



Social Dynamics: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Lived Experiences of Social Science Professionals Across Generations

Eric F. Fungo¹, Amando F. Grata^{2*}

^{1,2}University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Philippines

*Corresponding author: hajigrata@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study explores the interplay between social dynamics and the career development of social science professionals, focusing on how generational identities are influenced by and contribute to these dynamics. As societies evolve, the resulting behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs shift significantly and impact individuals' career trajectories. This qualitative research employs a descriptive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of social science professionals from different generations—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. By analyzing participants' narratives, the study uncovers how social environments, shaped by historical, political, and economic contexts, inform career choices and professional growth. Key themes emerged from the analysis, highlighting distinct generational characteristics and motivations. Baby Boomers exemplified resilience and adaptability, reflecting on their diverse career paths. Generation X demonstrated a commitment to education and innovation amidst systemic challenges. Millennials articulated a strong drive for social change, while Generation Z exhibited a search for meaning in their evolving professional identities. The findings emphasize that career development is a multifaceted journey, shaped by social dynamics that extend beyond personal choice to encompass broader societal influences. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how generational experiences impact career decision-making, offering insights into fostering an adaptable and resilient workforce capable of navigating contemporary social challenges.

Keywords: Lived experiences; Social dynamics; Social science professionals.

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1. Introduction

The social world is constantly in flux, shaping and reshaping how individuals dream, socialize, work, and live. These societal transformations introduce shifts in behaviors, attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs, challenging established traditions and practices across generations and revealing the intricate layers of social dynamics. Social dynamics are the processes through which societies adapt, balance, and navigate through uncertainty. As a multi-dimensional construct, social dynamics has captivated scholars globally, leading to various programs to enhance understanding of social circumstances and challenges. These programs focus on key areas such as (1) science, technology, and society; (2) the dynamics of human and social behavior; (3) social cohesion and identity; and (4) social change and the evolution of modern society (Rhodes University, 2018).

This study explored the relationship between social dynamics and the career development of social science professionals, examining how social dynamics shape their generational identities. Understanding social dynamics within the context of generational change is essential because today's social issues can define a generation's identity and values. Generational studies provide a valuable lens for understanding how societies evolve, driven by diverse factors such as social values, economic conditions, political climates, and significant societal events. The study's focus on social dynamics and generational identity is motivated by a desire to contribute meaningfully to the field, as understanding these dynamics is essential for grasping the complexities of human development and societal transformation. Modern career theories highlight the importance of meaning, identity, and interest, moving beyond the traditional focus on personality traits. Froidevaux (2018) emphasizes that career development is intricately linked to human development, which is inherently situated within the broader context of human evolution and significantly influenced by social environments and dynamics.

For social science professionals, these aspects are shaped by their generational experiences, which provide a foundation for understanding how they adapt and grow professionally. Each generation, Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z, has unique characteristics shaped by their social environments, influencing their perspectives on career development and professional growth. The Baby Boomer generation encompasses individuals born between 1946 and 1964, making them currently between 60 and 78 years old. This cohort emerged after World War II. The Western economy was experiencing significant growth, often called a "boom." This was a period of heightened social awareness, with the Civil Rights Movement starting to gain popularity. Baby Boomers are often characterized as diligent workers who aim to create prosperous lives for themselves and their families, with a strong sense of community and economic security surpassing previous generations (Keister & Deeb-

Sossa, 2004). Generation X, individuals born between 1965 and 1979, represents a cohort of professionals between the ages of 43 and 57 and are referred to by the code GXP (Generation X Participant). Gen Xers were the "first generation to grow up with personal computers to some extent, thus becoming tech savvy. They were the first generation to grow up with cable television widely available (McKenna, 2024)

The millennials are the first modern generation to be economically worse off than their parents. Zelazko (2024) stated that this generation is also known for being adaptable and is considered the first digital generation, quickly acclimating to new technologies, including smartphones, social media, and streaming entertainment. They are the generation that has received the most formal education. Members of Generation Z are described as "more pragmatic and earlier to mature than previous generations, Gen Zers being more likely to graduate high school, more likely to go to college, and more cautious in their career choices. They are more likely than any previous generation to have at least one parent who graduated college (Eldridge, 2024).

The lived experiences of these generations offer insights into how social dynamics affect career trajectories and aspirations. Research on generations investigates the different values, beliefs, and dispositions held by various age groups, often shaped by significant social events and cultural shifts. For instance, generational research can reveal how social science professionals born within the same period share similarities and differences in their career development experiences, influenced by their unique social environments. This approach allows for understanding the social dynamics that shape each generation's career decisions and professional growth. Studies such as those by Parker, Graf, and Igielnik (2019) and Casey (2021) highlight the distinct social and political views held by younger generations, such as Generation Z and Millennials, compared to older ones like Generation X and Baby Boomers. These studies demonstrate that younger generations tend to hold more progressive stances on social issues, while older generations often lean toward more conservative viewpoints.

