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## Work-Life Expectations of Christian Millennials

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The Silent Generation begat the Baby Boomers,  
and the Baby Boomers begat Generation X,  
and Generation X begat the Millennials,  
and the Millennials got rid of the “begats.”

The generation known as the Millennials, comprised of those born between 1980 and 2000, are the largest generation to date and in less than a decade will make up more than 75 percent of the workforce.<sup>1</sup> Millennials are more educated than any previous generation and are positive about their future but are also said to be narcissistic<sup>2</sup> and averse to hard work.<sup>3</sup> Millennials, to their credit, are the most tolerant generation to date, accepting others with little regard for race or class.<sup>4</sup> As a group, however, they are less approving of organized religion. Religious involvement, a shared characteristic among previous generations, is not an assumed value among Millennials. According to the 2014 PEW Research Center Religion Landscape Study, 78 percent of Baby Boomers were reportedly Christian compared to only 56 percent of Millennials. Moreover, Millennials are leaving the Christian faith faster, in greater numbers, and at earlier ages than any generation before them.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, there are some Millennials who are holding on to their faith and carrying it into their work life. Christian Millennials are engaging the business world from a perspective entirely different from their forefathers, a behavior common among this individualistic generation. While they have an entrepreneurial spirit – 54 percent of Millennials either want to start their own business or already have<sup>6</sup> – they are not interested in work for work’s sake but rather concern themselves more with charity work, social responsibility, and increasing consumer value. As far as this group seems to be concerned, people come first, then profit. “Many in our generation believe God calls each individual to fulfill His purpose, whether it’s planting a church in Africa or creating value for others in business.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte, *Big Demands and High Expectations: The Deloitte Millennial Survey*. January 2014 Executive Summary.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever before*. (New York: Free, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Brett McCracken. *Hipster Christianity: When church and cool collide*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Twenge, “A review of empirical evidence on generational differences in work attitudes,” *Journal of Business Psychology* 25 (2010): 201-210.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Twenge, Julie Exline, Joshua Grubbs, Ramya Sastry, and W. Keith Campbell, *Generational and Time Period Differences in American Adolescents’ Religious Orientation, 1966–2014*. *PLoS ONE* 10 (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Young Invincibles Policy Brief. (2011).

<sup>7</sup> Elise Amyx, *Christian Millennials Work to Redeem Capitalism*. Retrieved from <http://thefederalist.com/2015/04/14/christian-Millennials-work-to-redeem-capitalism/> (accessed April 14, 2015).

Although there is extensive research on managing Millennials in the workplace, there are contradictions and many generalizations of this enormous generation. As more and more Millennials reject a religious label, we are curious as to whether those who have faith are somehow different, not only in their spiritual lives but in their work lives as well. As this generation develops a reputation for not appreciating hard work, are Christian Millennials somehow different? This study seeks to determine whether there is a difference in work values between Christian and non-Christian Millennials.

### ***Millennials***

There is extensive research on Millennials, not all of which aligns. Taken together, recent studies paint a confusing at best and possibly contradictory picture of this generation. Millennial students have been described as sheltered, confident, peace-keepers, team-oriented, pressured, and achievement-oriented. Because of these qualities and the overly nurturing environments in which many Millennials grew up, many Millennial college students still need help in developing critical thinking and decision-making skills.<sup>8</sup> Millennials are motivated by status and freedom and desire to leave their organizations in greater numbers than Generation X and Baby Boomers. Additionally, Millennials are more individualistic and, therefore, more accepting of others regardless of race or class, but also possibly more narcissistic and possessing a greater sense of entitlement.<sup>9</sup>

A report from the Council of Economic Advisers<sup>10</sup> addressed several characteristics of Millennials that are changing our economy and society. Millennials are more educated than any previous generation, with more students completing their secondary degrees. Along with their degrees, Millennials have more student-loan debt than any prior generation. Millennial women have more equality in the labor market than ever before, but Millennials face years of consequences from starting their careers in a significant economic downturn. Millennials are also getting married later and are less likely to become homeowners as young adults, facts also backed up by Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Michele Monaco and Malissa Martin, *The Millennial Student: A New Generation of Learners. Athletic Training Education Journal* 2 (2007): 42-46.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever before*. (New York: Free, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Council of Economic Advisors. (2014). *Economic Facts about Millennials*.

