THE NEW PROFESSIONAL: MILLENNIAL GENERATION WOMEN AND POST-
GRADUATION EXPECTATIONS

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education

California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Education

(Higher Education Leadership)

by

Krystinne Grace Mica

SPRING
2013
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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

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by

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Brief Literature Review

In reviewing the available literature, Arnett (2007) made the argument that Erikson’s (1968) theory limited the way in which society understood adult development. Arnett (2007) argued that a more fluid transition, one he coined “Emerging Adulthood,” was needed to explain why Millennial generation men and women are exploring other opportunities and postponing decisions on child rearing and family. Research also indicated Millennial women currently outnumber men in college enrollment and graduation (Ghosh, 2011). This is a result of the movement away from the expectation of marriage and family and the ability to explore new possibilities at later ages in life.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study is to identify the motivations, aspirations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women. Particularly, this research hopes to uncover how current gender norms affect Millennial Generation women’s perspectives on family and career. The research seeks to answer the following three questions:
1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?

2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?

3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The researcher hypothesized college women at present are forced to choose between starting a family and starting their career, as current gender norms make it difficult for women to start both concurrently. The researcher also hypothesized Millennial Generation women’s educational attainment affects their decisions on which to start first, career or family.

**Methodology**

The data were derived from an online survey. Students at Sycamore State University during the spring semester of 2013 were asked to participate in the online survey. The students were gathered from the pool of career and technical education classes offered at the SSU during Spring 2013. Faculty members were asked to distribute the links to the students who then elected to participate in the survey. The survey included multiple-choice, short-answer, yes or no, and Likert-type scaled questions. Respondents were asked a series of 31 questions, organized into four categories: Personal Information, Career and Undergraduate Major Choice, Campus Career Services, and Goals After Graduation.
Conclusions and Recommendations

The data collected from participants suggest Millennial Generation women have varying motivations for attending college, but an overall theme that emerged was their motivation to attend college to pursue an interest in a particular major. The data also indicated women choose their particular major because of the motivation they have to make a difference in society via the chosen major. The research underscores that women are not attending college in pursuit of getting married and starting families. Rather, the researcher found it was more important for participants to get their careers started first. Subtle themes developed throughout the research indicated the participants still held gender biases, though may not necessarily have had an awareness of the bias. Findings suggested women were more inclined to choose majors in the fields of education and health services, two fields that tend to be female-dominated. The research also indicated women were under-utilizing the career center at SSU; however, data showed that when they used the service, they found it was effective. Finally, the research showed participants did not feel pressure to choose between starting a family and starting their careers.

________________________ , Committee Chair
Geni Cowan, Ph.D.

________________________
Date
DEDICATION

My mother always told me, “You can have all your possessions taken from you, but the one thing that cannot be taken away is your knowledge.” Twenty-eight years later, I still firmly believe this statement and understand even better those words of wisdom she imparted. Thank you Mom, for always being supportive in my endeavors, no matter how big or small they may be.

To Rebecca, Patrick, Jessica, Morgan, Sebastian, and Benedict – I watched all of you grow up from babies to the beautiful humans you are today. I love all of you and dedicate this work to each of you. I know that one day you too will find your passion in life and chase your dreams. Never give up, you will surely get there!

To my wonderful friends! Thank you so much for keeping me sane throughout the last two years. The late night hangouts and early afternoon brunches kept me from going off the deep end while focusing on this program. Thank you for providing me with unfettered support and challenging me to always do better.

Lastly, I celebrate this accomplishment with my “partner in crime,” Andrew. I cannot begin to articulate how lucky I am to have you in my life. Thank you for always being there for me, whether it was listening to me rant about my schoolwork, or knowing exactly when I needed a break. I appreciate your love and support!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my advisor, Dr. Cowan, who, in times of great stress, reminded me to simply “breathe.” I learned so much about myself during the last two years; sometimes the lessons weren’t fun, sometimes they were downright painful, but in the end, I believe I am a better leader for it. Thank you.

A special thank you goes to Dr. Pam Brown Schachter, for agreeing to accompany me on this journey. Your support, honest feedback, and keen eye for detail helped me tremendously in finishing this degree on time.

Lastly, I am incredibly grateful to my cohort. You all helped me to finish and see the light at the end of the tunnel. Thank you for all the fun dinners, conversations, and sharing this growing process with me. I could not have dreamed of a better cohort! You ladies (and Michael and Ali!) were amazing! I know you all will do wonderfully in your future endeavors!
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

College enrollment trends are an outcome of the changing attitudes and perceptions of American Society. Particularly, enrollment in California’s public higher education institutions, comprising community colleges, state universities, and University of California schools, reveals the reality of women outpacing men in higher education endeavors. Since 1988, over half the undergraduate enrollment in colleges across America consists of women (Ghosh, 2011). A study conducted in 2011 showed 57% of undergraduate enrollments were of female-identified students (Merklein, 2011), with numbers reaching 20.1 million women with bachelor’s degrees compared to 18.7 million men. This gap has increased steadily since 1996 (Associated Press, 2011). Despite the increase in college enrollment by women, they are still vastly outnumbered in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM (Hill, Corbett, & Rose, 2010).

Colleges’ increased enrollment today shows the distinct shift in how women perceive life and aspirations in adulthood. As access to college became more available, women took advantage of this by forgoing the matter of motherhood until a much later time in life. In the 1950s, the woman’s role was heavily based on finding a suitable man, as it was incredibly stigmatizing to be an unmarried woman after the teenage years (Arnett, 2006). Back then, few women had the ability or desire to attend college, and of
those women who did, they were “often there for the purpose of obtaining their m-r-s degree” (Arnett, 2006, p. 6). In society today, the researcher observed women are encouraged by family, friends, and partners to attend college as a means of self-advancement.

Participation in the labor force and movement away from the traditional ideation of motherhood became evident in the late 1960s. More and more women chose to separate from their mother’s role model of placing family first (having children and being a housewife), to having their own careers and goals not necessarily related to having a family (Goldin, Katz, & Kauziemko, 2006). These women, who formed the generation now referred to as the Baby Boomer Generation grew up during the second wave of the feminist movement. The 1970s saw a collective shift in the attitude and perception of women and their role in society. No longer was it the expectation that women stay at home; women were now afforded the ability to enroll in college. The 1970s and 1980s saw the real shift in college enrollment, as enrollment in college by women increased significantly more than that of men, outpacing them in both enrollment and graduation (Goldin et al., 2006).

During this period, between 1970s and 1980s, women focused more on taking college classes that would lead them to a career after graduation. Women 20 years earlier focused on education that would lead them to civic change; courses such as education, teaching, and literature were the most desirable majors for women (Goldin et al., 2006). As more and more women took advantage of college, there was an increase in the age at
which they began to marry. College graduates typically married two and a half years later than those in the previous generation, with 25 being the median age of married women in the 1980s. These women, whose desire was to move away from the traditional role their mothers held, had children to whom they passed on this newfound ideology on education, career, and familial life.

Currently, women are outpacing men in college enrollment, with no signs of slowing down. One of the generations in college now comprises students who exhibit a particular way of learning, interacting with others, and changing aspirations after graduation. These students, called the Millennial Generation, or Millennials, were students born to the mothers and fathers of the college generation matriculating during the 60s through 70s. Born in the period from 1982 to 2000, the Millennials’ defining characteristic is their knack for using technology (Howe & Strauss, 2000). These Millennial students bring with them their own sets of values, beliefs, and expectations of learning. To date, the Millennials are the largest generation, outnumbering the Baby Boomer generation, with about 80 to 100 million people (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009).

Millennial women in higher education face a very different challenge than women in previous generations. It is now a very real belief that women should attend some form of college after high school, whether it is community college or university (Worley, 2011). This new addition to a woman’s role is still coupled with the gender expectation for the woman to have families and raise children. The expectation for women to hold
both roles has placed a strain on them, particularly in terms of the stress levels for women in college who hold multiple roles concomitantly (Newton, 2000). Since figures demonstrate women in higher education institutions will continue to outnumber men, the challenges they face with holding competing roles will only become more evident.

Women today are not only expected to attend college; they are also expected to uphold familial duties as before. The gender revolution afforded women the ability to have careers, but this double-edged sword did not delineate exactly how men’s and women’s gender roles shifted away from traditional expectations. As students, Millennial women carried with them their own sets of beliefs and ways in which they perceived the world around them. As a generation, Millennials came of age during a time when traditional expectations were being forgone, and the ideologies of gender roles were reexamined by society. As standards shifted, men and women alike had to learn what was acceptable and expected of them in American society.

Statement of the Problem

In college today, women are outnumbering men in enrollment and graduation rates (Ghosh, 2011). As higher education today evolves, administrators are tasked with identifying the needs of the student body. One of the generations in higher education now comprises students who exhibit a particular way of learning, interacting with others, and changing aspirations after graduation. These students, called the Millennial Generation, are students born from 1982 to 2000, whose defining generational
characteristic is their knack of using technology (Arnett, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennial Generation students bring with them to school their own set of values, expectations for learning, and technological skills. This generation is rapidly becoming the largest generation, with about 80-100 million people (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009). The increasing number of women in education suggests a change in pace and attitude to why women, and Millennial Generation women, in particular, are attending college.

The purpose of this study is to identify the motivations, aspirations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women. Particularly, this research hopes to uncover how current gender norms affect Millennial Generation women’s perception of family and career. The research sought to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?
3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The researcher hypothesized college women at present are forced to choose between starting a family or starting their career, as current gender norms make it difficult for women to start both concurrently. The researcher also hypothesized Millennial Generation women’s educational attainment affects their decision on which to start first, career or family.
Definition of Terms

Adulthood
The age at which a person has reached maturity from adolescence. As defined by Erickson (1968), adulthood has three stages: young, middle, and late adulthood.

Aspiration
The measurement, in this case, of members of the Millennial Generation’s hopes and ambitions for the future.

Childhood
The ages during which a person is still developing his or her identity and forming opinions based on his or her surroundings and what is being learned from society around him or her.

Digital Native
A person born in an era in which technology developed rapidly (Black, 2010).

Expectations
The belief that, in this case, Millennial Generation students will achieve something in the future.

Gender Norm
The widely held view of society regarding the appropriate behavior of a man or a woman. Gender norms define the acceptable behavior for the sexes and can vary greatly between different societies.
Gender Revolution

The redefinition of the accepted gender norms in a particular society.

Glass Ceiling

“The artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission).

Helicopter Parent

A parent heavily involved in their children’s lives (Worley, 2011).

Millennial Generation

The generation of people born from 1982-2000, whose defining generational characteristic is their knack of using technology (Arnett, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Millennial Women

The focus of the study. These women were born between 1982 and 2000 and have varying degrees of expectation and motivation regarding family and career.

Mixed-family Home

Homes that have children from previous marriages, parents who are not married, or families with multiple generations living together.

Motivation

The reason or goal Millennial Generation women have for attending college.

Single-Parent Home

Families that have either one parent or a guardian in the home.
STEM

Acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math fields of study. STEM typically represents science fields strongly dominated by men.

Technosavvy

A term used to describe Millennial Generation students fluent in using the latest technology to their advantage, either in school or at home (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009).

Traditional

The long-established belief system held by the majority of society. When used as an adjective, this implies the noun has a long-established system in place (e.g., “traditional home”)

Significance of the Study

As more Millennial Generation students continue to matriculate through college, it is imperative administrators and faculty member alike recognize their motivations for attending school. The Millennial Generation brings myriad different characteristics to education and the school system from previous generations. The higher education system in California and across the United States witnessed the boom in college enrollment and graduation rates by women. Women are currently outpacing men in higher education, and numbers reflect this trend will continue into the future. This particular generation
was raised in an era when traditional views were being challenged, as more men and women began to question the traditional values and ideologies of American society.

Millennial Generation women currently in school face a very different challenge than women in the previous generation. It is now an expectation that women attain the same educational level as their male counterparts, while they are still expected to balance motherhood and family duties. This precocious balancing act is creating a strain on women in college, particularly those who play multiple roles while attending college (Newton, 2000). Women in higher education continue to face many different challenges. Although there were great strides to open doors for women in education, it is still evident that women continue to face issues on figuring out how to balance family and career expectations.

As this is the case, Millennial women are of particular interest to study due to their increase in numbers for both enrollment and graduation rates. Millennial women are poised during an era when they are able to have careers and family at later stages in life. They are able to explore their identities and ascertain what it is they want to achieve in life. Colleges could support Millennial Generation women if they understood the reasons behind their increased attendance in college. Arnett (2006) theorized the Millennial Generation is experiencing something he referred to as emerging adulthood. This stage of emerging adulthood can be used by colleges to better understand the developmental stage of their students. By understanding Millennial Generation women’s
motivations, aspirations, and expectations, colleges may be able to better gauge how to create support systems and networks and provide them tools to help them succeed.

