

Approved by Director: _____

Your Name: Ethan Baker

Project Director: Dr. Jason McKahan

Senior Capstone Contract

Project Title

The Future of Gen Z

Project Description

The Future of Gen Z explores Generation Z as a demographic, social/cultural classification, and community, defining what they are, what separates them from other generations, and how the digital revolution has impacted them in positive and negative ways. This piece also looks at their preparation for the future, as many are preparing to transition, or have already transitioned, from college into professional life. Using both poetic and expository techniques, this documentary implements first-person narration as well as voice-overs and interviews throughout the piece. The main objective is for the interviewees to tell the story; thus, the accounts of others will take on a more direct role than that of the narration and background information offered in the piece.

The audience must be kept in mind throughout the entire process. Especially with a topic such as this, it's imperative that the audience leaves with something more than they came with, whether a new perspective on the topic, inspiration, or even a view of disagreement or contestation—invoking that change is what matters. Through the personal experiences of my interviewees paired with my insight as the narrator and interviewer, I want my audience to be able to observe and relate to those experiences in a way that may change their preconceptions about Gen Z, strengthen their already held viewpoints about them, or cause themselves to seek to make a change or alter their treatment of Gen Zers based on the first-hand accounts and struggles that were presented and made evident in this piece.

Ultimately, the main goal of this project is to allow Generation Z to be better heard and understood, accomplished through the understanding of intergenerational disconnects and why they exist. Only then can one go about ways to bridge those communicative gaps.

What communication theory/theories will you research to produce this project?

Social Learning Theory

The first communication theory that I will use as a framework for presenting the topic of Gen Z and their future in the form of a documentary is the Social Learning Theory. This theory suggests that individuals' means of social behavior and interactions are influenced and learned by the observation and imitation of others around them in society and their social/cultural environments. In other words, the viewpoints of others and the ways in which they actively interpret and view the world around them are influenced by their interactions with others and their reaction(s) to those social behaviors.

In the case of my project, in particular, the opinions and beliefs held by my interviewees in regard to the tendencies and preconceptions of digital native generations, members of the Gen Z and millennial generations, and possibly before that, will be based on their own life experiences and interactions with the world around them. Also, in a larger sense, the behaviors of Gen Z as a whole can be attributed to the fast-paced, highly digitized world of social media as a means of connection and discourse, which has ultimately shaped the way that we all think and behave to a certain extent.

Narrative Paradigm Theory

The next communication theory that I will utilize is the Narrative Paradigm Theory. This frame of thought, proposed by psychologist Walter Fisher, states that the most effective and meaningful form of communication is through storytelling or the reporting of events. It also further posits that stories are more persuasive than sole arguments themselves.

This theory is integral to the aim of this piece, in that through storytelling and the use of interviews to illustrate real-life experiences and struggles: the plight of digital natives and the looming future ahead, the goal is to be able to change the way people think about Gen Z and beyond. By using the medium of documentary film to let the viewers in on the lives of Gen Zers in a personal sense, paired with the presentation of reliable and traceable data on intergenerational differences shaped by a changing society, the viewer can most optimally and effectively engage with the content and thus be influenced/impacted by it. Instead of simply presenting statistics and an argument in a different medium such as a paper, the use of storytelling through film will ultimately allow for a greater effect on the viewer.

McLuhan's Communication Theory

The final communication theory relevant to this project is McLuhan's Theory of Communication. This entails his most famous idea that "the medium is the message", in that the medium often supersedes the message in the way that it shapes social life and the viewers' interpretation and thought process. The medium influences how the message is perceived and has a message of its own, one that is both separate and distinct, and symbiotically connected to the actual desired message of the subject.

In the case of a documentary film on the lives and future of Gen Z, and the comparison of this demographic to past generations, the medium of a digital film takes on a meaning of its own: namely, mirroring the nature of the lives of digital natives in a digital format, reflecting social and business lives/norms lived through screens, virtual appointments, instant messaging, and the like. In other words, by using the medium of an interactive, interview-centered documentary, I believe I can most accurately and effectively depict the lives of Gen Z and what it means to be a part of this group.

