

Hiring, Promotion, and Progress: Millennials' Expectations in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Many Millennials are in the process of applying for, landing, and working in their first full-time jobs. In the popular literature, managers of Millennials report that the personalities or values of the younger generation are in conflict with values that have governed the workplace throughout the 20th century, such as hard work, respect for authority, and company loyalty. However, empirical research has not adequately explored this phenomenon. Using a survey of current undergraduates and alumni from a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest, we examined Millennials' values and expectations regarding hiring, promotion, and career progress in order to explore two hypotheses. First, Millennials' expectations for hiring and promotion in the workplace differ from the older generations' perceptions of their expectations. Second, Millennials who place a higher importance on extrinsic work values have a more favorable attitude towards job-hopping than those who place less importance on extrinsic values. Our results convey the need for members of all generations to be aware of the interaction between their actual work values and others' perceptions of those values, as well as the importance of understanding how this plays into landing and keeping jobs.

INTRODUCTION AND SCHOLARLY LITERATURE

The subject of generational differences is emerging as a major topic in academic literature as the children of the 1980s and 1990s have grown up, finished school, and begun entering the workforce in droves. While this generation has not yet fully transitioned from the school setting to the workplace, older employees and managers are already asking themselves: who are these people, and why do they seem so different?

The notion of a "generation gap" is not a new one, but only recently has it been looked at scientifically rather than solely anecdotally. A generation is a group of people, born during the same period of time, who share similar characteristics as a result of having experienced the same events at the same times in their formative development (Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley 2010). Three generations, each with its own unique experiences and characteristics, make up the bulk of the American workforce today: Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials. Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1963, are reported to have a strong work ethic, are

loyal, and value material wealth. Generation Xers, born between 1964 and 1979, grew up during an energy crisis, an economic recession, and a litany of government scandals; as a result, they are reported to distrust authority and value individualism and independence. Millennials, also called Generation Y, Echo Boomers, or the Net Generation, are the newest generation to enter the workforce; there is not yet a consensus as to which years mark this generation, but many researchers follow the definition laid out by Howe and Strauss (2000). Following suit, we consider Millennials to be those born between 1980 and 2003. They are said to be comfortable with technology and diversity, value flexibility and teamwork, and require constant feedback and direction to get work done (Gentry et al. 2011; Gibson, Greenwood, and Murphy 2009; Howe and Strauss 2000; Kowske et al. 2010).

Concerns surrounding what appear to be fundamental differences in values and behavior are becoming more pronounced as Millennials enter the workforce, prompting a rapid increase in the amount and scope of research undertaken on the topic. While there is no strong consensus on the extent to which the three generations actually differ in terms of either values or behavior, at least some research suggested that important differences not only exist, but have real implications for how managers should best address challenges in the workplace (Gibson et al. 2009). Generational differences in values have the potential to translate into any number of conflicts; one area that may be particularly fraught is expectations for the workplace. Typically, the expectations of Generation X and Baby Boomer supervisors shape the policies and requirements surrounding hiring decisions, job tasks, workplace behavior, and promotion practices. If Millennials' expectations are at odds with those of the prevailing workplace culture, their satisfaction, performance, and company loyalty all suffer; for businesses and industries looking to hire and retain Millennials, then, the questions that arise out of research into generational differences are important ones.

Expectations in the Workplace

Millennials' expectations surrounding the nature of their jobs or careers are a topic of increasing focus in academic literature. A Price Waterhouse Cooper Consulting study (2008) found that 88% of college graduates would prefer to work for employers who share their social values and 86% would consider leaving their job if they discovered that the employer's social values differed from their own. This study reflects the optimism and idealism that are often attributed to this generation, as well as the Millennials' sense of global engagement and responsibility (Pew Research Center 2010). However, little research has been conducted regarding whether or how often Millennials actually act on these values, and they may have little importance for employers wishing to attract new applicants.

Millennials' hiring expectations have not been a major focus in academic literature, and considerably more research has focused on their expectations once they have entered a job. Several researchers have found evidence that this generation expects to be given direction and support once they have been hired. Retail employees who report high levels of role ambiguity are significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs; likewise, strong supervisory support, including direction and feedback, was found to be a significant predictor of increased job satisfaction (Kim, Knight, and Crutsinger 2009). Research by Hauw and Vos (2010) supports these earlier findings: Millennials expect to be provided with job training and career development resources, and are more likely to consider leaving their jobs if those expectations are not met. Likewise, when asked to rank a list of qualities in order of importance for career success, Millennials ranked loyalty lower than either Generation Xers or Baby Boomers (Gibson et al. 2009). Taken together, these findings speak to the increased difficulty of retaining Millennial employees compared to employees of older generations. In addition, these findings raise the issue of what changes employers might need to make in order to build an employee base from the youngest generation.

