“Me, My Selfie and I”
A Qualitative ‘Visual Social Work’ Scholarship Presented in Filmic Modality from Selfie-Video Footage: How Millennial Generation Adults Experience the Stigma Associated With Social Media Messages Used to Describe Their Generation

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A DISSERTATION
in
School of Social Practice and Policy
Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in
Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Social Work

Faculty Co-Chairs
Dr. Kathleen D. Hall
Dr. John L. Jackson, Jr.
DEDICATION

The research and filmic presentation of the findings are dedicated to anyone, from the birth cohort known as the Millennial Generation, who have had to withstand considerable stigma and hardships associated with widespread stereotypes.

In particular I am dedicating this film to the participants who generously offered their personal experiences to shed light on this often overlooked and misunderstood social issue.

My hope is that this has elevated your voices in a way that shows strength and empowerment.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest gratitude to Dr. Kathleen Hall and Dr. John L. Jackson for creating space, inspiration and mentorship as co-chairs for this dissertation committee and offering invaluable guidance through the process. Particular appreciation to both of you, for inviting me into this highly regarded community of fellow visionaries that have commitment to offering multi-modal scholarship into the mainstream academic audience and general public. Included in that is a special thanks for introducing me to Amitanshu Das, who offered useful and insightful feedback during the conceptualization and editing process of the film.

I would also like to thank the School of Social Policy and Practice (SP2) for their willingness to recognize the vision of this as an applicable form of doctoral scholarship.
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SECTION 1: DISSERTATION DESCRIPTION

This is a filmic dissertation created as a research study and visual scholarship to satisfy the completion of the Doctorate in Clinical Social Work requirement at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy and Practice.

A FILMIC DISSERTATION

“Me, My Selfie and I”, A Qualitative ‘Visual Social Work’ Scholarship Presented in Filmic Modality from Selfie-Video Footage: How Millennial Generation Adults Experience the Stigma Associated With Social Media Messages Used to Describe Their Generation.

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SECTION 2: FILM LINKS

The dissertation abstract in filmic format for Me, My Selfie and I (MMSI) can be viewed at

https://vimeo.com/933830721

The password is: MMSI_Abstract_DSW2024

The full dissertation in filmic format for Me, My Selfie and I (MMSI) can be viewed at

https://vimeo.com/933522556

The password is: MMSI_DSW2024
SECTION 3: ABSTRACT

It is of particular interest to examine from within the birth cohort known as “Millennials” how stereotypical messages and stigma about their generation have a perceived impact on their lives. Cohort-based stereotypes may be more impactful than the traditional age-related stereotypes because they tend to be long-lasting and members continue to be associated with them (Arnett, 2013; Trzesniewski et al., 2014). In order to gain ethnographic perspective about the possible impacts, this qualitative study examined the following questions: How do adults (with the birth year 1981-1996) experience the stigma associated with the social media messages used to describe the Millennial Generation? What effects, if any, has this propensity to stereotype “Millennials” had in the lives of adults defined as “Millennials”? A few main concepts ground the conceptual framework of this research and the IPA analysis of the study, namely, stigma, stereotype internalization and stereotype embodiment. Perspective gathered from Millennial Generation Adults (MGAs) suggests that disparaging media discourse used to describe them has been reflected in their interactions with employers, family members and general public from the generation before and after them. As expected, these negative impressions have impacted their work environment, decision making and perspective of self and others in their generation. Contrary to expectations, Millennial Generation Adults (MGAs) tend to blame themselves, rather than others, for the consequences related to this stigma. The aim of this research is to open the dialogue of public perception and present new knowledge to consider about the contributing factors to the current trends among the Millennial Generation Adults (MGAs). This dissertation, titled “Me, My Selfie and I” is a qualitative investigation presented in filmic modality to emphasize the precedent that media messages are impactful in shaping public opinion.
SECTION 4: DISSERTATION DOCUMENTARY FILM TRANSCRIPT

Video Footage (no audio)

(Caption) An Issa Essman Production. IE Productions
(Caption) Me, My Selfie and I. a documentary
(Caption) Hey Millennials. Shut Up and Sit Down

(Voiceover) Uh. Hey. Shut Up and Sit Down

(Photos) Generation Me: Why Today’s Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled – and More Miserable Than Ever Before (Book Cover)
(Photos) The Narcissistic Epidemic (Book Cover)
(Photos) Are Millennials Lazy, Entitled and Work Shy? (Book Cover)
(Photos) Why Lazy Millennials Can’t Last 90 Days at Work (Article Headline)

Social Media clips:

0:00:00
There’s a narrative out there that Millennials and the Generation Z’s behind them are lazy.

