

Smashed Avo, Feta, and a side of Millennial defence

Bernard Salt's infamous article, amongst others, go against the grain of current Millennial media representation.

By Bridget Rose Murphy



Source: @fourth_chapter on Instagram

On the 16th of October 2016, Bernard Salt published **'Moralisers, we need you!'** in The Weekend Australian. The satirical piece highlights Salt's view that aspects of current youth culture are stupid: such as evil 'hipster cafes' and, most notably, the absolute idiocy that surrounds enjoying up-priced avocado on toast for a late brekkie, instead of directing the brunch money toward a home deposit. How **dare** young people enrich their tastebuds with the glory that is smashed avocado, rather than surviving off HomeBrand Rice Bubbles for decades!

The article was met with significant backlash from Millennials (those born between 1982 and the early 2000's), with youth-centric publisher BuzzFeed detailing the online reaction to the article.

"@BernardSalt is right of course, just give up \$22 a week and you'll have a deposit on a median priced house in Sydney in... 175 years," tweets Kyle Sheldrick.

"Given I'm allergic to avocado and cannot enjoy smashed avo lunches it is particularly galling that I'm not a property mogul already," Rachael Lonergan wonders.

Tim Lyons, another Salt-dissatisfied tweeter,



included a snippet from a headline apparently published all the way back in 1956, arguing that the young people have always wasted their money.

Source: [BuzzFeed](#)

I bring up Salt's article not to highlight his specific ideas and claims in regard to the excessive socialised spending of Millennials, but to bring Salt forward as an example of a Journalist who represents Millennials in a negative way.

He presents Millennials as **silly**, **materialistic** and **lacking** the ability to prioritise.

When considering Salt's article in the current media landscape, however, his ideas about Millennials stick out like a sore thumb. Yes, Millennials have definitely been represented in the media in a negative light over the course of the 21st Century; a perfect example being DailyMail writer Harriet Sergeant heading her **article** deferring to a "generation" of "Feral youths" who are violent and uneducated. However, as Millennials have come of age and entered the workforce, and through the revolution of online Journalism and social mediation of **EVERYTHING**, the atmosphere surrounding the discussion of young people in the media has turned to revolt.

New Journalists and commentators are defending themselves, either as Millennial or in defence of their Millennial peers. They are fighting back against claims that Millennials are **lazy**, **entitled**, **difficult to work with** and **selfish**. In today's media world, it takes a fair bit of guts to come forward and characterise Millennials as lazy or entitled, as the counterargument will be quick, eloquent and, most importantly, widespread.

Following are several examples of how criticism of Millennials in the media has sparked revolt and defence, showing how Millennial representation in the media is overwhelmingly positive on their side.

In defence of the NEETs: the responses to The Daily Telegraph's expose on 'lazy' teens



Source: [Justin Lloyd for The Daily Telegraph](#)

September 2016 saw Natasha Bitá and Jack Houghton publish '**Meet the NEETs: They're young and able, but completely unwilling to look for work**' in The Daily Telegraph. The article introduces the readership to Ashleigh and Amy, two young women from Mount Druitt who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). Bitá and Houghton chat to the girls who, in an accompanied video, express that they do not have any desire to work.

"Two young NEETs, Ashleigh, 21, and Amy, 17, from Mt Druitt, would rather spend their days "chilling at maccas" and taking their old Holden Barina on "off-road tracks" than look for a job.

Ashleigh told The Daily Telegraph she would "never get a job".

The article intends to spark outrage and disgust amongst readers at the sheer laziness not only of these young girls, but

of young people in general.

In stating that “*an army*” of young people are NEETs, a reader is encouraged to group and characterise young people within this negative argument: that they are lazy and selfish. Presenting Ashleigh and Amy as the face of this army, causes a contorted negative representation of young people to emerge, and it especially represents young people whom are on benefits for genuine reasons as unauthentic and bludgers. In addition to this, the featured photograph of the girls standing tough, messily dressed in front of rusted wall visually connotes to the reader a sense of grunge, danger and anti-social demeanour. The consistent factual inclusions of the statistics regarding the amount of NEETs in Australia legitimises Bitá and Houghton’s representation and solidifies their arguments that NEETs are damaging to society and on the rise.