However, it must be noted that there is no strong consensus regarding the work expectations of the Millennial generation. While several researchers found that direction and support are important to Millennials, Kim et al. (2008) found that Millennials value autonomy: in situations where respondents reported dissatisfying levels of role ambiguity or supervisory support, a high level of autonomy acted as a mediating factor, driving up overall job satisfaction scores. Likewise, while some research has found that Millennials expect the benefits of their careers and promotions to include a high salary and a prestigious title (Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins 2005), other research suggests that markers of wealth and prestige are less important to Millennials than their overall satisfaction (Dries, Pepermans, and De Kerpel 2008).

Even expectations about how to achieve success in the workplace may be affected by generational differences. Gentry et al. (2011) studied beliefs about leadership qualities across three generations, and found that Millennials were significantly more likely than Generation Xers or Baby Boomers to believe that learning and self-awareness were important for success in the workplace. In addition, Millennials were significantly less likely to consider being a leader important for success. However, while these results were statistically significant, the practical significance was small, once again calling into question how important these generational differences truly are. In fact, one study suggests that the generational differences in workplace expectations, though quite small, may actually improve retention: Millennials' unique desire for flexibility and expectations for career development may make them more receptive to lateral promotion strategies (Kowske et al. 2010). Such strategies would allow supervisors to maintain the traditional hierarchy and seniority-based promotion system to which they are accustomed while still maintaining high levels of Millennial job satisfaction.

Achievement Orientation

Millennials who have already entered the workforce have demonstrated a willingness to work long and hard to attain success (Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins 2005:65). A study by Lyons,

et al. (2005:65) found prestige work values (work that is highly esteemed and recognized by others) to be very important to Millennials, especially compared to other generational cohorts. Because work values shape employee perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors for the workplace, Millennials are likely to act on their prestige work values by maintaining a strong work ethic in their quest to succeed (Twenge et al. 2010:1121); (Lyons, Duxbury, and Higgins 2005:65). Millennials were also found to value extrinsic rewards (material aspects of work such as salary and benefits) more than older generational cohorts (Twenge et al. 2010:1134). This combination of wanting money and status but also wanting vacation time may be the basis for the stereotype that many older workers have placed on Millennials: entitled.

Desire for Rapid Success

Current popular literature points to a perception that Millennials want everything immediately. There are several societal factors that could contribute to this phenomenon, including globalization and rapid advances in technology. Millennials may not feel a need to “pay their dues,” privileging rapid career advancement, often through job-hopping, as an alternative to traditional seniority-based promotion tracks. Millennials expect that a career will include good benefits and pay from the earliest days of their employment. That expectation may have been fueled in childhood, when Millennials became accustomed to good grades regardless of what their work deserved (Ng et al. 2010:282). These heightened expectations for rapid career advancement may be a byproduct of entitlement. Of the 23,413 respondents surveyed by Ng et al. (2010:285), almost 70% expected to get a promotion by the end of 18 months at their first job. Together, these findings point to the notion that Millennials desire a faster timeline for promotion than their older counterparts.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is very important for the retention of Millennials in the workplace, because Millennials want to feel they are achieving something and that there is value in what they are doing. In fact, job satisfaction has a direct connection with whether or not Millennials consider themselves successful in their careers. According to Heslin (2005), individuals who are unhappy with most aspects of their job are unlikely to consider their careers to be successful. Throughout the 20th century, career success was typically judged based on money, power, and advancement, but younger employees are marking a shift in this paradigm: often, they consider subjective factors, such as challenge and time for self, to be more important. In fact, when asked about career success, Millennials responded that the determining factors were status, the amount of time that was left for themselves, the level of challenge that the job posed, the level of security the job provided, and if the job had social aspects. (Heslin 2005:116.)

Measuring career success as salary or number of promotions is no longer adequate due to a shift toward the idea that job satisfaction involves more than material factors. Dries et al. (2008) found that Silent Generation, born 1925-1945, employees consider salary and job satisfaction to be equally important, whereas all other generations (Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Millennials) considered job satisfaction to be more important than salary. Personal satisfaction with one's job has become an increasingly important facet of career success as the traditional markers of career success have waned. The popular literature is littered with anecdotes from managers claiming that job-hopping is an issue for companies that expend time and resources training employees who leave before the company is able to get a return on their investment. However, members of the younger generation are less likely to leave a job if they are challenged appropriately, are doing work that they believe makes a difference of some kind, and feel fairly compensated for their work in terms of salary and benefits (Dries et al. 2008).

The research that exists regarding Millennials in the workforce is sparse; in particular, there is almost no information about practices related to hiring, promotion, and career progress.

Likewise, though much popular literature on the topic includes employers' perceptions of job-hopping as a growing and problematic phenomenon, very little scholarly literature exists, contributing to these employers' lack of understanding of the job-hopping phenomenon and its causes. As a result of these gaps, we chose to investigate the role of work values as conceptualized by Lyons et al. (2005:65); in particular, we hoped to understand how these work values and perceptions of them differ by generation, as well as to explore how these values guide Millennials' decisions to take or leave jobs.