<sup>11</sup> Goldman Sachs Millennials: Coming of Age Infographic. [http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/Millennials/index.html?cid=PS\\_01\\_18\\_07\\_00\\_02\\_15\\_01](http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/Millennials/index.html?cid=PS_01_18_07_00_02_15_01) (accessed April 13, 2017).

### ***Millennial Work Expectations***

Rasch and Kowske's<sup>12</sup> analysis of the Kenexa High Performance Institute's WorkTrends survey focused on how unique Millennials truly were from their Baby Boomer and Generation X coworkers. For this particular study, they looked back to 1984 in order to find true generational differences and they found that in some ways Millennials are much like their coworkers of older generations. When it comes to pay, 42 percent of Millennials say they are paid fairly, compared to 41 percent for Boomers and 38 percent for Generation Xers.

Even apparent differences between the generations are more likely attributed to differences in age and career stage than generational identity. Baby Boomers may have a higher sense of accomplishment at 67 percent than both Gen Xers and Millennials--both at 59 percent--but this is likely because they are further along in their careers. In 2012, a third of Millennials were considering leaving their current job in search of better opportunities. Generation X was similar at 27 percent while only 19 percent of Baby Boomers considered leaving. By comparing people of different generations at the same age, however, it can be seen that Millennials are not truly unique in the workplace. Survey results from 1990 indicated that 31 percent of 27 year-old Generation Xers were thinking of pursuing other organizations and in 2009, an identical 31 percent of 27 year-old Millennials were also considering leaving their current job.

According to Rasch and Kowske,<sup>12</sup> there may be one significant difference between the generations. Millennials tend to be more positive than Gen Xers or Boomers. Sixty percent said that they were satisfied with their company overall compared to 54 percent of Boomers and Gen Xers. Millennials were more satisfied with job security, opportunity for growth, and recognition at their current organization. Overall, they determined that though Millennials have some differences, organizations do not need to revamp their operations just for them. "Taken together, these areas of generational differences can serve as leading indicators for Millennials' loyalty, motivation and productivity. That is not to say that younger workers, whether the hippies of the sixties or Millennials today, are devoid of characteristics typical of youth, such as periods of angst or optimism. The good news is that organizations have seen many of these attitudes before and can, in most cases, use time tested practices in managing younger workers."<sup>12</sup>

A survey of 2,581 members of a national building trade union supported Rasch and Kowske's findings as few differences could be found between the Millennials and older generations that could not simply be ascribed to age or experience.<sup>13</sup> Some do disagree, though. Professional business services provider

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<sup>12</sup> Brenda Rasch and Brenda Kowske,, Attitude? What Attitude? The evidence behind the work attitudes of Millennials. IBM Software Technical White Paper (2014).

<sup>13</sup> Kevin Real, Andrea Mitnick, and William Maloney, More Similar than Different: Millennials in the U. S. Building Trades. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25 (2010): 303-313.

PricewaterhouseCoopers along with the University of Southern California and the London Business School, surveyed 44,000 PwC employees worldwide and found that 41 percent of Millennials want to be rewarded or recognized for their work at least monthly while only 30 percent of non-Millennials would like that level of frequency.<sup>14</sup> The Council of Economic Advisers reported that Millennials are actually staying longer with their organizations than Gen Xers were at the same age. Gen Xers were more likely than Millennials to have only been at their organization for less than a year while Millennials were more likely than Gen Xers to have been at their organization for 1-6 years.<sup>15</sup> A study from Bentley University illustrated a gap in the views of Millennials and their older counterparts. Eighty-nine percent of Millennials say they have a strong work ethic, but only 74 percent of non-Millennials think that Millennials have as good a work ethic as older generations. Similarly, 55 percent of Millennials say they are willing to “pay their dues,” but 70 percent of non-Millennials think Millennials are not as willing as they need to be.<sup>16</sup>