This research could also shed light on why enrollment by women in STEM fields continues to remain lower than enrollment by men (Strauss, 2010). It was the long-held belief and stereotype that math and science were for boys, and girls were not expected to partake in these courses (Coger, Cuny, Klawe, McGrann, & Purcell, 2012; Strauss, 2010). Some researchers in the field of science and education tried to prove girls did not have the same cognitive abilities as boys; however, current research suggests otherwise. Girls in grade school are now outperforming boys in math and science tests (Strauss, 2010), suggesting cognitive ability is not the reason for the lack of women in STEM fields. Understanding motivations and expectations held by women could play a role in understanding why enrollment in STEM continues the same, while enrollment by women as a whole in higher education is on the rise.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Following this section, Chapter 2 is a review of related literature discussing the current notions and ideas on Millennial Generation childhood, student, and men and women roles in society. Theoretical frameworks accompany the research to support the theory of emerging adulthood and the gender revolution that ultimately shaped the lives of the Millennials and generations to come. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, data collection, and analysis
processes. The results of the survey are highlighted in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study along with conclusions, recommendations, and implications for future research.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In higher education, administrators are tasked with identifying the needs of the student body. This is especially true today as one of the central generations in higher education includes students who exhibit a particular way of learning, interacting with others, and the tendency of changing aspirations after graduation. These students, called the Millennial Generation, were born from 1982 to 2000, and their defining generational characteristic is their knack of using technology (Arnett, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Millennial Generation students bring with them to school their own set of values, expectations for learning, and technological skills. This generation is rapidly becoming the largest generation, with about 80 to 100 million people (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009).

In college today, women are outnumbering men in enrollment and graduation rates (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). The increasing number of women in higher education suggests a change in attitude for the reason why women, in particular, Millennial Generation women, are attending college. This literature review examines Millennial Generation women and their aspirations, hopes, and motivations for attending higher education, as well as their expectations after graduation. Millennial men and women were raised in an era vastly different from that of their parents, and as such,
their values and perceptions in life, love, and learning are carried with them throughout their evolution as an adult (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

To give the reader a thorough understanding of the Millennial Generation, the following topics are addressed: Millennial history and upbringing; education and the Millennial Generation; expectations and perception on life after college; and theories on adulthood, gender, and women identity development. The literature review provides readers the foundation to understand the Millennial Generation. To understand their motivations, aspirations, and expectations is to understand the way they perceive and interact with the world around them. Relevant research is discussed and reviewed.

The Millennial Generation

*Background*

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, America saw an increase in the birth rate, from three million per year in the 1970s, to about 3.9 million per year during the 1980s (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This came about as a result of the Baby Boomer adults’ decision to have children later in life. The late bloom in Boomer parenting, coupled with Generation X’s desire to have children, caused the upsurge in birth rates. This baby boom is responsible for the Millennial Generation, the largest generation known in history (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

Growing up, Millennial Generation children experienced a shifting attitude toward children and families in a variety of ways. The parents of Millennial Generation
children were incredibly involved in their children’s lives (Black, 2010; Howe & Strauss 2000; Huntley, 2006; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004; Worley, 2011). This nurturing of Millennial children manifested in different ways and, according to Howe and Strauss (2000), this generation was “the most watched generation in memory” (p. 9). Because parents of Millennial children went to great lengths to conceive, they were more likely to watch and monitor their children than those of previous generations.

Parents constantly monitored their children’s lives; they were actively involved in decision-making for their children throughout their early school days, leading up to their years in college. Reflecting the changed attitudes regarding household and parenting, Howe and Strauss (2000) noted parents of Millennial children were incredibly attached to their kids. They provided more supervision, spent more time with their children either at home or in the community, and disciplined their children in different ways than previous generation parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Worley (2011) used the term “helicopter parent” to describe how parents of Millennial children continuously hovered over their children’s life.

Growing up, Millennial children were part of the technology revolution, as rapid technological changes were normal and information was readily available (Newton 2000). The defining characteristic of the Millennial Generation is their ability to use technology, so they are referred to as digital natives (Black, 2010; Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009; Worley, 2011). Millennial children grew up in an era ruled by the Internet, the computer, and rapidly changing technology (Black, 2010). Millennial
children were the first to grow up with digital technology. They are incredibly techno-savvy and can adapt quickly to changing technologies (Black, 2010; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004). Technology played an important role for Millennial Generation students, as discussed by Howe and Strauss (2000), Newton (2000), Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil (2004), Huntley (2006), Black (2010), and Worley (2011).

Social and identity development. The uniqueness of the Millennial Generation can be attributed to their upbringing and the era in which they experienced childhood. They were immediately immersed in technology (Black 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Newton, 2000; Pinder-Grover & Groscurth 2009; Worley 2011), had parents who desired to have children (Howe & Strauss 2000), and grew up in an era with rapidly changing gender roles (Arnett, 2006; Gerson, 2002; Josselson, 1987). As such, the Millennials’ transition from childhood to adulthood demonstrated the way this particular generation developed. Erickson (1968) and Loevinger (1970) suggested development from childhood to adulthood happens in stages. During individuals’ lifetimes, they encounter eight stages of development, in each of which they must surpass a turning point to move on to the next stage. Erickson’s (1968) theory is rooted in a person’s development within their context of social and historical time.

Erickson (1968) suggests adulthood begins around the ages of 18-19 years old, when the child is transitioning into adulthood and undergoes a developmental change in perceptions of the world. They pass the stage of identity versus role confusion, where the child learns what is important to him or her while beginning to develop his or her own
values and goals. At the ages of 19-25, Erickson (1968) suggested people are in the adulthood stage; people at this age are already developed and steeped in their identity from childhood.

Studies conducted on the Millennial Generation suggest the theory Erickson (1968) presented on the linear progression of social development does not adequately explain the movement of extending the period between childhood and adulthood. Other theorists argued a delay in the process of making concrete decisions affected the way a person developed. Levinson (1978, 1996) theorized people’s life structures give definition to their lives, as life structures are rooted in a specific point in time. Levinson (1996) addressed three main stages of development, two that are concrete, and one that is amorphous. Childhood and adolescence, as well as old age, according to Levinson, are concrete, whereas the concept of adulthood is amorphous. Levinson suggested adulthood is a fluid transition and relies heavily on the person’s interactions with the world. Levinson’s (1996) theory suggests the identity developed by Millennial Generation children into adulthood is intricately linked to the way they interact with the external world. The way Millennials perceive their role in society ultimately determines how they form their identities.

Building on this ideology, Arnett (2006) described the typical adult of today as having developed differently from adults in the 1970s. He asserted, “Young people of that time grew up quickly and made serious enduring choices about their lives at a relatively early age” (Arnett, 2006, p. 3). He believed in prior decades, young adults
were not given the chance to explore roles outside the traditional roles given to that particular age group. At the age of 21, men and women were expected to marry and start a family. Arnett (2006) believed current societal expectations steer adolescents away from the strict definition of family and marriage and broaden the acceptable spectrum of when people are expected to get married and start families. This movement away from traditional expectation allows young adults today to explore their identities and live in the stage he coined emerging adulthood.

For people to be in emerging adulthood, they must observe the following five features Arnett (2006) enumerated: “Identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between (transition), and possibilities” (p. 8). Arnett’s research on many adults between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age led him to the conclusion that these five categories are the main characteristics most emerging adults experienced before transitioning into full adulthood. Their freedom to explore new possibilities during this period delays their need to commit to traditional roles and values as previous adults were expected to do at their age (Arnett, 2006).

Identity exploration is the main ingredient in Arnett’s theory. Identity exploration affords emerging adults the chance to discover new facets of themselves and apply this new thought in their life (Arnett, 2006). This theory suggests the period of 18 to 30 years is the best time during the developing adult’s life to explore new possibilities. Because emerging adults are independent from their parents, but have not yet engaged in the typical commitments of adulthood, they are at a prime stage to explore self-identity. This
self-exploration is exemplified through case studies Arnett conducted on young adults and their perceptions on life. As told through the lens of four people of various identities, self-exploration manifests in different ways; from identifying their career goals to determining the proper fit of their romantic partnership, adults of this age are in a moment in their lives where decisions can be undone (Arnett, 2006).

Instability in this time of life for adults means they are uncertain where the future will take them. In prior decades, this age group was forced to make concrete choices that determined the rest of their lives. As Arnett (2006) stated, emerging adults know they are supposed to have a “plan” but that plan is “subject to numerous changes” (p. 10). During this period, emerging adults encounter instability in all aspects of their lives. In an interview with a participant named Steve, they spoke about his work and life after attending college. Steve never completed his schooling at University of Missouri, and stated he now worked as a waiter. Steve did not feel rushed to follow a certain career path. In previous generations, this may have caused anxiety, but for Steve, it was normal to have uncertainty in his life (Arnett, 2006).

Arnett (2006) also listed self-focus as a determining characteristic emerging adulthood encompasses. He stated people within this category are focused on finding their happiness and identifying what matters to them most. Rosa, a young interviewee, bluntly stated, “I want to be a little selfish for a while” (Arnett, 2006, p. 45). Most emerging adults use this time in their life to focus on themselves, to realize their goals, and work on their identities (Arnett, 2006). For them to take on the responsibility of
adult decisions, most emerging adults say they must know what it is they value in life and apply that knowledge of themselves towards personal relationships and career in their future.

In a survey of 18- to 25-year-olds, 60% of them reported “yes and no” to the following question: Do you feel that you have reached adulthood? This “in-between” feeling for emerging adults usually lasted until about 30 years old, when a shift in perception happened once more, and most people in that age group will respond they indeed feel like they reached adulthood (Arnett, 2006). According to Arnett’s research, most emerging adults responded with both “yes” and “no” to this question because the criteria they attached to this concept of reaching adulthood classified it as a gradual process. Arnett (2006) found,

in a variety of regions in the United States, in a variety of ethnic groups, in studies using both questionnaire and interviews, people consistently state the following as the top three criteria for adulthood: (1) Accepting responsibility for yourself, (2) Make independent decisions, and (3) Become financially independent. (p. 15)

Perhaps the best part of emerging adulthood is the endless possibilities adults face during this time. “In one national survey of 18- to 24-year-olds, nearly all – (96%) agree with the statement ‘I am very sure that someday I will get to where I want to be in life’” (Arnett, 2006, p. 16). This optimism was undaunted by the very real possibilities of dead-end jobs, divorces, and numerous life experiences they will face in the future.
Authors addressing the topic of emerging adulthood used Arnett’s (2006) theory as a new guide to shed light onto the biological reasons why men and women of today are delaying their transition into adulthood. Henig (2010) and Beck (2012) wrote about the changing views on the development of the brain. Until recently, neuroscientists believed the human brain reached its maximum growth at or around puberty. However, recent studies show that the brain continues to grow until well into the 20s (Beck, 2012; Henig, 2010). Scientists found the brain of the young adult between early to late 20s is still developing and maturing, a process that, up until recent history, was ignored because of the societal demands placed on that particular age group. Neuroscientists found development and connections in the frontal part of the brain, related to processing emotions, communicating, and balancing out risk and reward, are still developing well into the 20s (Beck, 2012). The brain of an emerging adult is also experiencing physical transitions, which helps propel the emerging adult into full adulthood.

The theory of emerging adulthood also has its limitations. Arnett (2006) recognized the concept of emerging adulthood is a recent development in humans and could only exist in certain societies and cultures. “What is mainly required for emerging adulthood to exist is a relatively high median age of entering marriage and parenthood, in the late twenties or beyond” (Arnett, 2006, p. 21). Arnett (2006) tied emerging adulthood to the age at which adults marry and enter parenthood because he believed the transitions from leaving adolescence to entering marriage and parenthood are what define emerging adulthood. An argument against Arnett’s (2006) theory is that a developmental stage
must be experienced by all people, and not just a select group of people. The “classical stage theory” underscores that all people must pass through the stage or period being discussed in order for the stage to be considered a developmental stage (Henig, 2010).

**Students**

The Millennial Generation is currently the largest and most assorted student population in the history of the United States, with about 80 to 100 million native- and foreign-born Millennials (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009). Researchers who have studied Millennials label them with the following terms: “ambitious, precocious, stressed, indifferent, wayward, technotonerd, heterogeneous, politically conservative and sexually active” (Newton, 2000, p. 43). As noted, parents of Millennial Generation children were incredibly involved in their children’s life. This correlated with increased involvement with schools that typically would not have had parental involvement in generations prior. Worley (2011) stated Millennial students have parents who constantly monitored their progress in school and remained actively involved in researching “colleges, to admission, to graduation” (Worley, 2011, p. 33). Parents’ increased involvement in their children’s school led many colleges to target parents to attract and inform them of their college admissions process (Worley, 2011). The term *helicopter parent* emerged to describe the parents of Millennial students.