These days I hear so many people complaining about Millennials. They just don’t have the same work ethic.

0:00:24
They’re just not cut out to work hard.

0:00:27
25% of Millennials, their parents are paying for their housing in one way or another.

0:01:16
The Millennials are known as the “me me me” generation.

0:01:18
What do you think of Millennials? Coddled, entitled?

0:01:20
Yes, I think so.

0:01:22
Millennials don’t get off the couch very often.

0:01:24
Millennials don’t want jobs.
Video Footage (no audio) Millennials at 4:59 on the longest Monday ever after doing the bare minimum. (Millennial worker shutting laptop computer and singing).

0:01:26
Okay, I'll bite.

0:01:32
Let's talk about how Millennials are useless and entitled.

0:01:35
Supposedly this is due to kids getting parented with the participation trophy mindset. In other words, getting rewarded just for showing up.

0:01:41
Millennials are known for being narcissistic, needy, and prone to showing up to work late.

0:01:46
Here are the reasons Millennials are perceived to be entitled. They're more fame obsessed than any previous generation. Incidence of narcissism is three times as high.

0:01:54
Millennials resent authority and tradition.

0:01:56
Millennials have a low tolerance for inefficiency.

0:02:00
The generation cares more about work-life balance. They've been raised to believe they are special.

0:02:05
So, for all those beautiful Millennials and snowflakes out there, trust me, the more you get pushed, the thicker your skin, the thicker your skin, trust me, the higher you go.

Video Footage (no audio)
(Captions) Media and social discourse have perpetuated public concern about Millennial attitudes and characteristics (Arnett, 2013).
(Caption) Stigma.
(Caption) The central aim of this project is to better understand the Millennial Generation perspective concerning their public representation and stigmatization.
(Caption) 12 Participants. 12 Perspectives. 1 Study.
(Caption) Since visual media has perpetuated the stigmatization and stereotypes of this generation…VISUAL PRESENTATION of the study’s findings is particularly poignant.
(Caption) This study’s participants were between 27 and 42 years old, recruited directly and through social media.
(Caption) Ethnic Background of Participants. 8% Mixed Ethnicity, 25% Asian Ethnicity, 17% Black Ethnicity, 17% Hispanic/Latino Ethnicity 33% White Ethnicity

(Caption) Geographic Locale of Participants. 35% from West Coast, 8% from Midwest, 22% from South, 35% from East Coast

(Caption) Housing Costs of Participants. 59% pay rent, 33% pay a mortgage, 8% do not pay for housing

(Caption) Education Level of Participants. 4% have a high school diploma, 17% have completed some college, 46% have a bachelors degree, 25% have a graduate degree

(Social Media Post) MMSI Study – Volunteers Needed – Share Your Story – Millennial volunteers needed for a University of Pennsylvania Study

(Caption) We entered into the Millennial world of selfies and social media.

(Caption) Selfie-recordings were chosen as a method of providing the most accurate depiction of each participant’s points of view.

(Caption) These are images, voices and specific points of view, given by the participants themselves.

(Caption) Millennials are no longer young adults.

(Social Media Post) @reppeteking Time for millennials on spring break to grow up. Stop swarming beaches and bars and spreading Coronavirus. Forget your selfishness Show some responsibility like previous generations that made America greatest nation on earth.


(Caption) What even is a millennial.

0:03:31

0:03:56
I'm a ‘Zennial’.

0:04:26
That's a little hard to identify.

0:04:27
I don't know. I would probably say people born before 2000, probably. Like the early days of widespread Internet,

0:04:35
certain TV shows.

0:04:37
People born in the current world, where there are several advancements in nearly everything.

0:04:43
A lot of kind of like, Millennial thing, is dealing with a lot of financial struggles.
Millennials are also known as Generation Y. We have grown during an age of rapid technology advancement.

And they covered a big part of the jumps in society, because from 1980 to 1990 there was a big jump of the way society developed, progressed, values, and the way everything’s were, and Millennials were kind of in the middle of all that.

I wasn't entirely sure, so I did research this, and my understanding is it's from 1981 to 1996.

