"WE ARE THE FUTURE": CAREER ATTITUDES OF MILLENIGENZ COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Millennials make up the largest segment of the workforce today and it is estimated that by 2025, 75% of the global workforce will comprise this emerging generation (Fry, 2018). In this current study, I examine the career attitudes of Latinx and Asian American Millennial and Gen Z college students to understand better how their unique college experiences- shaped by their familial, cultural, and personal backgrounds – can inform how they imagine their post-college trajectory. Specifically, I explore to what extent these sociocultural influences impact MilleniGenZ's interest and attainment in leadership roles within their future careers. Two sets of surveys were administered. A 184-question survey was administered to college students in Southern California in 2017 (N=936), and in 2020, an updated 211-question survey was administered (N=742). The findings show the importance of providing better career resources (e.g., workshops, mentorship, networking opportunities) for MilleniGenZ during college, which will ease their transition into the workforce and potential leadership roles. The findings of the current study contribute to the existing literature by unpacking how complex sociocultural factors intersect to influence Latinx and Asian American college students' career attitudes. Based on our findings, institutions, and organizations should incorporate diversity and inclusion considerations into the career planning process to support individuals in overcoming systemic barriers.

Over the past few decades, historical events such as the Great Recession in 2008 greatly impacted the working lives of individuals across generations. The Boomers and Gen X'ers endured losses in their retirement savings, household finances, and home values. However, millennials, who were in their formative years, were struck the hardest by the increasing unemployment rates following the financial crisis. The Pew Research Center (Taylor et al., 2012) administered a general public survey in 2011, and based on the data, at least seven-in-ten millennials expressed how difficult it was to save money for the future (75%), pay for college (71%), and buy a home (69%). Additionally, millennials have struggled to pay off their student loan debt due to low-paying jobs and unemployment. Following the years of the Great Recession, the

COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 exacerbated financial concerns for Millennials and Gen Z[1]'s as they continue to face an uneasy job market, inflation, increasing debt, and job insecurity. Therefore, it is pertinent that organizations understand the intricacies of MilleniGenZ's financial lives holistically so that industry stakeholders, policymakers, and service providers can better support and help lead these generations into living more fulfilling and stable careers.

These young adults, however, although shaped by these financial incidents, were also able to observe and learn from the older cohort about financial risks and challenges. MilleniGenZ's financial and career outlook is also heavily influenced by their familial, cultural, and personal backgrounds. Vocational development is defined as "an interactive process where an individual both influences and is influenced by the social, cultural, and physical features of his or her environment" (Whiston & Keller, 2004, p. 493). Therefore, there are dynamic proximal and contextual forces at play that influence individual career decision-making.

Early career and vocational theorists have proposed models and approaches to explain the process of career decision-making from early adolescence to adulthood (Porfeli & Lee, 2012; Sawitri et al., 2015). For instance, the social-cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994) is derived from psychologist Bandura's social-cognitive theory, which states that environmental, cognitive, and social interactions are factors that influence an individual's behavior (1986). SCCT considers individual cognitive factors (e.g., self-efficacy, learning experiences, and personal interests) and how they interplay with environmental factors (e.g., social support, family, socioeconomic status) to impact career development behaviors. There is a reciprocal dynamic between the person, environment, and one's behavior. The SCCT framework is applicable in school career education guidance and provides a comprehensive foundation for career coaching (Lent et al., 1994). It has also been shown to explain and predict individual career development (Lent & Brown, 2019).

In addition, the proposed model by Fouad and Kantamneni (2008) also integrates multiple dimensions of contextual factors on career development. Fouad and

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[1] For the remaining sections of this article, millennials and Gen Z will be used to refer to MilleniGenZ unless otherwise specified.

Kantamneni's (2008) model focuses on the intersections of individual, group, and societal dimensions on career development. For the current study, I will focus specifically on Fouad and Kantamneni's (2008) model because the model captures the dynamic, complex, and interactive nature of how contextual factors influence the meanings that MilleniGenZ make in career and work decisions. The individual dimension focuses on factors such as values, personality, self-efficacy, and aspirations. The group dimension focuses on factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and family. The societal dimension focuses on factors such as schooling, cultural values, barriers, and the labor market.