METHODS

Our research was based on an electronic survey, administered via email to current students and alumni of a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest. We gathered data about values and expectations surrounding the hiring and promotion processes, in order to test two hypotheses:

1. Millennials' expectations surrounding hiring and promotion in the workplace differ from older generations' perceptions of their expectations; in other words, older generations have an inaccurate perception of Millennials' workplace expectations.
2. Millennials who place a higher importance on extrinsic values have a more favorable attitude toward job-hopping than those who consider extrinsic values to be less important.

By testing these hypotheses, we aimed to take a step toward both diagnosing the oft-reported generational conflicts in the workplace and providing constructive advice toward prospective employees and employers alike.

We initiated our research study by conducting a review of the scholarly literature. In so doing, we learned that no consensus exists regarding the nature and extent of generational differences in the workplace. In order to gain a better understanding of the topic, we planned and conducted a focus group with current Millennial undergraduates, highlighting common themes from the scholarly literature as topics for discussion; we also conducted informal interviews with Generation X and Baby Boomer informants. These two sources expanded the

information we had about Millennials' values and expectations for hiring, promotion, and career progress, as well as our information about older generations' perceptions of Millennials. Based on this, we were able to identify major themes to use in developing our survey.

Ultimately, we developed three surveys; one was administered to Baby Boomer and Generation X alumni, one was administered to Millennial alumni currently in the workforce, and the final survey was administered to Millennials currently pursuing undergraduate degrees. The surveys, administered in the fall of 2011, consisted of questions from several research teams, each collecting data on subtopics related to generational differences in personal life and career expectations.

Sample

The three target populations from which we drew our samples were current Millennial undergraduates, Millennial alumni, and Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni of a small, private, liberal arts college in the Midwest. We used student enrollment records as our sampling frame for current juniors and seniors; for the two alumni groups, we used Alumni Relations records as our sampling frame.

In addition, we made several exclusions prior to drawing our samples in order to eliminate respondents who may have lacked either relevant experiences or the ability to access the survey. Among current students, we excluded current freshmen and sophomores, part-time students, students spending the semester on off-campus study programs, students currently enrolled in our research methods course, and students who participated in our focus groups. Among both alumni populations, we excluded those whose class year, contact information, and employment information was missing or incomplete in Alumni Relations records; those who were not currently involved in civilian employment; and those who reported student, armed services, homemaker, retired, volunteer, unemployed, or disabled as occupational categories.

For each target population, our institution's Director of Institutional Research drew a simple random sample; we selected this sampling method because it yields a sample that is representative of the population from which it is drawn, thus allowing for generalizability of results to that population (Nardi 2006). In order to determine our sampling ratio, we used the rule of thumb method (Neuman 2007), which recommends sampling 30% of a population with fewer than 1,000 units and 10% of a population with about 10,000 units. Based on this recommendation, we sampled 20% of 3,071 Millennial alumni and 10% of 9,747 Generation X or Baby Boomer alumni. In addition, based on this recommendation and the expectation that only 40-50% of current students sampled would actually respond to the survey, we sampled 50% of current juniors and seniors.

After drawing each of the three samples, the Director of Institutional Research built a separate email alias for each sample; we used these email aliases to send an electronic cover letter to each person chosen for our sample. The cover letter described our research topic and the survey; invited respondents to voluntarily complete the survey, accessible through a link included in the email; and provided for informed consent. The cover letter sent to current undergraduates also included information about an incentive available to respondents. The cover letters were successfully sent to 647 current undergraduates, 536 Millennial alumni, and 858 Generation X or Baby Boomer alumni. We received survey responses from 266 current students, 104 Millennial alumni, and 122 Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni, giving us response rates of 41.1%, 19.4%, and 14.2%, respectively.

Among current student respondents, 32.3% were male and 65.4% were female; one respondent (0.37%) selected the choice "other" for gender. Likewise, 44.4% were juniors and 53.8% percent were seniors. Among Millennial alumni respondents, 20.2% were male and 78.8% were female. Finally, 41.8% of Generation X and Baby Boomer respondents were male, while 58.2% were female. Among respondents to this survey, 26.7% were Generation Xers,

while 72.5% were Baby Boomers.

Measures

Our survey items included Likert-type and other multiple choice questions discussing work values, the ideal length of time in a given job, and potential reasons for leaving. In addition, we included an open-ended question soliciting additional comments and anecdotes regarding work values, employee retention, and the hiring process.

The surveys administered to each group covered the same topics; however, we asked Millennial students and alumni about their own expectations, whereas we asked Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni about their perceptions of Millennials' expectations. We used a filter question to ensure that the data from the older generations were based on actual experiences: respondents who indicated that they did not interact with Millennials in their workplace were directed to refrain from completing this section of the survey.

Our primary independent variable was generation, which we extrapolated from respondents' indicated college graduation year. We classified respondents as Baby Boomers if they graduated college between 1964 and 1986, as Generation Xers if they graduated college between 1987 and 1999, and as Millennials if they graduated between 2000 and 2011. In addition, we used number of career changes as an independent variable; we provided respondents with a definition of "career" (work within a specific field, regardless of the number of employers) and asked respondents to indicate whether they had changed careers never; 1-2 times; or three or more times. Finally, we collected data on three primary dependent variables: intrinsic work values, extrinsic work values, and attitude toward job-hopping.

