



## Meet the Centennials: Understanding the Generation Z Students

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**Abstract:** - *The focus on Millennials is progressively turning to Centennials, their successors. The topic of the most recent generational cohort is a prominent topic in recent studies, especially among advertisers and employers. Such research might also be beneficial in the field of education. Centennials, as the newest generation of students, must be understood by educational institutions because of their special nature, which stems from the fact that they grew up in an ecology where the Internet and other technologies already exist. This unique cohort of learners, often known as Generation Z and by different monikers, has already displaced Millennials in schools. This conceptual paper discusses Centennials' (1) personalities; (2) learning styles and educational views; and (3) Internet, digital, and social media usage. In addition, the purpose of this research is to assist educators and administrators in proactively adapting their pedagogy and processes to suit the demands of this new generation of students.*

**Keywords:** Generation Z; Centennials; Schools; VUCA World

### Introduction

The word *generation*, ultimately, can be explained and defined in multiple ways. For instance, Eyerman and Turner (1998) detail an exhaustive elaboration—a generation is defined as a group of people who come to share a similar culture, the purpose of which is to provide them with a collective consciousness that seeks to integrate the generation over a predefined timeframe.

Generation is described by Howe and Strauss (2008) as the sum of all people born over roughly twenty years, or roughly the duration of one phase of life: childhood, young adulthood, midlife, and old age. Another researcher defines this concept as people within a defined group that encounter the same significant events within a given period (Pilcher, 1994). Meanwhile, three different definitions of generation were revealed in certain research: (a) generations as family lineage positions, (b) generations as birth cohorts, and (c) generations as historical participation (Alwin & McCammon, 2007).

The concept of generalization can be traced back to its origins in generation theory (Mannheim, 1970), where it is stated that people are greatly affected by the socio-historical environment of their youth. Centennials, as a generational cohort, have certain aspects in common. That is because they both live during the same time frame. *Generation Y* morphed into the name *Millennials*, and *Generation Z* morphed into *Centennials*, even though they are the same generations. Many researchers and organizations give their names to future generations, giving Centennials a variety of names. This, however, can cause people to become confused or ambiguous.

Madden (2017) illuminates the subject of generation in her book, *Hello Gen Z: Engaging the Post-Millennial Generation*, where she impresses the argument that every generation is influenced by the social forces, global developments, technology, and demography of their time, and each generation brings with them talents, individuality, and insights that can support society as a whole. Misconceptions between individuals of different generations with opposing worldviews and experiences distorted and affected by technology, as well as social and cultural expectations of a certain population born at the same time.

Similarly, Centennials, like other generations, are affected by various events throughout their lifetime, especially during their juvenility. It can be inferred that socio-economic-political forces during the generational phase can affect their actions, intellect, and general personalities, making them distinct from previous generations. As a result of this premise, knowing the general traits of Centennials is extremely beneficial in coping with them. Without it, it is possible to miscommunicate motives and misinterpret relationships.



## Defining Centennials

According to Strauss and Howe (1991), no one knows who will call the next generation after the Millennials. As a result, multiple academics and universities tackle the task of coining a name for the cohort. Later, the group was known by a variety of names, including Centennials, Internet Generation, iGen, Generation Z, and Post-Millennials (Raphelson, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2016). However, for the sake of uniformity in the manuscript, the word *Centennials* will be utilized.

Centennials succeed Millenials as a generational cohort. They are Generation X descendants, while some are Millennials (Seemiler & Grace, 2016). (Quigley, 2016). Different scholars and groups, however, differ in the Centennials' beginning and ending years. For example, Howe and Strauss (2008) restrict it to the years 2005-2025; Statistics Canada (2011) describes it as beginning in 1993; Philippine Retailers Association (2016) begins in 2001, and the Asia Business Unit of Corporate Directions (2016) marks the cohort's period as 2001-2015. Finally, according to Seemiller and Grace (2016), Centennials were born between the years 1995 and 2010. As a result, as of 2018, they are classified as teens and teenagers, with ages ranging from 8 to 23. Seemiller and Grace (2016) will be included in this paper for invariancy in the Centennials frame of time.

