

Examining organizational culture through a generational lens: Millennial workers in community colleges

by

Cynthia Alvarez

B.A., California State University, Fullerton, 2013
M.S., University of La Verne, 2018

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Abstract

Millennials make up nearly half of California's workforce yet represent only 25% of employees in the California Community College (CCC) system. This underrepresentation raises concerns about long-term staffing, leadership pipelines, and organizational sustainability. This mixed-methods study explored millennial employees' perspectives of organizational culture across two community colleges, guided by Schein's (2017) organizational culture and subculture framework. The study examined (a) the alignment between millennial employees' values and institutional espoused values, (b) perceptions of how well those values are enacted, and (c) the workplace motivators that influence attraction and retention.

Survey results (n = 99) showed strong value congruence, with all institutional values rated as highly important. However, participants reported substantial gaps between importance and enactment, particularly for integrity, quality, collegiality, and opportunities for professional growth. Interviews (n = 12) reinforced these findings, highlighting inconsistencies in leadership transparency, supervisory support, and access to advancement. Millennials identified work-life balance, feeling valued, flexible work options, and clear promotional pathways as key motivators not consistently demonstrated in practice.

Findings suggest that community colleges must strengthen value enactment, modernize workplace practices, and create structured growth pathways to better attract and retain millennial employees.

Examining organizational culture through a generational lens: Millennial workers in community colleges

by

Cynthia Alvarez

B.A., California State University, Fullerton, 2013
M.S., University of La Verne, 2018

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Leadership
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Cindy Miles, Ph. D.

Copyright 2026.

Abstract

Millennials make up nearly half of California's workforce yet represent only 25% of employees in the California Community College (CCC) system. This underrepresentation raises concerns about long-term staffing, leadership pipelines, and organizational sustainability. This mixed-methods study explored millennial employees' perspectives of organizational culture across two community colleges, guided by Schein's (2017) organizational culture and subculture framework. The study examined (a) the alignment between millennial employees' values and institutional espoused values, (b) perceptions of how well those values are enacted, and (c) the workplace motivators that influence attraction and retention.

Survey results (n = 99) showed strong value congruence, with all institutional values rated as highly important. However, participants reported substantial gaps between importance and enactment, particularly for integrity, quality, collegiality, and opportunities for professional growth. Interviews (n = 12) reinforced these findings, highlighting inconsistencies in leadership transparency, supervisory support, and access to advancement. Millennials identified work-life balance, feeling valued, flexible work options, and clear promotional pathways as key motivators not consistently demonstrated in practice.

Findings suggest that community colleges must strengthen value enactment, modernize workplace practices, and create structured growth pathways to better attract and retain millennial employees.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiii
Acknowledgements	xiv
Dedication	xv
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Background of the Problem	2
Millennial Workers within Organizations	7
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Questions	8
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	9
Methodology	9
Alignment Table	10
Delimitations and Assumptions	10
Significance of the Study	11
Definition of Terms	11
Chapter Summary	12
Organization of the Study	13
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	14
Literature Review Search Protocol	14
Millennials in the Workforce	15
Millennial Workplace Motivators	15
Millennial Workplace Expectations.....	16
Work/Life Balance.....	17
Career Advancement.....	18
Working Independently	19
Expectations of Technology Usage	20
Millennial Employees in Higher Education.....	21
Millennial Employees within Community College	24

Theoretical Framework: Organizational Culture	26
Schein’s Theory of Organizational Culture	28
Conceptual Framework: Organizational Subculture	29
Organizational Subcultural Studies within Community Colleges	31
Summary	33
Chapter 3 - Methodology	35
Purpose of the Study	35
Research Questions	35
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	36
Organizational Culture Theoretical Framework (Schein, 2017)	36
Organizational Subcultures Conceptual Framework	38
Research Design	38
Mixed-Methods Explanatory Sequential Design	39
Study Setting	41
College Site A	41
College Site B	41
Study Participants	42
Instrumentation	44
Data Collection and Data Sources	44
Part One: Quantitative Survey	46
Part Two: Qualitative One-on-One Semi-Structured Interviews	46
Data Sources	48
Data Analysis	48
Quantitative Analysis	49
Qualitative Analysis	50
Data Integration	50
Ethical Considerations	50
Limitations	51
Study Quality	51
Explanatory Sequential Design Validity	52
Quantitative Validity and Reliability	52

Qualitative Validity Procedures	53
Reflexivity Statement	54
Summary	54
Chapter 4 - Research Results and Analysis	56
Research Questions	56
Study Participants	56
Description of the Sample	57
Findings: Research Question 1	59
Pursuing Excellence	63
Building Collaborative Community	63
Achieving Student Potential	64
Championing Equity and Belonging	65
Advancing Social Good	66
Findings: Research Question 2	67
Pursuing Excellence	69
Building Collaborative Community	70
Achieving Student Potential	71
Championing Equity and Belonging	72
Advancing Social Good	73
Overall Participant Perceptions of Institutional Values	75
Findings: Research Question 3	76
Part A: Motivational Factors that Attract and Retain Millennial Workers	76
Part B: Extent to Which Motivational Factors are Perceived to be Present in the Workplace	78
Themes of Workplace Motivators to Attract and Retain Millennial Employees in Community Colleges	81
Workplace Motivator #1: Workplace Culture and Belonging	82
Quantitative Data Results	82
Workplace Motivator #2: Compensation and Benefits	83
Qualitative Data Results	83
Workplace Motivator #3: Work Environment and Autonomy	84

Qualitative Data Results	84
Workplace Motivator #4: Professional Development and Growth.....	85
Qualitative Data Results	85
Career Pipeline Development	85
Mentorship Opportunities	86
Supplemental Income Opportunities.....	86
Summary	88
Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations	90
Problem Overview	90
Purpose of the Study	91
Research Questions	91
Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks	92
Methodology	93
Data Collection and Analysis	93
Discussion of Findings.....	93
Finding #1: Millennials Strongly Align with Institutional Values	93
Finding #2: Millennials Perceive Inconsistent Enactment of Core Values	95
Finding #3: Workplace Motivators Are Important but Poorly Enacted.....	96
Unexpected Findings	97
Student-Centered Motivation.....	98
Integrity of Leadership and Management	99
Findings Related to Literature	100
Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework.....	101
Millennial Participants' Basic Assumptions	102
Millennial Alignment with Espoused Values	103
Millennial Perspectives on Artifacts and Enacted Practices	103
Integration of Millennial Employees	104
Socialization and Acculturation of Millennial Employees	104
Implications for Policy and Practice	105
Implications for Policy.....	105
Implications for Leadership Practice	105

Recommendations for Further Research.....	106
Summary	107
References	109
Appendix A - Quantitative Survey	117
Appendix B - Interview Protocol Letter	122
Appendix C - Research Alignment Table.....	124
Appendix D - Invitation to Participate in the Study	125
Appendix E - Participant Informed Consent Form	126

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Force Share, by Age Group, 2004, 2014, 2024, and Projected 2034.....	3
Figure 1.2 Workflow of Explanatory Sequential Design Mixed-Methods Research	10
Figure 3.1 Schein's (2017) Three Levels of Organizational Cultural Analysis	37
Figure 3.2 Research Design Stages of Explanatory Sequential Design.....	40
Figure 4.1 Employment Category Distribution	58
Figure 4.2 Career Stage Representation.....	59
Figure 4.3 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Pursuing Excellence Theme of Institutional Values	63
Figure 4.4 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Building Collaborative Community Theme of Institutional Values.....	64
Figure 4.5 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Achieving Student Potential Theme of Institutional Values.....	65
Figure 4.6 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Championing Equity and Belonging Theme of Institutional Values	66
Figure 4.7 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Advancing Social Good Theme of Institutional Values.....	67
Figure 4.8 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Pursuing Excellence Theme of Institutional Values.....	70
Figure 4.9 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Building Collaborative Community Theme of Institutional Values.....	71
Figure 4.10 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Achieving Student Potential Theme of Institutional Values.....	72
Figure 4.11 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Championing Equity and Belonging Theme of Institutional Values	73
Figure 4.12 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Advancing Social Good Theme of Institutional Values.....	74
Figure 4.13 Themes of Institutional Values: Importance vs. Enactment.....	76

Figure 4.14 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Workplace Motivational Factors by Likert-Scale Category	77
Figure 4.15 Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Presence of Workplace Motivational Factors by Likert-Scale Category	79
Figure 4.16 Workplace Motivators: Importance vs. Enactment	80
Figure 5.1 Levels of Organizational Culture Reflecting Millennial Participant Experiences in Community Colleges	102

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Generations by Birth Years and Age	3
Table 1.2 California Community College Percentage of Workforce Population by Generational Cohorts in Fall 2025.....	5
Table 2.1 Four Major Themes Defining Millennial Leadership Traits	23
Table 2.2 Definitions of Culture	26
Table 3.1 Employee Demographics Proposed Site vs. State Data.....	42
Table 3.2 Quantitative Survey Sections and Likert-scale Measurement and Ranges.....	45
Table 3.3 Defined Data Sources	48
Table 4.1 Study Participant Background	57
Table 4.2 District Definition of College Values	60
Table 4.3 Percentage of Participants’ Responses for Institutional Values Importance Ranked by Theme	62
Table 4.4 Percentage of Participant Responses Across Enactment Ratings for Institutional Values by Theme	68
Table 4.5 Participants’ Frequency of Themes that Attract and Retain Millennial Employees in the Community College Field.....	81

Acknowledgements

This dissertation is the completion of a dream, that I couldn't even fathom its possibilities as a first-generation student. This dissertation represents the culmination of years of learning, persistence, and deep personal growth, and I am profoundly grateful to those who walked beside me throughout this journey.

To my chair, Dr. Cindy Miles, thank you for your unwavering guidance, clarity, and mentorship. Your leadership, grounded in both grace and strength, modeled the kind of leader I aspire to be. You provided direction when I felt lost, encouragement when I doubted myself, and the confidence to move forward with purpose. I am deeply grateful for your belief in this work and in me.

To my dissertation committee members, thank you for your wisdom, thoughtful feedback, and commitment to shaping this research into its strongest form. Your perspectives pushed me to think critically and elevate the quality of this study.

To the community college professionals who participated in this research, thank you for sharing your experiences and trusting me with your stories. Your voices shaped the heart of this dissertation, and I hope this work honors your contributions and advances the conversations needed in our field.

To my family and friends, who gave me strength through every phase of this journey, thank you for your patience, encouragement, and unwavering support. Your belief in me carried me through the most challenging moments.

To everyone who poured love, time, and support into my life during this process: this accomplishment is ours.

Dedication

To the future of community colleges:

I dedicate this dissertation to the continued work of strengthening positive organizational cultures that honor our differences, uplift our shared values, and create environments where every employee and every student can thrive. May this research contribute, in some small way, to the evolution of workplaces that are inclusive, empowering, and worthy of the profound mission we serve.

And to my son, Isaiah:

My constant source of motivation, joy, and pride. Thank you for cheering me on, believing in me, and reminding me of the purpose behind every late night and early morning. I am honored to share with you another degree that carries our last name with *orgullo*/pride. May you always know that you inspired this journey, and that everything I do is grounded in love, hope, and the future I dream of for you.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Community colleges serve as a beacon of hope and the “foundation for economic growth and upward mobility” (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 1) for the workforce population, as they educate and inspire the next generation of workers. The community college workforce is responsible for designing a college that can effectively serve the mission of the institution and uphold its’ values. As community colleges prepare for future generations of employees, they are challenged to design an organizational culture that ensures equitable access, inclusion, and success for internal workforce populations and career pipelines.

The future workforce is largely represented by millennials- those born between 1981 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2018), between the ages of 31 and 45 years old in 2026. The millennial generation is entering the workforce in large numbers and is expected to “increase by nearly 4.5 million over the decade, which is the largest gain for a single age group” (Torpey, 2020, para. 1). As of 2025, millennials are projected to represent 75% of the global workforce (Deloitte, 2014). Given the significant presence of millennials in the workforce, examining their perspectives regarding working in community colleges becomes imperative to serve the future workforce population successfully.

Statement of the Problem

Millennials represent 44% of the California workforce and 75% of the global workforce (Employee Development Department [EDD], n.d.; Deloitte, 2014). In contrast, millennial workers constitute only 25% of two-year college employees across the state (California Community College Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO] Datamart, n.d.). The lower participation of millennial workers could signal trouble as community colleges strive to attract and prepare their employees to serve the ever-changing workforce needs while offering successful career

pathways for their employees of upcoming generational cohorts. Furthermore, several studies have documented how millennial workplace motivators and values are different from previous generations (Deloitte, 2023; PwC, 2011; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Smith & Nichols, 2015).

Background of the Problem

The foundation of the problem lies in understanding generations; which is identified by year of birth, age, location, and significant events that create their personality (Guha, 2010; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Howe & Strauss (1992) theorizes that people of every generation are affected by human developmental processes as they age, and they experience unique historical contexts that shape their development. Pew Research Center has been committed to “measuring public attitudes on key issues and documenting differences in those attitudes across demographic groups” (Dimock, 2019, para. 1), such as generational cohorts. Their work has extended beyond a decade, and they note the value in studying generational cohorts:

...generational cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time.

They can provide a way to understand how different formative experiences (such as world events and technological, economic, and social shifts) interact with the life cycle and aging process to shape people’s views of the world. (para. 3).

This study utilizes Pew Research Center’s (2019) birth year definitions for each generational cohort as demonstrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1*Generations by Birth Years and Age*

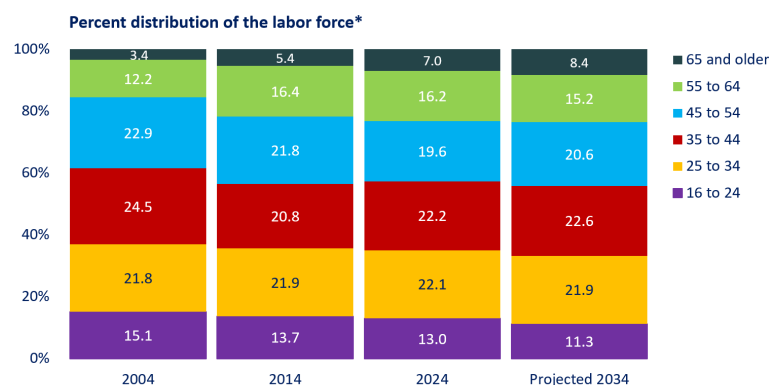
Generation Name	Birth Years	Ages in 2026
Baby Boomers	1946 - 1964	62 – 80 years old
Gen X	1965 - 1980	46 – 61 years old
Millennials	1981 – 1996	31 – 45 years old
Gen Z	1995 – 2009	17 – 30 years old

Over the past 70 years, there have been three generations that have dominated the workplace: baby boomers, Gen X, and millennials (Kaifi, et. al, 2012). In the near future, the growth and sustainability of the community college system will be within the hands of the Gen X and the millennial generation and Gen Z, as those from the prior generation (baby boomers) retire from the workplace. Examination of community college workforce demographics can provide insight into the presence of each generational cohort within the college system in comparison to the national labor workforce. Figure 1.1 is the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics percentage of distribution by age group from 2004, 2014, 2024, and projected 2034.

Figure 1.1

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Labor Force Share, by Age Group, 2004, 2014, 2024, and Projected 2034

The proportion of millennials in the California community college (CCC) labor force is comparatively low and declined from 27% in 2020 to 25% in 2025 (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.) in



comparison to 2024 state workforce participation at 44% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 5, 2025). According to Employee Development Department (n.d.), “The labor force participation measures the labor force as a percent of the civilian non-institutional population for each age group listed” (para. 4). The generation most highly represented among community college employees, as of Fall 2025 is the Gen X population at 40% (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.), although they constitute only 21% of the general state workforce population (EDD, n.d.). On the contrary, the millennial generation is disproportionately underrepresented (25%) in community colleges, with millennials employed at about half the rate as they appear in the overall state workforce population in Fall 2025 (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.). This lack of representation can impact the leadership pipeline of future generations filling the workforce, adding extra pressure as community colleges navigate the retirement boom and the current labor shortage (Mize, 2022; Weissman, 2023). Retirements are already impacting community college presidential leadership, as noted in the 10th biennial Community College League of California’s CEO Tenure and Retention Study for California Community Colleges, which found that nearly half (47.1 %) of California’s community college CEOs retired over the last decade (Mize, 2022). There is also a foreseeable increase in retirements, as the baby boomer generation continues to comprise 21% of the California community college workforce population as of Fall 2025 (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.). California community college employment demographics are demonstrated in Table 1.2 by each employment category among generations (Gen Z, millennials, Gen X, and baby boomers) in Fall 2025.

Table 1.2

California Community College Percentage of Workforce Population by Generational Cohorts in Fall 2025

Employment Category	Gen Z 16-28 years old (n= 11,113)	Millennial 29-44 years old (n= 20,276)	Gen X 45-60 years old (n= 32,572)	Baby Boomer 61-79 years old (n= 16,865)
Educational Administrator	4%	22%	56%	18%
Faculty	11%	24%	40%	25%
Classified	21%	26%	40%	13%
Total Percentage in Proportion to CCC Workforce Population (n = 81,440)	14%	25%	40%	21%
2024 U.S. Workforce Participation	13%	44%	21%	7%

Note. 2024 U.S. Workforce participation data also reflects that 15% are reported as self-employed. Data are from California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Datamart, n.d. and U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 5, 2025.

The CCC system has had an overall decrease in employee numbers from 2020 (n= 86,478) to 2025 (n = 69,893). The increase in retirements impacted the baby boomer representation within CCC, which decreased by 13,705 employees from 2019-2023. Although, baby boomers have retired they are still three times more represented (21%) in the community college field, than the state workforce (7%). Across the board, there is a decrease in overall employees and the CCC system workforce in 2025 (81,440 employees) has not fully recuperated from 2019 levels of 92,522 employees.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California (2024), California has recovered from the recession brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and is experiencing low

unemployment and high job vacancies, which reflect a tight labor market and decreased employer market power (Autor, et al., 2023; Lafortune, et al., 2024). Weissman (2023) noted that community colleges have struggled with major staffing losses related to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and reported that EAB, a higher education consulting firm, found a 13% loss of employees nationally within the higher education system from January 2020 to April 2022. They further reported that “EAB shows that four-year colleges mostly recouped their losses after also experiencing sharp declines in staff, unlike community colleges, which have lagged in their recovery” (Weissman, 2023, para. 2). From 2020 to 2023, the California community college system made progress in recovering its pandemic-related workforce losses and grew its overall number of workers by nearly two percent, with increases of almost 2600 employees from Gen X and baby boomer generational cohorts (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.). Over these three years, nearly 300 more millennial workers were employed in classified staff positions statewide; however, the overall millennial workforce in California community colleges declined by nearly 1200 workers.

There are minimal studies that focus on millennial employees’ perspectives within the community college and the few studies available focused on millennial employees who identify as female or members of racial-ethnic minorities serving in administrative positions in community colleges. These studies highlighted participants’ perceptions of the community college workplace as less than welcoming; they described it as marked by unclear career pathways, inadequate professional development, systemic racism (Hines, 2022), or calling for chronic vigilance (Langdon, 2022) within the institution.

Millennial Workers within Organizations

A growing body of research (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011; Bennett & Price, 2012; Baialik & Fry, 2019) focuses on how the U.S. workforce encompasses multiple generations, with millennials impacting the labor force and workplace environments differently than previous generations. Deloitte's (2014) global survey of millennials found that business leaders face significant challenges as they try to meet the millennial generation's needs. Several studies have underscored the impact of the millennial generation on the workforce and how millennial workforce motivational factors differ from those of prior generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; PwC, 2011; Smith & Nichols, 2015). These differences include a need for a nurturing and supportive work environment (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), a tendency to seek alternative work opportunities (Deloitte, 2023), and a greater desire for work-life balance (Vo et al., 2022). Some key workplace characteristics of millennials have become more commonly held values of the overall workforce population (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005; Vo et al., 2022), such as an expectation of technology being integrated into business practices (PwC, 2011) and an increase in the gig economy (Deloitte, 2023).

Millennial employees' preferences suggest an opportunity for community colleges to leverage insights from millennial employees in shaping educational practices and organizational strategies. The similar beliefs and organizational preferences expressed by millennials suggest that millennial employees can provide insights on attracting and retaining the millennial generation within the community college organization. The scarcity of literature exploring the millennial perspective within community college organizations poses an opportunity for further research, particularly as these institutions grapple with preparing future generations by developing strategies to enhance employee recruitment and retention and building sustainable

organizational frameworks for future workplace generations. The few specific studies available on community college millennial employees have highlighted their struggles with fitting into the culture of the community college workplace and advancing to higher-level positions (Hines, 2022; Langdon, 2022). How community colleges respond to these challenges may determine their ability to attract the millennial talent needed to sustain their operational needs and meet the workforce needs of the future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand millennial employee perspectives and experiences within the community colleges' organizational culture. Specifically, this study explored the extent to which millennial employees' values are congruent with the stated values within the community college field. Furthermore, the study focused on gaining insights into how community colleges might better attract, retain, and promote the success of millennial employees from the subcultural perspective of millennial community college employees.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How congruent are community college millennial participants' values with their community colleges' espoused values?
2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the community college is enacting its espoused values?
3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical framework that guided this study is Schein's (2017) organizational culture theory, which states that the essence of an operative organizational culture is demonstrated by the structural stability of the cultural DNA and how it is perceived by its members. The organizational culture framework was the most appropriate to learn about how the values are being espoused and perceived by the current millennial employees. This study helped to identify the basic underlying assumptions of its members that belong to the subcultural group of millennial employees. The conceptual framework to understand the millennial perspective for data collection and analysis was organizational subcultures, identified by Schein (1985, 1992, 2004, 2010, 2017) to explore how the espoused values of the subculture of millennial community college employees compared to those of the overall organization.

Methodology

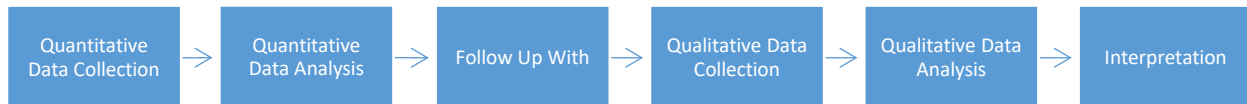
This explanatory sequential mixed-methods study sought to understand the congruence of the institutional values espoused and the motivational work factors present in the college from the perspective of millennial employees in the college. Mixed-methods research, "intentionally combines the perspectives, approaches, data forms, and analyses associated with quantitative and qualitative research to develop nuanced and comprehensive findings" (Plano, 2019, p. 107). A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was utilized and is characterized "by the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data" (Creswell, et. al, 2011, 2013). The research design involved a two-part data collection method through surveys that were further explained through semi-structured interviews for a select group of participants who completed the survey. According to Bowen (2009), "By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across

data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study” (p. 28).

Figure 1.2 provides a visual representation of the workflow of explanatory sequential design mixed-methods research.

Figure 1.2

Workflow of Explanatory Sequential Design Mixed-Methods Research



Alignment Table

An alignment table provides logical reasoning from the problem statement to how the research questions address the purpose of the study. Appendix C provides a research alignment table to demonstrate the alignment of the problem statement with the research questions, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and data collection methods for this study.

Delimitations and Assumptions

Study participants were confined to millennial workers employed at the proposed research sites. To increase the validity in responses assessing the organizational culture, participants were delimited to those who have been employees at the college for at least two years to provide relevant assessments of the community college values and motivational factors present within the organizational culture. Chapter three will review further participant criteria set forth in the research study.

A key assumption for the study was that participants were to respond honestly. In addition, this study relied on the assumption that with qualitative research, responses were subjective to the individual’s experiences and sense of reality, which can impact their interpretation of events.

Significance of the Study

The research study focused on millennials in the higher education system, particularly community college employees from the generational cohort. The community college millennial employee perspective helps to inform institutions on how colleges can promote the millennial generation in terms of their career success and recruitment and retention efforts. Findings from this study offer practices and provide knowledge to community college leaders about how to work with and serve the millennial generation more effectively. In addition, this study contributes to a limited body of literature on millennial workers in community colleges and provide an understanding of millennial workers' perspectives on their relationship with the current organizational culture in the community college workplace. Finally, the study provides recommendations for college policies and practices that might better address millennial workforce motivational factors and values, labor market changes, and millennial employee needs in Chapter 5.

Definition of Terms

- **Baby boomers:** Individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (Pew Research Center, 2019).
- **Gen X:** Individuals born between 1965 and 1980 (Pew Research Center, 2019).
- **Millennials:** Individuals born between 1981 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2019).
- **Gen Z:** Individuals born between 1997 and 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2019).
- **Cultural DNA:** This study employs Schein's (2017) definition of: "the beliefs, values, and desired behaviors that launched the group and made it successful" (p. 7).

- **Community college employees:** Community college employees will be included from all categories: educational administrators, academic tenured, academic temporary, and classified employees.
- **Organizational culture:** This study uses Schein's (2017) definition of organizational culture, which is how a group learns and solves problems based on accumulated knowledge from group behavior and basic assumptions.
- **Subculture:** Groups that evolve within an organizational culture as the organization develops that share the same beliefs, backgrounds, values, history, geographical location, etc. (Schein, 2017).
- **Workplace motivators:** "A set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form direction intensity and duration" (Pinder, 2014, p. 11).
- **Values:** "Values are individual and collective trans-situational conceptions of desirable behaviors, objectives, and ideals that serve to guide or value practices" (Askeland, et al., 2020, p. 3).

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the problem for the purpose and research questions for this study. The problem highlights the significant underrepresentation of the millennial employee population within the community college field and is had a need for further examination due to a limited research of community college millennial employees' experience of the workplace (Hines, 2023; Langdon, 2023). The chapter identified the background and reasoning of organizational culture, as introduced by Schein (2017), as the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework of organizational subcultures as further elaborated by Schein (2017). This

chapter also outlined the purpose of the study, the research questions guiding the study, the significance of the study, delimitations and assumptions, and key terminology that were used in the study.

Organization of the Study

The study is structured into five chapters. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to the millennial population, workforce trends, and workplace motivators among millennials and their perspective of the current organizational culture of community colleges. Chapter 3 outlines the design of the study, the research site and participant population, the two-part research design, and specific methods for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research questions, and Chapter 5 summarizes the study with conclusions and further implications of the study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Community colleges are challenged to assess their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the largest workforce population, millennials, as employees (Langdon, 2022). This study focuses on the perspectives of millennials employed at their respective community colleges to gain new insight into how to best serve the millennial workforce population within the organization.

