

Youngsters care: Spanish Millennials' perspective on internal and external security

Marina Mattera

Abstract—The Millennial generation is criticized and portrayed as self-centered and unaware of the context in which they live, due in part to their high use of technology for leisure purposes. One major concern is how they view highly relevant issues, such as terrorism, and how they will face them. The present study assesses the perspective of 110 individuals in Spain and their perceptions regarding ISIL, which were compared with the general results for Spain of the World Value Survey. Results show a polarized generation with some individuals holding high knowledge and being concerned about such matters, while others were not even aware of the existence of such organization.

Keywords—Millennials, Social Values, Security, Perception

I. INTRODUCTION

PERCEPTIONS of a given phenomenon significantly change depending on the group of individuals that provide their opinion. Within social groups currently coexisting, Millennials, also referred to as Generation Y (GY), have some of the most controversial perceptions because of their systematic use of technology, their high self-appreciation and the importance they give to leisure activities, even going as far as considering them more important than work-related duties.

This generation views work as a means to an end, not as an end itself. In addition, GYs are commonly thought of as being self-centered and not caring about other individuals' or groups' interests. This paper presents an exploratory study to assess GY's perspectives on Global Issues, specifically their view on terrorism and the current ISIL organization, which remains in the highest levels of importance on the global political agenda.

By conducting a study on individuals between the ages of 18-30, it was observed whether the subjects are aware of this organization, what kind of information they have on this matter, and the impact it could pose on their individual safety. Complementary to this, a focus group with 10 of those individuals was created to obtain their opinions on the matter.

After reviewing the results of the survey and the focus group, it was determined that youngsters have either high knowledge and strong involvement, thus partly disregarding prejudgments on them; or have no knowledge on the matter,

hence confirming in part the general view on this generation. This will be the contribution.

Section two of the present document outlines a review of the literature on this matter, followed by a description of the methodology and the study conducted. Thirdly, an analysis will be outlined, together with the results of the focus group. Lastly, conclusions will be outlined, as well as contributions from this analysis and future lines of research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Generational taxonomy

The present study is based upon the Strauss-Howe generational taxonomy, and the Theory developed thereafter. These authors defined U.S. generations back to the sixteenth century based on historical data (Howe and Strauss, 1991). In table 1, each generation is described according to their age; where generations X and Baby Boomers constitute the current workforce, while GY's are either carrying out studies (secondary, tertiary or higher education) or have fairly recently entered the workforce.

TABLE I
TODAY'S GENERATIONS

	Born	Age (in 2015)
GI Generation	1901 – 1924	91 – 113
Silent Generation	1925 – 1946	69 – 90
Baby Boom Generation	1946 – 1964	51 – 68
Generation X	1965 – 1979	36 – 50
Millennial or Y Generation	1980 – 1999	16 – 35
Generation Z	2000 –	15 and under

Source: Own elaboration

The Baby Boomer and X generations represent already established ideals and identity traits, as their characteristics and personality traits are already solidified. In the case of GY, they are still in early adulthood (some still teenagers) thus they are undergoing a critical time to form their generational identity and are still in process of defining their characteristics and traits.

Although some of the members of GY have formed their persona, most are still undergoing this process and during the next 10 years they will continue to be shaped by the events

taking place in their lives (US Chamber foundation, 2012). These events may be related to their specific environment or they could be circumstances taking place elsewhere.

B. Specific characteristics of Millennials

GYs grew up with the immersion of computers and more advanced technology that has become an ever increasingly part of their daily lives. They are used to having devices with them at all times, and contrasting information with different sources on the web.

Because of this, they are most likely to learn and be aware of events that are taking place in their specific environment together with more distant contexts. With the rise of Internet and instant information, they are able to know what is happening at all times, anywhere in the globe.

Complementary to these, the Strauss-Howe theory identifies them as having seven distinguishing traits:

- 1) They are full of promise and expectation of positive events taking place in their future, as well as in the future of society as a general.
- 2) Millennials have been overprotected and sheltered by having higher number of safety rules in their lives as well as always relying on devices.
- 3) Because their upbringing was through constant reinforcement and appraisal, they are highly self-confident and have self-trust and optimism.
- 4) They have a high orientation towards team-work based an education based in group learning and high orientation towards different team-sports.
- 5) They have been raised on goals-to-be-accomplished hence they are driven towards achievement and have a high sense of accountability.
- 6) Because of the abovementioned, they also are overly self-demanding and feel the need to constantly excel.
- 7) As opposed to some previous generations, they do not have a rebellious approach, and were raised with their opinions being heard.