The Millennial student exhibited learning characteristics including collaboration, connecting with others, and social change (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009). Millennial students viewed collaboration as necessary to succeed in school (Pinder-
Grover & Groscurth, 2009). Newton (2000) surveyed over 200 students at Kansas State University to learn about the Millennial Generation college student experience firsthand. His research found that students were more apt to experiment with grown-up activities, such as sexual activity and cohabitation with their significant other, than previous generations. Millennial Generation students also felt the need to work collaboratively in teams and gain hands-on experience through experiential learning and the use of technology.

Most authors who wrote on the subject of Millennial students and learning noted technology is the generation’s defining characteristic. Black (2010) found Millennial students differed from generations before them in their ease using technology in daily life. Termed digital natives, Millennial students use technology and electronic devices as an extension of their brains. Since birth, Millennials were surrounded by visual media, computers, video games, and the Internet. They are accustomed to seeing and using technology, enabling them to speak the technological language better than generations before (Black, 2010). These students are able to multitask better because of the competing nature of technology use around them (Black 2010; Newton 2000; Worley 2011).

Findings have shown Millennial students and their experience in school varies widely, but the majority of researchers believed Millennial students do not engage in the classroom to their highest ability. Pletka (2007) wrote that instruction in the classroom relied heavily on teaching from a textbook. Students he observed reported “they
answered merely fact-based responses found in a textbook rather than higher-level reasoning” (Pletka, 2007, p. 51). Multiple articles suggested Millennial students thrived in classroom environments allowing them to use technology in their learning (Black, 2010; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004; Newton, 2000; Worley, 2011). Millennial students expected faculty and staff were also able to use technology as proficiently as they could (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004; Pinder-Grover & Gurth, 2009). Millennial students learn best in an environment allowing them to multitask and use technology to research, learn, and engage.

In light of the research listed above, it must also be addressed that not all Millennial students are proficient in technology and not all have the same level of understanding. The picture put forth by research which portrayed Millennial students as being techno-savvy and comfortable with technology extended only to students who had the ability to use this technology at home. Cvetkovic and Lackie (2009) discussed that Millennial college students who did not grow up with access to computers were much farther behind than students who did. In turn, they used less of the online technologies for classroom learning and were behind other Millennial students in acquiring new skills (Cvetkovic & Lackie, 2009).

Higher education institutions researched ways Millennial students best learn to see if they can improve their college experience. This generation of students and their parents were the first to view higher education as a commodity. Worley (2011) stated students and parents have high expectations regarding customer service and satisfaction
and attributed this to the Millennial upbringing. Millennial students viewed college as a necessary achievement, similar to getting their high school diploma (Worley, 2011). The parents of the Millennial student valued education highly and imparted this ideal to their Millennial offspring.

Women

Millennial generation women experienced college differently than women in previous generations. College opened the doors into unknown freedoms afforded to those who attended; however, Millennial women also faced unique challenges while in college. Newton’s (2000) research found Millennial women were more likely to have high levels of stress, as they arrived to college campuses with higher career expectations and ideas of possible career paths. Millennial women were often expected to hold on to their traditional roles such as fostering relationships, maintaining family, and domestic tasks. Newton’s (2000) study also found students in general have more ambitious career aspirations but often have unrealistic timeframes for attaining their goals.

In 2006, the Millennial Generation comprised half of the student population in American higher education (Arnett, 2006). As access to college and education became more available to society, Millennial women took advantage of this by forgoing the matter of motherhood until a much later time in their life. In 1950, the woman’s role was heavily based on finding a suitable man, as it was incredibly stigmatizing to be single after the teenage years (Arnett, 2006). Few women had the ability, or desire, to attend college, and of those women who did, they were “often there for the purpose of obtaining
their ‘m-r-s’ degree” (Arnett, 2006, p. 6). In society today, women are encouraged by family, friends, and partners, to attend college as a means to advance themselves.

Currently, Millennial women and men abide by different gender norms as those of previous generations. As reflected, the gendered ideas on women’s roles in the 1950s were considerably different from the ideologies of society today. The changed attitudes and perceptions surrounding what men and women were allowed to do opened doors into new and challenging opportunities of growth for them. Recent theorists suggested men and women’s more fluid gender roles were responsible for the greater rewards as well as challenging conundrums for the sexes. Gerson (2002) wrote that although the ideas behind gender roles were revolutionized, men and women alike still experience the pressures of a gendered society. Women still battle with the conflicting notions of caring for others and expanded self-sufficiency (Gerson, 2002).

Gender revolution. Millennials grew up in an era with various non-traditional forms of family with differing gender roles for men and women. They had parents who, as part of the era in which they grew up, rebelled against traditional ideologies of what men and women were supposed to do (Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012). The 1960s and 1970s brought about the second wave of women’s liberation; during this time many women and men were redefining accepted gender roles. It was also during this time that women’s presence in colleges increased. The age at which women were deciding to marry went up and, as a result, many more women delayed motherhood to much later ages (Goldin et al., 2006).
Social theorists have previously relied heavily on the idea that men and women carried with them the dichotomous roles of either self-care or care for others, not both. Through this lens, social and cultural theorists expounded on their approaches and continued to make theoretical hypotheses based on this foundation. Bem (1981) theorized children’s knowledge about the delineation of gender between men and women was learned through observations of their culture and society. She postulated children learned quickly, through schemas, what is acceptable behavior for men and women in society. As a result, children formulated their own opinions and understandings of gender, which were incorporated into their own self-concept and identity.

Josselson (1987) recognized four pathways to women’s identity: foreclosure, identity achievement, moratorium, and identity diffusion. Josselson (1987) used the same terminology as theorists before her to maintain continuity and to reduce confusion. Although these terms were used by Erickson (1968) and Marcia (1966), Josselson’s use of them was in stark contrast to the way they were used to describe male identity formation. Josselson’s (1987) research found women’s identity formation differed from men’s; her theory linked women’s identity formation to societal expectations.

Josselson (1987) challenged the theories in place during the 1970s about identity formation for women. Until then, Josselson (1987) argued, the foundation of the theory of identity development in women relied heavily on research conducted on men. She asserted that a reformation of women’s identity theory needed to happen to truly understand women’s identity development. Josselson’s (1987) research on 34 women
concluded with some key findings that differed from what Erickson (1968) had stated about women’s identity development.

In her findings, Josselson (1987) determined women were less able to separate or individuate than men because they are of the same gender as their mother. Josselson found that women typically found little need to individuate from their mothers because a daughter identified with her mother better than a son did. As a result, Josselson (1987) claimed women were better able to have empathy toward others because of this symbiotic relationship with the mother. Chodorow (1989) built on this notion and stated the connection between a mother and her child was inherently different depending on gender. For boys, it was necessary to separate from their mother as a way to define their male identity. Girls on the other hand, had the opposite experience and depended on being connected to their mother in order to form their identity as women. Chodorow (1989) further stated the diminished value of women in society was a result of the separation process men must endure to individuate their identity from the woman’s role.

Gerson (2002) stated, “modern societies have reconciled the dilemma between self-interest and caring for others by dividing women and men into different moral categories” (p. 8). She believed the formation of traditional gender roles came about because of society’s inability to reconcile the need for both human self-interest and caring for others. This ultimately forced men and women into roles, such that women were expected to be the caregivers, and men were left with the ability to care for others through “sharing the rewards of independent achievement” (Gerson, 2002, p. 8). This
traditional view of men’s and women’s roles in society was challenged with the way modern men and women were raised, bringing about a change in cultural ideology regarding inflexible gender roles.

Gerson (2002) challenged the current gender schema and stated continuing with this view “justifies gender inequality by cloaking socially constructed gender categories with moral authority” (p. 10). Morality, then, was linked to social understandings and societal norms; as society continued to make decisions based on this ideology, both men and women were forced to remain with the roles assigned to them. Eagly (1987) suggested the division of men’s roles and women’s roles based on gender development was based on a person’s socialization. This theory suggested expectations based on gender stereotypes produce the gendered roles seen in society. “The idea that normative expectations are shared, which is part of the definition of a social norm, implies that consensus exists about appropriate characteristics and that people are aware of being consensual” (Eagly, 1987 p. 13). According to Eagley (1987), two roles exist today; the communal role is associated with caring for others and usually linked with domestic roles. The agentic role is associated with assertive and controlling attributes usually linked to the public sphere, roles that men typically take. She asserted that behavior is greatly influenced by gender roles; the more a society endorsed gender stereotypes, the more firm the expectations of the stereotypes became.

Gerson (2002) wrote that in the current generation, women in particular saw changes in the way they were allowed to participate in the economy. As noted by Howe
and Strauss (2000), Millennial Generation children were raised in many different types of households including both parents working, single mothers working, and divorced parents each making a living. The existence of many types of familial environments for Millennial children allowed for a new vision of gender flexibility (Howe & Strauss, 2000). This would seem a great advantage if not for the inherent institutional biases still existing in society today. Gerson (2002) wrote that although there were many more opportunities for women outside of the home, they were still faced with the institutional challenges that valued women’s role in the home. She conducted a study across two generations to find out how the gender revolution affected adults in the 18-32 age group.

Gerson’s (2002) findings identified three distinct categories that emerged in her research: Seeking Autonomy/ Establishing Commitment; Career as Time, Care as Money; and Identity through Love and Identity through Work. Through the three categories, Gerson (2002) delineated the attitudes of men and women now in relation to how they perceived gender roles growing up. She asked participants to reflect on several questions on topics including their parents’ relationship, the increasing number of women in the workforce, and the separation of work and familial expectations between genders. Her study showed there is a difference between what men and women perceive as their gender role and what is expected of them by society at large. Women showed an inclination for autonomy, opting to have less traditional families, stating that “going at it alone is better than being trapped in an unhappy relationship” (Gerson, 2002, p. 22). Men were more unwilling to let go of the traditional view of women as caretakers, but
opted for this idea of neotraditionalism. Neotraditionalism, according to Gerson (2002), “is built around shared breadwinning but less than equal caretaking” (p. 23). Gerson (2002) offered that neotraditionalism eased men into the new ideas surrounding shifting gender roles and economic contributions of women.

The development of Millennial women showed this particular group learned their perceived ideas and expectations at a time when society was shifting its perspective on gender roles. Men and women were redefining the accepted norms. Millennial men and women were left to decide the path they wanted to pursue. This was both advantageous and disadvantageous as traditional roles and responsibilities were still recognized by the population who did not belong to the Millennial generation. In recent years, many women have been faced with the challenge of reconciling their newfound place in the workforce with their familial obligations. This dichotomy between what was expected of them before and what is expected of them now caused a recent change in perceived expectations and aspirations for women.

Post-collegiate Aspirations

Men and women today have varying reasons to pursue a college degree. Some chose to go to college because it was what their family expected. For others, it was a means of advancing their future career. For still others, college was a way to find out about themselves and their own unique take on the world. College for many is a stepping-stone to understanding themselves through self-exploration, formation of bonds
with others, and, according to Arnett (2006), is the first step into adulthood for the Millennial Generation.

**Career**

Millennials who graduated college during the 2000s had high expectations for life after graduation (Vedder, 2013; Van Horn & Zukin, 2011; Wright-Piersanti, 2012). Partly due to their parents’ encouragement, about one-fifth of the Millennial graduates believed they would be just as prosperous financially, if not better situated, than their parents (Wright-Piersanti, 2012). Millennials perceived the labor market as having plenty of available jobs and more specifically, jobs in their field of study (Vedder, 2013). Further, Millennials expected their future employers would be cognizant of their need for flexibility, stating a balanced work/life was important to them (Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012).

Millennials who graduated college in the 2000s found the economic reality provided a much harsher environment for them as they began their careers after college. Many Millennials graduated without a guaranteed job, and of those who did have jobs worked outside the major they studied (Wright-Piersanti, 2012). After the recession in 2009, many Millennials who entered the workforce found there were fewer jobs available; most were forced to take jobs well below their qualifications (Vedder, 2013; Van Horn & Zukin, 2011; Wright-Piersanti, 2012). Most economists agreed the median starting salary for a college graduate in the late 2000s was around $28,000 (Van Horn & Zukin, 2011; Wright-Piersanti, 2012). The college students entering the labor force in
2011 found themselves in competition with millions of other unemployed college graduates, many of whom had already made their own career sacrifices by taking on jobs that did not require a college degree (Van Horn & Zukin, 2011).

Perhaps the Millennials were led to believe in a reality that was never there in the beginning. In an interview with an economics professor, it was highlighted that the “fundamental issue… is that there is simply something of a mismatch between the expectation of students and also the reality of the job markets” (Vedder, 2013). He went on to state the American job market has a need for jobs that do not require a college degree; jobs in retail, home health aides, truck drivers and plumbers all do not require a college degree. Yet, the number of young adults with college degrees continues to rise. “They are not all going to get jobs as scientists and managers. Some of them are going to be almost forced, by their sheer numbers, into these other kinds of positions” (Vedder, 2013, para. 6).

