

**Senior Capstone Project – Documentary Script**  
**THE FUTURE OF GEN Z**

**Section I – WHAT IS GEN Z?**

<b>Audio (Narration and SFX)</b>	<b>Visual (VFX, on-screen text)</b>
<p>iGeneration. Net Generation. Post-Millennials. Zoomers. Digital Natives. All of the following are words used to describe this new generation most commonly known as Gen Z, a demographic of young people that are fast taking the world by storm.</p> <p>But just what is Gen Z?</p> <p>By definition, Generation Z is the demographic cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha consisting of anyone born from 1997 to 2012, and between the ages of 11 and 26 as of the year 2023. Born into a time of ever-present technology, the term “Digital native” has also become synonymous with Gen Z, meaning those that grew up in the digital age.</p> <p>But Gen Z is much more than their historical classification. Countless factors have defined and shaped this generation from their entrance into this world, including the time in which they lived, and continue to live through, their unique qualities and adaptations living through truly unprecedented times, and their emergence into the professional world, as many graduate from college and prepare for a future that largely remains uncertain.</p> <p>But just what separates them from the generations before us, what does it really mean to be a digital native—and how has this influenced the way in which they operate and are perceived in society? These crucial discoveries must be made in order to truly understand what makes Gen Z a generation like no other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cloud reveal and dissolve during narration of each of these words overlain with pictures of Gen Z</li>   <li>- Show on-screen definition during narration with timeline of all generations, placing Gen Z at the end just before Gen Alpha. Then transition to stock footage when talking about digital natives</li>   <li>- Show stock footage of notable moments during Gen Z lifetime and footage of college students during future portion</li>   <li>- Fade to black and then from black into next portion after this narration block</li> </ul>

To truly understand the significance of Gen Z, one must first understand where Millennials end, and Generation Z begins – not in terms of age or birthyear, but the defining social, economic, and political climate of the time.

To start off with, millennials were between the ages of 5 and 20 when the 9/11 terrorist attacks took place, while the majority of Gen Z have no memory of such an event.

According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials also grew up (quote) "in the shadow" of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, a time of great "political polarization" that still affects us today, and were between 12 and 27 during the 2008 election, seeing firsthand the power of the youth vote as it helped to elect the first black president. These factors are all reflective of the emergence of the "most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation in the nation's history" (Dimock, 2019), topped only recently by Generation Z.

Aside from the political state of the time, the economy also played a large role in impacting Millennials' emergence into the workforce and US market. The economy was at the height of the recession when many Millennials first entered the workforce, and consequently, their life choices have been shaped by this recession in a unique way, different from that of Gen Z.

Finally, technology also played and continues to play a crucial role in defining generational differences. While Generation X grew up during the beginning of the computer revolution, and millennials, during the internet explosion, Generation Z shared their rise to power with the emergence of smartphones, an invention that has changed the way we all communicate and ultimately, defined a generation.

What makes Gen Z so unique from a technology standpoint, is that they were the

- Show screen capture of news article with angular keyframe upon quotation in narration and highlight effect on text

first to grow up with every innovation of their predecessors, such as the TV, computer and internet, and every step forward after this, such as the invention of the iPhone, high-speed data, and the widespread use of social media, occurred during Generation Z's coming of age, ultimately affecting their very basis of communication and interaction.

(Show professional interview excerpt of Liz Smith, or equivalent, defining Gen Z and digital natives and explaining significance.)

Circling back to the state of the world, Gen Z has also had their own unique experiences growing up in a world of increasing economic, political, and environmental tension. This generation now comprises the largest population of college students, and while they are the least likely to drop out of high school and most likely to attend college (Pew Research Center), this has not come without its struggles. Most notably, Gen Z has lived through the COVID-19 Pandemic, which first ravaged the world in 2020 and still serves as a poignant reminder of a time of great fear and loss across generations. They've also endured the frightening rise in school shootings across the country, and an increase in depression and other mental health issues on a level that has never been seen before.

Most importantly, however, these struggles are a reminder of the strength of this generation, as it's withstood some truly unforeseen and unique challenges.

