner on a coal plant's giant smokestack, for example” (2014a).

5.2.9 Greener personal life

66% of the sources believe that an activist can add to the climate change movement by adopting sustainable practices in their personal daily life. Klein mentions “reining in our own overconsumption” as a measure to “help tip the balance of forces toward a model of development that does not rely on endless growth and dirty fuels” (2014, 413). As an example, Greenpeace not only encourages people to take part in solar energy projects, but also to save the climate by saving energy at home: “everyone can do their bit at home to reduce their pressure on the climate” (2014b).

5.2.10 Rethinking

For two out of the three sources, it is an important aspect of climate change activism to question our current worldviews and rethink the way we perceive the ecological crisis. Klein writes that “any attempt to rise to the climate challenge will be fruitless unless it is understood as part of a much broader battle of worldviews, a process of rebuilding and reinventing the very idea of the collective, the communal, the commons, the civil, and the civic after so many decades of attack and neglect” (2014, 460). It might therefore be seen as overwhelming to become an active part of this movement, since it requires to rethink and even break so many rules – both written and unwritten – that are currently set in place. In order for deep social

change to take place we will have to reevaluate the way we currently communicate about climate change and we will have to engage in conversations in which “new stories can be told to replace the ones that have failed us” (Klein 2014, 461). In short, the movement’s task will be to create an alternative worldview that will be “imbedded in interdependence rather than hyper-individualism, reciprocity rather than dominance, and cooperation rather than hierarchy” (Klein 2014, 462). Greenpeace argues that since we now are finding ourselves in the state of an ecological crisis, many are fearful of the effects that global warming will have on our lives. It is thus no surprise that activists will want to “learn, act and agitate” (Greenpeace 2014b).

5.2.11 Selflessness

66% of the sources believe that activists will have to behave in selfless ways and make sacrifices for the greater good. Klein argues that neoclassical economics have embedded us with the notion that humanity in the end will always act egocentric and greedy, yet she says we actually have to step away from that perception in order to make “the kind of civilizational leap required of this fateful decade” (2014, 461). We have been told that people have failed to act upon climate change because they did not care about the topic, yet, maybe it is actually the case that people are simply overwhelmed by how much they really do care. Klein advocates for “collective spaces” in which people can unite in their battle against “raw ecocide”, so that they will find tools that will help them act upon their concerns for our planet (2014, 461). Greenpeace writes that all their direct actions and protests could not take place without the sacrifice of the individual. When they are taking the responsibility of bearing witness or even when they are “dressing up as a polar bear”, they are making “a personal choice to help save their world” (2014a).

5.2.12 Grassroots

For both Klein and 350.org, it is of extreme importance that the climate change movement is a bottom-up grassroots movement with horizontal hierarchies. Klein speaks of a “global, grassroots, and broad-based network the likes of which the environmental movement has rarely seen” (2014, 295). She also writes that everyone has started to realize that there will be no heroes stepping in from the top, saving the day, but rather it has dawned on us “that if

change is to take place it will only be because leadership bubbled up from below” (2014, 465). 350.org puts a strong emphasis on the fact that their organization acts solely as a facilitator of grassroots movements. They write that a “global grassroots movement can hold our leaders accountable to the realities of science and the principles of justice” (n.d.b). In addition, they state: “that movement is rising from the bottom up all over the world, and is uniting to create the solutions that will ensure a better future for all” (n.d.b). In all of 350.org events, you will not find any 350.org staff running show. Instead, they provide people with the tools and power to organize their own actions and start their own campaigns.

5.2.13 Communitarian views

Anyone who partakes in climate change activism will be fully aware of the ecological crisis humanity finds itself in. In one of the chapters of her book, Klein has investigated what it is that makes people accept or deny the scientific consensus on climate change. She argues that a research performed by Yale University has shown that people with strong “communitarian” and “egalitarian” views are far more likely “to accept the scientific consensus on climate change” (2014, 36). Whereas those with “hierarchical” and “individualistic” worldviews are far more likely to reject this consensus. Klein writes: “among the segment of the U.S. population that displays the strongest “hierarchical” views, only 11 percent rate climate change as a “high risk,” compared with 69 percent of the segment displaying the strongest “egalitarian” views” (2014, 36).