This literature review is organized to provide a logical, thematic, and descriptive explanation of the existing research on key themes related to millennials within the workforce, emphasizing workplace motivational factors and values, and trends influencing the millennial generation. Studies that examined millennial employees within higher education are reviewed. This chapter also examines the literature related to the theoretical and conceptual model for the study of organizational culture and subcultures within community college organizations.

Literature Review Search Protocol

The literature reviewed for this study included articles, reports, and books identified through the EBSCO Information Services and ProQuest database portals. The researcher searched specific databases, including Academic Search Premier, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Academic OneFile, SAGE Publications, and Education Research Complete. The researcher also reviewed dissertations obtained from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT). In addition to databases, the researcher identified government and professional organizations and searched their collections to obtain access to additional resources. Those sources included the U.S. Department of Education, the American Association of Community Colleges, the Pew Research Center, Deloitte, and the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), among others. The recommendations of the researcher's instructor, college librarian, and faculty chair helped guide the search.

Millennials in the Workforce

The millennial generation, those born between 1981 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2019), are characterized as tech-savvy, racially and ethnically diverse, innovative, and global-minded individuals (Desilver, 2019). PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a major consulting firm serving 84% of the Global Fortune 500 companies, conducted a large international study of millennial workers. The study concluded that millennials are a powerful generation of workers and may influence the way we work and where and how we operate in the workplace. Additionally, they may represent one of the biggest challenges many organizations will face (PwC, 2011, p. 3).

Millennial Workplace Motivators

Pinder (2014) defines workplace motivators as “a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual’s being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration” (p. 11). Vo et al. (2022) conducted a World Values Survey among 25 countries with 32,614 individuals to expand insights into an individual’s workplace motivation and concluded that work motivation plays a vital role in the development of organizations and increases employee productivity and effectiveness.

Hershat and Epstein (2010) conducted a review of current research on millennials in the workplace to explore how college-educated millennials approach the world of work. They summarized that college-educated millennials have increased empathy and an achievement-focused mentality, while they also seek frequent feedback and desire meaningful work and flexibility with fewer rules and regulations. Millennial employees report wanting work experience that would bring meaningful impact and contribute to the greater society without having income as the sole work driver (Ng et al., 2010). The desire to contribute to society aligns

with millennials having a greater cultural awareness than prior generations, including empathy for lower socioeconomic populations and a sense of advocacy for societal issues (Pew Research Center, 2009).

In Deloitte's (2014) global survey of college-educated, full-time working millennials, many reported disappointments in not being encouraged to be innovative and a loss of faith in employers' actions not meeting their stated visions. The researchers concluded that employers will increasingly risk losing talented millennial workers if organizations fail to consider the different values held by millennials and do not incorporate the millennial voice into institutional learning and practices. Smith and Nichols (2015) confirmed that the millennial generation needs to be further examined to understand their motivational factors and what could influence the generational cohort to avoid high turnover. Deloitte (2023) collected 14,483 responses from members of the millennial generation from 44 countries and concluded that millennials were empowered by driving change within their organization, although they perceived workplaces often did not fulfill this need. This investigation also suggested that to retain millennial workers an organization must understand what motivates the younger generation to avoid distrust and high turnover rates.

Millennial Workplace Expectations

Understanding millennials' workplace motivations provides valuable context for exploring their expectations in the workforce. Members of the millennial generation are described as supportive of technology, possessing diverse communication styles, working well in teams, possessing an entrepreneurial mindset, desiring mentorship, and training, and being adaptive innovators (Brown, 2016). Millennial leaders are considered to have created a new economic and cultural landscape in a challenging workforce via collaboration, social change, and

egalitarianism (Dimock, 2019). The millennial generational cohort reported placing increased importance on strong diversity policies and corporate responsibility, where “56% would consider leaving an employer that didn’t have the values they expected” (PwC, 2011, p. 4).

Furthermore, key expectations of millennials noted throughout the literature are a desire for work/life balance (Deloitte, 2023; PwC, 2011), and the ability to advance upward within an organization (Hauw & Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; PwC, 2011; Smith & Nichols, 2015). At the same time, millennials are drawn towards working in emerging markets (Deloitte, 2014; Ng et al., 2010) or choosing to work independently (Deloitte, 2018a, 2018b; Deloitte, 2023). Another key expectation among millennials is the use of technology to increase communication and access to information within the work environment (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; PwC, 2011).

Work/Life Balance

The upbringing of millennials has impacted their perspective on the workforce as they have reportedly seen their parents work long hours, only to fall victim to corporate downsizing, frequent layoffs, and high divorce rates (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). This generation has also been exposed to events such as the September 11th terrorist attacks, which motivated them to re-evaluate their priorities and choose jobs that allow them to make their personal lives a priority (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005). As a result, such events were noted to alter millennials’ approach to work and their workplace motivators from those of previous generations.

The desire for meaningful work and work flexibility was further validated in Deloitte’s (2023) qualitative study, in which four out of ten millennials said they felt stressed or anxious at work all or most of the time. Their top stress drivers were reported to be “longer-term financial futures, day-to-day finances, and the health/welfare of their families...while concerns about mental health and workplace factors such as heavy workloads, poor work/life balance, and

unhealthy team cultures are also at play” (p. 4). Although millennials reported finances as a stressor, it was a less significant motivator for the generational cohort than work/life balance. Millennials reported that they were looking for a good work/life balance in a company that has strong diversity policies, but “28% said that the work/life balance was worse than they had expected before joining, and over half said that while companies talk about diversity, they did not feel that opportunities were equal for all” (PwC, 2011, p. 4).

Career Advancement

Understanding millennials' perspectives on work/life balance sets the stage for exploring their career aspirations and expectations in the workforce. Ng et al. (2010) found that undergraduate millennial students across Canada valued advancement as the most desirable work-related attribute and “...had realistic expectations of their first job and salary but were seeking rapid advancement and the development of new skills, while also ensuring a meaningful and satisfying life outside of work” (p. 281). Their study found that “more than two-thirds (68.5%) of respondents expect to be promoted within the first 18 months in their first job” (p. 285). PWC (2011) contended that employers need a more focused approach to “the particular characteristics of millennials – such as their ambition and desire to keep learning and move quickly upwards through an organization, as well as their willingness to move on quickly if their expectations are not being met” (p. 2).

These findings align with other research on millennials' career perspectives, such as that of Hauw and Vos (2010), who observed that millennials understand that job security and retirement after working for one organization are rare. These results were confirmed in PWC's (2011) survey results, in which over a quarter of millennials reported expecting to have six or more employers over their lifetime, in comparison to 10% of millennials represented in the 2008

survey. These responses highlighted millennials' desire to seek new employment opportunities more frequently and to take a more proactive approach towards making themselves more enticing to the job market (Hauw & Vos, 2010).

Findings from Smith and Nichols (2015) echoed those from Ng et al. (2010) and Hauw and Vos (2010), noting that millennials also have higher expectations for advancement opportunities within their careers. Smith and Nichols (2015) argued that by offering advancement opportunities, organizations may better retain their millennial talent and concluded, "Since enhancement opportunities are important to this newer generation, training and development sessions can be a valuable retention and motivation tool" (p. 42). Hauw and Vos (2010) found that mentoring and training offered by the workplace satisfied the millennial employees' need to develop new skills and marketability and created job satisfaction and productivity.

Working Independently

Millennials have an increased desire to work independently (Deloitte, 2014, 2018a, 2018b) and have increased in reporting self-employment through the gig economy (Deloitte, 2023). A 2014 survey conducted by Deloitte found that "70% of millennials see themselves as working independently at some point, rather than being employed within a traditional organizational structure...[with] 52% in developed markets...[and] 82% in emerging markets" (p. 8). Deloitte (2018b) further documented these survey results, noting a significant increase among millennials engaging in alternative work arrangements, commonly referred to as the 'gig economy' (Deloitte, 2023, p. 11) where employees engage in "nontraditional, short-term and contract work" (Pew Research Center, 2021, para. 2). Self-employment in the United States is reported to "triple to 42 million workers by 2020, and 42 percent of those people are likely to be

millennials” (Deloitte, 2018b, para. 20). Deloitte (2023) highlighted the different gig economy opportunities to make an earning for millennial and Gen Zs workers, which include “selling products or services online (21% of Gen Zs/25% of millennials), food delivery or ride-sharing apps (20% of Gen Zs/19% of millennials), pursuing artistic ambitions (18% of Gen Zs/15% of millennials), and social media influencing (16% of Gen Zs/15% of millennials)” (p. 11).

Expectations of Technology Usage

Moreover, millennials' expectations extend beyond their work arrangements to encompass their interactions with technology in the workplace. Hershatter and Epstein's (2010) meta-analysis of studies of millennials within the workforce highlighted that millennials' comfort with technology creates an expectation for direct access to information and the ability to think creatively without boundaries. The researchers provided a contextual overview of business case studies and found two defining characteristics that differentiated the millennial generation: innate technology use and expectation of organizational accommodations. They summarized that the millennial generation was raised with technology “as a sixth sense” (p. 213), and an expectation “that all necessary information can be gathered with the touch of a button on a 24/7/365 basis” (p. 212). They also concluded that millennials' relationship with technology is uncoordinated with the complexity of organizations:

Our fast-paced business arena often requires immediacy, including the ability to efficiently retrieve and communicate concise, simplified information. Yet, the complexity of organizations and the environments in which they operate demands a more nuanced, informed framework for analysis and understanding. (p. 213)

PwC's 2011 large-scale investigation of perspectives of thousands of millennials from around the world aimed to understand the millennial mindset entering the workforce for the first

time. The study revealed that many millennials believe technology should drive communication and innovation in the workplace, “59% said that an employer’s provision of state-of-the-art technology was important to them when considering a job” (p. 9). Millennials prioritize ease of access and staying updated on technological advances, expecting businesses and services to meet these requirements. Furthermore, the researchers summarized that “technology is often a catalyst for intergenerational conflict in the workplace, and many millennials feel held back by rigid or outdated working styles” (p. 4).

Millennial Employees in Higher Education

Most research about millennials in the workplace has focused on managing intergenerational differences among workers (Casey, 2015; Levenson, 2010; Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Smith and Nichols, 2015). The few studies that focused on millennial employees within the higher education system have been limited to exploring their leadership style(s) or managing their generational characteristics within the workplace (Barnes & Gearin, 2022; Bryant, 2021).

Millennials working in higher education require workplace motivation to lead to success (Au-Yong-Oliveira, Gonçalves & Branco, 2018), and direct and open communication (Barnes & Gearin, 2022). A few researchers noted that millennial employees within higher education have demonstrated leadership attributes such as being achieving and confident individuals (Bryant, 2021) and hands-on leaders (Barnes & Gearin, 2022).

One of the few studies focused on millennial employees within higher education is Bryant’s (2021) dissertation, which examined female millennial administrators employed at public, private, and historically Black colleges, and universities (HBCUs). Key findings from the study provided insights into how millennials' identifying characteristics and leadership

development intersected within their institutions of employment. The traditional millennial characteristic of being achievement-minded was vocalized by participants who expressed the need for leadership development in terms of being cared for and challenged for growth. The researcher found that “individuals who have fewer opportunities to engage in leadership roles are less likely to claim or be granted an identity of a leader. These restrictions may have impeded individual progress in developing a leader identity” (p. 103). Female millennial university administrators who reported internal achievement pressure and a lack of validation of their leadership growth developed self-critical thoughts about the negative response to their expectations. The researcher explained, “Although the stereotypical millennial qualities were evident in findings, a perceived negative side of achieving, special, confident, and conventional characteristics were also prominent; these attributes were titled failure, insignificant, self-conscious, and nonfeasance, respectively” (p. 83). The researcher further concluded that “frequent changes in participants’ professional roles were a consequence of millennial characteristics (i.e., achieving, and pressured) and a desire for leadership that will invest in their development” (p. 109).

In their study focusing on millennials’ approach to leadership in higher education, Barnes and Gearin (2022) investigated “how millennial leaders in higher education lead in response to tremendous change” (p. 53). This qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to investigate how millennial leaders approached leadership in higher education through semi-structured interviews. Participants included 11 millennial higher education leaders in a vice president or higher role, from small and medium two- and four-year private or public universities. The author noted that the higher education institutions examined were in a state of complex and rapid change, such that they were fueled by workforce instability, changes in

technology, and demographic changes. The researchers identified four major themes defining millennial leadership traits that emerged from the research: self-development through the development of others, bold transparency, high tolerance for ambiguity, and commitment to due diligence and data. The authors concluded, “These [millennial] leaders describe a desire to create change and their passion to do it. Several participants discussed the challenges of changing past norms and traditions that no longer promote sustainable growth” (p. 60). The participants’ bold transparency and high tolerance for ambiguity were validated by their’ “willingness to confront and disturb people to challenge their beliefs and behaviors, as well as a need to break down formalities and promote relatability as a necessity to confront traditional culture” (p. 60). The participant findings and research themes from this study are identified in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Four Major Themes Defining Millennial Leadership Traits

Themes	Participant Findings
Self-development through the development of others	“Our participants explained that they prepare and motivate people to embrace change by taking a personal, hands-on, and involved approach to personal and professional development” (Barnes and Gearin, 2022, p. 58). “Another participant described their role as a visionary who empowers and supports their people along their life journeys” (Barnes and Gearin, 2022, p. 58).
Bold transparency	“Our participants described their approach to communication as direct, transparent, honest, open, and frequent. They also used collaborative outlets to promote open communication, including all-campus all-inclusive campus meetings for faculty, staff, and students, weekly team talks, monthly sessions, and other techniques to bring in opinions and concerns from people across the institution” (Barnes and Gearin, 2022, p. 59).
High tolerance for ambiguity	“Participants discussed how leading in a changing environment requires accepting the unknown” (Barnes and Gearin, 2022, p. 59).
Commitment to due diligence and data	“Participants referenced data as a way to assess the current state of their institutions, to prepare for the future, to measure the performance of critical changes, and to gain support from shareholders” (Barnes and Gearin, 2022, p. 60).

Both studies that focused on millennial employees within higher education (Barnes & Gearin, 2022; Bryant, 2021) related to broader studies of the millennial generation in the workplace in which millennials were found to be effective when motivated (Vo et al.,2022) and empowered to drive change within their organization (Deloitte, 2023). Furthermore, these studies validated the findings from other researchers that millennials desire to confront the current culture of their organizations to drive societal change (Barnes & Gearin, 2022; Bryant, 2021; Deloitte, 2023).

Millennial Employees within Community College

Limited research was found on millennial employees within the community college environment, with only two relevant research studies conducted in 2022. Both studies focused on millennial community college administrators' perception of the leadership pipeline. Hines (2022) highlighted the underrepresentation of community college Gen X and millennial CEOs of color in community colleges, and Langdon (2022) investigated female-identifying millennial administrators' acceptance and career success within the community college organizational culture. Both studies on millennial leaders reported how perceptions of systemic racism and the acceptance of lack of equity in their work environment impacted study participants' overall leadership identity within the organization.

Langdon's (2022) study aimed to understand how gender may impact millennial women's perceptions of leadership overall, as well as their perceived ability to advance into senior-level leadership roles within the community college. Millennial leaders in this study identifying as female reported that an organizational culture that harbors gender and generational inequities can be overwhelming for those members who want to create meaningful change and can lead to burnout. "There seems to be a distinct sense of not having enough energy to combat

these inequities, and often, if the inequity is not “bad enough” then the energy needed to counter it, the effort it would take is just not worth it” (p. 83). The participants reported that they were impacted by the inequitable environment in the community colleges in which they serve as administrators and felt that “the presence of identity intersections complicate things” (p. 76) in seeking senior-level roles within the institution. These findings reflected similar perceptions of community college Gen X and millennial CEOs of color in Hines’ (2022) study, which focused on an exploration of their perceptions of the underrepresentation of minorities serving as community college presidents. The researcher found that “systemic racism, ethnic, and gender inequities and prejudicial stereotypes were described by Generation X and millennial leaders as contributors to underrepresentation, ascension and leadership” (p. 46). Hines concluded that Gen X and millennial leaders are “... cognizant of and attuned to identifying and eradicating symbols in institutional culture that maligns diverse and inclusive environments” (p. 48).

Both studies pointed to millennial leaders’ perceptions of a lack of alignment between their career success within the organizational culture and embedded practices within the organization and employees having to challenge the status quo. They highlighted the struggles of millennial employees as females and leaders of color in identifying with the community college culture as they sought senior leadership (Hines, 2022; Langdon, 2022). Hines (2022) concluded that an understanding of “the underrepresentation of leaders of color in the community college presidency from the perspective of this newest and little-explored generation of leaders is a valuable contribution to the field of study in community college leadership” (p. 49).

These higher education studies of millennial employees are in keeping with prior studies noting that if millennials—especially those from gender and racially minoritized groups—are not intentionally integrated within the organization, they will leave (Deloitte, 2023; PwC, 2011;

Vo et al., 2022;). Recent data on millennials working within community colleges suggest that they are declining in each employment category. Millennial employees within California community colleges experienced a two percent decline from 2020 to 2021 among millennials employed as academic tenured, academic temporary, and classified, and a one percent decline in millennials as educational administrators (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.). Interestingly, the leaders in the two community college millennial worker studies (Hines, 2022; Langdon, 2022) did not show evidence of leaving their jobs despite their pronounced dissatisfaction with the organizational culture.

Theoretical Framework: Organizational Culture

There is a large body of extant literature available about culture with an emphasis on organizational culture, with a diversity of definitions among researchers (Deal and Kennedy, 1983; Geertz, 1973; Schein, 2004; Smircich, 1983; Tierney, 2008). Table 2.2 demonstrates the diversity of definitions of culture adapted from Bell (2010), who found commonalities in words and phrases within the definitions, such as “shared meaning, patterns, assumptions, and norms are commonly used across the disciplines” (p. 20).

Table 2.2

Definitions of Culture

Definitions of Culture	Author
The culture of a collective is characterized as a set of common fundamental assumptions acquired by the group while addressing external challenges and internal cohesion. These assumptions have proven effective, deemed valid, and consequently passed on to new members as the proper framework for perceiving, thinking, and feeling in connection to those challenges.	(Schein, 2004)
Culture is expressed through belief systems, behavioral norms, rituals, language, and other symbolic expressions. These elements are vital for the group members in constructing and maintaining their worldview and self-image.	(Smircich, 1983)

Organizational culture involves examining the intricate webs of meaning within a workplace, where members may lack a full understanding of the cultural factors influencing their daily decisions. The significance and power of these influences become apparent only when we decode them.	(Tierney, 2008)
Culture refers to a historically passed-down pattern of meanings represented through symbols. It encompasses an inherited system of ideas expressed in symbolic forms, serving as a means for people to communicate, preserve, and evolve their knowledge and life attitudes.	(Geertz, 1973)
Fundamental assumptions, comprehensions, and unspoken guidelines that dictate everyday conduct within the work environment.	(Deal & Kennedy, 1983)

Note. This table demonstrates the variety of definitions of culture. Adapted from *Perceptions of campus subcultures at a community college* by Bell, C., 2010, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/dissertations/AAI3408901>

Meta-analytic studies have reviewed the literature on relationships between organizational culture and employees' level of drive and productivity (Jain and Jain, 2013), innovation (Büschgens et al., 2013), and organizational effectiveness (Hartnell et al., 2019). Hartnell et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analytic regression study on 148 independent samples, including 26,196 organizations and over 500,000 participants in research, to measure organizational culture's relative predictive validity of elements of organizational effectiveness. The researchers' reasoning for conducting the meta-analysis was to enhance the understanding of organizational culture's role in the organizational system to identify criteria for predictive validity, such as leadership, strategy, structure, and high-performing work practices (HPWPs). The study's findings indicated positive relationships between culture dimensions and that elements such as leadership, strategy, structure, and high-performing work practices (HPWPs) are interdependent and can reinforce the organizational culture as defined by Schein (2017). Another finding was that culture cannot be changed if other cultural elements are not attended to

and can impair organizational effectiveness. The three levels of organizational culture (Schein, 2017) were noted to provide an in-depth analysis of other cultural elements at all levels of an organization.

Schein's Theory of Organizational Culture

Edgar Schein is recognized for his pioneering work on organizational culture and is known as the “father of organizational culture” (Constable, 2023, para. 7). He brought structure and rigor to the study of organizational culture in his landmark book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, first published in 1985, with the fifth edition released in 2017. According to Schein (1985, 1992, 2004, 2010, 2017), organizational culture and organizational leadership are inextricably connected, in that leaders have a primary role in creating and developing the culture of their organization. Numerous studies have applied Schein's theory of organizational culture to investigations of higher education. ProQuest keyword research found that 11,817 studies developed their research through the examination of Schein's organizational culture framework. Among these, 9,669 studies used Schein's organizational culture framework within higher education, and 2,843 specifically applied this framework to studies within community colleges.

Schein clarified that one definition cannot fit every culture as each group has different shared patterns and must be understood in its own terms. He argued that organizations “need a more integrative dynamic definition that highlights how culture forms and evolves in organizations, subcultures, and microsystems” (2017, p. 5). Schein offered a framework of organizational culture formed by understanding subgroups' perspectives of the organizations shared learning, basic taken-for-granted assumptions, and their sentiment toward integration and solutions. He posited that understanding a group's organizational culture requires knowing “what kind of learning has taken place, over what period and under what kind of leadership” (2017, p.

6). He addressed societal concerns about the millennial population and observed, “There is much concern and handwringing about how millennials will change everything in the workplace” (p. xix). Schein further noted that millennials were frequently viewed as entitled and motivated by things other than corporate or personal profitability and are more “purpose-driven” (p. xxi) in the workplace. He said organizations should shape their “artifacts and conventions around core beliefs that motivate newly indoctrinated employees” (p. xx) to ensure the organization’s “self-preservation and growth” (p. xx). He asserted that “organization design and organizational culture can no longer assume rational economic self-interested behavior from the current cohort filling the workforce” (p. xx) since it may impact “the cultural DNA of the company... [to be] out of sync with the interests of the company’s younger employees” (p. xx). Only four studies focused on organizational culture from the lens of millennials within their respective organizations (Andert, 2011; Hauw and Vos, 2010; Ng, et al.,2010; Smith and Nichols, 2015).

Conceptual Framework: Organizational Subculture

Organizational culture is embedded into practices, beliefs, and assumptions of the members of an organization and can impact the way its members approach challenges. An effective organizational culture focuses on the relationships and integration of subgroups to be responsive to their population needs according to their mission (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Lumby, 2012; Orellana, 2019; Schein, 2017). Schein (2017) delineated a set of characteristics defining subcultures that included the following:

Any group that has a shared task, more or less constant membership, and some common history of learning together will have its subculture as well as be nested in the culture of the organizational unit it is in and in the macro cultures of the occupations of its members, the organization, and the nation. (p. 29)

Schein (2017) observed that as organizations grow and develop, there will be new groups that will enter the organization that “share enough experience to create subcultures based on occupational, national, and uniquely historical experiences” (p. 229) to develop a subcultural group. Schein finds that as organizations age and grow, there is a process of differentiation. This differentiation is an opportunity for the leader to develop new ways to coordinate, integrate, and align the various subcultures within the organization. He contends that organizational cultures can become dysfunctional if they rely solely on past successes, and there is a need for culture change. Owens (2001) argues that the congruency between the dominant and subcultural groups can strengthen the organization, and that differentiation can cause instability and dysfunction.

According to Schein (2017), the second implication of culture is depth, which is the cultural DNA of the organization that is taken for granted. Early shared learning within a group provides meaning and stability and becomes the organizational cultural DNA, “the beliefs, values, and desired behaviors that launched the group and made it successful” (2017, p. 7). Fundamentally, Schein (2017) argued that organizational stability enforces a shared culture, although he noted that new members added to the group, such as new generations, can alter the internal and external survival of previously existing cultural norms: “As new conditions arise and as new members with different beliefs, values, and norms enter the group, there will inevitably be both reinforcement and change as new solutions are invented for the problems of internal and external survival” (p. 10). Application of Schein’s concept of subcultures to this study of a millennial population is made even more relevant by his observations in the most recent edition of his landmark book *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2017), in which he proposed that millennials are impacting the structural stability of the organizational culture due to their unique

subcultural response to the cultural DNA of the organization and called for further examination on the topic.

The third characteristic of culture Schein identified is the breadth, how it “influences all aspects of how an organization deals with its primary purpose, its various environments, and its’ internal operations” (p. 11). The fourth characteristic implied by culture is that there is patterning or integration that ties together various elements throughout the levels of culture. The integration of cultural elements including subcultures is the essence of Schein’s contention that “as organizations evolve and develop subgroups, those subgroups develop their subcultures, which may conflict with each other or with the larger ‘corporate culture’” (p. 11)

Schein’s theory is explored in Alvesson and Sveningsson’s (2008) change study focused on the micro perspectives of culture by understanding the driving forces behind success, such as looking at “meanings, ideas, lines of reasoning, emotional responses, identities, etc.” (p. 7). Their report demonstrated that effective organizational culture changes are inclusive of all voices within the organization to integrate the beliefs of all individuals. The researchers reported that culture is integral to an organization's ability to respond to environmental changes effectively. They contended that cultural changes require a collective receptiveness to a shared understanding of the problem and its significance. The researchers implied that unless an understanding of subcultures existing within the organization is developed, the members will “produce and sustain cultural differentiation rather than integration” (p. 46).

Organizational Subcultural Studies within Community Colleges

A review of the literature found 346 studies focused on the organizational subcultures within community colleges, with two studies utilizing Schein’s organizational culture framework (Bell, 2010; Cummings, 2021). Bell (2010) conducted a qualitative study with a

phenomenological approach on the perspectives of the organizational culture (Schein, 2004) within a community college that recently experienced a merger from the subcultural perspectives of faculty, staff, and senior administration. The researcher argued that a study of organizational culture would allow for in-depth research in which “community colleges will have to go beyond the cosmetic and begin to examine the values, environment, and structures that determine organizational culture” (p. 5). The research utilized Schein’s (2004) definition of organizational culture, emphasizing the three dimensions of organizational culture established by Chaffee & Tierney (1988): structure, environment, and values. The study found cultural congruence about the mission and vision, appreciation of new structures, concern to serve students effectively, and cultural differentiation examined through the “us/them paradigm” (p. 138) among faculty and other staff. Chaffee & Tierney’s (1988) study highlighted how building cultural congruency between dominant and subcultural groups led to a stronger sense of the mission and increased effectiveness of the organization.