Locally, generational dynamics are also evident in political preferences and responses to societal challenges. For example, the Pulse Asia survey from the last quarter of 2019 revealed high approval ratings for Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte among different age groups, with Generation Z showing a 93% approval rate, Millennials at 87%, Generation X at 90%, and Baby Boomers at 79% (Carlos, 2019). These results reflect the generational impressions of Duterte's administration and the social dynamics at play during his presidency. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the responses of elected leaders and the public's reactions further underscored the generational differences in coping with crises. According to the Philippine Social Science Council (2020), adapting to these challenges requires context-specific and time-bound social science research and policy recommendations to remain resilient and relevant in uncertain times. This study aligns with this perspective by exploring the career development of Filipino social science professionals and their generational characteristics within these evolving social dynamics. The 2022 Philippine Presidential Elections further highlighted generational dynamics, with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. receiving substantial support across all age groups despite the social and physical restrictions imposed

due to the pandemic (Statista, 2022). These dynamics suggest that social environments, shaped by significant political and social events, influence generational behavior and decision-making.

In this study, social dynamics are understood as the interactions, relationships, cultural norms, and peer networks that individuals, particularly youth, co-construct within their ecological settings (Farmers et al., 2017). Youth is a critical period where foundational life choices are made, such as selecting a college course, which prevailing social dynamics can influence. Given this context, this study examined how social dynamics impact the career development of social science professionals and sought to understand the generational characteristics that shape their professional lives. The 21st century is often considered the 'social sciences century,' reflecting the central role of human interactions, societal engagement, and diversity in shaping social environments. In this study, social dynamics encompass political climates, economic situations, cultural practices, significant social events, and personal experiences that influence career development among social science-oriented individuals.

Social sciences provide a robust academic foundation for developing various competencies, including communication, critical reasoning, conflict resolution, and collaboration skills. These skills are essential for adapting to dynamic working environments and building meaningful careers, particularly for social science students who must navigate complex social, cultural, psychological, political, and economic influences that shape their environments. The dynamic nature of social sciences allows exploring intricate subjects such as mental health, human rights, disability, migration, gender expression, and inequality. Careers in social sciences often focus on societal issues and human interactions, providing pathways into professions that advocate for social equity and justice. A social science qualification offers diverse career opportunities in education, law, government, social welfare, marketing, research, and more. This study defines social science professionals as administrators, financial advisors, law enforcers, lawyers, social workers, priests, jail wardens, guidance advocates, and educators. This research investigated the career development experiences of these professionals based on the social dynamics of their respective generations, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of career evolution in varying social contexts.

This study emphasizes that career development is a personal journey and a reflection of broader social dynamics. By examining how generational experiences influence career choices and professional growth, this research provides valuable insights into the landscape of careers in the social sciences. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering an adaptable and resilient workforce capable of navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative method, specifically using the descriptive phenomenological research approach to explore the lived experiences of social science professionals across different generations. The study aimed to uncover the essential meanings of these experiences

by analyzing participants' narratives, focusing on how social dynamics influenced their career development and professional identities. This method is particularly useful when little is known about a specific issue and seeks to understand the core meaning of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those directly involved (Giorgi, 1997). The method allowed for a deeper understanding of the generational social dynamics that affect social science professionals in the Philippines. The analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step method, which ensures a comprehensive and accurate interpretation of participants' experiences through a systematic process. The participants were selected based on their relevance to the study's focus, and their narratives were collected via online interviews. Participants were identified through referrals and personal networks, with three professionals selected per generation - the Baby Boomers, Generation X, the Millennials, and Generation Z - to provide diverse perspectives.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Baby Boomers

Social science professionals from the Baby Boomer generation, now between the ages of 58 and 76, have navigated diverse career paths. The participants in this study, aged 67, 61, and 58 (referred to by the code BBP (Baby Boomer Participant), shared their rich, varied experiences, revealing themes such as Opportunities, Explorations, and Journeys; Rewarding and Engaging Experiences; Championing Challenges and Optimism; and Inspirations and Directions.

Table 1 - Baby Boomers Professionals (1946-1964)

Theme	Participant	Key Statement
Opportunities, Explorations, and Journeys	BBP1	"I love teaching children during their development stage."
	BBP1	"It was fulfilling for me to see culture, for me to know culture."
	BBP1	I did not focus on the challenges or problems. I looked at what I learned."
	BBP2	"After a decade, I pursued a master's degree because I felt behind on teaching strategies."
	BBP3	"Those experiences were very helpful in my development as a leader."
Rewarding and Engaging Experiences	BBP3	"My background in social science helped me a lot. Even if you are intelligent and do not know how to relate with people, you cannot go far."
	BBP1	It was fulfilling for me to see culture, for me to know culture."
	BBP1	It was fulfilling for me to return to teaching."
	BBP2	I follow quadratic functions in planning: Instructions, Administration, Research and Extension, and Production."
	BBP3	"I had to choose between marriage and career. I chose harmony in the family."
Championing Challenges and Optimism	BBP3	I trained my youngest child, who was seven years old, to prepare bank deposits. I made it like a play for her."
	BBP1	"I did not focus on the challenges or problems. I looked at what I learned."
	BBP2	"I decided to shift to academia for less pressure and more fulfillment."
	BBP3	"It is always about people."
	BBP3	"I decided to study Psychology against my father's wishes."