There are about 1.6 billion Centennials worldwide, accounting for a sizable proportion of the global population (Singh, 2014). They have a population of around 277 million people in Southeast Asia (Osorio, 2018). Similarly, in the Philippines, there are 40 million Centennials, who make up the largest portion of the Philippine population (Philippine Statistical Authority, 2018). There are “around 61 million Centennials in the United States, a figure that is already bigger than Generation X and two-thirds the size of the Baby Boomers” (Morris, 2018). In Malaysia, there are 9.06 million Centennials, accounting for 29.7 percent of the total Malaysian population ((Ghani et al., 2018). Furthermore, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Centennials outnumber Millennials (Bloomberg News, 2018).

Furthermore, there are projections that the number of Centennials will be about 25% of the country's population by 2025 in Vietnam (The Nielsen Company, 2018); and “India, which has about 1.3 billion people versus China's 1.4 billion, will see its Gen Z population increase to 472 million next year, 51% more than China's estimated 312 million” (Bloomberg News, 2018). According to one estimate (Miller & Lu, 2018), Centennials will overtake Millennials as the most populous generation in 2019, accounting for around 32% of the population. Similarly, according to William (2015), by 2019, Centennials will account for 2.47 billion of the planet's 7.7 billion population, breaking the 2.43 billion record set by Millennials. According to estimations and projections, the world must prepare for a fresh wave of the population that will eventually overwhelm the world.

## Personalities

Burger (2015) defines personality as internalized behavioral patterns and intrapersonal systems. That is, personalities encompass a wide range of characteristics that define an individual. Similarly, personalities can be seen in people's relationships with the world and with their social group (Holzman, 1999). Personalities, according to researchers, will forecast attitudes (Conard, 2006; Levine, 2018). Personalities develop and then begin to remain intact until middle adulthood (Myers, 2005). It is therefore important to recognize the importance of the interplay between ecology and genetics in the development of personalities.

This is supported by the generational explanation, which argues that people's views when they were young largely remain unchanged (Myers, 2005). Factors influencing personality formation include, but are not limited to, environmental, educational, technological, and familial aspects. As a result, personality can evolve over time and through centuries as a result of changes in the social environment (Ng & McGinnis, 2015). Centennials are sociologically classified; they have several characteristics, especially in the area of personalities. As a result, the environment in which Centennials grow up during their formative years had a significant impact on their beliefs, personalities, cognition, and habits.



Centennials are frequently characterized as lazy and tech-dependent; although the former is debatable, the latter is actually very true, as opined by Javate, (2018). There is undoubtedly a need for Centennials to be dependent on technology, since they use it as a medium for acquiring information, communicating with colleagues, exchanging thoughts, making goods, and sharing knowledge and insights (Housand, 2018).

They describe themselves as trustworthy, thoughtful, kind, open-minded, and accountable (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). They have a good self-image. Such a combination of characteristics is pleasant. Meanwhile, Centennials have been described in a variety of ways such as pragmatic (Dorsey, 2016), skeptical (Kalkhurst, 2018), open-minded (Oxforde Royale Academy, 2018), independent (Jenkins, 2018), hyper-custom (Stillman & Stillman, 2017), multi-tasking (Lugtu, 2017), and iconoclastic (Williams, 2015). According to research (Tayao-Juego, 2018), Centennials are very straightforward about who they are, who they want to be, and how they want people to see them. Finally, Loveland (2017) points out that they have different experiences and talents than their predecessors. One distinguishing feature of Centennials is their practicality. They seem to be more realistic, like their Gen X parents, than their Millennial predecessors (Dorsey, 2016). They are pragmatic in their outlook (Shatto & Erwin, 2016). As a result, they are obsessed with practical issues. That is, they make sound decisions in finances (Morris, 2018), diet and wellness (Oxford Royale Academy, 2018), safety (Scott, 2016), privacy (Jenkins, 2018), and career (Stillman & Stillman, 2017).

Furthermore, through the perspective of young people's social development, Centennials as children and youth typically switch from dependency on parents to being more stable and forming peer relationships and perhaps romantic relationships (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). They, too, are experiencing stresses, challenges, and conflicts at this time, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Living in a "VUCA world" (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) (Kukreja, 2019), they are currently or will be confronted with various contradictions about their beliefs about gender, friendship, religious belief, eating patterns, and other activities.

