



Tracking your family's media history

The author contends that every generation grows up with a different form of media on the rise. Those who come of age as the new media form blossoms become “natives” for that particular means of communication. They shape the future of their preferred forms. They hold those preferences throughout their lives.

Discussion questions on three levels:

Flashlight:

Older generations sometimes refer to millennials as “digital natives.” What do you think they mean when they say that? Do you think you are a digital native? What do you think that means? Mizuko Ito and other scholars say young people use digital media to hang out, mess around and geek out. Is that true? Is it different from how your parents used media? How?

Spotlight:

Come to class prepared to discuss a media audit of your family. Where do your parents get their news: television, radio, newspapers, the Internet? What's their favorite form? What about your grandparents? Has their media consumption changed? What do they think about your media consumption? Would they have any trouble being “unplugged” from digital media?

Searchlight:

Consider your own media use. Be honest: How many hours do you spend each day with media? Do you multitask in several media forms at once? Some call this “continuous partial attention”. What would you call it? Consider this list of news sources important to the millennial generation. Do you use any of these sources? Do your parents?

Extra Credit:

Go 24 hours without consuming media of any kind. Keep a hand-written journal of the experiment. What happened? Could you do it? Was it difficult? What, if anything, did you miss? Compare your experience to that of the students of University of Maryland professor Susan Moeller. Were their reactions the same as yours?