Theme	Participant	Key Statement
Inspirations and Directions	BBP1	"I am the driver, the one doing my journey."
	BBP2	"Be serious as a student and finish your studies."
	BBP3	"Whenever I make decisions, I always pray for guidance."

Career exploration is crucial for Baby Boomer social science professionals to find meaning. All three participants pursued various careers as part of their life journeys, developing resilience and facing challenges. For instance, BBP1 transitioned from behavioral therapy to child guidance advocacy, teaching, and business, with a notable stint working with undocumented migrants in Italy. *"I love teaching children during their development stage,"* she shared. After a decade in corporate management, BBP2 moved from clerical work to becoming the Director of Romblon State University. *"After a decade, I pursued a master's degree because I felt I was behind on teaching strategies,"* he reflected. BBP3's journey included human resources, sales, and logistics roles, shaping her leadership skills. *"Those experiences were very helpful in my leadership development,"* she remarked. She later started a food business, using her social science background to excel. After extensive career exploration, each participant found fulfillment in reconnecting with their roots. BBP1 earned certification as a tourist guide for Italian tourists and returned to teaching after passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers. *"It was fulfilling for me to see and know the culture,"* she said. BBP2's return to his native province as Campus Director reflects his deep engagement in his role, especially during the pandemic. *"I follow quadratic functions in planning: Instructions, Administration, Research and Extension, and Production,"* he noted. BBP3 chose family harmony over a lucrative career at Levi Strauss. *"I had to choose between marriage and career. I chose harmony in the family,"* she shared. Her shift to business allowed her to spend quality time with her family, providing her with deeply rewarding experiences.

These professionals demonstrated optimism and resilience as they navigated career challenges. BBP1 faced cultural shocks while teaching in Thailand, opposing corporal punishment. *"I did not focus on the challenges or problems. I looked at what I learned,"* she reflected. BBP2 sought less pressure by transitioning from corporate to academic life, blending professional judgment and optimism. BBP3 pursued a master's in Business Administration after defying her father's wishes to study Psychology. *"It is always about people,"* she emphasized, using her social science background to overcome conflicts. Their stories offer valuable lessons for younger generations. BBP1 embodies independence and adventure. *"I am the driver; I am the one doing my journey,"* she said. BBP2 emphasizes focus and discipline. *"Be serious as a student and finish your studies,"* he advised. BBP3 highlights the importance of values and spiritual grounding. *"Whenever I make decisions, I always pray for guidance,"* she noted. These experiences illustrate how resilience, adaptability, and purpose can lead to fulfilling careers and lives.

3.2 The Generation X

The social science professionals from this generation who participated in this study are aged 43, 44, and 47. Their narratives revealed several key themes: Education, Interest, and Passion;

Work Experiences; innovations, Reforms, and Recognitions; Championing Challenges; encouragement and Inspiration; vision and Directions; and Commitment. These themes reflect their unique journeys, decisions, and achievements in their professional lives.

Table 2 - Generation X Professionals: (1965-1979)

Theme	Participant Key Statements	
Education, Interest, and Passion	GXP1	"It was such a fulfilling experience; I love teaching."
	GXP2	"Teachers were not fully compensated at that time, so my mother disapproved of the idea."
	GXP3	"The law office was my playground."
Work Experience	GXP1	"I lead the monitoring and planning adjustment regarding the curriculum implementation."
	GXP2	"I strive to create a learning environment where every student feels valued and motivated to excel."
	GXP3	"Serving others is not just a job; it is my calling, especially in cases where the resolution process takes years."
Innovations, Reforms, and Recognitions	GXP1	Led curriculum changes and supported the integration of new educational technologies.
	GXP2	"I strive to create a learning environment where every student feels valued and motivated to excel."
	GXP3	Advocated for legal reforms for marginalized communities and earned professional recognition.
Championing Challenges	GXP1	"Staying committed to providing quality education to all students, regardless of the circumstances."
	GXP2	"Relearning the ropes of the education system was both a challenge and an opportunity for growth."
	GXP3	"It is not about how fast you get there; it is about ensuring that the right thing is done."
Encouragement and Inspiration	GXP1	"Seeing my students excel is the greatest reward of all."
	GXP2	"My family's support and my colleagues' encouragement have been invaluable to my growth as an educator."
	GXP3	"Every case I take on reminds me of why I chose this profession—to make a difference."
Vision and Directions	GXP1	Envisions an inclusive, innovative, and adaptive education system.
	GXP2	"I want to be part of shaping an education system that is future-ready and student-centered."
	GXP3	"Continue fighting for justice and ensuring that the law serves everyone fairly."
Commitment	GXP1	Unwavering commitment to educational reform.
	GXP2	Dedication to fostering quality learning experiences.
	GXP3	Relentless pursuit of justice and legal reforms.

