INFORMING ACADEMIA THROUGH UNDERSTANDING OF THE TECHNOLOGY USE, INFORMATION GATHERING BEHAVIORS, AND SOCIAL CONCERNS OF GEN Z

Nicole Buzzetto-Hollywood	University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Maryland, USA	nahollywood@umes.edu
Troy Banks	Salisbury University, Maryland, USA	tvbanks@salisbury.edu
Austin Hill	Harford Community College, Maryland, USA	HAE@harford.edu

* Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The aim of this paper is to examine Gen Z students located in a representative region of the United States when it comes to technology use, news and information gathering behaviors, civic engagement, and social concerns and whether differences exist based on institutional type. The purpose is to report this information so that academics can better understand the behaviors, priorities, and interests of current American students.
Background	This paper investigates the mindset of Generation Z students living in the United States during a period of heightened civic unrest. Through the lens of the Theory of Generations, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Intersectional Theory, this study aims to examine the Gen Z group and compare findings across populations.
Methodology	An electronic survey was administered to students from 2019 through 2022. The survey included a combination of multiple responses, Likert scaled, dichotomous, open-ended, and ordinal questions. It was developed in the Survey Monkey system and reviewed by content and methodological experts to examine bias, vagueness, or potential semantic problems. The survey was pilot-tested in 2018 before implementation in order to explore the efficacy of the research methodology. It was then modified accordingly before widespread distribution to potential participants. The surveys were administered to students enrolled in classes taught by the authors, all of whom are educators. Participation was voluntary, optional, and anonymous.

Contribution	This paper provides insight into the mindset of Generation Z students living in the United States, which is helpful to members of academia who should be informed about the current generation of students in higher education. Studying Generation Z helps us understand the future and can provide insight into the shifting needs and expectations of society.
Findings	According to the findings, Gen Z are heavy users of digital technologies who use social media as their primary source for gathering news about current events as well as information for schoolwork. The majority of respondents considered themselves to be social activists. When institutional type was considered, there were notable differences with the students at the Historically Black College or University (HBCU), noting the greatest concern with a number of pressing issues, including racial justice/Black Lives Matter, women's rights, gun violence, immigration reform, and human trafficking. Less significance across groups was found when LGBTQIA+ rights and climate change were considered.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Institutions of higher education should invest in thorough and ongoing examinations of students' behaviors, norms, information acquisition habits, value issues, and other perceptions.
Recommendations for Researchers	As social media continues to proliferate in daily life and become a vital means of news and information gathering, additional studies such as the one presented here are needed. In other countries facing similarly turbulent times, measuring student interest, awareness, and engagement is highly informative.
Impact on Society	As generational norms and expectations continue to fluctuate and, considering Gen Z is a generation that experienced a highly contentious period during their formative years replete with a large volume of civil unrest and compounded by a global pandemic, understanding the behaviors and attitudes of these students can help us as higher education faculty be more attuned when it comes to the design and delivery of curriculum and services.
Future Research	Future research will explore the role that influencers have in opinion formation and the information-gathering habits of Gen Z.
Keywords	Generation Z, Gen Z, civic engagement and college students, minority learners, HBCU, information gathering of college students, information literacy, learning preferences, issues important to Gen Z, social activism, Black Lives Matter, pandemic learners, online activism

INTRODUCTION

The United States has been in a period of social and civil unrest for several years, with concerns over systematic racism, rampant inequalities, political polarization, xenophobia, police violence, sexual assault and harassment, and the growing epidemic of gun violence. Anxieties stirred by the COVID-19 pandemic further compounded these issues, resulting in a powder keg explosion that occurred throughout 2020 and 2021. This vitriol, polarization, protests, murders, and shootings have all occurred during Gen Z's formative years, and the research available indicates that it has shaped their values and political views (Buzzetto-Hollowell et al., 2021; Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020; Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021).

This paper provides the results of an analysis of the findings of a study that explores social media use, cultural and political awareness, news and information gathering, civic engagement, and the importance of a range of popular social issues of Gen Z students enrolled at three different institutional

types located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Grounded in the Theory of Generations, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Intersectional Theory, this study aims to look at the Gen Z group as a whole and compare findings across populations. The institutional types under consideration include a mid-sized majority serving or otherwise referred to as a traditionally white institution (TWI) located in a small coastal city on the Atlantic Ocean, a small Historically Black University (HBCU) located in a rural area, and a large community college located in a county that is a mixture of rural and suburban in the Washington D.C., Maryland, and Virginia regions. This exploration, conducted from 2019 to 2022, is purposed to examine the behaviors and expectations of Gen Z students within a representative American region during a time of historical importance marked by tremendous turmoil and civil unrest.

LITERATURE REVIEW

LIVING GENERATIONS

There are currently six generations of people living: the Silent Generation, born 1925-1945; Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964; Gen X, born 1965-1980; Millennials, born 1981-1996; Gen Z, born 1997-2012; and the cohort born after 2012 that is often referred to as Generation Alpha (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Gen Z is the largest of any of these generations and currently makes up almost one-quarter of the United States population (Williams, 2015).

GEN Z IS DIVERSE AND VALUES DIVERSITY

Over 74 million strong, Gen Z are more racially and ethnically diverse than any previous generation and are on track to be the most well-educated generation in history (O'Hare & Mayol-Garcia, 2023). They will be the last generation in America to be predominantly white, albeit by a small majority (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021). They are also more likely than Millennials to be the children of immigrants, whereas 22% of Gen Zers in the U.S. have at least one immigrant parent - compared with 14% of Millennials (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Further, new immigrants will continue to join the ranks of Gen Z, which means that this generation is projected to become the majority non-white by 2026, according to Census Bureau projections (Colby & Ortman, 2015).

Gen Z has been more likely than prior generations to have been raised in nontraditional family structures such as single-parent homes, same-sex parents, multi-racial households, or in a home where one or more members are gender expansive (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021). As a result, Gen Z is more accepting of diversity in race, sex, gender expression, or religion than previous generations. Further, a 2023 Gallup poll found that 20% of adult members of Generation Z self-identify as LGBTQ (Jones, 2024). Finally, Törőcsik et al. (2014) explain that this mindset of inclusion and valuing diversity comes because Generation Z is the first true "global generation" in the world, having been encultured from birth to developing a multicultural and multi-national orientation.