Specifically, in this paper, I focus on Latinx[2] and Asian American MilleniGenZ college students in Southern California and investigate the complexities of their individual vocational development, which subsequently impacts their future career attitudes and outlook. I seek to further understand to what extent sociocultural factors impact MilleniGenZ's career aspirations and interest in leadership roles. How are organizations, leaders, and mentors helping MilleniGenZ college students succeed within academia that can help prepare them to transition into the workplace? The existing vocational development literature has primarily explored how family has influenced individual career decisions. However, there is a lack of understanding of the intersections of individual, group, and societal factors in the career decision-making process. Thus, in this current study, I further unpack how contextual variables on an individual, group, and societal level shape MilleniGenZ's career attitudes. This can help inform organizations, practitioners, and mentors how to better support these young adults throughout their career decision-making.

To sum up, the current study contributes to the literature in the following ways. First, this study will examine the influence of the intersection of race, family, and culture on individuals' career aspirations, thus extending the existing literature primarily focused on parental/family influences. Second, this study identifies how external influences (e.g., media, professors, friends) may impact the way that Latinx and Asian American working college students imagine their future careers. Therefore, this study will provide insights

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[2] Latinx is an inclusive term that recognizes the intersectionality of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, and phenotype (Salinas & Lozano, 2019).

into the importance of considering interpersonal and societal factors that may influence how they conceive their career aspirations beyond individual-level factors. Lastly, I will compare the generational differences between MilleniGenZ and previous generations in their workplace values and expectations. Exploring these generational differences can help identify gaps and ways to best cultivate and sustain a multi-generational work environment that is psychologically safe, which is integral to successful collaboration and innovation.

Millennials make up the largest segment of the workforce today, and it is estimated that by 2025, 75% of the global workforce will be comprised of this emerging generation (Fry, 2018). Significantly, members of Gen Z are expected to surpass Millennials as the most diverse generation, as they constitute more than a quarter of the U.S. population (Fry, 2018). As the Baby Boomer and Gen X's share of the workforce slowly decreases throughout the years, it is critical for companies to shift their workplace cultures from traditional ways of adapting to the new and changing demographics within the workplace, such as the shift from in-person to remote work.

Specifically, Latinx and Asian American populations in the U.S. continue to grow at an increasing rate. According to a Pew Research Study (Budiman et al., 2021), Asian Americans were the fastest-growing racial-ethnic group from 2000-2019 at 81%, and Latinx was the second-fastest-growing population at 70%. Therefore, their unique college experiences – shaped by their familial, cultural, and personal backgrounds – can inform the public about how they imagine their post-college trajectory. Through their career decision-making process, MilleniGenZ starts to understand what they want to do by exploring a variety of career opportunities with careful planning and guidance (Porfeli & Lee, 2012). If properly handled, this process affirms individual identity and fosters career job satisfaction, overall well-being, and long-term stability (Kunnen, 2013). This project explores this for an upwardly mobile Latinx and Asian American MilleniGenZ population.

Methods

As a research assistant for the Asian American Transnational Research Initiative (AATRI) at Cal Poly Pomona, I, along with my research team, administered two waves of surveys to MilleniGenZ Cal Poly Pomona students and graduates living in Southern

California in 2017 and in 2020. The research team administered the survey to MilleniGenZ college students in a variety of on-campus settings, including college classrooms and campus cultural centers. To recruit a larger range of qualified subjects, the survey study was also shared through various social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

In the first wave, there was a total of 936 subjects and in the second wave, a total of 745 subjects participated in the survey. The survey included 184 questions in total around the topics of relationships, social issues, political beliefs, social media participation, labor, and the future. For the purposes of this current study, I only conducted data analysis on questions related to career and work.

To run and analyze the survey data, I used IBM SPSS Statistics. I ran a series of descriptive statistics on participant demographics and also crosstabs on relevant questions that are related to labor. Although the survey includes students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, only Latinx and Asian American students were the populations that I focused on. The findings of my data analyses are listed in the following section.

Findings

MilleniGenZ college students' potential plans post-college

During college, many students are learning to navigate their academic journeys and, for some, are simultaneously working. Based on the findings of the current study, more than 50% of Latinx respondents are at least working part-time in both survey 1 and survey 2, and approximately 40% of Asian respondents are at least working part-time. Based on both surveys, more Asian respondents were not employed in comparison to their Latinx correspondents (Figure 1). These numbers indicate that a majority of Latinx and Asian college students are trying to balance and successfully fulfill the duties and responsibilities within these roles as a student and an employee.

