

Teaching the Millennials: Characteristics of a Generation

Mary Devitt, Ph.D.
September 26, 2008

Scan of School Environment

- ◆ Multilingual challenges (2000 Census)
- ◆ Little time spent on homework (HSSSE, 2005)
- ◆ Cheating (Alger, 2000)

Scan of Home Environment

- ◆ Single-parent households (Kidscount)
- ◆ Blended families (2000 Census)
- ◆ Poverty (Kidscount)
- ◆ Primary caregivers (2000 Census)
- ◆ Mobility (2000 Census)
- ◆ Latchkey children (Kidscount)

Scan of Safety and Health

- ◆ Crime and violence (Alger, 2000)
- ◆ Feel unsafe in school (Alger, 2000)
- ◆ Weapons at school (NCES, 2002)
- ◆ Obesity rates (CDC, 2007)
- ◆ Alcohol use (Freshman, 2006)

High School Experiences

- ◆ Only 18% on college prep track took math course after junior year
- ◆ 53% put effort into high school work
- ◆ 51% felt they were challenged to do best

Kuh, 2007

High School Experiences

- ◆ 47% said school made them curious
- ◆ 35% were excited about classes
- ◆ 47% study 3 or fewer hours per week
 - 2/3 of them received mostly As or Bs

Kuh, 2007

High School Grades/ACT Scores

ACT Composite Scores

| 1989 | 1993 | 1997 | 2001 | 2005 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 20.6 | 20.7 | 21.0 | 20.8 | 20.9 |

% Freshman reporting High School GPA of 'A'

| 1989 | 1993 | 1997 | 2001 | 2005 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 23.2 | 27.0 | 31.6 | 44.1 | 47.5 |

Dr. Wes Habley

Generation Me

- ◆ AKA Millennials, Gen Y, Net Generation, Echo Boom
- ◆ Conscientious, pragmatic, self-sufficient
- ◆ Born and raised at a time when children were at the bottom of social priorities (YOYO)
- ◆ "Me" oriented

Characteristics of the Millennial Generation (born after 1982)

- ◆ Groomed for and highly pressured to succeed.
- ◆ Lives scheduled for them by parents.
- ◆ Tolerant toward multiculturalism.
- ◆ Highly capable technology skills.
- ◆ Morally preachy and pretentious.
- ◆ Disillusioned and politically confused.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y

Generation Me: Psychological Characteristics

- ◆ They don't need approval from others
-Nonconformists
- ◆ Lack basic consideration for others
- ◆ More likely to cheat
- ◆ Don't see knowledge or skills of others as relevant or important
- ◆ Accustomed to teachers as facilitators, not authority in classroom

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Generation Me: Psychological Characteristics

- ◆ See the world as a confessional
- ◆ More interested in fun and celebrity than self-fulfillment
- ◆ Not interested in reaching potential
- ◆ Sense of entitlement
- ◆ Things are important

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Generation Me: Psychological Characteristics

- ◆ Disinterested in a philosophy of life
- ◆ Inflated and often undeserved sense of self-esteem
- ◆ A generation of narcissists

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Generation Me: Psychological Characteristics

- ◆ Cynical
- ◆ See outcomes as controlled by powerful others
- ◆ Victim mentality

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Generation Me: Other Psychological Characteristics

- ◆ Pervasive uncertainty about future
- ◆ Financially motivated are financial
- ◆ Lack a sense of community
- ◆ Don't feel safe
- ◆ Don't often see point in trying

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Generation Me: Consequences of Externality and Cynicism

- ◆ Protect self-esteem by blaming others
 - Learned helplessness
 - Weak self-control
 - ◆ Inability to delay gratification
 - ◆ Less likely to work hard
- ◆ Anxiety and depression
- ◆ Cope poorly with stress
- ◆ Achieve less well in school

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Major Influencing Factors

- ◆ Their parents
- ◆ The self-esteem movement
- ◆ The customer service movement
- ◆ Gaming and technology
- ◆ Casual communication

Manning, Everett, & Roberts (2006)

Parents

- ◆ Negotiators
- ◆ Millennials expect and need praise
- ◆ Millennials expect feedback

Manning et al.

Self-esteem

- ◆ Center of movement
 - Still feel disconnected
 - Question their existence, purpose and the meaning of life
 - Want to feel valued

Manning et al.

Customer Service

- ◆ Expect access (24/7)
- ◆ Expect things to work
 - If they don't...
- ◆ Expect what they pay for

Manning et al.

Gaming and Technology

- ◆ Locus of control
- ◆ Decision-making
- ◆ Multi-tasking
- ◆ Trial and error approach
- ◆ Plugged in
- ◆ Educational software, games

Manning et al.

Cell Phone Technology

- ◆ In contact 24/7
- ◆ Lifestyle management tool
- ◆ Essential to be connected
- ◆ Safety issue for parents
- ◆ Casual communication

Manning et al.

Millennials Want to Learn

- ◆ With technology
- ◆ With each other
- ◆ Online
- ◆ In their time
- ◆ In their place
- ◆ Doing things that matter (most important)

Manning et al.

In School

- ◆ Need to understand
- ◆ Want to have input
- ◆ Involvement in what's meaningful
- ◆ Respond well to programs
- ◆ Desire explicit, detailed instructions
- ◆ High expectations can lead to demoralization

Dare, 2005

Understanding Generation Me

- ◆ Times have changed
- ◆ Tend to work harder if praised or appreciated
 - Praise must be based on achievement
- ◆ Appreciate directness
 - but don't take criticism well
- ◆ Learn best by doing
- ◆ Wildly ambitious – high expectations

Twenge, *Generation Me*, 2006

Understanding Generation Me

- ◆ Starved for good advice on future and possible career paths
 - Start early
 - Mentoring
- ◆ Assist in development of self-control
- ◆ Assist in cultivating realistic expectations

Twenge, Generation Me, 2006

Changing the Way We Think and about Teaching and Learning

- ◆ Learning is not outcome
- ◆ All learning is relearning
- ◆ Learning requires resolution of conflicts
- ◆ Learning is a holistic process
- ◆ Learning results from person/environment transactions
- ◆ Learning is the process of creating knowledge

Kolb, 1984

Here's the Rub

- ◆ Shifts are controversial
 - Involve unlearning
- ◆ Unlearning is difficult
- ◆ Change creates discomfort, reluctance

Dede, 2005

Approaches

- ◆ Review content
- ◆ Review delivery strategies
- ◆ Review opportunities for interaction
- ◆ Review context of the content
- ◆ Review directions/explanations
- ◆ Review emphasis on individual
- ◆ Review "one-size fits all" teaching

Questions to Consider

- ◆ What are our unconscious beliefs?
- ◆ What are we trying to accomplish?
- ◆ Can we continue down the same path?
- ◆ Are our methods working effectively?
 - What is the evidence?
 - For whom is it working?
- ◆ What do we have to lose?
- ◆ What do we have to gain?
- ◆ What do students have to gain?