GEN Z AND THE ISSUES

Gen Zers in the United States have been found in the research to be progressive and pro-government. They are less likely to hold xenophobic beliefs, such as the notion of American exceptionalism and superiority, that have been popular with prior generations (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021).

Gen Z is conscious of racial justice and equality (Seemiller & Grace, 2017), climate change, global unrest and geopolitical crises, economic disparities, and societal impact (Deloitte, 2024). They are also found to be concerned with a future that they feel is uncertain (Azimi et al., 2022).

While both Gen Z and Millennials value universalism and benevolence, Millennials are more inclined to view the world in a traditional manner, valuing conservation, self-direction, and the welfare of others. Gen Z, in comparison, was found to value stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and equality (Azimi et al., 2022).

The United Way of the National Capital Area (2024) surveyed 1,000 Americans, focusing on Gen Z's engagement with social issues. Highlights of the study found:

- Nearly one-third of Gen Zers (32%) are regularly engaged in activism or social justice work (compared to 24% of Millennials.)
- Over half of Gen Zers (51%) have participated in rallies or protests to support specific causes or social issues, with a slight increase to 56% observed among those enrolled in college.
- 61% of Gen Z respondents volunteer their time to meaningful causes at least once a year.
- About one-third (33%) have engaged in political advocacy by contacting local or national politicians to lobby for a cause.

When specific causes were explored, the top noted concerns were cost of living/inflation (57%), healthcare access and affordability (55%), affordable housing (52%), climate change (47%), gun safety/reducing gun violence (42%), racial equity (39%), LGBTQIA+ rights (39%), and access to education/affordability (38%). When asked about the drivers of their activism, 62% cited moral and ethical reasons, followed by 51% who cited personal experience or having others in their lives directly impacted. Finally, the study found that 28% of respondents had personally experienced or been directly impacted by gun violence (United Way of the National Capital Area, 2024).

MENTAL HEALTH AND GEN Z

Studies of Gen Z have shown that, compared with previous generations, and even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gen Z exhibited higher rates of depression and anxiety, distress, and need for emotional support (Coe et al., 2023; Deloitte, 2024; Schroth, 2019). Further, reports find that Gen Zers have the least positive life outlook, including lower levels of emotional and social well-being than older generations, with 25% of respondents in their national studies citing that they are emotionally distressed, which is double the rate reported by Millennials and Gen X and more than triple the levels reported by Baby Boomers (Coe et al., 2023; Deloitte, 2024).

The mental health challenges that have become characteristic of Gen Z have led them to be known as the "loneliest generation" (Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020). According to Parker and Igielnik (2020), this is because Gen Z has spent less time than prior generations engaging in direct face-to-face contact with other people.

Gen Z has also been shown to be less resilient than past generations (Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020; Harari et al., 2023; Ludwig et al., 2020), where resilience is the ability to recover from setbacks. As a concept, resilience is closely linked to self-efficacy, grit, and a growth mindset (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Mitchell, 2019).

GEN Z AND TECHNOLOGY

Raised in the age of the smartphone, Gen Z has been tethered to digital devices from a young age, with most having the preponderance of their childhood milestones commemorated online (Lenhart, 2015; Törőcsik et al., 2014; Williams, 2015). No generation has previously been raised more surrounded by digital communications (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). More specifically, research shows that American Gen Z members are connected to the Internet "almost always" or "several times a day" (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). They are the heaviest users of social media among all adults, with YouTube as their most used social media platform, followed by TikTok and then Instagram, with more than 35% of Gen Z reporting that they spend over four hours a day on social media (He et al., 2024).

Over 74 million strong, they are true digital natives known for their technological fluency (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Alade, 2018; Buzzetto-Hollywood & Quinn, 2024; Gibson, 2016; Shatto & Erwin, 2016). Gibson (2016) explains that Generation Z is going to transform society with their different

way of thinking and learning. He asserts that their minds, relationships, learning preferences, emotional health, and sense of self have all been shaped by constant screen exposure from an early age, which has altered their neural circuitry, leading to shorter attention spans, stunted social skills, and a heightened ability to multitask (Gibson, 2016).

GEN Z INFORMATION GATHERING AND SHARING

Gen Z differs from past generations in their ability to connect instantly and disseminate information globally, influencing each other at an exceedingly fast rate (He et al., 2024). Because Gen Z is inherently wired in, their mindset adapts at the speed of technology. As a result, cultural shifts happen faster, speed is a necessity, and change is constant. Gen Z has neither tolerance for broken technology nor inefficient processes, nor will members of this generation forgive digital ineptitudes (Merriman & Oktem, 2022).

After conducting a thematic analysis of 1,918 publicly posted TikTok videos tagged #GenZ, as well as salient comments posted on these videos, Stahl and Literat (2023) found that Gen Z uses social media for self-representation and collective expression and that it is part of their multimodal communications practices. When it comes to representation, they explained that "Gen Z portrays itself as a generation of contrasts: powerful and self-assured, yet vulnerable and damaged. Videos embrace a playful self-reflexivity about time that embodies Gen Z's self-awareness, sense of unity, and collective spirit" (Stahl & Literat, 2023, p. 925). Zilka (2023) conducted a quantitative study based on a sample of 418 Israeli adolescents and reported that using a smartphone made life easier, helped them solve everyday problems, made every day conduct simpler, and allowed them to express themselves, keep up to date with what is happening, disseminate information conveniently, be involved in social life, and establish relationships with those around them.

Gen Z is found to be the heaviest users of social media among all adults as a primary source for news and information, with entertainment-centric content, socio-political news, social commentaries, and reviews captivating their attention (He et al., 2024). According to Shatto and Erwin (2016), Gen Z is incredibly savvy when it comes to mobile technologies; however, they lack the critical thinking skills necessary to accurately evaluate the validity of the information found online. As a result, they are particularly susceptible to fake news and pseudo-information, which is intensified by their exceedingly short attention spans.

