

Lawyer, Doctor or YouTube Star?

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	03
Literature Review.....	07
Methods.....	20
Findings/Analysis.....	21
Conclusion.....	29
Bibliography.....	33

Introduction

Evan of EvanTubeHD is a 15-year-old kid with 6.5 million subscribers who earns a seven-figure yearly income from YouTube. EvanTubeHD has a net worth of 12 million dollars (Julian, 2020). When he started posting his first videos almost 10 years ago, who would have known that a kid reviewing toys online could generate this much money? Evan's income from YouTube is now enough to support himself and his family. For Evan and others like him, YouTube is a viable career.

YouTube is an online video sharing platform that was created in 2005 by three PayPal employees. A couple of years later it was bought by Google for over a billion dollars (Leskin, 2020). Since then, it has taken off and become the second most visited website in the world (Malik, 2021). Today, people upload all different kinds of videos, ranging from cooking tutorials, vlogs, music videos, pranks, and more. There appears to be a video to accommodate every taste and interest. Unlike other social media platforms, YouTube pays the creators for the content they upload. Pay varies by channel. Creators have certain tasks to complete in order to get paid (Julian, 2020). For example, creators have to film, edit, and post content. Similar to other jobs, you have to fulfill the duties you've been assigned and complete a certain number of hours in order to earn money. Content creators can even get sponsorships from companies that will pay them to feature and/or review that company's products. The success of different YouTube channels has been highly publicized in the media.

In addition to its general societal prominence, YouTube has been immensely important to Gen Z. Gen Z consists of those who never knew a world without the internet and technology. They were born between 1995 and 2010. Growing up with many technological advances, such as smartphones, has had a great impact on their lives. Hence the many other names Gen Z has for itself, such as igen, digital generation, and nextgen. They are by far the most tech-savvy generation yet. They've been through a lot. "They've lived through the legalization of gay marriage and marijuana, and the threats of terrorism, global warming and gun violence" (Petro, 2018).

Gen Z has also been shaped by many traumatic historical events. These events have made them exceptionally anxious as a cohort. For starters, some were very young when the tragedy of 9/11 occurred. Being so young, those in Gen Z were completely reliant on their parents and caregivers after 9/11 for security and safety. How young children see their parents and caregivers react to traumatic experiences can have a larger effect on the children than the experience itself. (DeVoe, Miranda-Julian, Klein & Bannon Jr, 2011). This was a challenging time for everyone in the U.S, and we were all dealing with all types of stress. This greatly affected younger members of Gen Z. After 9/11 the world changed, but for Gen Z this world was all they had ever known. They are used to the heightened security of our country. The threat of terrorism was part of the larger cultural background. This normalized terrorism for members of Gen Z.

In addition to 9/11, Gen Z has also witnessed numerous mass shootings in the past two decades, which have further contributed to their anxiety. These shootings have been broadcast on television for the whole world to see, as if they are normal. In 1999, a mass shooting occurred at Columbine High School in Colorado, resulting in the death of 13 people. While most of Gen Z may be too young to remember this, it is a tragedy that is still spoken about until this day. Since

this shooting, other mass school shootings have occurred, including the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting of 2012 and the Santa Fe High School Shooting of 2018. Both were highly publicized, creating fear and anxiety for the entire world. It's therefore not surprising that Gen Z is concerned about guns, to a far greater degree than Baby Boomers or Millennials (Curriculum Review, vol. 58, no. 4, 2018). They are the first generation to experience lockdown drills that help them prepare if there is ever a school shooter. This is their normal, and they worry about whether someone will ever bring a gun into their learning spaces. Accordingly, Gen Z is fighting hard for strict gun laws. They've grown up wondering when the next terrorist attack or mass shooting will be. They've lost faith in school safety. This has created a world full of anxiety for them.

In addition to anxiety over safety, Gen Z suffers economic anxiety. In 2008, Gen Z was affected by the recession. While the majority of Gen Z was still in grade school and not old enough to fully understand the depth of it, they were still old enough to understand that something serious was happening. They've seen what happened to their parents and other family members during this time, which has made them determined to have secure careers. The financial crisis of 2008 has shaped the way Gen Z thinks about money and capitalism and made financial security very important to them. For people like Natasha Nielsen, a 21-year-old senior majoring in public policy at the University of Michigan, the 2008 recession still has a noticeable impact on her life, as it led her parents to divorce. This has given her constant anxiety about her finances (Bahler, 2020).

Finally, Gen Z has anxiety about their health. In 2020, Gen Z was faced with a global pandemic, Covid-19. To date, there have been over one million deaths worldwide. Covid-19 has disrupted Gen Z's lives in several ways. Since the virus, there have been lockdowns, quarantines,

and very limited in-person interaction. Those in school have been forced to transition to online learning, separated from their teachers and classmates. During the pandemic, Gen Z has been finding ways to deal with the anxieties of life no longer being normal. The oldest of Gen Z are graduating college and entering the workforce. They are now sitting home questioning their futures. Natasha Nielsen, already affected by the '08 recession, now has to deal with being a recent college graduate trying to find a job in the middle of a global pandemic in order to pay her rent. Many other members of Gen Z that are her age are also dealing with similar struggles. Anxiety is a familiar feeling for Gen Z. Their entire lives they have been punctuated by unexpected challenges. Resulting from societal changes on a macro and micro level. Recently, many have been forced to miss out on the experience of graduation ceremonies, moving into their first apartments, and establishing careers. Missing these milestones is not natural, and creates further stress and uncertainty (Bahler, 2020).

