

# The Relationship Between Millennials' Attitudes Towards the United States and Their Goals and Personal Constructs

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MILLENNIALS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS  
THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR GOALS AND PERSONAL  
CONSTRUCTS

by

ANGELICA MARIA HERNANDEZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Charles Negy, Ph.D.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to examine various aspects of Millennials' attitudes related to their beliefs about the United States and in the context of their personal, career, and family goals and ethnic identity. Another purpose of this study was to determine if selected personality variables would predict attitudes toward the United States. It was found that Millennials who held positive attitudes toward the United States in terms of being a viable country for them also had relatively clear and developed personal, career, and family goals. Moreover, three personality variables—resiliency, optimism, and (inversely) cynicism significantly contributed to Millennials' views of the United States. Last, ethnic identity—strong feelings of attachment and loyalty to one's ethnicity—correlated in various ways with both attitudes toward the United States and the belief that the United States is oppressive toward minorities. Those observed correlations varied depending on the specific ethnicity (non-Hispanic Whites who strongly identified with their ethnicity were less likely to consider the United States a discriminatory country toward minorities, whereas Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans who identified strongly with their ethnicity were more likely to view the United States as oppressive toward minorities. More research is recommended to clarify and elucidate some of the obtained findings in this study.

## **DEDICATION**

Le dedico este logro a mi familia, la cual me ha apoyado a través de mi carrera profesional y durante las dificultades que se me han presentado en el camino. Ellos son el motor de mi vida y a ellos les debo todo lo que soy.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## INTRODUCTION

As generations pass, cultures evolve and develop new sets of behaviors and beliefs that tend to influence their members. The Generation Y, whose members are known as Millennials, refers to those who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Burstein, 2013). Some describe Millennials as being tolerant (Ross & Rouse, 2015), optimistic, cooperative, civic-minded, confident achievers, and conventional (Cone Inc. & AMP Agency, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2000). However, others depict them less favorably, such as being narcissists (Twenge & Campbell, 2008), entitled (Crossman, 2016), difficult (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010), and occupationally driven (Gallup Inc., 2013). Many contradictions have arisen regarding the behavioral traits that define them. Despite the relative dichotomy described, it has been observed that Millennials frequently criticize the United States because many are not satisfied with the current general situation of the country. It is important to note that there is much variation among the Millennial population. In the next section, I will review research as it relates to the goals and the aspirations of Millennials.

In general, goal setting is paramount during late adolescence and emerging adulthood because that is when the development of identity mostly occurs. Exploring goals enables individuals to establish solid future life aspirations (Arnett, 2000). Moreover, the consideration of myriad goals is positively correlated with the pursuit and commitment to both intrinsic and extrinsic goals (Luyckx, Duriez, Green, & Negru-Subtirica, 2016). Previous studies emphasize that having clear academic goals increases personal motivation to accomplish those goals. It also increases meaningfulness and concordance of the aspirations with respect to one's self (Davis, Kelley, Kim, Tang, & Hicks, 2016). Besides the motivational benefit that goal setting has, it also

increases resiliency. However, other factors such as self-regulation and self-monitoring have been implicated as necessary to attain immediate aspirations (Turner, Husman, & Scallert, 2002). Moreover, research concerning personal life goals has demonstrated the importance of having clear family aspirations because establishing a family has been linked with higher levels of life satisfaction (Headey, 2008). To further understand the Millennial population, I will discuss the goals of Millennials in three distinct categories: education, career, and family.

Regarding educational aspirations, Millennials have the highest percentage of college enrollment when compared to previous generations, with more than half of this cohort having some level of college education. It is believed that one factor that has increased college enrollment is current difficulties with employment due to the recent recession and fluctuating labor market (Pew Research Center, 2010). As positions become more competitive, Millennials have had to increase their educational level to obtain better jobs. The percentage of students pursuing advanced degrees has increased over the past years as well (Henig & Henig, 2012). A perception exists that Millennials often do not differentiate between needing a degree versus wanting one. Many Millennials appear to attend college because they have been encouraged to, either just to say they have graduated from college or just as a way to earn more money. Stated differently, some critics of Millennials believe many Millennials attend college for the wrong reasons (Luttrell & McGrath, 2015).