GEN Z LEARNING

Teh and Baskaran (2022) found that Gen Z exhibits a preference for e-assessments and hybrid learning environments. They attributed their findings to the diversified needs and experiences of these learners who, as a result of a global pandemic, were forced to experience multiple learning modalities.

A 2018 study by Buzzetto-Hollywood and Alade found that Generation Z learners enrolled in a minority-serving institution enjoy computer classes, feel that using computers comes easy to them, and perceive themselves as experts in the use of social media, mobile operating systems, using a smartphone, searching the web, and email. Participants also reported that they want to be more technologically literate, more skilled in computer software applications, and interested in learning about cyber security. In terms of the future, most respondents also believe that their careers will require them to analyze information to inform decision-making. Additionally, most stated that information security will be important to their future career.

Powell et al. (2021), who explored the teaching and learning experiences of Gen Z students at a historically Black college or university (HBCU), found that Gen Z learners attending an HBCU have been impacted by social justice movements. Accordingly, they explain that to teach Gen-Z students, faculty should create courses that fit their needs via culturally responsive practice and consider innovative teaching strategies to engage them in meaningful discourse.

THEORETICAL INFLUENCES

According to the theory of generations, a person's values are shaped by the major events witnessed while coming of age (Azimi et al., 2022). Karl Manheim explained that one should not look at a generation as a cohort defined by a birth period but rather as a group of contemporaries who have experienced a shared history and a set of experiences that have marked their formative years (Knight, 2015). Ranging from middle school students to early professionals, Gen Z has been raised during a time of economic, social, and political uncertainty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021). School shootings and domestic terrorism have played a prominent role in their consciousness (Rue, 2018), and an unprecedented global pandemic uprooted their young lives, which researchers note as being the most formative generation-defining moment that has impacted Gen Z much as 9/11 was a defining moment for Gen X Americans (Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020). Sakdiyakorn et al. (2021) explain that the combination of national and global events and their connectedness via social media has shaped the collective consciousness of Gen Z, making them value universalism, benevolence, self-direction, achievement, and security.

Uses and gratifications theory explains that people choose to utilize prevalent forms of media because they expect to obtain specific gratifications as a result of their selection (Katz et al., 1973). Falgoust et al. (2022), who explored young people's engagement with social media trends, found six categories consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory: (1) entertainment, (2) convenience and utility for widespread communication, (3) increasing social interaction, (4) finding social support, (5) seeking and sharing information, and (6) escaping from everyday life. Because social media occupies such a significant role in the lives of Generation Z and has developed into much more than a tool for social connections, Ibáñez-Sánchez et al. (2022) and Florenthal (2019) describe that social media facilitates young people's overall needs and requirements which Hoque and Hossain (2023) clarify when examined through the lens of uses and gratification theory explains the social media stickiness in the Z Generation which is mediated by emotional attachment.

The intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression such as their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers, "creating a complex convergence of oppression" that influences experiences, perceptions, and beliefs (YW Boston Blog, 2017). Intersectionality and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) go hand in hand. HBCUs are American institutions founded before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to provide educational opportunities that might otherwise be denied to historically marginalized populations (Buzzetto-Hollywood & Mitchell, 2019). HBCUs serve significant populations of low-income students of color, the majority of whom are the first generation in their families to attend college. HBCUs are also known for accepting students at far higher rates than traditionally white institutions (TWIs) from more challenging environments and who are more likely to have been subjected to a deficit mindset, which refers to the tendency of educational professionals to assume that disadvantaged or marginalized students will do poorly in their classes (Buzzetto-Hollywood, 2023).

WHY STUDY GEN Z

Gen Z has been referred to as the most influential generational cohort in history, making new trends, reshaping society, and redefining cultural norms (Merriman & Oktem, 2022). According to George (2024, p.93), Generation Z's passion for social causes and desire for a positive social impact is distinct and generation-defining. "Gen Z exhibits key differences from predecessors in perspectives, behaviors, and cultural influence. Their more pragmatic outlook, diversity, connectivity, and social consciousness will likely redefine what it means to be young in America and beyond. Understanding Gen Z's formative experiences helps contextualize their emerging impact." Studying Generation Z helps us understand the future and can provide insight into the shifting needs and expectations of society.

METHODOLOGY

This study builds upon three other studies conducted at the lead institution focusing on Gen Z, namely Buzzetto-Hollywood and Alade (2018), Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021), and Buzzetto-Hollywood and Quinn (2024). This exploration was purposefully conducted from 2019 to 2022 during a time of historical importance marked by tremendous turmoil and civil unrest that has included political polarization, mass protests and riots, murders and shootings, and a global pandemic. According to the theory of generations, these major events witnessed and/or experienced during Generation Z's coming of age are generation-defining and consciousness-shaping.

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey included a combination of multiple responses, Likert scaled, dichotomous, open-ended, and ordinal questions. It was developed in the Survey Monkey system and reviewed by several content and methodological experts in order to examine bias, vagueness, or potential semantic problems (issues related to the meaning of words and phrases in a language, where misunderstandings occur due to different interpretations of the same words, often arising from ambiguity, cultural differences). Finally, the survey was pilot-tested in 2018 prior to implementation in order to explore the efficacy of the research methodology. It was then modified accordingly prior to widespread distribution to potential participants.

SAMPLING STRATEGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The Mid-Atlantic region is a portion of the United States that exists as the overlap between the northeastern and southeastern portions of the country. It includes the nation's capital, as well as large urban centers, small cities, suburbs, and rural enclaves. It was selected as one of the most socially, economically, racially, and culturally diverse parts of the United States and is often referred to as the "typically American region." Accordingly, research conducted in this area is largely representative of the larger United States (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021). Additionally, this study was purposefully limited to the United States, where such issues as Black Lives Matter and gun violence are uniquely prominent and impactful.