Others see differences in the Millennial generation more positively. Millennials work well in teams, want to impact their organizations, prefer open and frequent communication with their supervisors, and are comfortable with communication technologies.<sup>17</sup> An analysis of Millennials in the military found that Millennials bring more strengths than weaknesses to the institution. They possess technical competence in operating and maintaining weapons systems, they are as committed to their military service as any previous generation, perhaps more committed to charity outside of work, and their distrust of authority and the status quo allows them to break up groupthink and adapt to change faster.<sup>18</sup> These commanders found that their Millennial troops embraced a culture of “respect the leader but challenge the approach.”<sup>18</sup>

The Great Recession of the late 2000s changed work expectations among Millennials. The Great Recession was the largest economic downturn in America since the Great Depression and had far-reaching social consequences.<sup>19</sup> “During times of recession, Millennials lower their expectations regarding the work-life

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<sup>14</sup> *PwC's NextGen: A Global Generational Study. Evolving talent to match the new workforce reality. Summary and compendium of findings*, Publication by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2013).

<sup>15</sup> Council of Economic Advisors, *Economic Facts about Millennials* (2014).

<sup>16</sup> PreparedU Project: *An In-Depth Look at Millennial Preparedness for Today's Workforce*, Commissioned by Bentley University (2014).

<sup>17</sup> Karen Myers and Kamyab Sadaghiani, Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials' Organizational Relationships and Performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25 (2010): 225-238.

<sup>18</sup> S. Clinton Hinote and Timothy Sundvall, Leading Millennials: An approach that works. *Air & Space Power Journal* 29 (2015): 131-138.

<sup>19</sup> David Grusky, Bruce Western, and Christopher Wimer, *The Great Recession*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011).

balance and social atmosphere. However, their expectations regarding job content, training, career development, and financial rewards remain high, suggesting that these expectations are largely embedded within the generation.”<sup>20</sup> They recognize the lack of job security in today’s market and therefore continue to seek professional development even in times of economic downturn in order to enhance their employability.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Millennial Work/Life Balance***

The Millennial generation cares more about their time than their earnings.<sup>21</sup> The aforementioned PricewaterhouseCoopers survey revealed that 71 percent of Millennials did not view excessive work demands to be worth sacrificing their personal lives, even with significant compensation.<sup>22</sup> By 2025, Millennials will make up more than 75 percent of the workforce<sup>23</sup> and with a changing workforce comes a changing idea of success. According to a survey of 1,225 employees, 45 percent of those surveyed ranked work-life balance as their top career aspiration. The survey included employees of various ages and locations worldwide, but Millennials and Europeans ranked work-life balance the highest.<sup>24</sup> Other top aspirations among employees today include being the best at what they do (17 percent) and earning a lot of money (13 percent). When asked, employees defined a successful career as doing something they enjoy that makes them happy. A good salary was the second most popular consideration. The fewest employees (10 percent) defined a successful career as one in which they perform well. Also notable was the fact that only 3 percent of employees surveyed said they want to be in a prominent position.<sup>24</sup> Seth Mattison, founder and chief movement officer for FutureSight Labs, agrees that Millennials may have a hard time fitting into the “top-down organizational structures” of current corporations with their “unwritten rules about how things are done.” He instead suggests “thinking more like a 3D

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<sup>20</sup> Sara De Hauw and Ans De Vos, Millennials' Career Perspective and Psychological Contract Expectations: Does the Recession Lead to Lowered Expectations? *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25 (2010): 293–302.

<sup>21</sup> Council of Economic Advisors, Economic Facts about Millennials (2014).

<sup>22</sup> PwC's NextGen: A Global Generational Study. *Evolving talent to match the new workforce reality. Summary and compendium of findings*, Publication by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2013).