Centennials are highly aware of current social challenges, both local and global. This is due to the Internet, technology, and other knowledge disseminated by different media. As a consequence, they want to "make a difference" (Mohr & Mohr, 2017), and they're more inclined to "support civil rights, gender, and racial equality, and poverty" (Mohr & Mohr, 2017). (Vision Critical, 2016). They will not just accept a negative circumstance if they believe they can change it. They sympathize with the poor, outcasts, immigrants, and other people in need. Centennials have taken up the task of improving the conditions in which they live. They have strong expectations of making the world a safer and brighter place to live.

Centennials are also more likely than earlier generations to have close friends of many religions, sexual orientations, racial and cultural backgrounds, and political convictions (Kaplan, 2020). Given that this demographic is a diverse group, diversity is expected and welcomed. As a result of their freedom, the value variety and tolerance. Diversity is not an issue for them; they can simply identify its absence (Nichols & Wright, 2018). Furthermore, according to Scott (2016), diversity is a defining feature of who Centennials are, and as such, they communicate their views and ideas on social problems. As per Seemiller and Grace (2016), their parents' accomplishments are significant because they do not attempt to lift themselves out of poverty so that they may assist others to improve their lives and continue to have a positive effect. In other words, because their parents have already put in the effort, Centennials may not have to worry about increasing their socioeconomic level. The latter do not want their children, the Centennials, to endure the difficulties they have faced in life so that their children will live in comfort. Centennials now consider helping those in need and contributing to the well-being of humanity and the world in general, attributable to their parents' stories and encouragement.

Nonetheless, Centennials are more likely to suffer from anxiety or depression. American Psychological Association [APA] (2018) describes them as the most probable of all generations to have poor mental health. Some of the causes include a never-ending influx of negative news, as well as



mistrust from corporations and governments (Stillman, 2016). They have a lot of negative perspectives on things.

This is exacerbated by their preferred social media, which can “influence suicidal behavior (White, 2017). Furthermore, a researcher (Yuvienco, 2018) observes Centennials having increasingly unreasonable educational and career standards of themselves, perhaps as a result of overprotective parenting (White, 2017) or social merits earned by titles and accomplishments.

### **Learning Styles and Educational Views**

Learning, according to Illeris (2007), is any process that causes a change in living creatures and is not just the outcome of biological maturation or aging. Teachers and school officials are critical in the development of the Centennials' minds. They are responsible for supporting the latter's learning as well as their overall education. Centennials, like previous generational cohorts, evolve and modify themselves via learning. It is important to remember, however, that learning styles must be recognized in order for people to learn meaningfully.

According to Keefe, (in Felder & Brent, 2005), styles of learning are relatively consistent markers for the ways that students interpret, engage with, and react to the learning atmosphere in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychological attitudes. Each person has his or her preferred style of studying, or two, or even more. That is where a particular lesson is convenient to that person. This makes the person feel better about learning. And this may affect significantly the direction of learning, beliefs, behaviors, or abilities.

The learning style of the Centennials as revealed by a Barnes & Noble College (2017) review is that they reject becoming passive learners as if they were vials in which information shall be put. They do not want to just go out to school, sit down and take notes that they can save for an exam later, rather they want to participate in the learning process and see its relevance in their lives.

Centennials, who believe that learning is a personal experience like to participate actively in the learning process. They do not want to be considered as information receivers or as containers to be filled with just teachings. As a result, a one-way pedagogic discussion will be ineffective for them. They would rather interact with the instruction. They want activities like learning by doing. They want to be involved directly.

Kalkhurst (2018) discusses the differences between Millennials and Centennials in the same framework. He explains that, although Millennials use an average of three screens, Gen Z students typically use up to five. Smartphones, televisions, laptops, and desktops are frequently used by Gen Z, and these technologies account for 10 hours of their daily activities. Constant stimulation and access to all world knowledge at their fingertips have given them an attention span of eight seconds and conditioned their minds to demand immediate satisfaction. The pain for Gen Z is waiting in the lobby or the classroom for a lecture. Students of Generation Z want to be able to participate in the learning process as active learners.