The HBCU included in this study is located in rural Coastal Maryland and is an 1890 Land Grant institution with an enrollment of approximately 3,200 students. The school is minority-serving, with over 91% of students being non-white. It also primarily serves first-generation and low-income learners coming from the Baltimore and Washington, D.C. areas. The community college is located in a densely populated suburban area with a student body that is approximately 5,300 students in size and where 44% of the students are non-white. The traditionally white institution is located in a small coastal city where enrollment is approximately 6,400, with one-third of the students identifying as non-white.

An electronic survey was administered to students from 2019 through 2022 attending a minority-serving institution, a majority-serving institution, and a community college. The surveys were administered to students who had been enrolled in classes taught by the authors, all of whom were educators. Upon completion of undergraduate business and/or mathematics courses delivered by the co-authors, students were sent an email invitation to complete the survey. Participation was voluntary, optional, and anonymous. Nearly 1,100 individuals (n=1,083) completed the survey, representing an approximate response rate of 35%, with 704 usable results remaining after partial completions and the responses of individuals outside of the 18-24 age range were removed.

DATA ANALYSIS

After data collection was concluded, the data was imported to SPSS, where descriptive statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation, and skewness, were calculated. A comparison table was generated to compare the responses based on institutional type. Several one-way analyses of variance (one-way ANOVA) were used to determine whether there were any statistically significant

differences between the means of the three participant groups. Chi-squares were also conducted. A Chi-square is a common inferential statistical test used to examine the differences between categorical variables. This test aims to determine if a difference between observed data and expected data is due to chance or if it is due to a relationship between the variables. Finally, Spearman's rank correlation coefficients were prepared to determine whether there is a monotonic component of association between continuous or ordinal variables. Monotonic relationships occur when one thing goes up or down with the other.

During the analyses, the following research questions were explored.

R1: Does Gen Z get most of their information from social media?

Influenced by uses and gratification theory and the existing literature, this research question considers student responses to dichotomous questions that explore the use of different media sources for news gathering. Additionally, a series of Likert-scaled questions included in the survey that explored how students regularly acquire information for their classes were considered, whereas if a mean of >3.0 was achieved, then the threshold for answering in the affirmative is viewed as having been met.

R2: Are there differences when institutional type is considered regarding social activism?

This research question, which is influenced by intersectional theory, was explored with an ANOVA and a Chi-Square. A p>.05 was established as the threshold for answering the question in the affirmative.

R3: When institutional type is considered, do perceived issues of importance vary?

This research question, which is influenced by intersectional theory, was explored with a comparison table, and a series of ANOVAs with a p>.05 was established as the threshold for answering the question in the affirmative.

FINDINGS

The respondents were 55% female, 41.5% male, and 3% nonbinary or gender non-conforming. Over half the respondents (51%) were enrolled at an HBCU, 28.5% were enrolled at a community college, and 20% were attending a traditionally white institution (TWI).

Participants in this study overwhelmingly were users of social media. In descending order, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn were the most popular social media services reported as being used. When the volume of use was considered, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat were the most cited as being used daily or multiple times a day. When asked which social media service they would pick if they could only have one, the top answers were YouTube, followed by Instagram. Additionally, more than half of participants responded that they have uploaded a video to a video-sharing site such as YouTube or TikTok.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - TECHNOLOGY FAMILIARITY

Participants were asked to reflect on their familiarity with a number of technologies using a five-point scale where 1 equaled totally unfamiliar and 5 equaled very familiar. Mean, standard deviation, and skewness were calculated and are presented in Table 1 in descending order by mean, with using a smartphone ranked highest, followed by searching the Web, social networking services, email, the Microsoft Office Suite, the G Suite, learning management systems, and the Microsoft Windows.

Table 1. Technology familiarity

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
Using a Smart Phone	4.68	.938	-3.110	.096
Searching the Web	4.67	.924	-3.059	.096
Social Networking Services (like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat)	4.59	1.002	-2.638	.096
Email	4.57	.951	-2.664	.096
The Microsoft Office Suite (MS Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Outlook)	4.33	1.023	-1.725	.095
The G Suite (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides, etc.)	4.14	1.125	-1.345	.096
Learning Management Systems (Blackboard, Course Sites, Edmodo, Canvas, Google Classroom)	3.98	1.207	-1.121	.096
The Windows Operating System	3.74	1.256	-.717	.096

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - TECHNOLOGY LIKES AND INTERESTS

Respondents were asked whether they found working with a computer easy and if they were interested in further developing their computer skills. These results are depicted in Table 2 in descending order by mean. A 5-point Likert scale was employed where 1 equaled strongly disagree and 5 equaled strongly agree. Mean, standard deviation and skewness were calculated.

Table 2. Technology likes and interests

	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. error
I would like to improve my overall technological literacy	4.15	.936	-1.222	.096
I would like to be more skilled in the use of computer software applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc.)	4.12	.979	-1.191	.096
Working with computers comes easily to me	3.94	.994	-.914	.096
I would like to know more about living online (communications networks, the Internet and World Wide Web, social media, searching, research fluency, and email)	3.86	1.067	-.873	.096
I would like to know more about computer fundamentals (hardware components, networking fundamentals, cloud computers, operating systems, and storage)	3.81	1.126	-.806	.096

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

When civic engagement has been explored in the literature, Gen Z has been found to be heavily engaged in advocacy (United Way of the National Capital Area, 2024). A series of yes or no questions explored whether participants had participated in marches or rallies (20.2%), boycotts (19.7%), educating friends and family about issues (64.7), or donated to a cause they support (40.7).

R1: Does Gen Z get most of their information from social media?

Respondents were asked how they get their news, and the most common response was social media (79.5%) followed by television (51%), YouTube (49%), Internet news sites (43%), online newspapers (25.1), Internet blogs (21%), radio (20.5%), online magazines (12.9%), newspaper hardcopy (5.3%),

and magazine hardcopy (5.4%). In addition to news-gathering behaviors, students were also asked about their likelihood of using a range of resources for schoolwork, with 1 equaling very unlikely and 5 equaling very likely. The resources considered included Google or another search engine, the specific social media service YouTube, the course website, the course textbook, the school library website, or physical libraries. After the use of a search engine such as Google, the second most common source was the social media service YouTube, with a mean of 4.59 and a standard deviation of 1.002, indicating that students are very likely to use this resource for schoolwork. The results are displayed in Tables 3 and 4 and are presented in descending order.