For Millennial women, the implication of graduating in the economy today is starker compared to that of their male counterparts. The median earnings of a Millennial woman with a college degree increased by 20% over the last 30 years; however, women still make less than their male counterparts in the workplace. Economists noted that Millennial women of the 2011 graduating class received starting salaries of roughly $28,000 in comparison to men’s starting salaries of $33,000 (Van Horn & Zukin, 2011). The glass ceiling is still in place, as many women are still not able to reach the same levels as men in the corporate world.
The term *glass ceiling* was coined to address this disparity in representation of women in higher ranks in the job market. This concept introduced the idea that there was an impermeable ceiling preventing women, as well as minorities, from advancing in the corporate world, despite their educational or professional achievements (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) offered the official definition of glass ceiling as “the artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities” (p. 2). While approximately 5% of senior management in Fortune 2000 companies are women, these women reported they still felt the presence of a glass ceiling (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Particularly evident for women of color was the concept, not of a glass ceiling, but a concrete ceiling identifying the incredibly challenging nature of advancing to higher status (Cotter et al., 2001).

Studies were conducted to identify why there was such a thing as a glass ceiling for women and minorities. It must be noted that the term was mainly used to address the inequality seen in higher echelons of corporations and their management. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) suggested the glass ceiling effect was not as prominent in lower levels of jobs. They reason the absence of women in senior-level positions can be attributed to the pipeline theory. This theory proposed the reason women did not advance as high as men had a direct correlation to the amount of time it took for an individual to gain experience within an organization (Allen, Srinivas, & Sakamoto, 1997). It was postulated that because of the increase in women’s degree attainment at the
college level and above, society will see an increase in women in senior-level positions, as more women will be in the pipeline (Silverstein, 1996).

However, despite the blocks in their career paths, Millennial college graduates have to adapt. In a recent survey, working Millennial Generation folks chose “opportunity for personal development” as their number one choice in looking for a job, outranking “opportunity for advancement” and placing “salary expectations” fifth on their list (Fisher, 2011). This generation’s changing aspirations for advancing in the corporate world has a direct correlation to the labor market they entered; the fluctuating number of available jobs and high unemployment rates gave the Millennials the sobering reality of the current American labor market (Fisher, 2011). Even through these bleak circumstances, many studies have shown Millennial graduates have a positive outlook on life (Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012). Millennials who were able to gain full-time employment were the happiest workers in America, with almost 42% of those aged 25 to 29 years saying they were “very happy” with their lives. Though most say they are making less than what they would like to make in order to lead the lifestyle they want, many were optimistic they would reach their salary goals in the future (Seppanen & Gualtieri, 2012).

Family

The attitudes of Millennial Generation men and women regarding family, marriage, and child rearing is a reflection of the way they grew up. In surveys conducted on Millennials, the overwhelming statistic is Millennials are less likely to have children
or be married than generations before in their age group (Gibson, 2010). Today’s couples are focused more on finding the right person and showing a greater emphasis on marriage as a lifelong commitment. They are more likely to marry at older ages, and tend to have a nontraditional view of family. The Millennial Generation is more likely to raise children in a household where the parents are not married.

Millennials continue to grow up in varying homes; an equal amount grew up in single-parent homes or homes with mixed families (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The U.S. Bureau of the Census showed in 2000 that in 1998, 40% of women were never married compared to just 2% in 1950 (as cited in Howe & Strauss, 2000). In the same survey, the percentage of women who were divorced was 34% in 1998 versus 22% in 1950. Although divorces occurred at a higher rate for Millennial children’s parents, the parents were aware of the impact on the children and made the process of a divorce as “child friendly” as possible (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 130).

Millennials grew up in environments with less resemblance to traditional ideologies of family and home, as many were exposed to different family life. In a survey conducted by Pond et al. (2010), only 62% of Millennials said their parents were married during the time they were growing up, roughly one quarter of Millennials (24%) said their parents were divorced or separated, and 11% reported their parents were never married (Pond et al., 2010). The attitudes of the parents of the Millennial generation involving sheltering of the child, pressure to achieve, and well-defined rules, resulted in
Millennials shaping the way they perceive family and child rearing (Winograd & Hais, 2011).

As a result, Millennials are more apt to accept non-traditional views of marriage and family. Less than a quarter of Millennials reject couples living together without marriage (22%) or mothers of young children working outside the home (23%) (Winograd & Hais, 2011). Millennials are also more likely to accept gay marriage, and single parent homes. They are also more likely to be in favor of interracial couples and dating. The Millennial Generation as a whole, view marriage and child rearing as a future goal for the latter part of their adulthood. Among 18- to 29-year-olds who are not currently married and have no children, 70% say they want to marry and 74% say they want to have children. Among those who have never married and have no children, 66% want to marry and 73% want to have children (Pond et al., 2010; Wang & Taylor, 2011).

Research has shown Millennials value being a good parent above marriage (Gibson 2010; Pond et al., 2010; Wang & Taylor 2011). When surveyed, 52% of Millennials ranked the phrase “being a good parent” as one of their top priorities in life. In comparison, 30% of Millennials surveyed said a successful marriage was one of their top priorities in life (Wang & Taylor, 2011). Examination of Millennials’ aspirations of parenthood and marriage indicated they are indeed looking forward to parenthood and marriage, but as a generation, they are more likely to delay both until later on in their lives (Wang & Taylor, 2011).
A facet of the Millennial Generation’s life today is that increasingly they are living with family or parents (Gibson, 2010; Pond et al., 2010). Most economists stated that was a solution to the economic crisis America faced during 2009-2011. The economic downturn made it harder for Millennials, as well as other generations, to live on their own. As an increasing number of Millennials moved back home, the idea of living with parents well into adulthood became less stigmatized. Roughly 47% of Millennials lived at home with either family or parents, in comparison to 43% of Generation X and 39% of Baby Boomers. It can be argued this changing ideology of living with family and cohabiting with romantic partners became the new trend for Millennials brought on by necessity first, then later becoming part of life. These less traditional views of family, marriage, and child rearing were accepted into American society.

Rationale for the Study

Millennial women in higher education face a very different challenge than women in the previous generation. It is now an expectation that women have the same advanced skills as their male counterparts, while still being expected to balance motherhood and family duties. Women are expected to be the mother of a family and raise children while juggling a career and taking an equal role in providing for the family. This precocious expected balancing act places a strain on women in college, particularly those who play multiple roles while attending college. Women in higher education continue to face
many different challenges. Although great advances were made to open doors to women for education, it is evident women continue to face issues around figuring out how to balance family and career expectations.

Women today are not only expected to attend college, they are also expected to uphold familial duties as before. The gender revolution afforded women the ability to have careers, but this double-edged sword did not delineate exactly how men’s and women’s gender roles shifted away from the traditional expectations. As students, Millennial women carry with them their own sets of beliefs and ways in which they perceive the world around them. As a generation, Millennials came of age during a time when traditional expectations were being forgone, and the ideologies of gender roles were reexamined by society. As standards shifted, men and women alike had to relearn what was acceptable and expected of them in American society.

In looking at the emerging roles of Millennial men and women in society, it became evident that traditional views of men’s and women’s gendered roles no longer account for the changing attitudes and perceptions of this generation. More importantly, Millennial men and women continued to redefine the gender roles of America and what is traditionally accepted. As these shifts in accepted societal norms continue to happen, it is important to understand how the new beliefs, balanced against the old traditional ideologies of generations before, will affect the ways in which Millennials, specifically women, recognize their roles in society. Millennials are still in contention with generations before them on how they view life. As such, understanding Millennials’
function and roles in society today, and the alignment of their perceptions and aspirations related to career and family, continues to be important, as it gives a glimpse of how this generation will affect the attitudes and perceptions of the generation to come.

Summary

Higher education today is ever-evolving as college attendance reflects the needs of society at large. One of the present generations in higher education comprises students who exhibit a particular way of learning, interacting with others, and changing aspirations after college. These students, in the Millennial Generation, brought with them to education their own set of ideologies. In particular, higher education has seen the increase in enrollment of women in education, as this trend reflects the evolving gender roles of both men and women.

As the Millennials grew up, they witnessed a shift in societal attitudes toward children and family. More parents desired to have children and went to great lengths to conceive (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Parents became more protective and constantly monitored their children’s actions and activities. These children grew up in the technological boom; they were termed digital natives and have become incredibly techno-savvy and adaptive to changing technology.

As students, Millennials are categorized as “ambitious, precocious, stressed, indifferent, wayward, technolonerd, heterogeneous, politically conservative and sexually active” (Newton, 2000, p. 43). They had parents who were incredibly involved in their
education and constantly monitored their progress and remained actively involved in their education. Millennials in school exhibit characteristics showing they learn best in collaborative environments, experiential learning, and the use of technology. A caveat is that not all Millennials in school are as adept with technology, as studies showed Millennial students of color who did not have access to computers at home are markedly behind in technology use compared to their white student counterparts (Cvetkovic & Lackie, 2009).

In particular, Millennial women in college experience college differently than women in previous generations. They face unique challenges while in college, as expectations of career and family were present alongside their educational expectations. Millennial women are often expected to hold on to their traditional roles such as fostering relationships, maintaining family, and domestic tasks (Newton, 2000). As access to college and education became more available, Millennial women began to postpone motherhood to a later time in their lives (Arnett, 2006; Goldin et al., 2006). Gender roles, attitudes, and perceptions of traditional values were challenged. Recent theorists suggested the more fluid gender roles present in society today helped propel Millennial women into the current direction, away from the traditional ideations of the woman’s roles. However, this newfound freedom from the traditional gendered roles also opened up a host of challenges for Millennials as they face the dichotomy between what was expected of them before and what is expected of them now.
Millennial men and women graduating from college now face an unprecedented time, as their expectations of life after college do not align with the current reality. The Millennials, while in college, held high expectations for life after graduation. They viewed the job market as having available jobs for them, and the reality they met was not what they expected. Their expectation of the working world was far from reality. The Millennials today face a depressed economy, a high unemployment rate, and competition from other recently graduated college students. Graduates today are not guaranteed jobs, and for those who find employment, many work for salaries much lower than they expected (Van Horn & Zukin, 2011; Wright-Piersanti, 2012). For Millennial women, the job market is only slightly better than it was for their mothers. Despite all the negative experiences, Millennial men and women still remain optimistic about their future.

Millennial men and women also have a different outlook on marriage and family. This generation is more likely to emphasize good parenting; move away from traditional families; cohabit with their partner or live with a roommate; and be more likely to live with their parents or family members. Underlying their outlook on life is their experience growing up, as statistics show Millennial upbringing played a huge role in their perception of family and child rearing. Fifty-two percent of Millennials stated in a survey that becoming a good parent was important to them (Wang & Taylor, 2011). Perhaps the most telling characteristic of Millennials regarding attitudes about marriage and family is their desire to find the right person to spend the rest of their life with, showing a greater emphasis on marriage as a life-long commitment.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The quantitative study was designed to learn about the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of undergraduate, female-identified students belonging to the Millennial Generation. As the literature review indicated, the Millennial Generation has the highest number of students currently matriculating through the higher education system in America (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009). The gender revolution witnessed by Millennials suggests there is a movement away from traditional gender roles. The change in perceived expectations for both men and women has an effect on the interactions Millennial Generation have with society, as it has been argued that society’s understanding of men and women is a collective understanding (Eagly, 1987). As such, studying the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of the Millennial Generation female lends insight into the way this particular generation will impact American society in the future.

The review of literature indicated the Millennial Generation’s understanding of gender roles and traditional views of family is shifting. Growing up, Millennials witnessed the rise of the non-traditional family, an equal number of Millennials were raised in single-parent homes, homes with breadwinner mothers, and homes with same-sex parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The Millennials as a whole also have a vastly
different expectation for their education as technology made information readily available and they, along with their parents, viewed college education as a necessary step to future advancement.

The Millennial Generation was raised in an environment of changing perceptions of the role of men and women in society. Higher education today has seen this shift, as more women are enrolled in college, outnumbering men in both enrollment and graduation rates (Pond et al., 2010). This circumstance of more women attending college was a result of the changed expectations of women. In the 1950s, it was not an expectation for women to attend college; rather, they were expected to start families and raise children. The 1970s and 1980s saw a move away from this, and women were enabled to enroll in college to advance their careers.

This study focused on Millennial women currently enrolled in a bachelor’s degree program. The data sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?
3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The quantitative research yielded 41 responses from Millennial Generation female students enrolled at a public four-year university. The findings are presented in the study. The remainder of this chapter covers the research design, the setting of the research, the
population sample, data-collection process, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures. Limitations of the study are also presented.

