

Generation Z: The new millennial

Generation Z (also known as Generation M for multitasking, Generation C for Connected Generation, the Net Generation or the iGeneration) is a common name in the US and other Western nations for the group of people born roughly from the second half of the [1990s](#) through to the late [2000s](#) or early [2010's](#), a span of 15-20 years in the very late 20th and very early 21st centuries. This generation is currently growing up in the [2010's](#) decade, as children and younger teens, which some citations show that the oldest members are entering adulthood as of 2012.

These 9-21 year olds are just starting to define themselves. It's the most diverse generation the world has ever seen comfortable within the global context and the challenges of working across boundaries. They are "digital natives" who have grown up deeply immersed in the web of technology and inter-connectivity. They are motivated to serve, particularly through volunteerism, but appear to be following Generation Y's trend of political disengagement. They are also facing one of the toughest economies we've experienced since the "Greatest Generation" of the Great Depression era, encouraging them to think about alternative career pathways as they struggle with the debt earlier generations have saddled them with.

Characteristics About Generation Z Students

Members of Generation Z are today's middle school, high school and college students, and they are transforming the demographics of higher education enrollment in the United States. They are the most ethnically and racially diverse college group in history (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Terry, Dukes, Valdez, & Wilson, 2005). The 2000 Census found that just over 31% of Generation Z are from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds, and this percentage is growing. Nearly three quarters of all current undergraduates are defined as "nontraditional" by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which means they have at least one of the following characteristics: "(1) delayed enrollment, (2) attend part-time, (3) work full time, (4) are financially independent, (5) have dependents, (6) are single parents, or (7) lack a high school diploma" (Oblinger, 2003, p.38).

Generation Z Seven Core Personality Traits

Neil Howe and William Strauss, best known for their book *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000), identified the following seven core personality traits of the Net Generation's peer personality.

1) Special: The first members of the Millennial generation were born in the early 1980s as children of the subset of Boomer parents labeled "yuppies." Boomer dads started out by involving themselves in the childbirth process; they attended childbirth courses and were present at the births of their children. With the end of the Cold War, the national political focus was shifted to enhancing the development of children through educational systems. Enrichment programs such as Head Start became popular during this time.

Members of the Millennial Generation internalized a sense of specialness in part from their experience of dominating the national dialogue. They also believe they will be the generation that will help Americans realize better futures through their civic-mindedness and leadership, qualities absent in the Gen Xers, who are distrustful of and apathetic toward civic and political service (Strauss & Howe, 2006). The large size of the Millennial Generation has made it an important object of attention—whether from their Boomer parents telling them they are special or from companies trying to sell them products (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003). The role of Millennial students' parents in their lives, including their college experience, is striking (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003). One of the biggest shifts for college campuses has been in the relationships between students and their parents; Boomer parents are extremely involved in their children's lives and directly involved with their children's colleges. Everything that happens to Millennial Generation students is considered

vital to their parents' sense of purpose, and their parents advocate for them throughout college and beyond (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Keppler, Mullendore, & Carey, 2005).

2) Sheltered: Parents and authority figures have sheltered this generation from harm. These efforts have ranged from the innocuous "Baby on Board" signs to the serious school safety changes made in the post-Columbine era (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003). Millennial generation parents are concerned about their children's safety and lobby for measures such as v-chips for television sets, metal detectors and security guards in schools, and spy cameras to monitor their babysitters. Younger students from the Millennial Generation are comfortable with significant parental involvement in their safety, which is the opposite of the Gen Xers' experience.

The Millennial Generation has been encouraged to follow the rules in school and throughout their development. These students expect to be suspended from school if they possess toy guns or butter knives. They trust that their parents and authority figures will apply rules fairly (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Strauss & Howe, 2006). Members of the Millennial Generation have spent their childhoods in structured, organized activities rather than in unstructured play (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003). In fact, the focus on structured activities has become so rigorous that the American Academy of Pediatrics (2006) recently encouraged parents to allow their children to spend time in free play and engage in unstructured activities for the benefit of their development.

3) Confident: Members of the Millennial Generation exude optimism and expect to hear good news (DeBard, 2004; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Millennial generation teenagers believe that they (and their children) will be able to achieve the American Dream. They believe it is easier to be a kid today than in their parents' time. They say they are optimistic about their chances of obtaining good jobs, and many believe they will be more financially successful than their parents (Strauss & Howe, 2006).

The Millennial generation trusts authority figures, who have given them rewards such as trophies for participating in activities as children and scholarships for passing achievement tests in high school (DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; 2003). They are good negotiators in determining acceptable levels of behavior with parents, teachers, and employers (DeBard, 2004; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000). Millennial generation students are motivated to make an effort to meet the expectations of others, and they expect beneficial outcomes (DeBard, 2004; Zemke, Raines, & Filipczak, 2000).