<sup>23</sup> Deloitte, Big Demands and High Expectations: The Deloitte Millennial Survey. January 2014 Executive Summary.

<sup>24</sup> Only 1 in 10 Employees Define Success at Work as High Performance, <http://www.right.com/wps/wcm/connect/right-us-en/home/thoughtwire/categories/media-center/Only-1-in-10-Employees-Define-Success-at-Work-as-High-Performance> (accessed April 20, 2015).

networking grid with leaders in the middle rather than a hierarchical organizational chart with leaders at the top.”<sup>25</sup>

Millennials also want more out of their organizations than just a job. Eighty-five percent of Millennials want to work for a socially responsible or ethical company and 91percent say that when they consider what companies to work for, a company’s social impact efforts are important.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Christian Millennials***

Jean Twenge, author of the book *Generation Me* about Millennials as “the entitlement generation,”<sup>27</sup> led a study of Americans’ religious involvement and found that Millennials are the least involved generation of the last six decades. Today’s adolescents view religion as less important in their lives, are less approving of religious organizations, and report being less spiritual and spending less time in spiritual disciplines such as prayer and meditation. Spirituality may not be replacing traditional religion either, as 20 percent fewer college students of today consider themselves to be above average in spirituality compared to those of the 1990s. Twenge notes that the study supported the idea that these changes were due to cultural shift and not simply to Millennials’ youth. “These trends are part of a larger cultural context, a context that is often missing in polls about religion. One context is rising individualism in U.S. culture. Individualism puts the self first, which doesn't always fit well with the commitment to the institution and other people that religion often requires. As Americans become more individualistic, it makes sense that fewer would commit to religion.”<sup>28</sup> More Millennials are also being raised in homes without religion and even many of those that were raised in religious families are abandoning their parents’ faith before they reach adulthood.<sup>29</sup>

Some Millennials are holding onto their faith, however, and are letting it inform how they operate in the marketplace. As a result of the Great Recession, many Millennials think differently about capitalism than their Reagan-era parents. Christian Millennials are not completely abandoning supposedly greedy capitalism,

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<sup>25</sup> Mark Hoske, 3 ways to tap Millennial talent to engineer a next-generation workforce, <https://www.csemag.com/single-article/3-ways-to-tap-Millennial-talent-to-engineer-a-next-generation-workforce/10923e83b787071f4e6312fd43dfb5f8.html> (accessed January 15, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> PreparedU Project: An In-Depth Look at Millennial Preparedness for Today’s Workforce, Commissioned by Bentley University (2014).

<sup>27</sup> Jean Twenge, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable than Ever before*. (New York: Free, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Beth Chee, The Least Religious Generation. Retrieved from [http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu\\_newscenter/news\\_story.aspx?sid=75623](http://newscenter.sdsu.edu/sdsu_newscenter/news_story.aspx?sid=75623) (accessed May 27, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Jean Twenge, Julie Exline, Joshua Grubbs, Ramya Sastry, and W. Keith Campbell, Generational and Time Period Differences in American Adolescents’ Religious Orientation, 1966–2014. *PLoS ONE* 10 (2015).

but instead see it as redeemable.<sup>30</sup> According to a nationwide survey, fifty-four percent of Millennials either want to start their own business or already have.<sup>31</sup> They focus on providing a “good product,” whether by sourcing materials locally or handcrafting quality goods in order to increase consumer value, and they are deeply concerned with charity and being socially conscious. Christian Millennials aim to make capitalism not about greed and consumerism but rather an opportunity to love their neighbors well.<sup>30</sup>

With older generations labeling the larger population of Millennials as entitled, lazy, and narcissistic, are Christian Millennials truly abandoning the teachings of their own Bible to “work with [their] own hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11) and “earn [their] own living” (2 Thessalonians 3:12) and living just like others of their age? Or do their values and work ethic just look different from those of previous generations? This study aims to analyze the supposedly declining work ethic of Millennials and to determine if Christian Millennials differ from their peers.