Research Design

The research was designed to study Millennial Generation women’s aspirations, motivations, and expectations after college graduation. Specifically, it was designed to identify the effect of current gender roles and their relationship to women’s expectations and aspirations post-graduation. The researcher sought approval for the research topic from the department’s higher education coordinator. Once approved, the researcher conducted extensive research on the topic to help formulate specific questions. The researcher sought approval from the committee on human subjects prior to beginning research.

As the researcher’s goal was to identify motivations and aspirations, it was clarified that the questionnaire should include multiple-choice, short-answer, yes or no, and Likert-type scaled questions. Respondents were asked a series of 31 questions, organized into four categories: Personal Information, Career and Undergraduate Major Choice, Campus Career Services, and Goals after Graduation (see Appendix A).

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted during Spring 2013 at a public four-year university located in an urban city in Northern California. It sits on approximately 300 acres nestled in a sprawling city and belongs to a public university system of 23 campuses across the
state. The university, Sycamore State University, hereon referred to as SSU, has a student population of approximately 28,500 undergraduate and graduate students, majoring in 58 undergraduate majors and 41 master’s degree programs. Women outnumber men in enrollment at SSU, with a ratio of 58% female students to 42% male. A majority of students who enter SSU identified as “White” (40%), followed by “Asian” (21%), “Latino” (19%), “Other” (11%), “African American” (6%), “Foreign” (2%), and “American Indian” (1%).

Population and Sample

The study focused on gathering respondents from programs identified by the researcher as falling under the category of Career and Technical Education, or CTE, at SSU. CTE programs, as defined by the California Department of Education, are, “A program of study that involves a multi-year sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers” (California Department of Education, n.d., para. 1). The researcher identified seven undergraduate disciplines at SSU that fell under the CTE category – Kinesiology, Health Science, Nursing, Graphic Art/Graphic Design, Child Development, Engineering, and Recreation and Tourism. Sixty-five faculty members were identified within the seven CTE disciplines and emailed to request participation in the survey by students from their classes. Of the 65 faculty members contacted, 14 responded to the request (22%), with seven agreeing to participate in the survey, and seven declining participation.
Within the CTE disciplines identified above, the population targeted for the study was Millennial Generation women, born between 1982 and 1995 and at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey. SSU’s admissions record during the 2012-13 academic year reflected that 58% of the student population enrolled identified as female. The researcher could not find specific information regarding current enrollment of women in CTE programs at SSU. The seven professors who agreed to participate agreed to survey their students by either posting the survey online via SacCT or emailing their students the researcher’s email address along with the link to the online survey. The survey included the consent form; in order for students to participate in the research, they had to select “Yes, I agree” to the terms and conditions enumerated on the first page (See Appendix B). The relatively low cooperation of faculty members who accepted the request to distribute the survey to their students yielded a smaller number of respondents to the survey than had been hoped.

Data Collection

The researcher reviewed available programs offered at SSU to determine which belonged in the category of CTE disciplines. Of the 58 undergraduate programs listed by SSU, the researcher identified the seven disciplines listed above as CTE disciplines. Faculty member emails were researched on the SSU website and used to initiate contact to determine their interest to participate. The researcher identified that an online survey was the best instrument to use for a wider distribution of the questions.
Communication with the faculty members began with an initial email explaining the purpose and target audience of the survey, as well as the method of distribution (see Appendix C). The email contained the link to the online survey, as well as a crafted email to the student that the faculty member could send out (see Appendix D). Faculty members were given a timeframe in which they were to respond to the email with either their agreement to participate or their declination. Fourteen faculty members responded to the request, roughly 22%, and of the 14, seven agreed to participate, roughly 11% of the faculty contacted.

Students were given two weeks to respond to the survey. Of those two weeks, one fell during SSU’s spring break. At the end of the survey period, 42 undergraduate students completed the survey. Because of the limited time to conduct the survey, the researcher was not able to resend the survey for additional responses.

Instrumentation

The researcher identified the programs at SSU that fell into the CTE category, as defined by the California Department of Education. Upon identification of the seven disciplines, the researcher identified 65 faculty members across the disciplines to solicit their help in distributing the electronic survey to their students. The invitation to participate was sent via email to the faculty member, who then distributed the link and the letter via email to their students, or posted it on the course online forum. Students had the option of participating in the survey by accepting the terms and conditions of the survey, otherwise known as the consent form. Students must have clicked “Yes, I agree”
to be redirected to the survey questions. If they clicked “No, I choose not to participate,” they were directed to the end of the survey.

The survey was conducted online using the online service called Survey Monkey. Participants of the survey received no remuneration for completing the survey. They were advised they might gain additional insight into factors affecting the decision making of Millennial Generation women, or they might not benefit from the survey at all. Participants were informed responses to the questionnaire would be kept anonymous, as no identifying markers would be collected. The survey identified the criteria the student had to meet in order to proceed. Since the survey was conducted online, there was a risk of having students participate who did not meet all four criteria. The four criteria were: born between 1982 to 1995 and must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey, must be an undergraduate student, must identify as a female sex or gender, and must be enrolled in a career and technical education (CTE) class, as defined by the California Department of Education. As the student self-selected their participation in the survey, the researcher entrusted the students to self-determine that they met the four criteria.

The survey attempted to gather information on Millennial women’s aspirations, motivations, and expectations during college and after graduation. The survey was separated into four categories with a total of 31 questions; each category highlighted an aspect the researcher identified as important for identifying factors of motivation and aspirations of the respondents. The researcher collected demographic information in the “Personal Information” section to determine the makeup of the respondents. The section
entitled “Career and Undergraduate Major Choice” highlighted the different pathways students took for their college education. “Campus Career Services” sought to find out how respondents utilized SSU’s campus career service and whether the respondents found the services useful. Lastly, respondents answered questions in the section called “Goals after Graduation,” which sought out their aspirations after graduation.

Although not explicitly categorized, questions asked of respondents had implications on gender and gender biases. These questions were not separated into a category; rather, the researcher designed the survey with these questions incorporated into the four categories to see if the questions would garner a more honest response from the respondents.

The survey questions were formulated several times by the researcher in an attempt to truly capture the data needed to answer the key questions the study sought to address:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?
3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

Questions 2 through 6 were asked so the researcher could have the demographic background of the women who participated in the survey. Questions 7 through 13 were designed to learn about the students’ educational background, while question 14 asked
students to rate several statements based on each statement’s importance to them. Questions 15 through 17 asked the respondents about their parents’ educational achievements and the impact on their own personal educational choices. Questions 18 to 22 sought to find out whether respondents utilized SSU’s campus career services office, and their perceptions of the efficacy of services offered. Questions 23 to 26 asked students about employment and internships. Questions 27 through 31 asked respondents to identify their goals after college graduation, as well as their family’s expectations for them after graduation. Question 32 closed the survey by asking students to rate the importance of several statements on career and familial expectations for women.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data for the study were collected through the online survey service called Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey allowed the researcher to design the survey by creating the unique questions, as well as customizing the survey layout. The researcher was able to personalize the link provided to students such that the link was entitled: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Millennial-Women-Post-Graduation. Survey Monkey enabled the researcher to distribute the link by embedding it into the email to faculty and the letter to the students asked to participate. During the survey period, students were able to click on the link and were directed to the survey. Survey Monkey tracked the students’ responses and tabulated the most popular answers to multiple-choice questions. Survey Monkey provided the researcher with the breakdown of the data, as well as
graphic analysis of the responses to the survey. At the conclusion of the survey period, the researcher was able to download the responses to the questions into an Excel document. Charts were also an option offered by Survey Monkey to help illustrate the answers to the questions. These charts are included in Chapter 4 and will help the researcher illuminate the information given by the respondents.

Limitations of the Study

It must be noted the results of the survey are specific to Millennial Generation women attending Sycamore State University in the spring of 2013 who were enrolled in a career and technical education course. While Millennial Generation women may have similarities to one another in regard to personal aspirations, motivations, and expectations, the survey results may not be an accurate representation of all Millennial Generation students.

The identification of career and technical education classes as the means of gathering respondents to the survey posed a limit on the audience the survey reached. The researcher needed to limit the scope of the research as she was advised electronic surveys had the potential to garner a response too great to synthesize in the amount of time given to conduct the research and complete the study. As such, the researcher decided to limit the participant pool to students enrolled in career and technical classes at the time of the research. In doing so, the researcher felt this extra specificity could provide a correlation to career preparation for women and familial expectations post-
graduation. However, it must be noted that the specificity of gathering participants currently enrolled in CTE programs may have severely limited the study.

The survey did not garner as many responses as the researcher had hoped. The limited amount of time given for students to participate in the survey, coupled with the fact that the last week of the survey was SSU’s spring recess, contributed to fewer students responding to the questions. The researcher opted not to extend the survey period as the limitations of synthesizing the survey data and completing the study were very real time constraints. If the researcher had been given more time to post the survey to students during the earlier part of spring semester, she may have received a better response rate.

Focus groups would have also provided the research with a more in-depth response from chosen participants. The researcher could have followed up with respondents with more personal questions that could not be asked via an online survey. These open-ended questions could have provided the research with invaluable data on the perceptions of Millennial Generation women regarding career and family life balance and societal expectations.
Chapter 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women. In particular, it was to identify the ways current societal gender norms impact Millennial Generation women’s perceptions of family and career. This study sought to uncover Millennial women’s aspirations for attending college, identify what, if any, their motivations were for attending college, and uncover expectations Millennial women have after graduation. This survey was designed with the following three questions in mind:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?
3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The survey was broken down into four categories: Personal Information (Demographics), Career and Undergraduate Major Choice, Campus Career Services, and Goals after Graduation. Questions 2 through 6 were asked so the researcher could have the demographic background of the women who participated in the survey. Questions 7 through 13 were designed to learn about the students’ educational backgrounds, while
question 14 asked students to rate several statements based on their importance to them. Questions 15 through 17 asked the respondents about their parents’ educational achievements and the impact they had on their own personal educational choices. Questions 18 to 22 sought to find out whether respondents utilized SSU’s campus career services office and their perceptions of the efficacy of the services offered. Questions 23 to 26 asked students about employment and internships. Questions 27 through 31 asked respondents to identify their goals after college graduation, as well as their family’s expectations for them after graduation. Question 32 closed the survey by asking students to rate the importance of several statements on career and familial expectations for women. This chapter is an analysis of the results from the online survey.

Presentation of Findings

The data collected on Survey Monkey were synthesized by Survey Monkey into tables; the tables presented reflect the answers most commonly chosen by the participants. Answers to each question were quantified by showing the percentage of respondents who selected that particular choice. Answers remain anonymous on the survey; however, the researcher was able to gather the data by participant response. Open-ended questions are discussed separately from the closed-ended questions.
Survey Results

Demographics

Table 1

Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Information</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority of respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23-26 years old</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>White/ Caucasian</td>
<td>57.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year in College</td>
<td>Fifth-year +</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Composition</td>
<td>Lives with Parents</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>&gt;$25,000</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample for this study was taken from Sycamore State University, during the Spring 2013 semester. SSU had approximately 28,500 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled during the 2012-2013 academic year. Participants invited to partake in this survey were undergraduate, female-identified, and born between the years 1982 to 1995. At the time of the survey, students who could participate had to be at least 18 years of age. Students invited to participate had to be enrolled in a career and technical education (CTE) class during the Spring 2013 semester. At the end of the two-week period, 42 students had followed the link to the survey and 41 agreed to partake in the survey.
The demographic data collected from the participants were but a minor representation of the Millennial Generation women at SSU, as only 41 participated in the survey. However, the demographic data collected were important to include, as they give the reader insight into the participants of the survey. The first five questions of the survey asked participants to answer questions about their age, ethnicity, year in college, and current household. Slightly over one-third of the respondents, 36.8%, identified their ages as between 23 and 26 years of age, followed closely by 27-30 (31.6%) and 20-22 (28.9%). Almost two-thirds of respondents identified as “White/Caucasian” at 57.9%, followed by “Hispanic/Latino” at 18.4%. Slightly fewer than that were respondents who identified as “Asian” at 15.8% and even fewer were students who identified as “Black/African American” (7.9%) and “Pacific Islander” (5.3%). One respondent identified as “Other” and answered “East Indian.”

It was interesting to see a majority of the undergraduate respondents said they were in their “fifth-year +” of undergraduate study (50.0%), followed by fourth-year (31.6%). It was also noted the responses to the choices “First-year” and “Second-year” were surprisingly low, with only three responding to first-year and one for second-year.

Over one-third, 36.8%, of the participants, indicated they lived with their parents, followed by slightly less than one-third, 31.6% who indicated they lived with their romantic partner. Twenty-six and three-tenths percent indicated they lived with a roommate and 7.9% of participants indicated they lived alone. One respondent indicated she lived with a child. Six participants indicated “Other” and specified they lived with
their siblings. About one-third of respondents stated their household income was less than $25,000, while about 18.4% stated their household income was greater than $75,000. When comparing the answers to the question “Who, if anyone, currently lives with you in your household?”, the answers to the household income question would indicate that slightly over one-third of the respondents are living below poverty level as defined by the California Department of Health Care Services (2011).