4) Conventional: The Boomer parents of the Millennial generation rebelled against the conventional attitudes of their own parents. Members of the Millennial generation have a stronger connection to their parents and have returned to more conventional values. Strauss and Howe (2006) report that Millennial generation teenagers and young adults are more likely than any generation in history to share their parents' values. DeBard (2004) says that members of the Millennial generation have learned to go along to get along, and they prefer not to take risks or be out of compliance with social rules. The Boomers defined social rules for the Millennial generation and they have had the power and resources to support those who followed these rules. Codes of conduct, proper dress, and high-stakes proficiency testing are typical experiences of members of the Net Generation (DeBard, 2004).

5) Team-oriented: In contrast to the disconnectedness of Generation X, the millennial generation members are more connected to each other than any previous generation. Millennial students like to congregate, whether in person, on cell phones, or on the Internet (DeBard, 2004). They seek out technology that helps them stay connected, such as instant messaging and social networking Web sites like Facebook. Teachers have capitalized on the idea of students influencing each other in positive ways by having them work in groups and on academic teams. Academic teamwork is so common that Millennial generation students prefer to work in teams on academic projects because they feel less individual pressure (DeBard, 2004).

Throughout their childhoods, Millennial generation children participated in activities such as team sports and youth programs (Howe & Strauss, 2000; 2003; Strauss & Howe, 2006; Terry, Dukes, Valdez, & Wilson, 2005).

They like to cooperate with others and want to be perceived by authority figures as willing to work in groups (DeBard, 2004). At the same time, millennial generation students are uncomfortable with controversy and look to authority figures to protect them in periods of conflict (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; see also DeBard, 2004).

6) Achieving: The Millennial generation is the highest-achieving generation in history (DeBard, 2004). Average SAT scores have increased 18 points from 1995–2005 and high school students report having definitive long-term plans that include specific college choices and career directions (College Board, 2006). On the one hand, these students are serious about preparing for their careers; on the other hand, they report liking school less than previous generations did. Millennial generation students are scoring much better in math and science, and are following career paths along those lines (Strauss & Howe, 2006).

In addition to the real achievements of these students, grade inflation has increased dramatically in the past 30 years, according to data from the Cooperative Institute Research Project (CIRP; Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 2002). For instance, in the late 1960s, 20.7% of students reported earning grades of C+ or below in high school while only 17.7% of students reported earning grades of A- or higher. Since the late 60s, there has been a steady shift in the balance to where grades of A- or higher drastically outnumber grades of C+ or less. In 2003, 46.6% of students reported A grades while only 5.1% reported C grades! One of the two periods that saw the most drastic change in grade inflation was the time between 1986 and 2003, during the time the Millennial generation have attended high school (Sax, Astin, Lindholm, Korn, Saens, & Mahoney, 2004). High school grade inflation has caused Millennial generation students to believe they will do better in college than those from other generations. Indeed, the percentage of entering first-year students who expected to earn a “B” in college has jumped from 26.7% in the 1960s to 57.5% in 2001 (Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 2002).

7) Pressured: In addition to having an achievement focus, members of the Millennial generation feel pressure to perform (DeBard, 2004). They believe that their long-term success hinges on the choices they make today; to them, success comes from a combination of planning and effort. In this sense, Millennial generation students feel a lot of pressure to do well on their exams and in other forms of evaluation (Strauss & Howe, 2006). High school students are aware that getting into college requires more than just good grades, so they fill their schedules with extracurricular activities. Stress and anxiety are common traits of Millennial generation college students (Terry, Dukes, Valdez, & Wilson, 2005). The percentage of college students who reported depression and anxiety in “the last school year” on the American College Health Association (ACHA) National College Health Assessment survey increased steadily from 2000 to 2005 (American College Health Association, 2006). In 2000, 16% of students reported experiencing depression in the previous school year and 7% reported experiencing anxiety while in 2005, the figures were 21% and 14%, respectively. DeBard (2004) believes this anxiety is due to the fact that the Boomers push their Millennial generation children to succeed to show how good their parenting skills are and for their own sense of accomplishment.

Another possible reason for the increase in mental health issues is that Millennial generation college students feel pressured by their parents and by themselves to succeed. Millennial generation students are much different from their counterparts in previous generations. Their arrival on college campuses signals a return to more conventional values reminiscent of the Silent Generation era. Also, these students’ connections to each other and the world via technology are unique. The world in which they have developed has cherished them as America’s next great generation and has provided them with technological tools unlike any ever seen. Their comfort with these technologies will continue to shape their own and future generations.

Facts About Generation Z Students

Today, we live in a postponed generation. They push the button on responsibility. While they are good at multitasking, they may find it harder to have old-fashioned, face-to-face conversations. With each new generation,.....

1. **Time** becomes more valuable
2. **Expectations** of convenience matter
3. The demand of work **meaning** intensifies
4. The hunger of **options** grows
5. The sense of **entitlement** increases
6. The need for **speed** & **space** goes up

Other Facts About Generation Z Students

- *A Generation about “Me”*
- *An “unreal” reality*
- *“Don’t talk, just text me”*
 - *“Lol”*
 - *“Omg”*
- *Instant minded*
- *Impatient*
- *Independent/Freedom*
- *Ambitious*
- *“Digital natives”*
- *Multi-taskers*
- *Smarter and more business savvy*
 - *Want to do things on their own*
 - *60.2% want to become an authority in their field*