For Generation X social science professionals, educational paths were shaped by interests, values, and circumstances. GXP1 pursued a course aligned with his interests but later shifted to teaching, a deeply fulfilling field. He reflected, "*It was such a fulfilling experience for me; I love teaching,*" highlighting the importance of aligning passion with career choices.

GXP2's educational path was influenced by her mother's disapproval of her initial interest in teaching due to the low compensation for teachers at the time. She explained, "*At that time, teachers were not yet fully compensated, so my mother disapproved of the idea.*" Despite pursuing a degree in Foreign Service, GXP2 eventually returned to her passion for education, completing an education degree and becoming a dedicated social science teacher. GXP3's interest in law was sparked by early exposure through her family, with the law office becoming her "*playground.*" Her passion for justice and service has grown through her professional experiences, particularly in cases where justice takes years to achieve.

The participants' professional experiences illustrate varied career trajectories and successes. GXP1 excelled academically, securing immediate employment in teaching, which allowed him to rise to the position of Chief of the Curriculum Implementation Division. He leads projects focused on curriculum development, stating, "*I lead the monitoring and planning adjustment about the implementation of the curriculum.*" GXP2 gained valuable experience in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), where she worked as a Quality Assurance advocate, ensuring high standards in customer service. Her analytical skills and leadership in the BPO sector paved the way for her transition back into education, where she feels her passion lies. GXP3's work in law has been driven by her desire to serve others and achieve justice. Despite challenges, she remains committed to her clients and the legal system. She shares, "*Serving others is not just a job; it is my calling, especially in cases where the resolution process takes years.*"

These professionals have contributed to innovations, advocated for reforms, and earned recognition for their work. GXP1 has actively led efforts to integrate new technologies into the curriculum, ensuring inclusivity and continuous improvement. His leadership focuses on adapting the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students. Similarly, GXP2 has been recognized for fostering a culture of quality and innovation in her organizations. As a teacher, she implements creative strategies to cater to different learning styles, stating, "*I strive to create a learning environment where every student feels valued and motivated to excel.*" GXP3, in the legal profession, has been at the forefront of advocating for reforms, particularly for marginalized communities. Her commitment to fairness and justice has earned her professional recognition, and she continues to push for reforms to make the legal process more efficient and accessible.

These professionals have demonstrated resilience in overcoming the challenges they encountered in their careers. GXP1 faced systemic issues and resource constraints in the educational sector but successfully navigated them through a proactive and problem-solving approach. He emphasized "*staying committed to providing quality education to all students, regardless of the circumstances.*" GXP2 encountered challenges when transitioning from the corporate world to education, noting that "*relearning the ropes of the education system was both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.*" Her ability to adapt and her commitment to her students have been key to her success. GXP3 has faced the slow pace of legal proceedings and the difficulties of advocating for underrepresented groups. Her unwavering commitment

to justice keeps her moving forward, saying, "*It is not about how fast you get there; it is about making sure that the right thing is done.*"

The participants also found sources of encouragement and inspiration in their professional journeys. GXP1 draws motivation from his students' achievements, stating, "*Seeing my students excel is the greatest reward.*" His commitment to education is driven by a desire to impact future generations positively. GXP2 finds inspiration from her family and colleagues, who have supported her throughout her career. She shared, "*My family's support and my colleagues' encouragement have been invaluable to my growth as an educator.*" For GXP3, her clients and the communities she serves provide continuous encouragement. She explained, "*Every case I take on is a reminder of why I chose this profession—to make a difference.*" Her dedication to justice inspires her to push forward despite the challenges.

Looking to the future, the participants have clear goals for their careers. GXP1 envisions continuing his work in educational reform and curriculum development, focusing on inclusivity and innovation in the education system. GXP2 aims to deepen her impact by exploring new teaching methodologies and contributing to policy reforms, stating, "*I want to be part of shaping an education system that is future-ready and student-centered.*" GXP3 intends to expand her advocacy for legal reforms and continue her work with underserved communities. She is determined to "*continue fighting for justice and ensuring that the law serves everyone fairly.*"

The commitment of these Generation X professionals is evident in their dedication to their fields and their continuous efforts to innovate and advocate for change. GXP1's unwavering passion for education, GXP2's dedication to creating quality learning environments, and GXP3's relentless pursuit of justice reflect the values that define Generation X professionals. Their stories show how passion, perseverance, and a sense of purpose can lead to fulfilling and impactful careers, providing valuable insights into how professionals can navigate challenges and contribute meaningfully to their fields.

