

12-2019

## MILLENNIAL GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF COUNSELING FACULTY AT SELECTED CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS

Antoine Thomas

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MILLENNIAL GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS: OBSERVATIONS AND  
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A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Antoine Thomas  
September 2019

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Approved by:

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## ABSTRACT

Higher education, specifically the California community colleges, is being inundated with a large new generation of students called millennials. They are the majority student group enrolled in record numbers at California Community Colleges. California community colleges continue to evolve in order to accommodate millennial generation college students. A phenomenological design was utilized, using face-to-face interviews. This research explores the phenomenon of “millennial college students (millennials)” through the lived experiences of California community college counseling faculty who interact with them. Their observations and experiences could prove to be informative and help advance the purpose of this research.

The following are the research questions that guided this study. What type of experiences have California community college counseling faculty encountered while providing counseling services to millennial college students? What type of experiences have California community college counseling faculty encountered while teaching millennial college students? Have California community college counseling faculty modified their counseling or teaching practices to better serve millennial college students? Will the observations and experiences of California community college counseling faculty closely align with the literature in describing millennial college students?

After reviewing the results of the study, a particular feeling developed from the research that led to the creation of particular themes. Each recorded

interview was analyzed for salient themes in order to categorize data that are similar. It was important for the researcher to identify commonalities from the accounts of the counseling faculty participants. There were some essential aspects that stood out and truly helped to identify the millennial college student.

The four themes generated were Expectations of Here and Now, Sheltered/ Protected, Group Focused, Techy/Technology.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To be able to thank those who made the attainment of my Doctorate in Education is truly humbling.

My family has been supportive and proud of the educational journey that I have traveled. My parents, Robert and Georgia, provided me with a strong foundation of life skills, and for this I am so thankful.

I would like to thank my brother, Julius Thomas, for his positive encouragement and support. His strong and steady guidance is why I am at this point in my life. Julius truly believes that there is nothing that can't be accomplished if you put your mind to it.

I would also like to thank my colleague and mentor, Dr. Wanda Fulbright-Dennis. It was her talks on a yearly basis that gave me the motivation to continue my education. The support and guidance that she has provided me throughout my Ed.D. program and dissertation process has made a huge difference and will never be forgotten.

## DEDICATION

To Julius Thomas, my family, and Dr. Wanda Fulbright Dennis for their constant encouragement, support, belief in me, dedication, and love.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

According to Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007),

Most scholars define a generation by a specific time-period (e.g., 1943–1960) and shared experiences (e.g., World War II). Possessing a common history, members of a generation are influenced by people, places or events that become enduring social referents. As a result, members of a generation often develop shared values and behaviors. (p. 21)

However, generations influence one another and in doing so they enrich one another (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Further, as they grow and evolve, younger members of the next generation will evaluate the beliefs of the previous generation, identifying with those that they accept and excluding those they do not (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b).

These evolving beliefs and values among new generations of community college students necessitate that California community colleges continue to evolve in order to accommodate these students. Further, there is a need to understand each new generation of college students from counseling faculty perspectives and experiences. For example, the majority of California community college students have grown up with a variety of technology options within their grasp. They are of a generation accustomed to easy and fast accessibility to information with very little wait time (Kundanis, 2003). The Internet has provided

these students with an accessible platform to explore questions or concerns as well as to retrieve answers to any question. There are no limits to the various topics to be researched or the amounts of information to attain because of technological advances (Nimon, 2007). As a result of these and other unique experiences among the millennial population, educators within community colleges must consider how to best address their needs.

### Problem Statement

Little is known in the literature about counseling faculty observations and experiences providing services to millennial students in California community college districts. Throughout all of the research there was one missing piece; there was little literature on the California community college counseling faculty voice. Because of the high level of involvement that counseling faculty have with all students, it is important to discern how counseling faculty describe millennial college students and what their experiences have been while providing services to these students.

It is important to gain the perspectives of California community college counseling faculty because these professionals are on the frontlines interacting with students on a daily basis and have been for numerous years. The California community college counseling faculty voice needs to be heard for what could prove to be useful information with regard to better assisting millennial college students. At California community colleges, counseling faculty play a key role.

They are usually the first point of contact for students. They have longevity with students, which can create long-term relationships that address educational planning, grades, retention, career information, letters of recommendation and graduation requirements. Counseling faculty also serve as mentors for students, given their supportive role. Some counseling faculty have been working with students for numerous years. Some of these counseling faculty have had work experience at the high school and/or at the university levels. Who would know students better than these professionals?

#### Purpose Statement

Millennials are not the only student group attending California community colleges; however, there is a generation of millennial students (i.e., ages 19 to 37) who are attending California community colleges and who have become the majority students in attendance and will remain so for several years. The purpose of this study was to explore the observations and experiences of California community college counseling faculty working with the millennials who make up a large majority of the student population attending California community colleges. Enrollment rates by age group at California community colleges are presented in Table 1.

California community colleges continue to evolve in order to accommodate the millennial college students who were born between 1982 and 2000. Also, California community colleges are made up of diverse student groups in regard

Table 1

*Enrollment Rates by Age Group and Percent Enrollment*

Age group	Spring 2018 % enrollment	Summer 2018 % enrollment	Fall 2018 % enrollment	Winter 2019 % enrollment
19 or less	30.87	53.09	64.86	20.87
20 to 24	22.31	16.73	12.77	12.29
25 to 29	11.08	6.73	5.88	7.22
30 to 34	7.81	4.26	3.73	6.14
35 to 39	6.09	3.15	2.86	5.65
40 to 49	8.22	4.48	3.78	9.76
50+	13.55	11.52	6.08	38.03
Unknown	.07	.04	.03	.06

From Management Information Systems Data Mart, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-b (<http://datamart.cccco.edu>).

to ethnicity, age, and identity. Generalist counseling faculty assigned to the department at a California community college are discipline experts who provide comprehensive counseling services to culturally diverse student populations enrolled at the college. A generalist counseling faculty member is one who is not assigned to a specialized student program, that is, Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOPS), Disabled Students Programs and Services (ACCESS), or athletics. Counseling faculty assist in planning, developing, documenting, and executing specific services and activities outlined in the

college district's Student Equity plan and Student Success and Support Program Plan (SSSP).

California community college counseling faculty are faculty who interact with millennial students on a daily basis. These interactions occur in counseling sessions, the classroom, workshops, or through various program involvement. These professionals are an untapped resource who can share their experiences regarding millennial students. Their observations and experiences regarding millennial students will prove informative.

This research explores the phenomenon of the millennial college students (the millennials) through the lived experiences of California community college counseling faculty who interact with them. Usually, California community college counseling faculty are first to meet new students because of mandatory orientation requirements and high school outreach programs designed for the millennial-aged students as they transition into college. Additionally, California community college counseling faculty teach courses (e.g., Introduction to College, Career Life Planning, Transfer Basics, Single Parent Academy, etc.) that have enrollments of millennial students. They are also instrumental in designing interventions to better address the needs of and accommodate millennial college students. A state mandate for California community college students, the SSSP, from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (n.d.-a) includes extensive counseling faculty involvement and provides a funding source for the development of student services and programs.

Understanding millennial college students' characteristics, behaviors, makeup, as well as their needs, desires, and expectations will assist California community college counseling faculty in developing or structuring insightful interventions, assistance, and programming. Furthermore, a clearer understanding of millennial students in higher education will contribute to appropriate and relevant planning while developing programs that will align best to the needs of the millennial college student.

#### Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What type of experiences have California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) encountered while providing counseling services to millennial community college students?
2. What type of experiences have CCCCCF encountered while teaching millennial community college students?
3. Have CCCCCF modified their counseling or teaching practices to better serve millennial community college students?
4. Will the observations and experiences of CCCCCF closely align with the literature in describing millennial community college students?

## Significance of the Study

This study is unique in that from this researcher's review of the literature, the current observations and experiences of these professionals have not been analyzed much at California community colleges. What do the lived experiences of CCCC convey to us about this new generation of students? Can these professionals provide us with new insights into the behavior or characteristics of millennial students? Do these professionals recognize and relate to some of the characteristics describing the millennial generation student that were discussed in the previous research and articles on the topic?

## Assumptions

A major assumption of the study is that the concept of "millennial generation students" is valid and worthy of investigation. That is, there are such things as unique experiences within this specific age range. The millennial generation college students are in fact different from prior generations of students. Their characteristics and behavior differ somewhat if not significantly from other generations of students with respect to their views, behaviors, values, and outlook on life. It is interesting to note that the literature review focused more on millennials as a group rather than as individuals. However, according to Coomes and DeBard (2004a), "One must always approach with caution the use of such models for understanding the dynamics of subcultures on college campuses" (p. 14). Therefore, while it is assumed that the millennial generation

of college students has been influenced by unique experiences throughout their generation, it is important to continue to recognize differences within the generation as well.

### Delimitations

This study was dependent on self-reported observations and experiences of the CCCCCF at the time of the interviews. This study is about the millennial community college student, but it does not address new state policies or mandates. Only selected California community colleges in the southern region were studied. The study did not include other higher education systems in California. This study was not generalized to every California community college. This study is delimited to CCCCCF since no existing studies were found that addressed CCCCCF observations and experiences.

### Definitions of Key Terms

The terms related to this study are defined as follows. The terms millennial and millennial generation college student are used interchangeably.

Baby Boomers generation. People born between 1940 and 1960.

California Community College system. “The largest system of higher education in the nation, with 2.1 million students attending 115 colleges. [These] colleges provide students with the knowledge and background necessary to compete in today’s economy. With a wide range of educational offerings, the

colleges provide workforce training, basic courses in English and math, certificate and degree programs, and preparation for transfer to four-year institutions” (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, n.d.-a, para. 1).

Counseling faculty. Assist in planning, developing, documenting, and executing specific services and activities outlined in the college districts Student Equity plan and Student Success and Support Program Plan (SSSP).

Generation. Strauss and Howe (1991) defined this as “an era, typically lasting about a decade, when people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment” (p. 71). A group of individuals, most of whom are the same approximate age, having similar ideas, problems, attitudes, and so forth.

Generation X (Xers). People born between 1960 and 1981.

Generation Y (Gen Y). Millennials also known as Generation Y (or Gen Y) are the demographic cohort following Generation X and preceding Generation Z.

Millennial generation student. Young people who were born between 1982 and 2000, also referred to as Generation Y (Howe & Strauss, 2003).

Student Success Initiative (SSSP). The Student Success Task Force recommended 22 specific policy changes to improve educational achievement in the California community colleges. These recommendations would strengthen the community college system by expanding those structures and programs that work and realigning our resources with what matters most: student achievement.

## Summary

The need to understand the millennial college student has proven to be interesting. This research is an exploration of the phenomenon of the millennial college students—millennials—through the lived experiences of the community college counseling faculty who interact with them. To research what CCCC observations and experiences have been in regard to millennial college students answered some of the research questions in this study. The literature review that follows offers a better understanding of the generations and provides a deeper look into millennial college students. Their characteristics, technology use, parental involvement, and education are addressed in the literature review.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Generalist counseling faculty assigned to the counseling department at a California community college district are discipline experts who provide comprehensive counseling services to culturally diverse student populations enrolled at the college. Generalist counseling faculty are not assigned to a specialized student program (e.g., Extended Opportunities Programs and Services [EOPS], Disabled Students Programs and Services [ACCESS] or athletics). Counseling faculty assist in planning, developing, documenting, and executing specific services and activities outlined in the college district's Student Equity plan and Student Success and Support Program Plan (SSSP). California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) are faculty who interact with millennial students on a daily basis. These interactions occur in counseling sessions, the classroom, workshops, or through various program involvement.