Research has found that more than half of the Millennial population is likely to hold a full or part-time job while attending school (Pew Research Center, 2010). Although they aspire to begin their professional career right after college, the recession has delayed the entrance process of many Millennials to their field of study (Henig & Henig, 2012). This means that Millennials

are obtaining jobs not related to their career aspirations and this may eventually increase their desire to switch employment more often than previous generations (Pew Research Center, 2010). Due to the changing workforce and the disposability of employees in the United States, Millennials' career expectations and work values arguably are now more linked with their self-worth rather than to company loyalty. The modification of values can be considered as an intent to balance their lifestyles and to find congruency between their work and personal life (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Millennials have shown a trend towards the decrease of marriage during young adulthood, which can be observed by an increase of the median age for marriage in today's women and men. The percentage of people getting married before the age of 30 has dropped by twenty percent when compared to the previous generation. Millennials are prioritizing their education and their professional career path and engaging in more non-romantic relationships before settling down and establishing a family (Henig & Henig, 2012). However, the delay of marriage does not mean that Millennials do not want to get married. According to a Gallup Poll (2013), more than two-thirds of the Millennial single population wants to get married and have children. However, there is no specific order between those two, given that having children without being married is commonly accepted by this cohort.

Another characteristic of Millennials is their view of politics. Early studies of the Generation Y had depicted Millennials as being silent, not politically driven, nor socially engaged. At the beginning of the new century, many Millennials were described as aware of issues facing the country, but were minimally interested in solving social problems through political or civic action (Andolina, Jenkins, Keeter, & Zukin, 2002). However, because the

generation is immersed in mass technology and social media, Millennials are now known for being change agents mainly in matters of human rights, environmental issues, and animal rights. Part of the current Millennial culture consists of advocating for change. Many Millennials believe it is their responsibility to address social and political issues and to engage in the betterment of different sectors of the country (Kiesa, Orlowski, Levine, Both, Kirby, Lopez, & Marcelo, 2007). Civic engagement among Millennials starts in High School, where volunteerism increased exponentially due to school requirements (Andolina et al., 2002). Moreover, their social activism started being noticed during the Obama administration. The majority of Millennials supported the former president during his 2008 campaign. At that time, Millennials used Facebook as a tool to spread the message of support for the Democratic Party (Burstein, 2013). They have utilized various existing social media platforms to convey their message to others, and they currently continue this type of activism.

Recent national events have revealed the lengths to which Millennials go when something offends them. Many have congregated and marched across the nation looking for a transformation of the policies that obstruct progress in accordance with their values. Scant academic research examined current and recent movements on matters of anti-racism, pro-immigration, pro-choice, LGBTQ+ rights, and women's rights among other topics of their interest. Some critics of Millennials have suggested that some of the issues Millennials take on are issues already fought and won in the United States (McWhorter, 2008). More specifically, many Millennials feel strongly about the need to combat racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of biases and discrimination that they perceive still plague the United States. Yet, critics point out that due to Millennials' relative youth, they have no historical perspective of the

injustices in the United States that existed during past decades. For example, the civil rights movements and struggles in the '50s and '60s led to desegregation of schools by race (*Brown vs. the Board of Education*, 1958), the elimination of separate facilities by race (*Civil Rights Act of 1964*) and the barring of racial discrimination in housing (*Fair Housing Act*, 1968). Interracial marriage has been legal in all 50 states since 1967 (*Loving vs. Virginia*, 1967); abortion has been legal since 1973 (*Roe vs. Wade*, 1973). Moreover, in 2015, same-sex marriage became legal across the country. For the past 20 years, there are more women who graduate from college than men (Bauman & Ryan, 2015), and the presence of undocumented immigrants has now reached a critical mass. As of 2016, there were an estimated 11.3 million people residing in the U.S. without authorization (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2017). Undocumented children have been permitted (and required) legally to attend public schools (K-12) since 1982 (*Plyer vs. Doe*, 1982). Many states allow undocumented adults to attend public colleges while paying in-state tuition (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015); some states even allow undocumented immigrants to obtain drivers' licenses (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2016).

