Presentation Overview

• Introduction to the “Millennials”
• Review of Previous Study
• Purpose of this Study
• Methodology and Sample
• Findings
• Implications
• Participation - Discussion – Future Agenda
Introduction to the “Millennials”

• Millennial generation is the current cohort of students born after 1982 (Howe & Strauss, 2000)

• Education-minded, achieving, pressured

• Team-oriented and socially conscious

• Self-esteem and entitlement

• “Helicopter” parents

• Technology wizards

Why study the Millennials?

• Generational approach

• Student life educators can better identify students’ needs

• Perhaps oversimplified (but useful tool for understanding students)

• Each generation has its own “Story” and “Personality”
Review of Previous Study

- (2005-06) Surveyed N = 888 of freshman and sophomores at research university
- Used “Attitudes and Activities” Survey
- Tested for differences between groups of students
- Hypothesized that...
  - ↑ Involvement = ↑ Self-Efficacy
  - ↑ Involvement = ↓ Stress
  - ↑ Involvement = ↓ Substance Abuse

Review of Previous Study

- Hypothesis “failed” in majority of analyses (not reliable as an alternate assessment)
- Actual (Confounding?) Result
  - ↑ Involvement = ↓ Self-Efficacy
  - ↑ Involvement = ↑ Stress
Purpose of Study

- Astin’s Theory of Involvement
- Defining the involved student:
  “one who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations and activities, and interacts often with faculty” (Astin, 1984, p.292)
- More you are involved = more you learn

Purpose of Study (cont’d)

- A new twist on Astin’s findings? When Involvement is applied to Millennials…
  “unintended negative consequences?”
  ↑ Involvement = ↑ Learning (Astin)
  ↑ Involvement = ↑ Stress (Our Previous Study)
  ↑ Involvement = ↓ Self-Efficacy (Our Previous Study)

- Where do you draw the line for Involvement?
- Astin’s 1980s student vs. today’s Millennial
Methodology & Sample

- Sample: Highly involved sophomores identified by Student Affairs Administrators.
- Each student had participated in year-long freshman leadership program.
- Total of 11 interviews (~6 hours of data)
- Seven females and four males
- Students attending a large research university
- Approximately 250 individually-coded segments of transcript data organized into themes.

Software used to code interview data
Findings

- Sorting students
- Why play the game?
- Let’s play!
- Coping strategies

Sorting Students

- (Group 1) Confident
- (Group 2) Cautious
- (Group 3) Uncertain
Confident (Group 1)
Career plans in order and underway...

- “I have … a whole career goal. I know what I want to do. I want to go to school, right after college, I want to go to law school. Right after that, I would like to work with foreign service, or perhaps the Department of State doing something for people and then towards the end, in my forties or thirties, I would probably be a congressman and then after a couple of years of experience as a congressman, I will try for senate.” [05]

- “I’m wanting to go back and probably teach at a college level, so I will have to go back to school and continue … it’s just something that I have always wanted to do.” [08]

Cautious (Group 2)
I want to be sure it’s right for me...

- “You think about the next 80 years of my life, or 60. I guess, I’m devoting to a career that I am choosing right now and that’s kind of scary.” [07]

- “I could end up going to grad school for higher ed. I’ve thought about Teach for America right out of college, and then decide what I want to do, so we’ll see.” [02]
**Uncertain (Group 3)**

*Still figuring things out...*

- “I am really still unsure about what I want to do as a career, so I feel that weight on me in every area of my life … because when you are not focused, it is hard to study 37 hours for Organic.” [01]

- “I never really made a decision. I always just assumed I would go to (this university) because, my whole life, (my brother) would go to a school first to test it out and I would follow.” [01]

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**Sorting Students (Cont’d)**

- **Group 1**
  - Confident
  - • Job Preparation
  - • Focus on School

- **Group 2**
  - Cautious
  - • Need to Belong
  - • Been There Done That

- **Group 3**
  - Uncertain
  - • Insecure

*A Conceptual Framework for understanding High-Involvement Millennials*
Job Preparation

“So, all of the things that I am involved in kind of relate to my major because I have decided that what I am really passionate about is service organizations, so public administration is pretty much the administration of non profit organizations and also the government sector. So, it’s great that everything that I do kind of relates and helps me with my major, I guess.” [06]

Focused on School

“My biggest emphasis is on my school work so I always make sure I don’t get too involved and too bogged down with stuff but I do like to keep my foot in the water I guess.” [04]
Cautious
*I want to be sure it’s right for me…*

- **Need to Belong**

  “I figured the student center and the church I go to and then SGA are kind of my things where I belong and where I get involved. It’s nice to have.” [04]

  “I was really homesick, so my way to offset that was getting involved.” [02]

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Cautious
*I want to be sure it’s right for me…*

- **Been There Done That**

  “My senior year was awesome in that ... grades didn’t really matter as much and I could let those slide, but I felt completely overwhelmed and, so I made a commitment not to do that in college.” [07]
Uncertain
Still figuring things out...

- Insecure
  “I was insecure and had to prove myself.” [01]

Explanation... The Game

Graphical Representation of Pathways Found in the Data.
Why play the game?