C. Millennials' Stereotypes

GYs are stereotyped as self-centered, unmotivated, disrespectful and disloyal (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010), particularly because of their constant interaction with technology devices and their mindset being focused on enjoying life instead of earning more money. However, those stereotypes do not focus on the positive characteristics.

Millennials are not motivated solely by financial elements, actually, these individuals have as high motivational factors the impact and contribution they make to society and the organization they work in, helping others and making a difference. This shift of their belief system makes them have unique traits to contribute to society.

Previous generations did not have a widespread offer of technologies at their disposal, and nearly none of the ones available for their entertainment were related to electronics or informatics, except for television and radio. GYs however

were born into households with computers they grew up surrounded by digital media (Gorman et al. 2004; Raines, 2002). Therefore, they have higher exposure to distractions and entertainment as well as information.

During the past decades, with the widespread use of social media, access to Internet as well as computers becoming easier to transport and use, there has been a shift in social behavior. Nowadays, individuals can access entertainment and information from their pockets through predetermined apps in their cellphones this has also made browsing the internet and obtaining data instantly easier.

This overflow and over-availability of information could contribute to a better understanding and faster problem solving or it could have a more negative effect. On the one hand, individuals could constantly search for entertainment and distractions. This might constitute a lack of awareness for information related to real-problems and events taking place in their region or in others.

On the other hand, if instead of distracting themselves, individuals reach out to information, they could read multiple sources, which could result in an overflow and a lack of differentiation between trustworthy and doubtful information. This could result in prejudgments, biased opinions, and decision-making based on misinformation.

Based on the description of GYs characteristics and the stereotypes, the following scenarios could take place:

- A) Millennials obtaining accurate information regarding relevant issues, then using it to foster the change they want to see in their social context.
- B) GYs only obtaining information related to leisure and other non-relevant matters, reinforcing the self-centered image other generations have of them, (i.e. not contributing to society).
- C) Millennials obtaining information regarding relevant issues yet being misinformed.

In this context, GYs are the more prone to fall under the issue abovementioned than previous generations, due to their eagerness to use new technologies, as well as their comfort in using interactive and networked media (Deloitte, 2009; Gorman et al., 2004; Pew Research Center, 2007). GYs spend a higher amount of time per week using social media compared to other generations (Consoli, 2006) and a large number of them constantly create personal content on the Web (Marketing Charts, 2007).

D. Current Global Issues – Islamic State of Iraq and Levant

Among the global issues that are currently most present in social media, national and internal security are two of the most relevant ones. This became especially true during the past five years, since the raise of new terrorist groups, specifically the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham or Levant (ISIL), also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. However, the correct reference should be ISIL since the group has expanded beyond Syria and intends to control the Levant

region that includes Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Turkey.

As a general background, ISIL has its roots in al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI), which was founded by the Jordanian extremist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (Austin, 2014), who was killed in 2006 by the Iraqi intelligence agency, backed up by the United States Government. At that point, an Egyptian extremist, Abu Ayyoub al-Masri, became the new leader, promoting the ideal of an Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which would be regulated under a strict fulfillment of the Quran (Freemen, 2014).

After a succession of leaders, and in spite of having its origins related to al-Qaida, the group is currently an independent jihadi organization that has defied orders of al-Qaida's Central Leadership (AQC) and disassociated from their roots (Sly, 2014). ISIL's approach is one of the most extremist within terrorist organizations, as its faith is based on punishing regimes and rulers who do not share ISIL ideology and resist it (Gulmohamad, 2014).

The organization currently controls different regions in the Middle East, as the update on February 2015 shows on Figure 1. Since 2014, it has created a Caliphate under which its members live ruled by the group's interpretation of the Quran, in the self-proclaimed "Islamic State".

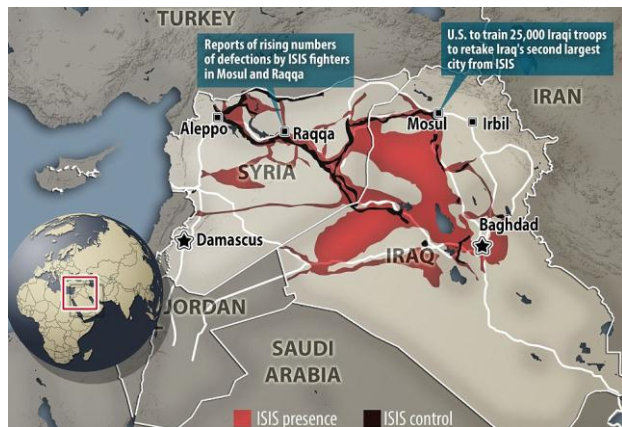


Fig. 1 ISIL's presence and control over the Middle East. Source: Akbar, J. for The Daily Mail (2015)

The group has an estimated 30,000 fighters, with foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq from about 100 different countries, including western nations. Furthermore, other terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, have pledged their alliance to the group, further enlarging the threat posed on a global scale by ISIL.