## METHODS

### *Sample*

Participants for this study were recruited from three primary sources: students from a private university connected with the Southern Baptist Association, Facebook, and an online subReddit thread called SampleSize. Participants who took the paper survey were informed by their professor that the class would be taking a non-mandatory, anonymous survey on work values. The professor then passed out the survey to all willing participants. Those who did not wish to take the survey were still given a copy to review. Additional participants were contacted through Facebook, asked about their interest in the survey, and redirected to an anonymous online survey. Finally, participants were recruited through Reddit. Reddit is an online message board where members can upload links of interest just for posts or discussion. The subReddit thread called SampleSize is a common site to post surveys for ongoing studies and was chosen to ensure a large enough sample size of non-Christian Millennials were included in the study. A post was made to the thread asking for participants and those interested were likewise redirected to the anonymous online survey.

Anyone who wanted to take the survey was allowed, however, survey responses from those not born between 1980 and 2000 were discarded. In total, there were 232 usable responses: 118 participants self-identified as Christians (51%) and 114 as non-Christians (49%). Twenty-eight participants indicated they were still in high school, 112 were currently in college, 47 were college graduates,

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<sup>30</sup> Elise Amyx, Christian Millennials Work to Redeem Capitalism, <http://thefederalist.com/2015/04/14/christian-Millennials-work-to-redeem-capitalism/> (accessed April 14, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Young Invincibles Policy Brief. (2011).

and 45 were currently in graduate school. There were 124 female participants (53%) and 4 participants preferred not to indicate their gender. Twenty-seven percent were not currently employed while the remaining were nearly evenly split between full and part-time employment.

### ***Measures***

For consistency, we administered all items using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

*Work value.* Work value was measured using the Survey of Work Values created by Wollack, Goodale, Wijting, & Smith.<sup>32</sup> This survey is based on dimensions of Protestant Ethic, namely those related to the meaning an employee attaches to his or her role at work. Sample items from the Survey of Work Values include “A person should feel a sense of pride in his/her work” and “there is nothing as satisfying as doing the best job possible.” The coefficient  $\alpha$  reliability estimate for this scale was .81.

*Work ethic.* Work ethic was measured using the Blood Protestant Work Ethic eight-item scale.<sup>33</sup> Sample items from Blood’s scale include “Hard work makes someone a better person” and “Wasting time is as bad as wasting money.” The coefficient  $\alpha$  reliability estimate for this scale was .61.

*Desire for praise and feedback.* Desire for praise and feedback from a supervisor was measured using a slightly altered version of the items developed by Mayer, Bobko, Davis, & Gavin<sup>34</sup> to assess the extent to which the supervisor used praise. For example, “My supervisor praises me when I do something well” was transformed into “I want my supervisor to praise me when I do something well.” Likewise, “If I get a project done well, I can usually expect my supervisor to tell me about it” was changed to read “If I get a project done well, I want my supervisor to tell me about it.” The coefficient  $\alpha$  reliability estimate was .90.

The data were analyzed to look for statistically significant differences between the mean scores of different demographic groups.

## **RESULTS**

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive statistics and correlations. As Table 1 shows, we found strong correlations between Christians and both work values ( $r = -.22$ ) and work ethic ( $r = -.33$ ). Similar results were found for employment. Gender

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen Wollack, James Goodale, Jan Wijting, and Patricia Cain Smith, Development of the Survey of Work Values, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 55 (1971): 331-338.

<sup>33</sup> Milton Blood, Work values and job satisfaction, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 53 (1969): 456-459.

<sup>34</sup> Roger Mayer, Philip Bobko, James Davis, and Mark Gavin, The effects of changing power and influence tactics on trust in the supervisor: A longitudinal field study. *Journal of Trust Research* 1 (2011): 177-201.

showed a strong correlation with work values ( $r = -.17$ ) and desire for praise and feedback ( $r = -.17$ ). These findings directed us to additional analyses looking at the means between the various demographic groupings and work values, work ethic, and desire for praise.

