



A Psychological Profile of the New Millenium College Student

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- The description of millennial students to follow are drawn from the work of Richard Sweeney, University Librarian at New Jersey Institute of Technology.
- His own children sparked his interest in the subject. Among other things, he has conducted over 35 focus groups in more than a dozen colleges in the presence of live audiences.

Millennials, a.k.a. NextGen, GenY, Echo Boomers, C Generation

Millennials' birth years span

- 1979 through 1983 are in the work force
- 1984 through 1994 are in college now or will be by 2012

“The Natives are Restless”

- **Natives** of our digital, consumer driven, flat, networked, instant satisfaction world; yet they still clearly want and expect expert teachers in a face-to-face environment.
- **Immigrants** - adaptive older generations will never be as competent, resourceful or “natural” as the “natives.”

Common Millennial Behaviors and Characteristics

- The following behaviors distinguish millennials in degree or kind from previous generations *at the same age*.

More Choices; More Selectivity

- Grew up with unlimited array of services and products
- Expect the same array in every service, including their college or university
- Unhappy with fewer choices

Experiential and Exploratory Learners

- Prefer learning by doing and interacting
- Multiplayer gaming, computer simulations, and social networks
- Almost never read the directions
- Bored by lectures

Flexibility / Convenience

- Keep time and commitments flexible longer in order to take advantage of better options
- Expect other people and institutions to give them more flexibility

Personalization and Customization

- Expect products and services to have as much personalization and customization features as possible to meet their changing needs, interests and tastes

Impatient, practical and results oriented

- No tolerance for delays
- Want to learn what they have to learn quickly and move on
- Expect instant processes and services that work continuously, and reliably and speed their interactions
- Require almost constant feedback to know how they are progressing

Multitaskers

- Excel at juggling several tasks at once since this an efficient, practical use of their time
- Multitasking can enable them to accelerate their learning by permitting them to accomplish more than one task at the same time

Gamers

- Constant interactivity, full motion multimedia, colorful graphics, the ability to learn and progress to higher levels
- Ability to collaborate with friends in their learning and competitions
- Thrills, competition, engagement and a rich array of emotional stimuli that also enhance learning

Nomadic Communication Style

- Communicate with their many friends frequently using IM, text, and cell phones as well as more traditional communication channels
- Prolific communicators
- Love and expect communication mobility
- Remain in constant touch wherever and whenever
- Firm desire to do whatever they need to do, obtain any services independent of their geography or distance.

Collaboration & Intelligence

- History of collaborating at schools, day care, soccer teams, orchestras, peer-to peer networks, games, and other programmed activities
- Know how and when to work with other people effectively
- Even those who do not prefer collaboration typically do so, if they think it gives them a practical advantage
- Respect intelligence and education

Balanced Lives

- Don't want to work 80 hours a week and sacrifice their health and leisure time, even for considerably higher salaries
- Expect to earn incomes exceeding their parents

Less Reading

- Reading is down for most age groups but the decline has been greatest among the youngest adult population
- Game more often than read a book
- Disturbing because reading is a very efficient means of communicating knowledge
- Likely to cause a decline in student writing skills

Other Characteristics

- Direct, often to the point of appearing rude.
- Believe that they are all “above average”
- Very confident; Boomer parents constantly told them that they would succeed at whatever they did
- Typically led more structured lives than Boomers

Other Characteristics cont'd.

- More aligned with their parents than those of previous generations, although most Boomers and Gen Xers do not believe this is so
- More likely to have a close friend of a different ethnicity than themselves and therefore have more tolerance for cultural differences
- More traveled

Different Personalities

- Not only do typical Millennial behaviors differ in some significant ways from Generation X and Baby Boomers, but some evidence indicates that their personalities may be different in some significantly measurable ways.

Personality research

- Millennials at Northeastern Ohio College of Medicine showed significant differences when compared with Generation X students on 10 of 16 personality factors on a standard personality test.
- Nichole J Borges et al. “Comparing Millennial and Generation X Medical Students at One Medical School.” Academic Medicine; 81.6 (2006): 571-576

Compared with Gen X

Millennials were more

- *Warm and outgoing* (Warmth)
- *Abstract than concrete* (Reasoning)
- *Adaptive and mature* (Emotional Stability)
- *dutiful* (Rule Consciousness)
- *Socially bold and adventuresome* (Social Boldness)

Personality traits cont'd.

- *Sensitive and sentimental* (Sensitivity)
- *Self-doubting and worried* (Apprehension)
- *Open to change and experimenting* (Openness to Change)
- *Organized and self disciplined* (Perfectionism)
- But they were also found to be less *solitary and individualistic* (Self Reliance)

Additional Sweeney Reference

- Sweeney's article, "Millennial Behaviors & Demographics" covers the characteristics described above, and an additional section on each characteristic's "impact on academe." Sweeney includes a bibliography as well.
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