Cummings (2021) conducted a dissertation case study at a community college in the Southwestern United States, which experienced a transformational change to increase student enrollment and student success. The study sought to understand how leadership within subcultural groups perceived, experienced, and responded to planned organizational change in the community college setting. Relying on twenty in-depth interviews, the researcher found a common understanding of the mission to serve the needs of the community, although there was a lack of clarity on how to achieve the goals. Two of the most frequently espoused values of participants included student success and accountability, although there was a perceived absence of a clear definition of student success. This study also distinguished between an organization's stated and latent mission or functions and how these differences may impact the perspectives of

subcultures within a community college. The researcher concluded that executives have more of an external orientation to resolve issues related to the survival of the organization, while members of the operator and engineering subculture are more internally focused.

Summary

The literature makes clear that the millennial generation has a different relationship with the workplace than prior generations (Baialik & Fry, 2019; Bennett & Price, 2012; Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). A significant body of research over the last thirteen years documents common characteristics of millennial workers, including enhanced connections to societal issues (PwC, 2011), expectations for the use of technology (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; PwC, 2011), need for supportive work environments, and desire for flexibility, independence, and career advancement (Deloitte, 2018; Deloitte, 2023; Hauw and Vos, 2010; Smith and Nichols, 2015).

Research on millennials in the higher education system has focused on millennial leadership styles and managing generational characteristics (Barnes & Gearin, 2022; Bryant, 2021). Existing studies predominantly explore intergenerational differences within the workplace (Casey, 2015; Levenson, 2010; Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010; Smith and Nichols, 2015).

The literature review revealed several large-scale studies of the relationships between organizational culture and various outcomes such as drive, productivity, innovation, and organizational effectiveness (Büschgens et al., 2013; Hartnell et al., 2019; Jain and Jain, 2013). In community colleges, leaders have sought to enhance organizational effectiveness through planned change initiatives impacting missions, processes, procedures, and culture (O'Banion, 2003). However, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning how millennials perceive and navigate the specific organizational culture of community colleges, which more generalized studies on millennials in the workforce suggest may impact the ability of community colleges to

attract, retain, and optimize the success of a critical component of workers and students (PwC, 2011; Orellana, 2019; Vo et al., 2022; Deloitte, 2023). Further research on community college millennial employees is warranted to gain insights from members of this subculture into how to understand better and address the needs of millennial employees in the community college. The methodology used in this study will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodology for the study, outlining the explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, research rationale, and methodological design. It discusses the data collection and analysis approaches and re-emphasizes the study's purpose, research questions, and theoretical frameworks. The chapter outlines the research design, study setting, participants, and limitations of the conducted study. Additionally, it addresses the validity, credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, and ethical considerations of the study design. The design focuses on triangulating data through a two-part mixed methods research design, including a survey and semi-structured interviews to effectively explain the perspectives of the millennial employees regarding the institutional values and motivational workplace factors in a community college setting.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to understand millennial employee perspectives and experiences within the community college organizational culture. The study assessed the millennial employees' perspectives of the importance and enactment of the community college values. This study further gained insights into how community colleges might better attract, retain, and promote the career success of millennial employees from the subcultural perspective of millennial community college employees.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. How congruent are community college millennial participants' values with their community colleges' espoused values?

2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the community college is enacting its espoused values?
3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Organizational Culture Theoretical Framework (Schein, 2017)

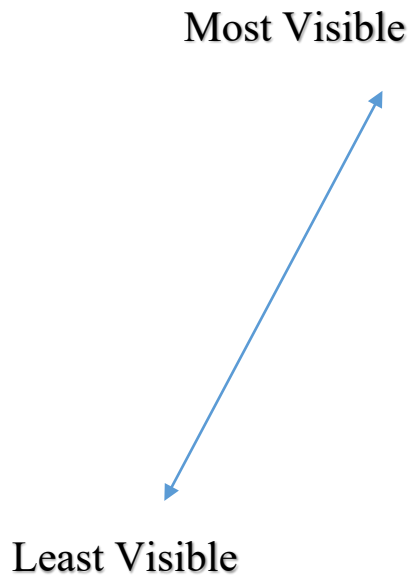
The theoretical framework guiding this study is organizational culture, which Schein (2017) defined as follows:

The accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave about those problems. (p. 6)

This study relied on Schein's (2017) organizational culture framework; Figure 3.1 demonstrates Schein's (2017) model of three levels of culture. The top of the pyramid is the most visible, and the bottom is less observable and taken for granted by organization members.

Figure 3.1

Schein's (2017) Three Levels of Organizational Cultural Analysis



According to Schein (2017), the first and most visible level of organizational cultural analysis is the artifacts of an organization, defined as visible products of the culture, such as language, written values, and ceremonies. Schein noted that this level of organizational culture can be easily observed, although it can potentially be misinterpreted by an observer's projections and personal cultural background. The next level of culture is espousing beliefs and values, which Schein described as clearly articulated rules that guide group members in dealing with critical situations and uncertainty. Schein argued that to fully understand a group's culture and predict future behavior correctly, there is a need to understand the underlying level of basic assumptions. He noted that basic underlying assumptions are deeply embedded in organizational culture and are experienced as unconscious behavior by individuals within the organization. Schein maintained that these basic assumptions create one's mental map and define how an individual responds to different work environments and decision-making in relation to how to perceive the

environment. This study will utilize Schein's levels of culture to assess the current stated values of the organization, particularly community colleges and identify their congruence with the millennial employees' subcultural values and basic assumptions as they are explored in the survey and semi-structured interviews.

Organizational Subcultures Conceptual Framework

The organizational subcultural concept by Schein (2017) served as the conceptual framework for this study, as this study proposes to examine the perspectives of the subculture of millennial community college employees. An organizational subculture is described as having a history that the group shares that impacts the response to the cultural DNA of the organization (Schein, 2017). Schein defines cultural DNA as "the beliefs, values, and desired behaviors that launched the group and made it successful" (p. 7). Schein maintained that all members' integration of the cultural elements is the essence of an operative organizational culture, where there is less dissonance among group members and subcultures. For examining such subset of employees, Schein proposed further research to provide "insight into and knowledge of employees' motivations that will provide levers for retention and hiring, not to mention improved productivity and optimized organizational designs" (p. xx) to develop an operative organizational culture.

Overall, the theoretical theme informed the depths of organizational culture and the subculture conceptual framework informed the survey and interview questions to understand millennial employees' basic underlying assumptions about the values and artifacts of the college.

Research Design

A mixed-method research design was utilized for this study and is defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018) as:

An approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insight beyond the information provided by either the quantitative or qualitative data alone. (p. 52).

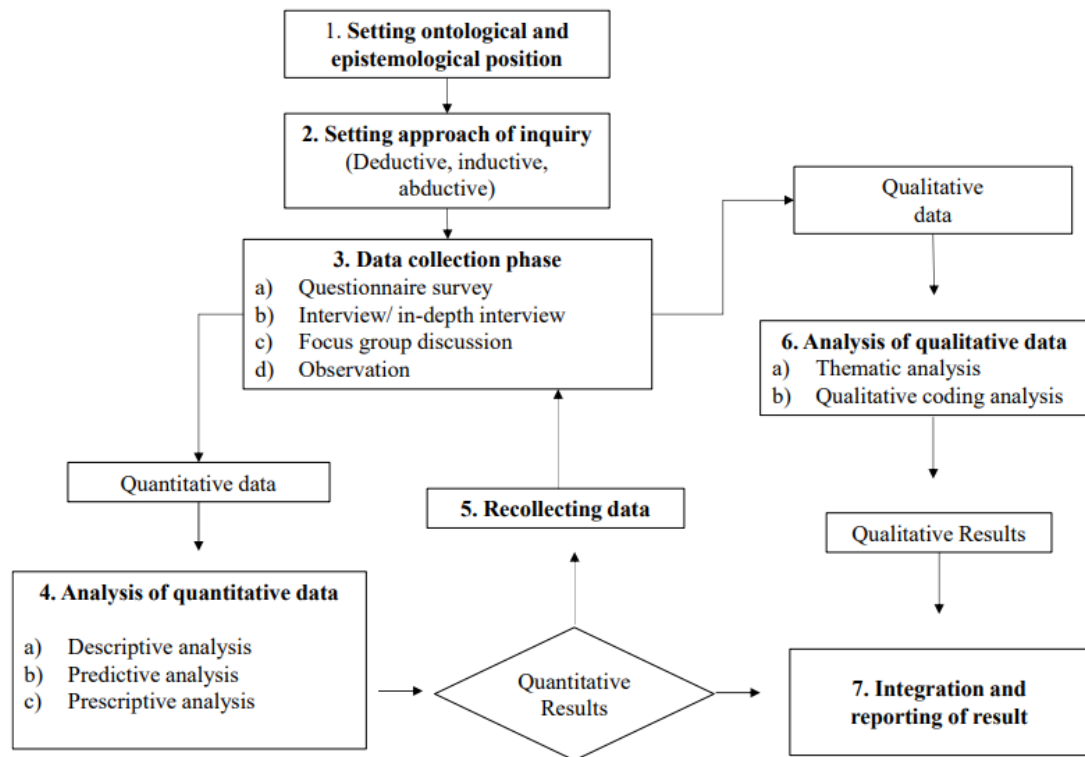
Mixed-Methods Explanatory Sequential Design

This study involved a mixed-methods explanatory sequential design, which has two distinct parts that were implemented consecutively: a quantitative part, in which numeric data was collected and analyzed, followed by a qualitative part, in which transcriptive data was collected and analyzed (Ivankova et al., 2006). An explanatory sequential design uses narrative data to explain or interpret numeric findings, especially unexpected ones (Creswell et al., 2003).

The researcher first used quantitative methods, with a survey to investigate the millennial workers' assessment of the importance and presence of both institutional values and workplace motivators, followed by qualitative investigation into their perspectives about how well these are expressed in the community college workplace. The selected research design allows researchers to “develop a robust and accurate understanding of a complex phenomenon and provided insights that can inform the development of interventions and policies” (Alele & Malau-Aduli, 2023, 5.5 Mixed Methods Study Designs section). Figure 3.2 depicts the several stages of explanatory sequential design including deciding upon an ontological and epistemological position, establishing an approach to inquiry, collecting data, analyzing quantitative data, recollecting data, analyzing qualitative data, and integrating and reporting the results developed by Toyon (2021).

Figure 3.2

Research Design Stages of Explanatory Sequential Design



Source: Toyon, 2021, p. 256

Toyan (2021) noted the first step is to set the ontological and epistemological positions for the study. “Ontology is the initial theoretical concept, and it is concerned with 'reality'. The second is referred to as epistemology, and it is concerned with the nature of 'knowledge' about what exists or is thought to exist” (p. 254). The researcher chose constructivism as the ontological position which “believes that human beings are meaning-making entities and that the integration of such meanings in social life occurs within the cycle of social existence” (p. 254). This aligns with the theoretical framework that includes members within the organization to have their own basic and underlying assumptions of the espoused value of the organization. The researcher decided upon an interpretivism epistemology approach since the study focuses on the

millennial worker's perspective of their workplace and is not seen as objective. The author shares that interpretivism is "about people's perspectives of reality and ...of the world as a consequence of their interactions with others and the environment in which those interactions occur" (p. 254). The millennial employees' perspectives were assessed and explained through the two-part data collection process and analysis that will be further explored later in this chapter.

Study Setting

The study was conducted at two community colleges in different districts (one is in a single-college district, and one is in a multi-college district) that are both serving within the same Region of California Community Colleges in the Inland Empire/Desert Region 12 (CCCCO, n.d.). Both research sites are certified as a Hispanic Serving Institution, defined as an institution of higher education with an enrollment of at least 25 % full-time undergraduate students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The projected total of participant pool was 587 millennial employees from both college sites.

College Site A

College Site A was in a single-college district with five campus locations that serves approximately 10,000 students and encompasses four K-12 school districts and serves 19 cities within the region (COD, n.d.). Overall, 31% of the workers in this district are millennials, compared to the state average of 25% within the community college field, as demonstrated in Table 3.1. (RCCD, n.d.; Cal-PASS Plus, n.d.).

College Site B

College Site B was a college in a multi-college district that serves approximately 40,000 students and a service area of 450 square miles (RCCD, n.d.). The research site has 45%

millennial employees, in comparison with the community college state average of 25%, as shown in Table 3.1. (Cal-PASS Plus, n.d.).

Table 3.1

Employee Demographics Proposed Site vs. State Data

	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
College Site A	45%	24%	32%
	n= 442	n=236	n=313
College Site B	31%	53%	15%
	n=145	n=248	n=71
CA Community Colleges	25%	54%	21%

Source: RCCD, n.d.; Cal-PASS Plus, n.d.

Study Participants

Study participants were millennials, which according to Pew Research Center (2009) are identified as individuals born between 1981 and 1996. The study's participants were not limited to a certain gender, race, sex, religion, or other demographic factor. Participants were delimited to those employed at the community college for at least two years and employed at the proposed research site from 2023-2024.

The survey participants were found through a purposive sampling method “widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas, et al., 2013, p. 533). Purposive sampling involved identifying and selecting individuals knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano, 2011). The purposive selection of millennial employees was based on specific criteria to provide insights into this subcultural population of millennial employees working at a community college across job classifications for sufficient time to develop personal perspectives about their workplace experiences. Survey data saturation was based on Glaser and

Strauss' (1967) theoretical saturation definition where if a researcher sees similar instances repeatedly and has gone out of their way to look for diversity of data, then saturation has been met.

Another purpose of the explanatory sequential design was to use quantitative data to purposively sample for the study's qualitative part (Creswell et al., 2003). The individuals for the semi-structured interviews were selected with a maximum variation strategy, defined as “Important shared patterns that cut across cases and derived their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity” (Palinkas, et al., 2013, p. 535). Community college employees were included from the following employee categories: educational administrators, academic tenured/temporary, and classified employees. Including three different employee categories broadened the range of explanations through qualitative data collection to further illuminate the millennial employee perspectives within the organization.

According to Kuzel (1992), 12 to 20 samples are recommended when trying to achieve maximum variations. Patton (2002) recommends that qualitative research sample sizes should “reasonably cover the studied occurrence, depending on the purpose of the study and the points of interest for stakeholders” (p. 248). Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (approximately 60 minutes) with 12 selected community college millennial employees (four classified staff, four academic tenure/temporary, and four administrators) were used to obtain qualitative information for the three research questions. At time of site approval, the researcher distributed study invitations (Appendix D) to key personnel, college governance members, and employee email distribution lists to seek participation for the study from qualified individuals.

Instrumentation

The two-part research design first used a survey (Appendix A) to investigate the extent to which the values of millennial employees were congruent with the college's values, as well as their perspectives about the extent to which the college district upholds its espoused values. The survey also explored the degree to which community college millennial workers concurred with millennial workplace motivators noted in the literature and how well they perceived the college district to provide or support those motivational factors. The second part of the research design relied on a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix B) to collect in-depth qualitative information through a flexible and open interview process. The interview protocol focused on understanding the basic underlying assumptions of the subcultural group with open-ended questions to leave room for follow-ups and probing questions.

Data Collection and Data Sources

This section outlines the two-part data collection process that was used to gain insight into the subcultural perspective of community college millennial employees. Before data collection, the researcher received approval from the Kansas State University (KSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB). The researcher also worked with each college site for approval by completing the college's IRB application to recruit and conduct research with college employees. To explore the three research questions, a two-part data collection process was used to investigate the artifacts of the organizational culture (Schein, 2017) and the perspectives of millennial community college employees. Per Creswell and Creswell (2018) explanatory sequential data collection includes, "...two distinct phases with rigorous quantitative sampling in the first phase and with purposeful sampling in the second, qualitative phase" (p. 347).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), “A survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population, or tests for associations among variables of a population, by studying a sample of that population” (p. 242). The survey used in this study included four Likert-scale surveys to assess the participants’ ratings of the importance of the colleges’ values, how well they perceive each value is being met,, and the extent to which they relate to the workplace motivators and assess their presence within the community college. The Likert scale measures attitudes (Likert, 1932) and asks people to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a series of statements about a topic (McLeod, 2019). The four sections of the survey are demonstrated in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Quantitative Survey Sections and Likert-scale Measurement and Ranges

Survey Section	Measurement	Range of Scales
Institutional values	Level of importance	Very unimportant to very important
Institutional values in action	Degree of value being espoused	Poor to excellent
Workplace motivators	Level of importance	Very Unimportant to Very Important
Workplace motivators in action	Degree of motivator being upheld	Poor to excellent

The first two sections of the survey focuses on the colleges’ values, and each college site completed a survey that is adapted to include their identified institutional values. The survey participants provided their assessment of the level of importance of each espoused value and the degree to which it is present within the organizational culture from their perspective.

The third and fourth sections of the survey focused on workplace motivators that have been identified through the literature review. These sections assess each workplace motivator for

the millennial employees within the community college to inform the researcher of their level of importance and presence within the organization from the subcultural group's perspective.

Part One: Quantitative Survey

The first part of data collection included a survey to provide responses to address research questions one, two, and three. An invitation to complete the survey (Appendix A) was sent by email to all millennial employees within the college sites (n= 587). The researcher received 99 usable surveys, 69 from Site A and 30 from Site B, representing a sample size with a 95% confidence level within a 9% margin of error from the overall population (SurveyMonkey, n.d.). Survey participants, by employment category, included 10 educational administrators, 34 academic tenured/temporary faculty, and 41 classified employees; 14 participants skipped this question. The survey included an opportunity to provide general background information, employment category, and years of employment within the college and the community college field prior to addressing the survey items. The survey concluded by asking if participants would like to participate in an interview for the second part of the data collection process. The researcher sent follow-up emails and text messages to those that opted in for the interview part of the research and included a debriefing form and a timeline for the next steps of the research process (Appendix B).

Part Two: Qualitative One-on-One Semi-Structured Interviews

Toyan (2021) shares that “the purpose of the second qualitative phase is often to explain the results discovered in the first quantitative phase, and sometimes to explain outliers that are not entirely consistent with the collected data” (p. 254). The second part of data collection included semi-structured interviews that were stratified based on employment category to have equal representation from each employment group. Per Creswell and Creswell (2018)

stratification is defined as “specific characteristics of individuals (e.g., gender—females and males) are represented in the sample and the sample reflects the true proportion in the population of individuals with certain characteristics” (p. 247). Among the 99 millennial community college employees who completed the survey, 21 employees indicated a willingness to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. The researcher contacted interested individuals via email and text to schedule an interview. Overall, 12 millennial employees were interviewed, with a breakdown of three educational administrators, five faculty, and four classified employees. Nine employees either withdrew, failed to follow up, left the institution, or did not respond to multiple interview requests.

Esposito and Evans-Winters (2022) state that semi-structured interviews are appropriate when a researcher has a prepared list of questions; however, there is an understanding that the questions are a loose guide, and the participant may veer off the question at hand. The semi-structured interview followed the interview protocol in Appendix B, and reflective memos were collected and the interviews were transcribed for thematic coding. The interviews were conducted via Zoom and will be audio recorded (with permission from participants) to transcribe data. The memos allowed for critical reflection after each interview and complemented the transcriptions and recordings to develop multiple data sources. Reflective memos allow researchers to “catch (their) thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections (they) make, and crystallize questions and directions... to pursue” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). The purpose of memoing is to foster researcher reflexivity and personal critique and connections, a characteristic of qualitative research. Thus, as part of the data collection process, the researcher actively gathered field notes and journaled throughout the data collection process. The semi-structured

interviews were the final data collection step, and there is no expected follow-up with the interview participants.

Data Sources

This mixed-methods research provided multiple categories of data sources, which were collected in various formats. The primary data sources consist of Likert-scale surveys, semi-structured interviews, and reflective memos developed throughout the data collection process, as depicted in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Defined Data Sources

Data Source	Data Type	Documents
Institutional documents	Public documents	• Institution's mission statement • Institution's values/core commitments
Participants	Semi-structured interviews	• Interview transcriptions • Audio recording • Reflective memos
Participants	Survey	• Survey responses
Researcher	Memos	• Reflective memos

Data Analysis

Data management encompasses the tools and strategies to manage a large volume of data, such as transcriptions, individual interviews, survey results, and observations of participants. Data were managed electronically and categorized into folders grouped by data type and then by pseudonym for the file name. To help with data analysis, the researcher used Microsoft Excel to help “store, manage, and analyze data in a deeper way...offering matrix coding queries and other visualizations that will help think in a more complex way” (Esposito and Evans-Winters, 2022,

p. 131). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) explanatory sequential mixed-methods design includes the quantitative and qualitative databased to be analyzed separately.

Quantitative Analysis

The study's initial phase was provided to understand the topic through a survey, and these findings helped design the semi-structured interviews in the second phase to further explain the participants' perspectives. The quantitative phase was analyzed through a descriptive analysis process, which summarized the data at hand and presented data in a comprehensible way. Toyon (2021) highlights that “descriptive analysis provides a response to the query "what happened?" by summarizing descriptive information and historical data in preparation for future investigation” (p. 255). Descriptive analysis does not provide predictions about the future and instead draws insight from the data and summarizes the data to make it more meaningful (Bush, 2024). These quantitative findings informed the design of the semi-structured interviews to further explain the data.

In summary, responses received from the quantitative survey were organized into categories based on the institutional values and workplace motivational factors identified in Chapter 3. Therefore, the data were summarized into charts with averages provided for each section that allowed for further explanation of millennial employees' congruency with the institutions' values and workplace motivational factors. After data collection of the survey results, the responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and these results were investigated further with “qualitative interviews to help explain confusing, contradictory, or unusual survey responses” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 347).

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were coded into more manageable units, stimulating further questions about the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Saldaña (2016) says that “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual page” (p. 4). The researcher undertook two coding cycles, as suggested by Saldaña (2016). First, descriptive coding was used, looking at transcripts line-by-line in the initial stages of data analysis to identify themes across responses. The second coding cycle included recoding by using the conceptual framework of the organizational subculture, in particular looking into the concepts of differentiation or integration to see how millennial participants aligned their reported values with the espoused values of the institution.

Data Integration

Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlights that in mixed method approaches after the two sets of data are analyzed separately, “...then the researcher combines the two databases by the form of integration called connecting the quantitative results to the qualitative data collection” (p. 347). To integrate the data, the researcher reviewed each phase of data results and specified how the qualitative results helped explain the quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

There were provisions to protect the participants’ rights throughout the study: (1) approval from the doctoral program and each research site’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research; (2) full disclosure of the purpose of the research study and its objectives through the interview protocol letter (Appendix B); (3) signed informed consent form (Appendix E) to ensure clear understanding of the study’s objectives and participants’ roles; and (4)

reminders to participants about the opportunity to opt-out and all data collection devices prior to the interview.

For confidentiality purposes, participants were given pseudonyms, and no employee ID numbers will be identified in the data analysis. In the data collection organization, the researcher will provide a numerical identifier to each participant to anonymize and safeguard the data to prevent leaks of sensitive information. An external storage device will be locked and kept safe for five years minimum.

Limitations

Although all participants had worked in a community college setting at least two years, some participants were limited in their experiences within their community college, and their perspectives cannot be transferable to all community colleges.

Study Quality

Multiple data sources are necessary to gain a substantial, in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013) and increase the credibility of findings (Creswell, 2013). The usage of a survey with four Likert-scale surveys and semi-structured interviews allowed for triangulation, “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Denzin, 1970, p. 291). Drawing upon multiple primary data resources allowed the researcher “to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Examining data collected through various data sources helped reduce the impact of any potential biases, establish credibility, and help the researcher guard against an investigator’s bias (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 1990).

Explanatory Sequential Design Validity

Creswell and Creswell (2018) advise researchers to address two challenges in the planning process to build a good explanatory sequential mixed-methods study. The first is that the researcher needs to consider all available options to follow up on the quantitative results. They recommend that “researchers consider all options for identifying results to follow up on before settling on one approach. Attention may focus only on personal demographics and overlook important explanations that need further understanding” (p.348). This study reviewed all the survey data results to extrapolate various ways to inform the semi-structured interviews. The data were sorted by employment category, number of years employed, and by responses that called for further explanation in the interviews. The second challenge identified is that a researcher “may contribute to invalidated results by drawing on different samples for each phase of the study” (p. 348). In this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the same individuals who completed the survey to “maximize the importance of one phase explaining another” (p. 348) and further validate the study. These processes helped the researcher conduct an unbiased research study and remain open to any findings that emerged from the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) provide insight into maintaining study quality for mixed-method studies, noting “...the researcher needs to establish the validity of the scores from the quantitative measures and to discuss the validity of the qualitative findings” (p. 348).

Quantitative Validity and Reliability

Creswell and Creswell (2018) propose that validity in quantitative research is established by assessing if the researcher can “draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instrument” (p. 250). This study met the three forms of validity established by the researchers by measuring the content proposed in the research questions, providing a criterion measure with

four Likert-scale surveys, and providing construct validity by measuring institutional values and workplace motivational factors.

The reliability of scores on the survey instrument was determined by the “degree to which sets of items on an instrument behave the same way” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 250). As exhibited in Table 3.1, the survey used multi-item instruments that assessed the same underlying construct and had consistency in the ranges provided to provide intercorrelations between the four sections of the survey to provide reliability of scores.

Qualitative Validity Procedures

Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by enacting certain procedures (Gibbs, 2007). This study included multiple validity procedures, including triangulation of data, member checking, and clarification of any bias with a reflexivity statement. Triangulation of data was conducted by “...examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 314). The usage of two data collection processes brought forward themes to address the research questions of this study. The researcher conducted member checking during the interviews by paraphrasing, summarizing, and asking the participants to confirm whether the interpretations were correct. Member checking “consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants of the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). To establish trustworthiness in the study, the researcher developed a reflexivity statement to “report on personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Reflexivity allows the researcher to understand the sensitivities toward the research process when collecting data based on prior experiences and assumptions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Reflexivity Statement

The use of the researcher as an instrument in interviews and data collection reflects the need to explore and reveal any biases the researcher may have relative to the research topic. In this case, I have a direct connection to this study as I am a millennial mid-level manager at the community college level and would qualify to participate. I have worked in the community college field for over 10 years within the Student Services division. In reflecting on my peers, I have personally experienced millennials being dissatisfied with the community college system and lacking connection with the current approach to leadership. I am aware of the personal impact on my peers through their shared stories. As an educational leader, my goal is to better understand how community colleges can provide the best services and connect with the students of the 21st century. This has motivated my interest in this research subject and has propelled my intrigue into a deeper understanding of what millennial employees see as opportunities so that I might help provide insights to support future change efforts within the community college system. I believe that this research study can elevate the voices of millennial employees, as they can have direct insight and relatability to the challenges that the community college system currently faces. I am aware of prior biases, and I will refrain from serving as an advocate for millennial employees as the researcher for this study.