Gen Z is important for many reasons. They are the next generation of leaders, voters, and more. They are now the largest generation in this country. Studying and understanding Gen Z from a sociological perspective, I speculate upon how life will look like in the future. Within this context, what are their career options? They are a generation driven by technology and economic uncertainty. While some strive to be the next wave of doctors and lawyers, will others pursue a career as a YouTube star? How will the social conditions of the moment affect their career paths? I am interested to see how the members of Gen Z think about the workforce and more specifically, whether they believe that creating a YouTube channel can be a legitimate alternative career path.

Accordingly, I examine whether members of Gen Z consider YouTube to be a viable career option. I surveyed twenty members of Gen Z, and asked them questions about how they

see YouTube, technology, and other current issues. I expected to find that many members of Gen Z would consider exploring YouTube as a career instead of a traditional 9-5, 40-hour/week job. Although the success rate of YouTube personalities isn't high, there are still many who will attempt to make it their livelihood.

There is much research that explores Gen Z and their connection to technology and social media such as Harris and Twenge. However, there is less research that examines how this connects to their career paths. Specifically, how young people have begun to use YouTube as a full-time career. We hear and see the successes online, but we don't fully understand them. I plan to explore the social phenomenon surrounding YouTube as a career path for Generation Z. Their slower maturation, relationship to technology, and exposure to the world of influencers has introduced them to this idea of exploring YouTube as a new career option.

Literature Review

Gen Z's Intense Relationship with Technology

The use of technology has revolutionized the way Gen Z thinks about the world. It has become so prevalent in today's world that it is needed for almost every aspect of our life. Gen Z has grown up during a time of such dramatic technological advancements. They've seen the first iPhone be released in 2007 and then the iPad shortly after in 2010. Today, smart devices are abundant. These include watches, TV's, and even lamps. It is no surprise that technology is very important to Gen Z. Many of them even sleep with their phones in their bed. It's the first thing they see in the morning and the last thing before they go to sleep. Besides, they use their cellphones as their alarms (Twenge, 2017). While the first smartphone and social media

platforms were first created in the late 90's, they are the first generation to interact with them daily. They do everything online. However, researchers argue that technological advancements don't replace other forms of media but instead supplement them. For example, Gen Z doesn't read hard copy books like previous generations, instead, they are reading digitally (Twenge, 2017).

Gen Z is intensely connected to technology. Growing up with so much access to technology has impacted the way Gen Z communicates. Their communication style is predominantly online. They even lack social skills due to online communication. They spend less time interacting with their peer's face to face than any previous generation. Time spent with friends in person is now replaced with time spent with friends and virtual friends online (Twenge, 2017). Since they mostly communicate online, they don't get much time to practice in-person social skills. Previous generations were working on their social skills without even knowing it by just simply communicating in person. Given Gen Z's relationship with technology, a career with YouTube is a reasonable proposition. It requires them to mostly communicate online, which they are already familiar with, and demands little in person interaction.

Technology and social media may make our lives easier, but they also come with disadvantages. Studies show that teens who spend more time on screen activities are more likely to be unhappy. Non-screen activities are linked to happiness. While many teens use social media to feel more connected to their peers, screen activities are linked to loneliness. Non-screen activities are what help teens feel less alone, not social media (Twenge, 2017). The lonely teens are the ones who spend more time on social media and less time with friends. Therefore, social media reduces in-person interactions which can lead to teens feeling lonely. While girls are

spending more time on social media, boys mostly spend their time playing video games (Twenge, 2017). There is a link between screen time and suicide. Teens most active on social media are most likely to develop depression. Those of Gen Z who have a lower socioeconomic status are more likely to spend more time on social media (Twenge, 2017). Many members of Gen Z prefer to communicate and interact online, but that doesn't mean it's healthy for them.

As technology continues to advance, it will continue to change our lives. More specifically, it will change the job market. The need for routine tasks to be completed by humans will decrease. Technology is advancing rapidly, and humans cannot keep up with the changes. Machines can meet demands faster and more efficiently than humans. Things can be produced and distributed faster by machines, meaning fewer jobs. Costly demanding labor is being replaced with this equipment (Roos & Shroff, 2017). Although technology has decreased the need for routine jobs, it has increased the need for analytical skills, which creates new jobs. Certain tasks and skills are more valuable than before. Evidently, technology makes tasks easier to complete so jobs don't need a heavily skilled worker anymore. Less skilled workers can complete the same task with technology (Roos & Shroff, 2017). Technological advancements will only continue to change the workforce. It's expected that 65% of grads will work in jobs that don't currently exist and that the 40-hour workweek will no longer exist (Prawitasari, 2018). In addition to previous jobs becoming obsolete, jobs that require technological skills are on the rise. This will give Gen Z more opportunities to work in the technology field rather than traditional job settings.

The Emergence of YouTube and the Influencer

Millennials, also known as Gen Y, were born between 1980 and 1995. Coming right before Gen Z their cohort plays a significant role in some of the expectations held for Gen Z. Millennials are known for putting their all into their work. “No one puts their whole self into their jobs like a Millennial who never learned to separate work and life enough to balance them, especially if they’re wired on uppers and get anxious when they’re too far away from their phone” (Harris, 2017, 8). Gen Z is not the only generation that has a severe attachment to their cellphones. Harris speaks on how before it was cellphones, there were Walkman’s and newspapers. There is always something that is going to grab the attention of society.