This is a quality of Gen Z that is often overlooked. In fact, Generation Z is often regarded as being "soft" and "hypersensitive." On the contrary, however, Gen Z has proved their strength in more ways than one.

- Show quote from Pew with credit at the bottom-right (Pew Research Center\*) and animated highlighter effect over text when reading

Fade to black, signaling transition to "Qualities of Gen Z" subsection

Each generation has its labels, or defining qualities that set them apart from the rest in both positive and negative ways. The Silent generation was known for their traditionalism and conformity to authority. Baby boomers are known for their independence, hard work, and economic prosperity, but are often stereotyped as being stubborn. Generation X is also known for their independence, however, are often portrayed as being apathetic. Millennials are known for their collaboration, challenging the status quo and valuing a work-life balance but are often regarded as lazy and unprepared. And finally, Generation Z is known for their acceptance, open-mindedness, and diversity, but is stereotyped as being addicted to technology and lacking basic communication skills.

Ultimately with every positive quality comes misconceptions and stereotypes. Looking at the positive attributes of Generation Z more closely, according to Roberta Katz, a senior research scholar at Stanford's [Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences \(CASBS\)](#), "a typical Gen Zer is a self-driver who deeply cares about others, strives for a diverse community, is highly collaborative and social, values flexibility, relevance, authenticity and non-hierarchical leadership, and, while dismayed about inherited issues like climate change, has a pragmatic attitude about the work that has to be done to address those issues"

In other words, members of Gen Z are inherent change-makers and valuers of diversity, such that they are the most diverse generation after millennials. Technology and a digitally connected culture have also paved the way for Gen Z's appreciation of diversity through their exposure to digital tools at a young age which allowed them to develop a greater appreciation for different cultures and to find their own identities.

Try to integrate animated graphics of icons with motion and SFX to go along with each generational label

- Show animated quote on scene during narration with source at bottom left and low-opacity background image

Closely tied to the title of change-makers, Gen Z is also a generation of protestors shown in their overwhelming participation in movements related to issues such as climate destruction, gender equality and police brutality. Their political and social engagement is fast becoming a defining quality of the generation.

Finally, Gen Z is also known for placing a priority on mental-health and well-being. While mental-health among Gen Z is at a low-point, with a 2022 study finding that 42 percent of Gen Zers have a diagnosed mental health condition, they highly value it in the workplace and elsewhere as a basic requirement for a healthy environment.

As one might expect, the majority of Gen Z stereotypes are related to technology-dependency. The fact is that Gen Zers have never grown up in a time without technology at their disposal, and its affected the cultural fabric of this demographic whether they liked it or not. However, the reliance on technology is not limited to Gen Z as its effect can be seen across generations. Gen Z is only more technologically-adept when it comes to using social media and various apps for everyday tasks.

One misconception closely tied to this is that Gen Z only values instant gratification, particularly as it pertains to climbing the ranks in the workplace. While this generation is used to getting things rather quickly as they've been on the internet their entire lives, this is not representative of the demographic as a whole. The reality is that Gen Z has so much to offer, and even though they are used to a fast-moving world and may dislike a stagnant work environment, their talents outweigh this surrounding narrative.

Cite psychiatrist.com for quote when displaying it

Intercut interview excerpts through this section pertaining to different qualities

Fade to black and from black to transition into stereotype-specific section?

Another stereotype and misconception are that Gen Z doesn't want to work, resigning from workplaces due to laziness. However, while many Gen Z workers did leave their jobs this year, it was not due to laziness or defeat, but instead, a desire for greater opportunities within their field. Gen Zers not only want to earn a paycheck but live their purpose through their work. They also highly value Diversity, equity, and inclusion practices within the workplace, and if they feel that the job is not meeting those standards, they'll likely move on to the next position.

Many of these misconceptions have affected the way that Gen Z is viewed and treated by other generations, the main way being the hesitancy of some businesses to hire Gen Z, which can hinder the hiring efforts of younger generations. But despite this, many Gen Zers, college, students, and young people in general are working to dispel these misconceptions.