These professionals are an untapped resource and can share their observations and experiences regarding millennial community college students. The observations and experiences of CCCCf regarding millennial community college students can prove to be quite informative.

This research explores the phenomenon of the millennial community college students, *millennials*, through the lived experiences of the community college counseling faculty who directly interact with them. Generally, CCCCf are

first to meet and serve new students because of the colleges' mandatory orientation requirements. Counseling faculty teach courses (e.g., Introduction to College, Career Life Planning, Transfer Basics, Single Parent Academy, etc.) that have enrollments of millennial community college students. These professionals are also involved in designing interventions to identify and address the concerns and needs of millennial community college students. A state mandate for California community college students, the SSSP from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (n.d.-a), includes extensive counseling faculty involvement and provides a funding source for student services and programs.

A review of the literature regarding millennials will provide a better understanding of the millennial community college student. This literature review focused on millennials as a group rather than as individuals. Thus, the literature review for this research study was approached with caution. The researcher took into account the dynamics of student subcultures found on college campuses.

In the pursuit of this literature review, the researcher found little literature addressing counseling faculty observations and experiences providing services to millennial students in California community college districts. Because of the high level of involvement counseling faculty have with all students, it is important to discern how counseling faculty describe millennial community college students based upon their observations and experiences while providing services to these students. Within the California Community College system,

attention has focused on the SSSP initiative (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-a).

Understanding millennial community college students' characteristics, behaviors, makeup, as well as their needs, desires, and expectations will assist CCCC in developing or structuring insightful interventions, assistance, and programming. Furthermore, a clearer understanding of millennial community college students in higher education will contribute to appropriate and relevant planning, development, and implementation of programs and services for this generation of students attending California community colleges.

### Generational Labels

Past research on millennial community college students conveyed that differences exist from prior generations, which include Baby Boomers and Generation X (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Oblinger, 2003). Each generation's narrative has been influenced by the events and experiences of that time period and this, in turn, shapes the personality of generations to come (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b; Howe & Strauss, 2007). Differences associated with beliefs, experiences, styles, and values between generations are important to recognize as knowledge of these differences proves valuable.

Strauss and Howe's definition (as cited in Sandeen, 2008) are identified with distinct names. Members of five generations comprise the vast majority of the current U.S. population (with birth dates listed) as follows:

The G.I. generation (1901–1924); the Silent generation (1925–1942); the Boom generation (1943– 1960); Generation X (1961–1981), and the Millennial generation (1982–2000). This newest generational cohort, the Millennials, builds upon the values instilled by the Baby Boomers while also filling the cultural void left by the departing G.I. generation. The newest generation, born since 2004, is yet unnamed (1991, p. 32).

However, Howe and Strauss predicted this generation may be called the “Homeland Generation” due to the repercussions of the events of September 11 on their lives (2007, p. 206). (Sandeem, 2008, pp. 12-13)

Table 2 refers to the different generational labels and time-periods associated with the generations, as reported by the various authors. The generations appear to have more than one name or reference that describes them as well as varying age ranges.

A generational view enables counseling faculty and student services educators with a much-needed guide to understanding college students. It is important to gain a generational perspective in order to offer community college student service educators, including counseling faculty, with a framework for understanding college students.

Table 2

*Generational Labels and Dates Reported in Different Sources*

Source	Label				
Howe & Strauss (2000)	Silent generation (1925–1943)	Boom generation (1943–1960)	13th generation (1961–1981)	Millennial generation (1982–2000)	—
Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	Traditionalists (1900–1945)	Baby Boomers (1946–1964)	Generation Xers (1965–1980)	Millennial generation; Echo Boomer; Generation Y; Baby Busters; Generation Next (1981–1999)	—
Martin & Tulgan (2002)	Silent generation (1925–1942)	Baby Boomers (1946–1960)	Generation X (1965–1977)	Millennials (1978–2000)	—
Oblinger & Oblinger (2005)	Matures (<1946)	Baby Boomers (1947–1964)	Gen-Xers (1965–1980)	Gen-Y; NetGen; millennials (1981–1995)	Post-millennials (1995–present)
Tapscott (1998)	—	Baby Boom Generation (1946–1964)	Generation X (1965–1975)	Digital generation (1976–2000)	—
Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak (2000)	Veterans (1922–1943)	Baby Boomers (1943–1960)	Gen-Xers (1960–1980)	Nexters (1980–1999)	—

*Note.* From *When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*, by L. C. Lancaster and D. Stillman, p. 296, 2002, New York, NY: Harper Business.

## Generational Values

In addition to a generational view, Coomes and DeBard (2004b) indicated that it is imperative to recognize specific generational values. That information offers insight regarding how to align services to those distinct characteristics. Community college student services personnel, including counseling faculty, have developed multiple theories for understanding student groups versus individuals. In addition to the traditional support services that one can learn about in their professional development programs, it is also important to recognize the conceptual framework under which generations operate (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b). Table 3 refers to the comparison of generational values that distinguish one generation from the other.

The study of generational values is informative for this literature review as it provides descriptive information for generational comparisons. Howe and Strauss (2003) stated that much can be learned from the distinctions between generations in terms of their values. This information is helpful when addressing the counseling needs of millennial community college students. Knowing millennial community college students' values provides counseling faculty with a foundation for designing relevant services and programs to better address their needs. Once the themes of a new generation have been identified, learning more about that generation's goals, dreams, and fears is possible. It is imperative for student affairs practitioners such as counseling faculty to remain optimistic and

focus on the behaviors of students reflective of their values rather than solely relying upon measures that are objective in nature (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b).

Table 3  
Comparing Generational Values

Views toward	Boomers	Gen Xers	Millennials
Levels of trust	Confident of self, not authority	Low toward authority	High toward authority
Loyalty to institutions	Cynical	Considered naïve	Committed
Most admire	Taking charge	Creating enterprise	Following a hero of integrity
Career goals	Build a stellar career	Build a portable career	Build parallel careers
Rewards	Title and the corner office	Freedom not to do	Meaningful work
Parent-child involvement	Receding	Distant	Intruding
Having children	Controlled	Doubtful	Definite
Family life	Indulged as children	Alienated as children	Protected as children
Education	Freedom from expression	Pragmatic	Structure of accountability
Evaluation	Once a year with documentation	“Sorry, but how am I doing?”	Feedback whenever I want it
Political orientation	Attack expression	Apathetic, individual	Crave community
The big question	What does it mean?	Does it work?	How do we build it?

*Note.* From *Serving the Millennial Generation: New Directions for Student Services*, by M. D. Coomes and R. DeBard, p. 40, 2004, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

However, generational views and values should be used cautiously. One cannot assume that an individual’s generational view fits everyone, so generational views and values cannot be assumed either. We should not

assume that the values, behaviors, and attitudes of one generation are reflected in the prior generation. It is important not to lose sight of the distinct characteristics of the individual. For example, Howe and Strauss's theory seldom contains images of marginalized groups (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b). Therefore, the generational perspective needs to be evaluated in terms of its application to students of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) students; and students of specific ethnic and cultural groups. Social science perspectives have taught us that the diversity within groups is greater than between groups (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b). Counseling faculty need to understand that each generation has its own social challenges within the group and it is important to understand how that has influenced one's values.

#### Who Are the Millennials?

Nimon (2007) stated,

Howe and Strauss (2000, pp. 6, 10–11) list no fewer than ten terms in common use, ranging from Generation X 2 to the Echo Boom, finally settling on Millennials, as a term popular among the generation itself.

Defining birthdates also vary. Huntley (2006, p. 2) argues the starting point as 1982, as do Howe and Strauss (2000, p. 4): Weiler (2004, p. 6), and Krohn (2004, p. 325) defined it as 1980, and Freestone and Mitchell (2004, p. 123) set it as 1977. (p. 25)

Given the variation in stated birthdates of the millennial generation, it is important to define the birth range for the purposes of this study. For this study, millennial community college students are students who were born between 1982 and 2000 and are called Generation Y. Currently, they range in age from 19 to 37 years of age.

### Influential Factors

Unique attributes among generations have been thought to be influenced by historical events and social interactions; therefore, it is essential to understand generations based on these interactions and events (Nimon, 2007). Strauss and Howe (1991) defined this as “an era, typically lasting about a decade, when people perceive that historic events are radically altering their social environment” (p. 71). Further, several authors stated that there were historical happenings that had an effect on the millennial generation. Elam et al. (2007) stated,

They watched the unfolding of Desert Storm in Iraq and the continual, “real time” media coverage it generated. From school shootings at Columbine High School and other locations, they experienced school lockdowns and increased security. Growing up, they heard presidential sound bites to “tear down this wall” and “read my lips,” and have witnessed the initiation of impeachment proceedings against a sitting President. (p. 21)

Parental concern, support, and protection were present throughout all of these historical undertakings. These defining historical moments will long be remembered (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Murray, 1997; Woodard, Love, & Komives, 2000).

In addition to unique experiences based on historical events, millennials have also been exposed to specific technological advances. For example, millennials are students who have grown up with a variety of technology options within their grasp (e.g., DVDs [Digital Video Disks], PDAs [Personal Digital Assistant], iPods, video games, MP3s, the Internet, cable television, and cell phones; Kundanis, 2003). Also, this generation of students will have the largest numbers in our current workforce as Baby Boomers are retiring (Fry, 2018). Millennials reflected over one in three American workers in the year 2015, and most recently they represent the American workforce at greater rates than Generation X and the Baby Boomers. It has further been noted that a smaller percentage of millennial students attending community colleges are from single-parent homes (Major, 2002).

In addition to significant historical events and technological advances, the millennial generation has been exposed to distinctly different messages from products available and the media. Unlike the prior generation, which is called Generation X and is labeled as having a traumatic, latchkey childhood, high value was placed on millennial children during their developmental years. This value was evident through relevant products such as Cabbage Patch Dolls and

movies like *Baby Boom*. Teamwork has been emphasized through such shows as *Barney and Friends*, which highlights the value of collaborating as opposed to individualism (Howe & Strauss, 2003).

### Characteristics of Millennials

The millennial student represents a generation that differs from their parents' Baby Boomer generation as well as Generation X and their ancestors (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Because of organized and structured playdates, they have been described as being team oriented (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002) and optimistic, high-achieving, modest rule followers (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Statistically, they have shown lower rates of "teen suicide, teen pregnancy, abortion, violent crime and drug use among teens" than students do in prior generations (Howe & Strauss, 2003, p. 1). Among the millennial generation, it has been found that their aptitude test scores are increasing and, likewise, they are experiencing more pressure to excel (U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2012).

Further, millennials have been described as representing larger numbers than nonmillennial students coming from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, more educated, and representative of a more diverse population. They have also been described as having busy schedules, being heavily monitored by parents, and being pressured to excel academically (McGlynn, 2008). Loy (2010) stated, "Millennials are perceived as being the 'I'm entitled to . . .,' the 'What's in it for

me?’ generation—and labeled the ‘trophy kids’” (p. 43). Figure 1 reflects some of the characteristics that have been described as reflective of the millennial generation.