- Give back
- Have fun & meet people
- Feel responsible
- Have fun

Give Back

- “I want to go back to the that place one day and go, hey, I did this … and the fact that I did this that helped so many people … and that just makes me feel better.” [05]

- “It’s just wanting to have that unique experience and to be able to look back and say, I was part of that or I did that.” [08]
Have Fun

- “I think involvement is fun. I’m not the type that can sit on my futon all day and watch TV or stay in bed all day.” [02]

- “I mean, it adds up, but it goes by. It’s amazing. You don’t even realize you are doing work. It is just fun.” [07]

- “I feel like you are missing a social aspect of Auburn if you’re not involved.” [07]

Feel Responsible

- “You have to recognize in each organization, are there other people who can do this job as great, or much better than I can?” [06]

- “I am doing something. It makes me feel that I have a responsibilities and if I’m not taking care of it, nobody else will … I like responsibility.” [05]
Pressure to get involved

- Parents
- Society
- Peers
- Self

Pressure from parents

- “I just felt like I needed to separate myself for some reason, maybe it was pride, maybe … I wanted to impress my parents. But, I know that is what forced me into involvement.” [01]

- “I kind of got some satisfaction by being involved, you know. Like my parents were really proud of me and everybody, you know, everybody said I was so involved … that is satisfying, hearing that.” [01]
Pressure from society

“I personally, don’t think that life is intended to be stressful and I feel that is just something that … corporate America has instilled in us to accept.” [07]

“I feel like, especially, over the past few years, it is just so emphasized to be involved in everything that you can be involved in and think about your career and, you always see signs and commercials, resume building activities, and, on like Monster.com and … you want to have the best resume.” [06]

Pressure from peers

“I guess I was just really intimidated by the number of people here my age and I just got really … scared … just thinking, well all of these people are, a lot of them are wanting to do the same things I am going to do. Am I going to be able to do all that I want to do here and after college. Just kind of a shock, I guess.” [06]

“I came from a small school where I felt like I was big dog and it sounds real prideful, because it is and … I came in and everybody was smarter or as smart as me, more athletic, funnier.” [01]
Pressure from self

“I don’t know if it’s safe to say, but maybe 20,000 out of 24,000 students here don’t have a really big role. They have a role of student and they will definitely have a role in society once they learn their profession and get their degree, but while they’re here, it’s almost like, they’re just the average college student. While I’m the average college student as well, I just like to make something else of it too.” [09]

Choose a Few

“I got that way in high school, … I was SGA president, then I was in my church choir, school choir and all of this stuff … I was stressed out … I felt completely overwhelmed and, so, I made a commitment not to do that in college.” [07]

“My biggest emphasis is on my school work so I always make sure I don’t get too involved and too bogged down with stuff but I do like to keep my foot in the water I guess.” [04]
Try Everything

- “You know, it all just came so quickly, I guess. In high school, I went to a very small high school, so I was always really involved and I knew when I came to (the university) that is just what I always did and I knew it would be an easier transition if I just really got involved.” [06]

- “I want to do something different where I can kind of leave my mark somewhere else, like helping out other places, because I do like to learn different things instead of staying in one thing, just one thing.” [05]

Crossing the Line

- “I think that once my social life and academic life just kind of started … getting lower on the totem pole and I just realized … I can’t, as much as I love these organizations, they can’t take over my life. That can’t be the only thing. That’s not even the reason I came to school, you know.” [06]

- “Things got to be too much, I wasn’t able to sleep my 8 hours, which college kids don’t sleep 8 hours and I know that, I’m just crazy about it. It was almost like I had to choose something.” [09]
Forced to Cut Back

- “I started out as an animal science major with an intent on going to med school, and realized I liked involvement better than studying to keep a 4.0, so I had to change to something else within the college … to keep it.” [02]

- I was literally about to blow off top. Honestly, I just cleaned them off. I just stopped going … I had to cut those out or I would have blown up.” [01]

Survive and Learn

- “Well, it is still, passion is just what really motivates me, I guess. I will never do anything that I am not passionate about.” [06]

- “there are so many things that you want to do … but I am asking myself, is that my priority or is it just something that I think would be fun.” [08]
No Change

- “I think involvement is kind of an addiction. Once you’ve been involved, it’s hard to let that go, because you’re so used to having a hand in the goings and how things are run.” [02]

Successful Involvement

- Enhanced learning (Astin)
- Diversity awareness
- Confidence
- Self discovery

Here’s what you’ve won!
Diversity Awareness

“I’m actually from a small town, not much diversity going on there. It has opened up my eyes to a lot of new ways, and even though I may not agree with a person, I can appreciate them for what they think, and what they have to bring to the table, even though it could be a complete 180 away from the way that I would approach a situation.” [02]

Confidence

“It’s given me more confidence. I didn’t really think that I lacked confidence in high school until I came to college because everybody knows you. ... It’s a different kind of confidence in knowing who you are and where you came from.” [10]
Self Discovery

- “Just finding out who I want to be as a person and where I want to go and who I want to be friends with … you have just kind of got to come up to that challenge and take it as you can.” [08]

- “So that was good to, to try and then fail, because I hadn’t had that before.” [01]

Coping

- Functional stress
- Exercise & Sleep
- Social Support
- Faith
- Time Management

Initial purpose of study: Investigate stress and coping.
All students had coping strategies (no practical differences).
The key: Data analysis revealed a difference with how students “sorted” by dedication to career path / focus on career goal.
Pathways to Involvement

Pathway 1
• Job Preparation (Confident)
• Need to Belong (Cautious)

Pathway 2
• Focus on School (Confident)
• Been There Done That (Cautious)

Pathway 3
• Insecure (Uncertain)

Discussion

How can we reach students who aren’t getting involved?

Forced to cut back

How should we intervene when students cross the line?

Is there an assessment we can use to predict which pathway students will choose?

Try everything

Possible source for peer mentors to lead involvement workshops?

What about when students don’t change? Do we have a responsibility to restrict involvement?

Call for academic affairs and student affairs to collaborate in addressing students involvement.
Future Agenda

- Explore the use of Conceptual Framework and Pathways as a mini-theory of student development…
  using Career Focus and Involvement as preeminent factors!
- Larger sample size, perhaps Quantitative study?

References