However, it is unknown whether these college students are interested in finding careers consistent with current majors or if they plan to pursue other career options. Based on the findings, more than 50% of Latinx and Asian MilleniGenZ plan on attending graduate school (64% of Latinx and 55% of Asian) and/or working after
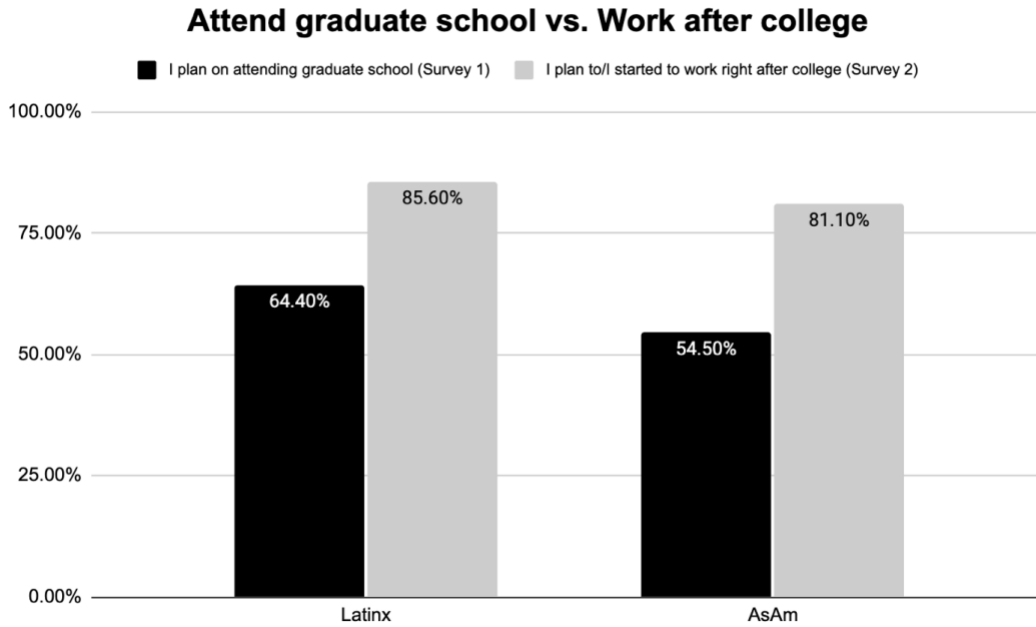
college (86% of Latinx and 81% of Asian). However, more students do prefer to work right after college. Figure 2.1 shows that, generally, Latinx respondents are more likely to want to work and attend graduate school than Asian respondents. This finding aligns with data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) (See Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3), which shows that enrollment for Latinx students in undergraduate and postbaccalaureate enrollment has increased at higher rates than for Asian students. Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, undergraduate enrollment increased for Latinx students (by 30%, from 2.6 million to 3.3 million students) compared to Asian students (by 7%, from 1.0 million to 1.1 million students). During this period, the enrollment decreased for White students (by 28%, from 10.9 million to 7.8 million students).

Figure 1: *Employment Status by Race*
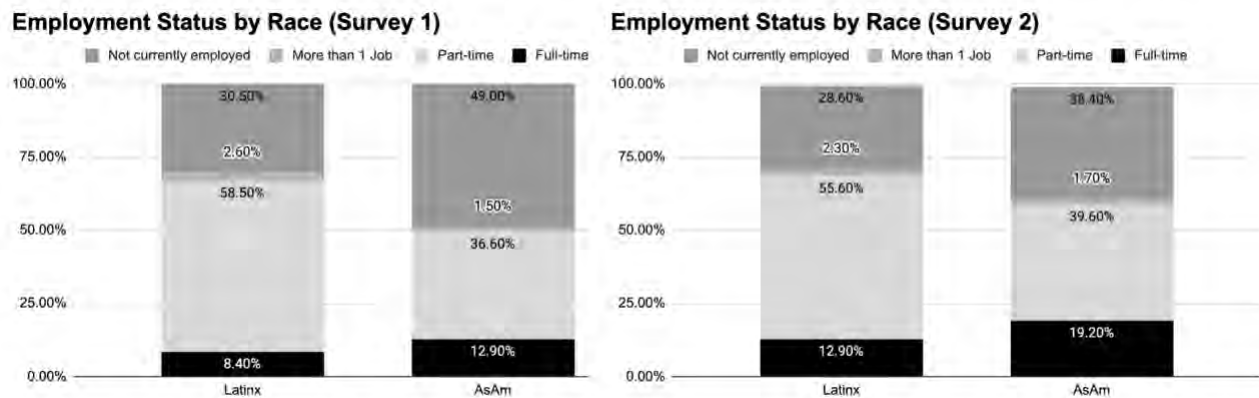
For postbaccalaureate enrollment between fall 2010 and 2021, enrollment increased for Hispanic students (by 81%, from 197,800 to 358,200 students) in comparison to Asian students (by 36%, from 187,800 to 254,600 students). Enrollment for White students also decreased (by 9%, from 1.8 million to 1.7 million students) during this period.

