Identities

How do you describe yourself? Do you use labels or generalizations to describe your characteristics, personality or talents? "I'm a Sagittarius" or "I'm a musician."

Young people in your generation, or those born after about 1994, are starting to be referred to in popular culture as **"Generation Z."**

Read these perspectives on your generation.

Gen Z number about two billion worldwide and one-quarter of the North American population, making them a larger generation than the one preceding it.

This is a group just coming of age. They turn 18 between 2013 and 2028. It's tricky to pin down a generation that is in the process of defining itself. However, what we can do is look at some of the social, economic and political conditions shaping this group of young Canadians (and, for those who will arrive through immigration during this period, Canadians-to-be).

Beyond having no tangible memory of the last great constitutional crisis in Canada, Generation Z is also the first age cohort to grow up in a post 9/11 world of global terrorism, surveillance, and institutional and economic instability. They have never experienced a halcyon period of government spending booms, only recession and austerity. They are living the environmental impact of climate change.

True digital natives, they've grown up swiping screens and using social media, and are fully at home in a world mediated by technology. Because their lives are so deeply informed by the realities of these new information and transportation technologies, theirs may be the first real global generation, where ideas about language, culture, identity and community are being formed across national borders.

Cooper, C. (November 1, 2015). *The Rise of Generation Z.* Special to Montreal Gazette. **http://montrealgazette.com/news/national/celine-cooper-the-rise-of-generation-z**
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Pause and Reflect

How do you identify yourself as a citizen? As a Canadian? Is there a difference?

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Do you believe that a country can have expectations of its citizens? What might these expectations be?

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How do these expectations influence your identity?

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Find Out More

Find out more about perspectives on identities on the **Building Future Voters** senior high webpage.

Go to **www.buildingfuturevoters.ca** and explore the information and examples in **Individual or Collective**.

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The data it has collected show that unlike young Generation Y, Generation Z are focused on the future. They want to act now, and want to create more things to share. They communicate more by the visual rather than text. They are more pragmatic than their predecessors, and they want to work for the success of a business, more than promoting themselves. But these companies must also endorse their social vision. They show much more altruism, and are more aware of the social and environmental problems that Gen Y. Three out of four of the generation Z are concerned about the fate of the planet, and 60% want their work to have a positive impact.

Born long after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union, Western based generation Z believe that democracy is a value acquired, and hardly realize it does not exist everywhere in the world.

Even if they are just beginning to hit the labour market, nearly 60% are worried about their future. Over 77% are interested in volunteering and over a quarter (26%) are already involved in social ventures in order to gain experience. At school, Generation Z youth seem much more serious than those of the previous generation: 50% graduate, as against 33% of Gen Y and 25% for Generation X. This will make the most educated generation. To do their research, they use more YouTube and other social platforms that textbooks. After graduation, 72% are considering starting their own business.

Generation Z youth development is inextricably tied to new technologies. Nearly 80% of young people interviewed by Sparks & Honey admit they would feel lost if they were deprived of their smartphone. On average, they use ten apps on their device, while for 10%, that number is nearly forty. They therefore expect to find these new technologies in their work environment.

On the internet, young generation Z belong to some popular social platforms like Facebook (23%) or Instagram (23%), while preferring private sites like Snapchat or Secret Whisper. When it comes to shopping online, young generation Z seek first on mobile applications, and rely primarily on recommendations from family (43%) and friends (35%). They consume more practical and everyday products such as laundry (55%), electronics (53%) and books or textbooks for studies (53%), than any other product.

Indeed, the generation which has grown up most profoundly affected by technology, will in turn be the generation which most profoundly changes it.

Morin, Raymond. (Online) *Generation C – Towards a New Baby Boom With Generation Z.* Used with permission from Raymond Morin and Curatti. http://curatti.com/generation-c-towards-new-baby-boom-generation-z/.

Parts of this article are excerpts from *Generation C (onnectée) – Le marketing d'influence à l'ère numérique*, published (in French) by Éditions Kawa.

Generation Z: The kids who will save the world?

Shelly White
Special to the Globe and Mail

"...These are the under-18s, kids growing up in an era of global economic turmoil and climate change. Despite their youth, the digitally sophisticated, socially conscious high achievers emerging from this group are causing some people to wonder: Is this the generation that will solve the world's problems?

"I think our generation is really socially conscious, environmentally friendly and they are really global thinkers," says Linda Manziaris, the 14-year-old social entrepreneur and founder of Body Bijou and this year's Young Entrepreneur of the Year at the Startup Canada Awards.

Linda donates 50 per cent of the profit from her online jewellery business to Girls Helping Girls, which was started by her 16-year-old sister, Susanna. So far, the not-for-profit has funded school building, teacher training and 20 scholarships for girls in South Africa, Kenya and Jamaica.

"[Our generation] sees a problem and they want to fix it, they aren't leaving it for someone else to fix," Linda says.

... Gen Z kids are digital natives, and can't remember a world without the internet, smartphones and social media. They have technological skills that are totally intuitive and surpass those of their parents, says Don Tapscott, chief executive officer of Tapscott Group in Toronto. He says that instead of a generation gap, we now have a "generation lap," where kids are lapping their parents on a digital track.

"This is the first time in history when children are an authority about something really important," he says. I was an authority about model trains when I was 11. And now you've got this 11 year old at the breakfast table who's an authority on this mobile revolution that's changing commerce, government, publishing, entertainment, every institution in society."