In response, The New Daily writer Jackson Stiles penned “**The truth behind Australia’s ‘dole bludger NEETs’**”. Stiles, who quotes advocates in referring to The Daily Telegraph’s article as “*completely irresponsible*”, exemplifies the fight-back attitude of young Journalists in standing up for their generational peers. He undermines the legitimacy of The Telegraph’s article by constantly criticising it, quoting authorities that side with his defence:

*“Australian Unemployed Workers’ Union (AUWU) president Owen Bennett said the report was “**completely irresponsible**” because it chose to “**scapegoat the victims**” rather than address the causes.*

*“It’s completely irresponsible for any media outlet to approach the youth unemployment crisis in that way, **blaming young people for a crisis that has been a systematic policy failure by governments for a long time,**” Mr Bennett told The New Daily.”*

Stiles says that the issue is attributed to something far greater than Millennial laziness. Also, he presents deeper analysis which continues to undermine the legitimacy and truth of Bitá and Houghton’s article. Looking into the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report that The Daily Telegraph article was based on, he highlights that Bitá and Houghton did not truthfully represent young people, as the Australian NEET level is below the global average, and that the primary issue with Australian NEETs is the issue of skill shortage that stems from a flawed education system.

Stiles list other challenges that young people, employed or not, students or not, face in today’s economic climate. Issues such as rising housing prices and pre-existing family poverty that young people have been born into, are included in his defence of underprivileged Millennials, and strengthens his call to invest in education for today’s youth.

Millennials at work - response to The New York Post’s list of Millennial’s ‘horrible’ career mistakes.

Doree Lewak published ‘**These are millennials’ worst career mistakes**’ in the New York Post in January of last year. The article details employer horror stories that they have experienced with their Millennial workers.



“A 2014 study by Elance-oDesk — a site where businesses come to find freelancers — found that 68 percent of hiring managers say millennials have skills that prior generations

do not. However, the same study found they're 80 percent more narcissistic than the Gen Xers who came before them — and there's no shortage of horror stories."

Lewak interviews "P.R. Guru" R. Couri Hay, CEO of TheMUSE.com Kathryn Mineshew, and Alan Cutter, CEO of AC Lion. She details their experiences of Millennial employees and their negative antics.

Each of these inside authorities have different views of Millennial workers, giving Lewak's article more representational breadth.

Couri says that Millennial workers are cheap, hardworking and smart, however he discusses an experience where one worker hacked a co-worker's phone in a fit of rage.

Mineshew, a Millennial herself, says that many Millennials have unrealistic expectations, and do not realise that success comes with lots of hard work.

Cutter agrees with Couri in saying that Millennials are cheap and smart, however they are attention hungry.

"They (employers) hate them because they feel entitled and need constant attention. You can never know if they are communicating with a client on Facebook, or checking the latest status updates," says Cutter.

The listing of these negative experiences offers a negative evaluation of young workers, which may be considered a vast generalisation, but Lewak is able to push this representation as she has constructed it through the voice of another. Lewak personally disassociates herself from the article's content and the characterisation of young people, thus making her article look more like reportage of another's ideas rather than an argumentative and representational piece.

In order to construct a more seemingly 'rounded' article, Lewak does offer some positive attributes of a Millennial worker, including that they are obviously tech-savvy and are educated. However, the educated point is instantly undermined as a positive attribute, as her quoted interviewee R. Couri Hay says that millennials are 'over-educated'.

Directly responding to Lewak's article, Alan Van's sarcastic NextShark article "**Millennials Are the Worst Workers in the History of the World, According to Employers**" fights back on behalf of young people.

Van says that cheap labour is the only thing Millennials have going for them, because they are lazy and entitled and "*Good-For-Nothing*".

His consistent sarcastic tone revolts against Lewak's article by poking fun at the situation and trivialising the issue, sub-commenting on how ridiculous the article is, as it is characterising all Millennials as bad workers off the basis of a few horror stories.

Me Me Me

It is worth mentioning through this comparative investigation of responsive, revolt articles, that some articles out there in the media sphere are created with a purpose of introducing a negative characterisation of Millennials, exploring and discussing it, only to quash the argument to emphasise their actual point and argument. These internal-arguing articles serve to revolt against the issue at large. In the past, especially in the early 2000's as the first Millennials were coming of age, a massive amount of ridicule was posed to the generation, primarily comparing them to Generation X, highlighting their increased laziness and tech-dependence. There was little to no reactive articles defending Millennials as there were little to no Millennials writing and publishing.

The primary defence for Millennials in the early 2000's had to do with the idea of Helicopter parenting.