5.2.14 No technology as a solution

Whereas a great deal of humans expect future technologies to save our planet from the harm of climate change, it is important for activists, according to Klein, to not put a lot of trust in new technologies as magical solutions. She states that due to “ever more sinister levels of inequality, most of us have come to realize that the oligarchs who were minted by the era of deregulation and mass privatization, are not, in fact, going to use their vast wealth to save the world on our behalf” (2014, 255). Geoengineering might be perceived by many as the promise of the future, but activists will disregard it as they have come to understand that this is just one of our many ways of “magical thinking” (Klein 2014, 255).

6. ANALYSIS III: RESULTS

6.1 Approach

In this final part of the analysis I will compare the results of the content analysis of part I with the results of the content analysis of part II as to see whether the characteristics of the millennials are as such in alignment with the characteristics of climate change activism. In order to so, I have taken the variables of part II as a vantage point in order to see which variables of part I where – partly – supportive of the part I variables. In short, I have seen which characteristics of climate change activism can actually be seen as associated with the characteristics of the millennial generation.

Table 4: Results

Number	Climate change activism variable	Number of millennial variables on same topic	Percentage that is in alignment (%)
1	Mass social movement	1	0%
2	Need for deep democracy	0	-
3	Offline action	2	0%
4	Globally connected	2	100%
5	Focus on solutions	2	100%
6	Reinvestment from fossil fuels	0	-
7	Distrust of the economic	1	0%
8	Anti-extraction	0	-
9	Greener personal life	1	100%
10	Rethinking	2	50%
11	Selflessness	2	50%
12	Grassroots	2	100%
13	Communitarian views	3	100%
14	No technology as a solution	1	100%

In table 4 I have organized this analysis by listing all the climate change activism characteristics and subsequently listing what number of millennial variables can be seen as

associated with the part I variables. In order to simplify the analysis a bit for the reader, I have also noted down the percentage of millennial variables that is actually in alignment with the climate change activism variable. However, it is of importance to note that the twenty variables I found in the first part of the analysis were not described in the same matter by all the sources. As we have seen in Analysis I, most variables have a majority of the texts supporting them, but some texts are actually opposing to the variables. In addition, there was one variable that was perceived differently by all sources. Therefore, as I have stated in my methods section, the quantitative part of this analysis, as organized in table 4, is merely tool for communicating the results whereas the qualitative part will provide us with a deeper understanding of what these results actually mean.

6.2 Variables

In the rest of this chapter, I will dive into the fourteen variables from the second part of the analysis that have been supported by the variables from the first part of the analysis. In addition, I will share some thoughts on the millennials generation's preference for family life and Klein's notion regarding our cultures. In addition, I will include some more thoughts on several variables from both Analysis I and II.

6.2.1 Mass social movement

A strong variable that sprung from Analysis II was the notion that climate change activism has took place in the form of a mass social movement. In order for this mass social movement to happen, people across all generations – but specifically from the millennial generation – will need to take part. Of those millennials that will join or already joined the movement, it is to be expected that they are or will be inclined to be active agents of social change. However, in my analysis of the portrayal of the millennial generation, I have come to the understanding that the majority of the texts perceive the millennials more as passive than as active agents of social change. It became apparent that the millennials are portrayed as embracers of the system who definitely have opinions on social matters, yet they would rather effect change by starting off slow processes than engage in direct action. This could probably be explained by the fact that they are perceived as having an inclination towards putting their trust in established organizations and then expecting those organizations to make the changes they believe need to happen. Nevertheless it should be noted that the Intelligence Group writes that

when millennials are asked “who is most capable of making a difference in the world, only the President ranked ahead of themselves” (2012). This could be seen as a positive indicator that millennials at least have the impression that their actions can have a strong impact on society and might therefore at some point act upon this notion.

6.2.2 Need for deep democracy

According to the three sources that have informed the analysis of the climate change movement, the movement will be driven by a greater need for democracy. Whereas some of the variables that define the millennial generation touch upon issues that are borderline relevant, none of them really describe the millennials as a cohort that is in search of a deeper form of democracy.