Nonetheless, many Millennials focus with laser-like precision on the presumed injustices still experienced by people of minority or disadvantaged backgrounds. Their levels of passion and activism may not correspond to the actual level of injustices that exist in the U.S. when compared to previous time periods in U.S. history. Critics also have pointed out that Millennials—with their drive to eradicate socially-contrived “isms,” seem to turn a blind eye to other more serious forms of societal injustices such as child abuse, murder, and rape. Moreover, some critics (Bulut, 2017) have pointed out that the outrage manifested by many Millennials (or liberal Americans in general) over presumed injustices in the U.S. show a lack of awareness of

the level of injustice found in many non-Western cultures and countries. Specifically, Millennials' outrage appears to reflect a provincial understanding and awareness of social injustice at a global level. After observing Millennials leading these critical movements, I am interested in studying the general attitude that they hold about their country and how this is related to aspects of their personal life.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Past research about Millennials has empathized the study of their attitudes in the work environment, their attitudes towards immigration, and their differences in personality when compared to other generations. To date, no research has examined the general attitudes of Millennials towards the United States, including their views about the future of the country. The purpose of the study is to understand the attitudes that Millennials hold about the country as they relate to their aspiration regarding education, career, and family. Additionally, I will examine Millennials' attitudes towards the United States as a function of a myriad personality variables. They include: resiliency, optimism, cynicism, and autonomy. These variables were selected because they have been shown to be related to subjective happiness and well-being (Mak, Ng, & Wong, 2011; Ng, 2015; Quevedo, Abella, & Villalobos, 2014). I anticipated that they may correlate with Millennials' attitudes towards the United States and their expectation about the future. These results may shed light on current conflicting characterizations of Millennials' views of the country, their goals and personality.

I hypothesized that Millennials who have relatively positive attitudes toward the United States will express higher expectations for their future (in the U.S.), and will have clearer

educational, career, and family goals. This hypothesis was based on the notion that logically, positive attitudes toward the U.S. and high expectations for the future ought to mutually influence each other.

I also hypothesized that the personality variables included in this study will, individually and conjointly, predict significantly attitudes toward the United States. More specifically, I hypothesized that higher levels of resiliency, optimism, and autonomy, as well as lower levels of cynicism, will be associated positively with more favorable views of the United States.

Finally, I hypothesized that ethnic identity—as defined by strong feelings of attachment and loyalty to one’s ethnic group—would correlate significantly with attitudes toward the United States, but distinctly by ethnicity. Specifically, I hypothesized that, for non-Hispanic Whites, higher levels of ethnic identity would correlate with more positive attitudes toward the United States. This hypothesis was based on the idea that historically and currently, non-Hispanic Whites are the dominant group and may have a sense of “ownership” of the United States. Thus, stronger identification with the larger, White ethnic group may influence positive views of the country overall. By contrast, I hypothesized that, for Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans, stronger ethnic identities would correlate with less favorable views of the United States. This hypothesis was based, in part, on the notion of ingroup bias that is a part of social identity theory. Ingroup bias often leads to less favorable views of others (i.e., out-group bias). To the extent ethnic minorities associate non-Hispanic Whites with the United States, that association combined with a strong ethnic identity may cause them to hold less favorable attitudes toward the United States. Moreover, minorities may embrace their ethnic identity as a



means for coping with perceived or real discrimination and may believe that the United States is not a fair country to ethnic minorities.

## **METHODS**

### *Participants*

Participants included 350 undergraduate students (188 females; 158 males; 2 transgendered; 2 “Other”) attending a large, public university located in an urban region of the southeastern United States. Their mean age = 20.09 yrs. ( $SD = 3.42$ ). Regarding ethnic identity, 193 (55.1%) self-reported they were non-Hispanic White, 68 (19.4%) were Hispanic/Latino/a, 40 (11.4%) were Black or African American, 25 (7.1%) were Asian American, and 24 (6.9%) as “Other.” Regarding class standing, most ( $n = 170$ ; 48.6%) of the students were freshmen, 85 (24.3%) were sophomores, 57 (16.3%) were juniors, and 38 (10.9%) were seniors. Participation was voluntary. Participants received credit in their respective General Psychology courses for participation.

## **MEASURES**

### *Demographic Information*

All participants were asked to report the following information: Age, gender, ethnic identity, class standing (e.g., freshman, sophomore, etc.), highest education obtained by parents, and place of birth.

### *Goals*

To assess participants’ level of established goals, they completed a scale I developed for the purpose of this study (henceforth called the *GOALS scale*). The GOALS scale contains 15

statements to which respondents indicated their level of agreement using a Likert-type response format, with response options ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The GOALS scale is comprised of three subscales (5 items per subscale) which assess goals in the areas of education, career, and family. A sample (educational) item is, “I know why I am in college and I know what I want out of it.”