(Caption) There are approximately 73 million U.S. adults (age 25-40) belonging to this specific birth cohort born between 1981-1996 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).
(Caption) This makes them the largest adult population group in the country.
(Caption) the term millennial.

When I think about the term Millennial. I think like, it’s just kind of who we are. It's, you know, sometimes made to poke fun. Sometimes, you know, it just kind of definitely defines our generation. I think that sometimes Millennials definitely have a negative connotation and that it is a blanket term that doesn't necessarily reflect everybody.

How do you feel about the term Millennial? I think it's just used to clarify maybe what years you were born in, but I do think that that makes a big difference when you're trying to explain to somebody maybe the years that they grew up in. Because although I was born in the ‘80s, I got to, early ‘80s, I grew up in most of the ‘80s. And I think a lot of these changed within the ‘80s and ‘90s.

It's like, we've always been Millennials, but I think when it was started to be talked about when we’d become adults, so about 10 years ago. I'd say it always felt like a very annoying part, like you didn't really want it to be part of your identity.

I would say I'm pretty indifferent. I never really paid much attention to it when I was growing up. Nowadays, there is a little bit more of like a negative connotation with the term Millennial. People, especially like folks or kids that are a little bit younger than me, I guess that are part of Gen Z, they’ll definitely use it in a sort of negative way.

I am excited to be a part of the Millennials.

I love it. I'm happy to be a Millennial.
I feel, I think there's definitely some negative connotations to the term. Often, you know, given by maybe older people who might think we don't work as hard or we want things handed to us like to get our, you know, some of our college, you know, debt paid off that for free or whatever, you know, that kind of thing.

I think it gets thrown at us a lot in a negative way. But like when, when I think about being a Millennial, I do feel some amount of pride in that.

In regards to the term Millennial, I feel pretty proud to be a Millennial. There's a lot of discord and I think there's also just a lot of banter about Boomers versus Millennials and Gen Zs versus Millennials. But I think that I do identify with the traits of my generation.

Generational identity isn't that as important to me. It only comes up when someone makes a comparison or usually comes up in a negative way. Whenever I hear the term Millennial, there's always something negative associated with it. It's never really something that is positive or that is looked upon in a good way.

(Social Media clip) I just got a call from a senior executive and here's how we started. I can't handle Millennials. All they want to talk about is pay. All they want to know is what can you do for me lately. And then they job hop to the next job opportunity. Guess what I said. “You better get used to it.”

(Social Media clip) Oh, Millennials can't do anything for themselves, but that's not what's happening at all. It's that our managers aren't seeing the 80% of the time that we're just solving shit on our own, rather than asking really simple questions.

(Social Media clip) Better be doing the right things if you want to keep your people.

(Social Media clip) Hold your feet to the fire.
(Social Media post) millennials are so SPOILED and ENTITLED. Millennials: is it rude if I ask my employer to pay me
(Social Media post) Fight today for tomorrow.
(Social Media post) Don’t give people so much power over you that their silence leaves you questioning your worth.
Millennials get stereotyped as lazy a lot. And I feel like I’m sort of anything but lazy.

(Social Media clip) (Caption) Every corporate millennial woman all day today: (worker singing and typing) I’ll still wait Hey, you call me up again Just to break me like a promise I’ll probably pick you up. (worker getting caught on video) Hey, Mike! (Caption) are millennials entitled, lazy and narcissistic.

Millennials don't work the same way that previous generations do.

They are more remote type of jobs now and have more flexibility work-wise from the locations they work at or their work hours. from someone who worked a nine to five or even longer than that in the past, it could be seen as these words just because it's different, it's uncomfortable, it is kind of counterintuitive to what people have known in the past.

I guess I could say that those like obviously I'm aware of the stereotypes and I'm also aware that I'm a Millennial and so I do presume that a lot of the general population might view me that way.

(Social Media clip) Older Adults dropping by: I heard you got a new job! Congrats! What's it like? You work a four-day work week? Wow! So it's part time. Oh, you work 10 hours a day, four days a week. Sounds like part time to me. No, I know it's 40 hours, but it's only four days. So you know what you could do with all that free time? Get another job.