Centennials have numerous channels at home for information (Turner, 2015). Examples of these are online reading and television viewing. Simply enough, they are multimodal students. They have many forms of information, and a diversity of information is being blasted. With this reality in mind, Centennials might obtain whatever information they need with just a single click due to the digital technology in their habitat. This can be explained why Centennials seem to learn differently than previous generations (Kippen, 2018). Mostly because of the omnipresent Internet, multiple solutions may be given to them with a single click. "Google it!" they exclaim if doubtful, unsure, or confused. Furthermore, Centennials are difficult to impress compared to prior generations (Samson, 2017). The cognitive and emotional impact of presenting or teaching Centennials must be addressed based on this principle. Because their attention span is barely eight seconds, they become easily bored (Kalkhurst, 2018). As a result, if they are not hooked within the first eight seconds, they will be bored.

Because Centennials are inundated with messages and are a generation that can swiftly determine whether or not something is meaningful to them (Shatto & Erwin, 2016), it is vital to underline the



relevance of a topic to their daily experience. They want to know how a particular lesson might help them develop themselves and their circumstances. As a result, they will be more self-motivated and self-assured since they value the lesson. In contrast, when there is a lack of relevance, Centennials become bored, uninterested, and disengaged.

Appealing to their taste or interest, as well as approaching them with the correct innovative strategy, are vital to effectively facilitating Centennials' learning. When delivering a specific lesson, modern teaching practices such as flipped learning, design thinking, and gamification may be useful. Redefined classic educational techniques, particularly those that are intrinsically learner-centered and foster engagement, may also be effective. Role-playing exercises, the Socratic method, graphic organizers, mind-mapping, and the integration of music and arts are some examples.

The humorous implementation that connects to the interests and difficulties of this younger, more skeptical generation is encouraged, according to (Reyes, 2017). Centennials expect a variety of new styles and approaches. To keep kids interested, they also demand comedy and inventiveness. As a result, they are skeptical of information given to them without scrutiny. They don't just take it as gospel. They are skeptical; therefore, they verify the accuracy and veracity of the information provided. Furthermore, Centennials believe that there are other ways to get a good education without going to college (Jenkins, 2017). In other words, Centennials do not believe in traditional, formal schooling. Alternatives to traditional schooling, such as massive open online courses (MOOCs), YouTube videos, short-term training, and other modern learning solutions, are also seen as viable options for obtaining an education.

### **Internet, Digital, and Social Media Usage**

Centennials are Centennials. They are technologically literate individuals who were born into a worldwide community where everything appears to be connected. They are likewise dependent on devices. According to Singh (2014), communicating with devices or with people via digital technology takes up a significant amount of time. Digital technology has a significant impact on their daily lives and activities.

According to Prensky (2001), this generation has grown up with constant access to the Internet and appears to adapt to new technologies more quickly than previous generations. As a result, unlike previous generations, Centennials are young and have grown up in a technologically rich world, therefore navigating a variety of technology comes naturally to them. According to Madden (2017), Centennials' view of digital technology is that online interactions enable offline relationships to continue, and vice versa. Online material, such as jokes and memes, provides conversation starters when people next meet in person. In addition, technology is commonly utilized to fill awkward silences or voids where the face-to-face conversation gets monotonous.

The actual world and the virtual world organically blend, and the virtual is just part of their reality, according to Centennials (Stillman & Stillman, 2017). As a result, the online world cannot be isolated from their world. It has already been embedded. Digital technologies enable them to interact in the notion that Centennials become socially linked online, which then extends offline. Though digital technologies facilitate face-to-face connection, they may also be a barrier to effective connection. For example, the act of utilizing the phone while with another person conveys a relational signal that they are not as important as the conversation on their phone (Tertadian, 2014). This might lead to misconception or, worse, conflict.

According to Jenkins (2018), Centennials use an average of 3 hours 38 minutes browsing on smartphones, nearly 50 minutes longer than the normal Internet user. This does not, however, suggest that they are phone addicts (Ozkan & Olmaz, 2015). They are just emotionally invested in their digital habits. Since the portable device has become an intrinsic part of their existence, centennials believe life is incomplete without one. A scholar describes Centennials as people who were raised with a smartphone in hand and for whom strong social network participation is a way of life (Osorio, 2018). As a result, it has been deeply ingrained in the social fabric of a Centennial, leaving a hole when such technology is unavailable.