Apart from other organizations, this group claims to have individuals who have pledged allegiance to their organization and located in western countries. Recently, a shooting took place in Garland, Texas (U.S.A.) and later on, through an audio statement, ISIL claimed the authors of the crime were "soldiers of the Caliphate" (AlJazeera, 2015).

E. World Value Survey: National Security Perception

The World Value Survey (WVS) is a cross-national study

in which citizens of each country respond a common questionnaire that allows for comparison. The topics analyzed are, among others: economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital, and well-being. The questions reveal the perception individuals have on specific matters (World Value Survey, 2015).

Complementary to this, the WVS assesses specific objective variables to define the socio-economic environment of each country analyzed. This has been carried out for over 20 years, being the first survey in the period 1981-1984 and the latest, the 6th survey, between 2010-2014.

For the purpose of this study and considering the global issues described earlier, the results for Spain in the latest wave, with reference to the internal and external security. The results are portrayed on Tables 2 and 3:

TABLE II
SPAIN'S SECURITY RESULTS IN THE 6TH WVS

Spain	
Perception: War affecting my country	44 over 59
Perception: Terrorist Attack	34 over 59
Perception: Civil War	38 over 59

Source: Diez-Nicolás (2014)

TABLE III
THEORETICAL MODEL FOR SECURITY RESEARCH

Security in Spain	Objective	Subjective (Perception)
Internal	High	Low
External	Low	High

Source: Diez-Nicolás (2014)

In the case of Spain, the 6th WVS revealed that individuals do not perceive there is a high menace of being affected by a war. Results showed out of 59 countries, they were among the least worried, being 1 the most and 59 the least concerned about this issue. Similarly, in the case of civil war or terrorist attack, Spain did not reach a high position in the scale; hence its citizens are not highly worried about these matters.

In spite of this, when considering objective variables, by analyzing its military power and ability to for defense, results show the country has low security. This implies that their military is not as strong as to face armed conflict if it arises. However, individuals feel their internal security is low, hence they are insecure within the borders of Spain yet objectively, based on number of felonies and police reports, it is a safe country.

Based on the abovementioned, and considering the prejudgments existing upon GYs' self-centeredness, the present study focuses on assessing the knowledge GYs have of current global issues. In addition, it is evaluated whether the Spanish GYs' behavioral patterns and general knowledge follow the prejudgments other generations have, or on the contrary, the Strauss-Howe theory is confirmed.

Additionally, it is assessed whether GYs perception of external security coincides with the general results of the 6WVS. Specifically, it is observed whether members of this generation with a high level of education are aware of the existence of a relatively new terrorist organization, and what kind of threat it could pose to their country.

III. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

In order to shed light on the matter, a survey was conducted to assess the perception of 110 University Students currently living in Madrid (Spain), regardless of their country of origin, to allow comparison between Spaniards and non-Spaniards. Respondents were 45% female and 55% male with diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs. The subjects were between 18 and 30 years old, the majority (52.2%) being aged 20-22 and from over 20 nationalities, as shown in Figure 2.

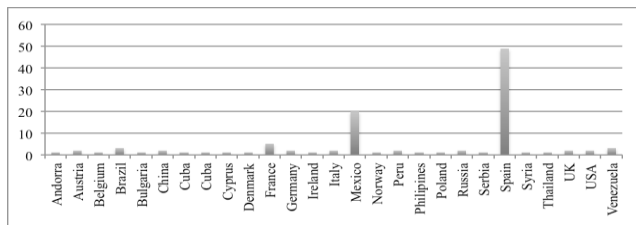


Fig.2 Subjects per country of origin
Source: Own elaboration

Out of the 110 individuals, less than half were Spaniards, in spite of carrying out the study in Spain. This provides a parameter of comparison between GYs living in one region who have their roots in that specific location, and those who have migrated from other areas. International Millennials represented 55.5% of the total, the largest foreign nationality being Mexico with 20 individuals responding the Survey.

