

1C The stressed-out generation

PRE-READING Predicting

Look at the title. Which generation do you think is the most stressed-out?

- a Millennials (born roughly between 1981 and 2004)
- b Generation X (born roughly between 1965 and 1980)
- c Baby Boomers (born roughly between 1946 and 1964)

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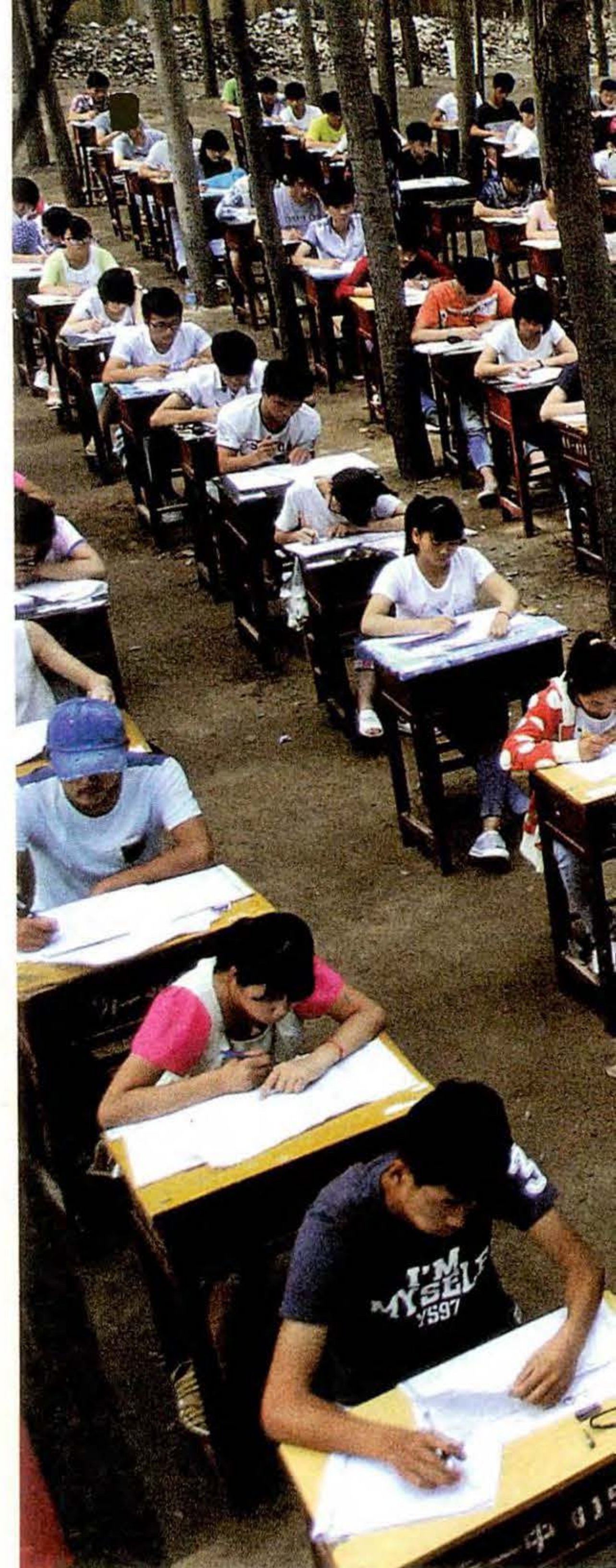
Each **generation**—from Baby Boomers to Generation X to Millennials—has its own set of values and characteristics. But one thing common to all generations is that they are suffering from stress. In a recent poll by the American Psychological Association (APA), all age groups now report higher levels of stress than in the past. Baby Boomers (those born roughly between 1946 and 1964, and who are now moving into their retirement years) said that they are stressed about money and health issues. Gen Xers (born roughly between 1965 and 1980) are concerned about work, money, and job stability. However, Millennials (born roughly between 1981 and 2004) are turning out to be the most stressed-out¹ of all the generations. Poll results indicate that stress levels for these younger respondents are significantly above average. So what's worrying the Millennials?