Millennials were the first generation to be pushed to be child stars. The book *Kids These Days* by journalist Malcolm Harris discusses how during the Millennial lifetime a whole new category of marketing and entertainment emerged around adolescence. In addition to common career options, the thought of becoming a childhood star has gained recent popularity. Kids have also become target consumers. Student-athletes have become popular over the last few decades. March Madness is now one of the most gambled sports events. Yet despite all this success, student-athletes still aren’t financially compensated. Coaches and universities get paid, but not the students. “In 39 states, the highest-paid public employee is a football or basketball coach” (Harris, 2017, 141). Schools justify this by saying that although these student athletes are athletes, they are students first. Harris explains, “Even though labor compensation is astronomical when it comes to coaches and athletic directors, the NCAA has found an innovative way to keep labor cost down: it banned paying players” (2017, 141).

Unlike the sports industry with student-athletes, the entertainment industry is one of the few industries where children’s work is compensated. We’ve seen companies like Disney and Nickelodeon invest millions into childhood stars such as Miley Cyrus and Ariana Grande. In the

music industry, we've seen teen stars such as Chief Keef who worked hard and was underpaid and dropped by his label. Education systems, the economy, and social media all set up children to fail. Children are raised with the expectation that their hard work will pay off but success in these industries is slim to none. Subsequently, many members of Gen Z have grown up thinking that success from YouTube is feasible to them because they've grown up seeing child stars in the media. However, in reality, only a small percentage make it and they start at a very young age.

Recent technological advances have also made it harder to succeed because of the increased competition. Success on YouTube is highly glorified but not realistic. This idealized success has also caused a shift in the cost of human capital and increased productivity. "Technological development leads to increased worker productivity, declining labor cost, more competition, a shift in the cost of human capital development onto individual competitors, and increased productivity all again" (Harris, 2017, 163). Members of Gen Z are working hard to make their dreams come true, but so is everyone else. There is more competition, and their work is less valued.

Media outlets like YouTube have allowed short clips to become popular. Since 2006 when YouTube first appeared, online videos have gained popularity. These videos have even replaced television time for some teens. Psychologist Jean Twenge writes, "iGen'ers are spending so much time on their smartphones that they just aren't interested in or available to read magazines, go to movies or watch TV (unless it's on their phones)" (68). This explains how technology has impacted how people use their time, as well as the influence of smartphones on media, popular culture and entertainment.

This shift on social media has also created the influencer. An influencer is someone who influences others to buy things. Brands and companies will reach out to influencers to promote

their products. They do this by reviewing products on their social media. There will be dedicated posts or even videos just for the promotion of products. There are different influencers for different interests. For example, there are mommy influencers, beauty influencers, fashion influencers, and more. This partnership between the influencer and the company may be paid or unpaid. For example, influencers like Bubz, also known as Lindy Tsang, choose to review products for free because her subscribers value her opinion and honesty. Bubz is a popular beauty vlogger who mostly reviews makeup products. She began her channel in 2007. Since becoming a mom, her channel has grown from beauty to motherhood content as well. She is also able to make money off the ads that appear in her videos. “This strategy appears to communicate honestly while at the same time not being damaging to the brand's reputation” (García-Rapp, 2016). Since YouTube has become an alternative to regular television for many, the ads and commercials people were used to seeing on TV, are now on YouTube. YouTube is a platform of production and consumption.

Success with YouTube

Since the Millennial generation and the rise of childhood stars, children have now become important to the economy. Children have always been an important target audience because they affect their parents' buying decisions and because they are future customers (Veirman, Hudders & Nelson, 2019). Many children's brands even choose kid influencers to promote their products. In today's world children are audiences and creators of media. Amazon allows 13-year-olds to leave reviews under products. At this same age, you can also create a Facebook and Instagram account (Veirman et al., 2019). Influencers are highly popular and admired peers. Children look up to them and imitate their lifestyles, attitudes, and even buy

products they include on their social media. Veirman et al's study shows that children spend a lot of time watching their favorite influencers. This means these children also encounter influencers' marketing practices (Veirman et al., 2019). Children grow up seeing influencers and are inspired by them. Adapting their lifestyles and attitudes may lead them to pursue similar career paths.

Success isn't easy to come by on YouTube. There are many genres and that makes it challenging for younger channels to gain success quickly. Research analyst Mathias Bärtl's 2018 study is about the characterization of YouTube and how it has evolved. Bärtl's main argument is that older channels are more likely to keep a large viewership and that there is only a small likelihood that younger channels will become successful fast, depending on their genre. From 2006-2009 the majority of the videos uploaded to YouTube fit into the music video category. This study found that there are 18 genre-like categories on YouTube. From 2010 on, more uploads started to fit within the people and vlogs category. Since 2012 the gaming category has held the spot for number two. In 2016, channels that incorporated user-generated content (UGC) made it to the top 3% in their first year (Bärtl, 2018). Bärtl's study shows the growth of YouTube channel categories since it debuted in 2006. Since there are more categories to choose from, there is more competition.

Media studies scholars Rachel Berryman and Misha Kavka's (2017) article discuss how YouTube influencers gain success based on their level of intimacy and how that intimacy is turned into a commodity. They follow beauty influencer Zoe "Zoella" Sugg. Similar to Bubz, success didn't come easy to Zoella. She has been part of the YouTube community since December 2009. She does videos on beauty products and fashion, but also incorporates behind the scenes (BTS) videos of her everyday life. These videos are what subscribers consider to be intimate moments. This allows her to create the image of "big sister." Zoe is relatable to her fans,

who see her as a “real” person who has been “celebritified”. Due to her following and success, beauty companies reach out to her for endorsements and advertising. These endorsements and ads make her channel and herself a commodity. This article argues that without commodification and intimacy Zoe would not be considered a successful YouTube influencer or even a celebrity. “Furthermore, many users not only make a living from YouTube, but also construct successful careers, turning into renowned personalities. More than a million creators monetize their uploaded videos (YouTube 2014) and thousands earn millions of dollars a year thanks to the high amount of views their content generates (YouTube, 2014)” (García-Rapp, 2016). This article focuses on the role YouTubers have to play to achieve a certain amount of success, which is not discussed often in literature. Success on YouTube takes a tremendous amount of time and dedication. Both Bubz and Zoella have been uploading content for over 10 years.