List a minimum of ten research sources you discussed in your blogs. (Citations)

De Witte, M. (2022, January 3). *What to know about gen Z*. Stanford News.

Dimock, M. (2022, April 21). *Defining generations: Where millennials end and generation Z begins*. Pew Research Center.

Dychtwald, Ken. *The Boomer Century, 1946-2046*. S.l: s.n., 2007. Film.

Geiger, J. (2011). *American documentary film : projecting the nation*. Edinburgh University Press.

Greenfield, Lauren. *Generation Wealth*. 2018. Film.

NBC News. (2020). *Millennials: The Unluckiest Generation In Modern History?*

Nichols, B. (2017). *Introduction to documentary (Third)*. Indiana University Press.

Oregon Public Television. (1998). *1968: The year that shaped a generation*. The United States.

Patricia Aufderheide. (2007). *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Thomas Cohen. (2012). *Playing to the Camera : Musicians and Musical Performance in Documentary Cinema*. WallFlower Press.

Describe the audience(s) for your project.

Upon identifying the audience of my documentary as it pertains to the medium and message/subject matter of the piece, the conclusion can be made that the (target) audience is ultimately comprised of the demographic of individuals, namely students, that belong to Generation Z and align with the principles and characteristics outlined in this film. More specifically, while Generation Z members are those born between 1997 and 2012, and between the ages of 10 and 25 years old today, the average viewer of this piece will most likely be college-aged: between 18 and 25, male and female alike from a primarily middle-class economic standing. Further, the perfect audience member to receive this content would be someone involved in/who has an appreciation for the arts, specifically poetic and narrative cinematography, and an individual who is technologically adept overall, as is the vast majority of Gen Z and millennials.

From a psychographic standpoint, however, viewership will be comprised of those who most closely live the lifestyles of a Gen Zer, more specifically, those "digital natives" who are either in college, have just graduated, or are about to graduate from college and either enter the workforce or continue on to pursue graduate degrees. In addition to their technological adeptness, they are aware of the stereotypes and assumptions that exist surrounding their demographic as a result of their perceived technology dependence, and consequently, they want the way in which they're viewed among previous generations to be changed. Finally, the last thing that unites this demographic most closely in a psychographic sense is their outlook on the future, as they share a sense of uncertainty about what their futures hold and that of the world at large. This documentary will seek to dispel some of those doubts/uncertainties and improve the way in which Gen Z is viewed by showing a different perspective of the generation.

As for the secondary target audience of this documentary, the ultimate goal is for those from previous generations to view this piece with an open mind, and possibly see Gen Z (and millennials) in a new light as a result of watching and hearing their stories.

What skills and/or technologies will you need to master in order to produce this project?

- Final Cut Pro
 - o Video Editing
 - Color grading
 - Transitions
 - Animated infographics
 - Continuity
 - o Audio editing
 - Soundtrack mixing
 - Music and vocal balance
 - EQ
 - Background noise reduction/quality maximization during interviews and narration
- Interviewing
 - o Preparation
 - Have questions prepared before interview
 - Send questions to interviewee in advance
 - Establish interview location in advance
 - Perform equipment checks to ensure functionality before each interview
 - o Visual
 - Multi-camera setup for interview
 - Thematic and visual consistency between interviews
 - Hide lavalier mic during stationary interview
 - Possible addition of boom mic or wireless lavalier during interactive/moving shot of interviewee
 - o Verbal/Non-verbal
 - Maintain clear, journalistic tone during interview
 - Instruct interviewee to rephrase question if necessary, during interview
 - Make sure interviewee knows where to look during interview
 - Ensure interview appears natural and interviewee is comfortable

List the deliverables you will hand in with your project.

Final documentary, A/V Script, research notes

Schedule

<https://app.teamgantt.com/projects/gantt?ids=3285011>