STRESS AND MILLENNIALS

Millennials are the first generation to grow up with computers in the home and the classroom. **Due to the rise of** modern technology and social media, they are constantly bombarded with information. Over time, this information overload can become too much to handle and can result in chronic stress, which in turn can cause serious physical, psychological, and emotional problems. **Another contributing factor**, according to author Michael D. Hais, is that many Millennials have

lived sheltered lives due to overprotective parents. These young adults lack problem-solving skills and may struggle with fear of failure once they leave home. Making matters worse, the 2008 **recession** occurred when many Millennials were graduating from high school or college. The resulting economic slowdown reduced the number of available jobs for graduates. Sure enough, in the APA poll, Millennials said that work, money, relationships, family **responsibilities**, and the economy are the main stressors in their lives.

However, the poll results may be a bit misleading as they don't take into account public attitudes toward stress and mental illness. Ronald Kessler of Harvard Medical School, who has studied the prevalence of mental disorders in the U.S., points out that changes in social attitudes have helped reduce the stigma attached to mental





High school students take part in their end-of-term exam in Fengqiu County, China.

illness over the years. For example, the creation of health-related television programming and specialty magazines such as *Psychology Today* have
50 contributed to greater public awareness of mental health issues. It's possible that younger people now are more willing to admit to being stressed than in the past. "There is not a lot of evidence of true prevalence having gone up," Kessler says. "It
55 looks like younger people are in worse shape, but unfortunately, we just don't know."