For me, I, you know, indirectly called lazy, you know, where like, I, you know, I'll be, you know, I live at home. With my grandparents, so like, if I'm working in my room or I'm, you know, writing music or trying to get inspiration for something, you know, to me it counts as part, you know, working in, into my job. But then, you know, sometimes there's like comments like, oh, well, nice to just be home for the day or nice to not, like, as if I'm here not actually doing anything when that's not the case. So I do experience that indirectly where like if I were, as opposed to if

I'm out, you know, my other job doing behavioral intervention, you know, I never get those kinds of comments. It's like, oh, well, you are working, you know, even though to me both are work, even though one is less typical in the way it's executed, you know, if I'm working at home doing my online stuff or creative stuff, it still is work. And it feels like sometimes it's like that's not really work, it's just fun. It's like, okay, well, I can't work to be fun, you know, and I think maybe that's where the line is.
Invisible. Stigma.
Discrimination as a consequence of stigmatization can be both subtle and blatant in everyday attitudes (Frost, 2011).
Sometimes when stigma is not overt, the stigmatized person assumes they are unaffected or takes responsibility themselves (Major & Schmader, 2018).

I could be completely ignorant, but I don't see any of those impacts affecting my self-perspective. I haven't really encountered that personally a lot. I've never really felt like people thought of me this way or assumed I was any of these things.

People internalize common stereotypes used to describe them and begin to see it in themselves (Levy, 2010).
Stigma. Internalization.

I guess I've, to some degree, internalized the stereotypes as, you know, when I'm looking at other Millennials as well. And when I do see a Millennial that I perceive as being entitled lazy and narcissistic it does kind of reinforce that and like, of course like this yeah, this generation is this way.

There's a lot of reason that they stereotypes are there. There’s some truth in them, and I think it should just be, kind of, spoken through to understand why that truth is there.

Stereotype embodiment occurs when one’s own self-appraisal reflects the stereotypes used against them (Levy, 2010).

We, Millennials, come across as entitled because we question instead of just going along with what we were told.

Definitely entitled. It's a hard word where I think sometimes I even think about it with other Millennials sometimes, you know.

I think people had to wake up and realize, like, OK, this is a real thing in how we’re being viewed.

I think there is some truth, for sure. A chunk of the Millennial generation, maybe a particular chunk that is more vocal and more likely to post on social media or like make their thoughts heard.
Those words get thrown around a lot, especially the narcissistic. That feels like that's when somebody's being selfish, that's the term you throw on it. And my understanding of it is, is someone that's just not aware. Someone that's entitled, like, oh, I deserve this and I deserve that. And to some extent, yeah, I could see how an older generation would say that I would be entitled because I'm not doing the things that they did, or because they don't see my work ethic as being, as having to be what they had to do, as lazy, you know, and because of that, having a narcissistic trait. I have enough examples of people, of my peers, that were lazy and hardworking. There's some people that I know that never, I mean, well into their 40s, still haven't even got a job, always looking for a handout. And there's other people that have made something of their lives. So it's not necessarily the rule, but it definitely does ring true to some extent, specifically with Millennials.

I have had, like my in-laws, who their son is a Millennial, I'm a Millennial, have said some pretty disparaging things about Millennials in general, you know, at their own workplace. And they'll say, well, you know, those Millennials, like they just don't wanna work or do this, or they're always calling in. And I'll have to remind them like, hey, you know, we're Millennials, right? And that's kind of hard to constantly feel like we're not living up to these expectations.

I'm one of the younger in my friend group, so kind of one of the only Millennials of all the friends and all the parents and adults that I hang out with. And I have heard them talking negatively about employees and they definitely use the term Millennials. Oh, those Millennials, they think that they, you know, need to have it handed to them. If they don't get a reward, then they're not gonna put out the work. And I definitely pause and kind of think about it.

From my own parents, sort of, oh, ‘it must be nice that you can go on vacation’, or ‘we didn't do things like that when we were young’. So I don't often appreciate being either made fun of or looked down on.

Yeah, there is stigma because other people, in fact even other Millennials like you, stigmatize you. Wondering why you have not achieved as much as they have done.

Even with, personally, Millennials I think have brought a different way of dress and a different way of what's considered professional. So going in, despite having bachelor's and master's degrees and being an expert in my field, being seen with, you know, being seen younger, being seen with my tattoos, being seen as that Millennial, it's hard to be respected sometimes by generations that are older.

We vary widely.
(Caption) Not all Millennials are living with the means to have flexible schedules or these work-life choices (Root, 2015).