Summary

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study design was to understand the millennial employee's congruence with college values and contribute to an understanding of what might help attract, retain, and help millennials succeed within the community college organizational culture. This chapter reviewed the research design for this study, the participants, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis. It also discussed the

ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Chapter 4 will discuss the research results through the lens of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks as well as in relation to the research questions, and Chapter 5 will present the researcher's findings and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 4 - Research Results and Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the mixed-methods data collected to address the research questions used in this research study. The chapter reviews the research questions guiding the study, background on study participants, and data analysis. The researcher then presents an analysis of the data for the millennial subcultural population of community college employees using the theoretical and conceptual theories of organizational culture and subcultures (Schein, 2017) in relation to the community college field. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the answers to the research questions and a summary of the findings.

Research Questions

1. How congruent are community college millennial participants' values with their community colleges' espoused values?
2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the community college is enacting its espoused values?
3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?

Study Participants

The researcher engaged study participants in two phases of this explanatory mixed-methods study: (a) a quantitative survey, and (b) qualitative interviews. There were a total of 99 usable surveys and 12 employee interviews conducted. Table 4.1 illustrates the study participants' background information, including their employment category, chosen pseudonym, site, and years employed at the study site.

Table 4.1*Study Participant Background*

Employment Category	Pseudonym	Site	Years Employed at Site
Administrator	Jessie	Site A	15
Administrator	Sherum	Site B	3
Administrator	April	Site A	2
Classified Staff	Polly	Site A	9
Classified Staff	Laura	Site A	5
Classified Staff	Lizzie	Site A	2
Classified Staff	Anastacia	Site A	2
Faculty	Millie	Site B	2
Faculty	Taylor	Site B	11
Faculty	Megan	Site A	17
Faculty	Angelique	Site A	10
Faculty	Manuel	Site A	7

Description of the Sample

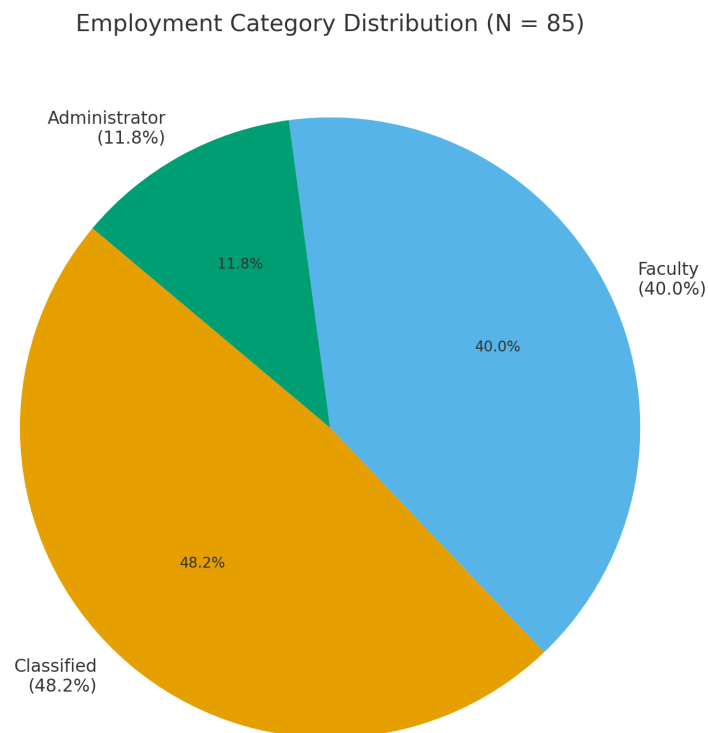
Study participants came from two colleges in different districts (one in a single-college district and one in a multi-college district) within the California Community Colleges Inland Empire/Desert Region 12 (CCCCO, n.d.). The sample included community college millennial employees born between 1981 and 1996 who had been employed in their respective districts for at least two years.

Findings from the quantitative survey confirmed that respondents represented various departments and programs across the two college campuses and different constituent groups,

including classified staff, faculty, and administrators. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of employees who completed the survey by college site and includes subgroups within the millennial generation (classified professionals, faculty, and administrators).

Figure 4.1

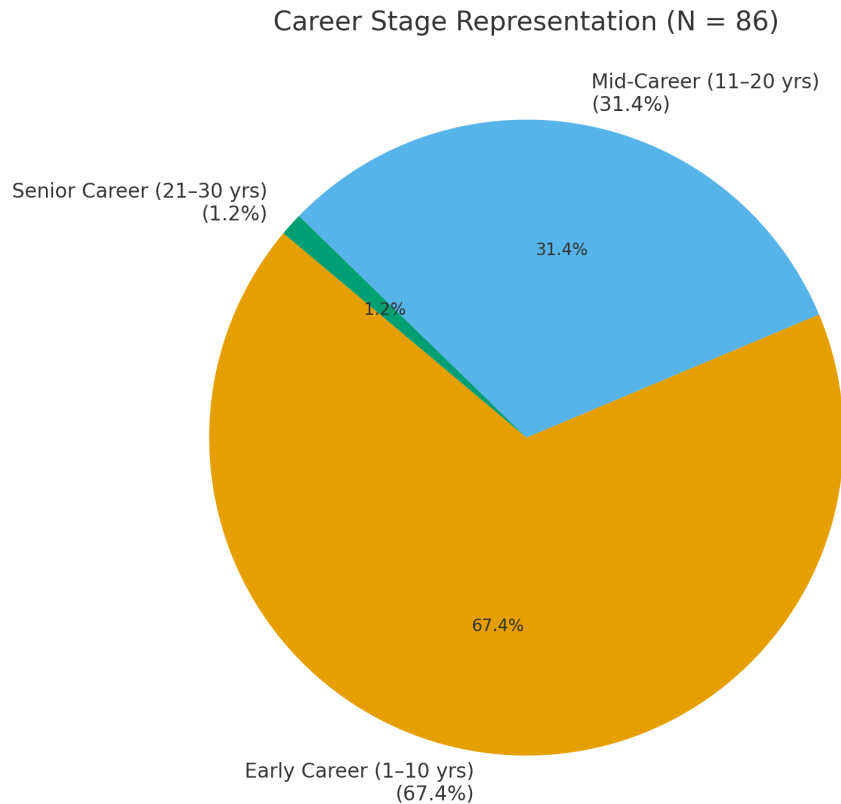
Employment Category Distribution



There was a range of career stages demonstrated among the study participants, as depicted in Figure 4.2. A majority (67.4%) of the respondents identified as Early Career Professionals (1–10 years). A third of the respondents (31.4%) were Mid-Career Professionals (11–20 years), and only 1.2% identified as Senior Career Professionals (21–30 years).

Figure 4.2

Career Stage Representation



Findings: Research Question 1

The first research question examined millennial employees' ratings of the espoused institutional values to assess the importance of these values to them as community college employees. Overall, the findings demonstrated a strong alignment between millennial employees and the core values espoused by their institutions. Across all 16 institutional values, participants expressed high agreement on their importance, with mean scores ranging from 4.13 to 4.72 on a five-point Likert scale (overall M = 4.46). The 16 examined values are defined by each college site, as noted in Table 4.2 (COD Values, n.d.; RCCD, n.d.).

Table 4.2*District Definition of College Values*

College Value	Site A	Site A Definition	Site B	Site B Definition
Access	X	To fulfill our Mission and achieve our Vision, we commit to ensuring open access to educational opportunities.	X	Providing open admissions and comprehensive educational opportunities for all students.
Collegiality	X	We value the thoughts, words, and actions of our students, colleagues, and community members. We encourage open dialogue, respectful dissent, and varying opinions in an inclusive forum. We pursue broad understanding, effective dialogue, and inclusive decision-making.	X	Being a supportive community that is distinctive in its civility, where the views of each individual are respected, humor and enjoyment of work are encouraged, and success is celebrated.
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)	X	We embrace the diversity of our community and uphold the dignity and worth of every individual. We strive to create safe, equitable, and accessible environments so individuals can learn, grow, and complete their educational goals.		
Equity			X	Engineering and sustaining an environment where student success is realized by all groups with proportionate outcomes.
Empathy	X	We listen to each other compassionately, with open minds, and without judgment.		
Fiscal Accountability	X	As good stewards of the public trust, we take thoughtful, intentional, and responsible action in allocating resources to fulfill our Mission and Vision. We anticipate and respond to dynamic fiscal conditions through ongoing evaluation, effective planning, reallocating existing resources with an equity lens, and developing and seeking new funds.		
Inclusiveness			X	Embracing diversity in all its forms — global as well as local — and creating a supportive climate that encourages a variety of perspectives and opinions.
Innovation	X	We create an environment of empowerment, creativity, courage, and exploration to provide a unique student-learning-centered culture that fosters innovation.	X	Valuing creative solutions and continuing to seek inventive ways to improve instruction and service to students and to the community.

Integrity	X	We take accountability for our actions and adhere to the highest ethical standards in all our professional and personal responsibilities. We communicate openly, honestly, and with authenticity.	X	Maintaining an open, honest, and ethical environment.
Social Justice	X	We commit to a fair and equal society in which all people and groups are valued and affirmed. We embrace efforts to end systemic racism. We recognize the legacy of past injustices and promote actions in support of restorative justice and full implementation of human and civil rights. (Based on: John Lewis, Institute for Social Justice.)		
Student Success	X	We commit to student learning, goal completion, personal fulfillment, and lifelong learning.	X	Being an institution that places high value on the academic and personal success of students in and outside of the classroom and where meeting student needs drives all decisions regarding educational programs and services.
Civic Engagement			X	Being fully engaged with the local community by listening to needs; establishing programs and partnerships to meet regional needs; forming alliances with other educational institutions to create a continuum of educational opportunities; and communicating information about XXX College programs and services to the external community.
Environmental Stewardship			X	Being mindful of the impact we have on the environment, as individuals and as a community, and fostering environmental responsibility among our students.
Mutual Respect			X	Belief in the personal dignity and full potential of every individual and in fostering positive human values in the classroom and in all interactions.
Expertise			X	Committing to ongoing improvement of teaching, service and leadership as core institutional skills.
Quality			X	Achieving excellence in the broad range of academic programs and services provided to students and to the community, fostering an environment of inquiry, learning and culture, and providing professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

Note. Source: Values, n.d.; Anonymous, n.d.

To examine the patterns of the 16 institutional values, they were grouped into five overarching themes for a larger scope of assessment: Pursuing Excellence, Building Collaborative Community, Achieving Student Potential, Championing Equity & Belonging, and Advancing Social Good. Table 4.3 shows the institutional values categorized by theme, including the percentage of employee responses for each ranking of importance from *Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*.

Table 4.3

Percentage of Participants' Responses for Institutional Values Importance Ranked by Theme

Theme	Institutional Values	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Pursuing Excellence (M = 4.62)	Expertise	0	0	0	27%	73%
	Quality	0	0	0	32%	68%
	Fiscal Accountability	6%	0	2%	25%	67%
Building Collaborative Community (M = 4.56)	Integrity*	4%	0	3%	11%	81%
	Collegiality*	4%	0	0	24%	71%
	Mutual Respect	0	0	9%	23%	68%
	Inclusiveness	5%	0	0	27%	68%
Achieving Student Potential (M = 4.44)	Empathy	8%	0	2%	22%	67%
	Student Success*	4%	0	4%	20%	71%
	Access*	6%	1%	1%	19%	73%
	Innovation*	6%	1%	3%	35%	55%
Championing Equity & Belonging (M = 4.44)	DEIA	6%	8%	2%	4%	79%
	Equity	5%	0	5%	28%	68%
Advancing Social Good (M = 4.19)	Social Justice	10%	6%	4%	12%	68%
	Civic Engagement	5%	0	14%	32%	50%
	Environmental Stewardship	0	9%	14%	32%	46%

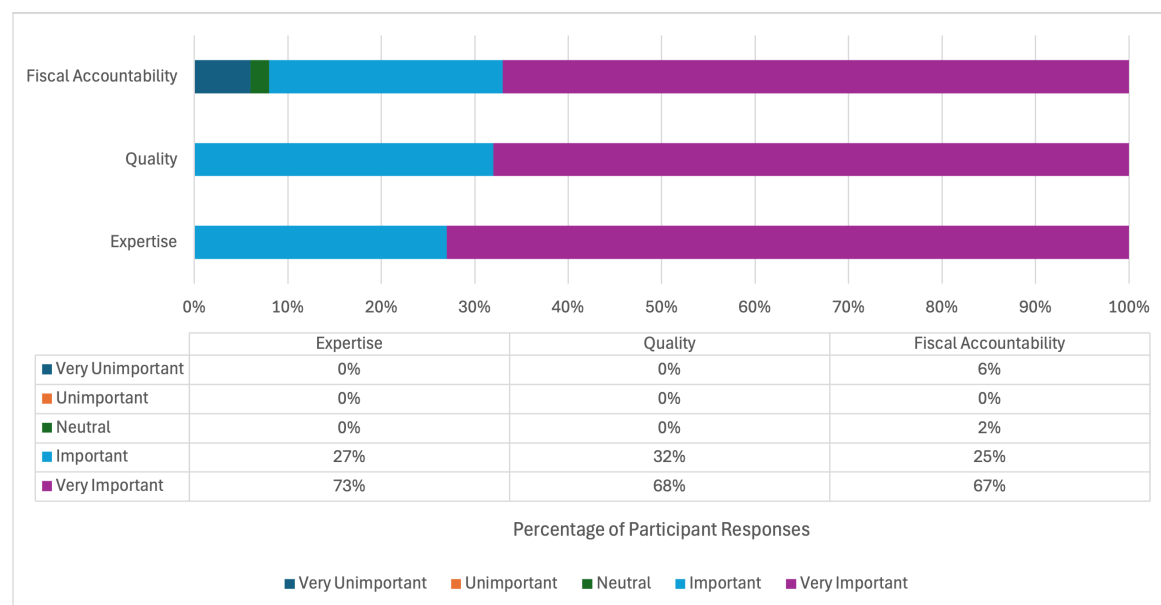
Note. Institutional Values with an asterisk (*) are espoused values at both research sites.

Pursuing Excellence

The most important theme, as rated by participants, was Pursuing Excellence ($M = 4.62$). The institutional values within this theme, Expertise ($M = 4.72$) and Quality ($M = 4.68$), were highly regarded, with all participants rating them as at least *Important*. Fiscal Accountability, while still strongly important, showed slightly greater variability, with 67% of participants rating it as *Very Important* and 25% as *Important*, and a small proportion (6%) indicating neutrality. Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating (*Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*) for institutional values within the Pursuing Excellence theme.

Figure 4.3

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Pursuing Excellence Theme of Institutional Values



Building Collaborative Community

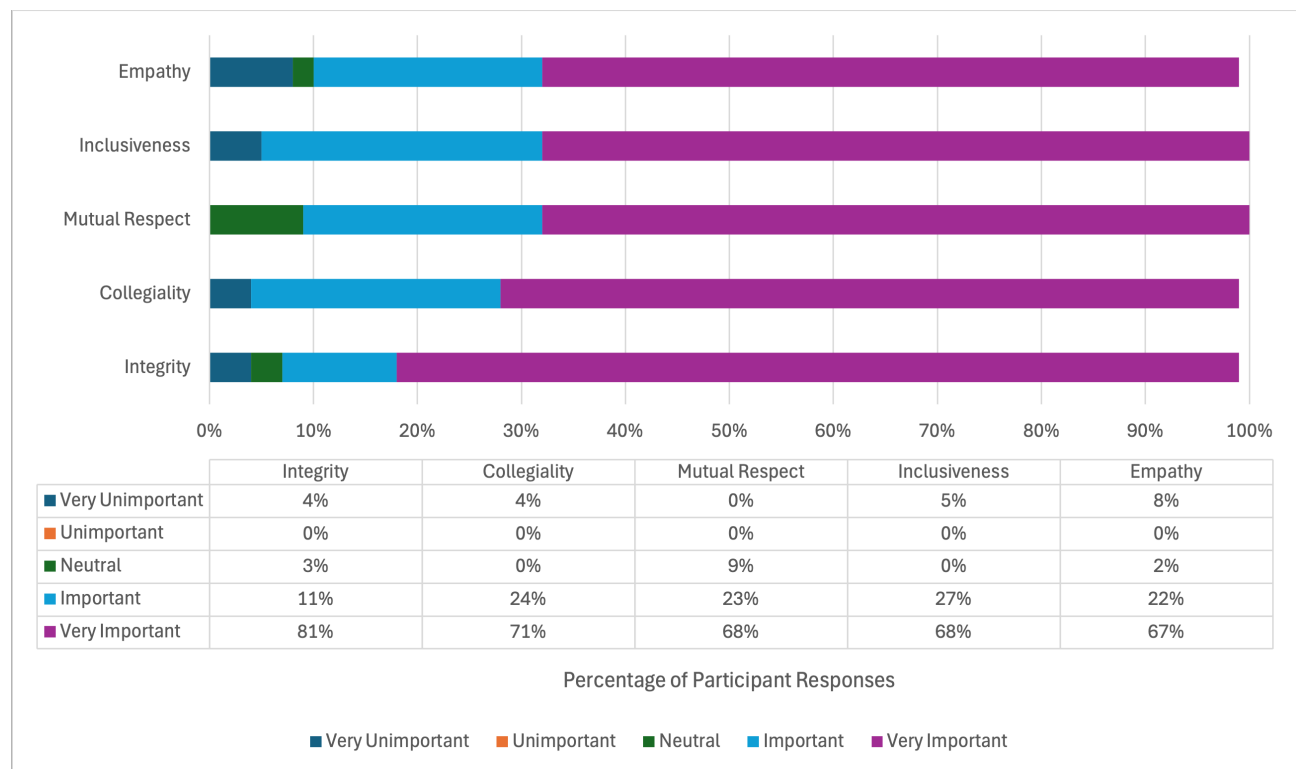
The second highest-ranked theme, Building Collaborative Community ($M = 4.56$), highlights the relational foundations of millennial workplace motivation. Integrity, one of the highest-rated individual values ($M = 4.66$), was endorsed as *Important* or *Very Important* by 92% of respondents, with 81% rating it as *Very Important*. Similarly, Collegiality (71% *Very*

Important) and Mutual Respect (68% Very Important) received strong support, while Inclusiveness and Empathy demonstrated high overall importance despite slightly greater spread across response categories.

Figure 4.4 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating of importance (*Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*) for the institutional values within the Building Collaborative Community theme.

Figure 4.4

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Building Collaborative Community Theme of Institutional Values



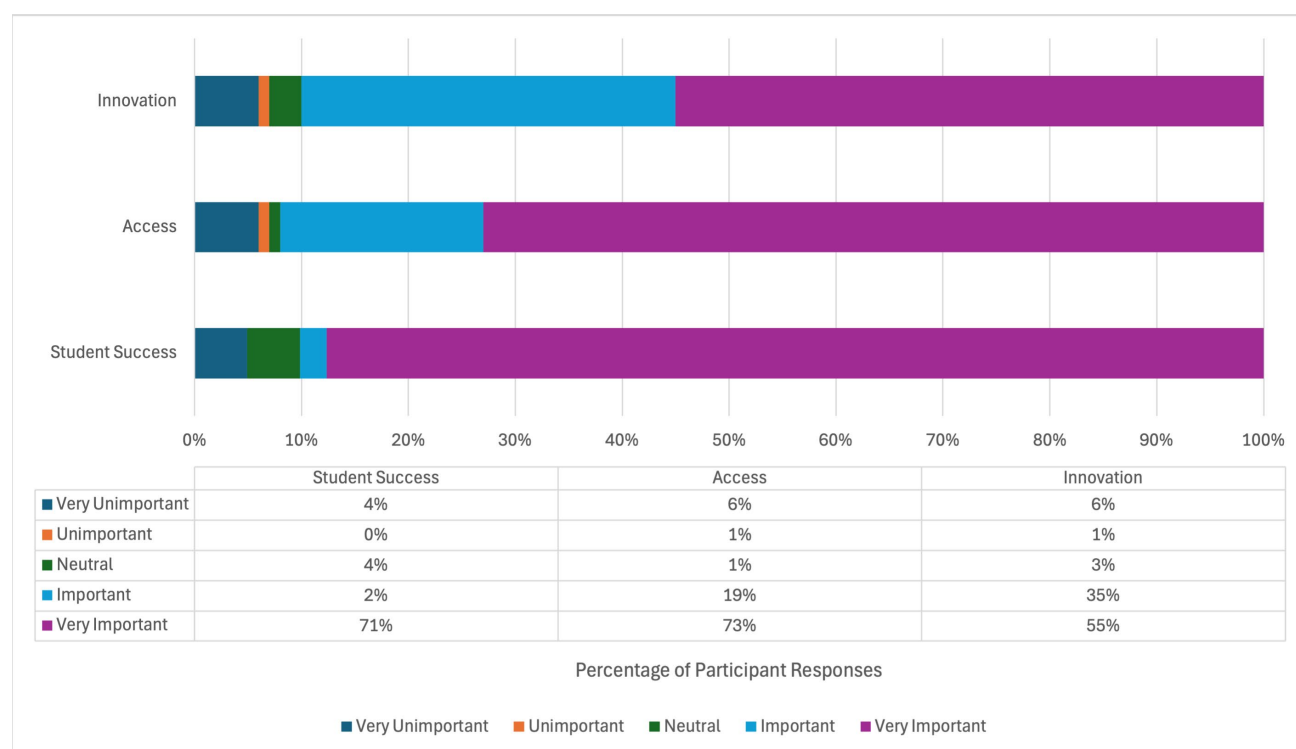
Achieving Student Potential

The theme of Achieving Student Potential was rated highly by participants ($M = 4.44$), indicating strong alignment with student-centered institutional priorities. Within this theme, Student Success and Access received the highest levels of endorsement, with 91% and 92% of respondents, respectively, rating these values as *Important* or *Very Important*. Innovation, while

still strongly supported, demonstrated greater variability, with 55% of participants rating it as *Very Important* and 35% as *Important*, suggesting differences in how innovation is experienced or operationalized across roles. Overall, these findings indicate that millennial employees place substantial importance on advancing student outcomes and reducing barriers to access, viewing these values as integral to their work in the community college context. Figure 4.5 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating of importance (*Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*) for the institutional values within the Achieving Student Potential theme.

Figure 4.5

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Achieving Student Potential Theme of Institutional Values



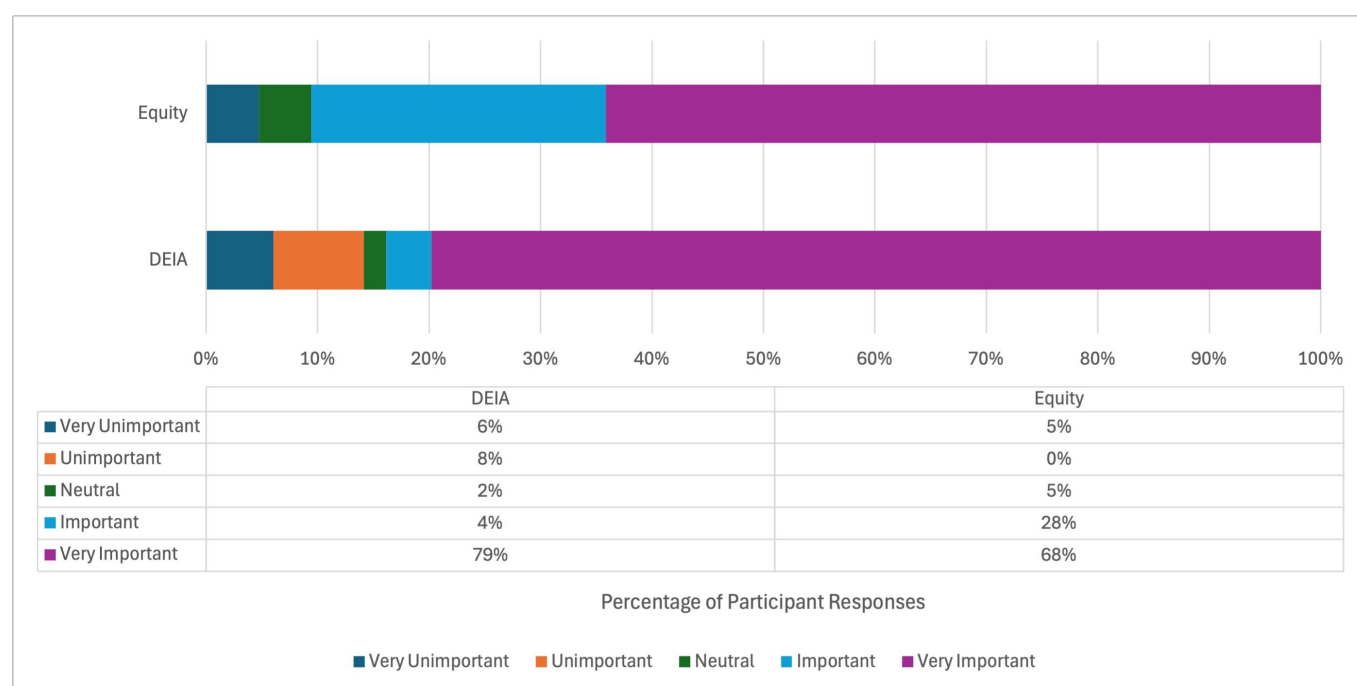
Championing Equity and Belonging

The theme of Championing Equity and Belonging also received high overall ratings ($M = 4.44$). Within this theme, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) was rated as *Important* or *Very Important* by 79% of respondents, while Equity was rated at these levels by

68% of participants. Compared to DEIA, Equity showed a lower proportion of *Very Important* ratings and a wider distribution across response categories. Overall, both values were rated favorably, though differences were observed in the strength of endorsement. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating of importance (*Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*) for the institutional values within the Championing Equity and Belonging theme.