6.2.3 Offline action

Through Analysis II it became apparent that it is important for the climate change movement that action not only takes place in online spaces, but also in offline spaces. Activists are eager to go onto the streets and, for example, partake in marches, volunteer at environmental organizations, or join a protest to shut down a fracking site. With regards to this matter, it is interesting to look at millennials’ strong comfort with technology, or simplified for the purpose of this analysis, the internet. As Hershatter and Epstein explain, the millennial generation appears to believe “that issues like environmental sustainability, ethnic persecution, and extreme poverty are best solved one can, one petition, and one dollar at a time” (2010, 221). There is a strong assumption that millennials will always fall back on digital structures. For example, The Intelligence Group writes that out of the generation two out of three think that “a person on a computer, being aware and spreading the word” can create more change than “a person on the street, rallying and protesting” (2012). In addition, when millennials are asked how they prefer to display their social consciousness, their top answer is to *like* a cause on Facebook. It shows, yet again, that the ways in which millennials like to affect change is often done through passive rather than active strategies, and most of these strategies take place on the internet. It could therefore be concluded that right now, the way millennials are perceived, they will not have a strong inclination to join direct action in the offline space.

6.2.4 Globally connected

Both Klein, 350.org and Greenpeace agree on the notion that the climate change movement will be one that is globally connected. This is where the millennials' comfort with internet comes in as a positive characteristic. Since millennials are "digital natives" (Pew Research Center 2014) and know exactly how to use the digital space to become connected with likeminded people and organizations throughout the world, they grew up as a generation that can be seen in its entirety as globally connected generation. 25% of the texts on the millennials believe that the generation is part of a global world and have a global mindset, which is completely in alignment with the global characteristic of climate change activism.

6.2.5 Focus on solutions

In Analysis II, I have explained that all three sources that describe climate change activism put a strong emphasis on the necessity to, besides challenging the establishment, produce positive solutions for issues as to create a constructive movement. None of the texts on millennials mention solution-based thinking as such, yet a majority of them write that the millennial generation is a positive and idealistic generation. They are not only optimistic about their future, - which might be of less relevance for this part of the analysis – but they also prefer to work with positive people and to communicate in positive ways. In that sense it could implied that the millennials, with their upbeat attitude, will be willing to embrace a solution-based mindset within their activism. It addition, I want to add that due to the fact that millennials are coming of age in relatively bad economic circumstances, they are forced to continue looking for creative solutions in order for them to still live the life that they want to live.

6.2.6 Reinvestment from fossil fuels

The climate change movement sees it as important that any activism includes divestment from fossil fuels and investment in renewable energy projects. None of the characteristics of the millennials that were found in Analysis I can contribute to this notion.

6.2.7 Distrust of the economic

According to Klein and Greenpeace, climate change activism will no longer take place in the language of the corporate culture and economic growth. Instead, it will be critical of businesses and disapprove of economic growth as more important than environmental destruction. Yet, two of the texts on characteristics of millennials state that this generation has a favorable attitude towards businesses. In addition, The Intelligence Group writes that “more than two-thirds believe that they could make more of a difference in the world by running their own business than they could by running for political office” (2012). It could thus be concluded that the millennial generation’s pro-business attitude might be juxtaposing the climate change movement’s distrust of the economic.

6.2.8 Anti-extraction

Where climate change activism according to Klein and Greenpeace has a strong emphasis on anti-extraction, the analysis on the portrayal of the millennial generation has not brought forward any variables that align to this.

6.2.9 Greener personal life

It is important for climate change activists to adopt sustainable practices in their personal daily life. This aligns with the notion that millennials are portrayed as relatively protective of the environment. They are less inclined as previous generations to describe themselves as “environmentalists”, however still 32% does so (Pew Research Center 2014). In addition, The Intelligence Group has shown in their survey that 44% of the respondents agreed with the statement “I try to practice being green in my daily life” (2012). Therefore I conclude that millennials will be eager to adopt green practices just as is required in climate change activism.

6.2.10 Rethinking

Two out of three sources state that is an important aspect of climate change to rethink our perception of and the solutions we have for the ecological crisis. This also means that activists will have to be willing to break written and unwritten rules and step away from current structures. It can therefore be perceived as a bad sign that most sources described millennials as a generation that generally dislikes the ambiguous. Apparently they like the safety of set rules, long-term relationships with institutions and they experience a great deal of anxiety when these structures are not provided. It could therefore be argued that it will be hard for millennials to rethink those exact rules and schemes that make them feel so safe, let alone even to break those rules and step away from those schemes. However, what might make millennials more inclined to rethink their current views, is the notion of the Pew Research Center that the millennial generation shows strong liberal views.