(Caption) It is important for people to be aware of the stigma and marginalization of any group by considering its varied geographical and functional areas (Sturgeon, 2012).

0:19:38
Looking at pictures posted by other millennials is really challenging for me. I see, you know, it's crazy because growing up I had such a different upbringing than so many others my age.

0:19:54
And so I feel like so many have either had like a head in life to be able to get that house, to be able to start that family, where I haven't and so there's definitely a lot of jealousy a lot of forgetting that's such a small snapshot in their lives.

0:20:08
I'll hear on the news or something like that when there's someone's making a generalization. There's nothing I can do necessarily to respond to that because this is what's being said to the masses so I don't feel like I have a 'dog in the fight' to just call up like a producer and be like, 'hey, that's not what we are', you know, or do something to change the narrative. When I see a post about stuff, I don't really, you know, and other generations that don't live in it, they talk bad about it. They talk bad about, oh, 'if only you would, you know, pick yourself up by your bootstraps', or 'if only you had this, if only you did that.'

0:20:43
Instances where all the colleagues or superiors have doubted my ability to handle responsibilities or take on leadership roles, especially that I have been prevented from taking on leadership roles because of that.

(Caption) Psychologizing.
(Caption) Rather than recognizing the social forces at play, we mask them by psychologizing the individual with labels and stigma (Sturgeon, 2012).
(Caption) Millennial rates of anxiety and depression are higher than any other generation in history (APA, 2020).
(Caption) Increased risk of psychopathology due to the combination of blame and sociopolitical forces is cause for concern (Major & Schmader, 2018).
(Caption) Mental health.

0:21:00
I guess the biggest stereotype that I think of when someone's referring to a Millennial

0:21:35
is disgruntled or a lot of anxiety, you know, and not being able to cope with life and kind of figuring out a way to cop out. I think there's like this stereotype that Millennials are depressed all the time.
And I think that's true to a certain extent.

And I've seen a lot of Millennials who were really unafraid to come in and seek out mental health help. So I think that's a really big positive.

You know what? We do have a lot of anxiety. We have gone through a lot of things. It's the 9-11. I always remember I was on my way to work and seeing that and seeing the buildings fall. And it was just, what do we do? I, you know, and being an early adult, young adult,

it was just so, we didn't know what to do. You know, and then we went into war. Then we had like a recession. It just felt like a lot of things. It just felt like it was a lot. And I think it also mentions Columbine, Trayvon Martin with the whole Black Lives Matter thing. And these are things that have been going on before,

but to have it repeat and having it compounded with everything else is what really, that's what my generation feels like.

In terms of checking all the Millennial boxes, I think the biggest thing is the anxiety. We are constantly looking back, making sure that we haven't hurt someone's feelings, what if we did, becoming super anxious about that.

(Social Media clip) Just wondering if potentially there would be a world in which the potential of maybe I not being online on Friday is a potential. If there is the potential for, to have that day.

We are a flexible people in that we will bend over backwards to do something for someone, or to make sure that everything is perfect for somebody, but we're gonna be anxious the whole time doing it. I think probably the hardest part of being a Millennial, I would say, is the anxiety, the ‘helicoptering’ that I do for my own kids, which I know is very common amongst my people. And I think the stigma of being whiny and sensitive are probably things that I carry with me.
We’re not being heard and our ideas are not being listened to.

(Caption) Negative beliefs about the worth of another group, to subordinate that group, naturally has a marginalizing effect (Uhlmann et al., 2018).

0:24:29

🎵 (Song voiceover during captions and social media posts)

(Caption) Stigma is often weaponized through the use of shame and blame (Scambler, 2018).
(Caption) Those who claim to be ‘normals’ interpret anything outside that norm as defective, inferior and flawed (Goffman, 1963).

