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Are millennials different?

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Are Millennials Different?

When I was a faculty member at Carleton College in Northfield MN, alums would often come back to campus to visit. After filling me in on their career or grad school experience, they would often say something like, “It feels so different around here. The students look different and seem to have different concerns. It seems so much more (fill in the blank: preppy, crunchy, nerdy, etc.). It’s not like it was when I was a student.”

I’d smile and say, “John (or Jane), you only graduated three years ago. The current seniors were first-years when you were here.”

This experience is often in the back of my mind when I read articles about students today, such as this recent offering in [Slate](#) exploring the world of millennials and their parents or this article in [Forbes](#) about millennials in the workplace.

Surely the world has changed significantly in the last generation, as it does across most generations. There is more technology for greater connectedness, families are generally smaller (especially among Catholic undergraduates), more and increasingly diverse students are going to college, economic uncertainty has made students and their parents a bit more focused on the job market, we are more affluent as a nation, the world is more globally integrated, etc. etc.

Certainly the WWII generation and baby-boomer college experiences were not identical to those of the millennials, but are students today different in fundamental ways, with new concerns, needs and dreams? This is a question that faculty members and professionals in student development ponder almost daily, here and across the higher education landscape, as we seek to provide the best possible educational experience for this new generation.

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