Table 3. News and information gathering

Social media	79.5%
Television	51%
YouTube	49%
Internet news site	43%
Online newspaper	25.1%
Internet blog	21%
Radio	20.5%
Online magazine	12.9%
Newspaper hardcopy	6.3%
Magazine hardcopy	5.4%

Table 4. Gathering information for schoolwork

	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. error
Google or another search engine	4.61	.760	-2.273	.096
YouTube	4.59	1.002	-2.638	.096
Instructor/Teacher/course web site	3.91	1.134	-.981	.096
Course textbook	3.90	1.086	-.855	.096
School/University library website	3.74	1.229	-.711	.096
Physical library	3.03	1.324	.021	.096

R2: Are there differences when institutional type is considered regarding social activism?

This research question was explored with an ANOVA and a Chi-Square looking at institutional affiliation and responses to the Likert scaled agreement question that asked students to respond to the statement, "I consider myself to be a social activist." A $p > .05$ was established as the threshold for answering the research question under consideration in the affirmative.

When participants were asked to respond to the statement, "I consider myself to be a social activist," the mean for the question was 3.11, and the standard deviation was 1.023. These results are in Table 5.

The significance for the ANOVA was <.001, indicating a significant difference between the means. Similarly, the results of the Pearson Chi-square indicated a relationship between institutional type and self-perception that one is a social activist with $p < .001$. These findings are presented in Table 6.

Table 5. Social activism

	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. error
I consider myself to be a social activist	3.11	1.023	-.166	.098

Table 6. Institutional type and social activism

ANOVA					
	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	18.432	2	9.216	9.044	<.001
Within groups	627.742	616	1.019		
Total	646.174	618			
Pearson Chi-square					
Chi-square	Value	df	Asymptotic significance 2-sided		
Pearson Chi-square	29.241	8	<.001		
Likelihood ratio	38.665	8	<.001		
Linear by linear association	619				

R3: When institutional type is considered, do issues of importance vary?

This research question was explored with a comparison table and a series of ANOVAs with a p>.05 established as the threshold for answering in the affirmative. Table 7 presents the responses in terms of the percentage of people that responded that a particular issue was important, where racial justice and BLM were important to the vast majority of students at the HBCU (81%), the majority of students at the community college (61%) and less than half of students enrolled at the TWI (38%). When LGBTQIA+ rights were considered, half the students (50%) at the community college cited that the issue is important compared to 43% at the HBCU and 22% at the TWI. Gun violence was deemed important by the majority of students at the HBCU and community college at 67% and 55%, respectively, whereas less than half the students (41%) at the TWI said it was an important issue. Women's rights were very important to the HBCU students (67%), followed by the community college students (55%) and the TWI students (40%), respectively. Human trafficking was reported as important at the HBCU (68%) and the community college (60%), with less than half (43%) of the students enrolled at the TWI noting it as an issue of concern. Climate change was only reported as important by the community college students at 51%, with a minority of students at the HBCU (46%) and TWI (43%) citing it as important. Finally, less than half the students at the HBCU (48%) and community college (44%) said that immigration reform was a crucial issue, with less than a third at the TWI (28%) citing it as important.

When a series of ANOVAs were run, significant differences were found when means were compared for racial justice, gun violence, women's rights, human trafficking, and immigration reform, as p<.05 for each issue. Statistical significance was not found for LGBTQIA+ rights (p=.106) or climate change (p=.106). The results for the ANOVAs are displayed in Table 8. Institutional Type and Social Issues.

Table 7. Issues by institutional type

	Racial justice/ BLM	LGBTQ+ rights	Gun violence	Women's rights	Human trafficking	Climate change	Immigration/ DACA
HBCU	81%	43%	67%	67%	68%	46%	48%
Community College	61%	50%	59%	55%	60%	51%	44%
TWI	38%	22%	41%	40%	43%	43%	28%

Table 8. ANOVAs institutional type and social issues

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Racial justice BLM					
Between groups	16.972	2	8.486	50.041	<.001
Within groups	106.157	626	.170		
Total	123.129	628			
LGBTQIA+ rights					
Between groups	6.441	2	.555	2.249	.106
Within groups	142.074	593	.247		
Total	146.515	593			
Gun violence					
Between groups	2.519	2	1.259	6.217	.002
Within Groups	117.492	580	.203		
Total	120.010	582			
Women's rights					
Between groups	5.033	2	2.516	12.732	<.001
Within groups	113.044	572			
Total	118.077	574			
Human trafficking					
Between groups	3.681	2	1.840	9.244	<.001
Within groups	117.666	591	.199		
Total	121.347	593			
Climate change					
Between groups	1.110	2	.555	2.249	.106
Within groups	145.572				
Total	146.681				
Immigration reform					
Between groups	3.176	2	1.588	6.463	.002
Within groups	144.241	587	.246		
Total	147.417	589			

DISCUSSION

This study was based on Gen Z students in the United States, where such issues as Black Lives Matter and gun violence are uniquely prominent and impactful. The Mid-Atlantic region was chosen as the focus of this study. It includes the nation's capital, as well as large urban centers, small cities, suburbs, and rural enclaves. It is widely recognized as one of the most socially, economically, racially, and culturally diverse parts of the United States. As such, research conducted in the Mid-Atlantic is considered representative of the larger United States (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021).

Three institutions were included in this study: a Historically Black College or University (HBCU), a traditionally white institution (TWI), and a two-year community college. The HBCU included in this study is located in rural Coastal Maryland with a student enrollment of approximately 3,200 students. The school is a minority school, with over 91% of students being non-white, and primarily serves first-generation and low-income learners coming from the Baltimore and Washington D.C. areas. The community college is located in a densely populated suburban area with a student body that is approximately 5,300 students in size and where 44% of the students are non-white. The traditionally white institution is located in a small coastal city where enrollment is approximately 6,400, and one-third of the students identify as non-white.