Figure 4.6

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Championing Equity and Belonging Theme of Institutional Values



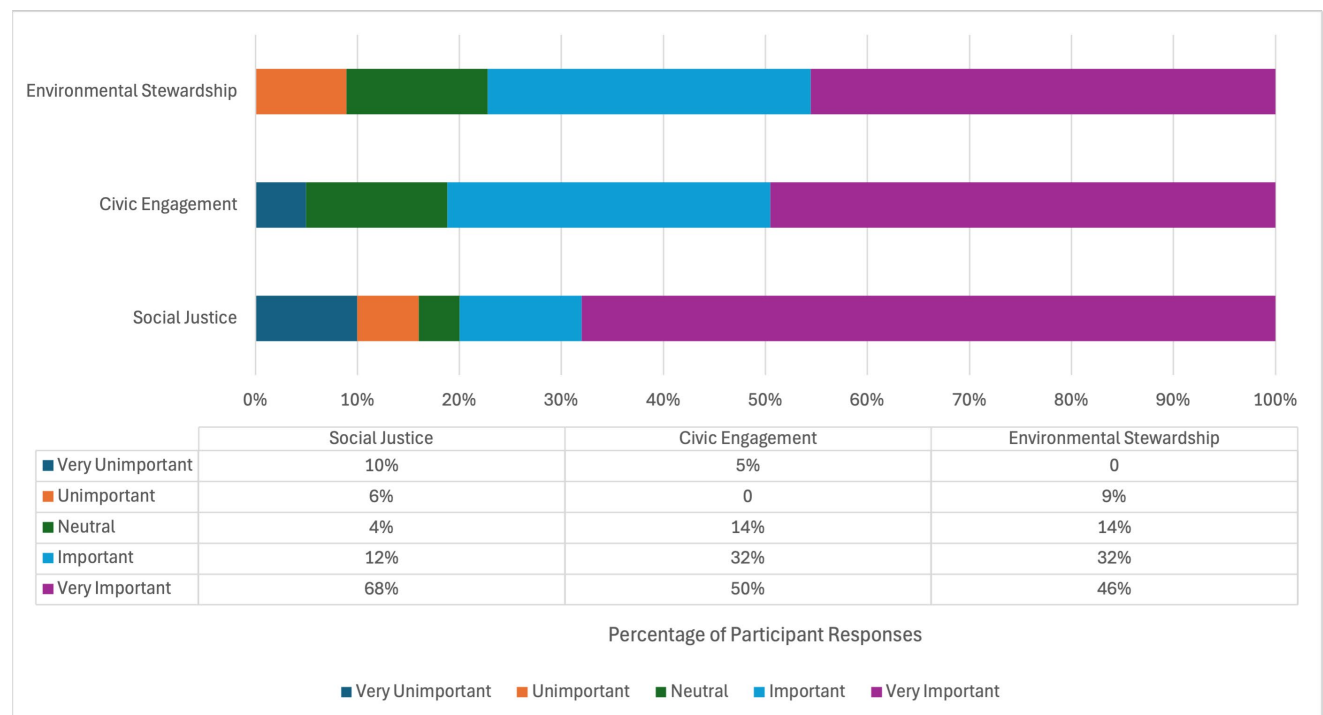
Advancing Social Good

Although still rated as important overall, Advancing Social Good emerged as the lowest-ranked theme ($M = 4.19$). Social Justice received the strongest endorsement within this theme, with 68% of participants rating it as *Very Important*, while Civic Engagement (50% *Very Important*) and Environmental Stewardship (46% *Very Important*) reflected comparatively lower levels of perceived importance. Environmental stewardship showed the greatest response variability, with 32% of respondents selecting a neutral rating and a higher standard deviation

(SD = .99), suggesting uneven exposure and relevance across employee roles. Participants acknowledged the broader societal value of sustainability initiatives; however, eight participants reported difficulty connecting these efforts to their daily responsibilities, particularly among faculty. Administrators, by contrast, more frequently referenced environmental stewardship in relation to long-term planning and institutional accountability. Figure 4.6 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating of importance (*Very Unimportant* to *Very Important*) for the institutional values within the Advancing Social Good theme.

Figure 4.7

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Advancing Social Good Theme of Institutional Values



Findings: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 examined how well millennial employees perceived their colleges are enacting the institutional values they state as guiding institutional practices. In contrast to the strong importance ratings reported in Research Question 1, participants expressed overall

uncertainty regarding the degree to which these values are demonstrated in practice. The average enactment score across all values was 3.18 on a five-point Likert-scale, indicating neutrality and reflecting a perspective that many institutional commitments are inconsistently or only partially implemented in the workplace.

Table 4.4 presents participants' ratings of each institutional value categorized by theme, with the percentage of participants who selected each enactment rating from *Poor* to *Excellent*.

Table 4.4

Percentage of Participant Responses Across Enactment Ratings for Institutional Values by Theme

Theme	Institutional Values	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Pursuing Excellence (M = 3.0)	Expertise	10%	14%	38%	29%	10%
	Quality	14%	24%	24%	33%	5%
	Fiscal Accountability	0	33%	47%	17%	3%
Building Collaborative Community (M = 3.15)	Integrity*	14%	14%	46%	23%	4%
	Collegiality*	10%	18%	31%	31%	10%
	Mutual Respect	10%	14%	10%	62%	5%
	Inclusiveness	10%	19%	14%	33%	24%
	Empathy	7%	33%	33%	20%	7%
Achieving Student Potential (M = 3.52)	Student Success*	4%	12%	28%	39%	18%
	Access*	0	6%	35%	40%	19%
	Innovation*	10%	14%	35%	31%	12%
Championing Equity & Belonging (M = 3.52)	DEIA	0	14%	31%	31%	24%
	Equity	0	19%	33%	38%	10%
Advancing Social Good (M = 2.97)	Social Justice	3%	10%	35%	41%	10%
	Civic Engagement	5%	24%	48%	14%	10%
	Environmental Stewardship	19%	19%	33%	10%	10%

Pursuing Excellence

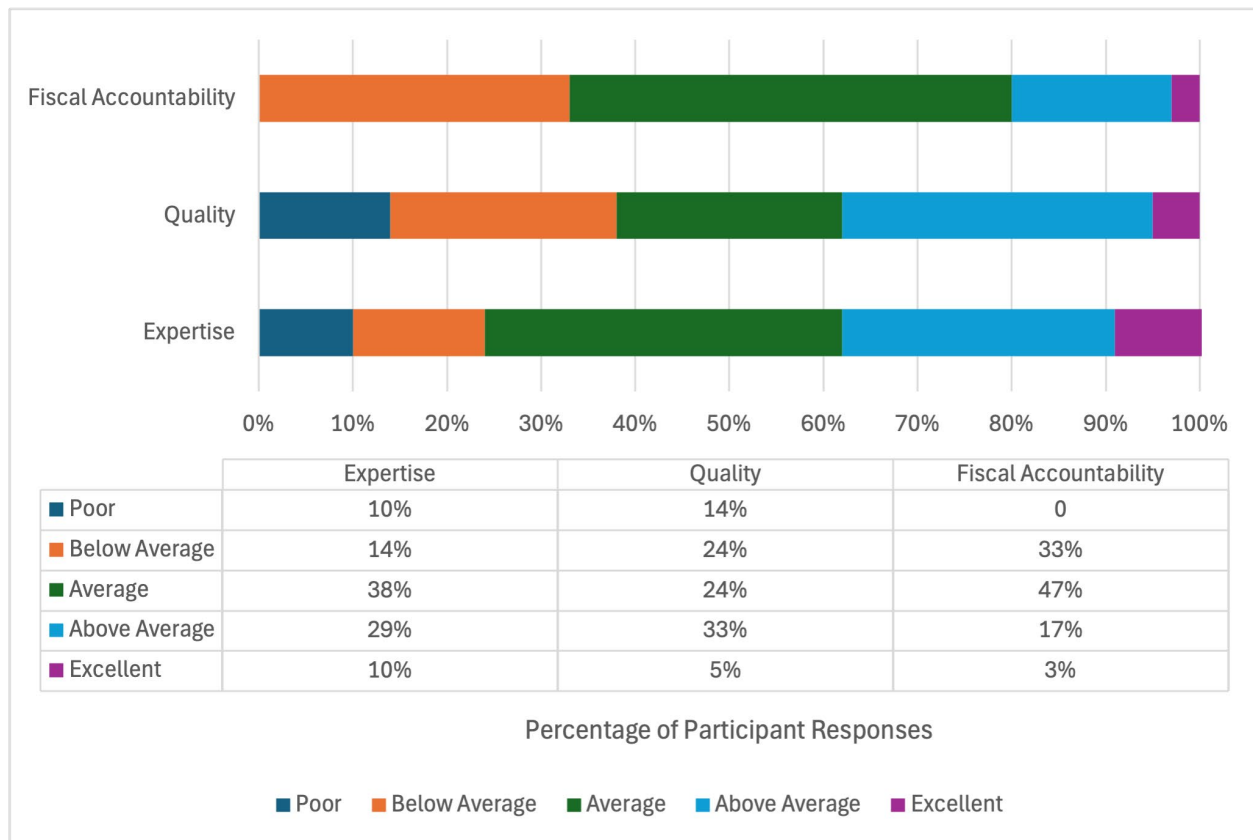
The theme of Pursuing Excellence received a moderate mean enactment rating ($M = 3.0$) relative to other themes. Within this theme, Expertise and Quality demonstrated similar distributional patterns across enactment categories. For Expertise, 38% of participants rated enactment as *Average*, 29% as *Above Average*, and 10% as *Excellent*. However, 24% of respondents rated Expertise as *Poor* or *Below Average*, indicating variability in observed enactment. Quality showed a comparable pattern, with 38% of respondents rating enactment as *Above Average* or *Excellent*, 24% as *Average*, and 38% as *Below Average* or *Poor*.

Fiscal Accountability received the lowest enactment ratings within this theme. Nearly half of respondents (47%) rated Fiscal Accountability as *Average*, while 33% rated it as *Below Average*, and only 20% selected *Above Average* or *Excellent*. Compared to Expertise and Quality, Fiscal Accountability demonstrated a higher concentration of responses in the lower enactment categories, indicating reduced visibility or consistency in perceived enactment.

Overall, values within the Pursuing Excellence theme were most frequently rated at the *Average* level, with fewer respondents indicating *Excellent* enactment compared to values in higher-ranked themes such as Championing Equity and Belonging and Achieving Student Potential. Figure 4.8 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating (*Poor* to *Excellent*) for their perceived enactment of institutional values within the Pursuing Excellence theme.

Figure 4.8

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Pursuing Excellence Theme of Institutional Values

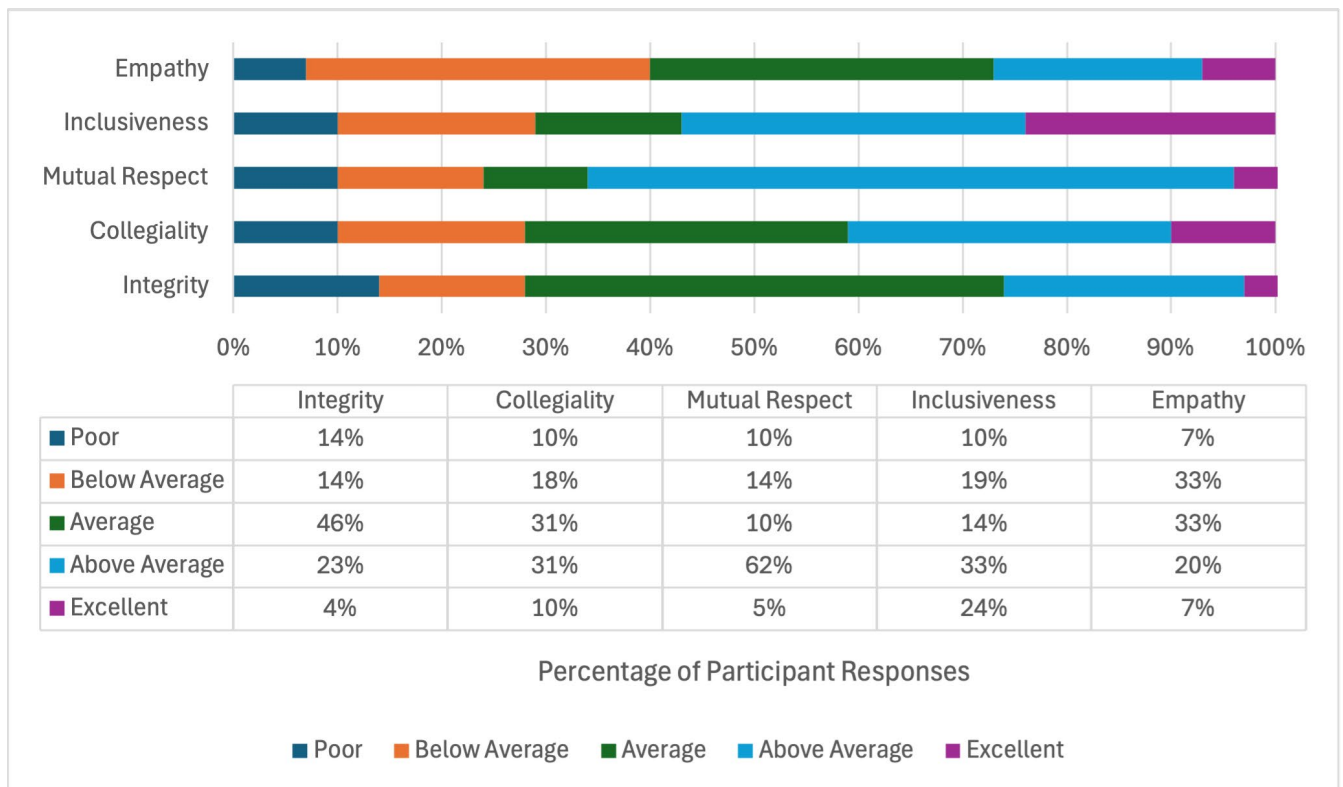


Building Collaborative Community

The theme Building Collaborative Community received a moderate mean enactment rating ($M = 3.15$). Within this theme, Mutual Respect received the highest proportion of *Above Average* or *Excellent* ratings (67%), followed by Inclusiveness (57%) and Collegiality (41%). Integrity, despite being highly rated in importance elsewhere in the study, was rated as *Above Average* or *Excellent* by 27% of respondents, with 46% selecting *Average* and 28% selecting *Below Average* or *Poor*, indicating lower perceived enactment. Perceptions of how well Empathy was demonstrated were reported as unevenly applied across the college, with varied responses: 27% rated it positively, 33% rated it as neutral, and 40% rated it as not well executed.

Figure 4.9

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Building Collaborative Community Theme of Institutional Values



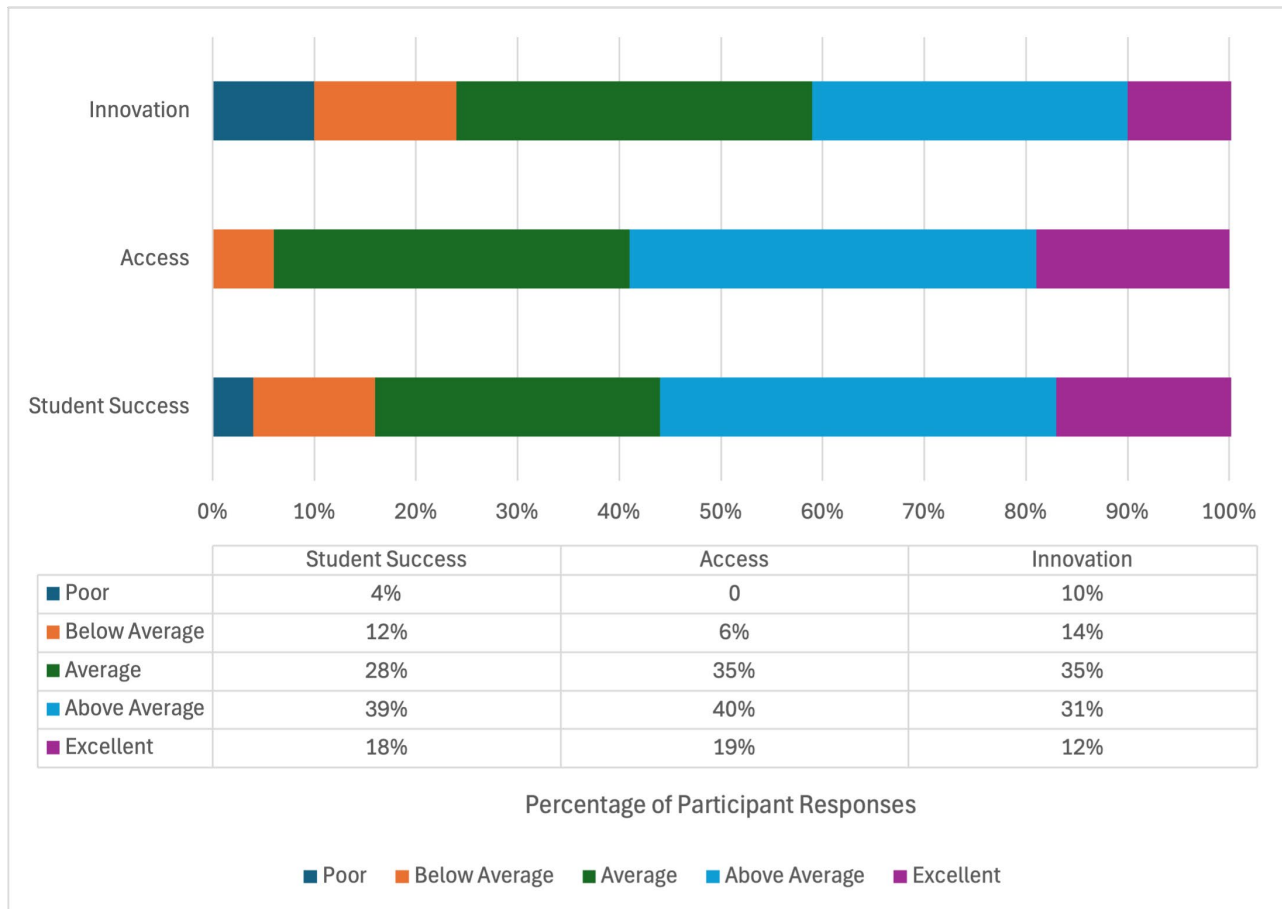
Achieving Student Potential

The theme of Achieving Student Potential also received a relatively high mean enactment rating ($M = 3.52$). Within this theme, Student Success was perceived as *Above Average* or *Excellent* by more than half of the participants (57%), with more than a third (39%) rating it as *Above Average*, and 18% rated the institutional values as being executed with *Excellence*. Access was rated as *Above Average* or *Excellent* by 59% of respondents, with less than half (40%) rating it *Above Average*, and 19% rating it *Excellent*. Innovation demonstrated greater dispersion across response categories, with 43% of respondents rating it as *Below Average* or *Average*, and 43% rating it as *Above Average* or *Excellent*. These findings indicate that Student Success and Access were more frequently perceived as enacted at higher levels than Innovation.

Figure 4.10 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating (from *Poor* to *Excellent*) for their perceived enactment of the institutional values within the Achieving Student Potential theme.

Figure 4.10

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Achieving Student Potential Theme of Institutional Values



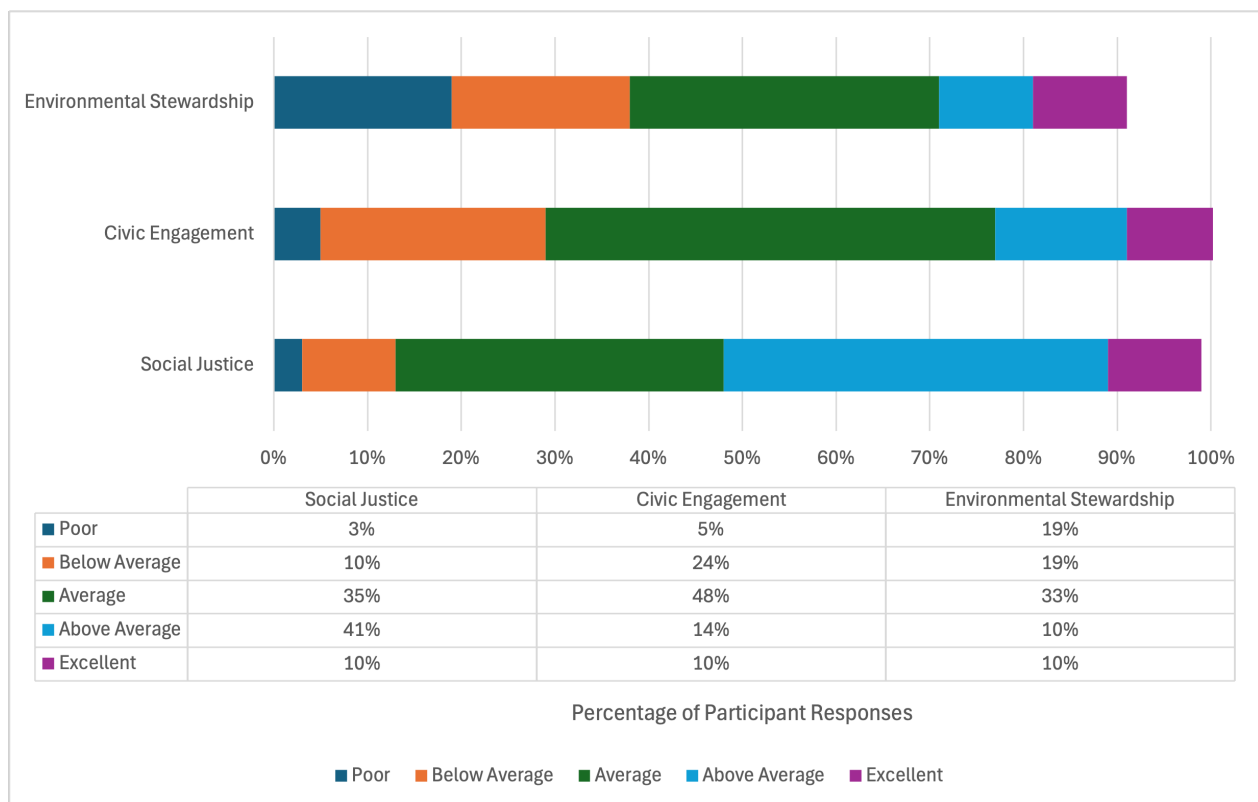
Championing Equity and Belonging

The theme of Championing Equity and Belonging received the highest mean enactment rating among the identified themes ($M = 3.52$). Within this theme, DEIA was rated as *Above Average* or *Excellent* by 55% of respondents, while Equity received *Above Average* or *Excellent* ratings from 48% of participants. For DEIA, more than one-third (31%) of participants selected

Above Average, and a quarter (24%) selected *Excellent*, indicating higher concentrations at the upper end of the enactment scale compared to other values. Equity demonstrated a similar pattern, though with a lower proportion of *Excellent* ratings (10%) and a higher proportion of *Average* ratings (33%). Overall, responses indicate that values within this theme were observed more consistently than those in other thematic areas. Figure 4.11 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating (*Poor* to *Excellent*) for their perceived enactment of the institutional values within the Championing Equity and Belonging theme.

Figure 4.11

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Championing Equity and Belonging Theme of Institutional Values



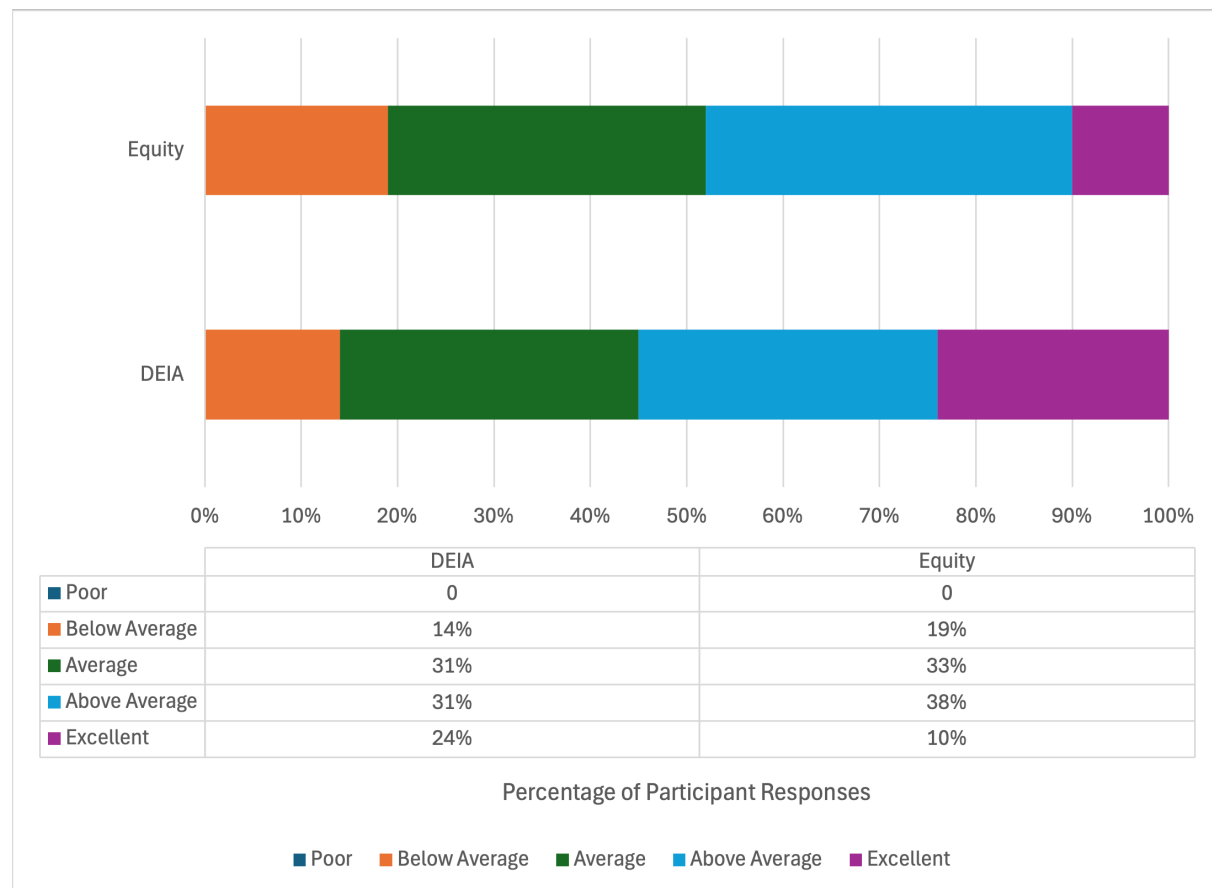
Advancing Social Good

The theme of Advancing Social Good received the lowest mean enactment rating ($M = 2.97$) among the identified themes of institutional values. Within this theme, Social Justice more

than half (51%) rated the value as being enacted *Above Average* or *Excellent*, while Civic Engagement received these ratings from 24% of participants. Environmental Stewardship received the lowest enactment ratings, with more than a third (38%) selecting *Poor* or *Below Average*, a third (33%) selecting *Average*, and 20% selecting *Above Average* or *Excellent*. Compared to other values, Environmental Stewardship demonstrated the greatest concentration of lower enactment ratings. Figure 4.12 shows the percentage of participant responses for each rating (*Poor* to *Excellent*) for their perceived enactment of the institutional values within the Advancing Social Good theme.