In total, respondents were from (in alphabetical order): Andorra (1), Austria (2), Belgium (1), Brazil (3), Bulgaria (1), China (2), Cuba (1), Cyprus (1), Denmark (1), France (5), Germany (2), Ireland (1), Italy (2), Mexico (20), Norway (1), Peru (2), Philippines (1), Poland (1), Russia (2), Serbia (1), Spain (49), Syria (1), Thailand (1), UK (2), USA (2) and Venezuela (3).

These individuals were asked to answer a set of question based on the general concept of “global issues” without any prior explanation or background specifically elaborated for the survey. They were expected to provide answers based on their prior knowledge and to respond honestly, not giving random answers if they were unsure.

The questionnaire was carried out through online format and respondents provided their answers all at once, without consulting peers in case of doubt. The questions were elaborated to understand what type of information they consult and where.

The possible alternatives included popular topics among youngsters, as well as topics of general interest. Among both categories were distributed: sports, gossip, celebrities, summary of breaking news, international politics,

local/regional politics, business, economics, stock-market, sports, general (full newspaper/magazine). In addition it was assessed the readiness of information and use these individuals make of such tools.

Afterwards, the subjects had to determine whether they knew about ISIL or not, and in case they did, where they had learned about the organization and what kind of threat they felt it posed to the country where they were living, as well as their country of origin.

In addition to the survey conducted, a focus group was created only with 10 of those 110 subjects, all of which were of Spanish origin and currently living in Spain. They were asked a more in-depth approach on the topic, as well as their opinion on the results from the survey and the differences evidenced between Spaniards and foreign individuals.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After carrying out the survey, results showed each individual consulted more than one type of information. Out of the possible topics; business, economics, International and local/regional politics, and sports, were the most popular ones. Figure 3 shows how many subjects consult each of the topics, being Economics the most consulted (55 individuals claimed they seek this type of information) while gossip being the least (only 14 wish to learn about this).

Additionally, they were asked where they consult information, to assess their level of technology use to obtain data. In this case, only 24 out of 110 admitted restoring to physical magazines or newspapers to obtain information. Approximately 78% of the sample does not use physical sources of information, only digital ones. Most of them use either their laptop (84) or their cellphone (83), or a combination of the two. Figure 4 represents the number of individuals that chose each tool to obtain information.

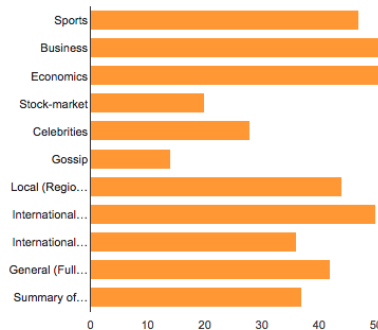


Fig. 3 What type of information do you consult?

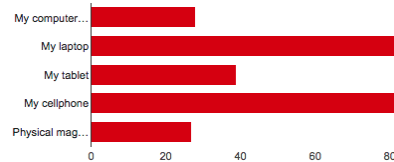


Fig. 4 Where do you consult information?

In addition to the questions regarding type of information

and tools used to obtain it, subjects using their cellphones were asked if they had a push notification or not (this implies they get a message on their home-screen or lock-screen notifying them of such event). More than half (56%) declared they have push notifications, hence learning about breaking news as they happen (see Figure 5).

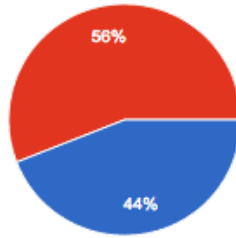
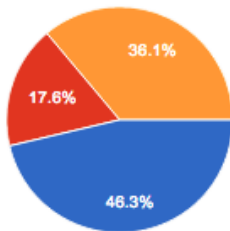


Fig. 5 Do you have push notifications for breaking news?

With respect to awareness of global issues, specifically ISIL, results showed almost half the subjects (46.3%) had never heard about ISIL, and out of those who had, 36.1% knew what the organization was about, as shown in Figure 6.



No, I haven't heard of it	46.3%
Yes, I have heard of it but I'm not sure what it means	17.6%
Yes, I have heard of it and I know what the acronyms stand for.	36.1%

Fig. 6 There is a relatively new terrorist organization referred to as ISIS/ISIL/IS, do you know it?

From the 49 Spanish-origin individuals, less than half (20) responded they had never heard about it, while 4 claimed they had heard about it yet were unsure what it meant, and the rest (25 individuals) knew what it stood for.