- Were born between 1981 and 1997 and are the largest and the most college-educated generation in American history.
- Will make up 75 percent of the workforce within the decade.
- Were the first generation raised by “helicopter parents” who hovered incessantly and worried about their children’s self-esteem.
- Were described by their teachers as being in constant need of positive reinforcement and attention. They were the first generation to receive trophies for participation.
- Are the most rapidly growing class of millionaires and billionaires. However, many live at home with parents and expect they will never achieve the same standard of living they were raised in.
- Tend to be politically independent and may not affiliate with either Democratic or Republican parties. They are strong supporters of Bernie Sanders for president.
- Thrive on collaboration. It comes naturally: They spent their preschool to college years working in small groups.
- Were the first generation to grow up with social media networks and enjoy sharing their lives within the larger communities. Many prefer texting to talking.
- Find integrating Common Core with technology-infused instruction to be a relatively easy shift.
- Don’t necessarily see teaching—or the field of education—as a long-term commitment. They see careers in education as being among many options open to them.

*Figure 1. Millennials: The facts. From “What Do Millennials Really Want?” by S. Posnick-Goodwin, 2016, California Educator, 20(7), p. 19.*

Lancaster and Stillman (2002) studied the millennial students by looking at who they are, their age, and their characteristics as compared to other generations of students. Lancaster and Stillman’s work contributed to a working

definition of the millennial student. Characteristics of millennial students noted most often in the literature appear in Figure 2.

Characteristics of Millennials Noted Most Often	
• Feeling special	• Lacking interpersonal skills
• Feeling pressured	• Over reliant on technology
• Sheltered	• Indecisive
• Confident	• Sensitive
• Conventional	• Tied to one major
• Team oriented	• Trouble finding a career
• High achieving	• Having trust issues
• Respectful	• Hard working
• Structured followers	• Generous
• Short attention span	• Practical
• Multi-tasking behavior	• Rule followers
• Lack of critical thinking skills	• Optimistic about their futures
• Helicopter parents	

Figure 2. Characteristics of millennials noted most often. From *Characteristics of Millennial Students at a Two-Year College* (Doctoral Dissertation), by S. K. Fenske, 2011 (ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global database, UMI No. 3492289); *When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*, by L. C. Lancaster and D. Stillman, 2002, New York, NY: Harper Business; *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, by N. Howe and W. Strauss, 2000, New York, NY: Vintage Books.

In a study conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2010 through phone surveys of a sample of 2,020 adults, 830 of whom are millennials, the respondents were asked to identify what made their generation unique. Based on the top five responses in the study,

Millennials have a distinctive reason for feeling distinctive. In response to an open-ended follow-up question, 24% say it's because of their use of technology. Gen Xers also cite technology as their generation's biggest source of distinctiveness, but far fewer—just 12%—say this. Boomers' feelings of distinctiveness coalesce mainly around work ethic, which 17% cite as their most prominent identity badge. For Silents, it's the shared experience of the Depression and World War II, which 14% cite as the biggest reason their generation stands apart. (p. 5)

Interestingly, among the top five responses, work ethic was not represented among the millennial responses. The other remaining characteristics described by millennials in terms of what made them unique were music/pop culture, liberal/tolerant, smarter, and clothes.

#### College-Related Attributes

Howe and Strauss (2003) also described the degree to which millennial students who attend 2-year colleges exhibit seven core characteristics:

- **Special.**

“As Millennials absorb the adult message that they dominate America’s agenda, they come to the conclusion that their problems are the nation’s problems, their future is the nation’s future, and that, by extension, and the American people will be inclined to help them solve those problems.” They tend to trust large national institutions (including the government) to do the right thing. In addition to their faith in institutions to serve them well, this generation is also more willing than other generations to acknowledge the importance of their own personal choices and actions. In recruiting, colleges can capitalize on this trait by stressing traditions and high standards, and involving the co-purchasing parents in recruiting activities. Administrators must prepare to deal with the impact of helicopter parents on campus life, and students’ high expectations for housing and other facilities. Feedback and structure are critical in the classroom for this group of students who has come up through the “no child left behind” approach to education.

- **Sheltered**

“Everywhere Millennials go . . . they expect to be kept safe”. From school uniforms, to identity cards, to V-Chips, to fences and metal detectors at school, Millennials have grown up with a premium on security, and the support for harsh punishments for those who misbehave. The doctrine of in loco parentis, long denigrated by Boomers and Generation Xers is

regaining support among both millennial students and their parents. In recruiting, quality campus security services can become a real selling point, as well as an emphasis on the smaller, safer feel of a “college” as opposed to the larger, more impersonal feel of a “university”. Safety on campus both from external threats, and from the misbehavior of students themselves will impact the nature of campus life. This will include addressing issues of health services and substance use and abuse. In the classroom, faculty can expect more complaints about “unfair grades”, biased values, and any perceived inappropriateness in faculty-student relationships.

- **Confident**

More than four in five teens believe that they will be financially more successful than their parents—a percentage that rose sharply during the 1990s. The Millennials’ view of success has become more rounded with the concept of balance becoming more important. Among freshman, the goal of “making a contribution to society” is on the rise while “having lots of money” is on the decline.

In recruiting, it will be more important to tell prospects about the great things that will happen when they make the right choice, rather than the terrible things that will happen if they make the wrong choice. School spirit is likely to return to campus life with all the attendant pep-rallies and award ceremonies. Confidence about their future may lead Millennials to see less

benefit in attempts to be “creatively different from their peers”, focusing in the classroom more on following the rules than pushing the envelope.

- **Team-Oriented**

In response to the perceived “lack of cohesion” of Generation X culture, Millennials are trying to make all the pieces fit together a bit better. Fewer teens report feeling lonely, and more reporting socializing in groups than socializing with only one or two friends. This group orientation, combined with advances in technology, has increased levels of interconnection among Millennials who are less interested in the anonymous freedom of the internet than its potential to maintain their peer networks. This connected generation of teens tends to view the major causes of America’s problems as the consequences of adult individualism, and issues of gender, race and ethnicity are losing importance, while issues related to income inequality are gaining.

Peer pressure among Millennials can become a powerful tool for recruiters as they capitalize on this groups’ tendency to conformity. Also, while many schools openly recruit for subpopulations (including men), Millennials appear to be bothered more than previous generations by “preferential admissions quotas or formulas based on race”. With regard to campus life, this team-orientation is likely to manifest itself in growing involvement in service and civic activities both on and off campus. In the classroom, faculty should prepare for students that expect team teaching, team

assignments and team grading, and more emphasis on academic programs that serve the public interest rather than individual interests.

- **Conventional**

The conventionality of the Millennials seems to stem from their general sense that rules and standards can make life easier. This generation feels loved by their parents, and perceives a diminished generation gap – their parents are in touch with their lives and it's easier for them to talk with their parents about sex, drugs and alcohol than it was for previous generations. More than ever before, teens and parents share tastes in clothes and music, as well as many values, although they tend to feel that values will be more important in their generation than they were for their parents.

Recruiters need to respond to the fact that, more than the generations that preceded them, Millennials believe in big brands, and will want to go where the group goes. Once on campus, these students have a high level of respect for the institution, but this respect comes with an equally high level of expectation, and an administrator or professor that “fails to live up to those expectations will lose a great deal of trust—and may find it very difficult to earn back.” In the classroom, a new generation gap seems to be opening between professors who value questioning authority and millennial students who are more inclined to trust that the authorities and their institutions are telling them the truth.

- **Pressured**

As transcripts, test scores and even attendance records become more important in the marketplace, and in the minds of students, an assumption is emerging among today's youth that long term success demands near-term achievement, reviving the connection between effort and payoff.

There is less of a sense among Millennials than among their Generation X predecessors that one can rebound from failure. This pressure to succeed has led to an emphasis on planning, and time management is becoming more important in order to fit in all the necessary activities. "Millennials are far more interested than Generation Xers in institutions, including colleges, that can enhance (the) job and life stability" that they have planned and prepared for so diligently.

Recruitment strategies should focus on conveying to prospective Millennial students that an institution is part of a life plan in a larger context, including helping them develop values, habits and skills that will help them become the kinds of adults they wish to be. On campus, provision for physical and other extra-curricular activities, as well as "chill-zones" where students can simply relax, are important parts of necessary stress management strategies for these students. In the classroom, the discussion of pressure quickly becomes a discussion of cheating, and while the conventional nature of this generation would seem to lead away

from cheating, the difficulty seems to be in helping Millennials clearly define what cheating is.

- **Achieving**

With their plans and their pressure, and confidence all in tow, Millennials have shown a great propensity to achieve. With achievement test scores at an all time high, and strong extra-curricular programs, today's teens not only are successful, they know that they are successful. A majority of today's high school students say they have detailed five and ten year plans for their future. Most have given serious thought to college financing, degrees, salaries, employment trends, etc., and see preparation as important, although not necessarily fun. More students are reporting that they try their best in school, but fewer are reporting that they actually enjoy the process. Surveys show that Millennials are more interested in pursuing fields in math and the hard sciences where success can be objectively measured than the more subjective social sciences and arts. While at first, the success of millennial students appears to be a gold mine for recruiting, it is important to realize that most schools will now have an opportunity to recruit higher achieving students. Highlighting a balance of top notch academics as well as a strong and diverse community and solid "infrastructure for student activities" will be important. Campus life should offer a broad array of extracurricular activities, and the technology tools that these students will demand. In the classroom, "expect students,

parents and public officials to demand higher academic standards, smaller classes, straight forward grading policies . . . (and a) mixture of traditional values with cutting edge technology.” (pp. 2-4)

Whether or not CCCC also report observing the same characteristics in millennial community college students is of interest to this researcher.

Today’s millennial community college students are said to possess a number of positive qualities because of support and involved parents who encourage their children to achieve success and work hard (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Woodard et al., 2000). On the surface, they appear both outward focused, generous, and oriented toward the need for relevancy (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Woodard et al., 2000).

Additional attributes of the millennial student were explored through a study with a sample of 239 millennials where 117 were males and 122 were females (Credo, Lanier, Matherne, & Cox, 2016). The authors began by looking at several studies that support the idea of millennials and their involvement with community service. In this study, the authors explored the relationships between narcissism, psychological entitlement, community service self-efficacy, and engagement. Each of these constructs was measured using existing scales.

The authors found that these millennial students were positive and in support of community service despite being narcissistic and entitled. The authors found that millennials liked to engage in community service and felt a sense of pride in doing so. The millennials believe that they are helping or giving back to

their community. Interestingly, the authors found a negative relationship between narcissism and engagement. The authors indicated that because millennials are narcissistic, this does not allow them to engage with others, which is what community service calls for. Community service self-efficacy was found to have a positive connection to student engagement among the sample in this study as it mediated the relationship between narcissism and engagement. The authors also found that participating in service activities might decrease narcissistic influences.

In a study by authors O'Dell, Smith, and Born (2016), which used a generational lens, they saw pre-college involvement as positive. An ex post facto design was used where a multi-institutional study of leadership (MSL) survey was administered on-line at a Midwestern university to undergraduate and graduate students resulting in a sample size of 1,432 students. The survey contained subscales that measured pre-college involvement, leadership efficacy, common purpose, citizenship, and college social change behavior. When talking about pre-college involvement, researchers are talking about high school involvement or extracurricular activities. Things that come to mind are student government, clubs, or after school activities. The results of the study supported the mediated model of pre-college involvement and college social change behavior but through a less direct path. This pathway necessitates the development of one's awareness of one's own leadership aptitude, which helps facilitate the development of common purpose. Through pre-college involvement, one can

learn to engage with others. One can learn to develop and use practical skills. One can also gain skills associated with taking personal responsibility that leads to involvement within one's own community. As cited in O'Dell et al. (2016), students can also learn additional skills through pre-college participation such as leadership, group involvement, and the opportunity to gain competences through real world learning (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

Millennial students lead hectic lives, so having structure, schedules, and rules are the norm (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Given the reality of structured lifestyles, they expect standardized testing to show their readiness for academic achievement. This leads to taking an assessment, receiving feedback and setting goals (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b; Howe & Strauss, 2000). It appears that millennial community college students enjoy participating in group-projects, are team oriented, are socially networked, and possess organizational and mobilization skills (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Finally, because of their connection with technology such as computers, pagers, and cell phones, multi-tasking is a way of life (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

Finally, confident and optimistic describe how millennial community college students feel about their futures (Pew Research Center, 2010). Millennials will be a generation capable of presenting challenges both current and future for educators as they have been reported to possess a tremendous amount of assets that can positively contribute to society.