"The phenomenon popularly referred to as helicopter parenting refers to an over-involvement of parents in their children's lives. This concept has typically been used to describe parents of college-aged young adults." (LeMoyne 2011, pp 389)

Aside from this, however, it was all guns blazing in tearing apart Millennials for their perceived traits in the early part of the 21st Century.

Fast forward to the second 21st Century decade, Joel Stein publishes his feature titled The Me Me Me Generation as a cover feature for a May Issue.

He starts the article by staking an honest claim about what he is about to do: prove Millennials are lazy.

"I am about to do what old people have done throughout history: call those younger than me lazy, entitled, selfish and shallow. But I have studies! I have statistics! I have quotes from respected academics! Unlike my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents, I have proof."

Stein establishes the tone of the article as exploratory and discursive through mentioning statistics and quotes, but allows it to remain lighthearted and perceivably humorous.

Stein then spends almost 500 words presenting statistic after statistic that come together to prove that Millennials are lazy, entitled narcissists. This accumulation incrementally strengthens Stein's article as the reader progresses through the feature:

"The incidence of narcissistic personality disorder is nearly three times as high for people in their 20s as for the generation that's now 65 or older

"They are fame-obsessed: three times as many middle school girls want to grow up to be a personal assistant to a famous person as want to be a Senator, according to a 2007 survey; four times as many would pick the assistant job over CEO of a major corporation.

"And they are lazy. In 1992, the nonprofit Families and Work Institute reported that 80% of people under 23 wanted to one day have a job with greater responsibility; 10 years later, only 60% did."

However, after this, Stein turns the corner, flipping the article's perspective into a more informed defence on why Millennials are the way they are.

The basis of Stein's defence is a favourite with writers that are revolting against the negative representation of Millennials in the media: their parent generation, the Baby Boomers, are just as equally entitled, and if they were young now, they would likely be the exact same.

"While every millennial might seem like an oversharing Kardashian, posting vacation photos on Facebook is actually less obnoxious than 1960s couples' trapping friends in their houses to watch their terrible vacation slide shows. "Can you imagine if the boomers had YouTube, how narcissistic they would've seemed?" asks Scott Hess"

This technique is common within argumentative pieces. The quashing of a pre-established perspective not only shocks a reader into continuing with the feature, but gives an author an opportunity to present facts to strengthen their actual argument.

Stein concludes his discussion by presenting a final war cry in protection of not only today's youth, but the youth of the past:

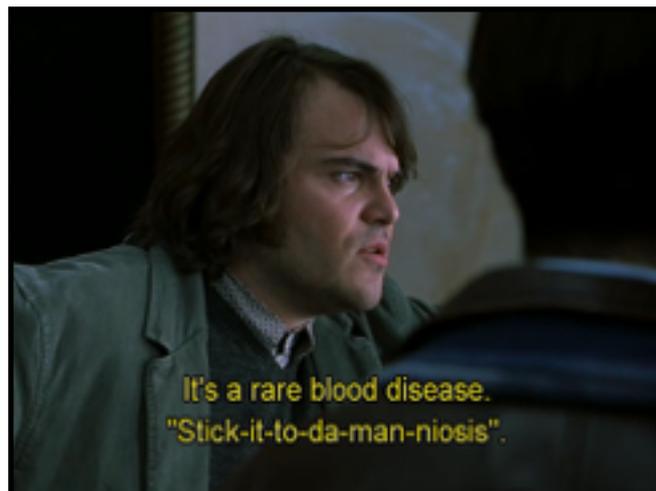
"So, yes, we have all that data about narcissism and laziness and entitlement. But a generation's greatness isn't determined by data; it's determined by how they react to the challenges that befall them."

Ultimately, it is clear that the youth are doing what the youth have historically done best: stick it to the man. Think

It is only fair that the kids, and the friends of the kids, fight back against some of the bullies that are pitting it against them. Although the bullies may have a good argument that they have based off other Millennials they have encountered in the world, the kids are too-savvy to let that go.

Looking at today's online media, it is clear that the kids have quite frankly had enough of letting writers characterise them in their stereotypical boxes: lazy, entitled and narcissistic.

No, the kids truly took on the lessons, and the rare blood disease put forth by substitute 'teacher' and absolute bonafide rock GOD Dewey Finn, the protagonist of School Of Rock: a true iconic film of their childhood.



I truly hope there is no cure to this one.

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Articles:

<http://time.com/247/millennials-the-me-me-me-generation/>