(After NMGZ excerpt) The National Millennial and Gen Z Community is just one example of young people actively changing the narrative surrounding Generation Z and working to dispel some of these stereotypes and misconceptions. They serve as a reminder that change is possible, and that the aims and talents of Gen Z are much greater than the narratives and stereotypes that surround them.

- Intercut several interview excerpts from students explaining and dispelling misconceptions.
- Fade out and transition to NMGZ portion with Bill Imada interview explaining the aim and mission of organization.

## Section II – THE DIGITAL NATIVES: GEN Z AND TECHNOLOGY

Digital Natives are defined as people who are very familiar with digital technology, computers, etc. because they have grown up with them, or a person who has grown up in the information age. This encompasses virtually all of Generation Z as a demographic that has never known a time without technology. Like Gen Z, digital natives are known for their heavy reliance and dependency on technology, however this trait is not limited to just this demographic, as its impacted people of all age groups on a global scale.

Let's take a quick trip back a few decades, to the year 2002, to be specific. The first camera phone was introduced, and over 80 billion were sold during this year. During this time, many Gen Zers were still very young, or were not even born yet. In 2005, a video-sharing site called YouTube first joined the internet-scene, becoming the fourth most visited site on the web. And then in 2007, everything changed with a company called Apple. This was the year that the first iPhone was released, and it completely revolutionized the tech and smartphone world. It was the first multi-touch phone and the first of its kind to have a browser with full-web access. Subsequently, in 2010, the first Apple iPad was introduced, which was essentially an enlarged iPhone, and was great for kids because of its large screen size. Now, fast-forwarding back to 2023, one can truly see just how much technology has evolved over the years, with access to instant information in a pocket-sized device that once filled entire rooms. But what does this mean for consumers? How has technology impacted the masses, particularly Gen Z and Digital Natives, in positive and negative ways? And how has time spent on technology, particularly social media apps, affected Gen Z behavior and socialization?

- Cite Cambridge Dictionary\* in bottom right during narration of this definition and show on screen animation of definition
- After "...on a global scale" intercut interview segment from Liz Smith interview defining Digital Natives and their qualities.
  
- Show animated timeline with technology developments with icons and company logos, sfx, keyframe motion effects

The answer is not an easy one, and discoveries are still being made about the full effects of increased internet and social media use on the health of young people.

What we do know is that 65% of Gen Z use social media on a daily basis to communicate with friends and family, get information, shop and so much more. What we also know is that, from 2009 to 2017, [depression rates increased](#) by more than 60% among teens between 14 and 17 years old. While there are so many potential causes of depression among Gen Z including daily stress and the pandemic to name a few, researchers are linking increased social network usage to negative mental health more than ever before.

While social media has its obvious benefits including the ability to stay connected with those you care about from around the globe and bringing people with similar interests together through online groups, it presents several dangers to its young users, particularly Gen Z, including the promotion of false images and unrealistic beauty standards, and cyberbullying, to name a few. These harmful practices on social media apps, affect how users, of all ages, view themselves and can ultimately lead to feelings of lower self-esteem and depression. But all is not lost.

While Gen Z has the highest rates of depression and anxiety among other generations, they are also the most likely to seek help from mental health professionals and talk about it openly with others. This helps bring awareness to these issues and enables those of previous generations to understand the unique struggles of digital natives.

- After effects of Technology section, transition to Liz Smith interview talking about Gen Z and tech, interview excerpts of students talking about how much time they spend on their phones and Austin talking about dangers of Gen Z and technology, interlace between different narration blocks
- Show on screen graphic of “65%” in large letters and under “of Gen Z use social media regularly”, then the same for depression rates, cite MedicalNewsToday\* for information in bottom right/left.
- Show stock footage, or real footage of students on their phones and possibly use icons/graphics when talking about the harmful effects of social media and how Gen Z is dealing with it (seeking professional help, group discussions, etc.)
- Show Kevin Williams interview excerpt (first clip) talking about Gen Z and mental issues
- Continue to intercut Liz Smith and student interview excerpts between narration blocks