Community college educators work hard to provide students with the educational experiences that help the millennial college students explore their interest as they relate to their propensity for socially oriented activities (Brownstein, 2000). Counseling faculty, advisors, educators, and administrators can help support their confident outlook, their commitment to community, and their hope for a more improved society. It is important to understand the characteristics of millennial college students in order to benefit counseling faculty in the classroom as well as in counseling sessions.

#### Parental Involvement

Howe and Strauss (2000) labeled millennial parents as ready to intervene and solve the problems of millennial students in a moment's notice, which is commonly referred to as being a "helicopter parent." Hovering is another term that has been used to describe parents who have difficulty letting their children do things on their own. This leads to the necessity of having a team approach when working with the millennial parent and his or her child, which would include the parent, child, and the appropriate professional or para-professional associated with the services needed (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Protecting the well-being of the millennial child is evidenced by signs such as "Baby on Board," which are symbolic of this idea of offering safety and security and family values (Atkinson, 2004; Weston, 2006). Millennial mothers were usually older when they

had their children, and a large majority of the fathers were present when their child was born (Raines, 2003).

Parental protections have labeled millennials as being the most protected generation, indulged as well as being included in family decisions. Extracurricular programs such as soccer camp and preschool programs became a necessity because of the millennial parents' desire to protect and support their children (Weston, 2006). This has led to a more structured and specifically scheduled life of millennials (Atkinson, 2004). Furthermore, millennial parents have had the opportunity to be actively engaged in their child's life because of raising fewer children. This engagement involves high level participation such as helping their child with their studies, mentoring, and focusing on their child's health and wellness. Taking an active role in their parenting responsibilities and having their children exposed to numerous social and cultural events was the norm. New roles were created for many parents who became chauffeurs, transporting their children from one organized activity to another. As a result of parents' active involvement, there are some general qualities associated with mental health that millennials are struggling with such as problem-solving and patience (Bland, Melton, Welle, & Bigham, 2012).

Mattai, Wagle, and Williams (2010) stated,

Millennials characterization is often as a mixed bag with two over-arching variables used in describing this population: (1) the diverse nature of the group: and (2) the closeness that exists between them and their parents.

In the case of the latter, millennials have a closeness to their parents who tend to belong to the groups euphemistically referred to as “Baby Boomers” and “Generation Xers” and who have very high expectations for their children. (p. 26)

Being overscheduled appears to be the norm for millennial community college students (Atkinson, 2004). Atkinson also indicated that having millennials involved in extracurricular activities at a young age has enriched their multi-tasking skills. Further, millennials’ involvement in structured group activities has enhanced their concept of teamwork and has taught them social skills. For example, the team approach requires a focus on individual contributions as well as how those contributions make the team better and more successful. Because Millennials have had experiences in team situations, they have a propensity toward recognizing the value of collaborating with their coworkers and managers. This collaboration is inclusive of loyalty and commitment as well as expressing their opinions, ideas, and knowledge in order to support the collective whole.

As millennials transition from youth to adolescence and then adulthood, education plays a major role. Having a desire and awareness for a higher education, parents are actively involved in finding and offering emotional and financial support (Brownstein, 2000; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Murray, 1997; O’Reilly & Vella-Zarb, 2000; Zemke, 2001). Commitment and dedication to their child’s continued success does not end after their child graduates from college.

The millennial child's success is important to the parents as they find opportunities for their child to excel. This can be seen throughout the child's education as the millennial parent becomes involved in all aspects of the child's academic world such as helping them write book reports and working collaboratively with them on their science projects. This has been described as an extension of the parents' own need to be perfect (Murray, 1997; O'Reilly & Vella-Zarb, 2000). This involvement in their children's success has continued throughout their preparation for college with such activities as researching college guides and visiting college with their children (Shields, 1995). It was extremely informative to learn whether counseling faculty have observed parental involvement at the community college and if so, the level of parental involvement they have witnessed.

McGlynn (2008) conducted a study that looked at millennials and asked who they are and how they learn. The author viewed millennials more qualitatively and incrementally different from other generations and hard to reach and motivate. The author gave two recommendations that would help with connecting to millennial students because the learning process is so important. One of the recommendations was to engage parents. Parents are integral in the lives of their millennial students. They are heavily involved in almost every aspect of these students' lives. The author suggested holding parental orientations. This can help parents understand the rigors, challenges, and expectations of higher

education. Parents can convey this knowledge to their millennial students, helping them balance work, family, and friends.

### Millennials and Technology

Computers and the Internet hit the scene in the 1980s and 1990s, bringing to the forefront mobile phones, instant messaging development, and immediate connection with society, be it the local community or beyond. According to Nimon (2007), computers have definitely had an effect on all generations, but the millennial college student was born with and immersed in technologies.

Technology has definitely become a “go to” for the millennial student as a form of communication on a daily basis and for getting things done. Importantly, the use of the Internet has led to more of an individual focus or personal identity with the creation of Facebook, chat rooms, and the like. Generations prior to the millennial generation had to learn to adapt by means other than technology.

Technology is not only a major resource for millennial students, but it is also engrained as a part of their individual lives (Nimon, 2007). The mass number of technological connections for the millennial generation includes DVDs, PDAs; iPods (Internet Portable Open Database); video games; MP3s (Moving Picture Experts Group Layer-3 Audio); the Internet; cable television; cell phones; and e-mail, which are the norm (Kundanis, 2003). Further, for communication they use Twitter, Instagram, instant messaging, Myspace, Facebook, and text messaging.

The millennial college student is “reliant upon technology” and linked to the title of a “digital native” (Black, 2010). Being reliant upon technology is essential to understand because it influences the way students need and desire to learn. For example, millennials appear to be more independent in their thoughts because they have been taught to express their personal opinions and share their ideas through social media. Students are more familiar with using a keyboard or reading from an iPad and computer screen than some of the more traditional forms of communication such as writing in a notebook or reading hard copies of books or papers. Continuous uninterrupted communication and connection with those that are important to them has been influenced by the use of technology (Black, 2010).

Frand (2000) also referred to millennials as digital natives, confident in their abilities to receive and apply almost any form of a technological platform and appearing so natural at learning technology quickly. Millennials have been dependent on digital technology since birth as they have been surrounded by all forms of electronic media, such as Music Television (MTV), home computers, video games, and virtual reality. The forms of technology that this generation has been exposed to include music that can be downloaded, communication that can be immediately received and given, and content that can be ascertained immediately.

Further, technology has allowed for multi-dimensional forms of visual displays. All of these technological characteristics have led to the need for instant

gratification, multi-dimensional interactivity through visual auditory, and hands-on stimuli. This generation is accustomed to instantaneous hypertext, downloaded music, communication via cell phone and text messaging, and information from laptops. Digital natives multi-task and prefer visuals to graphics and text. Digital technology has shaped the way they prefer to experience the world. There will definitely be counseling and teaching faculty and administrators who adapt to the new technology, but other “digital immigrants” not born into the world of technology will remember the good old days of using pen and paper (Simpson, 2007).

Millennial community college students have been identified as those who seem disconnected to others (Nasseh, 2002). The distinct connection to social media using technology is changing the way millennials view friendships as they are able to connect nationally and internationally to others through technology. On-line is where their conversations are ramped (Nasseh, 2002). As a result, conversations and friendships are formed in the technological world. Students are looking at the numbers of friends on their social media websites, taking pride because they usually number in the hundreds (Nasseh, 2002). A number of the friendships appear to be about their immediate needs, wants, and desires. They want to entertain an audience, which results in the sharing of very private or personal information. Relationships are created on-line and remain there until they are finished. The on-line distance and not being present has allowed users to be rude and outspoken, negligent of manners. Students appear to lack

sensitivity or the need to take responsibility for their actions and words.

Sometimes, they can appear downright mean. This on-line access has also created extremely outspoken individuals who can belittle or berate others to the point of victimization, especially among young adults.

Murray (1997) expressed concern over the millennial college students using technology at the expense of communicating face to face. Conversely, others have noted a positive outlook of on-line engagement in that young adults are getting their message out to other cultures, countries, and religions, which is resulting in closeness with others (Nasseh, 2002). Although Generation Y (Gen Y) seems to prefer physical isolation in social and learning activities, they are eager to contribute to the knowledge bases of the digital community. According to Black (2010), "Ironically, generation Y may be simultaneously the most socialized generation in the digital world and the most-isolated generation in the physical world" (p. 96). Yet, for all those definitions of millennials, like other generations, there are many exceptions and contradictions.

Millennial community college students seem to be less focused and concerned about political issues while concurrently embracing new technology (Black, 2010). However, because of the 2016 presidential election, millennial community college students being complacent appears to have changed drastically because of the number of millennials involved in protests and marches. Millennials believe that one's verbal comments are of importance and give less credence to their physical appearance.

Digital natives have spent their developmental years in a time of life that truly values the Internet; however, many educators, as digital immigrants, are still teaching in ways that worked for them 10 years ago or more (Black, 2010). Times are changing, and so is the foundation of education. Students are not the same as they were 10 to 15 years ago. Education has to change to adapt to the learning needs and interest of today's students (Black, 2010). In addition, as many researchers have noted, technology has played a huge role in millennials' lives. "Computers, the Internet, and social networking sites in particular, have significantly influenced how these young people learn, think, and socialize" (Pew Research Center, 2010, p. 2).

For example, Maples and Han (2008) studied millennial community college students by looking at Cyber counseling. Cyber counseling includes technology that utilizes the use of applications like e-mail, course registration, academic advising, and career counseling. These applications are included in the new state initiative, SSSP. For example, 10 years ago, students physically stood in line to register for classes. The waiting time could take hours to meet with a faculty member to assist them; unfortunately, this is still the practice at some California community colleges. However, many California community colleges have implemented or are implementing an on-line registration system. This is creating easier accessibility for all students. Additionally, California community colleges are also utilizing an on-line academic advising and career guidance system by which students have access to counseling faculty without having to

come to the college in person for an appointment. Technology is a huge topic for the millennial community college student. It is informative to hear from counseling faculty as to the level of technological involvement they have observed or have been asked about by the millennial community college student. For example, do counseling faculty see millennial community college students as “digital natives”?

### Millennials and Education

According to the National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], n.d.), The number of students projected to attend American colleges and universities in fall 2018 is 19.9 million, which is higher than the enrollment of 15.3 million students in fall 2000, but lower than the enrollment peak of 21.0 million in fall 2010. Total enrollment is expected to increase between fall 2018 and fall 2027 to 20.5 million. (para. 2)

A large number of students will impact colleges and universities, so preparing for this influx is critical.