◼ Political Engagement

Young Canadians care about what is happening in their communities and around the world. In the past year, we have seen hundreds of thousands of Canadian youth join protests and demonstrations like Occupy, Kony and student marches. This clear interest in public policy through direct action is seen by youth as more likely to have an impact than joining a political party. They are engaged in looser networks, and projects are replacing structured organizations. There is also evidence that when youth are involved in petitions, boycotts and manifestations, this actually boosts their voting behaviour, which is positive for Canadian democracy.

O'Rourke, D. (October, 2012). *#Generation Flux: Understanding the seismic shifts that are shaking Canadian youth.* Community Foundations of Canada: p. 9.

◼ Identities

According to research involving groups of young people, Generation Z youth have a distinct identity that is different from previous generations:

Generation Z are more prudent and realistic, but also very conscious about the world's issues and ready to tackle the problems at their root. A study from advertising agency Sparks & Honey revealed that 60% want to have an impact on the world, compared with 39% of Millennials. The survey deemed them "entrepreneurial" (72% want to start their own business), and community-oriented (26% already volunteer).

Gen Z has been raised with social platforms, not websites, as the communication convention... smartphones as a default...and on demand viewing as the norm. Communicating more through images than text, applications like Instagram and Vine have a huge appeal for teenagers. But as they're more self-conscious and aware of being exposed to the eyes of everyone, including their parents who are active on Facebook, they're moving to platforms that offer more privacy, like Snapchat or WhatsApp.

As attached as they are to their smartphones, tablets and other devices, a surprising 45% of young people believe the most effective way to communicate is in-person.

4 in 10, or 41% of young people say that the most important quality of a leader is the ability to communicate, well ahead of honesty (19%), confidence (12%), commitment (10%), vision (10%), or patience (8%).

Human Resources, Randstad Canada (March 2008). *From y to z: a guide to the next generation of employees.* Randstad Canada. http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hub/148716/file-2537935536-pdf/Gen_Y_Brochures/randstad-from-y-to-z-web.en_LR.pdf

◼ Challenges

What is certain is that this post-referendum generation will inherit some of the key challenges facing Canada as we move forward. Examples include our national dependence on resource-based economies, revitalizing our democratic institutions, reconciliation between First Nations and non-First Nations people, investing in new sectors of innovation and entrepreneurship, how Canada should be positioned in the world, and figuring out how to leverage our cultural and linguistic diversity to build the intellectual and economic corridors that connect Canada to the rest of the world.

Cooper, C. (November 1, 2015). *The Rise of Generation Z.* Special to Montreal Gazette. http://montrealgazette.com/news/national/celine-cooper-the-rise-of-generation-z

What do you think? Find other sources that describe or refer to the identities of Canadian youth. Use a graphic organizer such as a **Triple T–Chart** to identify the source in the first column and in the second column record the perspectives it presents.

Consider these questions:

- Do the sources agree or disagree with the perspectives presented in this student resource? How?

- What additional information do these sources provide about Generation Z? Are these facts or opinions?

- What causes and influences most affect Generation Z identities?

In the third column of the Triple T–Chart, analyze the source:

- Who wrote or created the source?

- How reliable is it? What biases are present in the source? Why and how do you know this?

- To what extent do you think the perspectives in the source reflect stereotypes or caricatures of today's youth?

What most influences your identity as a Generation Z? Create responses for each piece of the puzzle below to reflect who you are and what influences your identity.
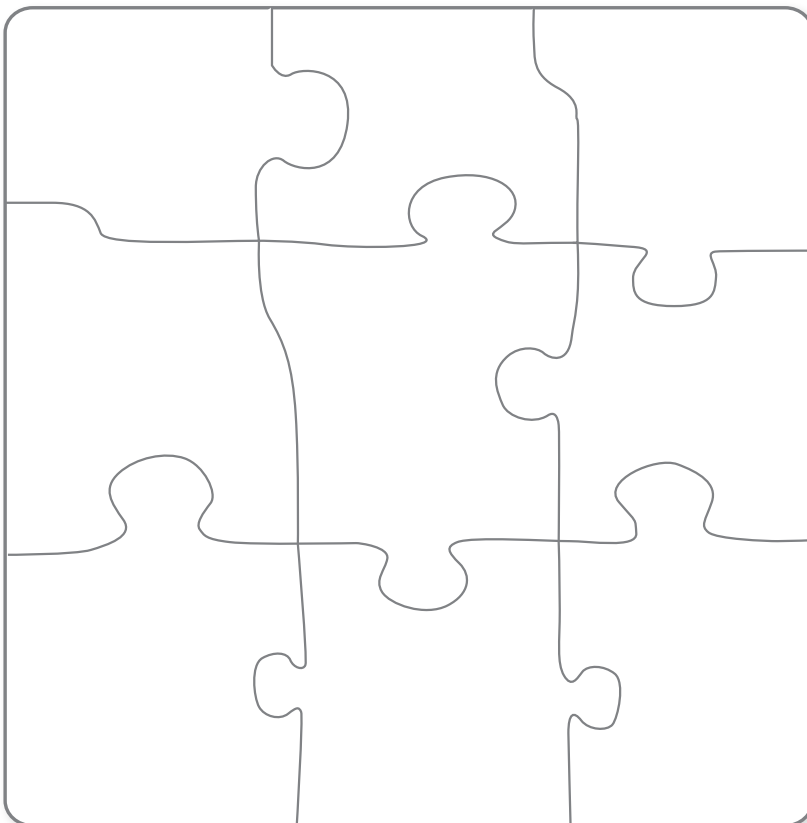
Pause and Reflect

What does your puzzle tell you about perspectives that shape identities?

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