Researcher Hector Postigo’s article talks about how gameplay posted on YouTube can be seen as labor. Similar to how student athletes’ athletic responsibilities can be seen as labor, but it is not acknowledged as such. This research was a 24-month long study of the YouTube video game commentator community, specifically Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 and Call of Duty: Black Ops. Postigo studied how YouTube functions as an architecture system. Digital work is not always recognized and valued. Certainly, the same can be said about student athletes and their hard work. They are not recognized by the NAACP enough to be paid. This article contributes to the idea that while YouTube can be a part of a hobby, it can also turn into a career. For some of the commentators in this study, it turned into a full-time job, and they spend hours a week putting it all together. Commentators can do this based on subscribers, which are seen as the currency of YouTube (Postigo, 2016). The larger their following the more likely they are to want to continue putting out new content for their viewers. Having a large following is

associated with success. This article highlights the importance of subscribers as the currency of YouTube.

While subscribers are an important factor for measuring success on YouTube, it is not solely how content creators are paid. “YouTubers' earnings do not directly correlate with their subscriber counts or video views. They are based primarily on the ads that run on their channels and brand sponsorship deals -- both of which are determined by how much their content and demographics are worth to advertisers. Jake Paul, the second highest paid YouTuber, has 17 million subscribers” (The Independent [London, England], 2018). However, not every subscriber is the same. Sociologist García-Rapp's article helps identify the different types of subscribers on YouTube. The author argues that content beauty gurus upload can lead to two types of audiences- casual viewers and loyal subscribers. García-Rapp’s research consists of a 22-month long ethnography that includes 80 videos in which she follows Bubz of Bubzbeauty. This study found that the most relevant measure of attention within YouTube’s beauty community is subscribers. The author categorized Bubz’s videos into four sections including, market-oriented, content-oriented, relational, and motivational. A market-oriented video would include videos of Bubz talking about her favorite products. A motivational video will consist of her talking about how to have healthy relationships. Content-oriented is where tutorials would fit in, and relational videos would include vlogs. The analysis also showed that vlogs led to more subscriptions and more shares than tutorials. Tutorials engage casual viewers while vlogs provide a more personal experience between the vlogger and the viewers. It is important to note the different types of subscribers that content creators on YouTube can generate. This study also demonstrates how Bubz viewers value her vlogging content more than any other content. The content when she is just showing her daily life is more likely to get her channel more subscribers and shares.

While YouTube is widely known for its entertainment content, it also holds some educational content that is rarely shared. Business/management professor, program director, and author Nicole Buzzetto-More argues that incorporating YouTube videos in classrooms is beneficial to students regardless of the format of the class. Online classes can benefit from YouTube videos just as much as a class in a traditional setting. Buzzetto-More suggests that videos that are carefully selected can help students engage more and recall the information they've learned longer. This study found that the use of videos increases students' depth of understanding (Buzzetto-More, 2014). While this survey only consisted of business students at a small public university it still highlights a more educational aspect of YouTube. Many members of Gen Z have been taught using online tools such as YouTube by their teachers over the years. They have used YouTube for their own personal entertainment as well as educational purposes. This depth of exposure to YouTube and influencers has impacted Gen Z's perception of YouTube as an important medium and a potential career.

Gen Z's Slower Maturation

In addition to Gen Z's deep familiarity with YouTube, Gen Z has been maturing more slowly than prior generations for many reasons. The book *Igen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and What That Means for The Rest of Us* by Jean M. Twenge discusses how and why Gen Z is growing up more slowly. Compared to their predecessors Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials, Gen Z is doing things later in life and less frequently. For starters, they go out less, and when they do go out, they are likely accompanied by their parents. Gen Z isn't likely to go out and hang out with just their

friends at the mall or the movie theater. Since they are less likely to go out, they date less than previous generations. Dating less has also contributed to why they have a low teen birth rate. In addition to going out less, Gen Z is also driving less. Only one quarter of Gen Z has their driver's license by high school graduation (Twenge, 2017). Twenge highlights how many still rely on their parents (mostly moms) to drive them around until they force them to get their license. Research has found this to be true all across the board, in all regions, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic classes.

Gen X was known for being latchkey kids because they would spend a lot of time home alone. Gen Z teens are rarely home alone. They are also putting off work. Gen Z spends less time on homework, volunteering, and extracurriculars. Many of the teens interviewed in this book expressed that they don't go out often. Hence why many are entering college with little experience with drugs and alcohol. The result is a rapid increase in binge drinking for beginners ages 18-21. Gen Z wasn't the first generation to start doing things later in life. Generation X was also slowing down by waiting longer to have kids and start careers. We even see this in how the Millennial childhood era was lengthened. It has become the new norm that children are growing up slower and waiting until later in their lives to fully experience adulthood. Some say Gen Z should be looked at as a more responsible generation for not indulging in adult activities too early. Others say Gen Z is boring. In fact, they are simply doing things later. Some of these factors can also be attributed to the global pandemic that Gen Z is currently facing. With lockdowns and stay at home orders, it is hard for pretty much anyone to get out of the house.

This isn't all on Gen Z. Their parents also contribute to them growing up slower, by babying them. Twenge (2017) discusses how their parents register them for classes, remind them of deadlines, and even wake them up in the mornings. Their parents are also more surveilling.