6.2.11 Selflessness

A majority of the sources on climate change activism believe it is essential for activists to be selfless. It is therefore intriguing that a solid part of the texts on the millennial generation actually believe that the millennials are highly self-involved. They used strong words such as narcissistic, entitled and high-maintenance. In the corporate setting, they take up high amounts of time and space because they expect guidance and direction. This is in strong opposition with Klein's vision of selflessness and thus the common perception of millennials as selfish appears to be a problem. However, it should also be added that a – smaller – amount of texts do also argue that the millennials are community minded, which would be more in alignment with the notion of selflessness. Yet, Stein and Sanburn did not agree on the millennial generation being community minded as they argued “millennials lack the kind of empathy that allows them to feel concerned for others” (2013). Therefore I have to conclude that the millennials' perceived selfish attitude can be experienced as clashing with the selfless culture of the climate change movement.

6.2.12 Grassroots

Both Klein and 350.org argue that climate change activism will be driven by grassroots movements that exert power from the bottom up. I therefore like to argue that the millennials will feel comfortable in these horizontal grassroots organizations since they are perceived as having a strong disregard of authority and they prefer to work in teams.

6.2.13 Communitarian views

I might be stating the obvious, but it is clear that in order for someone to partake in climate change activism, this person has to fully accept the scientific consensus on climate change. Klein argues that the more communitarian a person's view is, the more likely it is for that person to accept this consensus. It is therefore interesting to look at the characteristics that describe the millennial generation as a liberal, community minded and inclusive generation. These variables could support the notion that the millennials are growing up with a more egalitarian view of society and that they are therefore part of the increasing group of people that perceives climate change as an ecological crisis caused by humans.

6.2.14 No technology as a solution

Klein makes a strong argument in which she states that even though technology and specifically geoengineering are perceived by the mainstream audience as the future solution of our ecological crisis, it is important that climate change activists are aware that these type of thoughts are an example of "magical thinking" (2014, 255). She writes that for most people "our secular religion is technology" (2014, 289). This is in interesting contrast with the notion that millennials are perceived as having little affiliation with religious institutions, whereas they indeed do express a strong trust in technology. Yet, none of the texts on the millennial generation touch upon the topic of future technologies and any conclusion might therefore be too simplified. Nevertheless, it will be of high importance, if we want millennials to become adults who negate the geoengineering solution, to have this generation steer away from any magical thinking regarding technology.

6.3 Extra note on family life and fertility

I would like to raise your attention to another interesting aspect that I found when analyzing Klein's book looking for variables regarding the characteristics of climate change activism. I have not been able to include this part in the analysis as such since it does not describe the climate change movement; however I do think it makes an interesting case that will be relevant for the main purpose of this thesis.

In the first part of the analysis I have described that 50% of the texts on the millennial generation believe that the millennials have a strong focus on family life. They want to balance their work life with their personal life and they take starting a family so seriously that they put off marriage until they have a strong economic foundation. I found it therefore striking to read Klein's argument that our culture, as it is now, does "a very poor job of protecting, valuing, or even noticing fertility" (2014, 430). She states that our economic system does not value women's reproductive labor, nor does it pay caregivers and teachers appropriate salaries. In addition, we only hear of female reproduction "when men are trying to regulate it". I find Klein's argument highly fascinating in the sense that it is in complete opposition with the millennial's cherishment of family life. Whereas our culture negates reproduction, the generation that is coming of age right now, is prioritizing their family above their job. Millennials want a balanced life, whereas Klein argues that all of society is built on the notion of "surviving", not "thriving" (2014, 422).

I therefore wanted to include this observation as part of this analysis, since if it is indeed true that our cultures are attacking millennials' cherished family life, it might be a factor in their engagement in any action that is part of the climate change movement.

7. CONCLUSION

It is now increasingly accepted that human-caused global warming will have a strong effect on our climate. If we do not intervene, our lives will be inherently changed and the future of our planet as we know it will be in extreme danger. What we need right now is for people all over the world to stand up against climate change and challenge those who hold all the power to keep the fossil fuels in the ground. Many people out there expect the millennials – those who are born between roughly 1980 and 2000 – to be the new generation of young adults that will affect the social changes that are necessary in order to reverse global warming. Yet, being a millennial myself, I see very little of this sort of activism amongst my peers. Therefore, I am intrigued to see how millennials are perceived throughout sources in general and how this perception aligns with common characteristics of climate change activism. Thus, in this paper I aimed to answer the following research question:

“What are the implications of the common perception of the millennial generation for their involvement in climate change activism?”