**Table 1**

*Demographics, Work Values, Work Ethics, and Desire for Praise Correlations (N=232)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Education	-						
2. Gender	-.072	-					
3. Christian	.065	.161*	-				
4. Employed	-.060	.158*	.117	-			
5. Work Values	.036	-.173**	-.223**	-.148*	-		
6. Work Ethic	.030	-.102	-.327**	-.183**	.678**	-	
7. Desire for Praise	-.024	-.174**	-.111	.002	.255**	.153*	-

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 2**

*Means and Standard Deviations by Group Variables for Work Values, Work Ethics, and Desire for Praise (N=232)*

Variable	Work Values		Work Ethic		Desire for Praise	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Christian	3.87	.346	3.23	.414	3.95	.639
Non-Christian	3.63	.641	2.87	.601	3.80	.738
Female	3.83	.410	3.09	.481	3.99	.620
Male	3.68	.628	3.03	.605	3.75	.761
Employed	3.81	.493	3.12	.547	3.87	.692
Unemployed	3.58	.572	2.89	.501	3.90	.696

An independent samples *t* test was performed comparing the mean work value scores of Christians versus non-Christians. Christians ( $M=3.87$ ,  $SD=.346$ ,  $N=118$ ) were significantly more likely to agree with statements regarding the importance of work values than non-Christians ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=.641$ ,  $N=114$ ),  $t(230) = 3.50$ ,  $p = .001$ . These results suggest that there is in fact a difference in the work values between Christians and non-Christians such that Christian Millennials have higher work values than non-Christians.

A similar but stronger pattern of results between Christians and non-Christians was found in the mean scores of the participants' work ethic. Christians ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.414$ ,  $N=118$ ) were significantly more likely to agree with statements regarding the importance of work ethic than non-Christians ( $M= 2.87$ ,  $SD=.601$ ,  $N=114$ ),  $t(230) = 5.26$ ,  $p < .001$ . Christian Millennials seem to agree with the same ideals that have traditionally been associated with the Protestant Work Ethic.

In the course of running additional, exploratory analyses, we found some unexpected results in terms of gender differences with regard to both work values and desire for praise. It seems that women ( $M= 3.83$ ,  $SD=.410$ ,  $N=124$ ) were significantly more likely to agree with statements regarding the importance of work values than men ( $M=3.68$ ,  $SD=.628$ ,  $N=104$ ),  $t(226) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ . There was also a significant difference in the desire for praise and feedback between women ( $M= 3.99$ ,  $SD=.620$ ,  $N=124$ ) and men ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=.761$ ,  $N=104$ ),  $t(226) = 2.66$ ,  $p < .01$ . Women, it seems, are more likely than men to want routine feedback and praise about their work performance. The results of the praise and feedback scale were surprising and further research as to why females desired more praise and feedback would be interesting.

We also found that employed individuals ( $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=.493$ ,  $N=169$ ) were significantly more likely than unemployed individuals ( $M=3.58$ ,  $SD=.572$ ,  $N=63$ ) to agree with statements regarding the importance of work values,  $t(230) = 3.04$ ,  $p < .01$ . Similar results were found between employed participants ( $M=3.12$ ,  $SD=.547$ ,  $N=169$ ) and unemployed participants ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=.501$ ,  $N=63$ ) and their work ethic,  $t(230) = 2.84$ ,  $p < .01$ . Based upon the data from this study, those individuals who are employed are more likely than those who are unemployed to have higher scores relating to both work values and work ethic.

For further clarification, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the work values, work ethic, and desire for praise and feedback scores based on whether a person was employed part-time, full-time, or unemployed. There was a significant difference in the work ethic scores between the three groups [ $F(2,230) = 4.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HD test indicated that the mean work ethic score for those employed part-time ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=.459$ ,  $N=87$ ) was significantly different from those who were unemployed ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=.501$ ,  $N=63$ ). There was a similar result between the full-time and unemployed participants but it was not statistically significant.