When civic engagement was explored, a large percentage of participants (64.7%) had educated friends and family about an important cause, with 20.2% having participated in marches or rallies, 19.7% having participated in boycotts, and 40.7% having donated to a cause they support. These statistics are more modest than what has been reported in the literature, such as a 2024 study conducted by the United Way of the Capital Area (United Way of the National Capital Area, 2024).

Participants in this study overwhelmingly were users of social media, particularly YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter, with the most time being spent on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. Participants indicated strong familiarity with the use of smartphones, searching the web, social media services, email, use of Microsoft Office, and the Google Suite of productivity applications. Participants also indicated familiarity, albeit less strong, with learning management systems (LMS) and the Windows Operating system. Participants responded that working with computers comes easily to them, and most would like to further develop their skills in such areas as cybersecurity, information literacy, computer software fundamentals, and living online. These findings are similar to what has been reported in the literature by Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021), Buzzetto-Hollywood and Alade (2018), Gibson (2016), Parker and Igielnik (2020), Shatto and Erwin (2016), and Zilka (2023).

Research question one explored the following: "Do Gen Z get most of their information from social media?" According to the findings, respondents overwhelmingly, at nearly 80%, cited social media as the most common source for receipt of news and information, with results confirming the findings of He et al. (2024) and Watson (2024). Additionally, when the range of resources most commonly used for gathering information for schoolwork was considered, the most common responses were the use of internet searches followed by the use of the social networking service YouTube, which are consistent with the earlier findings of Buzzetto-Hollywood and Alade (2018) and Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021). These results may also be explained by the uses and gratifications theory, which states that people choose to utilize prevalent forms of media because they expect to obtain specific gratifications as a result of their selection (Katz et al., 1973) and, more specifically, that the social media stickiness exhibited by Generation Z is mediated by an emotional lifelong attachment (Hoque & Hossain, 2023)

Research question two explored whether there was a difference in perception of social activism when institutional type is considered with both an ANOVA and a Pearson Chi-Square. The Theory of Generations states that a person's values are shaped by the major events witnessed while coming of

age (Azimi et al., 2022). Gen Z has been raised during a time of economic, social, and political uncertainty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021; Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021). When asked if they consider themselves to be social activists, a modest majority responded in the affirmative, which is consistent with what has been reported by the United Way of the National Capital Area (2024), Deloitte (2024), and Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021). When an ANOVA and Pearson Chi-Square were performed to explore differences by institutional type, significant mean differences were found, which was consistent with what has been reported by Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021) and Powell et al. (2021).

In order to more deeply dive into the nature of the differences in the selections picked by participants when a range of common issues were presented, research question three asked, "When institutional type is considered, do issues of importance vary?" According to the responses, there were significant differences when institutional type was explored when it comes to most issues under consideration, whereas students enrolled at the HBCU were much more likely to consider issues to be important, followed by the community college with the traditionally white institution deviating considerably. The issues where there were significant differences in perceptions based on institutional type were racial justice/Black Lives Matter, gun violence, women's rights, human trafficking, and immigration reform. These findings are similar to what has previously been reported by Buzzetto-Hollywood et al. (2021). Additionally, a Pew Report (Auxier, 2020) found that race was a significant determinant in interest in social justice issues, with Black and Hispanic social media users significantly more likely than white users to express interest in social justice issues, look up information about protests and rallies, and to be sharing information about issues deemed important. Looking through a theoretical lens, these findings are best explained by Intersectional Theory.

To understand intersectional theory, we must first understand the concept of intersectionality, which is a term coined in 1989 by American civil rights scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Intersectionality is the examination of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectional theory asserts that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression, such as their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers, "creating a complex convergence of oppression" that influences experiences, perceptions, and beliefs (YW Boston Blog, 2017). When the racial and ethnic diversity of the three institutions under question are explored, there are significant differences among the student bodies. The work of Powell et al. (2021) has noted that Gen Z students attending HBCUs have been particularly impacted by societal disparities and the myriads of prevailing social and racial justice issues. Accordingly, the authors of this paper postulate that the differences in responses by institutional type are best explained by intersectional theory and, more specifically, in the differences in the demographic makeup of the students attending the three institutions.

The issues where no significant differences were detected by institutional type by the ANOVAs were LGBTQIA+ rights and climate change. The authors are not able to conclude why there was a minimal difference among students about these issues, nor can they find anything in the literature that provides a compelling justification. Accordingly, the authors believe that this is an area that could be explored in future studies.

LIMITATIONS

The most notable limitation of this study is that it is focused on just three institutions located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. However, the Mid-Atlantic region is one of the most socially, economically, racially, and culturally diverse parts of the United States and is often referred to as the "typically American region." Accordingly, research conducted in this area is largely representative of the larger United States (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021). The limitations inherent in the study presented in this paper can be addressed by future research that expands the scope of this examination so as to include additional institutions from more areas of the country.

In addition to the regional focus, other potential limitations include the reliance on self-reported data and potential biases that may exist that are inherent in survey research. These limitations could be addressed with future studies that employ a mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative methods for more in-depth probing.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides the results of the analysis of the findings of a study that explores the social media use, cultural and political awareness, civic engagement, issue prioritization, and social activism of Gen Z students enrolled at three different institutional types located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The aim of this study was to look at the group as a whole and compare results across populations.

According to the findings, Gen Z are heavy users of digital technologies, with social media utilized as their primary source for gathering news about current events and utility for informing for schoolwork. Uses and gratifications theory explains that people choose to consume certain kinds of media because they expect to obtain specific gratifications as a result of those selections. Whiting and Williams (2013) identified ten uses and gratifications involved with social media – social interaction, information seeking, passing the time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory utility, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others. More recently, Falgoust et al. (2022) explored young people's engagement with social media trends, finding six categories consistent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory: (1) entertainment, (2) convenience and utility for widespread communication, (3) increasing social interaction, (4) finding social support, (5) seeking and sharing information, and (6) escaping from everyday life. Finally, Hoque and Hossain (2023) explained that the social media stickiness exhibited by Generation Z is mediated by an emotional lifelong attachment.