Intrinsic Work Values

We drew our conceptual definition of intrinsic work values from Lyons et al. (2005), who described intrinsic work values as placing a high importance on intellectual challenge and

personal fulfillment. We measured four dimensions of intrinsic work values: desire for challenge, learning opportunities, personal fulfillment, and high levels of responsibility.

We created an interval-ratio Intrinsic Work Values Index that included five Likert-type items about intrinsic work values. We asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement (Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, or Strongly Disagree) to statements such as: *I value work that gives me a lot of responsibility*, *I value work that is challenging*, or *Millennials prefer jobs that do not require them to learn new skills*. We assigned each response category a point value and determined each respondent's overall Intrinsic Work Value score by summing their responses on each of the five indicators. Possible scores ranged from 5 to 20, with higher scores reflecting a stronger preference for intrinsic work values.

Extrinsic Work Values

We drew our conceptual definition of extrinsic work values from Lyons et al. (2005), who described it as placing a high importance on tangible rewards. Based on this definition, as well as comments from our focus group participants, we chose to measure two dimensions of extrinsic values: salary and benefits. We used two ordinal-level, Likert-type questions to measure extrinsic values; respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with: *I value work that provides good levels of tangible rewards such as salary and benefits* and *I would seriously consider leaving my job if another company offered me a position with the same salary but better benefits*. We posed the same statements to Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni, but phrased to ask about their perceptions of Millennials ("Millennials value..."), not their own values.

Attitude Toward Job-Hopping

Based on responses in our focus group and informant interviews with Generation Xers and Baby Boomers, we defined job-hopping as: leaving an employer to advance one's career or

increase one's personal career success. We measured this variable through a combination of ordinal-level multiple choice and Likert-type questions. We asked Millennial students and alumni how long they wanted to stay (or had stayed) at their first full-time job after college. In addition, we asked them to state their level of agreement with statements such as: *My first full-time job out of college will be a stepping-stone to a better position elsewhere.*

We measured Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni's own attitudes and behavior in regards to job-hopping by asking multiple choice questions about how many times they had changed jobs and careers since graduating from college. In addition, we used Likert-type statements such as *Millennials will typically leave their jobs if they receive a better offer from another company, regardless of how long they have been with their current employer* to determine their perceptions of Millennials' job-hopping tendencies.

Reliability and Validity

The first step we took to ensure reliability of our survey came in the planning stages: we developed clear and specific conceptual definitions (described previously) of each of our variables. Once we began drafting the actual survey, we consistently used these definitions to develop questions that addressed our hypotheses.

Likewise, we used several indicators to measure each variable. For example, our measurements of intrinsic work values included five Likert-type items compiled into an interval-ratio index. We included at least two questions for each of our other major variables. In addition, providing response categories that were precise, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive helped safeguard the reliability of our survey.

Finally, we conducted a "talk through" of our survey with members of our focus group, in which we asked respondents to discuss their thoughts, questions, and concerns aloud as they took the survey. This allowed us to identify problems and issues of clarity before administering the survey to our full sample.

The measurements used in this survey had both face validity and content validity, as described by Nardi (2006). In order to ensure face validity, we discussed our conceptual definitions with focus group participants and Generation X and Baby Boomer informants; throughout these discussions, it was clear that all participants felt that these definitions accurately reflected the concepts they were meant to describe. To ensure content validity, we confirmed that each dimension of our conceptual definitions was represented by at least one survey question. While criterion validity is a useful way of determining whether measurements actually reflect the variables they are intended to (Nardi 2006), achieving this form of validity was beyond the scope of this research.

Ethical Considerations

When conducting human research, it is of the utmost importance to protect subjects from undue harm. Ethical research is founded on the principles laid out in the Belmont Report (1979), which calls for protection of subjects' autonomy and provision of informed consent; beneficence and non-maleficence; and an equal distribution of burden and potential benefits. Our first step in providing for the well-being of our subjects consisted of seeking approval of our research from our Institutional Review Board (IRB). Because our research fell into the category was limited to populations associated with our institution, no vulnerable subjects were involved, risk to subjects was minimal, and no identifying information could be connected to responses, our IRB considers it low-risk (IRB 2011). We were allowed to conducted our research without explicit IRB review; instead, only review by the course instructor was required. Our instructor helped us plan and implement our research designs and worked with us throughout the research process to ensure that we upheld the ethical principles of the Belmont Report.

Informed consent is one of the main principles of the Belmont Report (1979), and an essential component of ethical research. We ensured informed consent by sending a cover letter to each person selected to be part of our sample. The cover letters we sent described the

topic of our research, the approximate length of the survey, and potential benefits of completing the survey. They also provided information about who to contact regarding questions or concerns. Finally, our cover letters assured respondents that their names could not be connected to their responses, that participation was voluntary, and that any or all portions of the survey could be skipped.