Identifying the demographic background of the participants was an important part of the survey, as it shed light on the different circumstances of Millennial Generation women currently in college. The researcher was surprised to find over two-thirds of the respondents either lived with their parents or with a romantic partner. Although the researcher was aware of previous studies indicating more students taking longer to attain their undergraduate career, it was unexpected to find 50.0% of the participants indicated they were in their “fifth year + of college.” Even more astonishing were the data collected on the household income of the participants, suggesting over one-third of them were living below California’s poverty level. While 36.8% indicated they lived with their parents, it was unknown to the researcher whether the students who lived with parents had parents as head of household, or if students who lived alone or with housemates were the ones who indicated household income levels of less than $25,000.
**Career and Undergraduate Major**

**Table 2**

Career and Undergraduate Major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career and Undergraduate Major</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority of respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen Major</td>
<td>Education &amp; Family Services</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health &amp; Medical Technology</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Choosing Sycamore</td>
<td>Location &amp; Proximity</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State University (SSU)</td>
<td>Availability of Program Choice</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer from Community</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for Choosing Major</td>
<td>Interest in the Subject</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Opportunities after</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Education- Father</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Education- Mother</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Parent’s Education to</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their own education?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents of the survey were asked to reflect on different questions regarding their program of choice, attendance, and motivation to attend SSU. They were also asked to rank a series of statements based on perceived importance to their life. Of the 15 career path choices defined as career and technical education by the California Department of Education, 14 of the 37 respondents to the question (37.8% of the respondents) reported their major was categorized as Education, Child Development & Family Services. Health Science and Medical Technology was a close second with 12 of the 37 respondents choosing that field (32.4%). Of the respondents who chose Health Science and Medical Technology, five specified “Nursing” as their specific major. “Arts, Media & Entertainment” and “Building, Trades & Construction” each had 10.8%; “Finance & Business” had 5.4%; and “Agriculture & Natural Resources” had 2.7%.

When asked why they chose Sycamore State University, over three-quarters of respondents, 29 of the 37, stated “Location and Proximity” was important (78.4%), followed by the availability of their program of choice (40.5%). Ten of the 37 (27.0%) respondents reported they chose SSU because of transferability from community college into SSU. Those who answered “Other” indicated they chose SSU for reasons such as: boyfriend moved here a semester earlier; length of baccalaureate program; the rigor, reputation, and my expectations for the program; acceptance into my school was my only option. Of the 37 answers to the question, “Did you transfer from a community college?”, 13 respondents indicated yes (35.1%). Twelve of these 13 respondents
reported they felt supported by their family during their transition from community college to SSU.

The following information demonstrates the breakdown of the answers to the question, “What motivated you to choose your current major?” Participants were allowed to choose more than one answer to the question. Of these, 94% of the respondents said “Interest in the major” was one of the motivations for choosing their major, with “Career opportunity after graduation” a distant second at 42.9%. “Length of time to get degree” and “Salary outlook of graduates from this major” were closely tied with 25.7% and 22.9%, respectively. Students who responded to the question “Do you belong to any clubs or organizations specific to your major?” mostly responded no (77.1%), and of those who responded yes, 50% belonged to the “California Nursing Student’s Association.”

Students participating in the survey were asked to rate a set of statements based on perceived importance to them for their education. Eighty-two and eighth-tenths percent indicated “Graduating from their current major” was very important. Slightly over half the respondents, 54.2%, indicated their parents’ approval of their chosen major was important, while less than one-fourth, 22.8% said it was not important. Participants largely indicated “entry-level salary of careers in their major” was somewhat important, 42.8%, with the distribution of the rest of the answers almost evenly distributed between “very important” and “neutral.” Eight and five-tenths percent indicated entry-level salary of career was not important.
Respondents leaned toward “somewhat important” and “neutral” in answer to the statement “Ability to start a family during the first 5 years of their professional career,” with about 29.4% indicating “somewhat important” and 26.4% indicating “neutral.” A small percentage, 11.7% answered “very important” to that statement, and 23.5% indicated “not important.” An overwhelming majority of respondents chose “very important” and “somewhat important” to “stability of future career” (97.1% combined). Similarly, an overwhelming majority of respondents chose either “very important” or “somewhat important” to “availability of jobs” (94.2%); “ability to express personal values (91.4%); “ability to be creative and innovative in the profession” (91.4%); “ability to work for civic or social change” (85.7%). “Ability to get promotions or raises” had 77.1% of respondents choosing “very important” or “somewhat important,” while 68.5% of the respondents chose “very important” or “somewhat important” to the statement, “ability to work limited or flexible hours.”
Table 3

Statement Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Slightly Less Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduating from your current major</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent's approval of your chosen major</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry level salary of careers in your major</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to start a family during the first 5 years of your professional career</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability of future career</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of jobs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to get promotions or raises in job</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to express personal values</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to be creative and innovative in the profession</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work limited or flexible hours</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work for civic or social change</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>answered question</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>skipped question</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
indicated the highest level of degree achieved by their father was a “Graduate degree” while slightly over one-fourth of the responses (26.5%) indicated the highest level of degree achieved by the mother was a “Graduate degree.” In almost equal numbers, 23.5% of respondents said their mother had a “High school degree or equivalent (GED),” while “Some college but no degree” and “Bachelor’s degree” resulted in the same percentage (20.6%). When asked whether their parents’ educational achievement made a difference in their decision to pursue a college degree, 60% indicated “yes,” 22.9% indicated “no,” and 17.1% said they were “unsure.”

The section on *Career and Undergraduate Major* demonstrated the selections the respondents made regarding their education, as well as their motivation for doing so. Students overwhelmingly answered they chose their major because they were interested in the subject. Although this was the most frequent choice, students indicated career opportunity after graduation was also an important factor in deciding their major choice. This section also showed students were influenced by their parents’ educational attainments.
**Career and Employment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career &amp; Employment</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority of respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Center Utilization</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Utilized Service</td>
<td>Resume Writing/ Interview</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Utilization of Services</td>
<td>1-2 times</td>
<td>48.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never used (0)</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a Career Fair</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>67.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation for Career Fair</td>
<td>Full-time job after graduation</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Employed</td>
<td>Yes, but not in major field</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, in my major field</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, I am not currently employed</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours a week spent working</td>
<td>&gt;33 hours</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours a week spent at internship</td>
<td>&lt;10 hours</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students were asked to respond to a series of questions related to their use of the Campus Career Services at SSU. When asked whether they had utilized the Campus Career Services, a majority said they had not (60.0%). “How often have you gone to the career center for the following services?” asked students to reflect on their use of the career center at SSU for the following services: Career counseling; Workshops; Job Search; Internship search; Resume Writing/Interview Preparation; Other. Overwhelmingly, the respondents indicated they had not utilized any of the services listed. Those who indicated they had used the service noted they used it between one and two times. Only one person indicated she had used the service “Job Search” and “Internship Search” greater than seven times.

Students were then asked to rate the perceived efficacy of the services they utilized at the Career Center at SSU. The students who answered this question overwhelmingly chose that the services were “somewhat effective,” with none of the respondents choosing “very ineffective” as their answer. This would indicate the Career Center at SSU provides a service participants found effective but were underutilizing.

Participants were asked whether they had attended a campus career fair; two-thirds of the respondents said “no” (67.6%). When asked what they were looking for when they attended the Career Fair, a “full-time job after I graduate” was the number one chosen answer. It is noted that only eight of the 41 participants answered the question.

Participants were asked whether or not they were employed at the time of the study. Of the 34 who answered the question, 13 (38.2%) answered “Yes, but not in my
major field,” 10 (29.4%) answered, “Yes, in my major field,” 10 (29.4%) answered “No, I am not currently employed,” and one participant indicated they had an internship. Participants were asked to indicate how many hours a week they spent working. Forty-seven and eight-tenths percent, or 11 of the 23 respondents to the question, said they worked more than 33 hours a week, 26.1% said they worked 16-32 hours a week, while five of the 23 respondents and one of the 23 respondents said they worked less than 10 hours per week. The reverse was true for the question “How many hours a week do you spend at your internship?” Although only one person indicated she had an internship when asked the question of employment, 12 respondents indicated they spent hours at their internships. Eight indicated they went to their internship for less than 10 hours a week (66.7%), two indicated they were at their internship for 16-32 hours per week (16.7%), and two indicated they were at their internship for over 33 hours per week (16.7%).

Participants who answered, “No, I am not currently employed” were directed to the question “Why are you not currently employed?” This question was not accurately tabulated as all participants who took the survey were routed to this question. However, of those who did not answer “Other,” 12 of the respondents or 35.3% answered, “I’m too busy with school,” followed by one person who indicated she “can’t find a job.”
**Goals after Graduation**

Table 5

Goals after Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals After Graduation- Majority of respondents</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan on getting a graduate degree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary to pursue a graduate degree to attain career goal?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family expects me to __ after graduation</td>
<td>Get a job</td>
<td>84.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to __ after graduation</td>
<td>Get a job in the field I</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final part of the survey asked respondents to reflect on questions related to their goals after graduation from college. The first question asked participants if they planned on pursuing a graduate degree after graduation. Most telling was the breakdown of the answers to this question; 47.1% of the respondents said, “Yes,” while 44.1% were “Undecided.” Only 8.8%, or three of the respondents, said “No.” This answer was surprising given that the researcher hypothesized that the answer would be an overwhelming “Yes.”
Participants were asked to reflect on the major they would pursue for their graduate degree. The responses reflected that the majority of the respondents planned to stay within the same field as their undergraduate degree. While the answers to the question regarding whether participants planned on pursuing a graduate degree in their future would predict a majority would say no, this was not the case. Responses from participants to the question “Do you feel it is necessary to pursue a graduate degree in order to attain your career goal?” showed 51.6% or 16 of the 31 respondents answered “Yes,” 36.7% said “No,” and only 9.7% or three of the 31 respondents were “Unsure.”

Participants were then asked to reflect on their family’s expectations for them after they graduate from college. A majority, over four-fifths of the respondents, or 84.8%, said their family expects them to “Get a job” after graduation. Almost one-quarter, or 24.2% of the respondents, said their family expects them to “Get a Masters (or a higher degree).” Fifteen and two-tenths percent of the respondents, or five of the 33 participants who responded to the question, said their family expects them to “Start a family.” When asked the same question regarding their own expectations after graduation, only 22 of the 33 respondents, or 66.7%, said they expected to “Get a job in the field I studied,” and only one of the respondents replied they expected to “Start a family.”

Table 6 represents the participants’ answers to the following questions. They were asked to read statements and rate their agreement. These statements were meant to gauge the perceptions of Millennial college women regarding career and family. Slightly
fewer than two-thirds of the participants strongly agreed with the statement “Getting started on my career is more important than starting a family,” while 15.1% of the participants somewhat agreed with the statement “Starting a family is more important than starting a career.” A majority, 87.8%, strongly agreed with the statement “I don’t believe that women should have to choose between getting married and starting a career.” The strongest negative reaction perhaps was to the statement “I think women are obligated to get married and have children,” with 63.6% of the participants choosing either “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Eighteen and one-tenth percent of respondents indicated they either “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” with that statement, while 18.1% remained “neutral.” The statement “starting a family is more important than starting my career” also received more negative responses, with over half (57.5%) the respondents choosing to “somewhat disagree” or “strongly disagree” with the statement. Slightly fewer than one-third, or 27.2%, indicated they were “neutral” to that statement.
Table 6

Personal Belief Statements

Please rate the following statements based on your personal beliefs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started on my career is more important than starting a family</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting a family is more important than starting my career</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think women are obligated to get married and have children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think women should focus on their career before getting married</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't believe that women should have to choose between getting married and starting a career</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuing a higher degree after college is important for my career</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 33

Discussion on Findings

To repeat, the purpose of this study was to examine the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women. In particular, it was to identify the ways in which society’s current gender norms impact the perception of Millennial Generation women on family and career. The study posed three questions:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?

3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The three questions are discussed in the following section, which presents the researcher’s interpretation of the data.

*Question 1*

Respondents were asked about their motivation to attend Sycamore State University. More than two-thirds of the respondents, or 78.4%, chose SSU because of its location and proximity. A distant second to that answer was the availability of their program of choice, with 40.5% of the respondents choosing that answer. Slightly over one-quarter of the respondents, 27%, indicated they chose SSU because of its transferability from community college; slightly less than one-quarter, 21.6%, said they chose SSU because of the cost of tuition. Over one-third of the respondents transferred from a community college and, of those who transferred, 92% of them felt they were supported by their family during their transition.