Figure 4.12

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Enactment of the Advancing Social Good Theme of Institutional Values

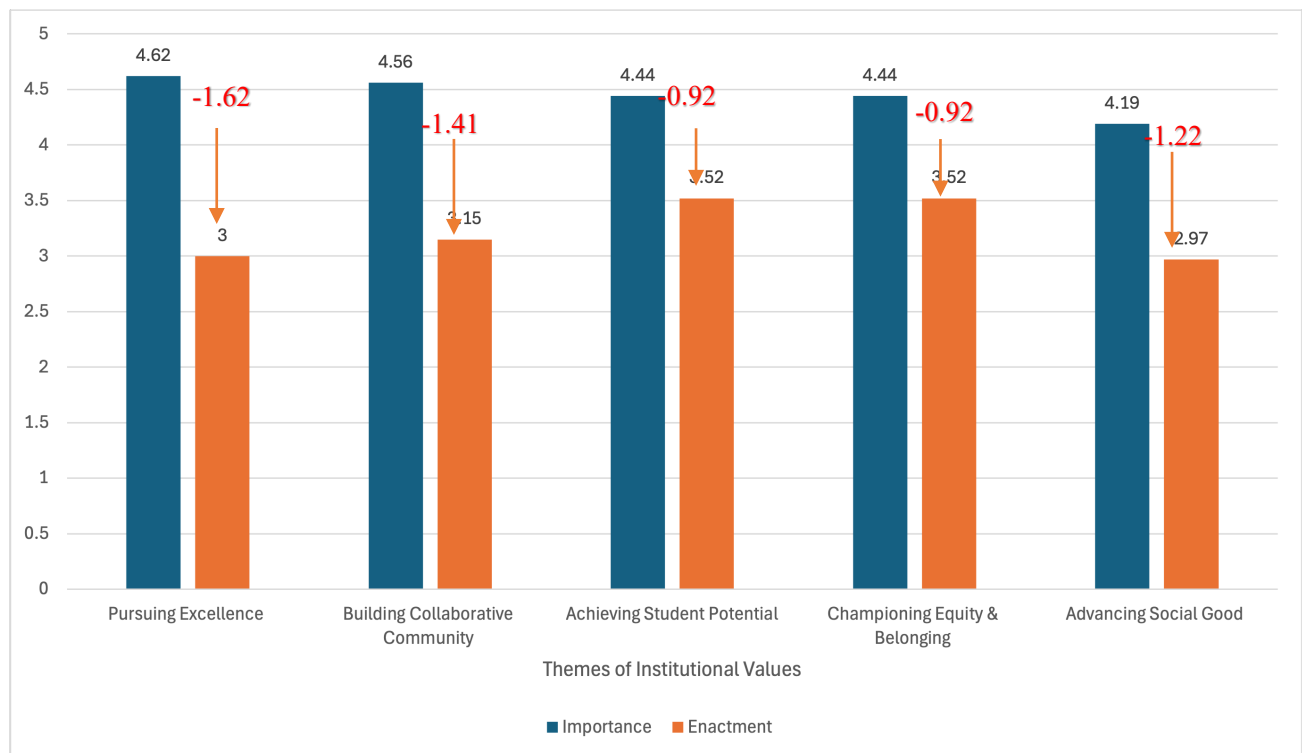


Overall Participant Perceptions of Institutional Values

Overall, the findings of Research Question 1 and 2 revealed a clear pattern: participants strongly support institutional values (overall $M = 4.46$), and they perceived substantial inconsistencies in how those values were enacted within their colleges ($M = 3.18$). Findings of Research Question 1 demonstrated that there is clear subcultural congruence among study participants, indicating that they strongly endorsed the institutional values guiding community colleges and perceived them as essential to their professional identity, organizational expectations, and the student-centered mission of the career field. Although, there was a noticeable gap in how millennials perceived the values to be present in their day-to-day work settings. This comparison suggests that millennial employees believe in and align with the mission and values of community colleges but remain skeptical about their consistent application in practice. Figure 4.13 shows the comparative ratings of the participants' assessment of the importance and presence of each institutional value theme.

Figure 4.13 Themes of Institutional Values: Importance vs. Enactment

Themes of Institutional Values: Importance vs. Enactment



Findings: Research Question 3

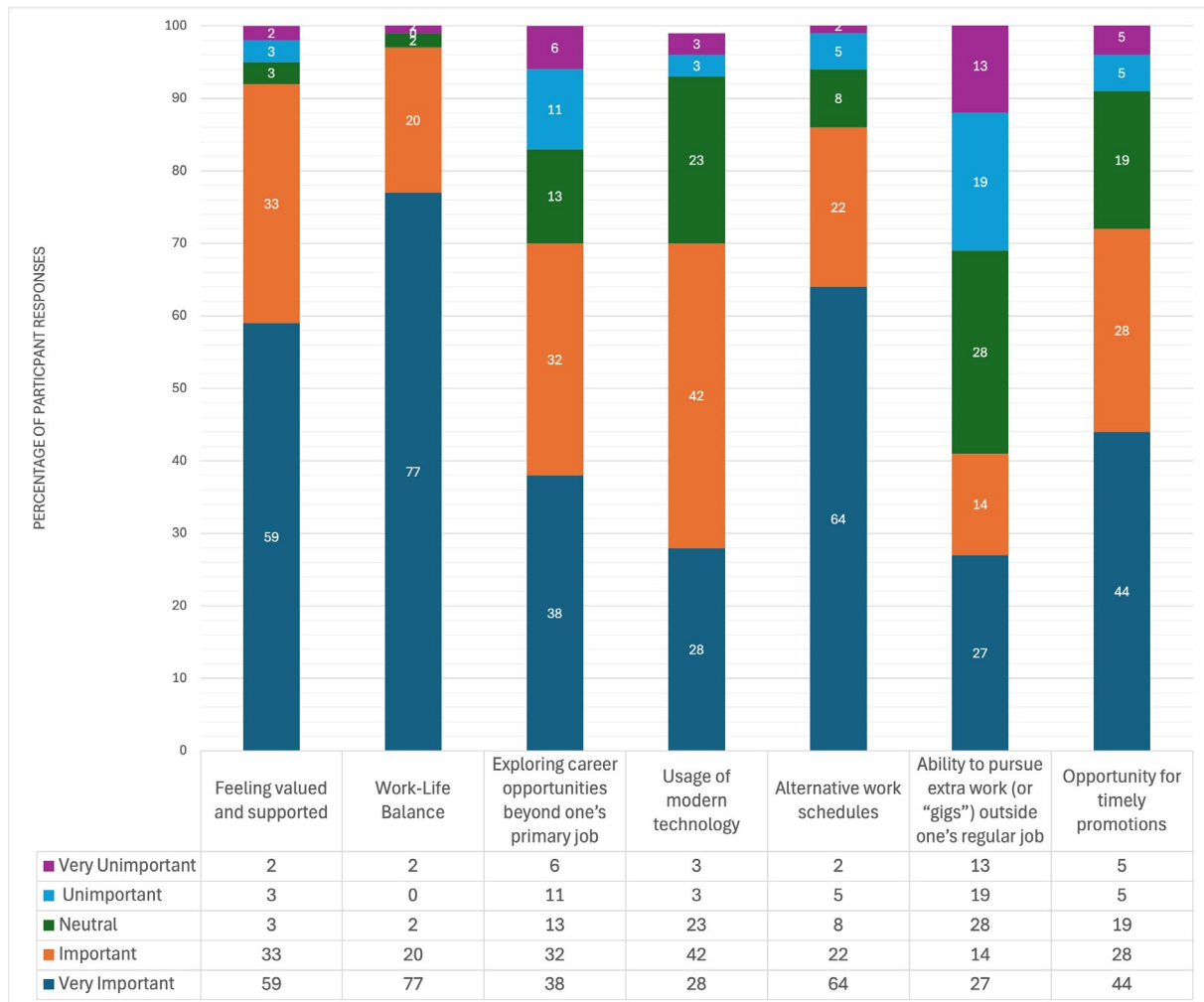
The third research question focused on millennial employees' perspectives on the motivational factors that are important for retaining and attracting them and assessed the presence of those factors within the community college field.

Part A: Motivational Factors that Attract and Retain Millennial Workers

Participants were asked to rate workplace factors identified in the literature review, and their importance ratings are shown in Figure 4.14, along with the percentages of responses for each Likert-scale category.

Figure 4.14

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Importance of Workplace Motivational Factors by Likert-Scale Category



The top two motivational factors identified were maintaining a healthy work-life balance and alternative work schedules. Nearly all (97%) of participants rated work-life balance as highly valued. More than half of the participants (64%) rated alternative work schedules as *Very Important*, and less than a quarter (22%) rated it as *Important*. Two factors had more than 20% of participants rate them as *Neutral*: the ability to pursue extra work (or “gigs”) outside one’s regular job (28% of participants) and using modern technology to increase productivity and

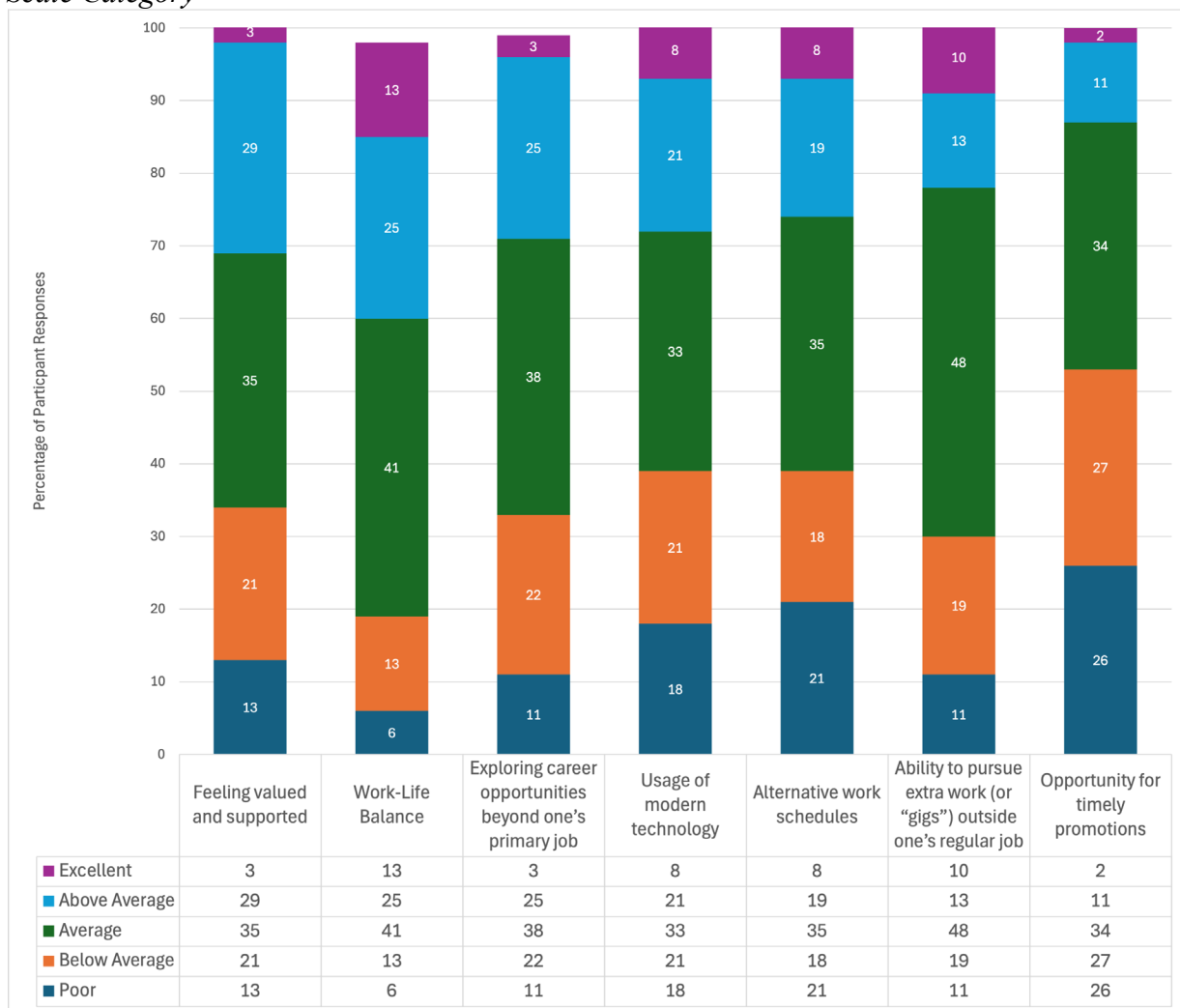
make work easier (23% of participants). Pursuing extra work elicited varied responses from participants, with nearly a third (32%) ranking it as low in motivational value.

Part B: Extent to Which Motivational Factors are Perceived to be Present in the Workplace

Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of the presence of workplace motivational factors (from *Poor* to *Excellent*) in their college, and Figure 4.15 shows the percentage of participants' responses for each Likert-scale rating.

Figure 4.15

Percentage of Participant Ratings of the Presence of Workplace Motivational Factors by Likert-Scale Category

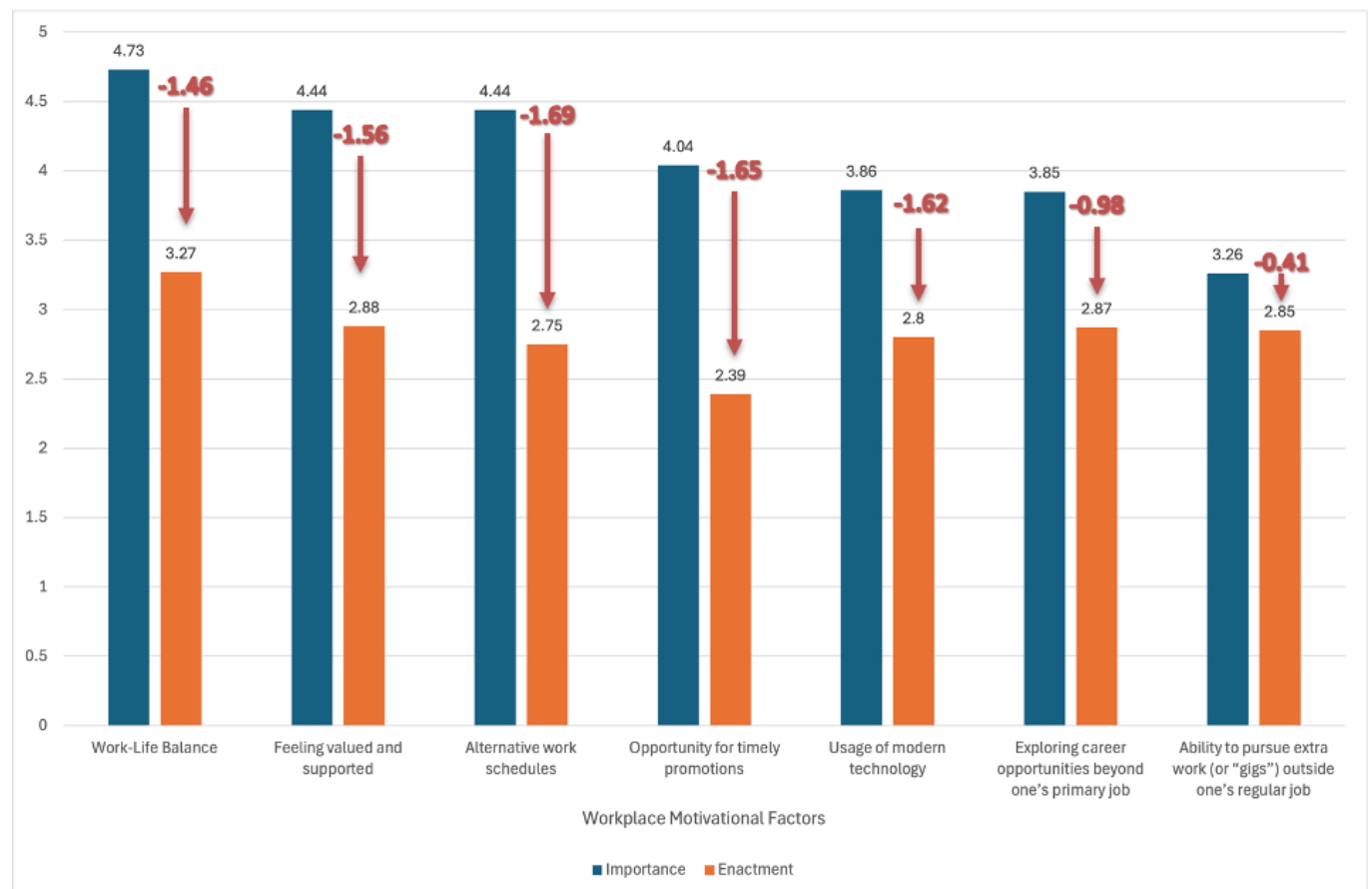


All motivational work factors were rated overall as *Average* by study participants; however, notable differences emerged among specific motivators. Work–life balance received the highest combined positive ratings (*Above Average* and *Excellent*; 38%) among the factors, whereas timely promotion opportunities received the lowest positive ratings (13%) and the highest combined negative ratings (*Poor* and *Below Average*; 53%). Feeling valued and supported by supervisors and colleagues was rated more positively (*Above Average* and *Excellent*; 32%) than career opportunities beyond one’s primary job (28%), and the use of

technology to increase productivity (29%). Less than half (48%) of the participants rated the presence of the ability to pursue gig work or additional employment as *Average* in enactment within the college. Opportunities for alternative work schedules were rated less favorably overall, with more than a third (39%) of participants selecting *Poor* or *Below Average*, exceeding the negative ratings reported for work–life balance (19%). Overall, ratings across motivational factors clustered around *Average*, with consistently low percentages in the *Excellent* category, particularly for promotion and career advancement opportunities. Figure 4.16 shows each motivational factor’s importance rating in comparison to participants’ rating of enactment within their college.

Figure 4.16 Workplace Motivators: Importance vs. Enactment

Workplace Motivators: Importance vs. Enactment



Themes of Workplace Motivators to Attract and Retain Millennial Employees in Community Colleges

In addition to the survey results, the semi-structured interviews provided insights into how motivational themes were interrelated for participants, and themes emerged that were distinct from the larger national data trends for the generational cohort. Four motivational themes emerged from the analysis of survey and interview data based on their frequency of occurrence within participant responses that were particular to millennials working within the community college field: Workplace Culture and Belonging ($n = 27$), Compensation and Benefits ($n = 18$), Work Environment and Autonomy ($n = 17$), Integrity of Leadership and Management ($n = 15$), Professional Development and Growth ($n = 14$), and Student-Centered Motivation ($n = 9$). Table 4.5 depicts each motivational factor's theme, related workplace factors, and participants' key responses on how to attract and retain millennial employees.

Table 4.5

Participants' Frequency of Themes that Attract and Retain Millennial Employees in the Community College Field

Theme	Related Workplace Factor	Summary	Frequency	How to Attract Millennial Employees	How to Retain Millennial Employees
Workplace Culture and Belonging	Feeling valued and supported by supervisors and colleagues.	Inclusive, respectful, and community-driven culture fosters belonging and retention.	27	Share diversity, equity, and inclusion values as assets in the workplace	Collegial relationships and team support Psychological safety and feeling represented Comfortable, welcoming campus environment Community-building events and celebrations
Compensation and Benefits	Exploring career opportunities beyond one's primary job Ability to pursue extra gig work	Competitive pay, strong benefits, and financial security are essential to attract and retain employees.	18	Competitive Salary Benefits (health, dental, vision, retirement)	Financial stability and ability to support family Union support and protection for management/administrators

Work Environment and Autonomy	Work/Life Balance	Flexibility, autonomy, and supportive environments enhance motivation and balance.	17	Flexibility and remote work opportunities Healthy, safe, and supportive workstations	Respect for workload and contributions Autonomy in teaching, projects, and decision-making Feeling heard when raising issues
	Schedule Flexibility				
	Using modern technology to increase productivity and make work easier.				
Professional Development and Growth	Opportunity for timely promotions (within 2 years of hire).	Growth opportunities, mentorship, and career pathways foster retention and belonging.	14	Career development and leadership pathways	Mentorship opportunities Training, cross-departmental learning, and skill building Opportunities for adjuncts/part-time faculty to grow

Workplace Motivator #1: Workplace Culture and Belonging

Quantitative Data Results

Eight out of 12 interview participants noted that retention is strongly linked to whether employees feel respected, recognized, and secure in the workplace. Polly emphasized the “paramount” need for a workplace that is both welcoming and responsive to employee needs. Laura added that she desires to work in an “inclusive environment where employees feel respected, their work is not taken for granted, and their opinions are genuinely considered and valued.” Participants referred to a sense of belonging as being cared for, seeing peers who look like you, and being respected and valued in the workplace. The importance of care was shown to link to job loyalty, as Anastacia explained, “Being loyal to an institution...you have to feel like they care for you too.” Taylor vocalized challenges in finding a sense of belonging due to not having peers her age: “I feel like I have to keep finding my place, especially in education, because not a lot of people are my age, so it’s been harder.” To add to feeling included in the workplace, Polly commented about the personal impact that the inclusion or lack thereof had on her when communicating work responsibilities and alignment with college goals:

I think about how my work is valued, and it aligns with the overall college's goals, mission, and values. Oftentimes, I think as Classified Professionals, we are asked to produce, produce, produce, be flexible, be open to change, but often we aren't told the why or are part of the decision-making when changes are needed. Just do the work. But I think when we are involved or when our input is valued, it can go a long way.

Workplace Motivator #2: Compensation and Benefits

Qualitative Data Results

Financial stability, compensation with benefits, and retirement security were consistently identified as central motivators, with 18 mentions by study participants. Seven participants suggested that community colleges should effectively market their competitive salaries, stability, and comprehensive benefits compared to other educational sectors. Taylor stated, “I think the main motivator is how much we’re getting paid,” while also noting that many peers assume four-year institutions offer better opportunities, when in reality, “you get paid more in a community college than you do at a four-year, which they don’t know.” Polly emphasized that enhancing retirement benefits, such as increased 401(k) matching, would further appeal to millennials by addressing concerns about long-term financial security.

Eleven of the 12 interview participants reported compensation and benefits as a primary motivator for their employment in the community college system, where “ultimately we all come to work because we want financial stability.” Anastacia summarized the overall sentiment, stating that “to be able to work in a community college and do the work that we do and get paid well for it” is a major workplace motivator. Four interview participants felt that fair wages and benefits, including health, dental, and optometry insurance, were a sign that they were valued for “the work and time I am putting into my students and teaching” (Manuel).

Workplace Motivator #3: Work Environment and Autonomy

Qualitative Data Results

There were 17 participant references to workplace flexibility, autonomy, and supportive environments, enhancing motivation and balance. One of the least enacted workplace motivators, as rated by participants, was alternative work schedules (2.51 average). Additionally, respondents reported different observations about this workplace motivator depending on their classification. Millennial participants had a variety of responses regarding the consistency of employees across all categories having access to work schedule flexibility: faculty reportedly had flexible schedules, while classified employees were required to be on-campus for their full scheduled hours. Manuel pointed to specific institutional practices that encouraged balance, such as the reduced workweek (32 hours) available to full-time counselors. Similarly, Laura identified work-life balance as the top motivator for employees but expressed concern that institutional support remains uneven, requiring improvement to be consistently effective. Taylor observed that while maintaining a balance between personal and professional responsibilities is important, the institution tends to emphasize mental health workshops rather than implementing direct policies or practices that reduce workload or create flexibility.

During interviews, the faculty participants described their experiences as somewhat more positive than those of other employment categories (classified and educational administrators). Angelique acknowledged this disparity, highlighting the uneven distribution of flexibility and support across employee groups:

I think if you would talk to classified employees on campus, maybe some of them would not feel as supported either, or that they don't have that same work-life balance because,

you know, faculty schedule is really flexible...I am very privileged... I'm a faculty member, right? So, I have a very, I feel very supported in my work-life balance.

Polly, a classified employee, similarly described the uneven application of support, noting that some supervisors encouraged employees to take time off after working overtime to reduce burnout, but others failed to do so, leaving their staff feeling undervalued. Millie's experience suggested that while the institution respects personal time and does not pressure employees outside of work hours, opportunities to reinforce this balance remain. Taken together, these findings suggest that while the colleges provided some support for work-life balance, many participants perceived this motivator as inconsistently applied and shaped heavily by position type, supervisor practices, and overall institutional culture.

Workplace Motivator #4: Professional Development and Growth

Qualitative Data Results

Qualitative findings revealed three main subthemes that study participants viewed as important motivational factors within the professional development category: career pipeline development, mentorship opportunities, and increased opportunities for supplemental income.

Career Pipeline Development

Participants emphasized the importance of creating structured career pipelines within higher education to both attract and retain millennial employees. Angelique noted the lack of intentional programs preparing students for careers in community colleges, suggesting mentorship and internship opportunities in partnership with four-year institutions offering graduate programs. Polly underscored that long-term retention depends on providing employees opportunities for innovation and advancement, such as moving from classified to faculty or

administration. Millie highlighted the difficulty of advancing within the community college system, explaining:

It's really hard to get into teaching at a community college...If you give us the opportunity, we can move forward and continue to thrive with you, but if you don't give us that opportunity, it's going to be really difficult.

