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COURSE: Youth & Cyberculture S6 / Spring 2020

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### Handout 3

#### What is the Net Generation?

The Net Generation (also called the millennials) is the cohort of young people born between 1985 and 1995 who have grown up in an environment in which they are constantly exposed to computer-based technology. The characteristics of millennials vary by region and by individual, and the group experiences a variety of social and economic conditions, but they are generally marked by their coming of age in the Information Age, and are comfortable in their usage of digital technologies and social media. It has been suggested that their methods of learning are different from those of previous generations. Today a large majority of students start university with some experience of using online systems such as blogs, social media and wikis; furthermore, their attitudes to the possible use of such tools in learning are positive. The Net Generation is a challenge to the way that all universities and higher schools provide teaching and learning.

#### Educating the Net Generation

The Net Generation has grown up with information technology. The aptitudes, attitudes, expectations, and learning styles of Net Gen students reflect the environment in which they were raised—one that is decidedly different from that which existed when faculty and administrators were growing up.

In his article (2001) entitled '*Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*,' Marc Prensky used the terms 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' to describe the digital gap in terms of the ability of technological use among people born from 1980 onward (**digital natives**) and those born before (**digital immigrants**). Prensky has criticized the outdated methods of learning, and claims that students raised in a digital, media-saturated world, require a media-rich learning environment to hold their attention. In Prensky's own words,

‘Our students today are all “native speakers” of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet....

Digital Natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to “serious” work.’

The claim made for the existence of a generation of ‘digital natives’ is based on two main assumptions:

1. Young people of the digital native generation possess sophisticated knowledge of and skills with information technologies.
2. As a result of their upbringing and experiences with technology, digital natives have particular learning preferences or styles that differ from earlier generations of students.