Strauss-Howe hypothesized that generations occur in roughly twenty-year increments and that at any given time, four generations exist together while competing for power (Brinkof, 2023), whereas 'crisis' and 'awakening' events in history shape the generations living through them, which will cause those generations to influence the next cycle (Knight, 2015). Manheim explained that generations are formed through two important elements: a common location in historical time, such that there are shared events and experiences, and an awareness of that historical location. He explained that new generations are formed and shaped during sudden and significant historical shifts that cause them to develop new norms as they adapt to evolving social conditions (Kalmus & Opermann, 2019). The Theory of Generations explains that the major events occurring when one comes of age impact their values (Azimi et al., 2022). Further, Gen Zs are the first true digital natives whose lives have been marked by the proliferation of social networking as well as a global pandemic as well as economic, social, and political unrest and uncertainty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2021; Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021). The vitriol, polarization, protests, murders, and shootings that have occurred during Gen Z's formative years have been shown in the research available to have shaped their values and political views, making them value universalism, benevolence, justice, diversity, self-direction, achievement, and security (Buzzetto-Hollywood et al., 2021; Center for Generational Kinetics, 2020; Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). As such, it was not surprising that the majority of respondents participating in this study considered themselves to be social activists.

When institutional type was considered, there were notable differences with the students at the HBCU, noting the greatest concern with a number of pressing issues, including racial justice/Black Lives Matter, women's rights, gun violence, immigration reform, and human trafficking. Less significance across groups was found when LGBTQIA+ rights and climate change were considered. These findings are best explained by Intersectional Theory, which posits that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression, such as their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation,

religion, and other identity markers, "creating a complex convergence of oppression" that influences experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and values (YW Boston Blog, 2017).

This paper provides insight into the mindset of Generation Z students living in the United States, which is helpful to members of academia who should be informed about the current generation of students in higher education. Studying Generation Z helps us understand the future and can provide insight into the shifting needs and expectations of society. The findings tell us that the Generation Z students participating in this study are heavy users of technology, which serves as a prominent source of news and information gathering. It also tells us that Gen Z is not monolithic, with measurable differences when institutional type is considered. Accordingly, the findings underscore the importance of considering institutional type and intersecting identities in research on generational behaviors and attitudes. As such, institutions of higher education should invest in thorough and ongoing examinations of the behaviors, norms, information acquisition habits, value issues, and other perceptions of their students. Understanding the behaviors and attitudes of these students can inform higher education faculty and administration when it comes to the design and delivery of curriculum, programs, and services.

REFERENCES

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2021). *Social issues that matter to Generation Z*. https://www.aecf.org/blog/generation-z-social-issues

Auxier, B. (2020). *Activism on social media varies by race and ethnicity, age, political party*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/07/13/activism-on-social-media-varies-by-race-and-ethnicity-age-political-party/

Azimi, S., Andonova, Y., & Schewe, C. (2022). Closer together or further apart? Values of hero generations Y and Z during crisis. *Young Consumers*, *23*(2), 179–196. https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-03-2021-1300

Brinkof, T. (2023). *Strauss-Howe generational theory: Is revolution coming to America?* Big Think. https://bigthink.com/the-past/strauss-howe-generational-theory-revolution-america/

Buzzetto-Hollywood, N. (2023). Decolonization and culturally responsive teaching practices and the role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, *12*(1), 1-15.

Buzzetto-Hollywood, N., & Alade, A. (2018). An examination of Gen Z learners attending a minority university. *Interdisciplinary Journal of e-Skills and Lifelong Learning*, *14*, 41-53. https://doi.org/10.28945/3969

Buzzetto-Hollywood, N., Hill, A., & Banks, T. (2021). Early findings of a study exploring the social media, political and cultural awareness, and civic activism of Gen Z students in the Mid-Atlantic United States. In M. Jones (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Informing Science and Information Technology Education Conference* (Article 11). Informing Science Institute. https://doi.org/10.28945/4762

Buzzetto-Hollywood, N., & Mitchell, B. C. (2019). Grit and persistence: Findings from a longitudinal study of student performance. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, *16*, 377-391. https://doi.org/10.28945/4375

Buzzetto-Hollywood, N., & Quinn, K. (2024). Technology behaviors of Generation Z learners. *Journal of Education and Human Development*, *13*(1), 53-58.

Center for Generational Kinetics. (2020). *The state of Gen Z 2020*. https://www.msjc.edu/careereducation/documents/fow/State-of-Gen-Z-2020-by-CGK-Impact-of-Covid-19-on-Gen-Z-and-Future-3-of-3-in-Study-Series.pdf

Coe, E., Doy, A., Enomoto, K., & Healy, C. (2023, April 28). *Gen Z mental health: The impact of tech and social media*. McKinsey Health Institute. https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/gen-z-mental-health-the-impact-of-tech-and-social-media

Colby, S. L., & Ortman, J. O. (2015). Current population reports. US Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2015/demo/p25-1143.pdf

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989*(1), Article 8. https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf

Deloitte. (2024). *Gen Z and millennial survey: Living and working with purpose in a transforming world.* https://www2.deloitte.com/global/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/genzmillennialsurvey.html

Djafarova, E., & Bowes, T. (2021). 'Instagram made me buy it': Generation Z impulse purchases in fashion industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 59*, 102345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102345

Falgoust, G., Winterlind, E., Moon, P., Parker, A., Zinzow, H., & Madathil, K. (2022). Applying the uses and gratifications theory to identify motivational factors behind young adult's participation in viral social media challenges on TikTok. *Human Factors in Healthcare*, *2*, 100014. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hfh.2022.100014

Florenthal, B. (2019). Young consumers' motivational drivers of brand engagement behavior on social media sites: A synthesized U&G and TAM framework. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 13*(3), 351-391. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-05-2018-0064

George, A. S. (2024). Trendsetters: How Gen Z defined 2024. *Partners Universal Innovative Research Publication*, *2*(3), 92–103. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11661558

Gibson, C. (2016). Who are these kids? Inside the race to decipher today's teens, who will transform society as we know it. *The Washington Post*. http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/style/2016/05/25/inside-the-race-to-decipher-todays-teens-who-will-transform-society-as-we-know-it/

