

Daje' Brinson
Blake Silver
Thursday, 12-12:50
A Millennial Generation?

Introduction

In their book, *Millennial Rising: The Next Generation*, Howe and Strauss assert that the current generation is dramatically different from those in the past. The conclusion was reached through longitudinal studies, which compared opinions throughout the differing generations. The results that were produced led to the establishment of core traits that distinguish the people of the millennial: specialness, a sheltered life, confidence levels, team-orientation, conventionality, sense of pressure, and achievement levels. In order to assess the claim Howe and Strauss are making, I will examine the data produced around the idea that the millennial generation is sheltered, confident, and pressured.

Sheltered

The authors believe that the members of the millennial generation are more sheltered than those freshman in previous generations. To demonstrate this, I will examine two social customs: beer drinking and smoking cigarettes. Drinking, specifically underage drinking is probably one of the greatest social ignominies as evident even in our society today. Results in the data show that freshmen are more strongly supervised than they were in past generations. The trends in the data show that there was an increase between the early and late boomers, making its peak in 1982 at 73.7%, and then there was a steady decrease in Gen X, to a dramatic decrease in the millennial generation. These

results are supportive of Howe and Strauss' assertion that members of the millennial generation are more sheltered than that of the generations prior. Even from the generations before, according to Table 1, there was a 28.44% decrease in the freshmen that gave the response of yes, they had drank beer. A significant change as such, shows more than a gradual shift. Regardless of the missing years in the data, there is enough to demonstrate a relationship between the generations.

Society also has a negative opinion about underage smoking. Similar to the data with drinking, there are variations, with a decrease between the boomer generations, and then an increase between the Gen X and millennial generation, as seen in Table 2. The data reveals that smoking seems to have come back into style, but has again died down in recent years. There was a spike in 1966 with 15% and in 2006 with the least at 5.3%. However, the overarching pattern in the data seems too small to be significant. This could be due to parents being more protective, and sheltering their children more. The counterculture in the 1960s and 70s could have also influenced this, whereas today there is more societal stability.

Confident

Howe and Strauss define confidence felt by members of the millennial generation as one for their own personal futures and their country, with foundations of trust and optimism. In order to analyze this claim, I looked at the survey in which they asked for self-ratings, and used cooperativeness and leadership ability.

In order for a generation to be confident, they must feel trust with their peers and a sense of optimism, so cooperation is key. Considering this fact, one would expect higher levels in believing in cooperation. There is a major set back regarding this data, it is missing until 1990. Despite this limit in available data, the information that is provided yields probable insights. As the data demonstrates in Table 3, there is a small shift from Gen X and the millennial generation, so perhaps senses of cooperation change little throughout differing generations.

The second trait is leadership ability. Where the new generations are confident of their future, they should have confidence in the person next to them. The data shows a rather gradual increase between the late boomers and Gen X, but nearly a 10-15% increase between the boomer generations and Gen X to the millennial generation as seen in Table 4. With relatively mild gaps between the generations, individuals felt confident in leading themselves to a productive future as well as their country.

Pressured

The authors also show the members of the millennial generation as heavily influenced by people who came before them, and that they have to become the “trophy kid.” This is where Howe and Strauss believe in a generation that feels ever mounting pressure to meet or even exceed expectations.

One survey that strongly demonstrates this is the reasons noted for deciding on going to college, with the response of, “my parents wanted me to go.” Just the label in its