Figure 2.1*: MilleniGenZ plans after college*

Attend graduate school vs. Work after college

■ I plan on attending graduate school (Survey 1)   ▢ I plan to/I started to work right after college (Survey 2)

- Latinx: 64.40% (graduate school), 85.60% (work)
- AsAm: 54.50% (graduate school), 81.10% (work)

Figure 2.2: *Undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions by race/ethnicity: Fall 2010, 2019, and 2021*

Race/ethnicity	2010	2019	2021
American Indian/Alaska Native	179,091	116,245	107,013
Asian	1,029,768	1,102,464	1,098,939
Black	2,677,086	2,100,153	1,947,653
Latinx	2,551,000	3,478,407	3,306,301
Pacific Islander	57,521	44,879	40,972
White	10,895,938	8,497,838	7,828,943

Figure 2.3: *Postbaccalaureate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions by race/ethnicity: Fall 2010, Fall 2019, and Fall 2021*

Race/ethnicity	2010	2019	2021
American Indian/Alaska Native	17,140	13,409	14,069
Asian	187,807	224,655	254,550
Black	361,882	367,159	382,090
Latinx	197,816	307,473	358,247
Pacific Islander	6,466	5,997	6,173
White	1,824,865	1,641,935	1,667,357

An explanation for this trend among Latinx students may be due to the embodiment of critical resilience within their community. *Critical resilience* is a term that emerged from adopting the ideology of the feminist critical lens (Delgado, 2006) and emphasizes how Latinx students can navigate asymmetrical power relations at school (Campa, 2010). This perspective shows that Latinx students are influenced and operate by the personal, social, cultural, and historical factors that help them navigate power structures. Moreover, Latinx youth are able to create social counterspaces within their community. These social counterpaces are identity-affirming social settings in which Latinx youth challenge, disrupt, and help from racial microaggressions and discrimination (Nuñez, 2011). Therefore, these social counterpaces that strengthen their cultural identities make Latinx students resilient and persevere through graduate school and work. This racial group is unique in how they can build community and navigate their lives in their careers and academic success.

Influences of Family and Culture

Working college students are impacted by many factors, and some of the biggest influences on their career decision-making process are their families and culture of origin. A qualitative study collected data from 12 Asian Americans, and the authors identified seven domains that influenced their participants' career decisions (Fouad et al., 2008). The seven domains were the following: 1) family, 2) culture, 3) external factors, 4) career goals, 5) role models, 6) work values, and 7) personal characteristics

(Fouad et al., 2008). Family expectations impacted these participants heavily regarding their personal goals, interests, and work values. For instance, a participant from Fouad et al.'s (2008) study expressed the following: "*Filipino girls, it is just destined that you become a nurse. To this day, I still sometimes hear that from my family.*" Eight of the 12 participants said they received messages from their families about the role that work should play in their lives. Therefore, within the domain of familial influences, familial expectations of roles emerged as one of the main categories, as indicated by the majority of participants.

Parents exert emotional pressure on their children in hopes of guiding them towards a career that they believe is most suitable for their children. A parent's educational background is also an important factor in the type of career that college students gear toward. Previous research does support the notion that parents' education is linked to students' career choices (Grissmer, 2003; Ogunlade, 1973). For working-class families whose parents do not have college degrees, these students are forced to navigate their academic journeys with little to no guidance. Yet, they are pressured to meet expectations from their parents to excel in school.

