

A NEW HOPE: RISE OF THE MILLENNIALS

BY ANDREW M. SCOTT

With an 18 hours-a-week class schedule and the sometimes 20 hours-a-day work schedule of a residence assistant in Kincannon dormitory, it is understandable that James Buchanan stays busy. But he is also a student in the Croft Institute, as well as a member of the Symphonic Band, Jazz Band, Amnesty International and the College Democrats at Ole Miss.

The rest of his day is ruled by a computer; checking e-mails, doing Blackboard homework, researching projects and reports using the Internet, and of course, the constant need to check his Facebook more than four times a day.

A few weeks ago, he was accepted for an internship with U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C. He someday hopes he can make a difference in the world of politics and a failing economy.

Though his story is very unique, James is not alone. A lot of his characteristics are similar to other students his age. That defines him as part of a rising generation now known as "the Millennials."

Also known as the Net Generation, Generation Y, Echo Boomers and iGeneration, the Millennials consist primarily of the offspring of the Generation Jones and Baby Boomers. The Millennial timeline of birth ranges between the years 1982 to 2000. Their numbers far outrange that of their Baby Boomer parents, numbering somewhere between 80 million and 95 million.

Ross Haenfler, assistant professor of sociology and specialist in youth subcultures, believes the most prominent characteristic of the Millennial generation is how technologically savvy they are. He mostly links that aspect to being plugged in their entire lives.

Many Millennials spend their day either checking Facebook, MySpace or Twitter feeds. Others go to online forums and video sites like YouTube. When they are not in front of a computer, Millennials either have a cell phone in their hands texting or an MP3 in their ears. Sometimes it is both.

"I think it's changing their consciousness. Their ability to multi-task is pretty amazing, but so is their lack of attention," Haenfler said, "Technology is almost a compulsion; it's difficult for students to sit still and not be plugged in."

According to William Strauss and Neil Howe, the authors who wrote the book "Millennials Rising," one of the Millennial generation's other key strengths is that they are team players. Millennials play in groups and study in groups.

Because of this the Millennials are also the least race-conscious generation in American history. Millennial values encourage unity in dress and speech and ideals, far more than fears regarding diversity issues.

Another aspect Haenfler cites for this generation is that it extends youth well into the 20s, with fewer individuals wanting to be married, own a family, or a home by their mid-20s.

"For them it's no rush, especially when they think they could live into their mid-80s," Haenfler said.

A number of studies, including new ones by the Center for American Progress in Washington and by Demos, a progressive think tank in New York, have shown that Americans in this age group face a variety of challenges that are tougher than those faced by young adults over the past few decades. Among the

challenges are worsening job prospects, lower rates of health insurance coverage and higher levels of debt.

In Strauss and Howe's book "The Fourth Turning," they predicted that some event between 2005 and 2010 will signal the beginning of about two decades of chronic fear and struggle. The effects of this event will have led to a point where compromise is no longer seen as a virtue. The Millennial generation will have no choice but to rise to the challenges.

The authors make much of the generational structure of the Star Wars characters when it comes to this crisis.

The Baby Boomers have become old Obi Wan Kenobi as a Prophet, who defines the confrontation. Han Solo, like Generation X, belongs to a "Nomad" generation that is likely to get most of the dirty work and little of the praise.

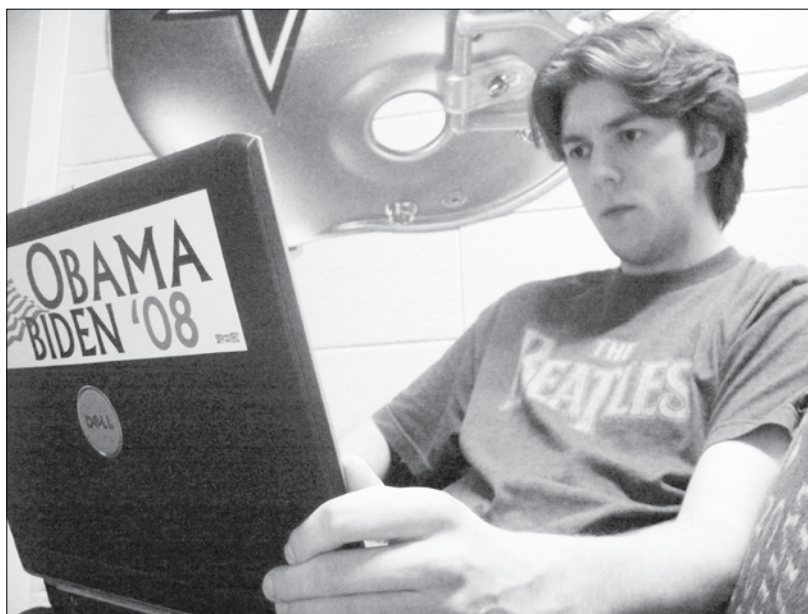
Luke Skywalker is a Hero, obviously, and he is what the Millennials are to become. The shadow

of Luke Skywalker, however, is his own father, Darth Vader. In the prequel to the trilogy, "The Phantom Menace," audiences see Darth Vader as a child, still full of possibility, like the little Millennials now.

"For the average person of this generation, it's going to be harder to achieve the kind of lifestyle their parents got to have," Haenfler said, "This is the generation that in their lifetime, environmental and economical problems are going to come to a head. So once they are older and in positions of power, they are going to have to tackle these issues."

But Haenfler remains hopeful for Millennial's future.

"You hear a lot about this generation's wanting to change the world for the better, so that is where some of them are finding meaning in contrast with the ramped individualism of the 70s and 80s," Haenfler said, "Many of this generation are interested in giving something back and finding fulfillment in that."



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Millennials are increasingly aware of and engaged in volunteer work, community service, and philanthropic activities. About 67 percent of students said helping others who are in difficult situations is an essential or very important objective, according to UCLA's annual survey, "The American Freshman—National Norms for 2006."

The report also found that 35.2 percent of undergrads think it is important to become leaders, and 42 percent believe it's important

to influence social values, which is the highest that measure has been since 1993.

Under all of these circumstances is where students like James come in.

With a tedious academic career and a very dreary economic future, he and the rest of his generation has come of age to where soon they will have to use every resource they have available to rise to the challenges of a very uncertain future.

GREEK WEEK 2009

TODAY:

THE DREAM RIDERS

11 AM - 1 PM

UNION PLAZA

TOMORROW:

AFRO-OLYMPICS

4 PM - 6 PM

THE GROVE

TOMORROW NIGHT:

BOWLING TOURNAMENT

KARAOKE CONTEST

9 PM - 1 AM

THE LANES