Gen Z teens don't mind though. They embrace their parent's overprotectiveness and prefer it because they want to be treated like kids. They argue less with their parents and are running away less. Beyond the perception that they are growing up slower, Twenge also states that Gen Z teens desire to be children longer. They don't want the responsibility of adulthood. Gen Z already enjoys spending a lot of time at home alone and YouTube allows them to have a career from the comfort of their own home. During a pandemic many more may find this appealing.

Gen Z's Student Debt and Practicality

Gen Z's comfort at home and positive view of YouTube work hand in hand with this awareness of the increasing rate of student debt. Because of this, members of Gen Z tend to want practical jobs that will help them pay their loans. Student debt scares them, but they acknowledge that college is the best way for them to secure a good job in the precarious 21st century economy. Most don't care about the type of job they have; they just want a job. "iGen'ers are caught in a bind: they need to get a college education to get ahead, but they have to take out hefty student loans to pay for it. No wonder they are exhausted and just want a job-any job that can pay off their loans" (Twenge, 2017, 185). They assume it's hard to succeed in today's world and are afraid that the jobs they want will require too much work. Gen Z values work-life balance and doesn't want careers that will take over their lives or long hours. "iGen'ers practical focus also appears in work-life balance-the idea that work should not crowd out the rest of life" (Twenge, 2017, 182). They aspire to have jobs they like but at the very least they don't want to hate it. While the police force is considered a dangerous job, many members of Gen Z admire it because of the steady paycheck, fewer layoffs, and pension opportunities. They are not

drawn to jobs in big corporations. Furthermore, this is why members of Gen Z may consider YouTube as a career. It doesn't require them to take out loans or work long hours.

Each generation brings something new to the workplace and each has its own workstyle. For Boomers, they assumed their identities through their careers and had a work/play mindset. Gen X'ers prefer to be told what's expected of them in the workplace with appropriate feedback. Members of Gen X want their bosses to be clear and direct with their expectations, as well as providing feedback when needed (Wiedmer, 2015). Millennials are achievement-oriented similar to Boomers. Gen Z is the most tech-savvy generation, and they are constant multitaskers. They also want constant feedback, clear goals, and rewards (Weidmer, 2015). Stability and personal fulfillment are very important to Gen Z (Grow & Yang, 2018). Unlike Millennials who grew up thinking they could be whatever they wanted to be, Gen Z is more practical (Twenge, 2017). Gen Z grew up during many traumatic historical events making them more sensible.

Every generation has its own morals and values which can determine the type of careers they are interested in. Gen Z places an extremely high value on jobs that provide freedom and creativity. They are likely to choose careers that enforce that (Prawitasari, 2018). In addition to not wanting to take out loans and work long hours, Gen Z also values creativity and freedom, qualities they can get from YouTube. This article found that younger generations such as Gen Z, are also likely to leave a job if the work environment doesn't match their preferences because they believe nothing is permanent (Prawitasari, 2018). Unlike other generations, Gen Z doesn't have that "loyal to the company" mindset. They are willing to leave a company if it doesn't satisfy them, even if they've been there for a long period of time. Previous generations like Boomers and Gen X wanted to make friends in the workplace. This is not important for Gen Z (Twenge, 2017). They expect instant feedback from their employers. It's what they're used to

because technology makes everything so easily accessible. They are used to getting answers in seconds, this also means they require less direction from their bosses. They have the internet to help them instead of reaching out to their bosses for help. If they have a question they can search for answers on the internet, which they are very comfortable doing.

The social phenomenon surrounding YouTube as a career option for Gen Z can be examined by looking at how Gen Z lives and why they live the way they do. Research shows how their slower maturation, aspiration for job security, relationship to technology, and exposure to the world of influencers has shaped their lives tremendously. These factors could possibly make YouTube an appealing alternative to the average 9-5 career options for Gen Z.

The research previously explained on Gen Z demonstrates how their lives are completely centered around technology, not only in their personal lives but school and work included. The research discusses how practical they are when it comes to careers and money. It also explains how creativity and freedom is important to them in the workplace. Psychologist, sociologist and other experts' studies have shown that there is a need to study technology and Gen Z. My survey will help gain a closer understanding as to how Gen Z feels about their own technological/social media usage, employment opportunities and values.

Methods

For data collection I used a survey method to get my responses, specifically snowball sampling. Snowball sampling allows for each respondent to send the survey along to others at their choosing. This helps reach a wide variety of individuals. It was important for me to reach a wide range of Gen Z that I might not have otherwise come into contact with to get an accurate representation of Gen Z. All surveys were collected anonymously. I chose to survey thirty

members of Gen Z. The survey was first posted to the SUNY Purchase Facebook Open Forum. The forum includes current students as well as some graduates of the college. I feel that college students are the ideal group to start the sample from because they will soon be entering the workforce and starting careers, if they haven't already.

By doing surveys, I reached a larger number of respondents remotely, which was especially important during the pandemic. They are easy to distribute to groups like Gen Z. They are constantly online; therefore, it will be easy for them to complete. It is also easier to make generalizations through survey responses because there is a limited amount of answer choices and everyone is given the same list of questions and responses. My goal is for the survey to be easy to understand and complete. Some limitations include, not being able to grasp a deep understanding of the respondents' attitudes and opinions through multiple choice responses.

This survey includes questions about career goals/expectations, technology usage, and personal experiences with YouTube. It will include mostly multiple-choice questions with a few short response questions. The answers to these questions allow me to understand what Gen Z's attitudes, opinions and beliefs of YouTube as a viable career choice are. Some questions consist of how often they watch YouTube and what career options they are currently interested in.