Mentorship Opportunities

Mentorship emerged as a central factor in millennial retention: "Mentorship is a good way to keep millennials... we want constant change and molding for things and people" (Taylor). Two participants, Taylor and Millie, highlighted that guidance from more experienced colleagues provides both professional development and a sense of belonging in environments often dominated by older generations. Taylor noted that in meetings, "I don't understand it [meeting topics] and I feel like I'm playing catch-up," but with mentorship opportunities, she has been able to "go to people who have more practice." Taylor explained that mentorship keeps her "enticed" by offering a "place at the table," while Millie noted that mentorship and advocacy were key to her own entry into teaching roles. Millie states, "Having someone who can guide me and give me resources will help me feel confident in growing in that space and keeping me to stay there."

Supplemental Income Opportunities

Overall, extra income opportunities represented both a financial incentive and a professional motivator for study participants. Whether through teaching overloads, stipends, or paid professional development, these opportunities were reported to enable employees to supplement their income, develop skills, and remain engaged in their roles, thereby further contributing to retention and satisfaction. Five employees found value in gig opportunities

outside their role at the college, and others ($n = 7$) were content with their current workload and did not want to impede on their personal life, which demonstrated their belief in work-life balance. Seven participants indicated that time constraints and personal interests limited their ability to pursue additional paid opportunities within the college. Lizzie reflected, “I personally have a lot of work to do, and I don’t know that I would have time to do something additional.” Similarly, Manuel stated, “I have enough with those 32 hours of my life” as a full-time counseling faculty. Anastacia, however, cautioned that workload demands may make additional paid projects impractical, even if stipends are available. When reflecting on opportunities provided by the college, five participants considered them part of their role, while seven participants examined opportunities with an understanding of how they benefited them personally. A lack of interest in taking on additional roles for supplemental income was not as highly valued as work/life balance (4.7 average) or feeling well-compensated in their current role (18 participants). Participants vocalized only accepting additional opportunities if they contribute to timely career promotions (valued at 4.02 average importance) or will lead to career opportunities outside their primary role (valued at 3.84 average importance).

In contrast, four participants expressed greater interest in supplemental income through “gig work” or secondary employment, though with some hesitancy. Taylor recounted working multiple jobs and engaging in gig work to maximize income, “I (did) substitute teaching, I did Door Dash. Because I just wanted extra money, like I know that I’m stable, I work now three jobs. But I’m like there’s always time for more, like let me just do more.” Angelique reported consulting on the side, not out of financial necessity, but to maintain intellectual stimulation and variety beyond her routine role in counseling. Sherum similarly described secondary employment as offering both income and professional development opportunities. As she

explained, “You know it, it’s not important to me. But I do it, so I guess it is. I wouldn’t have told you that... I have a side hustle, and I have had one long time, so I guess yes.” These findings mirror the survey data, which showed a lack of clustered responses between participants and the motivator of extra income opportunities, in addition to their primary role at the community college. While some individuals reported actively pursuing side “gig work” or stipends, the majority either deprioritized additional work due to time constraints or framed it as secondary to personal balance and professional growth.

Summary

This chapter reported the mixed-methods results analyzed through Schein’s (2007) organizational culture lens, thereby aligning the findings with the study’s conceptual framework and research questions. After outlining the participant demographics, methods, and analysis procedures, the chapter reported quantitative survey results with qualitative interview insights to explain how millennial community college employees perceived institutional values and what motivates their attraction and retention within the community college field.

A central pattern that emerged from the study’s findings was that millennial employees’ values strongly aligned with community college espoused values, yet they were less convinced that those values were consistently enacted. At the same time, what attracts and retains millennials was found to be centered on relational culture (being valued, included), modernized work practices (flexibility, technology), credible leadership (transparency, stability), and visible growth pathways (mentorship, advancement). Equity and access were evident and appreciated; integrity, professional excellence, and workload/flexibility practices were found to require consistent, artifact-level enactment throughout the workplace.

Chapter 5 provides further analysis of these findings relative to the research questions, implications for community colleges endeavoring to attract and retain millennial employees, recommendations for further research, and the researcher's conclusions.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the study's conclusions, grounded in the mixed-methods findings reported in Chapter 4. It begins with an overview of the problem and then offers a brief review of the study's purpose, research questions, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The chapter then presents a summary of the methodology, data collection, and analysis, and discusses key findings and their relationship to existing literature, as well as unexpected findings. The chapter concludes with the study's implications for policy and practice, recommendations for further research, and the researcher's reflections.

Problem Overview

Community colleges across California face a critical workforce challenge, as millennials represent 47% of the California labor force and an estimated 75% of the global workforce, yet they remain significantly underrepresented within the California Community College (CCC) system, where they make up only 25% of employees, as of 2025 (EDD, n.d.; Deloitte, 2014; CCCCCO Datamart, n.d.). This generational underrepresentation raises concerns about the community college system's ability to sustain its operations, cultivate future leadership pipelines, and adequately prepare for impending demographic shifts in the workforce.

Over the past several years, the CCC system has experienced substantial staffing transitions, marked by the retirement of baby boomers, increased vacancies following the COVID-19 pandemic, and a slower workforce recovery post-COVID than at four-year institutions. From 2020 to 2025, CCCs saw a decline of nearly 13% among millennial workers (n = 3,063), continuing to widen the disproportionate representation of the generational cohort (CCCCO Datamart, n.d.).

At the same time, research consistently shows that millennials' workplace motivations, expectations, and values differ from those of previous generations (Deloitte, 2023; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Smith & Nichols, 2015). According to such prior studies, millennials tend to prefer collaborative, flexible, technologically integrated environments and seek meaningful work, clear advancement pathways, and alignment between personal and organizational values. The limited research on this population in community colleges, with only two studies found, both of which focused specifically on millennial administrators who highlighted their challenges with fitting into institutional cultures, navigating unclear career pathways, and experiencing workplace climates marked by slow change, limited support, or systemic inequities (Hines, 2022; Langdon, 2022).

This study addressed this problem by examining millennial employees as a generational subculture within CCC organizations, exploring their alignment with institutional values, their perceptions of value enactment, and the workplace conditions that attract and retain millennial professionals.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to understand millennial employee perspectives and experiences within the community college organizational culture. This study identified the extent to which the millennial employees rated the importance and presence of institutional values and workplace motivational factors within the community college field. This study further gained insights into how community colleges might better attract, retain, and promote the success of millennial employees.

Research Questions

Three primary research questions guided this study:

1. How congruent are community college millennial participants' values with their community colleges' espoused values?
2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the district is enacting its espoused values?
3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study was guided by Schein's (2017) theory of organizational culture, which examines culture across three interconnected levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Schein argues that organizational stability and alignment depend on the congruence between what an organization says it values and the behaviors and practices that embody those values. According to Schein, these elements form an organization's "cultural DNA," shaping how members behave, make decisions, integrate new employees, and respond to challenges.

In Schein's latest edition of *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2017), he highlighted in his preface that millennials are entering the workforce with distinct expectations and experiences that interact with and interpret cultural DNA in ways that may differ from prior generations. Schein specifically argued that millennials introduce new learning histories into organizations, requiring leaders to reconsider aspects of cultural integration, alignment, and renewal, as new generations enter the organization. Therefore, the conceptual framework applied Schein's notion of subcultures, recognizing that millennials form a generational subculture within the broader community college organizational environment. This framework allowed the

researcher to investigate the millennial subculture's perspectives on institutional values, daily workplace experiences, and motivational needs.

Methodology

A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was used for this study. Quantitative survey data were collected from millennial employees at two community colleges in the Inland Empire/Desert region of California. The survey measured (a) the importance of institutional values, (b) the perceived enactment of institutional values, and (c) the importance and presence of workplace motivational factors.

Follow-up qualitative semi-structured interviews with 12 millennial employees were conducted to further explain the quantitative findings. Interviews explored beliefs, experiences, and workplace motivators, providing insight into the underlying assumptions shaping millennial perspectives of organizational culture and workplace motivation.

Data Collection and Analysis

Ninety-nine participants completed the survey, representing classified staff, faculty, and administrators. Descriptive statistics, averages, and standard deviations were used to examine value alignment, enactment discrepancies, and motivational factor gaps. Interview transcripts were coded systematically in two coding cycles, following Saldaña (2016), to identify major themes in millennial employees' experiences, motivators, and perceptions of cultural alignment.

Discussion of Findings

Finding #1: Millennials Strongly Align with Institutional Values

The problem guiding this study was the underrepresentation of millennial employees in community colleges, where they comprise approximately 25% of the workforce despite representing nearly 47% of the national labor force. Findings from this study indicate that

generational underrepresentation is not attributable to a lack of alignment with institutional values. Instead, participant responses revealed broad affirmation of the importance of the values that lead their colleges. This unanimity of subcultural alignment with institutional values suggests that there are few generational differences within the organization's microculture, and millennial employees can be leveraged as a cultural asset to align with the guiding values.

One area of particular importance across findings was the theme of Pursuing Excellence. Participants emphasized that millennial employees are strongly driven by excellence and place a high value on professional mastery, clearly articulated expectations, structured onboarding processes, and opportunities for continuous learning and growth. These findings suggest that millennial employees are not resistant to institutional norms or standards; rather, they are motivated by environments that clearly define success and provide the tools necessary to achieve it. When institutions invest in intentional onboarding and professional development, millennial employees are positioned to uphold and advance institutional values consistently and purposefully.

Taken together, the findings point to a strong cultural fit between millennial employees and the community college workplace. This alignment carries important implications for the problem of underrepresentation identified in this study and how colleges can successfully move into the future. Study participants report upholding the importance of the current institutional values guiding the college, and it can be assumed that their perspectives align with the organizational culture and should be regarded as such throughout the organization. For community colleges facing ongoing workforce and leadership transitions, the demonstrated alignment of millennial employees with institutional values represents a meaningful opportunity to strengthen

organizational continuity and build upon stated practices. There is no need to develop new guiding institutional values, as participants are aligned and view them as important.

Finding #2: Millennials Perceive Inconsistent Enactment of Core Values

Although millennial employees strongly affirmed the importance of institutional values, they reported clear and consistent gaps in how those values were demonstrated in the workplace. Across all value areas, enactment ratings were lower than importance ratings, suggesting a disconnect between what institutions say they value and how those values are experienced day-to-day from the perspective of millennial employees. Participants described a shared assumption within the millennial subculture that values are often stated but not consistently upheld. This perspective contributed to a sense that accountability for institutional values is uneven, with values inconsistently modeled by leadership or reinforced within isolated departments rather than across the institution.

This misalignment may illuminate the problem of millennial employee underrepresentation in community colleges. While participants identified strong alignment with institutional values, they also emphasized that inconsistent enactment, especially within the Pursuing Excellence theme, may undermine subcultural integration into the organizational culture. Millennial employees in this study placed high importance on Expertise and Quality, noting the need for clear expectations, access to resources, and leadership that consistently models institutional commitments. When these values are not visibly enacted, millennial employees may develop basic assumptions that their access to resources and support for training is unevenly supported and that institutional priorities shift depending on role, department, or supervisor.

Over time, this lack of subcultural integration may lead millennial employees to conclude that the organization does not fully embody its stated values. Such perspectives can erode trust and weaken long-term commitment, even when employees remain philosophically aligned with the community college's values. Taken together, these findings suggest that millennial underrepresentation is not due to disengagement from institutional values, but rather to the inconsistent enactment and sustenance of those values across the organization.

Finding #3: Workplace Motivators Are Important but Poorly Enacted

Similar to patterns observed with institutional values, findings related to workplace motivators revealed a consistent gap between what millennial employees identified as highly important and how those motivators were experienced in practice. Across motivator categories, enactment was perceived as uneven and inconsistent, highlighting a misalignment between millennial employees' expectations and their day-to-day workplace experiences. This gap offers additional potential insight into the problem of millennial underrepresentation, as the absence of consistently enacted workplace motivators limits the extent to which community colleges are viewed as supportive and attractive work environments for this generational cohort.

When workplace motivators are acknowledged in principle but not consistently enacted across the organization, a lack of subcultural integration may develop, weakening employees' sense of belonging and engagement. Over time, this disconnect may undermine motivation and contribute to attrition, even among employees who remain aligned with the institution's values. Taken together, these findings suggest that community colleges risk losing millennial workforce participants to other career fields or environments when key workplace motivators are not reinforced in visible, consistent ways.

The most pronounced gaps were related to relational culture, as it was important for participants to feel valued and supported by supervisors, to be included in key conversations about goals and plans of action, and to have workplace flexibility and variety that make them feel seen and understood. Feeling valued and supported emerged as a critical motivator for millennial employees, and participants viewed it as within institutional control and as an area for leadership professional development training. Participants identified clearer onboarding processes, mentorship opportunities, and meaningful avenues for employee input into college goals as areas with potential to strengthen the presence of their valued workplace motivators. As Taylor noted, “I feel like the way our brain works is where we want constant change and molding for things and for people, and I want to see that encouraged more, even with the employees.”

In contrast, findings also revealed limited college-wide enactment of workplace flexibility. While some participants acknowledged that flexible arrangements were available to certain employee classifications, particularly faculty, these practices were not perceived as equitably accessible across the institution. If community colleges are unable to implement consistent practices and policies that support workplace flexibility, including remote work options and variability in responsibilities, some millennials may seek employment in other, more flexible fields.

Unexpected Findings

In addition to the institutional values and workplace motivators identified in the literature review; two motivational factors emerged through qualitative interviews that were not previously highlighted in the existing research on millennial employees in community colleges. Specifically, participants described being motivated by their direct impact on student success and

the “next generation”, as well as by the integrity of leadership and management. These findings broaden understanding of millennial motivation in community college settings and provide additional context for the millennial underrepresentation in the workforce.

Student-Centered Motivation

Nine participants described deriving a strong sense of purpose and job satisfaction from their direct impact on student success. Eight millennial employees articulated motivation rooted in giving back to “their younger selves,” supporting “the next generation,” or becoming “someone they did not have” during their own educational journeys. This student-centered motivation was frequently described as intrinsic and closely tied to participants’ decisions to continuously work in the community college environment. As April explained, “We recognize that, however small our role is in helping others achieve their goals, we nonetheless play a role in that which gives people opportunities, and that can make work more gratifying.”

Participants consistently linked their motivation to the broader impact of their work on students, families, and communities. Lizzie reflected on her initial interest in community colleges, noting that she wanted “to be a mentor for students who are at community college, and encourage them to pursue higher education... I wanted to be someone I didn’t have when I was going through college.” Similarly, Taylor described motivation as wanting “to give back to the same students and past versions of me that I see,” while Angelique emphasized the long-term impact of educational work, stating that it changes students’ lives “for generations.” Anastacia echoed this broader sense of purpose, explaining, “It makes me feel like, wow, our impact isn’t just within our families anymore, now it’s within our community.”

Beyond student-facing roles, some participants also identified supporting colleagues as a meaningful extension of this motivation. April described supporting employees as a key source

of fulfillment, stating, “Supporting my people is a huge part of my role... helping them pursue their professional goals as well.” Collectively, these findings suggest that millennial employees view their work as purpose-driven and community-oriented, extending beyond individual job duties. This unexpected motivational factor highlights the potential role of meaning and impact in attracting and retaining millennial employees within community colleges.

Integrity of Leadership and Management

A second unexpected finding centered on the importance of leadership integrity and management practices in shaping millennial employees’ motivation and workplace experience. Across the interview data, participants referenced integrity, fairness, accountability, and recognition of expertise as essential to trust and long-term engagement, with 15 references to these themes. Eight participants explicitly stated that they felt most motivated when their expertise was valued, their voices were heard, and leaders consistently modeled integrity at both mid-level and senior leadership levels.

Several participants described how perceived gaps in managerial support negatively affected motivation and retention. Angelique noted that managers often lack training in employee support and evaluation processes, contributing to poor onboarding experiences and higher turnover. She emphasized that inadequate onboarding can leave new employees feeling incompetent and unsupported. Laura similarly highlighted the importance of accessible professional development opportunities, noting that overly restrictive approval processes limited growth and motivation. Millie underscored the role of supervisory guidance in building confidence, explaining, “Having someone who can guide me and give me resources will help me feel confident in growing in that space and keeping me to stay there.”

Together, these findings suggest that leadership integrity and effective management are not merely contextual factors but central motivators for millennial employees. When leadership practices are perceived as inconsistent or unsupportive, motivation and trust may erode, contributing to the lack of millennial representation. In relation to the problem of millennial underrepresentation, these unexpected findings indicate that meaningful work and leaders who uphold integrity may play a more significant role in millennial engagement and retention than previously emphasized in the literature.

Findings Related to Literature

Findings from this study both confirm and expand existing literature. They corroborate research indicating that millennials across the workforce prioritize meaningful work and mission alignment (Deloitte, 2023; Ng et al., 2010), ethical leadership and transparent communication (Hersatter & Epstein, 2010), work–life balance (PwC, 2011; Vo et al., 2022), career growth and skill development (Smith & Nichols, 2015), and use of technology to streamline work (PwC, 2011).

These findings also parallel existing community college literature on millennial workers. Although Hines (2022) and Langdon (2022) focused specifically on millennial employees serving in administrative roles, they found that millennial administrators often experienced structural inequities, unclear advancement pathways, and cultural friction within community colleges. The present study revealed similar patterns, suggesting that these experiences may extend beyond administrative employees and affect millennial community college workers across the organization.

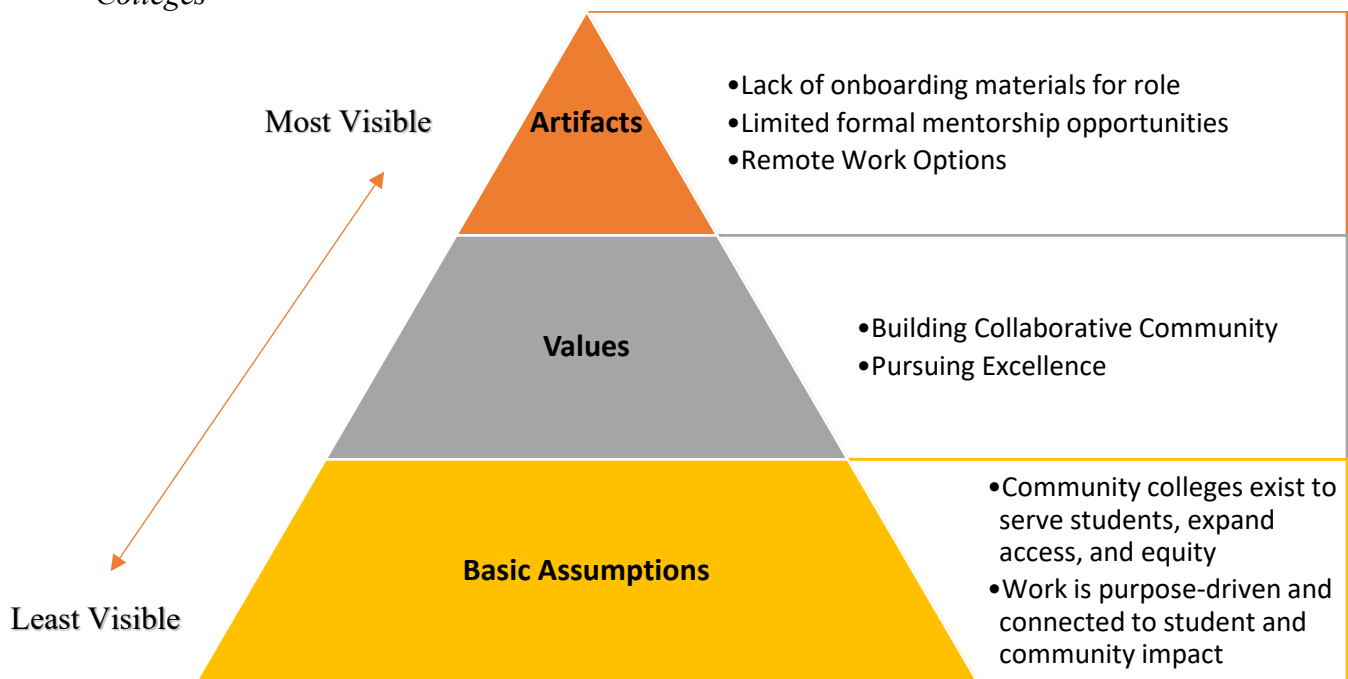
Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

Schein (2017) regarded the concept of culture as implying “structural stability, depth, breadth, and patterning or integration that results from the fact that culture is, for the group, a learned phenomenon” (p. 10). Millennials in this study displayed strong alignment with institutional values but reported a lack of depth in the enactment of those values, which, according to Schein, implies a lack of structural stability. Overall, the study revealed a lack of the “power of culture [that] comes through the fact that the assumptions are shared and, therefore, mutually reinforced” (Schein, 2017, p. 25) within the community college context, as the prevailing assumption among millennials is that values are not being fully carried out. As a result, these values may not be mutually reinforcing over time, as Schein cautioned.

Figure 5.1 shows the three levels of organizational culture, adapted from Schein’s model, including the millennial participants’ basic assumptions, their values, and perspectives on artifacts and enacted practices.

Figure 5.1

Levels of Organizational Culture Reflecting Millennial Participant Experiences in Community Colleges



Note. Adapted from *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (5th ed., p. 18), by Schein, E. H., 2017, Jossey-Bass.

Millennial Participants' Basic Assumptions

The basic assumption of the millennial participants was that, while values are regarded as important, they lack the depth of being enacted across all areas of the campus for both students and employees. At the same time, there is a neutral level of breadth, as institutional values were reportedly inconsistent in providing “pervasive and influence all levels of an organization” (Schein, 2017, p. 11), by being present within internal operations such as committee meetings, email communication, and program development, but lacking congruence within employee related values of access to schedule flexibility and training resources.

At the foundational level, millennial participants demonstrated deeply held assumptions about the purpose of community colleges and their role within them. Participants expressed the

belief that community colleges exist to serve students, expand access, and advance the community. These assumptions were reflected in participants' strong identification with student success, access, equity, and community impact. Millennial participants unanimously viewed their work as meaningful and purpose-driven, with a shared belief that their roles mattered because they supported the next generation and contributed to the public good.

Millennial Alignment with Espoused Values

At the values level, millennial participants expressed strong alignment with the institutional values espoused by their colleges. Participants resonated most highly with values of institutional expertise and quality, as well as student access and equity. They further articulated a strong sense that community colleges should operate with integrity, inclusiveness, and high professional standards.

Millennial Perspectives on Artifacts and Enacted Practices

At the artifact level, millennial participants described mixed experiences with the enactment of institutional values and motivational priorities. While participants consistently experienced validation through their impact on students and the community, they reported inadequate employee orientation and mentoring opportunities, uneven access to flexible work arrangements, and few formal mechanisms for employee voice. Work flexibility was experienced inconsistently across employment classifications, with faculty reporting greater access than administrators and classified staff. Participants found value in opportunities for cross-departmental collaboration, though these opportunities were often informal rather than institutionalized. These visible practices shaped millennial employees' day-to-day experiences and contributed to their perceptions of misalignment between espoused values and enacted culture.

Integration of Millennial Employees

The findings further elaborate on millennial employees' perspectives of what Schein referred to as patterning or integration, the fourth characteristic of his concept of culture. Schein argued that as organizations evolve and develop subcultural groups, such as millennial employees, these groups "may conflict with each other or with the larger 'corporate culture'" (2017, p. 11). Based on the study's findings, institutional espoused values align with millennial values of importance; however, differentiation remained, which could create instability and dysfunction in the enactment of those values.

Socialization and Acculturation of Millennial Employees

Consistent with Schein's assertion that organizational culture is developed through processes of socialization and acculturation, millennials described a strong need for mentorship and onboarding as mechanisms for learning "how things are done" within the college. Participants suggested that mentorship supports the knowledge on how to uphold institutional values by creating shared understanding and reinforcing expectations across roles and departments. In the absence of these supports, millennials reported feeling disconnected from institutional decision-making and uncertain about how to enact values such as integrity, empathy, quality, and expertise in consistent ways.

Millennial participants further emphasized that when learning is shared, values are more likely to become mutually reinforced across the organization. Participants perceived that mentorship, and onboarding could strengthen enactment by fostering collective learning, increasing employee involvement in advancing departmental and college goals, and embedding institutional values into everyday practices.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study suggest that community colleges' policies and daily practices play an important role in shaping millennial employees' motivational experiences and perceptions of belonging within the workplace.

Implications for Policy

Policies related to employee onboarding, mentorship, and employee engagement warrant particular attention. Community colleges may benefit from developing or revising policies that establish standardized, comprehensive onboarding practices and formal mentorship structures applicable across employment categories.

Additionally, policies governing work flexibility may require review to ensure equitable access across employee groups. Establishing transparent criteria for flexible scheduling, remote work, or alternative work arrangements may help align policy intent with employee experience.

Overall, these findings suggest that policies that explicitly operationalize employee support, flexibility, and engagement may help community colleges more effectively enact institutional values and support millennial motivation across the organization.

Implications for Leadership Practice

Leadership practices emerged as a central factor influencing millennial employees' perceptions of motivation, trust, and organizational alignment. The findings indicate that leaders play a critical role in reinforcing millennial employees' sense of being valued and supported. Clear communication, consistent expectations, and visible follow-through were identified as key contributors to fostering trust and engagement from study participants. Leadership practices that prioritize relationship-building, transparency, and inclusion may help strengthen organizational

trust, particularly among millennial employees who place high importance on integrity and ethical leadership.

Leaders also influence how flexibility is experienced across employment classifications. Decisions related to scheduling, workload distribution, and participation in cross-functional projects often occur at the supervisory or managerial level. Leaders' awareness of how flexibility is applied may help reduce inconsistencies and promote more equitable access. College leaders may also benefit from encouraging participation in collaborative projects and institutional initiatives to further support millennial employee motivation while leveraging their interest in varied and meaningful work experiences.

A positive workplace culture built on collegiality, inclusion, and psychological safety strongly influences motivation from the perspective of millennial employees. Efforts to cultivate psychological safety, recognition, meaningful inclusion, and collegiality can significantly strengthen millennial engagement in the community college workplace. A key implication for leaders is that to feel a part of the organization, employees must be included in the decision-making processes, be informed of the day-to-day practices, and feel safe in sharing input openly.