Privacy was one of our major considerations when undertaking our research study. Because the Director of Institutional Research drew our samples and assembled email aliases for our use, no one involved in the research process ever saw the names of those people who comprised our samples. In addition, the electronic survey form submissions were not connected to respondents' email addresses, so it was impossible to link any identity to any specific responses. Finally, the incentive we offered to current students was the opportunity to enter a drawing for a gift card; however, those students who emailed us their names in order to participate in the drawing still had their privacy protected because there was no way to determine which responses were connected to any given name.

Two final ethical issues that arose throughout the research process relate more closely to the actual data. The first issue is that of sensitive information; it was important to strike a balance between collecting data that were relevant and informative without asking questions that could be offensive or uncomfortable for respondents. In order to do so, we avoided questions about race, income, or other sensitive personal information. Likewise, though the nature of our research required us to ask questions related to age, we did not want to offend or discouraged people from responding. In order to accommodate these concerns while still obtaining the information we needed for our research, we asked respondents to indicate their graduation year, thus enabling us to classify them into approximate generational categories.

Data analysis provided the final source of ethical concerns. Excessive data analysis can show relationships that do not really exist or that are not meaningful; likewise, untoward manipulation of data could be used to intentionally show results that are desired, even if such

results are not true. In order to prevent false conclusions, we strove to be conscientious in our data analysis: we ran only the tests that were most relevant to our research topic, and did not pursue insignificant results with relentless follow-up tests. Finally, we strove to be clear and transparent in the reporting of our analysis, so that any audiences reviewing our research would understand what relationships we did or did not find, what they meant, and whether they were likely to be important in an actual workplace setting.

RESULTS

Current undergraduates' scores on the Intrinsic Work Values Index ranged from 13 to 20, with a mean of 17.76. The median was 18 and the standard deviation was 1.767. The data were skewed left (see Figure 1), indicating that current students tended to cluster in higher intrinsic value scores.

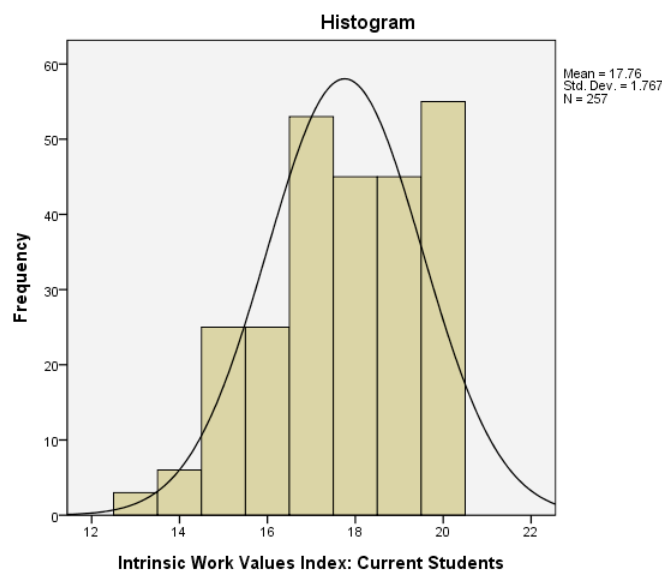


Figure 1. Intrinsic Work Values for Current Students

Millennial alumni's scores on the Intrinsic Work Values Index ranged from 13 to 20 with a mean of 18.12, a median of 18, and a standard deviation of 1.681. The data were skewed left (see Figure 2), indicating that Millennial alumni, like their undergraduate counterparts, tended to

cluster in higher intrinsic value scores. There was no statistically significant difference in intrinsic work values scores between Millennial alumni and Millennial undergraduates.

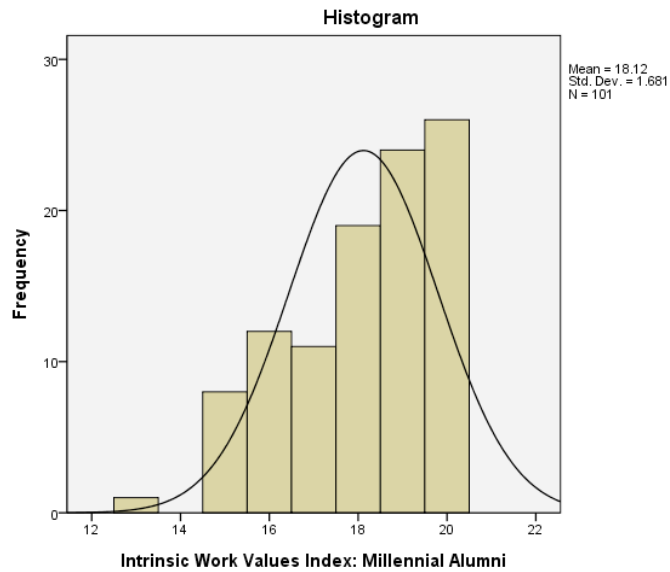


Figure 2. Intrinsic Work Values for Millennial Alumni

Among Generation Xers and Baby Boomers, scores on the Intrinsic Work Values Index ranged from 10 to 20 with a mean of 15.45. The median was 15 and the standard deviation was 2.360. These data had a relatively normally distribution (see Figure 3), with most scores clustered in the mid-range of the data, from 13 to 16.