More specifically, millennial students are the majority of students arriving and currently in attendance at California community colleges and universities (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, n.d.-a). Millennials enrolling in higher education are arriving at California community colleges and number 100,000,00 strong. These students are influencing space, planning, design, and construction. They will continue to change the face of higher education, returning to our colleges employed as faculty and staff (Rickes, 2009).

It is further evident that 2-year institution enrollment has definitely increased in comparison to 4-year institutions, which supports the need for learning how community college counselors are navigating the needs of so many students. According to the NCES (n.d.),

Some 6.7 million students will attend 2-year institutions and 13.3 million will attend 4-year institutions in fall 2018. About 17.0 million students are expected to enroll in undergraduate programs, and 2.9 million are expected to enroll in post baccalaureate programs. (para. 2).

### Demographics and Diversity

The NCES (n.d.) also predicts,

Females are expected to account for the majority of college and university students in fall 2018: about 11.2 million females will attend in fall 2018, compared with 8.7 million males. Also, more students are expected to attend full time (an estimated 12.1 million students) than part time (7.8 million students). (para. 2)

It is important to note not only how to meet the needs of millennials but how demographics impact percentages of males coming to college. The next paragraph identifies the ages of projected students.

The NCES (n.d.) definitely supports the large number of millennials attending colleges and universities:

In 2018, a projected 12.3 million college and university students will be under age 25 and 7.6 million students will be 25 years old and over. The

number of college and university students under age 25 hit a peak of 12.2 million in 2011 and has remained steady since that time. The number of students 25 years old and over hit a similar peak in 2010 (of 8.9 million) but the overall enrollment for this age group declined from 2010 to 2018. (para. 2)

The need to prepare for a diverse population of students is certainly more evident based on the following statistics. According to NCES (n.d.),

Higher numbers and percentages of Black and Hispanic students are attending colleges and universities. The percentage of all students attending colleges and universities who were Black was higher in 2016 than in 2000 (13.7 vs. 11.7 percent), and the percentage who were Hispanic rose from 9.9 to 18.2 percent over the same time period. Also, the percentage of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in colleges and universities increased from 21.7 percent in 2000 to 39.2 percent in 2016, and the percentage of Black 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled increased from 30.5 percent to 36.2 percent in that same period. (para. 3)

Further, California community colleges consistently enroll diverse student groups in regard to ethnicity, age, and identity (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, n.d.-b).

Millennial community college students are different from prior generations in several ways. Some of the differences have to do with demographic characteristics such as race and ethnicity, how they view other peoples'

differences, political and social values, and showing strong opinions about social justice issues (Broido, 2004). Being born after the year 1982, the millennial generation is said to be the largest in the nation's history as well as the most racially and ethnically diverse (Broido, 2004; DeBard, 2004b; Howe & Strauss, 2000). Additionally, there are larger numbers of millennial students from biracial, stepfamilies, and same-sex couples (Broido, 2004). It is becoming irrelevant to ask students to identify their racial identity categorically, as there are more biracial or multi-racial students than from generations before (Broido, 2004). This has been attributed to the increasing number of immigrants to the United States (Broido, 2004).

According to Brownstein (2000), it is important to note that not all millennial community college students come from the same background. Indeed, there is variation among millennial students regarding social and financial as well as personal support. An example of such variation might be seen among those who are and are not first generation. For example, first-generation college students may be less familiar with technology (e.g., computers, cell phones, etc.), or less likely to have reaped the benefits of tutors, travel, and/or support services than more educationally advantaged students. Thus, educational institutions will continue to be confronted with social differences separating those who appear to have more from those who appear to have less (Brownstein, 2000).

The statistics previously mentioned as well as representation among first generation students, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and lowered

representation among male students suggest that there will be continued challenges involving the planning of faculty and administrators with regard to recruitment, instruction, and services. Further, according to Broido (2004), “As the millennial generation brings these differences with them to college, university administrators need to rethink how they attempt to address social justice and diversity issues on campus” (p. 73). California community colleges continue to evolve in order to accommodate millennial community college students. Having these strategies developed and utilized early in the educational careers of these students is important. This work is being done at some colleges with summer enhancement programs and student success programs that provide career exploration and counseling services (Brownstein, 2000).

### How Millennials Learn

In addition to the increasing number of millennials in higher education, DeBard (2004b) indicated that there are some common themes that have emerged among the millennial population related to how they learn and develop. It is important for educators to understand these attributes. Millennials view education differently than previous generations. Students understand the importance of success in high school as that relates to getting admitted to a college. Also, since college is seen as more accessible and no longer for specific elite students, it becomes even more imperative for college educators to understand the needs and concerns of the entering millennial student. According to Howe and Strauss (2003), millennial college students report worries over

grades and college admissions, which differs greatly from previous concerns reflective of major events during that time such as AIDS or nuclear war.

Jones (2012) stated that the millennial brain development may present some physical differences because of the huge influx of digital technology from their formative years. Millennials' exposure to multiple forms of technology has led to the need for consistent and immediate feedback as that pertains to how they learn. Even though millennials have made great strides in gaining proficient technical capabilities as well as informal knowledge, they appear to have less depth associated with their critical thinking, shorter attention spans, and lack deepness in learning. Because of easy access to Internet resources, pinpointing and discovering data is a skill possessed by millennial students. However, having the ability to interpret, analyze, and assess the information retrieved appears to be a challenge (Rowlands et al., 2008; Hall, 2006).

Prensky (2005/2006) stated that technology has afforded the millennial student greater exposure to symbols and visuals, which have in some instances taken the place of spelling. Further, the rapid pace of and multiple modalities associated with technological advances have made traditional forms of teaching boring to the millennial student. Educational institutions need to continually examine their expectations and guidelines related to educational goals and outcomes for millennial college students. How can today's educators effectively assist students in attaining their educational and career goals?

Digital technology as it relates to human interaction is progressing rapidly and developing in complexity. Millennials view the need to learn and stay abreast of new technology as a necessity for their usage. Such students prefer inductive reasoning, desire frequent and quick interactions with content, and display exceptional visual-literacy skills which are essential when navigating the digital technology used today. Gaming is the new rage for digital natives (millennials). The gratification, challenge, and knowledge that they gain involve technology-based learning. Millennials appear to value the interactivity and interconnectedness with their world, which helps them learn. Millennials seem to prefer ideas or specific information instead of lengthy readings. Students relish the advances of technology and have expectations of institutions as well as educators maintaining currency in the technological realm (Black, 2010).

Based on unique experiences and resources of the millennial college student, learning styles have been influenced. The learning style of millennials has been called “mediated immersion” (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Authors have further described the learning style needs of the millennials as collective and cooperative (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005), with the need for authentic real world and virtual experiences (Mills & Sharma, 2005). Further, this population needs the learning experience to be engaging and interactive (Black, 2010). It is also understood that the parents are an integral part of their child’s educational experience (Coomes & DeBard, 2004b). All of these attributes and experiences must be understood by educators in order for millennials’ learning needs to be

met (Black, 2010). A new generation of students who want to learn is knocking on the door of higher education classrooms. Their learning styles should be encountered with operative teaching strategies, adapting to match their learning styles.

According to Black (2010), the implications of the millennial community college students changing nature include a student body that is

- Often unprepared for the level of work expected because they lack basic skills, especially in mathematics, reading, and writing;
- Collaborative and works and learns best with others;
- Assertive and confident, and therefore more demanding of higher grades and greater accommodation to its needs;
- Supported emotionally and financially by “helicopter parents,” who also have customer expectations of higher education;
- Dependent upon and extremely comfortable with technology and has expectations of these tools in its learning. (p. 99)

### Instructional Strategies and Instructor Qualities

A study by Kraus and Sears (2008) looked at both student and teacher perceptions of effective learning techniques. The primary focus of these techniques was community versus individual learning. The study had 15 psychology professors and 120 undergraduates show their interest in 17 pedagogical techniques from simulation gaming to lecture. The results of the study found that students liked having a sense of community in their learning

experience. They liked having discussions and sharing stories. They liked to hear stories about other students and they enjoyed sharing stories about themselves. They even liked to hear stories about the lives of their teachers. In contrast, teachers liked individual learning, which included taking quizzes and doing papers. This researcher suggests that teachers may want to spend more time on activities that build associations between students and connecting academic material to students' lives.

In a study conducted by Gerhardt (2016), which used generational identity, results indicated the importance of sociability in the classroom experience. The researcher looked at how a range of characteristics impacted millennial perception of instructor credibility. The study had both millennials and instructors rate and look at three characteristics in particular as they relate to instructor credibility. The three characteristics were competence, character, and sociability. Interestingly, both groups saw competence and character as important or relevant to instructor credibility. However, both groups disagreed on sociability. Millennials saw sociability as very important and relevant to instructor credibility and instructors did not. The study found that millennials value interaction, collaboration, relationships, and communication in the classroom and beyond. Similarly, it was found that among a sample of 30 freshmen who were interviewed, the following themes emerged as being important for meeting the needs of millennial freshman students: freshman activities and events,

development of effective study skills, instructor-student relationship, and academic advising support (Turner & Thompson, 2014).

In a qualitatively oriented study, McGlynn (2008) found that a way to motivate the millennial student is to reach out to students. Student engagement is key to persistence, academic motivation, and degree attainment/completion. The second recommendation was to build on students' strengths. According to the author, experiential and service learning works well with these students. Creating learner-centered classrooms works well too. As mentioned previously, parent involvement was recommended also.

Finally, a source of frustration that could be forthcoming and may already be occurring is the lack of attention and detail to assignments submitted by the millennial community college student. Expectations and standards may need to be set and discussed early on in the course in order for expectations to be met and for learning to take place (Nimon, 2007). A study conducted that focused on university's staffs' perceptions of the millennial college student found that millennial college students tend to ignore what is expected of them, are reluctant to accept accountability, and are dependent upon others for problem-solving (Much, Wagener, Breikreutz, & Hellenbrand, 2014).

There is much that CCCC need to understand about the millennial generation to enhance their knowledge as they interact with and serve this generation of college students on a daily basis. Knowing these students' characteristics and behaviors helps expand counseling faculty's knowledge base.

Understanding their distinct demographic differences can help CCCC put things into perspective in counseling sessions as well as in the classroom. Counseling faculty play a major role in the lives of millennial community college students because of their job duties that include daily interaction with students. Counseling faculty are on the front lines with these students. To learn about their observations and experiences on millennials and education is informative. What have they concluded from their professional experiences when serving this generation of college students?

### Summary

There definitely appears to be differences that exist between the generations of college students in terms of values, experiences, and beliefs. Generations of college students have different experiences based on what is happening during that time period associated with their development, both politically and through social media. It is also important to understand differences within generations.

The millennial community college student reflects an extremely diverse group because of increased numbers of immigrants to the United States (Broido, 2004). Technological advances have created some of the unique experiences among millennial community college students. Millennials also have strong opinions on social justice issues and have been said to possess positive habits such as being achievement and team oriented as well as hopeful regarding their

future. However, millennials have also been referred to as an entitled generation. Millennial community college students have parents who are very involved in the lives of their children particularly regarding their education. All of these experiences and attributes need to be considered when developing an optimal learning environment within the community college system.