Findings and Analysis

During my research I found how influential social media and technology are to Gen Z. Each day, I see social media influencers and YouTube stars post and share their glamorous lifestyles online and I wanted to examine how this affected Gen Z's career aspirations. Responses from the survey and previous research show that Gen Z values freedom

and creativity in the workforce. Ultimately, I found that while many members of Gen Z actively engage and enjoy using YouTube, they are not considering it as a full-time career.

The survey had a total of 30 respondents. 50% of the respondents were ages 21-23, 40% were 18-20 years old, and the remaining 10% were 24 or older. 15 of the respondents identified as White, 11 identified as Hispanic or Latino. The remaining 4 respondents identified as Black/African American, Native American/American Islander, or “other”. 83.3% of the respondents identified as a woman, 13.3% non-binary, and only 3.3% man. This data explains Gen Z’s gender fluidity. Gen Z is a generation that does not limit themselves when it comes to the gender binary. They are also known for fighting for gender equality. Entrepreneur and investor Greg Petro discusses how gender is different to Gen Z than previous generations. Research included in his 2018 article stated “38% of Gen Z respondents “strongly agreed” that gender no longer defines a person as much as it used to. This is higher than the 27% of Millennial respondents who felt the same way. Further 55% of consumers aged 13 to 20 years old knows someone who uses gender neutral pronouns “they”, “them” or “ze” vs “he” or “she” (Petro, 2018). This was not the cultural norm for previous generations. When asked if currently enrolled in college, 80% of respondents said yes.

The most used social media accounts were Instagram, Tik Tok, and YouTube. 26 of the respondents selected said that they use Instagram more than three times a week, 22 for Tik Tok, and 21 for YouTube. Twitter and Snapchat were both tied with 14 votes each. Facebook only received 11 votes. This is significant because the survey was originally posted on Facebook however, according to the survey results, many of the respondents say they don’t use it more than three times a week. Facebook is also considered a Baby Boomer generation social media.

Since Facebook was introduced in 2004, there have been numerous social media platforms created. Many of which Gen Z has learned to adapt to.

Gen Z spends a notable amount of their day online. This includes a lot of time on social media. 16 of the respondents are on social media for 3-5 hours per day. This data shows lower social media usage compared to Twenge's 2017 research where she discusses how Gen Z high school students spend an average of 6 hours a day on new media. This consists of doing things such as using the internet, video chatting, and texting. Nine of them said they are on social media for 5-7 hours per day and two respondents even said their daily usage can even extend over 7 hours per day. Only three respondents keep their social media usage between 1-2 hours a day. Many of them are spending a crucial amount of time interacting with technology and social media. They have become very dependent on technology. Their phone is the last thing they see before bed and the first thing they see in the morning. They use it for alarm clocks and reminders (Twenge, 2017). The top responses for using social media included, boredom, entertainment and due to the pandemic, many use it for social interaction to keep up with friends.

80% said they watch YouTube more than once a week. 53.3% began watching YouTube between ages 6-10 years-old and 43.3% began watching after age ten. Only 3.3% were watching under age five. When asked why they watch YouTube, a common answer was because there are a variety of options and they have specific channels they enjoy. A lot of them use it to listen to music, watch cooking tutorials, as well as art and animal videos. 19 have thought of starting their own YouTube channel, while 11 haven't. Given how glorified lifestyles of social media influencers and YouTube stars seem, it is not surprising that many have given this thought. Especially since many of the influencers and YouTube stars are around a similar age or started very young such as Evan Moana of EvanTube and Logan Paul. They have witnessed many child

and young adult entertainers become successful. Meaning they have gained a significant amount of media attention and support that has allowed them to start profiting from their talents. This may have impacted some members of Gen Z to consider similar career paths. They grew up with the expectation that they could also be successful content creators. Only 8 respondents currently have a YouTube channel. 96.7% said they have never considered YouTube as their primary occupation. Most common reasons for this were because they don't want to commit, camera shyness/online bullying, and unreliable income. Some also stated that they wouldn't know where to start or what type of videos to make. This is significant because Gen Z acknowledges that there are many different types of content on YouTube. They understand that being successful on YouTube requires them to be able to draw in a specific audience type based on their content. Gen Z knows the importance of creating content for specific viewers and how that can increase their subscribers/supporters. They know having subscribers/supporters is what ultimately generates them money. YouTube Channels are considered successful when they gain a large following. YouTube requires that you have at least 1,000 subscribers before you can monetize your account on the platform. Once this happens, the creator, its videos, and subscribers become a commodity. The creators then become monetized.

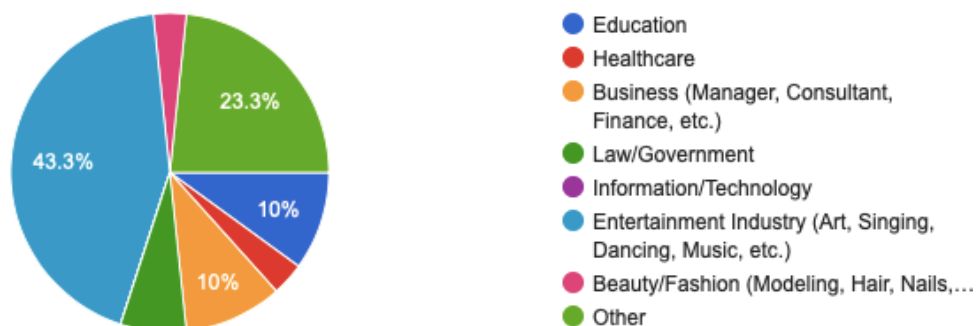
43.3% said their ideal career is within the entertainment industry. This is a critical finding because it demonstrates Gen Z's career aspirations. This is not surprising as the entertainment industry has played a significant part of Gen Z's life. They've spent a lot of time growing up seeing childhood stars and being on social media. There is a whole new job market that didn't always exist around entertainment. Harris discusses how during the Millennial lifetime there was an industry created around tween stars. Companies began to see that there was a market for child stars and wanted to profit from that. "Chasing a wave of (highly leveraged) consumer spending,