#### *Attitudes toward the United States*

To assess attitudes toward the United States, participants completed a modified version of the *Attitudes toward the United States Scale* (ATUSS; Negy, Velezmore, & Ruiz, 2016). The ATUSS contains 10 statements to which respondents indicate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert-type response format, with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores are averaged and range from 1 to 5, with higher scores reflecting more positive attitudes toward the U.S. Preliminary data suggest that the ATUSS has construct validity (see Negy et al.). Based on the current sample of participants, the ATUSS demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .89).

#### *Resiliency*

To assess resiliency, participants completed the *Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale* (CD-RISC; Conner & Davidson, 2003). The CD-RISC was originally comprised of 25 items to which respondents indicate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert-type response format, with response options ranging from 0 (not true at all) to 4 (true nearly all the time). However, I utilized the modified 10-item scale that is known as CD-RISC 10 (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007). A sample item is “I am able to adapt when changes occur.” Based on the current sample of participants, the CD-RISC 10 demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .88).

### *Autonomy*

To assess a sense of autonomy, participants completed the Autonomy subscale of the Psychology Well-Being scale (Ryff, 1989). The original scale consisted of 20 items per scale. However, I utilized the shortened 14 item scale. Respondents indicate their agreement with statements using a 6-point Likert-type scale format. Response options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A sample item states “People rarely talk me into doing things I don’t want to do.” Based on the current sample of participants, this scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .87).

### *Optimism*

To measure optimism, participants completed the Life Orientation Test Revised (Scheier, Carver, & Bridge, 1994). The LOT-R has 10 items (3 measure optimism, 3 that measure pessimism, and 4 used as fillers). Respondents indicate their agreement with statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale format, with response options ranging from 1 (I agree a lot) to 5 (I disagree a lot). A sample item is “In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.” Based on the current sample of participants, this scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .76).

### *Cynicism*

In order to measure cynicism, participants completed the Social Cynicism subscale, which is part of the Social Axioms Survey (Leung & Bond, 2004). This scale has 18 items to which respondents indicate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert-type response format with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item is

“Powerful people tend to exploit others.” Based on the current sample of participants, this scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .75).

### *Ethnic Identity*

To assess identification and loyalty to one’s ethnic group, participants completed the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (MEIM). The MEIM contains 12 statements to which respondents indicate their level of agreement using a 4-point Likert-type response format, with response options from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores are averaged and can range from 1 to 4, with higher scores reflecting higher degrees of ethnic identification. This scale has been used extensively and has been found to be reliable and valid (Phinney, 1992). A sample item is “I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.” Based on the current sample of participants, this scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .90).

### *Uncritical Criticism of the United States*

For exploratory purposes, I have created 10 items that assess participants’ endorsement of contemporary criticism leveled against the United States by some Millennials. I called this scale the *Uncritical Criticism of the United States* scale (UCUS) because the items, if endorsed, tend to reflect the belief that the United States is an oppressive country to minority groups without thoughtfully considering the complexities of some minorities’ challenges in their personal lives; that is, the items were written from the standpoint of the victimization model of minorities. As examples, one item assesses if respondents support “safe spaces” on college campuses for minority groups; another item assesses the belief that 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution should be modified in order to curb free speech that minority groups find offensive; another item

assesses the belief that Americans who oppose Muslim refugees do not understand that Islam is a religion of peace. Because two items had low item-total score correlations (less than .5) and reduced the internal reliability estimate of the scale, they were deleted. Based on the current sample of participants, the final eight items were found to have acceptable reliability (Cronbach alpha = .84). Moreover, the UCUS was found to correlate negatively with the Attitudes toward the United States scale ( $r = -.36, p < .001$ ), providing some evidence for its construct validity.

## **PROCEDURES**

Participants voluntarily completed the study online through the Psychology Research Participation System of the University of Central Florida called SONA and UCF Qualtrics online survey system. The survey was taken from any device with internet access. Participants provided consent of participation prior to completing the questionnaires.

## **RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of all study variables. To test the first hypothesis that positive attitudes toward the United States would correlate positively with higher levels of educational, career, and family goals, zero-order correlations were performed on the data. Attitudes toward the United States regarding participants' lives were found to correlate significantly, and in expected directions, with educational goals ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), career goals ( $r = .21, p < .001$ ), and family goals ( $r = .47, p < .001$ ).