Millennial community college students are the subject of paramount interest for 21st-century educators. It is a generation unlike its predecessors with some stating it is the most intelligent consumer generation in history.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose Statement

This research is an exploration of the phenomenon of the millennial community college students (millennials) through the lived experiences of the California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) who interact with them. The purpose of this study was to explore the observations and experiences of California community college counseling faculty working with the millennials who make up a large majority of the student population attending California community colleges. For this study, millennial community college students are identified as students who were born between 1982 and 2000, and are called Generation Y. Currently, they range in age from 19 to 37 years of age. The general aim of this study was to access information about the differences, perspectives, or observations of millennial community college students from the observations and experiences of counseling faculty at California community colleges. There is value in the observations and experiences of these professionals who might represent a different generation but possess a vast body of knowledge and insight. In serving millennials, CCCCf are not only discipline experts, but they are also on the frontlines working with millennials on a daily basis.

## Research Design

Phenomenology is the best approach when

- studying people's experiences
- studying how people make meaning in their lives
- studying relationships between what happened and how people have come to understand these events
- exploring how people experience the essence of a particular phenomenon, and examining the commonalities across individuals (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017).

There is much to learn from the participants taking part in this study and the phenomenological approach aligns with this objective.

The researcher conducted unstructured interviews using open-ended questions with counseling faculty at selected California community college districts. The researcher focused on the phenomena that have occurred naturally while exploring counseling faculty members' observations and experiences. The researcher also attempted to understand the lived experiences of counseling faculty in higher education. This study is unique in that the current experiences of these professionals have not been analyzed much at community colleges. There was a need to identify relevant statements, seek divergent perspectives, and group common themes.

## Research Methodology

Descriptive and qualitative research was used to identify the observations and experiences of CCCCCF in the southern region of California. Ten CCCCCF were identified and contacted to participate in the study.

The qualitative approach that was used to answer the research questions was a phenomenological design (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell, phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences of the participants, and in order to gain access to those experiences, data may take the form of interview notes, recordings, and transcripts. There may also be additional forms of qualitatively oriented records. There are different objectives associated with phenomenology, and that guides the specific approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting. In some instances, the goal is to describe the data without interpretation. In other instances, the goal is to add an interpretive aspect in order to formulate a theory or create new understandings regarding a phenomenon that challenges existing interpretations.

## Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What type of experiences have California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) encountered while providing counseling services to millennial community college students?

2. What type of experiences have CCCCCF encountered while teaching millennial community college students?
3. Have CCCCCF modified their counseling or teaching practices to better serve millennial community college students?
4. Will the observations and experiences of CCCCCF closely align with the literature in describing millennial community college students?

### Research Setting

The research setting included California community colleges in the southern region of California. There are currently 115 California community colleges. The research was conducted with participants from selected California community college districts in Southern California. An interview over the phone or in an office setting was utilized and approved by both parties.

### Research Sample

The sample included CCCCCF. These participants had 5 or more years of experience at the community college level. The participants achieved the educational level equivalent to a master's degree or higher, which meets minimum qualifications. The researcher utilized phone calls, the informed consent letter, counseling conferences, and workshops to obtain sample participants.

## Data Collection

Data were obtained through face-to-face and phone interviews using an unstructured schedule that had been previously field-tested. The tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed, which provided verbatim transcripts for use in data analysis. A qualitative analysis approach was used to determine themes and patterns that emerged from the data based on the multiple responses from the CCCCCF. This analysis included a five-step process: (a) the initial reading of the interview transcripts, (b) organization of data according to research questions and coding of responses, (c) a review of transcripts for final coding to note multiple references to a response category, (d) data analysis and the report findings, and (e) another review of transcripts to determine that the findings, themes, and patterns were consistent with the data. The researcher was able to extrapolate the lived experiences of these professionals in order to relate them to their opinions, perspectives, experiences, observations, and knowledge of the millennial community college student.

### Informed Consent

Prior to the beginning of the recruitment process, approval was obtained from California State University, San Bernardino's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct research with human participants. Each participant was provided with and signed an approved Informed Consent form that asked their permission to record the interview.

### Actual Interview

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher once again explained that the purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of their lived experiences, perspective, and observations as they relate to the millennial community college student.

### Transcriber

A professional transcriber was used to transcribe the taped recording of each individual participant's response to the interview questions. Identifying information was not recorded, which provided a needed level of protection in order to ensure the participants' identities were kept confidential.

### The Reflection

At the completion of the interviews being transcribed, the researcher wrote a narrative of each participant's responses. The researcher used the exact words, statements, and input from the participant's responses and lived experiences.

## Data Analysis

Analytic notes were utilized, which consisted of the recording of relevant information that occurred to this researcher and included participants' observations and experiences. The background information, which consisted of their years of experience, past and present roles at the college, and the college

of the participants, was used for this study. A careful and systematic thematic analysis of the transcription was used for validity.

### Validity and Trustworthiness

Transcripts were shared with participants for accuracy in order to provide the opportunity for editing and modification. It was important to ensure that the findings and interpretations were trustworthy and unbiased. The researcher replayed the recorded session for each participant and let the participant review the write-up on the session for accuracy. The purpose of this approach was to understand the universal experience among the participants, which is one objective associated with phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013).

### Positionality of the Researcher

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the millennial community college student. As a counseling faculty member in a California community college setting for over 18 years, this researcher began to notice the differences in the characteristics and behavior of today's students when compared with students of the previous generations at the community college. He also began hearing comments such as "these students are so different" from other counseling faculty and administrators in meetings and during conversations about this generation of students. His curiosity peaked about these new millennial college students who are coming to college in large numbers. It

was imperative to learn more about millennials so that he could become more informed and become a more effective counselor when interacting with millennial college students. There has been research completed on millennial college students in regard to counseling and its benefit from a student's perspective. Also, teaching and learning issues have been the subject of journal articles pertaining to millennials. However, little research has been published on the CCCCCF, who usually interact with these students on a daily basis.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the observations and experiences of California community college counseling faculty working with the millennials who make up a large majority of the student population attending California community colleges. The next chapter provides the results of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This research explored the phenomenon of the millennial generation college student through the lived experiences of the California community college faculty who interact with them. There has been research completed on the millennial generation in regard to the counseling discipline and its benefits from a student's perspective. Cyber counseling has been a topic in several articles. Teaching and learning issues have also been covered but not from the perspectives of the California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF). There is definitely value in the opinions, perspectives, experiences, and observations of these professionals who usually represent a different generation of knowledge and insights because they themselves are vast data banks waiting to be tapped for information. The general aim of this study is to access information about differences, perspectives, or observations of this new millennial generation student from the experiences of counseling faculty at California community colleges. The millennial generation students are young people who were born between 1982 and 2002.

This study is unique in that the observations and experiences of these professionals pertaining to millennials have not been researched at California community colleges. Do the opinions, perspectives, observations, and

experiences of CCCCCF reveal and support some of the same observations reported in the literature on this new generation of students?

## Results of the Study

Descriptive information about the sample and the nature of the interview questions follows in Table 4. Six interview questions were asked that were semi-structured and open ended (included in the Appendix). The results of the study are presented in response to each research question.

### Research Question 1

What type of experiences have California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) encountered while providing counseling services to millennial community college students?

The faculty appeared eager and willing to elaborate on the experiences encountered while providing counseling services to millennial college students. To start, the faculty described the millennial generation college student as different in many respects than prior generations of students. Their characteristics and behavior differ somewhat if not significantly from other generations of students with respect to their views, behaviors, values, and outlook on life. These professionals described the need to be more nurturing or “softer” with millennials because of the personalities of the students. They also felt they needed to use more of an intrusive counseling style, which can require asking more detailed and probing questions. In some cases, hand holding may

Table 4

*Community College Counseling Faculty Results, 2019*

Participant #	Counseling faculty positions held	Years of experience
Participant 1	Generalist counselor, transfer center director	25 years
Participant 2	Generalist counselor, bridge program, International students program, veterans counselor	5 years
Participant 3	Generalist counselor, NEA involvement state level, CTA involvement state level	39 years
Participant 4	Generalist counselor, union president, transfer coordinator, department chair, career coordinator	23 years
Participant 5	Generalist counselor, honors program, teaching program	32 years
Participant 6	Generalist counselor, TRIO programs, CARE program, PUENTE program, EOPS, CalWorks	15 years
Participant 7	Generalist counselor, athletic counselor, TRIO, EOPS and transfer center	19 years
Participant 8	Adjunct counselor, honors program, dream program	5 years
Participant 9	Generalist counselor, president of CA Community College Association, senator for academic senate, honors program, EOPS program	26 years
Participant 10	Generalist counselor, EOPS, CalWorks, transfer center	7 years

be required. The counseling faculty felt the need to be more prescriptive in their counseling styles. There is definitely the need to suggest or recommend more college resources and programs that would benefit millennial college students. Social settings may be a challenge for some students as well. The millennial

generation college student likes having more options or choices and not being limited. Sometimes faculty find themselves in a counseling session and the student has trouble understanding the terminology, phrases, words used by the counseling faculty.

Counseling faculty have to ask more clarifying questions and be more specific and direct in order to aid in the understanding of concepts. The counseling faculty also have to “check in” with the student to make sure they understand the directions or guidance provided. The need to repeat information more than once seems to be the norm. It might be because of the aforementioned reasons listed that there is definitely more parental involvement. College counseling faculty observed that parents are accompanying students to their counseling appointments more than in prior years and wanting to ask and answer questions for the millennial college student.

Counseling faculty reported that current counseling sessions provide better results when used in conjunction with visual aids. The millennial college student tends to have a short attention span. This was mentioned by a majority of the counseling faculty interviewed. It appears to be challenging for these students to stay on track and comprehend the information provided without taking detailed notes or having handouts. Oftentimes, students need to be encouraged to take notes during a counseling session. Even though counselors provide handouts, there is no guarantee that the student will read or have the handouts in their possession when they return for future counseling sessions.

Students appear to be more distracted than in the past and a major reason for this distraction appears to be the overuse of cell phones. The interruption of cell phones beeping is the newest or latest major problem being experienced by the counseling faculty interviewed for this study. According to counseling faculty, students answering the phone or texting during a counseling session is outrageous and disrespectful.

### Research Question 2

What type of experiences have CCCC encountered while teaching millennial community college students?

Faculty reported that millennial generation college students have a different learning style than prior generations of college students. Findings from this study indicate that there is the need for soft skills (communication, time management, problem-solving, etc.) with this generation of students. There are practices that have a positive impact on the millennial generation college student. The curriculum was designed from a more traditional perspective prior to these students' arrival at the college, but these students appreciate a faster pace because of short attention spans. The more interactive the curriculum and less lecture based, the better for these students because this keeps them on task. Hands-on learning appears to work well with this generation of college students.

Millennials do well in group settings and also one on one with other classmates. There is a need for constant change when using traditional teaching formats, incorporating videos, guest speakers, and on-line assignments works

well with these students. They truly enjoy, relish, and depend upon the use of technology as a learning tool versus traditional methods of learning. Some counseling professors have mentioned utilizing certain in-class projects that allow students to use their cell phones. There are some negative behaviors or habits that are presenting some major challenges in the classroom. Keeping the millennial generation college student engaged has presented some major challenges as they appear easily distracted. As a professor in the classroom, there is a need to walk up and down the aisles in the classroom to stop distractions or keep students on task. The cell phone has created major and obvious problems in the classroom. Some counseling professors have had to apply strict rules and disciplinary action because of cell phone usage during class time. These rules or policies are now included in their syllabus and addressed on the first day of class. Their attention will be on reading texts or texting, which leads to major distractions including a lack of note taking and a lack of understanding of the material presented. Some counseling faculty will check in with students and ask questions during the lecture to make sure they are following along and are on task.