0:24:35

(Social media meme) A Millennial who accepts constructive criticism. Now there’s something I don’t see very often.
(Social media meme) #tiktok
(Caption) Responsibilizing.
(Caption) When in doubt blame Millennials.
(Headline) Millennials are the blame for sky-high inflation, strategist says.
(Headline) The Gaslighting of the Millennial Generation. How to Succeed in a Society That Blames You For Everything Going Wrong.
(Social Media meme) Are you one of those Millennials ruining everything?
(Photo) Avocado. A fruit commonly eaten by Millennials.
(Social Media meme) Millionaire to millennials: Stop buying avocado toast if you want to buy a home.
(Caption) Cultural norms proscribing shame to attributes, traits or conditions have been omnipresent through history (Scambler, 2018).
(Caption) Millennials are stigmatized in relation to how they are assumed to deviate from valued societal norms.
(Social Media meme) So many Millennials seem to be allergic to gluten…maybe that’s why so few are breadwinners.
(Social Media meme) Complains that she’s a starving college student. Too good to work in dining hall.
(Caption) The stigmatized take the blame for their own inability to manage the world in it’s current state.
(Social Media meme) Millennials be like…where’s my promotion?
(Social Media meme) Meeting at 9:30AM? But that’s when I look at cat pictures on the internet.
(Caption) Stigma has, of course, always exacted a price from its ‘victims’ (Scambler, 2018).
0:26:20
It’s like the Millennials kind of got beat down a lot.
(Caption) Sociopolitical. Factors.

0:26:50
(Social Media clip) If nothing changes, two-tiered society we have right now is going to become even wider

0:27:11
in terms of the gap between the have and the have-nots.

0:27:21
Different generations have had different set of circumstances, and we all do the best we can with what we have.
We are navigating a dumpster fire of a political landscape and economy that those oats were sown many years ago by the generations before us, and so, I think we're trying to undo a lot of those harms. I see Millennials as being a really hard-working people and I think just because we do advocate for a work-life balance and we also push for things like the ability to work from home or having better office environments, I actually just find

0:27:53
that as being an appropriate adjustment and things that could have been done a long time ago.

0:28:02
There's so many factors that contribute to these stereotypes. And I think things like parenting in past generations, war, economics, all of these things that impacted our parents and previous generations to that, they wanted to go the opposite way. And so that's really contributed to their parenting practices and just everything that you want to do differently than in the past.

0:28:30
You know, the generation before me, I mean, had I had the same resources and abilities available, such as like the value of a dollar being worth more and being able to, you know, be married at a company and you'd be okay with your family. You know, just to be able to own a home, you would have to do all kinds of crazy, crazy insane jobs. And it just feels like you're never going to get there.

0:28:59
(Social Media clip) The progression of Millennial experience during adulthood.

0:29:00
In 2000, we were told, ‘go to college or you'll be flipping burgers’. In 2008, they said, ‘what do you mean you can't find a job? Is flipping burgers too good for you?’ In 2016 they said ‘you want $15 for flipping burgers? Millennials are so entitled’. In 2021 they told us ‘why does no one want to flip burgers anymore?’ Millennials it comes to a sad time we have to recognize - you will never have the same access to affordable housing that your parents did.
Today, more than ever before, your chance of getting ahead is dependent on the parents you have and their income and their wealth. We are on the verge of the largest intergenerational wealth transfer in history. (Social Media clip) Generational wealth transfer only benefits those Millennials whose parents have wealth to pass down (Smith, 2023).

(Social Media clip) Social stratification does not give all Millennials access or opportunity to take advantage of these trends (Scambler, 2018).

(Social Media clip) Social Mobility. Impact.

(Social Media clip) Structural violence occurs when both personal and institutional responsibility are not considered in the transformation of society (Trnka and Trundle, 2014).

(Social Media clip) Lack of social mobility may be a sign of marginalization and misattribution of blame (Scambler, 2018).

They're paying huge amounts, much more than their parents ever paid as a proportion of their paychecks for education, higher education or student debt, housing, for rent, health care, even transportation. All of these costs have increased faster than inflation. And at the same time, jobs are not paying that much more. We know that one in ten college graduates are underemployed. And by underemployed, we mean that they are not spending 40 hours a week doing things that are challenging and taking advantage of their education. One out of 20 are unemployed. In the post-World War II era, we have never seen anything like this.

That is, we have always expected that we're going to do better. Individuals and families are going to do better, they're going to be trading upward, and their children are expected to do better than they have done. And that's been the case. For the first time now, we see the pendulum moving in exactly the opposite direction.