AGE AND OPTIMISM

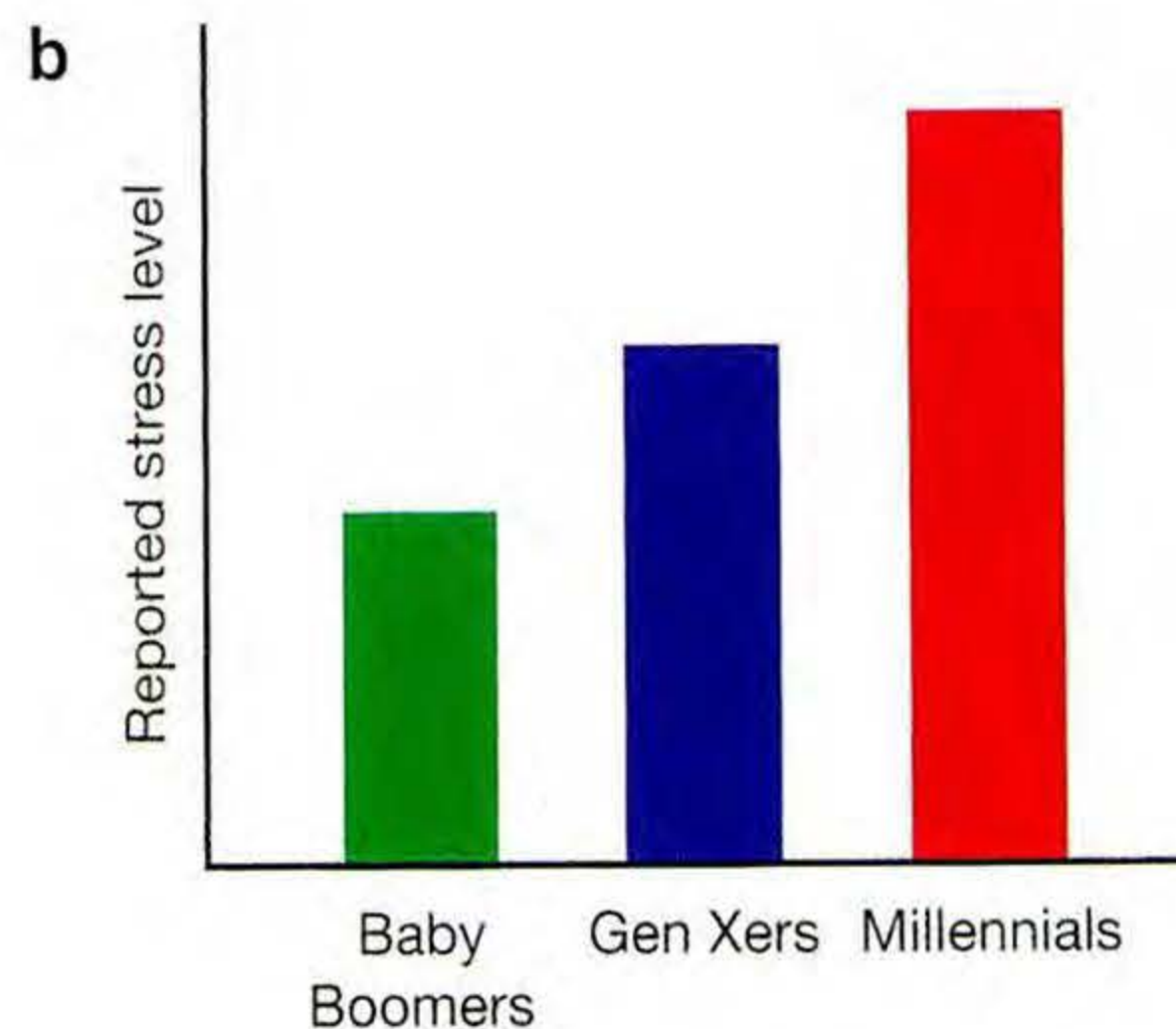
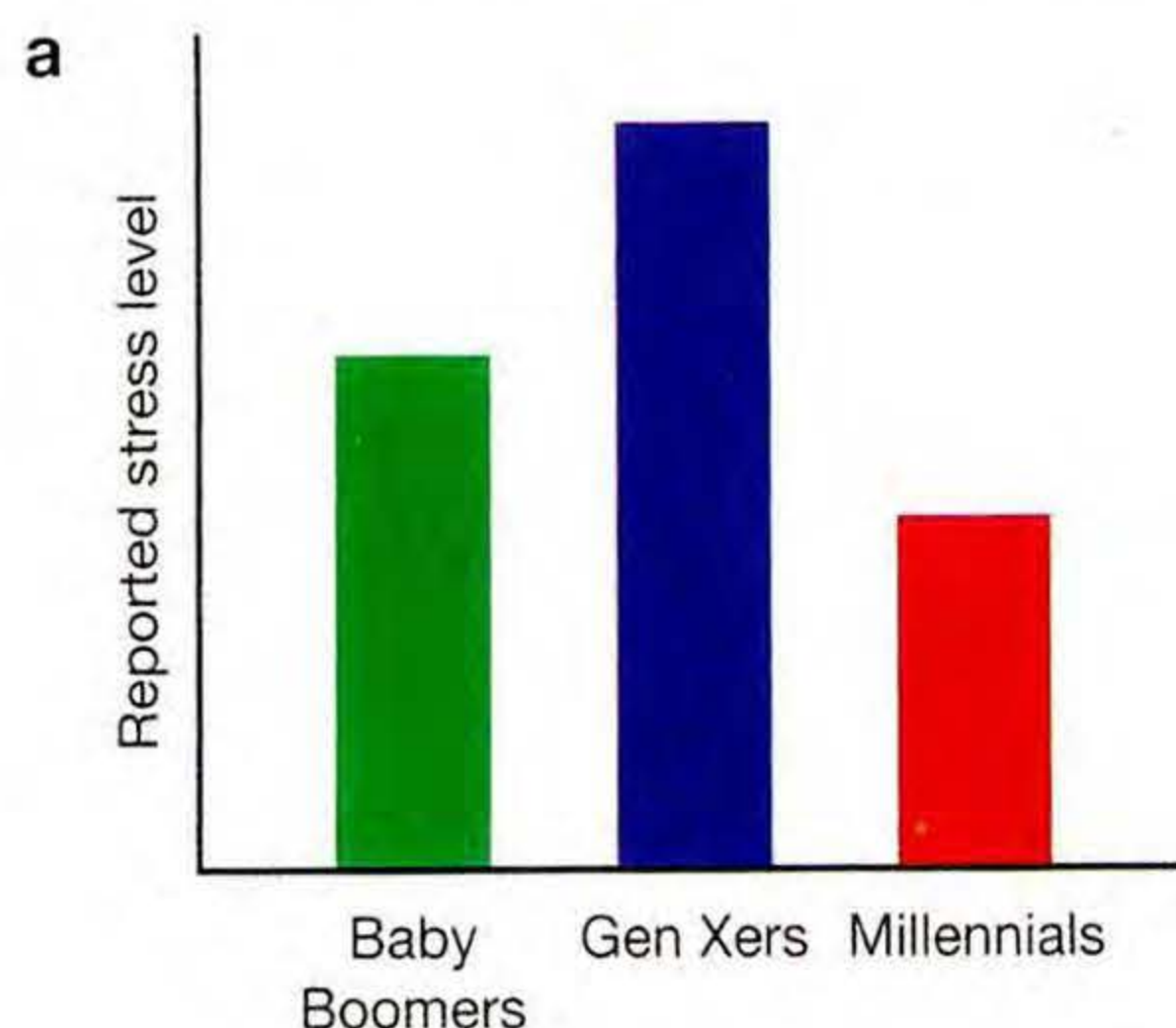
Despite the high levels of stress reported by Millennials in the APA poll, there is reason for
60 optimism. Many happiness and well-being surveys show that happiness generally increases as people grow older. This seems to imply that the ability to manage stress effectively comes with