For those who had heard about it, Spanish and foreigners alike, the majority claimed they had heard about it in the media of their country of origin or where they were currently living, in this case Spain. The rest, 33%, claimed they had heard about ISIL on social media, because either their friends, or a company/politician they followed talked about it.

In addition, they were asked whether the organization posed a threat to their country of origin or not. In the case of Spaniards, 70% responded yes, thus considering that the external security of the country is at risk. Non-Spanish interviewed students also had a high response (75%) towards ISIL being a threat to their home-countries. This shows GYs sensitivity towards current terrorist organizations and the widespread network of members they currently have.

The subjects also responded questions regarding cultural sensitivity and empathy. In this case, 88% agreed that calling this organization "Islamic State" may have offended Muslims who do not share the extremist views of this group. What is

more, 76.5% also consider it was non-Muslim journalists and media groups who created this feeling by misusing the concept of an "Islamic State".

The last question referred to the impact and current situation of ISIL, as well as the persecution of individuals who do not share their system of beliefs. In this case, students were asked whether they considered if the situation could be classified as a 21st century reverse crusade, making reference to the historical military campaigns that took place during the High and Late Middle Ages. From 110, 55% considered we are currently living a reverse crusade, while 45% did not consider that was the case.

After the results obtained through the survey, a focus group was carried out with 20 individuals who had responded to the survey and knew exactly who ISIL was. In this case, they were presented with the results, opening a discussion with regards to the internal and external security of Spain and the GYs perspective on this matter.

Subjects were enthusiastic and eager to comment on the results, not being surprised by the responses of their co-nationals. They considered that some Spaniards did not consult a variety of sources of information enough to keep them updated on different global issues, and they even assumed that some individuals only used one source of information. In their view, this could lead to biased knowledge and a lack of objectivity on certain topics.

In spite of the abovementioned, they consider that in some cases, having responses to the survey in English may have generated issues. In the focus group, over half of the interviewed agreed Spanish people do not have a sufficient enough level of English in general terms, so even though they do not know their peers, they believe the lack of expertise in this language could have generated doubts, confusion or misinterpretation.

Last but not least, they considered that they themselves are aware of these global problems and would like to take active action in contributing to their solution. It should be noted, one of the participants of the survey is Syrian, and came to Spain after the conflict scaled up, transferring from his home-country's University. Some of the Spanish individuals interviewed are good friends with him, thus having stronger ties and involvement in the matter.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

A. Millennials perspective

It was herein defined that generational differences mark the attitudes and belief systems each age group has towards various matters. In addition, during the past decades, GY has been the generation with most technological changes when compared to its predecessors.

Millennials are considered to be the tech-age, being born into an environment where computers, portable devices and wearables are a normal part of their daily lives. Yet this can

be a trigger to promote individuals that are highly self-centered, unaware of their surroundings and lacking general knowledge of relevant matters.

The present study confirms the generalized use of technology on GYs part as well as their patterns when searching for information mainly through technical devices. This reinforces the technological characteristic of this generation.

Results from the focus group showed the concern Spanish individuals have towards the global issue of terrorism, particularly ISIL. What is more important, they were worried about their peers not knowing about the topic, whether it was due to a translation problems or they did not know about the matter all together. In any of those cases, the subjects considered that there was an issue to be solved, either because their colleagues needed to be more awareness or they needed better language-training.

Taking into this into account, the Strauss-Howe theory describes accurately the individuals that took part in the focus group. They are concerned individuals yet in expectation of positive events, and they also foresee a bright future for society as a whole.

Millennials also showed a high degree of cultural awareness, considering the implications of misusing certain concepts. This shows their sensitivity and engagement with others, as well as the general information they are exposed to and how they incorporate that knowledge. Furthermore, out of those who knew about it, most considered it a threat to Spain.

This shows they have a higher degree of awareness with respect to external threats to their country, thus creating a difference with the general view portrayed in the 6th WVS. By acknowledging this difference, it is also evidenced the higher degree of information that GYs may have as opposed to previous generations.

Considering the abovementioned, it would be of interest for future research to analyze the degree of knowledge each generation has towards matters affecting national security. This can shed light on the general perception that Spaniards have in terms of the external security and whether the trend may change in the future.

Another element that needs further in-depth analysis is the correlation between GYs perception and each country's general results for external security (subjective). Based on this, comparison it would be possible to determine between countries, as well as a generalized view of Millennials knowledge concerning global issues and how they consider it can impact their country.

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