The need for these students to read books, research, or other printed materials is critical. Reading provides better meaning, understanding, and can be informative. However, according to the counseling faculty interviewed for this study, millennials do not appear to like or enjoy reading at length; they want information quick and fast. Figuring out a method or practice to accomplish the

necessary reading and checking on depth of understanding has proven to be a major challenge.

Counseling faculty have noticed more attendance issues or students just not showing up for class. Absenteeism has increased. Counseling faculty are also finding that they have to use current lingo (language) or phrases and examples to garner mutual understanding as they try to relate to the millennial college student. For example, when given research assignments, millennials want to Google something fast with no depth. Community college counseling faculty have reported that they are dealing with more negative attitudes from millennials. These attitudes stem from being dissatisfied with grades received, assignments given, or due dates for homework assignments. According to CCCC, most millennial generation college students believe that any work or assignments they complete, is worthy of a letter grade of "A." Because of the change in students' needs, the classroom needs and environment have changed tremendously and presented some major challenges for community college counseling faculty.

### Research Question 3

Have CCCC modified their counseling or teaching practices to better serve millennial community college students?

Each community college counseling faculty member interviewed stated a definite, emphatic "YES" to this question. Community college counseling faculty stated several changes or modifications that were needed in both counseling and

teaching, more with this generation of students than with past students. One major practice that needed to be changed for the majority of counseling faculty is the use of traditional teaching methods. What worked in the past is not working currently for these students. The modifications and changes are included in questions number one and two respectively.

#### Research Question 4

Will the observations and experiences of CCCCCF closely align with the literature in describing millennial community college students?

The observations and experiences of CCCCCF aligns well with the literature in describing millennial college students. It is absolutely astonishing, to say the least, at how closely they in fact do align. The observations and experiences tend to mirror the literature. The following bullet points offer a summary of the literature. Community college counseling faculty also reported the same points.

##### Millennial college students

- Tend to be multi-taskers, often doing several tasks at once.
- Have a closeness to their parents who tend to belong to the groups euphemistically referred to as “Baby Boomers” and “Generation Xers” and who have very high expectations for their children.
- Are team oriented, likely because of the way they were taught in K-12 via much group learning.
- Have been sheltered by families and schools, with the greatest amount of parental “help” with everyday problems.

- Have a sense of entitlement, even narcissism, and strong opinions regarding how they ought to be treated in higher education and the workplace.
- Technology has in some ways supported a “need for speed” and frequent feedback, they are used to accessing information quickly and connecting with people easily and often.
- Technology has played a huge role in the way millennials socialize, gather information, and communicate.
- Rebel against the traditional styles of previous generations, and they demand technology-rich learning with supportive feedback to assist them along their learning pathway.
- Differ in many ways from their predecessors, including Baby Boomers and Gen Xers.
- Are the most diverse generation of students in U.S. history.

The diversity of millennial generation college students was mentioned by several community college counseling faculty, which definitely supports the literature. Parental involvement is mentioned throughout the literature and is being experienced by not only counseling faculty but the community college system as a whole.

It appears that parents not only want a say in their students’ education, but they also want to be at the forefront of their students’ educational journey more than parents in the past. Parents from the prior generations appeared satisfied to let

the institution guide their student to success and trust the process. This is also supported by the literature.

Some community college counseling faculty view some students as spoiled or embracing a sense of entitlement, which the literature referred to as being “sheltered” because students have a great deal of family help or support. The role that technology has played in the lives of the millennial generation college student cannot be understated.

Counseling faculty have noticed millennials need for speed as stated in the literature, especially in the classroom setting. Millennial college students want to get everything done quickly but are not thorough with depth and detail. The multi-tasking behavior noted in the literature was mentioned by several community college counseling faculty which might account for their lack of attention or being distracted.

It is important to note that the literature also stated how team-oriented millennial college students are because of their experiences in their K-12 education. Community college faculty noticed how well these students perform during group activities, which is justified by their K-12 experiences. Community college counseling faculty also reported that they view the millennial generation college student as different, which is supported by the literature. Each generation appears to have things that have stood out and defined them more than prior generations. The literature states that millennials differ in many ways from their predecessors. Millennial college students are different from prior generations in

several ways: demographic characteristics, political and social values, and social justice issues (Broido, 2004).

Table 5 lists characteristics from the literature describing millennial generation college students. These characteristics also align well with and mirror the observations and experiences of the community college counseling faculty. During their interviews, CCCCCF mentioned several of these characteristics.

This researcher found that CCCCCF who participated in the research study were candid in their answers and appeared to be well versed in the topic of millennial college students. Their passion, excitement, and detailed responses were definitely noted as they answered the interview questions.

After reviewing the results of this study, particular themes were created. Each recorded interview was analyzed for salient themes in order to organize and group similarly coded data into categories. It was important for this researcher to identify commonalities from the accounts of the counseling faculty participants. There were some essential aspects that stood out and truly helped to identify the millennial college student. The four themes generated are listed in the following section.

#### Expectations of Here and Now

The millennial generation college student appears to have set expectations when dealing with institutions, administrators, and professionals. When millennials experience an issue or has a concern, they expect it to be dealt

Table 5

*Characteristics of Millennials Noted Most Often*

Characteristic	Source	Research study participant #
Feeling special	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	7, 9, 10
Sheltered	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	7
High achieving	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	8
Confident	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	9
Structured followers	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	9
Short attention span	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	1, 2, 5, 10
Multi-tasking behavior	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	1, 9
Lack of critical thinking skills	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	4, 6, 9
Lacking interpersonal skills	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	3
Over reliant on technology	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	3, 5, 6
Indecisive	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	9
Tied to one major	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	9
Having trust issues	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	4
Optimistic about their futures	Howe & Strauss (2000, 2003) Fenske (2011) Lancaster & Stillman (2002)	9

with and resolved immediately to their liking. They feel that they not only have rights, but they know their rights as well.

This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated that counseling faculty do their best to serve a large number of students: “We really try to do our best, but I think that’s the main one is them being very impatient” (Participant 2). “Because they don’t like to wait. They are used to the ‘here and now’ and give it to me now. Don’t make me wait” (Participant 8).

#### Sheltered/Protected

Millennial generation college students have parents who have made them a high priority in their lives. This results in a more pampered, spoiled individual, or so it appears. This is why parents of this generation of students have been referred to as “helicopter parents.” These parents hover over their child, ready to swoop down in an instant in order to advocate or protect their child.

This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated that they think parental influence plays a role to an extent. Participant 2 stated, “Yes, and I say yes personally because I am a first-generation student. I know that my parents, they weren’t sure of a lot of things so I had to seek a mentor.” This reflects the idea that in the past, parents relied on their children to give them the knowledge and information, particularly parents of first-generation college students. Now the parents want to be informed first-hand. The majority of the participants indicated that the parents of community college students are

more protective than what they have witnessed in the past (Participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, and 10). This researcher has observed that parents are now, more than in the past, accompanying their students to counseling sessions.

### Peer Group Focused

The family has always been a part of the millennial college students' team. Because of social media, they believe they have friends or groups of people who understand them. K-12 provided them a group approach to learning. Social media appears to provide them a platform where consensus thought or group thinking occurs, which encompasses thinking about issues in the same manner. They appear to excel in college when involved with group-projects or assignments. This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated they think one of the positive things they have recognized about this group is that the positive side of social media is that they seem to be much more aware and engaged in social issues (Participants 5, 7, and 8). This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated that students in a group setting with each other talk fine. "But with all of us together they won't talk" (Participants 4 and 9).

### Techy/Technology

The millennial generation college student has a "love" expectation and comfort when using laptops, cell phones, iPads, or social media (Facebook, Instagram, or the Internet). This is a huge part of who they are, and they could not imagine life without these and other technology related items. Millennials tend

to be extremely “visual” in nature, so having the ability to see examples or samples helps their understanding immensely. This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated “millennials are very hands on and want access right now because of technology—they have easier access to information” (Participant 1).

Another good example that this researcher has observed is the student educational plan, which is created by counseling faculty as a guide for students to follow, showing them which classes they need to take and when to take them. This is dependent on the students’ individual goals, which can be a certificate, an associate’s degree, or transferring to a university (in or out of state). Having an educational plan in their hands, something tangible, has proven to be extremely important for student success. This visual guidance provides the student with his or her own personal road map. Student progress checks are also important as these forms are handed out so that students can see how they are progressing in their classes.

This appears to contribute to their visual/hands-on nature. Technology is now and forever engrained in their quality of life. This idea was reflected by California community college faculty who indicated, “Yes, big time, millennials are very accustomed to technology so I try to include technology in my teaching” (Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10).

## Summary

The aforementioned challenges that millennials present are many, but having an awareness of their needs can provide a way forward to handle the new challenges presented by millennial generation college students. As stated in the literature, millennial college students are the majority of students attending colleges and universities today. To better understand the millennial generation college student is to provide new ways of learning or creating curriculum that matches their learning styles. This might allow for the development of programs or services specifically developed for the millennial college student. This researcher's observations and experiences highlight two points: (a) California community colleges focus on "student success" and development of programs to accommodate millennial students and (b) at California community colleges, millennial students command the attention of various administrators, staff, and counseling faculty with a focus on student success. They are a generation of college students whom counseling faculty enjoy, are optimistic about their future, and want the best for.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The research questions that guided this study were (a) Identify the observations and experiences encountered by California community college counseling faculty (CCCCF) while providing counseling services to Millennial college students, (b) Identify any teaching modifications by CCCCCF to better accommodate the millennial generation college student, (c) Identify counseling modifications by CCCCCF to better accommodate the millennial generation college student, and (d) Compare findings of this research study on millennials with the literature. Millennial college students are worthy of research.

#### Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the observations and experiences of California community college counseling faculty working with the millennials who make up a large majority of the student population attending California community colleges. Millennial generation college students have different and unique characteristics from those of prior generations of college students. The research supports the need for an awareness of the millennial college student. These students are changing the way student learning occurs and how counseling services have taken place traditionally. Understanding this generation of students will assist CCCCCF and administrators in planning and

developing appropriate and relevant programs and services. Updated or new ideas and practices are needed to address these college students with the support, ideology, and services needed for their success.

The diversity of millennial generation college students was mentioned by several community college counseling faculty, which definitely supports the literature. Parental involvement is mentioned throughout the literature and is being experienced by not only counseling faculty but also the community college system as a whole.

It appears that parents not only want a say in their students' education but they also want to be in the forefront of their students' educational journey, more than parents in the past. Parents from the prior generations appeared satisfied to let the institution guide their student to success and trust the process. This is also supported by the literature.

Community college counseling faculty saw some students as spoiled or entitled, which was referred to in the literature by being "sheltered" because students have a great deal of family help or support. The role that technology has played in the lives of the millennial generation college student cannot be understated.

Counseling faculty have noticed the need for speed stated in the literature, especially in the classroom setting. Millennial college students want to get everything done quickly but not thoroughly with depth and detail, which are needed for research. The multi-tasking behavior noted in the literature was

mentioned by several community college counseling faculty, which might account for their lack of attention or being distracted.

It was interesting to see that the literature also stated how team-oriented millennial college students are because of their experiences in their K-12 education. Community college faculty noticed how well they perform during group activities, which is justified by their K-12 experiences. Community college counseling faculty mentioned that they see the millennial generation college student as different, which is supported by the literature as well. Each generation appears to have things that have stood out and defined them more than prior generations. The literature says that millennials differ in many ways from their predecessors. Millennial college students are different from prior generations in several ways: demographic characteristics, political and social values, and social justice issues (Broido, 2004).