For instance, many Asian families expect their children to work in STEM-related fields, and due to these expectations, they may choose certain majors in STEM on behalf of their parents (Fouad et al., 2008). This is a popular cultural perspective that Asian family values and socialization experiences strongly emphasize the importance of educational success. Based on anecdotal and observational studies by Sue and Okazaki (2009), researchers found that the following values in Asian families may promote educational achievements: demands and expectations for achievement and upward mobility, induction of guilt about parental sacrifices and the need to fulfill obligations, respect for education, social comparisons with other Asian-American families in terms of educational success, and obedience to elders (e.g., teachers). Therefore, some Asian college students will heavily immerse themselves in their academic studies to ensure they are fulfilling their parents' wishes. Moreover, due to the model minority myth that stereotypes Asians as being successful and highly educated, MilleniGenZ may feel pressured during college to do significantly well in classes, network, take on internships, and join organizations.

Figure 3: *MilleniGenZ preference to work near family*
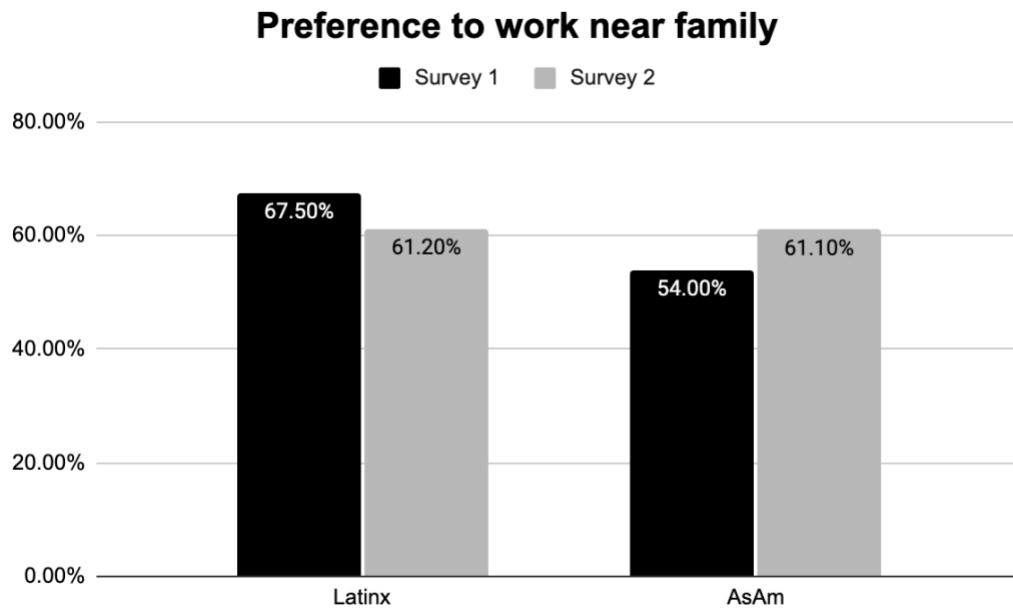
In many Latinx populations, *familismo* is a cultural value that emphasizes the importance of family loyalty and closeness (Vega, 1990). Individuals have to put the needs of their family first, sometimes at the expense of their own needs. Such self-sacrifices can be harmful to Latinx students because there are a number of factors that contribute to the underachievement of Latinx students within school (Bohon et al., 2005; Marschall, 2006). For example, low levels of parental education and engagement and lack of educational support predispose these students to specific vulnerabilities or disadvantages, which can result in negative life outcomes within a school (Woolley & GroganKaylor, 2006). However, it is critical to acknowledge the structural and systemic factors that create and perpetuate unequal access to educational support for Latinx students. In a qualitative study conducted by Zalaquett (2006), barriers that negatively impacted Latinx students in higher education were lack of strong adult supervision, misinformation about college requirements, and choice of less successful options. The student's parents expressed that even though they supported their children's educational aspirations, they had little to no experience in higher education which makes it challenging to provide proper academic guidance, and this is a common experience felt among Latinx parents (Trueba & Delgado-Gaitan, 1988). Therefore,

through *critical resilience,* Latinx students can navigate such power structures by building identity-affirming social counterspaces that help them strengthen their cultural identities (Nuñez, 2011). For institutions and organizations, there needs to be continuous efforts to encourage and support community-based initiatives and mentorship programs that help Latinx youth develop their skills and confidence throughout their academic careers.

As a result of familial values and expectations, both Latinx and Asian students may prefer to live at home with their families due to family obligations or because of other factors such as debt accumulation, the cost of living independently, and the labor market.