To test the second hypothesis that study variables would predict attitudes toward the United States, a standard multiple regression was performed. Predictor variables were resiliency, autonomy, optimism, and cynicism. The criterion variable was scores on the Attitudes Toward

the United States scale. Taken together, the variables significantly predicted attitudes toward the United States (Multiple  $R^2 = .23$ ,  $F [4, 345] = 25.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The subscales that achieved significance were resiliency ( $t = 3.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ), optimism ( $t = 4.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and cynicism ( $t = -3.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ). See Table 2.

For exploratory purposes, a second standard multiple regression was performed to determine if the study variables would predict uncritical criticism of the United States (i.e., scores on the UCUS scale). Taken together, the variables significantly, albeit modestly, predicted UCUS scores (Multiple  $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F [4, 345] = 5.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The only subscale that achieved significance was cynicism ( $t = 4.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ). See Table 3.

To test the hypothesis that ethnic identity (i.e., stronger attachment and loyalty to one's ethnic group membership) would correlate significantly with more positive views of the United States for non-Hispanic Whites and with less positive views of the United States for ethnic minorities, zero-order correlations were performed on the data separately by ethnicity. For non-Hispanic Whites, ethnic identity correlated significantly, and in the expected direction, with attitudes toward the United States ( $r = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Contrary to the hypothesis, for Hispanics, ethnic identity correlated with attitudes toward the United States in the same direction as for non-Hispanic Whites, and approached, but did not achieve statistical significance ( $r = .22$ ,  $p = .06$ ). For African Americans and Asian Americans, ethnic identity did not correlate significantly with attitudes toward the United States ( $r_s = .04$  and  $-.10$ ,  $p_s > .05$ , respectively).

For exploratory purposes, additional zero-order correlations were performed to determine the relations between ethnic identity and uncritical criticism of the United States (UCUS scores),

separately by ethnicity. For non-Hispanic Whites, ethnic identity did not correlate significantly with UCUS ( $r = -.10, ns$ ). Consistent with the third hypothesis, for all three ethnic minority groups, the stronger their ethnic identities, the higher they scored on UCUS (for Hispanics,  $r = .26, p < .05$ . For African Americans,  $r = .49, p < .001$ . For Asian Americans,  $r = .24, ns$ ). I note here that the correlation coefficient for Asian Americans did not achieve statistical significance likely because of their small sample size.

## **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to examine if Millennials' attitudes towards the United States with respect to their personal lives would correlate with their goals and personalities. In support of the first hypothesis, it was found that Millennials' who tend to have positive attitudes towards the United States tend to have clearer and better established goals in the domains of education, career, and family. These findings are subject to multiple interpretations. Individuals with well-defined goals may want to believe in the country in which they have staked their future. To believe otherwise—to have future goals yet believe their realization is unlikely in one's country—would be frustrating. Past research has shown that having clear aspirations is associated with general life satisfaction (Headey, 2008). General satisfaction may contribute to positive views of one's home country. Another possible interpretation is that young adults who have developed personal goals may be relatively mature and as such, may possess a better understanding of the world. Specifically, having a global perspective may cause them to be aware they are more likely to achieve their goals in the United States than in other countries.

By contrast, young adults with undefined personal, career, and family goals may feel lost or frustrated, and attribute their lack of direction in life to their home country. Because these data are correlational, it is difficult to determine order of causality. Having clear goals (or not) may influence people's attitudes toward the country in which they reside. Likewise, having positive (or negative) views of one's country may motivate (or de-motivate) individuals to establish goals. More research should be conducted to determine if the direction of causality between these variables could be better elucidated.

The second hypothesis was that selected study variables (resiliency, autonomy, optimism, and cynicism) would predict attitudes toward the United States. The data supported the hypothesis. Young adults who perceived themselves to possess a resilient character and to have generally optimistic views toward life reported having relative more positive views of the United States. Similarly, yet in opposite fashion, those who tended to be cynical in general were found to have more negative views of life in the United States. This last finding was corroborated by an additional analysis that used an 8-item scale I had developed to measure uncritical criticism of the United States. That scale (the UCUS) assessed the generic belief that the United States is an oppressive country to minorities. The UCUS items—if endorsed—reflected that belief without understanding the complexity of minorities' lives in the United States. More specifically, the scale assessed the belief that the United States holds minorities back from upward mobility without taking into consideration that in some cases, individual minorities have made poor life decisions (such as abandoning their education, or getting involved in crime, etc.) and those decisions may better explain their lack of progress in life. Nonetheless, the one personality variable that significantly predicted uncritical criticism of the United States was cynicism.