Nobody wants to work anymore. (Millennial) You were able to buy a house in your 20’s working 40 hours a week without a degree. (Boomer) What does that have to do with anything? (Gen X) Because Millennials are turning 40 and they can't get houses like you could when you were 20. (Gen Z) Yeah and why keep playing a game you can't win, right? (Boomer) This is the land of opportunity. Just start a side hustle. (Millennial) I already have two side hustles. (Gen Z) Nobody should have to work more than one job. (Millennial) Bills are like building up and ballooning and now I know that I'll never catch up. (Boomer) All you do is complain. (Gen Z) Don't do that. (Boomer) Do what? (Gen X) You're invalidating how he feels and trying to shame him by telling him he's complaining. That's abuse. (Boomer) That's not abuse. (Gen Z) Yes it is. Abusers always gaslight victims. (Gen X) My therapist told me that's why I have no boundaries and I accept abuse from corporate America. (Boomer) What has gotten into you? (Gen Z) He told you he was in therapy. You're fucked! (Boomer) Anyway, as
you were complaining, I mean saying.... (Millennial) …slavery contract when I was 18 years old thinking it was the best option. (Boomer) So dramatic. (Gen Z) You said nobody wants to work anymore but you won't let the people respond. (Gen X) It’s very narcissistic. (Boomer) Nobody told you to go to college. (Millennial) Yes you fucking did.

0:32:37
I do feel a certain pressure to have to not only live up to their expectations and accomplish what they have but go beyond that because, from their vantage point, being, you now, immigrants and having from nothing to making an empire, it makes it feel like I'm not trying hard enough. I should be able to do so much more since I started way more ahead than they did with much more things at our disposal.

0:33:12
The stigma of Millennial has impacted others' expectations of myself. It's really challenging in the workplace.
(Caption) Enacted bias both interpersonally and institutionally comes across in behavior and policies (Major & Schmader, 2018).

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There's a sense of not being accomplished, not being something that you can, you know, attain. You're not good enough.

0:33:26
Knowing that we've done everything we possibly can as a Millennial to get there. And because of this stigma of not being enough, at least for me, I felt like I self-sabotaged. Because I wasn't gonna live up to this ideal, I could still, I tried and I fall short of what I'm supposed to be or what is expected of me and I can never live up to it. So then I'll just start shooting myself in the foot.

0:34:02
I think that a lot of us think that we're supposed to be engaged in things that are a lot larger than us, especially by the time we're at our age now where we're like, we're 30. I feel like a lot of us are feeling like we're already hitting a midlife crisis in a way. Because everyone’s like ‘oh, I thought I was supposed to be at this point and have achieved this.’

0:34:28
Well, because I do hear these terms being thrown around, not personally, but I do hear them, I think that I can be harder on myself and feel the need to prove myself more, that I am hardworking and I hold value and that I am effective in the workforce and I'm an effective, kind friend.

0:34:43
I really think that's one of the hardest parts about being a Millennial is just so many of the milestones that my parents reached by my age I haven't reached and it's because the economy, it's because of inflation, it has absolutely nothing to do with my work ethic. If I made money based on work ethic alone, I'd be making tons of money.
0:35:18
I think, yeah, like I'm sure people have a certain degree of, like, when I start a job, they're probably not expecting me to stay there for longer than a few years. And they probably expect me to stay looking around. I think it's very normal to talk with your employer and your employees about job opportunities now whereas before I think it was more like a bit of a taboo.

0:35:40
(Social Media clip) They're going to work a place where they feel treated well and where they see a career path that makes sense for them and also this is really important their comp and their contribution has to get rewarded pretty immediate, not a year from now, but pretty immediate and honestly immediate pay for performance seems like a pretty good idea to me.

0:36:03
I try to not let it affect me too much, but yeah, sometimes I wonder, you know, about those like, you know, am I hitting those like generic, you know, like life milestones, you know, because guess what, you grow up learning that you're supposed to do those things. So that can be tough but I try to just, you know, move past that and try to not get caught up in like what you're supposed to do or what life's supposed to look like.

0:36:37
We're all just coping and going through this once-in-a-lifetime thing, you know, all these events in the best way possible. I definitely think there is that stigma where you're losing the housing market, we don't have children. I've had several people confused that my husband and I don't have children yet and asking how I would feel about that. So it just seems, you know, being a Millennial, there's so many expectations and just trying figure out what works best for us and how to best support our lives is a challenge.

0:37:27
And I just think in reality we ultimately just want the same opportunities that you know our parents and grandparents had. Which seems harder to come by nowadays just given you know the state of the world, the economy, all that stuff.