Overwhelmingly, 94% of the women who participated in the survey stated they chose their current major because of interest in the subject. This answer was followed by 42.9% of the respondents choosing their major because of career opportunity, 27% who chose their major based on the length of time it took to receive the degree, and 22.9% said they chose their major based on the salary outlook. The distribution of the majors of
the respondents indicated that 38% identified their major as “Education & Family Services” and 32% of the respondents identified their major as “Health & Medical Technology.” Of those participants indicating “Health and Medical Technology,” they specified “Nursing” as their current major. The respondents indicating they belonged to a club or organization said they belonged to the California Nursing Students Association.

Participants were asked about their desired job after graduation. The top three choices that emerged were: Nurses or RN, 26%; Teacher, 20%; Social Worker, 14%. The answers above show the participants had inclinations toward working in women-oriented fields. Women-oriented fields are more likely to be service-based, such as teaching and health care, as more women than men tend to enter such professions.

Participants indicated they chose their current major because of a desire to change the world and desire to work in the medical field to help people.

Overwhelmingly, students indicated answers to the following statements that illuminated the importance of career and education:

- Graduating from your current major – 97% very important or somewhat important
- Stability of future career – 97% very important or somewhat important
- Availability of jobs – 94% very important or somewhat important
- Ability to get promotions or raises in job – 77% very important or somewhat important

The numbers above show that women are looking into careers offering stability in the future, as well as availability of jobs in the field. Interestingly, less than 23% of the
respondents valued entry-level salary as very important to them, but 53% said it was very important to have the ability to get promotions or raises in future jobs.

The data from the following statements also indicated women’s values:

- Ability to express personal values – 91% very important or somewhat important
- Ability to be creative and innovative in the profession – 91% very important or somewhat important
- Ability to work for civic or social change – 86% very important or somewhat important

Of the 86% who stated, “Ability to work for civic or social change,” 60% said this aspect of their professional career was very important. The results explain the overwhelming majority of respondents who answered they were currently studying in the major of Education & Family Services or Health & Medical Technology. The researcher was to some extent surprised to find that only 37% of the respondents said it was very important for them to have a job that offered limited or flexible schedules. During the research, studies were done to show Millennials preferred to have work environments with flexibility. This low number of students who indicated this was very important to them seems contrary to previous research conducted.

Respondents’ most telling motivation for attending college had much to do with their parents’ achievement. Sixty percent of the students who participated in the survey said their parents’ achievement made an impact on their decision to pursue a college
degree. When asked to explain how their parent’s educational achievement has impacted their decision to attend college, respondents gave the following answers:

- I wanted to achieve as much as they did, if not more.
- Since they both have their graduate degrees it makes me feel I have to at the minimum get a bachelor’s degree. College was always an expectation.
- Neither of my parents ever graduated from college and I have seen how difficult that has been for them as far as providing for a large family with limited job opportunities. They have always encouraged my siblings and I to learn from their experiences and make graduating from college a priority.
- My dad always wished that he had finished college and encouraged me to do so.
- My parents always said they always wanted me to do better than they did when it came to education.
- I was raised in a family that has always had to live paycheck to paycheck, so I knew from an early age that I wanted to make sure I didn't live the same life when I grew up. The impact of their educational achievements is mostly financial.
- I would like to make my parents proud and be a good role model for my future children.
- They made it a possibility. They also were talking about the things I wanted to be talking about for a long time and I attribute that to their education.
- My mother started a master’s but didn't get to finish and my father always told me to achieve more than he did.
- I am the first in my family to go to college.

- Education has been a very important priority for my parents and their children. They set high but attainable expectations for me in regards to my educational success.

- I've grown up my entire life knowing that I was going to finish high school and then go to college. Maybe it's because that's what my parents did, but maybe it's because that's just the environment I was raised in by going to private school my entire life.

- Regardless their educational success, they never forced me to get an education. They let me make that decision on my own.

The responses above indicated that for some students, their parents’ educational achievement, or lack thereof, made them aware of the challenges this posed to their family. As one respondent said, ”the impact of their educational achievements is mostly financial” as she further stated that growing up, her family lived paycheck to paycheck. Other respondents indicated they learned of the importance of education from their parents who made it a priority for their family to be educated. While responses run the gamut, it is evident that for 60% of the respondents, they were influenced by their parents’ education, whether they had education or not.

**Question 2**

Surprisingly, the women who participated in the survey were split on their answer to the question “Do you plan on pursuing a graduate degree after graduation?” Forty-
seven percent said “yes” to the statement, while 44% said they were “undecided.” This data would suggest there is not a direct connection for participants regarding their desired career outlook and educational attainment. While over 97% indicated that stability of their future job was very important or somewhat important, there does not appear to be a relationship between the desire to have a stable job and their plan on pursuing a graduate degree. Participants who answered the question “What major would you pursue if you plan on getting your graduate degree?” indicated specialized training or advanced schooling for the major they chose. The participant answers are as follows:

- I'm unsure
- Nurse Anesthetist (Masters Program)
- Nursing
- Obtain my Masters in Social Work
- Nursing
- Social Work
- Possibly mental health or education. I am not sure.
- Masters in Education & Teaching Credential
- NP
- MSW
- Doctorate or Nursing Practice or Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Genetic counseling
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- health communications
- I would remain in Nursing.
- MBA
- MFT
- Public Policy
- na
- masters in education
The subtle disconnect between degree attainment and their desired job conditions are an indication women may not see the correlation of career advancement and specialized degree. When asked if they felt that it was necessary to pursue a graduate degree to attain their career goal, 51.6% said yes, 38.7% said no, and 9.7% said they were unsure. This information could be taken a variety of different ways, as there were no follow-up questions presented to the students to see why they answered this question in the manner they did.

Participants were asked to identify their family’s expectations regarding their future plans after college graduation. Eighty-four and eight-tenths percent indicated their family expected them to “get a job” after graduation. In a very distant second to this answer, 24% said that their family expected them to get their master’s, and only 15% indicated their family expected them to start a family. In comparison, 66.7% of the participants said they expected to get a job in the field they studied, 18% said they expected to pursue a graduate degree, and only 3% said they expected to start a family. Perhaps the parallel of the answers for familial expectations and personal expectations have their roots tied into Millennial Generation’s upbringing in which parental involvement was high. This may continue on into their adulthood, as seen with the parallel data collected for the two questions.
Question 3

To note, the majority of participants seemed to indicate a proclivity toward starting their career first, then establishing a family later. A majority of the responses to the questions have leaned toward career and educational attainment. Yet, a small minority of respondents answered they felt women were obligated to get married and have children, 18%, while another 18% indicated they were neutral to that statement. Although none of the participants strongly agreed that starting a family is more important than starting a career, 15% indicated this was somewhat important and 27% were neutral. A small minority also dissented to the statement “Getting started on my career is more important than starting a family,” 9%, and another 9% indicated they were neutral to this statement. Again, a small minority dissented to the statement, “I think women should focus on their career before getting married, 15%, and 36% were neutral to the statement.

Answers to the questions on family and marriage expectations reflect that although a majority of the respondents felt this could wait until later in their lives, there is still a minority who do value family and marriage. Perhaps the research out there that portrays Millennial Generation as wanting to delay adult obligations later in life does not accurately capture the generation. Neutral answers to the statement could show a very different side of Millennial Generation attitudes and beliefs about marriage and family. Future research could expound on the neutrality chosen by the women and find out why there were ambiguous sentiments toward those statements.
Subtle themes developed throughout the research indicating the participants still held gender biases, though they may not necessarily have seen this. Findings to the question regarding their choice in major shows a strong correlation to service-oriented majors. Education & Family Services and Health & Medical Technology garnered the most responses, followed by Public Service at 11% and Arts, Media & Entertainment also at 11%. Finance & Business had 5% of the respondents, and Agriculture & Natural Resources had 3%. None of the students identified their major in the following fields: Manufacturing & Development; Energy & Utilities; Marketing, Sales & Service; Engineering & Design; Hospitality, Tourism & Recreation; Building, Trades & Construction; Fashion & Interior Design; Information Technology; Transportation. Fields such as Manufacturing & Development, Engineering & Design, Building, Trades & Construction and Information Technology are all male dominated careers. This survey showed women are still choosing majors that align with the gender characteristics prescribed to women; traits of helping others and educating the youth are still given to women.

Answers to the following statements also show women are less inclined to value salary and promotions when compared to statements relating to expression of personal values and ability to work for civic or social change.

- Ability to express personal values – 91% very important or somewhat important
- Ability to be creative and innovative in the profession – 91% very important or somewhat important
• Ability to work for civic or social change – 86% very important or somewhat important

Again, the above information is a reflection that women value money less than they do their ability to get a job that suits their personal beliefs.

Campus Career Services

An interesting discovery of this survey showed how Millennial Generation women utilized the Campus Career Services at SSU. Sixty percent of the surveyed students said they had never utilized the career center, while one student indicated she was not aware SSU had a career center. Of the 12 students who responded to the question on their frequency of use of the career center, a majority indicated they had gone to use the services either 0 or 1-2 times for the following reasons:

• Career Counseling
• Workshops
• Job Search
• Internship Search
• Resume Writing/ Interview Preparation
• Other Service Provided

They indicate that when they did go to the career center to use the services, they found the services to be either “very effective” or “somewhat effective”.
Students were also asked if they have attended a campus career fair. Similarly, 67.6% of the respondents indicated they have never gone to a career fair while 32.4% said they have. Of those who responded to the question “What were you looking to get out of the Career Fair?”, 75% indicated a “full-time job after I graduate”, 12.5% said a “part-time job while in school” and 12.5% chose “an internship while in school”. The researcher was surprised to find the under-utilization of the campus career center at SSU, in light of the fact that the information collected in the survey showed that Millennial women were focused on education as a way to attain their career goal. In order to help support women to achieve their career goals, the utilization of the campus career center would benefit them.
Summary

The quantitative study was designed to gather information about the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of undergraduate, female-identified students belonging to the Millennial Generation. As the literature review indicated, the Millennial Generation has the highest number of students currently matriculating through the higher education system in America (Pinder-Grover & Groscurth, 2009). The gender revolution witnessed by Millennials suggests a movement away from traditional gender roles. The change in perceived expectations for both men and women have an effect on the interactions Millennial Generation have with society, as it was argued that society’s understanding of men and women is a collective understanding (Eagly, 1987). As such, studying the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of the Millennial Generation female may lend insight into the way this particular generation will impact American society in the future.

The review of literature indicated the Millennial Generation’s understanding of gender roles and traditional views of family is shifting. Growing up, Millennials witnessed the upsurge of the non-traditional family as an equal number of Millennials were raised in single-parent homes, homes with breadwinner mothers, and homes with same-sex parents (Howe & Strauss, 2000). The Millennials as a whole also have a vastly different expectation for their education as technology made information readily available.
and they, along with their parents, viewed college education as a necessary step to future advancement.

This study was aimed at identifying the motivations, aspirations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women. Particularly, this research hoped to uncover how current gender norms affect Millennial Generation women’s perception of family and career. The research sought to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the motivations of Millennial Generation women for attending college?
2. What expectations do Millennial Generation women have after graduating from college?
3. What are the current perspectives of Millennial Generation women on family and career?

The researcher hypothesized that women in college today are forced to make a decision about which to put first, their career or family, because gender norms make it difficult for women to balance both. The researcher also hypothesized their educational attainment played a part in Millennial Generation women and their decision about starting a career versus a family.

The findings in Chapter 4 presented data indicating Millennial Women who participated in the survey were more inclined to choose a career and education over starting their own family. These results were gathered from students who attended Sycamore State University during the Spring 2013 semester. The women chosen to participate were selected from classes considered career and technical education (CTE).
As more Millennials matriculate through the college system in California, it is imperative their motivations and expectations are understood as to the reasons they are in college and what they want to achieve once they graduate. Motivation plays an integral part in college success, as students who lack motivation are more likely to stay in school longer, or not complete their study.

Conclusions

The survey attempted to gather information on Millennial women’s aspirations, motivations, and expectations during college and for after graduation. The survey was separated into four categories with a total of 31 questions; each category highlighted an aspect the researcher identified as important in identifying factors of motivation and aspiration for the respondents. The researcher collected demographic information in the “Personal Information” section to determine the makeup of the respondents. The section entitled “Career and Undergraduate Major Choice” highlighted the different pathways students took for their college education. “Campus Career Services” sought to discover how respondents utilized SSU’s campus career service and if the respondents found the services useful. Lastly, respondents answered questions in the section called “Goals After Graduation” which sought to find out what their aspirations were after graduation.

The data collected from the participants suggest Millennial Generation women have varying motivations for attending college, but an overall theme that emerged was their attendance in college to pursue an interest in a particular major. Ninety-four percent
of the respondents said they chose their major based on their interest in the subject. The majors students chose fell into two categories: Health & Medical Technology and Education & Family Services. Both of the majors have jobs in fields currently dominated by women. Students who participated in the researcher were asked about their desired job after graduation; 60% of them chose professions in nursing, teaching, or social work.