Cynicism is a mindset that predisposes individuals to believe that others have sinister motives that are self-serving. The present data suggest that cynical Millennials are more inclined to believe the United States is not a good country for them and is in fact, oppressive toward minority members.

It was hypothesized that higher levels of ethnic loyalty and attachment (i.e., ethnic identity) would correlate with attitudes toward the United States, but differently depending on the ethnic group. Specifically, I expected that non-Hispanic Whites who identify strongly with their ethnicity would hold relatively positive views of the United States. That part of the hypothesis was supported by the data. However, counter to my hypothesis, Hispanics identifying strongly with their ethnicity also held positive views of the United States. Although there are Hispanics who stand in solidarity with African Americans with respect to their minority status, there are many Hispanics who do not; in fact, many may align themselves with U.S. Whites. In his book, “Who is White? Latinos, Asians, and the New Black/NonBlack Divide,” Yancey (2003) argues that many Hispanics and Asians (but, particularly Hispanics) identify more with the White American culture than with African American culture. Yancey’s phenomenon possibly can be observed among the present sample of Hispanics participants. Yancy believes the identification of many Hispanics with non-Hispanic Whites likely reflects a confluence of variables, such as the fact that many Hispanics are actually more of European ancestry and non-European ancestry. Moreover, Blacks in Latin America are arguably even more marginalized than U.S. Blacks, due to many non-Black Latin Americans’ prejudice toward Blacks. A study by Weaver (2011), based on U.S. national data collected from the General Social Survey, showed how pervasive prejudice is toward African Americans among U.S. Hispanics. Further, it bears

noting—in relation to the present findings—that my samples are all college students and consequently, perhaps Hispanic college students align themselves more with non-Hispanic Whites more than with African Americans.

For African Americans and Asian Americans, their levels of ethnic identity did not correlate significantly with their beliefs about the United States being a good country for them. This is not to say that, on average, African Americans and Asian Americans did not believe that the United States was not a viable country for them, but that their views about that was unrelated to their level of attachment to their ethnicity. Additional research is needed to clarify these discrepant findings among these four ethnic groups.

By contrast, with respect to the relation between ethnic identity—feelings of loyalty and attachment to one’s ethnic group—and beliefs that the United States is oppressive to minorities, the results were clearer. Non-Hispanic Whites who identified strongly with their ethnic group were less likely to view the United States as an oppressive country to minorities. However, for all three ethnic minority groups, those who identified strongly with their ethnic group were more likely to view the U.S. as oppressive and to see minorities as victims of discrimination. They also were more likely to endorse vogue ideas that are somewhat unique to Millennials, such as “safe spaces” are needed on college campuses, and free speech that offends should be penalized, as well as express a naïve view of the benignity of Islam. It is of interest to note that, among the present sample of non-Whites, stronger allegiance to their respective ethnicity correlated significantly with their views that the United States is oppressive to minorities. This finding is a robust finding among distinct minority samples, particularly African Americans (see Jefferson & Caldwell, 2002; Sanders-Thompson, 1991; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Because of the

correlational nature of these studies, it is difficult to know if allegiance to one's ethnicity causes (minority) individuals to perceive racial discrimination (that may or may not be real [Marino, Negy, Hammons, McKinney, & Asberg, 2007]), or if the experience of real or perceive discrimination causes minorities to embrace their ethnic identity more strongly as a possible coping mechanism. Further research should include the variables of religiosity and educational level of Millennials' parents.

### *Limitations*

One of the limitations of this study is that the data collected only reflect the information of Millennials located in Florida, United States, which may not generalize to Millennials in other parts of the United States. Moreover, the attitudes expressed by this sample of Millennials likely do not reflect those of Millennials worldwide. Additionally, the sample sizes of the ethnic minorities in this study were relatively small, further limiting the generalizability of these results. Also, some of the scales are new (e.g., the ATTUS and the UCUS) and minimal data exist to document their validity. As such, the findings herein must be viewed with caution. Finally, as mentioned above, the correlational nature of these data prevents causal conclusions.

## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to examine various aspects of Millennials' attitudes related to their beliefs about the United States and in the context of their personal, career, and family goals and ethnic identity. Another purpose of this study was to determine if selected personality variables would predict attitudes toward the United States. It was found that Millennials who held positive attitudes toward the United States in terms of being a viable country for them also

had relatively clear and developed educational, career, and family goals. Moreover, three personality variables—resiliency, optimism, and (inversely) cynicism significantly contributed to Millennials' views of the United States. Last, ethnic identity—strong feelings of attachment and loyalty to one's ethnicity—correlated in various ways with both attitudes toward the United States and the belief that the United States is oppressive toward minorities. Those observed correlations varied depending on the specific ethnicity. More research is recommended to clarify and elucidate some of the obtained findings in this study.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation of Study Variables by Participants ( $N = 350$ ).

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<i>VARIABLE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
ATTUS <sup>a</sup>	3.94	(.65)
Education Goals <sup>b</sup>	3.87	(.68)
Career Goals <sup>b</sup>	3.70	(.73)
Family Goals <sup>b</sup>	4.10	(.76)
Resiliency <sup>c</sup>	3.83	(.61)
Autonomy <sup>d</sup>	4.24	(.75)
Optimism <sup>e</sup>	3.49	(.63)
Cynicism <sup>f</sup>	3.02	(.44)
Ethnic Identity <sup>g</sup>	2.75	(.56)
UCUS <sup>h</sup>	3.22	(.75)

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Notes:

<sup>a</sup> ATTUS = Attitudes toward the United States scale (Negy, Velezmoro & Ruiz, 2016)

<sup>b</sup> Educational, Career, and Family Goals questionnaire was developed by the present author.

<sup>c</sup> Resiliency measured by the Conner-Davidson Resiliency Scale 10 (CD-RISC 10) (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007).

<sup>d</sup> Autonomy measured by the Psychology Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989).

<sup>e</sup> Optimism measured by the Life Orientation Test Revised (Scheier, Carver, & Bridge, 1994).

<sup>f</sup> Cynicism measured by the Social Axioms Survey (Leung & Bond, 2004).

<sup>g</sup> Ethnic identity measured by the Multidimensional Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992).

<sup>h</sup> UCUS = Uncritical Criticism of the United States scale (present author, 2018).

Table 2: Regression of Study Variables on ATTUS<sup>a</sup>

VARIABLE	Beta	Std. Error	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i> -test value	Significance
Resiliency <sup>b</sup>	.25	.36	.23	7.93	< .001
Autonomy <sup>c</sup>	.00	.05	.00	.03	<i>ns</i>
Optimism <sup>d</sup>	.26	.06	.25	4.44	< .001
Cynicism <sup>e</sup>	-.27	.07	-.18	-3.63	< .001

Notes: Multiple  $R^2 = .23$  ( $F [4, 345] = 25.95, p < .001$ ).

<sup>a</sup> ATTUS = Attitudes toward the United States scale (Negy, Velezmoro & Ruiz, 2016)

<sup>b</sup> Resiliency measured by the Conner-Davidson Resiliency Scale 10 (CD-RISC 10) (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007).

<sup>c</sup> Autonomy measured by the Psychology Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989).

<sup>d</sup> Optimism measured by the Life Orientation Test Revised (Scheier, Carver, & Bridge, 1994).

<sup>e</sup> Cynicism measured by the Social Axioms Survey (Leung & Bond, 2004).

Table 3: Regression of Study Variables on UCUS<sup>a</sup>

VARIABLE	Beta	Std. Error	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i> -test value	Significance
Resiliency <sup>b</sup>	-.06	.08	-.05	-.80	<i>ns</i>
Autonomy <sup>c</sup>	.00	.06	.00	.07	<i>ns</i>
Optimism <sup>d</sup>	-.05	.08	-.04	-.64	<i>ns</i>
Cynicism <sup>e</sup>	.38	.09	.22	4.06	< .001

Notes: Multiple  $R^2 = .06$  ( $F [4, 345] = 5.54, p < .001$ ).

<sup>a</sup> UCUS = Uncritical Criticism of the United States scale (present author, 2018)

<sup>b</sup> Resiliency measured by the Conner-Davidson Resiliency Scale 10 (CD-RISC 10) (Campbell-Sills & Stein, 2007).

<sup>c</sup> Autonomy measured by the Psychology Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989).

<sup>d</sup> Optimism measured by the Life Orientation Test Revised (Scheier, Carver, & Bridge, 1994).

<sup>e</sup> Cynicism measured by the Social Axioms Survey (Leung & Bond, 2004).

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