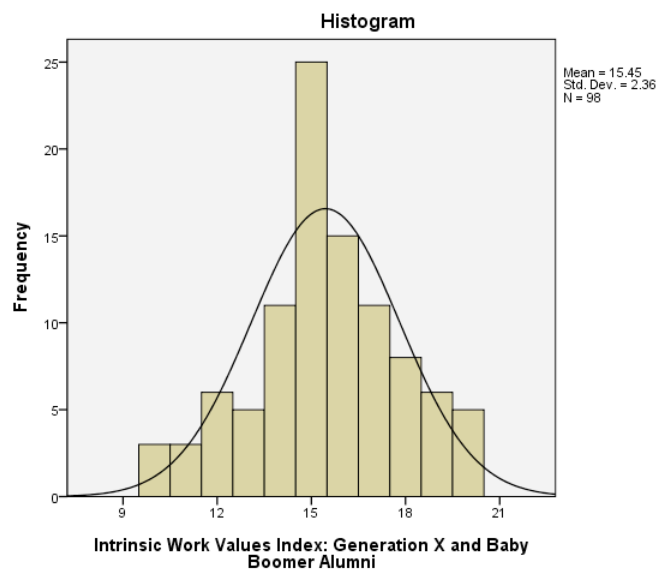


Figure 3. Generation X and Baby Boomer Alumni's Perceptions of Millennials' Intrinsic Work Values

We used Likert-type questions to measure Millennials' work values and Generation X and Baby Boomers' perceptions of those work values. In response to the statement *I value work that provides good levels of tangible rewards such as salary and benefits*, 89.3% of current students selected either "Strongly Agree" or "Somewhat Agree," while 10.7% of current students selected either "Strongly Disagree" or "Somewhat Disagree." Millennial alumni responded similarly, with 86.3% of respondents indicating agreement and 13.7% indicating disagreement. We measured Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni's perceptions of the importance placed on extrinsic work values by Millennials by asking them to indicate their level of agreement with the statement *Millennials typically stay with a company only if they feel they are earning a competitive salary*. Among respondents, 61.2% indicated that they agreed, whereas 38.8% indicated that they disagreed.

To measure attitudes toward job-hopping, we used both multiple choice and Likert-type questions. The majority of both current students and Millennial alumni indicated a preference to stay at their first full-time jobs after college for at least one year (see Table 1). In addition, we asked Generation X and Baby Boomer respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the statement *Millennials will typically leave their jobs if they receive a better offer from another company, regardless of how long they have been with their current employer*; 80% agreed with this statement and 20% disagreed, demonstrating that alumni of this generation tend to believe that Millennials have an inclination towards job-hopping. Likewise, we asked current students and Millennial alumni to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: *I would seriously consider leaving my job if another company offered me a position with the same salary but better benefits*. Among current students, 88.1% agreed and 11.9% disagreed; among Millennial alumni, 61.7% agreed and 38.3% disagreed. These data indicate favorable attitudes toward job-hopping among both groups of Millennials surveyed.

Table 1. Desired Length of Time at First Full-Time Job After College Among Millennial Respondents

Desired length of time at first full-time job after college	Current Students	Millennial Alumni
Less than 6 months	1.9%	2.8%
6-12 months	17.9%	13.9%
13-18 months	23.3%	8.3%
19 months to 2 years	33.2%	8.3%
More than 2 years	23.7%	66.7%

Hypothesis 1: Millennials’ expectations surrounding hiring and promotion in the workplace differ from older generations’ perceptions of their expectations.

We used a Mann-Whitney U Test to compare the relationship between Millennials’ intrinsic values and Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni’s perceptions of those values. We compared scores on the Intrinsic Work Values Index by generation and found statistically significant results ($p < 0.001$). Current Millennial students scored higher on the Intrinsic Work Values Index than older generations did (see Table 2), indicating that Millennial students place a higher importance on intrinsic values than Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni perceived.

Table 2. Mann Whitney U-Test of Intrinsic Work Values between Current Students and Generation X & Baby Boomer Alumni

		Ranks		
Generation Grouped		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Intrinsic Work Values Index	Boomers and Gen Xers	97	105.20	10204.50
	Current Students	254	203.04	51571.50
	Total	351		

Interestingly, the number of careers (defined as work within a specific field) that Generation Xers and Baby Boomers have had does not modify their perceptions of Millennials’ intrinsic and extrinsic work values. There was no statistically significant difference in scores on the Intrinsic Work Values Index among Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni who had never changed careers and those who had changed careers at least once. Likewise, there was no statistically significance difference in perception of Millennials’ extrinsic work values between

Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni who had never changed careers and those who had changed careers at least once.