In order to answer this question, I have provided my research with a theoretical framework based on the work of Karl Mannheim. In his path-breaking essay titled *The Sociological Problem of Generations*, which he wrote in 1952, he laid out his recommendations for a more rich explanation of what it takes for a group of people to be regarded together as a generation. He stated that in order to have a deeper understanding of social change, it is important to study the concept of generations. He also argued that generations need to be almost entirely defined in social terms rather than in biological terms. More recently, Bryan S. Turner and June Edmunds have elaborated on Mannheim's theory by endorsing social scientists to finally uphold Mannheim's suggestion of using generation theory as a powerful tool of analysis. For this paper, I have followed their recommendation and therefore I have written this thesis in alignment with Mannheim's notion of generation studies.

The research method I have used for this paper is content analysis. Content analysis is a method through which academics can analyze the messages of written texts. According to Kimberley Neuendorf, content analysis can only be used in a quantitative matter, however, I have deferred myself from this standpoint. Instead, I followed a specific method as proposed by Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon that is called *summative content analysis*. For this method, I have started out by quantifying certain variables and afterwards I have explained these variables in terms of their qualitative meaning. I have performed a summative content analysis for the first two parts of my research in order to answer my first two sub questions.

In the first part, I have analyzed eight different texts from several backgrounds that held different perspectives on the millennial generation. I have started out by analyzing a book written by Neil Howe and William Strauss in the year 2000, since this book provided a forecast of what the millennial generation would be like when they would come of age. For the analysis, I have written down every variable in the book that would describe the millennials in one way or another. Afterwards, I continued to look for variables in the other seven texts on the millennial generation. In case the variables would have some sort of overlap, I added them to the earlier variable that I had already found. In the end, I had listed twenty variables that all provided some sort of characteristic of the millennial generation. I have organized these twenty variables in table 2 and in this overview you can see both the variables and the percentage of texts that either agreed or disagreed with the meaning of the variable. The five biggest variables that were mentioned by most of the texts were:

comfortable with technology, positive attitude, focus on family life, dislike for the ambiguous and passive agents of social change.

In the second part, I have examined texts from three different sources. For the first step, I analyzed Naomi Klein's book that she published in 2014. Since this book has been widely regarded as influential on the topic, I decided that in order to describe the characteristics of recent climate change activism, it would be most relevant to use her book as a vantage point. In addition, I have used texts from the websites of both Greenpeace and 350.org to confirm or negate the fourteen variables I found while analyzing Klein's book. All of these fourteen variables can be found in table 3. It should be noted that this table was organized differently than table 2 from Analysis I, since all of the sources in Analysis II were always with each other in agreement with regards to the deeper meaning of the variables. In addition, since all of the variables were derived from Klein's book, they were all supported by that source specifically. The six variables that I found to be mentioned most by all three sources were: mass social movement, need for deep democracy, offline action, globally connected, focus on solutions and reinvestment from fossil fuels.

In the third and last part of the analysis, I have used the variables I found in Analysis I in order to see in what way they aligned with the variables found in Analysis II. I organized these findings in table 4 and elaborated on the results in the rest of the chapter. In short, out of the fourteen variables found in Analysis II, eleven variables could be related to variables found in Analysis I. The three variables that could not be related were: need for deep democracy, reinvestment from fossil fuels and anti-extraction. For the other eleven Analysis II variables it has to be noted that some of the variables were completely in alignment with Analysis I variables, whereas other variables completely opposed Analysis I variables. Below I will summarize the most interesting findings and organize them by (A) variables that do support the notion that the millennial generation's characteristics are in alignment with characteristics of climate change, (B) variables that do not support the notion that the millennial generation's characteristics are in alignment with characteristics of climate change and (C) variables that both do support and do not support the notion that the millennial generation's characteristics are in alignment with characteristics of climate change.