Harari, T. T., Sela, Y., & Bareket-Bojmel, L. (2023). Gen Z during the COVID-19 crisis: A comparative analysis of the differences between Gen Z and Gen X in resilience, values and attitudes. *Current Psychology, 42,* 24223-24232. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03501-4

He, A., Case, W., Briggs, W., Burns, M., Marlatt, J., & Tran, K. (2024). *Report: What to know about Gen Z's engagement with social media, entertainment and technology.* Morning Consult. https://pro.morningconsult.com/analyst-reports/gen-z-engagement-social-media-entertainment-tech

Hoque, S., & Hossain, M. A. (2023). Social media stickiness in the Z Generation: A study based on the uses and gratifications theory. *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice*, *11*(4), 92-108. https://doi.org/10.1633/JISTaP.2023.11.4.6

Ibáñez-Sánchez, S., Orús, C., & Flavián, C. (2022). Augmented reality filters on social media: Analyzing the drivers of playability based on uses and gratifications theory. *Psychology & Marketing, 39*(3), 559-578 https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21639

Jones, J. (2024, March 13). *LGBTQ+ Identification in U.S. now at 7.6%.* Gallup. https://news.gallup.com/poll/611864/lgbtq-identification.aspx

Kalmus, V., & Opermann, S. (2019). Operationalising Mannheim: Empirical building blocks of generational identity. *Comunicazioni Sociali*, 232-246. https://doi.org/10.26350/001200_000061

Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *37*(4), 509–523. https://doi.org/10.1086/268109

Knight, Y. (2015). Talkin' 'bout my generation: A brief introduction to generational theory. *Planet*, *21*(1), 13-15. https://doi.org/10.11120/plan.2009.00210013

Lenhart, A. (2015). *Teens, social media, and technology overview 2015.* Pew Research Center. http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/

Ludwig, C. M., Geisler, A. N., Fernandez, J. M., Battaglia, G., Andorfer, C., & Hinshaw, M. A. (2020). The challenge of change: Resilience traits in Women's Dermatological Society Forum participants by generation. *International Journal of Women's Dermatology*, *6*(4), 277-282. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijwd.2020.06.005

Merriman, M., & Oktem, C. (2022, December 2). *Why Gen Z matters and what boards should know.* EY. https://www.ey.com/en_us/board-matters/why-gen-z-matters-and-what-boards-should-know

O'Hare, W., & Mayol-Garcia, Y. (2023). *The changing child population of the United States: Child population data from the 2020 census*. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. https://www.aecf.org/resources/the-changing-child-population-of-the-united-states

Parker, K., & Igielnik, R. (2020, May 14). *On the cusp of adulthood and facing an uncertain future: What we know about Gen Z so far*. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far/

Powell, A., Jenkins, K., Gulledge, B., & Sun, W. (2021). Teaching social justice and engaging Gen Z Students in digital classrooms during COVID-19. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 21*(4), 56-68. https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v21i4.32708

Rue, P. (2018). Make way, Millennials, here comes Gen Z. *About Campus, 23*(3), 5-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1086482218804251

Sakdiyakorn, M., Golubovskaya, M., & Solnet, D. (2021). Understanding Generation Z through collective consciousness: Impacts for hospitality work and employment. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *94*, 102822. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102822

Schroth, H. (2019). Are you ready for Gen Z in the workplace? *California Management Review, 61*(3), 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125619841006

Seemiller, C., & Grace, M. (2017). Generation Z: Educating and engaging the next generation of students. *About Campus, 22*(3), 21-26. https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.21293

Shatto, B., & Erwin, K. (2016). Moving on from millennials: Preparing for Generation Z. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, *47*(6), 253-254. https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20160518-05

Stahl, C. C., & Literat, I. (2023). #GenZ on TikTok: The collective online self-portrait of the social media generation. *Journal of Youth Studies, 26*(7), 925-946. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2053671

Teh, Y., & Baskaran, V. (2022). The effectiveness of eAssessments to encourage learning among Gen Z students. In F. D. Yusop, & A. Firdaus (Eds.), *Alternative assessments in Malaysian higher education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-7228-6_26

Törőcsik, M., Szűcs, K., & Kehl, D. (2014). How generations think: Research on Generation Z. *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Communicatio*, 1, 23-45.

United Way of the National Capital Area. (2024, March 5). *The Gen Z activism survey*. https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/gen-z-activism-survey/

Watson, A. (2024, January 4). *News consumption frequency among millennials in the U.S. 2022, by source*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1010456/united-states-millennials-news-consumption/

Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research, 16*(4), 362-369. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2013-0041

Williams, A. (2015). Move over, millennials, here comes Generation Z. *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/fashion/move-over-millennials-here-comes-generation-z.html

YW Boston Blog. (2017, March 29). *What is intersectionality, and what does it have to do with me?* https://www.ywboston.org/what-is-intersectionality-and-what-does-it-have-to-do-with-me/

Zilka, G. C. (2023). Gen Z self-portrait: Vitality, activism, belonging, happiness, self-image, and media usage habits. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology*, *20*, 111-128. https://doi.org/10.28945/5139

AUTHORS

Dr. Nicole A. Buzzetto-Hollywood is the interim director of assessment at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She received a doctorate and master's degrees from Columbia University and earned a postdoctorate from Tulane University. She has authored over 40 peer-reviewed journal articles and is currently Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*. An active volunteer, she has been appointed to a number of boards and currently serves as a commissioner on the Maryland Commission for LGBTQIA+ Affairs as well as on the Informing Science Institute Board of Governors.

Dr. Troy Banks is an associate professor in the Department of Mathematics at Salisbury University. He earned his master's and doctorate from the University of Texas at Dallas and has a bachelor's degree from Southwestern Adventist University. Dr. Banks is known for his student-focused approach to teaching mathematics at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Dr. Austin Hill is the director of the Workforce Training Center for Harford Community College. He earned his doctorate from Capella University and has earned master's and bachelor's degrees from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Before joining higher education, Dr. Hill was a public school high school business educator.