3.3 The Millennials

Social science professionals from the millennial generation, aged between 28 and 42, include four participants in this study: MP1, MP2, MP3, and MP4. MP1 and MP2 are 39 years old, while MP3 and MP4 are 40. The themes derived from their career development are Foundation, Formation, Influences, and Interests; Intentions, Decisions, and Realizations; Commitment, Relationships, and Reputations; Demands, Potentials, and Opportunities; Decision-Making and Responsibility; Rewarding Moments; Challenges; and Motivating Younger Generations. Reflecting on Malcolm X's assertion, "*Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today,*" these millennials have demonstrated a profound commitment to education. Despite various factors influencing their choice of social science courses, it is evident that they have consistently valued the importance of selecting the right educational path to prepare effectively for their professional roles. Their distinct socio-economic backgrounds and personal experiences have shaped their educational journeys, yet they share a collective appreciation for education's role in their careers.

Table 3 - Millennials Professionals (1980-1994)

Themes	Participants	Key Statements
Foundation and Formation	MP1	"Faced challenges in pursuing higher education and chose social work due to its accessibility."
	MP2	"Entered the seminary but transitioned to a military academy due to financial constraints."
	MP3	"Initially pursued electronics before embracing a religious vocation."
	MP4	"Drawn to psychology, influenced by curiosity and teaching experiences."
Influences and Purposes	MP1	"Pursued advanced degrees in education and counseling to enhance teaching practice."
	MP2	"Found purpose through mentorship in social work shifted to law enforcement."
	MP3	"Spiritual experiences in childhood and education in philosophy shaped a commitment to serving others."
	MP4	"Challenging upbringing influenced a career in law enforcement and rehabilitation programs."
Intention, Decision, and Realizations	MP1	"Move from provincial to metropolitan teaching revealed disparities in educational settings."
	MP2	"Shift from social work to law enforcement was driven by personal motivations but focused on addressing societal issues."
	MP3	"Diverse roles within the priesthood heightened sensitivity to marginalized groups."
	MP4	"Commitment to rehabilitation programs in correctional facilities demonstrates dedication to justice system reform."
Demands, Potentials, and Opportunities	MP1	"Teaching in the U.S. highlighted a stark contrast in compensation and support compared to the Philippines."
	MP2	"Vocation Director role involves inspiring young professionals across the Philippines."
	MP3	"Position as a warden demands management skills and trust-building with inmates."
	MP4	"Background as a social worker benefits her current law enforcement role, especially with minors."
Decisions and Responsibilities	MP1	"Empowers counselees to make decisions, fostering responsibility."
	MP2	"Emphasizes integrity and transparency in ministry roles, navigating operational decisions."
	MP3	"Influences societal change through rehabilitating individuals in conflict with the law."
Rewarding Moments	MP1	"Fulfillment comes from students' understanding and appreciation."
	MP2	"Values gratitude from parishioners and the positive changes in their lives."
	MP3	"Derives satisfaction from seeing inmates change their lives."

Themes	Participants Key Statements	
Dealing with Challenges	MP4	"Finds reward in successful operations and impacting families positively."
	MP1	"Positive attitude and coping mechanisms helped him overcome career transitions."
	MP2	"Offers guidance through prayer and reflection when dealing with skepticism."
Motivating Younger Generations	MP4	"Prepares rigorously for court testimonies and operations, relying on preparation and prayer."
	MP1	"Demonstrates the value of continuous learning and career growth, setting a positive example."
	MP2	"Encourages those calling to serve by sharing his faith journey."
	MP4	"Inspire younger professionals by demonstrating dedication and resilience in their fields."

Socioeconomic status significantly influenced some participant's educational paths. MP1 faced considerable challenges in pursuing higher education and chose social work- a less popular field due to its perceived accessibility. Early exposure to social work through community outreach and her family's involvement contributed to her commitment to the field. MP2 relates: *"I entered the seminary, influenced by high school experiences with nuns, but eventually, I transitioned to a military academy due to financial constraints."* He added, *"My military training led to a career as a jail warden."* MP3, now a priest, initially pursued an electronic course before embracing his religious vocation, inspired by childhood experiences with his grandmother and, later, the nuns in secondary education. The fourth co-researcher, MP4, was *"drawn to psychology out of curiosity about human behavior, and transitioned into teaching, influenced by his grandmother's role as an educator."* His experiences as a teacher and guidance counselor have shaped his social science foundation.

Influential figures significantly shaped each professional choice of the participants. MP1, guided by a curiosity about human behavior, *"pursued advanced degrees in education and counseling, reflecting an ongoing quest to enhance her teaching practice."* MP3's *"spiritual experiences and education in philosophy underpinned my vocational path, revealing a deep commitment to serving others through spiritual ministry."* MP2 found her *"purpose through mentorship, which helped me appreciate the field's impact on societal welfare."* Her career shift to law enforcement, while initially motivated by personal reasons, reflected her commitment to addressing criminal behavior's root causes. MP4's *"entry into law enforcement was influenced by a challenging upbringing,"* motivating him to seek meaningful work in the justice system.