0:37:40
We assumed we would get the same standard of living as our parents, and we didn't.

0:37:48
I think maybe the hardest thing about being referred to as a Millennial is being pushed aside. (Caption) Empowerment. Impact.

0:37:55
I think it definitely has benefited me in some ways because I am a really hard worker. and really diligent. I've gotten promotions and stuff. I've been kind of ‘exceptionalized.'

0:38:01
I've been raised to figure it out and give it a go first and then if I'm completely unable to do that
then it might be worth following up with some questions. I'm not able to do it. Let's figure out another way.

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I guess it means that I might work harder and try to go upstream rather than go with the flow and just kind of advocate.

0:38:40
My identity, my generational identity as a Millennial is not so important, more than what I work for, more than what I achieve after working and after putting effort.

0:38:54
Something my husband and I, who's also a Millennial, talk about a lot is the fact that we did wait a while to get married, we did have children later than our Boomer parents, we are a lot more emotionally mature. That has made a really big difference.

0:39:14
Makes me more motivated. Makes me want to prove them wrong even more or go against them even more. So maybe I'm feeling lazy one day or I think about like, oh, people think the Millennial generation's so lazy. That makes me want to go to the gym or get to work or do something.

0:39:34
People think Millennials are entitled. Okay, that makes me want to be more humble or generous. Makes me want to get off of social media and not care about that at all.

0:39:51
Change is uncomfortable for other people.

0:39:53
Seeing a generation that's changing, I think that that makes people really uncomfortable, but I also think it's so important to look at the other side and see, you know, problem solving, being creative, being a free thinker, and all those factors that I think millennials do bring to the table.

0:40:14
Judging people based on the generation in which they are from, that's not good. That's not good at all.

0:40:20
My parents were a people who you got up every day, you win, you did the thing, you had a long commute. Some of their jobs didn't require a lot of education, a higher level of education expected now and a lot more experience expected now.
0:40:39
And I think Millennials are just adjusting to the landscape that we were given.
People want to see us having achieved a lot, having known a lot, but sometimes it's not possible because life is not predictable, it does not go, sometimes it doesn't go as you want.

And I feel like a lot more Millennials are like, no, but like how do you, how do I and how do you feel like it should go? And like, how are you going to make a difference?

It's definitely mixed feelings. I am proud to be a Millennial. And there are things where it's really hard.

I'm happy to have this option and world view of questioning things and wondering if maybe there's a more efficient way than just rolling up your shirt sleeves and putting out a little more elbow grease. I just see a lot of value in us and in fellow Millennials. And so I think and I hope that people can see that in them and get to know them more and ask questions and think about societal factors that have contributed to who people are and why they are the way they are and how they've become how they are and backtrack it because history and society and culture and all these things really create change, positive or negative, and labels and how those are applied to people.

I think we're kind of just stuck where we can't make the next steps forward and Millennials are this generation. We are left, kind of, fixing the traumas of the people before us, our generations before us, while trying to figure out how to make the world a better place and navigate it in our own sense. I think our generation has been through so many of those once in a lifetime events that we shouldn't have had to go through, yet here we are, you know, almost I think, once a year turning on the news

and there's something else that's unprecedented for the times, it's very challenging. But I also think that our generation is gonna be the one that breaks the chains, that changes a lot of the stigmas that were there before.

I'm pretty proud to be a Millennial and I think it's been a really interesting and fun way to walk this life. It's just like we were introduced to so much and we broke away from so much, kind of chaos too.

I think we've made a lot of chaos as well and I think that's something that we're pretty proud of and smile at as well.

I feel like life is not necessarily a straight line like maybe it was in the past you know school.
a job, get married, do the whole thing with fire you know I don't think it's so much in a straight line anymore it's like you hit those steps when you hit them and you might go out of order you might do some things and not others and it's, I think it's empowering for our generation to not have to live in a straight line.

(Caption) 26 total participants were enrolled in this study. 12 participants were used in the final product of this film. We appreciate all of their input, willingness and insights. (Caption) Thank you MMSI Participants for your invaluable perspective about the Millennial Generation. (Caption) Me, My Selfie and I, a documentary

0:43:43
🎶 (Song voiceover during captions and credits)

(Caption) This film is a form of Visual Social Work to present the findings of the Me, My Selfie and I (MMSI) University of Pennsylvania Study.

#VISUALSOCIALWORK
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