

Generation Z Teens Stereotyped As 'Lazy And Unaware'Posted:

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By Julianne Micoleta

You may recognize them as your constantly-connected, constantly-moving peers, but to the rest of the world, they're Generation Z: the lazy, apathetic age group born between 1994 and 2004.

Though they're characterized as multi-tasking whizzes, they're simultaneously garnering the reputation among older generations of being lazy, unaware and apathetic.

Gen Z is often portrayed as less engaged in politics; they have short attention spans and don't care about the weighty issues that confront their generation and the nation; and they're more interested in technology and celebrity than staying active in their communities and schools.

So what gives with Generation Lay-Z?

"Unfortunately, I do think that our generation is somewhat guilty of that title," Elk Grove junior Michelle Zerafin said. "I'm guilty of not being knowledgeable about the world and I can name 10 other people right now that aren't either."

The characterizations come from the parents of Generation Z and prior generations alike.

"Compared to when I was growing up, I think that in some ways my daughter's generation is more unaware of what's going on the world," Hellen Minev said, a parent of a Prospect student. "I don't think they're apathetic, though, I think they just have different priorities like their cellphones and Facebook."

Like Minev, many adults say much of the blame lies with Gen Z's reliance on gadgets.

"You guys have all these devices like smartphones, touchscreens, iPhones, iPads, 'iEverything,'" Elk Grove history teacher Dan Davisson said. "It'd be hard for you guys to spend your energy on things like volunteering if you have all these distractions."

Furthermore, sitting around watching videos, texting or playing video games can lead to negative health effects for teens who would rather stay indoors and use their electronics than be active outdoors. They're leading a sedentary lifestyle that, when paired with a poor diet, can result in obesity, diabetes and other health problems.

A 2009 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report found that approximately 17 percent of children and adolescents ages two-19 are obese. Since 1980, obesity rates have nearly tripled, the report shows.

"No one calls each other up and says, 'Hey, want to go for a bike ride?'" Zerafin said. "And if they do, it's rare. Now it's more like, 'Hey, want to come over and play some ('Call of Duty')?'"

While some worry that Gen Z is lazy and unprepared for the real world, Elk Grove junior Kate DeMeulenaere believes that it's just a matter of survival of the fittest.

"I don't think anyone is ever really prepared," she said. "But I think (some) just adapt better than others and make more logical choices."

Elk Grove counselor Maria Mroz adds that making the right choices and having the right attitude from an early age is the way to beat the stigma of being apathetic.

“If more teenagers realize the value of their education they can beat those murmurs of being apathetic right here at school,” Mroz said.

Huntley junior Christian Nunez tries to beat the label by keeping informed on current affairs and staying on top of his education.

“Although sometimes I tend to let my grades slip, I try to compensate by trying harder. ... I also try to keep up with things that happen in other places,” he said.

On the other hand, there are those like youth group pastor Jin Kim who believe that the lazy label isn't really accurate.

“I don't think this generation is apathetic at all,” Kim said. “If they are, then every other generation, including my own is apathetic as well. I have kids right in front me right now that spend their time and effort volunteering and being active in their community.

“When I look at them I don't see lazy or inattentive kids. I see kids that are caring and hard-working, not apathetic.”