External Influences: Professors, College resources, Friends

Moreover, other contextual factors such as friends, professors, institutional resources, and even the media can impact the way that Latinx and Asian working college students imagine their future careers. For college students, their peers are sources of influence when making future career choices. Previous research shows that it is generally observed that peer groups have a significance influence on students' academic achievement (Olalekan, 2016). For instance, during these formative college years, students attached to their social groups find it more comfortable to discuss their personal lives and seek advice from their peers. More specifically, students join certain organizations and clubs on campus to learn more about their chosen majors, network, and decide whether they intend to pursue careers in their field of interest.

Institutional agents (e.g., professors and academic counselors) also influence college students' career decision making process. These social capital resources are important factors in shaping the success of college students and whether they are to persist in college. More importantly, previous studies have expressed that underrepresented, low-income, and first-generation college students have little to no knowledge of what college is and how to navigate their college experiences successfully (McDonough, 1997; McDonough et al., 1997). Therefore, academic counselors and professors are critical in transmitting knowledge and information about career options and opportunities to college students. For example, research indicates that mentoring programs on campus influence positive outcomes for Latinx college students (Crisp &

Cruz, 2010; Santos & Reigadas, 2002). At California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, the ARCHES Peer Mentoring program comprises undergraduate peer mentor students who meet with students to help them successfully transition to Cal Poly Pomona. These peer mentors are trained in specific areas such as: organizational strategies, decision making skills, general study skills, and time/life management. As such, these institutional agents can provide college students with emotional and instrumental support, familiarize students with college culture and values, career resources and academic knowledge to help students adjust to college accordingly.

MilleniGenZ's work values and expectations

While there are distinct generational work needs that differentiate Millennials and Gen Z from each other, there are common overall work-life values that make MilleniGenZ unique compared to older generations. For example, although both Millenials and GenZ are entrepreneurial, Millennials direct their career development efforts toward start-ups and early-stage companies, whereas Gen Z prefers to have entrepreneurial opportunities with more stable employment (Deloitte, 2022). However, MilleniGenZ values flexibility to manage both their work-family and work-school lives. Despite the popular media stereotype of MilleniGenZ as being "lazy" due to their need for flexibility, demanding more job autonomy, flexible work hours, and better workplace policies and practices to better manage their personal lives has led to a notable shift in how organizations are treating and managing their employees.

For instance, organizational leaders managing a diverse multigenerational workforce should offer more emotional and instrumental support to employees who are struggling with work-family conflict overall. Work-family conflict occurs when the demands from an employee's work (family) interfere with their ability to meet the demands from their family (work) domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and can manifest in both directions, including work-to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC). Existing studies about WFC and FWC have shown that employees tend to experience negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit, and health outcomes such as increased depression and anxiety. Thus, MilleniGenZ college students who are currently struggling with demands as a student and in their personal lives are also more likely to experience negative

outcomes such as disengagement in school, low exam performance, and increased depression and anxiety. In our Generations Study, one of the students who is an immigrant expressed the following: "*I will say I can see that it's hard for immigrants who come over here and not know English. To this day, I still translate for my grandparents from my parents. And they struggled to adapt to English.*" Based on this qualitative data, work-life balance for immigrant students is a struggle due to competing demands from having to be a language broker for their parents while trying to meet demands from their school or work lives. These negative individual outcomes for MilleniGenZ college students can subsequently impact their attitudes about their future careers and what they potentially seek from their future employers to be successful employees.

Compared to previous generations, Millennials and Gen Z have different career expectations and values that have shifted over the years. Managing workplace generational differences can pose different kinds of issues and conflicts. Therefore, understanding how historical events have characterized each generation and adapting to the changing workforce is critical in fostering an effective and productive workplace culture. According to the Society for Human Resources (SHRM), employee work values are the most different among generations; however, if such differences are managed well, this can create new opportunities and innovations.

According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) (2004), work values are the source of most significant differences among generations and a major source of conflict in the workplace. The workplace comprises five generations: Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Traditionalists, who are the oldest generation, are committed to their company long-term and have respect for authority and the hierarchal system. Baby Boomers live to work and are goal-oriented. They strongly believe that hard work and making sacrifices pave the way to success. Generation X are self-directed and are not impressed by micromanagement (Waltz et al., 2020). This generation are parents of Generation Z and are senior employees as Baby Boomers are retiring. Millennials are currently the largest generation in the workforce. They also grew up with the internet and ensuing changes in expectations for communication. Therefore, they seek communication through email and texts rather than face-to-face. Significantly, they are motivated by the quality and

competence of their supervisors (Noble et al., 2009). Lastly, Generation Z are the youngest generation of employees. They prefer flexible work hours (Ryback, 2016) and seek workplace environments that prioritize diversity and social responsibility.