Millennial social science professionals' commitment to professional growth is evident in their career decisions. MP1's *"move from provincial to metropolitan teaching environments"* enriched her understanding of the field. MP3's diverse roles within the priesthood, *"from parish duties to administrative positions, provided extensive experiences in social interactions and heightened sensitivity to marginalized groups."* MP4's dedication to implementing rehabilitation programs in correctional facilities demonstrates his *"commitment to ensuring*

positive outcomes for individuals in the justice system." MP2's decision to *"shift from social work to law enforcement"* reflects a deep understanding of societal issues shaped by family experiences.

Opportunities in the professional world can vary widely. For millennial social science professionals, these often arise from innate potential and field demands. In the U.S., high teacher demand and competitive compensation presented significant opportunities for MP1. His *"experience in the U.S. educational system highlighted a stark contrast to the situation in the Philippines,"* where teachers often face numerous responsibilities. Despite challenges, MP1 finds teaching in the Philippines rewarding due to the genuine appreciation from students. In ministry, MP2 faces the *"challenge of balancing the delivery of messages of hope, peace, and love while maintaining fairness."* As a Vocation Director, she travels across the Philippines to inspire young professionals, requiring sensitivity to societal challenges. MP3 views his role in the Bureau of Jail and Penology as a testament to his skills, stating, *"The position demands precise operation and management to ensure facility security."* MP4 finds her *"background as a social worker beneficial,"* especially during interrogations involving minors.

Decision-making is crucial for social science professionals, often testing their ability to make informed choices. MP2 navigates complex decisions as a campus minister, emphasizing integrity and transparency. MP1, in his *"guidance and counseling practice, empowers his counselees to make their own decisions,"* encouraging responsibility. His decision to work abroad reflects a commitment to professional development. MP3, motivated to influence societal change through rehabilitation, demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility in managing programs.

Moments of impact are highly rewarding for social science professionals. MP1 finds *"fulfillment in witnessing students' understanding and appreciation of their lessons."* MP2 *"values the expressions of gratitude from parishioners,"* while MP3 *"derives satisfaction from seeing inmates"* inspired to change their lives. MP4 *"finds her rewards in successful operations and the genuine impact of her work."*

Social science professionals must approach challenges with resilience. MP1 has *"demonstrated a positive attitude and effective coping mechanisms,"* attributing his success to his psychology background. MP2 faces skepticism in ministry, approaching it by *"understanding their perspectives and offering guidance."* MP4 *"prepares rigorously for court testimonies and operational tasks,"* recognizing the importance of thorough preparation. While idealistic, social science professionals can contribute significantly to a better society. MP2 *"envision a proactive approach to social issues,"* advocating for comprehensive community training. MP3 emphasizes *"community involvement in supporting rehabilitation,"* while MP1 advocates for enhancing educational programs to impact students positively. Social science professionals inspire younger generations through their work. MP2 encourages service through his journey. MP1's academic achievements *"demonstrate the value of continuous learning,"* while MP4 *"inspire younger professionals by demonstrating the impact of dedication and resilience,"* contributing to understanding the potential for positive change.

3.4 The Generation Z

The Generation Z participants in this study, aged 24, 26, and 27, reflect diverse backgrounds and exposures that have influenced their professional journeys. Themes derived from their narratives include Background and Exposure, Learning Opportunities, Inspiration and New Perspectives, Leadership and Governance, Challenges and Realizations, Understanding and Awareness, Hard Work and Reward, Conviction, Inspiration, Mission, and Service and Credibility.

Table 4 - Generation Z Professionals (1995-2014)

Theme	Participant Key Statements	
Background and Exposure	GZP1	"I got to meet and talk to many people with different statuses in life... it made me curious more about us, about 'people' as social beings."
	GZP2	"There are people who had to go through hard experiences... it gives me an insight into how they live their lives."
	GZP3	He was inspired by his sister's academic journey at De La Salle University, which led to an interest in interdisciplinary studies.
Learning Opportunities	GZP1	"The more I was exposed to the realities and injustices in the workplace, the more I am driven to learn more."
	GZP2	"That is where the theories I learned, the concepts that I have envisioned, really came to life."
	GZP3	Learned the importance of health in workplace environments, prioritizing well-being over difficult conditions.
Inspiration and New Perspectives	GZP1	"These experiences showed me the practical side of theory and helped me develop a clearer vision of what I want to achieve."
	GZP2	Inspired by his father's resilience and work ethic in law, combining it with psychological insights.
	GZP3	Encouraged by his sister's achievements, he explored new academic perspectives, particularly in interdisciplinary studies.
Leadership and Governance	GZP1	"Leading a team and making decisions that impact others helped me understand the complexities of governance and leadership."
	GZP2	"Working with different leaders taught me about the diverse approaches to leadership and how to navigate complex governance issues."
	GZP3	"Studying leadership from different perspectives broadened my understanding of how leadership principles apply across different sectors."
Challenges and Realizations	GZP1	"Balancing different aspects of my life taught me the importance of being organized and focused."
	GZP2	"It was challenging to bridge the gap between psychology and law, but it ultimately made me more adaptable and innovative."
	GZP3	"Shifting my focus required me to develop new skills and adapt my approach to different areas of study."
Understanding and Awareness	GZP1	"Exposure to various viewpoints and experiences has broadened my understanding and made me more open to different approaches."
	GZP2	"Integrating psychological insights into legal practice has given me a greater understanding of how mental health issues impact legal cases."