media and advertising companies set about creating the “tween market” (Harris, 2017, 153). We see this especially on television. There have been successful shows such as Disney’s “Hannah Montana” starring teen sensation Miley Cyrus. “Miley Cyrus represents a real achievement for the tween industry. A single television lead at twelve, Cyrus was a hit with Hannah Montana (itself about a tween star), garnering Disney Channel its largest audience ever” (Harris, 2017, 155). The entertainment industry has grown over the generations and only become more significant through generations.

23.3% said “other” because their ideal field wasn’t listed. 10% said education and 10% also said business. 6.6% chose law and government. The remaining percentage was split between beauty/fashion and healthcare. This is significant because while many don’t want to pursue a career within YouTube, the majority are still interested in a career in the entertainment field. This field allows them to create content that others find enjoyable. It may not be on YouTube, but it could be another social media platform such as Instagram or TikTok. It’s important to note that Purchase College has a focus on liberal arts. The college has many different competitive conservatory programs for the arts such as theater and dance. Subsequently, some of the students here may already have an interest in entertainment/creative fields. The entertainment field has expanded with technology and will continue to expand, therefore, creating more jobs. The finding is also interesting because in Prawitasari’s 2018 article, she discussed how 65% of grads will work in jobs that don’t currently exist. This could be explained by why 23.3% didn’t choose one of the options listed on the survey. Jobs that require a typical 40-hour workweek such as, the education field and law/government were also rarely selected by the respondents.

What is your ideal career field?

30 responses



When asked “what’s important in choosing a career?”, almost every answer included decent pay and happiness. Grow and Yang’s 2018 article highlights how important income stability and personal fulfillment are to Gen Z, which is why many mention income and happiness in their responses. Some other answers included, not having a 9-5, flexible hours, and artistic or creative expression. The majority want to work in the entertainment field where this seems more possible, but it is not guaranteed.

The last question asked “Do you think pursuing a YouTube career could meet your occupational goals? Why/Why not?”, most answered no. Even though a high portion of them have considered creating a channel. Four out of twenty-eight respondents said yes, three said maybe and the remaining twenty-one said no. Those who answered yes, said things about the entertainment field, flexibility, and that YouTube could lead to other potential job opportunities. Those who said no were worried about income stability and job satisfaction because YouTube doesn’t pertain to their career fields. Those who answered maybe, said that it would depend on if they are successful and can bring in a decent amount of money. The results of the survey relate to when Twenge (2017) discusses how members of Gen Z want a job that they don’t hate and

can make good money with. During her research she talks with young Gen Z high schooler, Julia. She asks her what they want out of a job, Julia replies by saying “I’d like to have a job that wouldn’t take over my life and would pay enough money. I wouldn’t want a job where I’d have to work so many hours- like a lawyer” (Twenge, 2017, 181). This ties directly into my survey responses. Based on results of the survey, less than 7% of the respondents said that their desired career was with law and government. While careers in law and government may provide Gen Z with income stability it still lacks the fun creative aspects they are looking for. This is not the career field for them because they want more than just money. To Gen Z, money is very important but so is having a job that isn’t too demanding that they can also enjoy.

Even though YouTube can potentially offer flexibility in hours and creative expression, it can’t provide Gen Z with income stability. As previously stated, Gen Z grew up witnessing the 2008 economic downturn, because of this they crave financial stability. Now they’re facing a pandemic and don’t want to be stuck with precarious jobs. “More than any other single term, “precarity” sums up the changed nature of American jobs over the last generation. And not only the jobs; young people curl around this changing labor structure like vines on a trellis. We are become precarity” (Harris, 2017, 82). Harris also explains how this means workers are doing more work for less money (Harris, 2017). Despite the economy, Gen Z does not want to become the precarious worker. They want to be properly compensated for the work they do.

Although the results of the survey determined that the majority of the respondents wouldn’t consider YouTube as their primary occupation it does show they have some interest in it. They watch and engage with it frequently, more than three times per week. Social media has had an immense impact on Gen Z. It is the reasoning behind their communication style, which is predominantly online. It is a part of their culture. For example, they post intimate details about

their life on social media to share with others. They do this freely, a way no other generation has. While this can be helpful in making them feel connected with others it is also dangerous because as previously stated it can lead to loneliness and depression.

More than half of the respondents have given some thought to creating a channel. A little over ¼ of the respondents have their own channel. All of Gen Z may not be ready to fully commit to YouTube as a career but many have considered it at some point. Many of them are worried about their chances of success on the platform. They have good reason to be worried because YouTube isn't guaranteed overnight success. "It's easier today for young people to make and distribute art, and according to the formula we've observed thus far, that means they're going to shoulder a greater portion of the production cost" (Harris, 2017, 162). It is quite easy to create a YouTube channel which is why many start, but they don't take into account how much competition there truly is. The increased competition makes it harder for the content creators to achieve success. As previously discussed, for some channels it can take years before they see success.

Throughout my research process I have found that there is no denying Gen Z's connection to social media and technology. There is plenty of research that supports this, including this survey. The survey and research also show their need for creative and artistic expression. Gen Z is unlike any other generation. They are not tied to gender binaries, they don't want typical 9-5 jobs, and they are highly interested in careers surrounding the entertainment industry. This survey also depicts how technology will only continue to advance and become more prevalent in our society. The job market will also change with technology. As digital natives, Gen Z will be remembered for having a close and complicated connection to technology.