We also conducted a Kruskal Wallis test comparing extrinsic work values by generation. We found statistically significant results ($p < 0.001$) indicating a difference between at least two of the three generational cohorts in the importance of extrinsic work values (see Table 3). Current students and Millennial alumni prized extrinsic work values more highly than Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni thought they did.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis Test of Extrinsic Values by Generation

		Ranks	
	Grouped Generations	N	Mean Rank
Value work that provides tangible reward	Generation X & Baby Boomer Alumni	97	153.02
	Millennial Alumni	101	246.47
	Current Students	258	249.84
	Total	456	

We followed this analysis with Spearman rho tests in order to confirm which groups differed in terms of extrinsic values, as well as to determine the magnitude of this difference. There was no statistically significant difference between current students and Millennial alumni in terms of their extrinsic values; however, each of these groups differed significantly ($p < 0.001$ for both relationships) from the importance that Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni thought Millennials placed on extrinsic work values (see Table 4 and Table 5). There was a correlation of -0.383 between Millennial alumni and older alumni; the correlation for the relationship between current students and older alumni was -0.360. In both cases, this indicates a relationship of moderate strength, in which Generation X and Baby Boomer alumni tend to underestimate the importance that Millennials place on extrinsic values.

Table 4. Correlation Between Extrinsic Work Values and Generation For Millennial Alumni and Generation X and Baby Boomer Alumni

Correlations			Value work that provides tangible rewards	Generation
Spearman's rho	Value work that provides tangible rewards	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.383**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	200	199
	Generation	Correlation Coefficient	-.383**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	199	224

Table 5. Correlation Between Extrinsic Work Values and Generation for Current Students and Millennial Alumni

Correlations			Value work that provides tangible rewards	Generation
Spearman's rho	Value work that provides tangible rewards	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.360**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	359	356
	Generation	Correlation Coefficient	-.360**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	356	382

Hypothesis 2: Millennials who place a higher importance on extrinsic values have a more favorable attitude toward job-hopping than those who consider extrinsic values to be less important.

We analyzed this hypothesis using six Spearman rho tests, three of which had statistically significant results. All of the statistically significant tests showed small positive correlations between the extrinsic value and job-hopping variables tested; this indicates a direct, albeit weak, relationship between these variables. The first Spearman's Rho test compared value placed on tangible rewards (extrinsic value) with desire for first full-time job to be a stepping stone to a better position elsewhere (job-hopping indicator). The results were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) with a correlation of 0.205 (see Table 6).

Table 6. Correlation Between Desire for Tangible Rewards and Stepping-Stone Job Intentions

Correlations			Value work that provides tangible reward	First full time job will be stepping stone
Spearman's rho	Value work that provides tangible reward	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.205**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	261	261
	First full time job will be stepping stone	Correlation Coefficient	.205**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	261	265

The second Spearman's Rho test compared value placed on tangible rewards (extrinsic value) with desired length of time spent at first full-time job after college (job-hopping indicator). The results were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) with a correlation of 0.116 (see Table 7).

Table 7. Correlation Between Desire for Tangible Rewards and Desired Duration of First Full-Time Job

Correlations			Value work that provides tangible reward	Length of time spent at first job
Spearman's rho	Value work that provides tangible reward	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.116*
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.031
		N	261	258
	Length of time spent at first job	Correlation Coefficient	.116*	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.031	.
		N	258	262

The third Spearman's Rho test compared the perceived importance of benefits (extrinsic value) with desire for first full-time job to be a stepping stone to a better position elsewhere (job-hopping indicator). Our results were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), with a correlation of 0.221 (see Table 8).

Table 8. Correlation Between Perceived Importance of Benefits and Stepping-Stone Job Intentions

Correlations			Would leave job if another company offered better benefits	First full time job will be stepping stone
Spearman's rho	Would leave job if another company offered better benefits	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.221**
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.000
		N	262	262
	First full time job will be stepping stone	Correlation Coefficient	.221**	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.
		N	262	265

Three Spearman's Rho tests did not indicate statistically significant relationships. These compared value placed on tangible rewards (extrinsic value) with desire to stay at a company long-term after five years of service (job-hopping indicator), perceived importance of benefits (extrinsic value) with desire for first full-time job to be a stepping stone to a better position elsewhere (job-hopping indicator), and perceived importance of benefits (extrinsic value) with desired length of time spent at first full-time job (job-hopping indicator). None of these results were significant at the $p = 0.05$ level.

DISCUSSION

We tested the hypothesis that there is a discrepancy between older generations' perceptions of Millennials' expectations in the workplace and Millennials' actual expectations. We found statistically significant evidence to support this hypothesis ($p < 0.001$ on all tests conducted). In other words, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers tend to have an inaccurate perception of Millennials' expectations and values. Specifically, Millennials prize intrinsic work values more highly than older generations tend to assume; likewise, older generations underestimated how important extrinsic work values were to Millennials.

The discrepancy between Millennials' values and older generations' perceptions of those values may be due to Millennials' experiences with their parents' careers. Many Generation Xers and Baby Boomers have been laid off or fired during economic downturns, and growing up with this may have lead Millennials to have different work values than their parents (Myers and Sadaghiani 2010:227). For example, having watched adult role models lose jobs with companies they had worked at for years may have given the Millennial generation a sense that a job can be lost without warning and thus is not a reliable guarantee of tangible benefits; this could have contributed to a desire to pursue jobs providing personal fulfillment, leading to the high importance Millennials places on intrinsic work values.

