







Echo Boomers



From “The Echo Boomers” - Sixty Minutes, CBS [October 3, 2004]

- The largest generation of young people since the 1960s is beginning to come of age. It's called "echo boomers" because they're the genetic offspring and demographic echo of their parents, the baby boomers. Born between 1982 and 1995, there are nearly 80 million of them. The oldest are barely out of college, and the youngest are still in grade school. And whether you call them "echo boomers," "Generation Y" or "millennials," they already make up nearly one-third of the U.S. population.

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- And the world is falling all over itself trying sell them things. What brands do they love? Sony, Patagonia, Gap, Gillette, Aveda.
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- They are the first to grow up with computers at home, in a 500-channel TV universe. They are multi-taskers with cell phones, music downloads, and Instant Messaging on the Internet. They are totally plugged- in citizens of a worldwide community.

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- From when they were toddlers, they have been belted into car seats, and driven off to some form of organized group activity. After graduating from "Gymboree" and "Mommy and Me," they have been shuttled to play dates and soccer practice, with barely a day off, by parents who've felt their kids needed structure, and a sense of mission.
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- "This is a generation that has long aimed to please. They've wanted to please their parents, their friends, their teachers, their college admissions officers." It's a generation in which rules seem to have replaced rebellion, convention is winning out over individualism, and values are very traditional. They are also the most diverse generation ever: 35 percent are non-white, and the most tolerant, believing everyone should be part of the community.
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- They are much different than their self-absorbed, egocentric baby boomer parents. Nothing could be more anti-boom than being a good team player, right? Fitting in. Worrying less about leadership than follower-ship. If you go into a public school today, teamwork is stressed everywhere. Team teaching, team grading, collaborative sports, community service, service learning, student juries.

"When you ask kids, 'What do you most hope to achieve there?' Where they used to say, 'I wanna be No. 1. I wanna be the best.' Increasingly they're saying, 'I wanna be an effective member of the team. I wanna do everything that's required of me.'"

- They are the most sophisticated generation ever when it comes to media. They create their own Web sites, make their own CDs and DVDs, and are cynical of packaged messages. They take their cues from each other.






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- One of the things with this generation is word of mouth. Buzz is more important today than it's ever been. And that can get started on the Internet. That can get started just through friends. And it's very hard for a marketer to tap into that unless it's really a product that they like.
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- Echo boomers have their own television network, the WB, and their own stores, with multimedia presentations and disc jockeys to lure them in the door. It's a generation used to being catered to. They are more protected. They regard themselves as collectively special, because of the time in which they were raised.
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- Why do they consider themselves special? Because they came along at a time when we started re-valuing kids. During the '60s and '70s, the frontier of reproductive medicine was contraception, During the '80s and beyond, it's been fertility and scouring the world to find orphan kids that we can adopt. The culture looked down on kids. Now it wants kids; it celebrates them.

Echo boomers are the most watched-over generation in history. Most have never ridden a bike without a helmet, ridden in a car without a seat belt, or eaten in a cafeteria that serves peanut butter.

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- They're hovered over by what college administrators call "helicopter parents." Protected and polished, they are trophy children in every sense of the word. Parents really have a sense their kids are fragile. And parents therefore are protecting them, inflating their egos. Massaging them, fighting their battles for them.
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- Everything has to be immediate, like a video game. And they have a lot of trouble sort of doing things in a stepwise fashion, delaying gratification.

Levine calls the phenomenon visual motor ecstasy, where any cultural accoutrement that doesn't produce instant satisfaction is boring. As echo boomers grow up, they'll have to learn that life is not just a series of headlines and highlight reels.

- For instance, when a young person shows up for work at his or her first job, what do they expect and what are they finding? "They expect to be immediate heroes and heroines. They expect a lot of feedback on a daily basis. They expect grade inflation, they expect to be told what a wonderful job they're doing," says Levine. "[They expect] that they're gonna be allowed to rise to the top quickly. That they're gonna get all the credit they need for everything they do. And boy, are they naive."



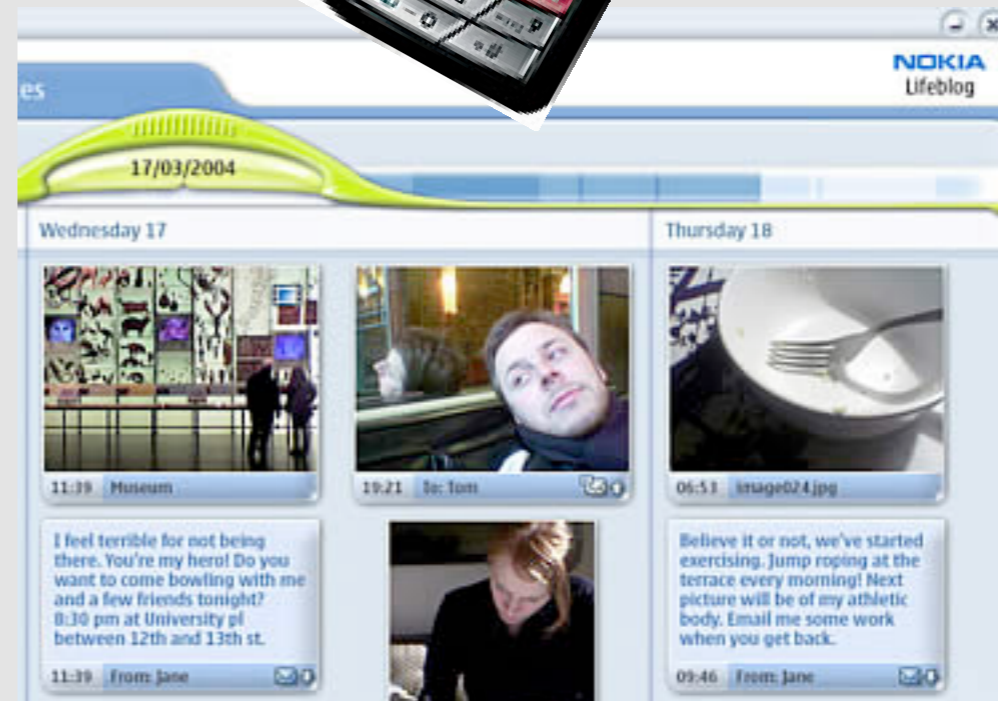
Microsoft's SenseCam

- Up to 2000 images a day



Nokia's LifeBlog

- Every call and picture automatically into diary software



MyLifeBits [Microsoft]

- “I *am* data.”



Steve Mann: Wearables

- Computer as the new sensorium & memory.



Technological Determinism

Technology → Culture

Culture → Technology