Gen Z is already a generation that lives online but the global pandemic has increased that lifestyle even more. Due to the pandemic, countries all over the world are limiting in person interaction as much as possible. Everything has shifted online- work, education, healthcare, religious services. Over one year later, we are still in the same predicament. This has become a new lifestyle not for just Gen Z but for everyone. Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z have all had to embrace the online world. It is the only way people can stay connected and maintain a glimpse of normal. Award shows, school and even doctor's appointments are held virtually. Even with some in person interaction, there is still social distancing and other strict safety Covid guidelines. The pandemic has even created new jobs that require certain technological skills. Such as Zoom, which has become a very popular video conferencing software platform for all things virtual. It is used on college campuses, hospitals and other professional settings. Many even use it for their own personal communications with friends and family. The company was able to benefit from the pandemic as virtual communication has become the main form of communication across the world. This has become the new normal for the entire world. For Gen Z this is just an expansion of the lifestyle they were already living. They were already used to having and wanting little in person interaction. They were already used to living life online. It is a greater lifestyle change for previous generations than Gen Z.

Conclusion

Throughout all my research one thing has been undeniable and that is the close relationship Gen Z has with technology. All they have ever known is technology. With the rate that technology is advancing, their relationship to it will only get stronger. As the global pandemic continues, the rest of the world will continue to rely on technology as well. Right now,

the education system is relying on technology heavily. Majority of students are taking some if not all of their classes online. Many stores in the retail industry were forced to close for months and were strictly relying on online sales. Although now stores are open, many still prefer to shop online.

The whole world is adjusting and adapting to technology on a daily basis. Every day we hear about some new advancements that are supposed to make life easier for us. While this may not be ideal for previous generations who had a much more unattached relationship with technology, Gen Z doesn't mind. They want the technology to continue to advance and keep its significant role in their lives. They need it. They need it for their alarms, to set reminders, and to stay in constant communication with others. They don't know how to live life without it, and they may never need to. Technology isn't slowing down for anyone.

As Gen Z and future generations grow up with advanced technology, things will change. The way we live life will change. This also means the job market will change. We have seen this in the newspaper industry. According to the Pew Research Center, U.S newspaper circulation fell in 2018 to its lowest since 1940. The Pew Research Center also reported that newsroom employment within the U.S fell 47% between 2008 and 2018. Reality is people are not paying for local news anymore. This is due to technological advancements. It is not surprising that newsroom employment dropped by almost half between the years 2008 and 2018. The first iPhone was released in 2007, followed by many other smart devices. On these devices you are able to access local news online. There are websites and apps where you can pay a small subscription fee and get news in seconds. Today, iPhone's even come with their own news called *Apple News Spotlight* and it comes at no cost to iPhone users. Your phone gets notified with big news announcements. It covers the same material you would normally see on TV or in the paper.

Since many people can easily access news on their smart devices and for free, they don't see the need to pay for local news.

Technology has already started to change the labor market. There are more tech jobs than there have ever been before. "Hiring for tech positions surpassed all other occupations, even healthcare jobs in New York City, one of the hardest hit parts of the U.S. by Covid-19" (Plagianos, 2021). As more people continue to use and rely on technology, the more jobs will increase around it. Today, we have software developers, computer programmers, and even social media managers. Technology is important in our world and even more important to Gen Z. We need jobs that help technology help us. The rise of technology and tech jobs will change the future generations with the way they communicate and think.

Technology has also expanded our entertainment. As stated before, there was an entire industry created around tween stars. Many Millennials and members of Gen Z have seen their success firsthand. They have watched their shows and listened to their music. Ever since 2004, when YouTube was founded, it has been a staple for all things entertainment. It has become one of the world's most visited websites. There are millions of videos uploaded for people to enjoy. More importantly, some of the people uploading them are getting paid to provide entertainment for others. Their success stories are highly glorified and have encouraged many people to aspire to be YouTube stars as well. While findings from this survey show that majority of Gen Z participants don't think of YouTube as a viable career, they still admire it. Some still want to try in hopes of maybe one day gaining that success. While some may be able to make a reliable career out of YouTube, that is not the case for many members of Gen Z. They are interested in technology, social media, and entertainment but they are more concerned with how their time and money is spent when it comes to their careers.

Just as we have seen changes in the newspaper industry, we will continue to see changes in other industries across the labor market. This survey has revealed that many members of Gen Z want to go into the entertainment industry. They don't want typical 9-5 jobs. They want a job where they can express creativity. They want jobs that offer flexibility in schedule. In addition to all of this, they value technology. What does this mean for the labor market as Gen Z begins to enter it? It means that it will continue to change and expand. Gen Z is the next generation of doctors, lawyers and even YouTube stars.

Since technology is becoming such a big part of society, it is important that it is studied. Studying social media sites such as YouTube help us understand those who use it. By studying YouTube, you study who uses it, watches it and why. We are able to gain a deeper understanding of society. Throughout my research I have learned how and why Gen Z is closely attached to social media. I was able to understand the social and economic impact that social media has on them as a generation and compare it to previous generations.

I have found that YouTube is actually a significant social media site for Gen Z. YouTube and other social media platforms will continue to advance. As they advance, we will see them more dominant in our society. It has already started. Some jobs, check your social media accounts before they hire you and same with college universities. In the future, this may become a requirement. Soon, background checks may include your social media history. Growing up with technology at their fingertips has had its pros and cons for Gen Z. They may lack certain social skills, but they are very knowledgeable because of their access to technology.

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