<p>Gen Z is also making use of social media for the good, using the platforms and photo and video formats to spread awareness on issues they're passionate about, finding commonalities and sharing their struggles with other users, and making a difference through their digital influence as content creators.</p> <p>Some Gen Zers are even ditching their smartphones and social media and turning to flip phones for their mental health, reflecting the overwhelming need for and prioritization of positive mental health practices among Generation Z.</p>	<p>Show Good Morning America News clip of teens ditching their smartphones and then fade to black for next section</p>
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**SECTION III – THE FUTURE OF GEN Z**

<p>As so many members of Gen Z are making the transition into professional life, or have already done so, the question arises: what does a Gen Z-run future look like? Is it a promising future? An uncertain future?</p> <p>Is Gen Z ready to face the real world, a world that seems to be increasingly volatile by the day? Only they know the answers to these questions.</p> <p>According to a study by Cigna, 34% of Gen Z say they are worried about the future and 24% are concerned about a lack of learning and job opportunities. Additionally, 91% of Gen Zs reported feeling stress and 98% said they felt burned out. Only 32% of Gen Z report being engaged in work environments, and 48% say they are unable to move out of their parents' homes due to financial struggles.</p> <p>Despite all these challenges, and as is frequently the case through the resiliency of this generation, there is a bright side.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Show animated question on screen with cloud appear and dissolve effect with black or moving orb background, then transition to Cigna study, citing source at the bottom and animating the percents so as one appears, it slides over to make room for the next until all appear on the screen with a subtitle explaining the statistic.</li> <li>- cite Forbes along with Cigna in end credits under sources.</li> <li>- After saying, "only they know the answers to these questions," transition to student profile interviews, excluding all responses aside from personal questions about how they feel about the future, integrating B-roll in a creative and personal way.</li> </ul>
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Regarding concerns of employment uncertainties, this did not deter them from seeking out new job opportunities, with 48% of Gen Z and Millennials planning to look for a new job in the next 12 months. As for stress, despite feeling overwhelmed, Gen Zers are prioritizing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and overall, with 78% saying wellbeing at work is equally as important as their salary. Despite feeling disengaged at work, Gen Z highly values workplace culture in determining whether they will remain at a job, putting greater pressure on employers to better support Gen Z through a meaningful work environment and more opportunities for growth. Lastly, pertaining to Gen Z's financial struggles, although many worry about rising inflation, and a lack of money for a wealth of expenses, many young people are learning money management and developing their financial literacy to stay afloat amid the inevitable and unpredictable state of the market.

#### (CONCLUSION)

So, despite these worries, fears, and uncertainties that persist, the future of Gen Z is still a bright one. Yes, it may be uncertain and ever-changing, but if there's one thing that Generation Z has demonstrated more than ever throughout their lifetime, it's a spirit of resilience and persistence through unprecedented challenges, and an ability to withstand the greatest storms of this life.

These fears, worries and doubts are overshadowed by hopes, dreams, and aspirations as this generation goes out into this world head-first, ready to take on any challenge or adversity that may arise. Their call to action and responsibility as a group of young leaders is now greater than ever. But this responsibility is met by a generation of change-makers and rule-breakers, those that

- Use stock footage including stills and video during this portion, possible animated infographic addition

- Consider making a video appearance in addition to narration for the conclusion segment to add some personability to the narrator, fade out with a drone shot if possible

will lead the future—as uncertain as it may be. This is Generation Z.

## CREDITS

THE FUTURE OF GEN Z  
WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ETHAN BAKER  
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INTERVIEWS BY ETHAN BAKER  
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Mary Álvaro  
Austin Gregoryk  
Kevin Couser  
Gerald Wright  
Kayla Blake  
Sonia Chavez  
Liz Smith

SHOT ON iPhone.

SOURCE MATERIAL

a magazine  
Cambridge Dictionary  
Cigna  
Forbes  
Good Morning America  
Pew Research Center  
Psychiatrist.com  
Stanford News

STOCK FOOTAGE

SONGS