Five out of the fourteen variables that were found in Analysis II support the variables found in Analysis I. Firstly, I found that the climate change movement is highly globally connected

and will be even more so in the future. This is in completion with the millennials generation's perceived global mindset and their use of the internet to be in touch with peers worldwide. Secondly, it was found that recent climate change activism cannot solely be about challenging the establishment, it is also necessary to provide alternatives that will give a positive outlook on our future as a whole. Since millennials are perceived to have a upbeat attitude and are coming of age in relatively bad economic circumstances, they are forced to continue looking for creative solutions in order for them to continue living the life that they want to live. Thirdly, millennials appear to be eager to adopt sustainable practices in their daily life, just as is required in climate change activism. Fourth, since millennials apparently prefer to work in teams and have a strong disregard of authority, I argue that they will feel comfortable in the bottom-up grassroots movements that will become more and more part of climate change activism. Fifth, because the millennials seem to uphold a more egalitarian view of society, they are more likely to accept the scientific consensus on climate change, which is obviously of importance for those who are needed to take part in climate change activism. Lastly, I want to add that since the millennial generation puts a strong emphasis on family life, this will be in conflict with Klein's notion that our recent culture negates fertility. If it is indeed true that our cultures are attacking millennials' cherished family life, it might be a factor in their engagement in climate change activism.

Three out of the fourteen variables that were found in Analysis II do not support the variables found in Analysis I. Firstly, since millennials have a strong trust in technology and are perceived as inactive agents of social change, it can be seen as less likely that they will participate in offline actions by the climate change movement. Secondly, the pro-business attitude of the millennial generation is in direct opposition with the climate change movement's suspicious attitude towards the corporate sector. Lastly, a majority of the sources on climate change activism believe it is essential for activists to be selfless. However, the millennial generation is portrayed as being more self-involved than any generations before them. Therefore the millennials' perceived selfish attitude can be experienced as clashing with the selfless culture of the climate change movement.

Three out of the fourteen variables that were found in Analysis II do neither support nor do they not support the variables found in Analysis I. Firstly, the climate change movement will need to take place in the shape of a massive social movement. Since millennials are regarded as inactive agents of social change, it is less likely that they will engage in this movement.

However, they do appear to believe in the power of the individual and therefore they might be more inclined to join the movement. Secondly, it is required for climate change activists to be capable of rethinking our perception of the ecological crisis and the solutions we have for this crisis. This also means that activists will have to be willing to break written and unwritten rules and step away from current structures. It can therefore be perceived as a bad sign that most sources described millennials as a generation that generally dislikes the ambiguous. Nevertheless, what might make millennials more inclined to rethink their current views, is the notion of the Pew Research Center that the millennial generation shows strong liberal views. Lastly, Klein explains that is of importance to the climate change movement that its participants do not engage in any ‘magical thinking’ that puts trust in technological solutions such as geoengineering. Millennials are portrayed as being highly comfortable with technology, however it would be too simple to conclude that they would approve of such practices. Either way, it will be of high importance, if we want millennials to become adults who negate the geoengineering solution, to have this generation steer away from any magical thinking regarding technology.

To conclude, the millennial generation is a multi-fold generation that can be understood in complex ways. For this paper I have tried to understand the millennials in terms of their perception and see what the implications were of this understanding for the millennials’ involvement in climate change activism. Since this paper is about portrayal more than it is about simple facts that are deduced through a purely quantitative analysis, I feel that this paper cannot be concluded with an one-dimensional answer. Yet, I would like to argue that the millennial generation’s perception of being a collective that is team- and family-oriented, globally connected, upbeat about the future, inclusive of minorities, willing to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives, dismissive of authority and liberal in its views, will make them more likely to be regarded as possible partakers in the climate change movement. In addition, since he millennials come of age during poor economic circumstances, this might make them more inclined to challenge the establishment and come up with creative solutions that will serve as alternative for the current unsustainable habits of our societies. However, I am afraid that the millennials perceived characteristics of being pro-business, self-involved, focused on online spaces and inactive agents of social changes will make them less likely to join the climate change movement. In addition, I believe that the millennials’ perceived fear of the ambiguous will in the end discourage them from any participation in climate change activism. They might have a rational understanding of their power as a group – and even as an

individual –, nonetheless their preference for rules and structures might retain them from challenging the establishment. Therefore, I would like to encourage those who actively perceive the millennial generation as a collective and which to communicate with them as such to emphasize their characteristics that positively align with the characteristics of climate change activism. In addition, one could attempt to steer away from the millennial generation's perception of – for example – being self-involved, or scared of the ambiguous, and instead compliment them on their sense of community and reassure them they actually do have the courage to question rules and structures that have long been in place.

As Angie-Marie Hancock puts so eloquently: “it is essential to be empowered with new frameworks that can inspire us to take on the challenging and daunting questions rather than feel defeated before we begin” (2011, 186) and therefore I hope that this paper has moved you to rethink the way you think of today's young adults and how to both portray them and engage with them in order for them to contribute to the climate change movement.

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