To attract millennials through the hiring process, the findings suggest that colleges should share how their roles can impact the community and highlight the values that guide the institution. Although to further attract the millennial generation, colleges need to look into remote work practices and uphold their values through daily practices at all levels of the organization.

Recommendations for Further Research

To deepen understanding of cross-generational cultural dynamics, the researcher recommends conducting the research design across different generational cohorts (Gen Z, Gen

X, and Baby Boomers). Similarly, understanding of the millennial employee subculture in community colleges could be deepened by examining their perspectives on leadership training, supervisory communication, and pathways for career advancement. Further research could also be enriched by a longitudinal study examining millennial employee retention over time and identifying factors contributing to exit or advancement within the system. Furthermore, expanding the scope of the study beyond California would replicate the study, strengthen transferability, and broaden implications.

Summary

The findings of this study suggest that the underrepresentation of millennial employees in California Community Colleges is not solely a demographic concern but also a reflection of organizational culture and practice. Millennial participants demonstrated strong alignment with institutional values, particularly those related to student success, access, equity, and integrity. However, this alignment was weakened by perceived inconsistencies in the enactment of values and workplace motivators. These findings indicate that cultural alignment at the level of values alone is insufficient to sustain engagement without corresponding structures and practices.

Guided by Schein's (2017) framework, millennial community college employees emerged as a distinct organizational subculture shaped by shared experiences, expectations, and collective meaning-making. At the level of basic assumptions, millennials viewed community college work as purpose-driven and rooted in service to students and the community. At the level of espoused values, participants affirmed institutional commitments to excellence, collaboration, and equity. However, at the level of artifacts and enacted practices, inconsistencies related to onboarding, mentorship, flexibility, and employee voice created points of dissonance. These findings suggest attracting and retaining millennial employees in community colleges may not

require attention on aligning with institutional purpose so much as demonstrating how organizational systems support employees in living out that purpose.

This study contributes to the understanding of millennial employees as a critical workforce group that will increasingly be central to the future stability of community colleges. As the system continues to face leadership turnover, workforce shortages, and growing demands to meet diverse student needs, addressing gaps between espoused and enacted values represents a key opportunity to cultivate and enhance its millennial workforce in meaningful ways. Strengthening organizational practices that support belonging, recognition, flexibility, and professional growth may enhance trust, motivation, and long-term commitment among millennial employees. Ultimately, aligning institutional culture across all levels may help community colleges build a sustainable, engaged, and value-aligned workforce positioned to lead the next generation of the system.

References

- Alele, F., & Malau-Aduli, B. (2023). *An introduction to research methods for undergraduate health profession students*. James Cook University. <https://jcu.pressbooks.pub/intro-res-methods-health/>
- Alvesson, M., & Sveningsson, S. (2008). *Changing organizational culture: Cultural change work in progress*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315688404>
- Askeland, H., Espedal, G., Løvaas, B. & Sirris, S. (2020). *Understanding values work in organisations and leadership*. DOI:10.1007/978-3-030-37748-9_1.
- Autor, D., Dube, A., & McGrew, A. (2023). *The unexpected compression: Competition at work in the low wage labor market*. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w31010>
- Au-Yong-Oliveira, M., Gonçalves, R., Martins, J., & Branco, F. (2018). The social impact of technology on millennials and consequences for higher education and leadership. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(4), 954-963. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.10.007>
- Baialik, K., & Fry, F. (2019). *Millennial life: how young adulthood today compares with prior generations*. www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/millennial-lifehow-young-adulthood-today-compares-with-prior-generations/
- Bailey, T. R., Jaggars, S. S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clear path to student success*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674425934>
- Barnes, E., & Gearin, C. (2022). How millennials approach leadership in higher education. *Journal of Leadership Education*. 21(1), 53-67. <https://doi.org/10.12806/V21/I1/R4>
- Bell, C. (2010). *Perceptions of campus subcultures at a community college*. (Publication No. 3408901). [Doctoral dissertation, Johnson & Wales University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Bennett, J., Pitt, M., & Price, S. (2012). Understanding the impact of generational issues in the workplace. *Facilities*, 30(7/8), 278-288. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02632771211220086>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.3316/QRJ0902027/full/html>
- Brown, S. (2016, July 18). When millennials become managers. *Chronical of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/when-millennials-become-managers/>

- Bryant, C. M. (2021). *Millennials and leader identity development: The intersection of an evolving paradigm in American higher education* (Publication No. 28648457). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Central Arkansas]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Büschgens, T., Bausch, A., & Balkin, D.B. (2013). Organizational culture and innovation: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 30(4), 763-781.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jpim.12021>
- Bush, T. (2024, March 29). *Descriptive analysis: How-to, types, examples*.
https://pestleanalysis.com/descriptive-analysis/#What_Is_Descriptive_Analysis
- California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) Datamart. (n.d.). *Faculty and staff demographics*. https://datamart.cccco.edu/Faculty-Staff/Staff_Demo.aspx
- Cal-PASS Plus. (n.d.). *About Us*. <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>
- Casey, S. (2015). How millennial are you? *PM World Journal*, IV(X), 1-18.
<https://pmworldlibrary.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/pmwj39-Oct2015-Casey-how-millennial-are-you-second-edition.pdf>
- Chaffee, E. E., & Tierney, W. G. (1988). *Collegiate culture and leadership strategies*. New York: Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.1990.11780726>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. SAGE. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/constructing-grounded-theory/book235960>
- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Sage Publications, Inc. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/making-sense-of-qualitative-data/book5617>
- Constable, J. (2023, August 3). *Don't let your company's culture stifle leadership development*.
<https://hbr.org/2023/08/dont-let-your-companys-culture-stifle-leadership-development>
- Corporate Leadership Council. (2005). *HR considerations for engaging Generation Y employees*. Corporate Executive Board. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL19252182M/Engaging_the_workforce
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

- Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 39(3), 124–130. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1477543>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano, C. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J.W., Klassen, A.C., Plano Clark, V.L., & Smith, K.C. (2011). *Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences*. National Institutes of Health. https://obssr.od.nih.gov/sites/obssr/files/Best_Practices_for_Mixed_Methods_Research.pdf
- Creswell, J.W., Klassen, A.C., Plano Clark, V.L., & Smith, K.C. (2013). *Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences*. National Institutes of Health. https://obssr.od.nih.gov/sites/obssr/files/Best_Practices_for_Mixed_Methods_Research.pdf
- Creswell, J.W., Plano, C., Gutmann, M.L., & Hanson, W.E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 209–240). SAGE. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/sage-handbook-of-mixed-methods-in-social-behavioral-research/book233405>
- Cummings. (2021). *The influence of organizational subcultures on leaders' perceptions of planned organizational change at a community college*. (Publication No. 29328132). [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana Wesleyan University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Deal, T. E., & Kennedy, A. (1983). Culture: A new look through old lenses. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 19(4), 498-505. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002188638301900411>
- Deloitte. (2014). *The millennial survey 2014*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/al/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/2014-millennial-survey-positive-impact.html>
- Deloitte. (2018a). *Decoding millennials in the gig economy: Six trends to watch in alternative work*. <https://deloitte.wsj.com/articles/millennials-in-the-gig-economy-six-trends-1538096536>
- Deloitte. (2018b). *Millennials in the gig economy: Six trends*. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work/millennials-in-the-gig-economy.html>
- Deloitte. (2023). *2023 gen z and millennial survey*. <https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/content/genzmillennialsurvey.html>
- Denzin, N. K. (1970). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>
- Desilver, D. (2019). *10 facts about American workers*. <https://pewrsr.ch/2Zm7e8Y>.

- Dimock, M. (2019). *Defining generations: Where millennials end, and generation Z begins*. <https://pewrsr.ch/2szqtJz>.
- Employee Development Department [EDD]. (n.d.) *Labor force participation by age groups*. <https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/data/Top-Statistics.html#LFPAG>
- Esposito, J. & Evans-Winters, V. (2022). *Introduction to Intersectional Qualitative Research*. (1st ed.). SAGE. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/introduction-to-intersectional-qualitative-research/book265127>
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books. <https://archive.org/details/interpretationof00geer>
- Gibbs, G.R. (2007). Analyzing qualitative data. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 347-365). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208574>
- Glaser, B.G., Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206>
- Guha, A. (2010). Motivators and hygiene factors of generation x and generation y-the test of two-factor theory. *Vilakshan: The XIMB Journal of Management*, 7(2), 121-132.
- Hartnell, C. A., Ou, A. Y., Kinicki, A. J., Choi, D., & Karam, E. P. (2019). A meta-analytic test of organizational culture's association with elements of an organization's system and its relative predictive validity on organizational outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(6), 832–850. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000380>
- Hauw, S., & Vos, A. (2010). Millennials' career perspective and psychological contract expectations: does the recession lead to lowered expectations? *Journal of Business & Psychology*, 25(2), 293-302. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40605787>
- Hershatter, A., & Epstein, M. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: An organization and management perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 211-223. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9160-y>
- Hines, C. Y. (2022). Voices of community college generation x and millennial CEOs: Perceptions of underrepresentation. *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College*, 29(1), 35-51. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/montezuma/jarcc/2022/00000029/00000001>
- Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (1992). *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. Morrow. <https://archive.org/details/generationshisto00stra>

- Ivankova, N.V., Creswell, J.W., & Stick, S.L. (2006). Using mixed-methods sequential explanatory design: From theory to practice. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 3–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05282260>
- Jain, A. K., & Jain, S. (2013). Understanding organizational culture and leadership - enhance efficiency and productivity. *Pranjana*, 16(2), 43–53. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/understanding-organizational-culture-leadership/docview/1561080789/se-2>
- Kaifi, B. A., Nafei, W. A., Khanfar, N. M., & Kaifi, M. M. (2012). A multi-generational workforce: managing and understanding millennials. *International Journal of Business & Management*, 7(24), 88-93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v7n24p88>
- Kapoor, C., & Solomon, N. (2011). Understanding and managing generational differences in the workplace. *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*, 3(4), 308-318.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/17554211111162435>
- Kuzel, A. J. (1992). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research* (pp. 31–44). Sage Publications, Inc. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/doing-qualitative-research/book245437>
- Lafortune, J., Bohn, S., Cuellar Mejia, M., Duan, J., Johnson, H. & McConville, S. (2024). *Labor force participation in California* [Policy Brief]. Public Policy Institute of California.
<https://www.ppic.org/publication/labor-force-participation-in-california/>
- Langdon, K. (2022). *Understanding female millennial administrators and their perceptions and experiences of leadership in the community college* (Publication No. 2670135187). [Doctoral dissertation, Illinois State University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- Levenson, A. R. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: An economist's perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 257-264. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605784>
- Likert, R. (1932). The method of constructing an attitude scale. In M. Fishbein (Eds.) *Readings in attitude theory and measurement*. (pp. 90-95). John Wiley & Sons.
<https://archive.org/details/readingsinattitu0000unse>
- Loughlin, C., & Barling, J. (2001). Young workers' work values, attitudes, and behaviors. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74(4), 543-558. <https://doi.org/10.1348/096317901167514>
- Lumby, J. (2012). Leading organizational culture: Issues of power and equity. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 40(5), 576-591. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143212451173>

- Magaldi D. & Berler M. (2020). Semi-structured interviews. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T.K. Shackelford (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. (pp. 4825-4830). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_857
- McLeod, S. A. (2019). *Likert scale definition, example and analysis*. www.simplypsychology.org/likert-scale.html
- Mize, R. (2022). *CEO tenure & retention study: 10th update*. Community College League of California. https://ccleague.org/sites/default/files/publications/CEO/ccle_cao-tenure-report_10.2022-v7.pdf
- Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 225-238. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605781>
- Ng, E. S. W., Schweitzer, L., & Lyons, S. T. (2010). New generation, great expectations: A field study of the millennial generation. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(2), 281-292. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40605786>
- O'Banion, T. (2003). The learning-centered institutions: Ideas and observations. *Community College Journal*, 73(5), 12-15. https://www.theterryobanionpapers.com/_files/ugd/9f4457_1a2052e04890424d947d627b522ed7c9.pdf
- Orellana, D.A. (2019). *Organizational culture in community colleges: Making connections to diverse student success* (Publication No. 13858292). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Owens, R. G. (2001). *Organizational behavior in education: instructional leadership and school reform* (7th edition.). Allyn and Bacon. https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6784611M/Organizational_behavior_in_education
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). SAGE. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1990-97369-000>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035719X030030021>

- Pew Research Center. (2018, April 11). *Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/>
- Pew Research Center. (2019, February 14). *Millennial life: How young adulthood compares with prior generations*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/02/14/millennial-life-how-young-adulthood-today-compares-with-prior-generations-2/>
- Pew Research Center. (2021, December 8). *The state of gig work in 2021*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/12/08/the-state-of-gig-work-in-2021>
- Pew Research Center. (Dec. 10, 2009). *The millennials*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/2009/12/10/the-millennials/>
- Pinder, C.C. (2014). *Work Motivation in Organizational Behavior*. Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315734606>
- Plano, C. (2019). Meaningful integration within mixed methods studies: Identifying why, what, when, and how. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 57, 106–111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.01.007>
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). (2011). *Millennials at work: Reshaping the workplace*. <https://www.pwc.com/co/es/publicaciones/assets/millennials-at-work.pdf>
- RCCD. *About us*; n.d. <https://www.rccd.edu/about.html>
- Saldana, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. (3rd ed.). SAGE. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-researchers/book273583>
- Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (1992). *Organizational culture and leadership*. (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership*. (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*. (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Schein, E. H. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership*. (5th ed.). Jossey-Bass. https://archive.org/details/organizationalcu0000sche_d2h5
- Silver, L., Stevens, R. E., Wrenn, B., & Loudon, D. L. (2013). Research designs: Exploratory and qualitative research. In S. Lawrence, R. Stevens, B. Wrenn & D. Loudon. (2012). *The essentials of marketing research* (pp. 60–77). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203182598>

- Smircich, L. (1983). Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(3), 339-358. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2392246>
- Smith, T. J., & Nichols, T. (2015). Understanding the millennial generation. *The Journal of Business Diversity*, 15(1), 39-47. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/understanding-millennial-generation/docview/1728003809/se-2>
- Smola, K. W., & Sutton, C. D. (2002). Generational differences: Revisiting generational work values for the new millennium. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23(Spec Issue), 363–382. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.147>
- SurveyMonkey. (n.d.). *Sample Size Calculator*. SurveyMonkey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/sample-size-calculator/>
- Tierney, W. G. (2008). *The impact of culture on organizational decision making*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447887>
- Torpey, E. (2020). *Millennials in the labor force, projected 2019-29*. <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2020/data-on-display/millennials-in-labor-force.htm>
- Toyon, M. (2021). Explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research: Phases and challenges. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 10(5), 253-260. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i5.1262>
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2025, August 28). *Labor Force Share, by Age Group*. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/graphics/labor-force-share-by-age-group.htm>
- U.S. Department of Education (n.d.). *Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)*. <https://sites.ed.gov/hispanic-initiative/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis/>
- Vo, T. T. D., Tuliao, K. V., & Chen, C. W. (2022). Work motivation: The roles of individual needs and social conditions. *Behavioral sciences*, 12(2), 49. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12020049>
- Weissman, S. (2023, January 4). Community colleges suffer employee shortages. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2023/01/04/community-colleges-suffer-employee-shortages>

Appendix A - Quantitative Survey

Background Information

1. What is your employment category?
 - a. Classified Staff
 - b. Faculty
 - c. Administrator
 - d. Other: _____
2. How many years have you worked within the community college field?
3. How many years have you worked at the current district? [Participant must have a minimum of two years employed at district to continue survey]

Section 1: Institutional Values

Instructions:

- Please take a few moments to review the following institutional values and indicate how important you believe these values are by marking an "X" on the Likert scale provided. Your honest responses are appreciated.
- The scale ranges from "Very Unimportant" to "Very Important" with intermediate options indicating varying degrees of importance.
- If you feel neutral or uncertain about a statement, you may select the midpoint.

College District Values	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Inclusiveness: The district embraces diversity in all its forms and endeavors to create a fair and equitable climate for its students and workforce.					
Excellence: The district maintains high standards in teaching, learning, and services.					
Innovation: The district responds to the changing needs of its communities by continuous improvement and creative solutions.					
Collegiality: The district respects the unique views of each individual and encourages civility, discussion of ideas, and collaboration.					
Stewardship: The district maintains public trust by responsible management of its resources and by open and honest reporting of its decision-making processes.					
Heritage: The district respects and builds on the rich traditions of education, innovation, and service to its communities.					

Section 2: Institutional Values in Action

Instructions:

- Please take a few moments to assess your college's values in action. Select a response that best represents how well you think the college is living up to its stated values. In other words, how well do you think the college is "meeting its promise"? Your honest responses are appreciated.
- The scale ranges from "Poor" to "Excellent" with intermediate options to indicate the degree of each value being espoused within the district.
- If you feel neutral or uncertain about a statement, you may select the midpoint.

Value Statements	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
Inclusiveness: The district embraces diversity in all its forms and endeavors to create a fair and equitable climate for its students and workforce.					
Excellence: The district maintains high standards in teaching, learning, and services.					
Innovation: The district responds to the changing needs of its communities by continuous improvement and creative solutions.					
Collegiality: The district respects the unique views of each individual and encourages civility, discussion of ideas, and collaboration.					
Stewardship: The district maintains public trust by responsible management of its resources and by open and honest reporting of its decision-making processes.					
Heritage: The district respects and builds on the rich traditions of education, innovation, and service to its communities.					

Section 3: Workplace Motivators

Instructions:

- Please take a few moments to provide your perspectives about what workplace factors are most motivating for you. Your honest responses are appreciated.
- The scale ranges from "Very Unimportant" to "Very Important" with intermediate options indicating varying degrees of importance.
- If you feel neutral or uncertain about a statement, you may select the midpoint.

Workplace Factors	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very Important
Feeling valued and supported by supervisors and colleagues.					
Maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life.					
Exploring career opportunities beyond one's primary job.					
Using modern technology to increase productivity and make work easier.					
Alternative work schedules or modalities that allow flexibility.					
Ability to pursue extra work (or "gigs") outside one's regular job.					
Opportunity for timely promotions (within 2 years of hire).					

- ❖ What other workplace factors are important to motivating you to come to work or stay in your job? (Open-Ended)

Section 4: Workplace Motivators in Action

Instructions:

- Please take a few moments to assess how well the college demonstrates motivational workplace factors. Your honest responses are appreciated.
- The scale ranges from "Poor" to "Excellent" with intermediate options to indicate the degree of each workplace motivator being upheld within the district.
- If you feel neutral or uncertain about a statement, you may select the midpoint.

Workplace Motivators	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
The college ensures employees feel valued and supported by supervisors and colleagues.					
The college promotes a healthy balance between work and personal life.					
The college promotes career opportunities beyond one's primary job.					
The college utilizes technology to increase productivity and make work easier.					
The college provides opportunities for alternative work schedules or modalities.					
The college allows workers to pursue gig work or extra jobs outside their regular jobs.					
The college provides opportunities for timely promotions (within 2 years of hire).					

Would you be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview?

- A. Yes (Provide Phone Number & Email)
- B. No

Appendix B - Interview Protocol Letter

Thank you for taking the time today to speak with me about your work with xx community college. As you know from our initial correspondence, I am researching millennial employees and their alignment with institutional values, workplace motivators, and your insights on attracting and retaining the millennial generation.

Before we start, I want to ensure that you are aware that this interview is voluntary. You can stop the interview at any time, and you can withdraw from the study at any point with no questions asked. You can review the transcription and observation notes so you can verify the recorded information used in the study.

I would like to audio record this interview. All recordings will be kept confidential and in a secure location, accessible only to me. Are you ok with recording this interview?

I will ask you a few questions regarding your perspectives as a part of the millennial generation within your role in the community college field. All your answers will be confidential and included anonymously in this study. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

- Tell me about your role at your institution.
- What attracted you to working in your current role?

The next set of questions will help me further explore some of the survey data related to institutional values, and I want to gain your insight on how they show up in the workplace, whether in your daily interactions or college messaging.

- The two highest ranked institutional values are _____ & _____.

Integrity & Student Success - Site A

- a) Do you believe these are important institutional values & why?
- b) Can you tell me how these show up in the workplace?
- c) If they don't, what are your suggestions to help demonstrate these values in the workplace?

- The two lowest-ranked institutional values are _____ & _____.
 - a) Social Justice & Innovation
 - b) Do you believe these are important institutional values & why?
 - c) Can you tell me how these show up in the workplace?
 - d) If they don't, what are your suggestions to help demonstrate these values in the workplace?

- The survey showed that although millennials valued Integrity, it was ranked low for being seen in the workplace.
 - a) How can the college improve its commitment to this value, so that employees will feel that it is being met?

In the survey, you were asked about millennial workplace motivators and how important they were to you, and whether your workplace provided them. The next set of questions will ask you about those motivators, and I would like to gain a better understanding of how community colleges can motivate millennial employees.

- What motivates you to come to work each week?
- The survey showed that the biggest motivator is work/life balance.
 - a) How does your institution motivate you in that way?
 - b) What are your ideas for the institution to motivate you in this way?
- Research showed that millennials value pursuing extra gig work, but the survey showed that it wasn't as important to millennials working in community colleges.
 - a) Do you think this is an important workplace motivator? Why or why not?
 - b) How could this show up in the community college field?
- How can community colleges attract millennial employees?
- How can community colleges keep millennial employees employed long-term?

Appendix C - Research Alignment Table

Problem Statement	Purpose Statement	Research Questions	Framework	Data Collection
A number of studies have documented how millennial workplace motivators and values are different from previous generations (Deloitte, 2023; PwC, 2011; Hauw & Vos, 2010; Ng et al., 2010; Smith & Nichols, 2015). The few specific studies available on community college millennial employees have highlighted their struggles with fitting into the culture of the community college workplace and advancing to higher-level positions (Hines, 2022; Langdon, 2022).	This study will explore the extent to which millennial employees' values are congruent with those of the community college district in which they work. This study will identify the extent to which the millennial employees perceive the institution is enacting its espoused values within the organization.	1. How are the values of community college millennial workers congruent with the community colleges' values? 2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the community college is enacting its espoused values? 3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?	Organizational Culture (Schein, 2017) • Artifacts • Values • Basic assumptions Organizational Subcultures (Schein, 2017)	Survey
As millennials represent 47% of the California workforce and 75% of the global workforce there is a significant lack of representation of millennial employees within the California community college system, which constitute only 25% of two-year college employees across the state (Employee Development Department [EDD], n.d.; Deloitte, 2014; California Community College Chancellor's Office [CCCCO] Datamart, n.d.). The lower participation of millennial workers could signal trouble as community colleges strive to attract and prepare their employees to serve the ever-changing workforce needs while offering successful career pathways for their employees of upcoming generational cohorts.	This study further purports to gain insights into how community colleges might better attract, retain, and promote the success of millennial employees from the subcultural perspective of millennial community college employees.	1. How are the values of community college millennial workers congruent with the community colleges' values? 2. What are community college millennial workers' perspectives about how well the community college is enacting its espoused values? 3. What are community college millennial employees' perspectives regarding (a) the motivational factors that attract and retain millennial workers and (b) the extent to which these factors are present in their workplace?	Organizational Culture (Schein, 2017) • Artifacts • Values • Basic assumptions Organizational Subcultures (Schein, 2017)	Semi-Structured Interviews

Appendix D - Invitation to Participate in the Study

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Dissertation Study on Millennial Employee Perspectives

Dear [Recipient's Name],

My name is Cynthia Alvarez, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Community College Leadership Program at Kansas State University. I am conducting a research study titled "Understanding Millennial Employee Perspectives on Institutional Values and Retention Strategies," and I am writing to invite you to participate in this important study.

Study Objectives:

This research project aims to explore the perspectives of millennial employees regarding the values upheld by their institution and the strategies employed to attract and retain the millennial generation. By participating in this study, you will contribute valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by millennial employees in the community college workplace and the alignment of these experiences with institutional values.

Who can Participate?

Any employee that was born between 1981-1996 and has been employed for at least two years within the district.

Participation Details:

- Survey: You will be asked to complete an online survey that should take about 15-20 minutes.
- Follow-Up Interview: You will have the opportunity to opt-in for a follow-up interview, which will allow for a deeper explanation of your experiences and perspectives.

Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. The findings from this study will be used to inform strategies for improving workplace environments and retention practices for millennial employees in community colleges.

If you would like to participate in this study, please click on the link below to access the survey:
[Survey Link]

Thank you for considering this invitation. Your input is crucial to the success of this research, and I deeply appreciate your time and effort. If you have any questions or need more information, contact me at the email address below.

Sincerely,
Cynthia Alvarez
Doctoral Candidate, Community College Leadership Program
Kansas State University
partida@k-state.edu
949-337-0502

Appendix E - Participant Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: Understanding Millennial Employee Perspectives on Institutional Values and Retention Strategies

Researcher: Cynthia Alvarez

Affiliation: Kansas State University, Community College Leadership Program

Introduction: Thank you for considering participation in this research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand the nature of the study, your role as a participant, and the measures in place to protect your privacy and confidentiality. Please read this document carefully and feel free to ask any questions before making your decision.

Study Objectives: This research project aims to explore the perspectives of millennial employees regarding the values upheld by their institution and the strategies employed to attract and retain the millennial generation.

Participant's Role: Your participation will involve engaging in an interview where you will be asked to share your experiences, opinions, and perspectives on the aforementioned topics. Your input will be crucial in gaining insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by millennial employees in the community college workplace, as well as congruency with college values.

Data Collection: The interviews will be conducted via Zoom video conferencing. Prior to the interview, you will be reminded of the opportunity to opt-out if you so choose. Additionally, audio recordings will be made to ensure accuracy in capturing your responses. Please be assured that your identity will be protected throughout the research process.

Confidentiality Measures:

- Participants will be given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.
- Specific departments or identifying information will not be disclosed during data analysis.
- Each participant will be assigned a numerical identifier to further anonymize the data.
- Data will be securely stored on an external storage device, which will be locked and kept safe for at least five years to prevent unauthorized access or leaks of sensitive information.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher or the institution.

Questions and Concerns: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, your participation, or your rights as a participant, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at partida@k-state.edu.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the information provided in this consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in the research study.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