Community college counseling faculty were candid in their answers and appeared to like and be well versed in the topic of millennial college students. Their passion, excitement, and detailed responses were definitely reflected in their answers.

### Summary

The aforementioned challenges that millennials present are many, but having an awareness of their needs can possibly provide a way forward to handle the new millennial student challenges presenting themselves. As stated in

the literature, millennial college students are the majority attending colleges and universities. To better understand the millennial generation college student is to provide new ways of learning or creating curriculum that matches their learning styles. This might allow for the development of programs or services specifically developed for the millennial college student. They are a generation of college students whom counseling faculty enjoy, are optimistic about their future, and want the best for.

### Recommendations for Educational Leaders

Recommendations based on the results of this study for educational leaders include the following.

#### Theme: Expectations of Here and Now

- Faculty awareness of millennial expectations. Instant gratification appears to be an expectation of the millennial generation college student. Educators should be aware of this and prepared to provide answers, direction, or a realistic solution.

An article titled “Millennials in College: How Do We Motivate Them” spoke to this theme (McGlynn, 2008). These recommendations are considerations that should be taken into account when designing interventions, programs, or services for the millennial generation college student in the California Community College system. The motivators that McGlynn addressed in the article are as follows:

### **Reach Out to Students:**

Student-engagement data from the National Survey of Student Engagement for four-year institutions and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement for the community college sector, makes it abundantly clear that student engagement is the key to academic motivation, persistence, and degree completion. . . . We need to become more proactive in reaching out to students to help them set realistic goals and provide the guidance that will help them reach those goals. (p. 20)

### **Build on Students' Strengths**

What we educators need to do is to capitalize on the strengths they bring to the classroom. If we recognize their strengths, we can create a classroom dynamic and use strategies that will effectively engage them. For example, this generation is the most socially connected of all generations. (p. 21)

### **Engage Parents**

Millennials seem more connected to their parents than were previous generations. Given these ties, many colleges are offering parents orientation to college experiences in which the college explains the kind of commitment their children must make to their studies. (p. 22)

### Theme: Sheltered/Protected

- Parental influence continues to play a major role in the lives of these students on a daily basis and during their educational endeavors

(helicopter parents). There may be a need for parent information sessions and/or orientations. Based on the results of this study, having an informed parent aid in the support of his or her student so that both are well informed is a way of being proactive and avoiding miscommunication since the parent is involved in his or her student's educational journey.

#### Theme: Peer Group Focused

- Socially these students are different and tend to be more aware of societal happenings and changes (voting, politics, etc.). The opportunity to participate in student government should be introduced to them early on in their academic career.
- The millennial generation college student is entering the job market in large numbers. The experience of internships or group-focused programs like a nursing program helps millennial college students with their confidence and provides them with hands-on experience. It also allows them the opportunity to work in groups or cohorts, which is highly beneficial to the millennial generation college student.

#### Theme: Techy/Technology

- Recognize that millennial generation college students are first and foremost different than previous generations in the way they think, learn, and process information. Educational leaders should cater to millennials' learning style, which is visual as well as hands on.

Additionally, educators should provide materials that are tangible in nature. According to Rosemary-McKibbin, Pieretti, Haberstock, and Estrada (2016),

Research has documented the need for “traditional” university instructors to update their teaching techniques to engage the interest of millennial students. In this study, we surveyed students (most of whom were millennials) about their reactions toward (a) the perceived importance of specific pedagogical strategies in the classroom and (b) the effectiveness of a demonstration YouTube video. We based survey items on current research in the fields of medicine, dentistry, education, and communication sciences and disorders, which indicated characteristics of millennials (e.g., interest in use of technology in the classroom). (pp. 182-183)

A study titled “Effective Pedagogical Strategies for Millennial University Students in Communication Sciences and Disorders” addressed specific instructional strategies (Rosemary-McKibbin et al., 2016). The specific strategies noted in the study are referred to as pedagogical practices. Implications for university pedagogical practices that engage millennials are as follows:

- Students were very enthusiastic about use of technology in the classroom. They were visual and kinesthetic learners who valued use of PowerPoint and demonstration videos.

- Students valued hands-on, in-class activities.
- Most students wanted to take notes during lectures. They generally did not value having all the notes given to them beforehand or during class. Several commented that having to take some notes kept them awake and engaged.
- Students did not value the situation of having an instructor just lecture with no PowerPoint slides or group discussion. Some students wrote strongly worded negative remarks about this traditional style of lecturing.
- The most surprising finding of this study was that very few respondents valued group projects. This directly contradicts conclusions from current literature, namely that millennials value collaborative, team-based projects. (Rosemary-McKibbin et al., 2016, p. 183)

Perhaps these strategies could be just as effective and utilized in other discipline areas.

Advanced technology continues to play a major role in the lives of millennial generation college students (Google, Facebook, PayPal, LinkedIn, etc.). It has led to an over reliance on technology for this generation of students. One should consider technology as a learning tool for millennials.

There is an article titled “Academia’s Challenge: Training Faculty to Teach Millennials in The Digital Age” (Villena-Alvarez, 2016). This article further justifies and supports the need to incorporate technology as a learning tool in the

classroom and offered some notable programmatic digital and technological innovations on how to do so. According to Villena-Alvarez,

Seven notable innovations and measures are presented as examples, with scopes ranging from a national scale to within campus projects, joint institution projects, and specific within course activities.

#### 1. Digital Humanities – what is Digital Humanities?

Most everyone in Higher Education is aware of the difficulties that the Humanities have undergone in the past two decades and the decline in the Humanities has been studied, argued, tracked, reviewed, analyzed, etc. by various groups such as Harvard University and even the illustrious organization -- the Modern Language Association. For certain groups of academics, the solution has been *Digital Humanities*, a phenomenon that has taken off in multiple directions. Note the research and publications that have been listed earlier and in the reference section of this publication. There are nine publications that group the arguments for this technological move to improve. One publication, by Arthur and Bode centers on the methodological and theoretical aspects of digital humanities. Four books, by such authors as Berry, Burdick, Drucker, Lunenfeild, Presner, Schnapp, Hirsch, Jones, Terras, Nyhan, and Vanhoutte, make myriad efforts to better understand what digital humanities really represent by defining, updating research, and elucidating ideas. McGann and Gold discuss the troubles and debates surrounding

digital humanities. As a whole, these authors are making the valiant effort to move humanities to the digital age, a much needed step in the right direction.

## 2. Bates College, Maine

In response to the advent of Digital Humanities as mentioned above, institutions are discovering ways and innovations that tap into this. One of these institutions is Bates College. Bates is a small private liberal arts institution with about 2,000 students and an acceptance rate of less than 30%. In 2015, the college launched their “Digital Course Design/Redesign Initiative” grant to motivate their faculty “to incorporate computational thinking, logical argumentation, algorithmic problem solving, computational modeling, database management, and the application of these skills and tools to subjects we study and teach” (Bates College).

## 3. Grinnell College and Iowa University

*Inside Higher Ed* featured the joint collaboration between Grinnell College and the University of Iowa in an article by Straumsheim. This joint project entitled “Digital Bridges for Humanistic Inquiry” is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with a \$1.6 million grant.

## 4. Harvard University et al

*Harvard Magazine* published the article “The Humanities, Digitized: Reconceiving the Study of Culture” by Shaw to showcase how researchers and students can tap into culture studies through programs

that provide a visualization of a 4,500-year old landscape in Egypt at Harvard University; programs at UCLA that capture unfolding history through “citizen-archive of a revolution in progress” during the 2011 ouster of the then Egyptian president through Twitter feeds; programs that archive massive amounts of data coming from some 10,000 websites of the twin tsunami and nuclear reactor accident disasters in Japan that happened March 2011; and a review of programs that can mine data from more than a million written texts.

5. Johns Hopkins University and the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation

This is an earlier program from 2006 and is a report of a project that started in 2001. It has aged a bit but can demonstrate how institutions have been working on digitalizing the Humanities for some fifteen years now. It was a project partnership between the JHU Sheridan Libraries with faculty members to develop course enhancement resources like digitizing images for higher resolution in history of art courses and creating an online environment such as eWorkshops for writing seminar courses, just to name two of fifteen individual projects accomplished.

6. University of South Carolina Beaufort –Student App Creation for

campus needs At USCB, select undergraduate students are identified to present their research work at the annual Student Research and Scholarship Day (SRSD). In 2013, student Bill Glesias presented an App he created for campus security, a feature the university did not have at

that time (Barton). His presentation won second place in the SRSD's Innovation/Application category. This App has since then been launched through the iPhone App Store (and others) and now available to all the students, faculty, and staff of the campus (Glesias and Canada).

7. Clickers and the updated digital version of this interactive teaching platform like Top Hat. 100% class participation. Enough said. (pp. 379-380).

#### Recommendations for Future Research

A future research project that could be of interest is the next generation of students called the Homeland Generation, referred to as Generation Z. These young people are the next generation born from 1992 to 2015, following the millennial generation, known also as Generation Y. Will Generation Z show similarities or differences from Generation Y, the millennial generation? What characteristics will define them? How will they help shape the future?

A similar study should be undertaken that compares the observations and experiences of other faculty, such as faculty hired into instructional (i.e., psychology) departments.

A similar study should be undertaken that looks at millennial college students entering the workforce in large numbers and working alongside other generations of people. This study was limited to CCCC. It would have been interesting to hear from community college administrators and instructional

faculty from other college districts. These professionals interact with the millennial generation college students in very different ways than a college counseling faculty professional does. What observations or experiences would they have shared?

### Limitations of the Study

The study did not identify the input and challenges of specific programs already established at various California community colleges. What are these programs experiencing? How are these programs organized and what goals do they identify for the millennial generation college student? The study was limited in terms of gaining specific details from the counseling faculty regarding strategies that they believed were the most successful when working with millennial students.

### Conclusion

Millennial generation college students have proven to be a fascinating topic of research. Millennials are definitely different from other generations as far as the way they were raised, their expectations, and their behavior. Millennials (the actual title) are being mentioned in the news, in the workplace and on certain media outlets in order to discuss various topics about this generation. They are a group that comes with a lot of nuances and challenges. These students are our future.

APPENDIX  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## Final Interview Questions

1. How many years have you worked as a counseling faculty at a California Community College? Have you worked in other roles in the community college setting? (Adjunct, programs etc.)  
PROBE: years, prior experience?
2. In your experience working with millennial college students, have you had to modify or change your counseling style and if so in what way?
3. In your experience working with millennial college students, have you had to modify or change your teaching style and if so in what way?
4. From your observations and experiences, to what extent has technology played a role in the lives of the millennial college student?
5. Which characteristics of millennial students have stood out to you the most?
6. From your observation and experiences, does parental involvement play a role in the lives of millennial college students?

APPENDIX  
IRB APPROVAL FORM

**IRB #:** IRB-FY2018-146

**Title:** Millennial Generation College Students: Observations and Experiences of Counseling Faculty at Selected California Community College Districts

**Creation Date:** 6-18-2018

**End Date:** 11-20-2019

**Status:** Approved

**Principal Investigator:** Antoine Thomas

**Review Board:** CSUSB Main IRB

**Sponsor:**

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### Study History

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<b>Submission Type</b>	Initial	<b>Review Type</b>	Expedited	<b>Decision</b>	<span style="color: orange;">Approved</span>
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