Theme	Participant Key Statements	
Hard Work and Reward	GZP3	"Studying various disciplines has helped me see the value of combining different areas of knowledge to address complex issues."
	GZP1	"The effort I put into balancing different aspects of my life has paid off in terms of personal development and career clarity."
	GZP2	"The challenges faced in integrating psychology into law made me more adaptable and innovative."
Conviction, Inspiration, and Mission	GZP3	"Shifting my focus required me to develop new skills and adapt my approach to different areas of study."
	GZP1	"Strong sense of conviction and mission, driven by a passion for understanding and improving social dynamics."
	GZP2	His father's dedication further solidified his commitment to integrating psychological insights into law.
Service and Credibility	GZP3	"The influence of his sister's academic achievements fostered a strong conviction in exploring interdisciplinary studies."
	GZP1	"His background in various roles and activities underscores the value of building a credible and service-oriented career."
	GZP2	"Integrating psychological insights into legal practice emphasizes the importance of credibility and effective service."
	GZP3	"His academic and professional pursuits reflect a dedication to making a meaningful impact through his work."

The influence of family background is evident in GZP1's career trajectory. With a lineage of lawyers on his paternal side, pursuing law seemed a natural choice. His involvement in high school extracurricular activities, including varsity sports and student leadership roles, sparked his curiosity about human socialization. This diverse exposure ultimately guided his decision to study political science as a precursor to law. He reflected, "*I got to meet and talk to many people with different statuses in life... it made me curious more about us, about 'people' as social beings.*" GZP2's path into law was shaped by his father's career as a lawyer. Combining this influence with his background in psychology, he aimed to integrate psychological insights into legal practice, focusing on the mental aspects of cases. He noted, "*There are people who had to go through hard experiences... it gives me an insight into how they live their lives.*" His sister's academic journey at De La Salle University inspired the choice of Interdisciplinary Studies at Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU) by GZP3. His exposure to her studies ignited an interest in the field. Initially intending to major in Psychology, he shifted to Management and Communication, driven by a passion for sports and a scholarship opportunity.

GZP1's diverse experiences in workplace environments and his background in psychology provided valuable learning opportunities. His time as an exchange student, dealing with mental health issues and cultural differences, enriched his understanding of human behavior and its legal implications. He remarked, "*The more I was exposed to the realities and injustices in the workplace, the more I am driven to learn more.*" An exchange program allowed GZP2 to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world cultural practices. He explained, "*That is where the theories I learned, the concepts that I have envisioned, really came to life.*" For GZP3,

working in a large company offered a unique perspective on workplace challenges, emphasizing the importance of health over difficult conditions.

GZP1 found inspiration through participation in community outreach and debates, which provided practical insights and clarified his career goals. He said, "*These experiences showed me the practical side of theory and helped me develop a clearer vision of what I want to achieve.*" The resilience and dedication of GZP2's father motivated him to pursue his path in law, integrating psychological insights into his practice. This admiration for his father's work ethic inspired him significantly. GZP3 was influenced by his sister's academic achievements, which opened his eyes to the potential of interdisciplinary studies. Her success encouraged him to explore new perspectives in his educational and professional pursuits.

Exposure to student leadership roles and governance structures profoundly shaped GZP1's understanding of effective leadership. He shared, "*Leading a team and making decisions that impact others helped me understand the complexities of governance and leadership.*"

GZP2 gained insights into leadership and governance through legal internships and volunteer work, learning from various leaders. He noted, "*Working with different leaders taught me about the diverse approaches to leadership and how to navigate complex governance issues.*" Academic experiences in interdisciplinary studies broadened GZP3's appreciation of leadership and governance. He remarked, "*Studying leadership from different perspectives broadened my understanding of how leadership principles apply across different sectors.*"

GZP1 faced challenges balancing academic and extracurricular activities, requiring effective time management and prioritization. He stated, "*Balancing different aspects of my life taught me the importance of being organized and focused.*" GZP2 navigated the complexities of integrating psychological insights into legal practice, which presented its own set of challenges. He reflected, "*It was challenging to bridge the gap between psychology and law, but it ultimately made me more adaptable and innovative.*" Transitioning from a sports-oriented academic background to a focus on management and communication posed challenges for GZP3. Adapting his skills and knowledge to new goals required significant effort. He explained, "*Shifting my focus required me to develop new skills and adapt my approach to different areas of study.*"

GZP1's diverse experiences contributed to a deeper understanding and awareness of different perspectives. He noted, "*Exposure to various viewpoints and experiences has broadened my understanding and made me more open to different approaches.*" GZP2 developed a heightened awareness of mental health impacts on legal cases by integrating psychological insights into legal practice. He said, "*Integrating psychological insights into legal practice has given me a greater understanding of how mental health issues impact legal cases.*" GZP3's interdisciplinary studies enhanced his awareness of the interconnectedness of different fields. He remarked, "*Studying various disciplines has helped me see the value of combining different areas of knowledge to address complex issues.*"