Women who participated in the survey did not convey they were motivated to attend college for monetary gains. Only 23% of the participants valued entry-level salary as being either very important or somewhat important to them. However, data showed that while they did not value entry-level salary, 53% of them indicated it was very important or somewhat important to be able to get raises or promotion in their jobs. This seems to be an aspect Millennial women take into consideration when choosing jobs, as some of their responses in the open-ended question indicated they were getting their college degree in order to do financially better than their parents did.

The data indicated women are motivated to make a difference once they are in their professions. Sixty percent of respondents indicated working for civic or social change was either very important or somewhat important to them. Perhaps this could help explain the reason the respondents chose their majors in Health & Medical Technology or Education & Family Services. Women are still showing an inclination toward working for the greater good, rather than working for personal gain. This does not seem to have changed much, as none of the participants chose fields that are male-
dominated; fields such as Engineering, Manufacturing & Development, and Information Technology garnered zero responses during the survey.

The data collected did not point in the direction of women choosing to go to college to have families and get married. Only 41% of the respondents indicated it was important for them to be able to start a family within the first five years after graduation. Thirty-two percent of respondents indicated it was slightly less important or not important to them they have an ability to start a family within the first five years. While some of the respondents were in the minority and chose answers indicating the importance of family and marriage for them, this was not the widely held belief for the respondents. There could be many explanations for this, and research would suggest Millennials, as a generation, have decided to push off marriage and childrearing to a much later stage in their life. As more and more women continue to attend college, it would be interesting to observe the shift toward marriage and family at later stages in life.

Participants appeared split in their aspirations and expectations after graduation regarding their pursuit of a higher degree. While 47% said yes to the question of “do you plan to pursue a graduate degree after graduation,” almost an equal number, 44%, indicated that they were undecided. However, when women were asked if they thought it was necessary for them to pursue a graduate degree for their future career, 51.6% said yes. Participants who responded to the question “what major would you pursue if you plan on getting your graduate degree” answered they would get higher degrees in the major they studied as an undergraduate.
Two-thirds of the respondents expected they would get jobs in the field they studied after graduation. Eighty-four and eighth-tenths percent of them indicated their family expected them to get a job after they graduated. Only 18.2% of the respondents said they would get their master’s degree after they graduated, with 24.2% indicating their family expected them to get their master’s degree after graduation. Only 3% of the respondents indicated they expected to get married and start a family, while 15.2% said that was what their family expected them to do after graduation. The parallel percentages between familial expectations and personal expectations suggest there is an alignment between Millennial Generation women’s expectations and family expectations.

Subtle themes developed throughout the research indicating the participants still held gender biases, though they may not necessarily have seen this. Responses to the question regarding their choice in major show a strong correlation to service-oriented majors. Education & Family Services and Health & Medical Technology garnered the most responses, followed by Public Service at 11% and Arts, Media & Entertainment also at 11%. Finance & Business had 5% of the respondents, and Agriculture & Natural Resources had 3%. None of the students identified their major in the following fields: Manufacturing & Development; Energy & Utilities; Marketing, Sales & Service; Engineering & Design; Hospitality, Tourism & Recreation; Building, Trades & Construction; Fashion & Interior Design; Information Technology; or Transportation. Fields such as Manufacturing & Development; Engineering & Design, Building; Trades & Construction; and Information Technology are all male-dominated careers. This
survey showed women are still choosing majors that align with the gender characteristics prescribed to women; traits of helping others and educating the youth are still attributed primarily to women.

The research seemed to indicate there is not pressure for women to choose between their career and starting families. Women seemed inclined to choose career and employment over getting married and having children. Sixty-four percent either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I think women are obligated to get married and have children,” while 18% either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement. Ninety-four percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed to the statement “I don’t believe that women should have to choose between getting married and starting a career.” A majority, or 58%, either somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “Starting a family is more important than starting my career.” A small percentage of respondents indicated agreement with the statements and a great follow-up would be to ask them their reasons behind their agreement.

Recommendations

After completing this research and synthesizing the data collected, the researcher recommends further study on the Millennial Generation women in college. Because the limitations of this research only gathered students from one college, during one semester, the data does not allow generalizing these findings to the generation as a whole. The
researcher recommends another quantitative survey be sent out to colleges across California to reach more female college students. More participation in the quantitative survey would get a more accurate indication for the aspirations, motivation, and expectations of Millennial women.

The quantitative survey was able to give a facet of the Millennial women motivations and aspirations, but the researcher believes the interviewing of a representative sample of the population would yield responses lending greater insight into the motivations of each individual participant. Interviews with participants would give the survey a more in-depth, personal response, than a quantitative survey would. There were many questions the researcher was not able to ask participants because no follow-up to the survey was conducted. The researcher suggests follow-up interviews with participants who took the quantitative survey.

This research could also be utilized to help further advance research already conducted on women and STEM fields. The research found that women chose majors in the service field and cited they wanted careers that helped others. Women were focused more on working for civic and social change than they were on gaining for monetary purpose. Responses from participants also indicated women valued the ability to help others more than they valued starting salary. Because the research focused on motivations and aspirations, this could have the potential to open discussion on why women are choosing or not choosing to enter STEM fields. It may be women do not perceive science and technology as fields that directly create social change; therefore,
there is less participation. Researchers could certainly survey women in STEM on their expectations, motivations, and aspirations STEM.

The researcher also recommends the survey be broken down into age categories. There may be data that could be collected from Millennial Generation women that would reflect differing attitudes and perceptions dependent on age. The quantitative survey responses were not able to be broken down by age group. This categorization could provide great insight into how perceptions may change throughout the age range of Millennials. In addition, future research could include those Millennial women to see if their aspirations and motivations played out in the way they hoped they would.

Finally, the researcher recommends a separate study conducted on campus career services and students’ utilization of them, particularly in light of the research showing participants are placing careers in front of marriage and family. It would seem to be an important service students are not utilizing on campus. Information collected on reasons why students are or are not utilizing the service could give campuses information on how to get students to take advantage of this service.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Terms Defined:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What year are you in college?
4. Who, if anyone, currently lives with you in your household?
5. What is your total household income?
6. What grouping best describes your current major?
7. What motivated you to choose this college?
8. Did you transfer from a community college?
9. Did you feel supported by your family during your transition from community college to your current school?
10. What motivated you to choose your current major?
11. Do you belong to any clubs or organizations specific to your major?
12. What is your desired job after you graduate?
13. Please rate the importance of the following things (Scale: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Neutral, Slightly Less Important, Not Important)
   a. Graduating from your current major
   b. Parent’s approval of your chosen major
   c. Entry level salary of careers in your major
   d. Ability to start a family during the first 5 years of your professional career
e. Stability of future career
f. Availability of jobs
g. Ability to get promotions or raises in job
h. Ability to express personal values
i. Ability to be creative and innovative in the profession
j. Ability to work flexible hours
k. Ability to work for civic or social change

14. What is the highest level of school your father completed?
15. What is the highest level of school your mother completed?
16. Has your parent's educational achievement made an impact on your decision to pursue a college degree?
17. Have you utilized the career center on campus?
18. How often have you gone to the career center for the following services (Scale: 0, 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, >7)
   a. Career counseling
   b. Workshops
   c. Job search
   d. Internship search
   e. Resume writing/ Interview Preparation
   f. Other service provided
19. How effective would you rate the services you received from the Career Center? (Scale: Very Effective, Somewhat Effective, Neutral, Ineffective, Very Ineffective, I did not use this service)
   a. Career counseling
b. Workshops

c. Job search

d. Internship search

e. Resume writing/ Interview Preparation

f. Other service provided

20. Have you attended a Career Fair on campus?

21. What were you looking to get out of the Career Fair?

22. Are you currently employed?

23. How many hours a week do you spend working?

24. How many hours a week do you spend at your internship?

25. Why are you not currently employed?

26. Do you plan on pursuing a graduate degree after graduation?

27. What major would you pursue if you plan on getting your graduate degree?

28. Do you feel it is necessary to pursue a graduate degree in order to attain your career goal?

29. My family expects me to ___ after college:

30. I expect to ___ after college:

31. Please rate the following statements based on your personal beliefs: (Scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

   a. Getting started on my career is more important than starting a family

   b. Starting a family is more important than starting my career

   c. I think women are obligated to get married and have children

   d. I think women should focus on their career before getting married
e. I don’t believe that women should have to choose between getting married and starting a career

f. Pursuing a higher degree after college is important for my career
APPENDIX B

Consent Letter

Hello! You are being asked to participate in research conducted by Krystinne Mica, a student in the Masters in Higher Education Leadership program at Sacramento State University. The study investigates Millennial generation women’s future career aspirations, motivations, and expectations after graduating from a career and technical education (CTE) program. CTE programs, as defined by the California Department of Education are “programs of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers”. Students who are eligible to participate in this survey must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be born between 1982 – 1995, and must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey
2. Identify as female sex or gender
3. Must be an undergraduate student
4. Enrolled in a career and technical education (CTE) class.

The survey asks for information about your career goals and future life goals after graduation. You may gain additional insight into factors that affect decisions of Millennial Generation women, or you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will help to further investigate the goals and future plans of Millennial Generation women entering the workforce today.

Your responses on the questionnaire will be anonymous. The survey will not collect any identifying information. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Krystinne Mica at [phone number] or by e-mail at [email address].

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you wish to proceed, please click on the link here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Millennial-Women-Post-Graduation. This will redirect you to the consent form of the survey, where you will have to click “Yes, I agree” to continue to the survey. Please complete the survey by Wednesday, April 3, 2013.

Thank you for your time!!

Krystinne Mica
Graduate Student
Sacramento State- College of Education
Masters in Higher Education
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Greetings! My name is Krystinne Mica and I am a graduate student in the Masters in Higher Education and Leadership program here at Sacramento State University. I am writing to you today to see if you would allow me to collect data for my thesis research from students in your class(es). My research was approved for the use of Human Subjects by my program’s Human Subjects Committee. My thesis topic is “Millennial Generation Women and Expectations Post-Graduation”. This research is intended to investigate the aspirations, motivations, and expectations of Millennial Generation women for life after graduation. In particular, my research focuses on women in majors addressed by career and technical education (CTE).

Your class was chosen because it is considered a CTE class. CTE, defined by the California Department of Education, is, “a program of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers”.

Students in your class who are eligible to participate must meet the following criteria:
1. Must be born between 1982 – 1995 and at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey
2. Must be an undergraduate student
3. Identify as female sex or female gender
4. Enrolled in a career and technical education class

The survey asks questions about the student’s beliefs, career goals, and undergraduate experience. Student participation is entirely voluntary; the risks associated with participation in this research are minimal. Responses to the survey will be kept anonymous; no identifying markers will be asked for, or collected from, participants. Students will be asked to read a consent form and select the appropriate choice (agree or disagree) prior to taking the survey.

Would you be willing to distribute a survey link to your class so that interested participants may take the survey? The direct link to the survey is: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Millennial-Women-Post-Graduation or you may email them my cover letter and consent form with the survey link included (attached).

Please let me know if you are willing to distribute the link to your students by Monday, March 25, 2013. Thank you very much and I look forward to working with you to conduct my research! Please contact me at krystinne.mica@gmail.com or 831-295-1102, or my advisor – Dr. Geni Cowan, gcowan@csus.edu -- if you have any questions.

Best,

Krystinne Mica
APPENDIX D

Millennial Generation Survey: Request to Participate

Hello! You are being asked to participate in research conducted by Krystinne Mica, a student in the Masters in Higher Education Leadership program at Sacramento State University. The study investigates Millennial generation women’s future career aspirations, motivations, and expectations after graduating from a career and technical education (CTE) program. CTE programs, as defined by the California Department of Education are “programs of study that involves a multiyear sequence of courses that integrates core academic knowledge with technical occupational knowledge to provide students with a pathway to postsecondary education and careers”. Students who are eligible to participate in this survey must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be born between 1982 – 1995, **and must be at least 18 years of age at the time of the survey**
2. Identify as female sex or gender
3. Must be an undergraduate student
4. Enrolled in a career and technical education (CTE) class.

The survey asks for information about your career goals and future life goals after graduation. You may gain additional insight into factors that affect decisions of Millennial Generation women, or you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will help to further investigate the goals and future plans of Millennial Generation women entering the workforce today.

Your responses on the questionnaire will be anonymous. The survey will not collect any identifying information. You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Krystinne Mica at [redacted] or by e-mail at [redacted].

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you wish to proceed, please click on the link here: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Millennial-Women-Post-Graduation](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Millennial-Women-Post-Graduation). This will redirect you to the consent form of the survey, where you will have to click “Yes, I agree” to continue to the survey. **Please complete the survey by Monday, April 1, 2013.**

Thank you for your time!!
Krystinne Mica, Graduate Student
Sacramento State- College of Education
Masters in Higher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
REFERENCES