Nonetheless, constant monitoring and/or usage of smartphone applications may result in sleep disruptions, tension, worry, disengagement, and decline in well-being, poor academic performance, and decreased physical activity” (Thomee, Harenstam, & Hagberg, 2011). Similarly, the invasiveness of smartphones decreases the quality of face-to-face social contacts, lowering their beneficial influence on well-being (Samaha & Hawi, 2016). According to the research, Centennials are more vulnerable to the harmful consequences of smartphone dependence.

Beyond the actual usage of digital devices, most Gen Z youngsters have an emotional reliance on their digital connections, which is rare in previous generations, according to Singh (2014). Many older generations use digital devices as well, but largely as a means of communication. The Gen Z generation, on the other hand, considers digital gaming to be an important part of their life, most likely because they have never known any other techniques and have grown up with digital technology. The argument behind such an assumption may be linked back to the idea that Centennials are mostly online and on mobile phones, and they experience the world, its grandeur and tragedies, every day, in real-time (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). They are exposed to the facts of life—Centennials, despite their early age, may easily perceive the many occurring in local and worldwide contexts, both positive and negative. Digital technologies have been an ally to them in better understanding the world and various situations and have assisted Centennials in making friends, understanding the world, boosting pride, finding solutions, and so on. As a result, Centennials cannot help but attach emotional attachments to such tools.

Another explanation is that Centennials “seek out areas to HOMAGO, which stands for Hang Out, Mess Around, and Geek Out, where they can be themselves, dig deep into their hobbies, and be their authentic self” (Williams, 2015). And internet links, social media, in particular, provide Centennials a way to HOMAGO. Because Centennials are digital natives, social media is unquestionably a place to be. They feel liberated on those platforms, and they may generate stuff to convey themselves as they like. This explains why they are hyperconnected on social media (Fromm, 2016).

Centennials have never experienced a world in which one could not converse with anybody, anywhere, at any time (Tulgan, 2013). As a result, Centennials are more likely to “live considerably more of their whole lives online and on their cellphones, from connecting with friends and family to making significant purchases (Dorsey, 2016).

Because they are captivated by the digital world and have never known life without such Internet, social networks, and gadgets, they suffer FOMO or fear of missing out. According to one research, 100 percent of all Centennials spend at least one hour each day online. (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). They want to be kept up to date and obtain the most recent fresh information. They want to remain connected at all hours of the day since they are likely to miss a lot by just signing out of a social networking site or turning off a phone.

## Conclusion

"Teachers should teach the students, not the subject," goes the popular adage in education. In reality, instruction begins when educators first comprehend the learners. Such psychological and pedagogical activity should be implemented in schools and included in the core curriculum. To successfully engage this new generation of students, schools must consider their obvious differences, not just in terms of education, but also in terms of their entire learning experiences.

Teachers and school administrators must not be indifferent and must recognize that paying attention to and having a ready understanding of the uniqueness of Centennials, including the themes mentioned in this paper such as personalities, learning styles and preferences, and Internet, digital, and social media usage, can help them perform their duties more effectively. Discarding such knowledge is a risk that might jeopardize students' well-being and, more broadly, the school's image since it would be unable to accomplish one of its functions—knowing its students.



Centennials are distinct from earlier generations. As a result, they cannot be handled in the same way as earlier generations. This is a new group of students—each with their own interests, needs, and expectations. Several investigations and literature cited in this study support this conclusion. Teachers are responsible for learning about this issue and putting it into practice in the classroom, so they may take the required steps to help students, particularly in the areas of education and classroom management. To best assist Centennials, school administrators and other politicians must be aware of and sympathetic to their positions and situations; they should strategically adjust their approaches on how to steer the students.

Centennials may realize their objectives and dreams with the help of education. Teachers and school officials are in charge of this. Centennials may take an unfavorable course if those who are directing them do not recognize and grasp their unique character and treat them without thinking. Schools may connect with Centennials in a way that not only motivates individual progress but also assures students become critical and creative thinkers that the world expects in the twenty-first century by establishing curricula and learning experiences customized to their individuality. This collection of generalizations can, in fact, be useful in dealing with this new generation. However, a caveat must be advanced—two students classified as Centennials might be very different from one another. Therefore, it is advised should use research about Centennials with prudence, discernment, and informed judgment.

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