age. As Millennials gain more life experience and
65 develop better problem-solving skills over time, they should become better at handling stress. Moreover, with the greater awareness surrounding mental health issues today, the stigma associated with seeing a psychiatrist or psychologist has
70 lessened. This means that people are more likely to seek professional help to reduce their stress and **anxiety** levels. There is now a wide range of stress management techniques available including exercise, meditation, and hypnotherapy. Millennials
75 must develop effective coping strategies to deal with stress in order to be productive members of their community. Once they do, they will be able to look back with satisfaction on the world they helped create.

[†] **stressed-out:** *adj.* experiencing stress

UNDERSTANDING MAIN IDEAS

Which of the diagrams below best illustrates the results of the APA poll?



UNDERSTANDING DETAILS

Choose the correct options.

- 1 Which of the following is true about the results of the APA poll?
 - a Stress levels are down for all age groups, but they're down the most for Millennials.
 - b Millennials are experiencing more stress than before, but other age groups aren't.
 - c All age groups are experiencing more stress than before.
- 2 Which of these is a cause of worry across all generations?
 - a health
 - b the weak economy
 - c money
- 3 According to the passage, what is true about young people today compared to the past?
 - a They are more likely to become psychiatrists or psychologists.
 - b They are more willing to seek professional help to deal with stress.
 - c They are more independent and have good problem-solving skills.
- 4 According to the passage, why might Millennials be right in feeling optimistic about the future?
 - a The economy is improving.
 - b Technology is helping to reduce stress.
 - c Happiness tends to increase with age.

BUILDING VOCABULARY

A Match the words in blue from the passage to their definitions.

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 generation | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> a period when economic activity is not strong |
| 2 recession | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> things that a person must do as part of a job, role, or legal obligation |
| 3 responsibilities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> a group of people about the same age |
| 4 anxiety | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> a feeling of worry or nervousness |

B CRITICAL THINKING

Synthesizing What might Dr. Trudi Edginton (page 15) say about the poll results? What advice might she have for Millennials? Discuss with a partner.

I think Dr. Edginton would say that ...