I focus on MilleniGenZ as our primary focus as they constitute a majority of the workforce today and are the most ethnically diverse than previous generations (Bannon et al., 2011; Flippin, 2017a, b). They are an entrepreneurial generation that is keen on startups. As digital natives, with the help of the internet, they are able to seek solutions independently. When asked whether they would consider becoming an entrepreneur, 41.6% of Asian MilleniGenZ agreed, and 37.7% of Latinx MilleniGenZ also agreed. In addition, participants were also asked if they would like to be self-employed. Only 34.8% of Asian MilleniGenZ agreed, whereas 53.5% of Latinx MilleniGenZ said yes.

Figure 4: *Plans to take on leadership role in career by race (n=936)*

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
White	15	26	73	121
	12.40%	21.50%	60.30%	
African American/Black	2	4	31	38
	5.30%	10.50%	81.60%	
Latinx	39	75	286	416
	9.40%	18.00%	68.80%	
Asian American	24	49	124	202
	11.90%	24.30%	61.40%	

In a 2016 Millennial study conducted by EY (Merriman & Valerio, 2016), one of the Big 4 accounting firms, 62% of the study's participants considered starting their own business and 78% considered entrepreneurs as successful. This shows that MilleniGenZ are fueled by original thoughts and ideas. As the DIY or 'Do it yourself' generation, there is a pool of resources that they can tap into and experiment with. Additionally, in comparison to their White counterparts (60.30%), more Latinx (68.8%) and Asian (61.4%) MilleniGenZ indicated that they do plan to take on a leadership role within their future careers. Therefore, the traditional path to a successful career — going into higher education — may not be as fulfilling for MilleniGenZ achievers. Some

MilleniGenZ may find interest in climbing the corporate ladder into leadership positions (see Figure 5). Therefore, it is critical to acknowledge the unique paths that MilleniGenZ students may want to pursue and create and foster more personalized career pathways. For instance, through career assessments, mentorship, and counseling, it is important to tailor career advice and guidance to each individual's strengths, interests, and goals.

Organizational and Practical Implications

Considering that MilleniGenZ will continue to enter the workforce in increasing numbers, how will employers try to attract and retain these future workers? It is important to treat this unique generation based on their needs and talents rather than the stereotypical characteristics they are labeled by. Organizations will have to compete with each other to attract skilled workers with benefits and incentives that align with MilleniGenZ need and values. For instance, MilleniGenZ collectively strive for work-life balance. Therefore, flexibility is commonly sought after and is one of the factors that may impact MilleniGenZ retention in the workplace.

Another important resource that can mitigate the effects of work-family demands of college students is family-supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB), which refers to positive behaviors from supervisors that support employees' family-related needs (Hammer et al., 2009).

Organizations can implement training interventions for supervisors and professors so that they are better equipped to manage family-related matters. For instance, prior work has found that when supervisors attended family-supportive supervisor training, their employees' perceptions of FSSB increased, and there were even increases in employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). This indicates the positive outcomes that family-supportive training for supervisors can ultimately benefit employees in the organization. Further, this training can help identify the specific competencies that supervisors need to develop. Based on the Generations survey data, respondents indicated they prefer to live near their parents while working or pursuing higher education post-college. Therefore, flexible work hours and job crafting are some of the ways that can provide MilleniGenz with more autonomy and freedom to balance their work-nonwork demands.

More importantly, it is critical within educational institutions to further help guide and support college students by focusing on their strengths, capabilities, and potential. Drawing from the social-cognitive career theory (SCCT; Lent et al., 1994), educators should utilize student-centered pedagogical methods that focus on active learning and creating culturally affirming, inclusive spaces. Institutions should incorporate diversity and inclusion considerations into the career planning process to support individuals in overcoming systemic barriers. Mentoring programs (e.g., peer mentoring) could help students feel more comfortable speaking about their aptitudes, talents, and interests with their peers compared to college career counselors or professors. However, career counselors should continue to provide opportunities and information to students about careers that would best match them. For instance, utilizing career development strategies that recognize the complex contextual factors that characterize each student can help them make their career choices.

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