No statistically significant results were found in comparing the work values, work ethics, and desire for praise and feedback of those participants who were in college, graduated from college or who had never been to college.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to discover whether a difference exists in the work ethic of Christian Millennials compared to the larger population of non-Christian Millennials. We had expected that a religion that encourages people to “work with your own hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11) and “earn your own living” (2 Thessalonians 3:12) would lead to a higher work ethic and were pleased to see empirical results that could potentially indicate such a correlation. Of all the groups compared, Christians and non-Christians had the greatest significant difference in their means on the work values and work ethic portions of the survey indicating a high confidence that one would find similar results if the survey were given to another sample of Millennials. These numbers seem to support the idea that religion has a noticeable influence on work ethic for this generation. The use of the long-established Protestant Work Ethic scale suggest that those who scored high on this survey subscribe to a similar view of work as previous generations in American society.

Additionally, the clear differences between Christians and non-Christians show that it is worthwhile to study subsets of Millennials. This generation may be too large to be accurately stereotyped. Debevec, Schewe, Madden, and Diamond<sup>35</sup> suggested a similar idea in their study of the potential splintering of the Millennial generation into two distinct cohorts. Further research into parsing the Millennial generation to more truly understand it would be helpful for both researchers and employers. Practically, employers and educators should take into consideration the individuality of Millennials when making policies. For example, De Hauw and De Vos<sup>36</sup> determined that Millennials experienced lowered optimism during the Great Recession, but did not give up on career development. They suggest that managers focus on providing Millennial employees with meaningful work and learning opportunities, which would be in keeping with an expectation of high work ethic and high individuality among Millennials.

We were not surprised that there was no difference between the desire for praise and feedback between the Christian and non-Christian Millennials. This result is in line with the PricewaterhouseCoopers study finding that many Millennials would prefer to be rewarded or recognized for their work at least monthly.<sup>37</sup> This characteristic of the Millennial generation, it would seem, crosses even religious boundaries. It was interesting to see the significant difference in the

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<sup>35</sup> Kathleen Debevec, Charles Schewe, Thomas Madden, and William Diamond, Are today's Millennials splintering into a new generational cohort? Maybe! *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 12 (2013): 20-31.

<sup>36</sup> Sara De Hauw and Ans De Vos, Millennials' Career Perspective and Psychological Contract Expectations: Does the Recession Lead to Lowered Expectations? *Journal of Business and Psychology* 25 (2010): 293–302.

<sup>37</sup> *PwC's NextGen: A Global Generational Study. Evolving talent to match the new workforce reality. Summary and compendium of findings*, Publication by PricewaterhouseCoopers (2013)

desire for praise and feedback between the male and female participants of this study. While the reason for the variance was beyond the scope of this particular study, further research into this outcome would definitely be of value to employers.

It would be very interesting to see this study replicated employing Millennials from various faith backgrounds. We did not ask the non-Christian participants to indicate their religion or whether they were atheist, however, many religions support perspectives similar to Christianity with regard to work ethic. It would not be surprising, but very encouraging, to find similar results among Millennials from different faith backgrounds.

If this study were to be expanded, giving the same survey to non-Millennials in order to establish what would be considered in the wider society a “high work ethic” would probably reveal much greater insights about the Millennial generation as compared to other generations. It might likewise be of interest to determine whether the age of the Millennial might moderate the impact of the religious background on their work ethic. For example, would a Christian Millennial born in 1985 have a stronger work ethic than a Christian Millennial born in 1995? These insights would contribute to a greater understanding of Millennials in general and practically, to understanding Millennial employees and how they approach work and should be approached by managers.

Overall, we were pleased with the results of this study and hope that managers can use the findings from this research to positively influence how they interact with their employees. At a time when managers and older generations are complaining about the entitled, indolent characteristics of the Millennial generation, it is encouraging to see that the Christian subset of this generation seems to espouse a strong set of values and work ethic.