GZP1's dedication to balancing responsibilities led to personal growth and career clarity. He shared, "*The effort I put into balancing different aspects of my life has paid off in terms of personal development and career clarity.*" GZP2's commitment to integrating psychological insights into legal practice resulted in a deeper understanding of his field. He observed, "*The challenges faced in integrating psychology into law made me more adaptable and innovative.*" For GZP3, transitioning from a sports-oriented academic background to a focus on management required significant hard work and adaptation. The reward was the development of new skills and a broader approach to his studies. He explained, "*Shifting my focus required me to develop new skills and adapt my approach to different areas of study.*" GZP1's career journey reflects a "*strong sense of conviction and mission, driven by a passion for understanding and improving social dynamics.*" His experiences shaped a clear sense of purpose in his professional aspirations. The inspiration GZP2 drew from his "*father's dedication further solidified his commitment to integrating psychological insights into his legal practice.*" This sense of mission guides his approach to law and personal development. For GZP3, the "*influence of his sister's academic achievements fostered a strong sense of conviction in exploring interdisciplinary studies.*" This commitment to his educational and professional goals demonstrates a clear mission for his future endeavors.

GZP1's experiences highlight the importance of service and credibility in professional development. His background in various roles and activities underscores the value of building a credible and service-oriented career. In GZP2's case, "*integrating psychological insights into legal practice*" emphasizes the importance of credibility and effective service. His work aims to address mental health issues within the legal context, enhancing his professional credibility. GZP3's journey through interdisciplinary studies demonstrates a "*commitment to service and credibility in his field.*" His academic and professional pursuits reflect a dedication to making a meaningful impact through his work.

4. Conclusions

As indicated in this study, the social dynamics of the generations show significant contributions in all career stages of the participants. Each generation has its distinct characteristics, influenced by the dynamics of their generation. The Baby Boomers were adventurous and ambitious; they did not settle in just one career. The Gen Xers were conservative, focused, and independent. The millennials, on the other hand, were driven and innovative. Gen Z are still in the exploratory phase where they are trying to look for meaning and purpose. Although there are age gaps and the richness of the participants' experiences are different, it is still evident that each generation has distinct characteristics. Developing a career is indeed a life journey and in itself influenced by so many factors. For social science professionals, these factors have been in one way or another, the source of their inspiration in finding their meaning and purpose. It brings this study to the necessary stages of the participants' career development. In the process of career exploration, cognitive exercise imposes substantial decision outcomes. Ultimately, this study argues for the following:

Social science professionals 'social dynamics' and 'career journey' reflect their experiences from selecting a college course to exploring various careers. Social dynamics focus

on the behaviors of generations shaped by individual interactions and group relationships. The journey begins with choosing a social science course, influenced by inspiration and motivation, leading to opportunities that help them find meaning in their careers. Challenges accompany every opportunity, with Millennials and Generation Z currently navigating this stage. At the same time, Baby Boomers and Generation X are established and engaged in fulfilling careers, often focusing on community service. Career decisions stem from various inspirations within one's social environment, including successful role models and everyday interactions. Factors influencing career choices include childhood experiences, culture, gender, interests, personality, and socioeconomic conditions. Social science professionals recognize these influences as significant in shaping their career paths and impacting earnings, social standing, and emotional well-being.

Career progression involves achieving goals, acquiring skills, and receiving appropriate compensation. Social science professionals understand that education level and job nature significantly correlate with employment opportunities. Baby boomers and Generation X were in social environments where they developed skills and their experiences are essential for career advancement. They face challenges in productivity, recognition, decision-making, administrative support, and workplace conditions. These challenges align with common workplace issues, including motivation, technology adaptation, communication gaps, and mental health. Generational differences influence how these challenges are perceived, with younger professionals often dealing with pressures from superiors.

Motivation is the internal force that drives professionals toward their career goals. It can be intrinsic, arising from personal interest, or extrinsic, driven by external rewards like wealth or fame. Both types of motivation contribute to career satisfaction and improved performance. The Millennials and Generation Z Social science professionals' experiences show that motivated individuals put forth greater effort, enhancing productivity and morale. Their career exploration involves behaviors related to self-discovery and environmental engagement. They demonstrate proactive behavior, taking control of their careers and responding actively to their social environments. This proactive attitude is crucial for career exploration and success in any workplace.

Social science professionals continuously seek meaning in their careers, achieving self-fulfillment through social dynamics. Their narratives indicate that fulfillment is vital for effective performance and role engagement. For Generation Z, community service is a significant motivation early in their careers, reflecting their dynamic and creative approach. In contrast, Baby Boomers and Generation X emphasize service through organizational contributions. A strong sense of social involvement enhances their careers and provides development and fulfillment.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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