The absence of a relationship between the number of times Generation Xers and Baby Boomers have changed careers and their perceptions of Millennials' work values is curious. Our results indicate that number of career changes is *not* a mediating factor for older generations' perceptions of Millennials' work values. However, previous research into factors motivating career changes suggests that those who change careers tend to prize intrinsic work values and believe that employment should be personally fulfilling; conversely, those who have never changed careers tend to consider extrinsic factors, particularly salary, to be more important (Kanchier and Unruh 1989). This apparent difference between those who have and have not changed careers did not appear in our research.

Further research is needed to fully understand the implications of this; however, our findings lend support to the notion that older generations believe that Millennials are fundamentally different from them. For example, if Generation Xers and Baby Boomers saw Millennials as similar to themselves, they may project their own expectations and values onto these new workers; if this were the case, alumni who had changed careers would likely perceive Millennials differently than those who had never changed careers. The absence of evidence for such a difference suggests that older alumni may have based their perceptions of Millennials' work values on a belief of fundamental difference, which points to the need for further research to investigate more fully whether such a belief exists and where it stems from.

Our second hypothesis examined the relationship between extrinsic work values and job-hopping. We found statistically significant evidence that Millennials who consider extrinsic work values to be important will also have favorable attitudes toward job-hopping. However, some of the statistical tests did not indicate significant relationships. Even the tests that showed significance indicated only a small correlation between the importance Millennials placed on extrinsic work values and their attitudes toward job-hopping. Thus, despite this relationship being partially supported, it may not be important in determining workplace behavior. It is possible that Millennials who desire rapid success in the form of extrinsic work values may

account for the trend towards job-hopping; however, precisely what portion of the Millennial population is clamoring for this rapid advancement is still unclear (Ng et al. 2010).

An increasingly fast-paced and arguably materialistic society is conducive to enticing workers to move from job to job in search of better benefits and salary. Millennials who place importance on extrinsic values will likely be more easily tempted to move to another company in pursuit of these tangible rewards. However, the fact that not all tests for the relationship between extrinsic work values and job-hopping were statistically significant calls into question the true existence of said relationship. The lack of significance in three of our six tested relationships may have been due to the absence of a true relationship or to poor measurement (for example, the questions used may not have adequately captured Millennials' beliefs about either extrinsic values or job-hopping). Further research on this topic is needed to better understand the relationship between extrinsic values and attitude toward job-hopping.

CONCLUSION

Our research broadly examined the roles that work values and expectations play in hiring, job-hopping, and work progress for Millennials, Generation Xers, and Baby Boomers. Our findings show a discrepancy between Millennials' expectations in the workplace and older generations' perceptions of those expectations. This suggests a need for more communication about work values among undergraduate students, college career centers and employers seeking to hire Millennials. Intergenerational communication will be especially important throughout the hiring process in order for all parties to ensure that the gap in understanding does not perpetuate workplace tensions.

Our research had several limiting factors. The survey asked specifically about values and expectations, but did not investigate actual behaviors. Accordingly, we cannot draw any conclusions regarding whether or to what extent these beliefs influence the hiring process or workplace interactions. In addition, our survey required that the participants self report, meaning

that they could have answered untruthfully or in a manner they think is expected of them. We conducted our survey at a small, liberal arts Midwestern private college, which means we will not be able to generalize beyond this population. Likewise, the response rate for alumni of all generations (Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial) was quite low; those who chose to respond may differ fundamentally from those who did not respond to the survey, compromising our ability to generalize data to all alumni of these generations. Additionally, the length of our survey may have deterred people from responding or influenced the specific types of people who responded. Lastly, our time restrictions prevented us from performing more in-depth statistical analysis, such as multivariate analysis, resulting in an incomplete understanding of these complex relationships and the interacting factors involved in them.

While it is important to understand Millennials' values and expectations for the workplace, it is equally important to study actual behavior of Millennials in regard to these dimensions. We recommend that future research encompass a study of expectations and actions, as well as the relationship between them, especially in terms of selecting jobs, perceptions of work benefits, and job-hopping. In addition, our research points to a need for a better understanding of the relationship between extrinsic values and job-hopping tendencies. Future research should investigate this relationship more closely, using data collection tools that are known to be reliable and valid and employing multivariate statistical analysis.

The topic of hiring, promotion, and career progress is of interest to employers who seek to understand how to attract competent employees and retain them. Of particular interest is the factors that motivate Millennial workers to commit to a company. A closer evaluation of Millennials during the interview process, in regard to the emphasis they place on particular values, could help employers select employees for a career with the company. Likewise, this research is significant to the undergraduate community as well; being aware of their own inclinations, as well as how their potential employers perceive those inclinations, can help guide preparation for applying and interviewing for jobs.

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