Understanding Students of This Generation

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Today’s Focus

Introduction to Program

- Disclaimer (LOTS of information, NOT an expert, and invited messenger)
- Information
  - Generations
  - Brain development
  - Some strategies
  - Resources available

Goals

- Develop greater understanding of today’s students
- Generate ideas about how to assist them to be successful
- Encourage constructive interactions

Discussion - Problem solving
Generations QUICK Overview

• Generalizations (with the inherent pros and cons)

• Find yourself
  – accurate description?
The Depression Era

Born: 1912-1921 Coming of Age: 1930 -1939
Age in 2014: 93 to 102

Population in 2004: 11-12 million (and declining rapidly)

- Be conservative, compulsive savers, maintain low debt and use more secure financial products
- Feel a responsibility to leave a legacy to their children.
- Be patriotic, oriented toward work before pleasure, respect for authority, have a sense of moral obligation.
**World War II**

Born: 1922 to 1927    Coming of Age: 1940 -1945
Age in 2014: 87- 92

Population in 2004: 11 million (in quickening decline)

- Share in a common goal of defeating the axis powers
- Accepted sense of “deferment” in contrast with the emphasis on “me” in more recent cohorts
Post-War Cohort

Born: 1928 - 1945  Coming of Age: 1946 - 1963
Age in 2014: 69 to 86

Population in 2004: 41 million (declining)

- Significant opportunities in jobs and education as the War ended and a post-war economic boom struck America.
- Cold War tensions and the potential for nuclear war led to levels of discomfort and uncertainty
- Value security, comfort, and familiar, known activities and environments.
Boomers I or The Baby Boomers

Age in 2014: 60 - 68

Population in 2004: 33 million

- Kennedy and Martin Luther King assassinations, the Civil Rights movements and the Vietnam War
- Served in or protested the War
- Good economic opportunities
- Largely optimistic about the potential for America and their own lives, the Vietnam war notwithstanding

- TV generation
**Boomers II or Generation Jones**

Born: 1955 - 1965  
Coming of Age: 1973 - 1983  
Age in 2014: 49 to 59

Population in 2004: 49 million

- Missed the Vietnam War
- Post-Watergate mistrust of government, skeptical of media, and less optimistic views the Boomers I
- Economic struggles (1979 oil embargo) reinforced a sense of “I’m out for me,” narcissism, and a focus on self-help
- AIDS part of their rites of passage
- Many of the best jobs, opportunities, housing etc. were taken by the larger and earlier group.
- Suffer from this long shadow cast by Boomers I.
Seven U.S. Generations

1. The New Worlders (1871 - 89) lived on farms more than any other American generation during the 20th century; 1/5 of all children died in childhood; ¼ immigrated to US

2. The Hard Timers (1890 -1908) WWI, Great Depression; finished their working lives in the wartime economy of WWII; married late; had fewer children; generally had the fewest choices about the direction of their lives

3. The Good Warriors (1909 - 28) (aka ‘Greatest Generation’ Tom Brokaw, 1998); fought in WWII; led all other generations in blue-collar jobs & union membership; most native-born generations in US history (along with the Lucky Few)
4. The Lucky Few (1929 - 45) the smallest share of immigrants of any generation in the century; 1st generation in US history with fewer people than the preceding generation; many educated Lucky Few men skipped blue-collar jobs for white-collar careers; military service came mostly during peacetime; Lucky Few women married earlier than any other generation in US history

5. The Baby Boomers (1946 - 64) ~doubled the number of people in the Lucky Few to become the largest generation of the century; men had problems finding jobs; women nearly matched men in education and made great strides in the career world
6. Generation X (1965 - 82) 1st generation with a greater share of women than men graduating from college; again includes many foreign-born immigrants; delayed marriage and parenthood more than any other generation before them in the century; men continued to struggle with jobs while women moved forward in careers and education.

7. The New Boomers (1983 - 2001) ~ as many births as the original baby boom; will add a larger share of new immigrants in adulthood than any generation since the New Worlders; will become the largest generation of any living during the century; most of their lives will take place in the 21st century, so we only get a few hints about them.

Generation X (the Baby Bust)
Age in 2014: 38 to 48

Population in 2004: 41 million

- The “lost” generation - 1st “latchkey” kids, lots of daycare and divorce
- Lowest voting participation rate of any generation
- High levels of skepticism, “what’s in it for me” attitudes
- Arguably the best educated (29% obtaining a bachelor’s degree or higher)
- Form families with more caution and pragmatism
- Concerns run high over avoiding broken homes, kids growing up without a parent around and financial planning
- Value a stimulating working environment with plenty of feedback and team effort over dictatorial-style supervisors
Next up . . .

Generations Y and Z

Are these your students?
Generation Y, Echo Boomers or Millennials
(Net Generation, Me Generation)
Born: 1977 - 1994  
Coming of Age: 1998 - 2006
Age in 2014: 20 to 32

Population in 2004: 71 million

- Largest cohort since the baby boomers
- Incredibly sophisticated, technology wise, immune to most traditional marketing and sales pitches
- Much more racially and ethnically diverse
- Most female dominated college population
- Much more segmented aided by the rapid expansion in cable TV channels, satellite radio, the internet, e-zines,
- Less brand loyal - flexible in fashion consciousness
- Often raised in dual income or single parent families and more involved in family purchases ...1/9 has a credit card co-signed by a parent
More on Gen Y

• **Family ties** (living with parents to save $)

• **Tech savvy** (computer classes in preschool, played with cell phones as babies, and instinctively knew how to manipulate a spreadsheet program, started Internet businesses in their Res Hall rooms)

• **Shorter attention** (multitasking, lack of stimulation that drives them nuts)

• **Social values** (time with their families, choose a job based on with who they will be working, embrace diversity, environmentally conscious)

• **Free time** (finding themselves via study or volunteering abroad, with society’s approval)

• **Compliant** (environmentalism and everyone doing their part to make a better world)

• **Outspoken** (taught to question the status quo, think outside of the box, speak up)

• **Work issues** (willing to do grunt work & stick with a company, if reassured that the company will be personal and look after them in return; like security, stability, personable working environment and a closer relationship to the owner; proving to be hard workers; need frequent affirmation)

http://www.lifescript.com/life/timeout/entertainment/generation_y_work_and_life_as_they_see_it.aspx?gclid=CIf9ILbh9nwCFSI SMwodlAUA8A&trans=1&du=1&ef_id=Uu@qCwAAABRJi8Vv9:20140303161458:s&p=1
‘Baby on Board’

‘Self-inflation movement is direct consequence of the good intentional self-esteem movement.’
(everyone – and therefore no one – is a ‘winner’ without realistic, practical, grounded expectations and protection from failure)

Consequences:

• Difficulty failing (tolerating, managing, learning from mistakes, accepting constructive criticism, blaming others or taking victim role)
• Trouble with realistic self-evaluation
• Difficulty seeing others’ perspectives
• Lacking self-awareness
• Difficulty recognizing their limitations
• Difficulty taking ownership for decisions and actions
• Inability to focus on the now
Why Generation Y Yuppies Are Unhappy

Say hi to Lucy; she’s kind of unhappy.
Happiness defined.

Happiness = Reality - Expectations
Lucy’s parents are Baby Boomers, who were raised by parents who grew up in the great depression and fought in WWII.
Lucy’s grandparents wanted her parents’ careers to have greener grass than their own; her parents were brought up to envision a prosperous and stable career for themselves. Something like this:
Baby Boomer Career Path Reality

Positive Net Happiness, Satisfaction

Reality

Expectations

SUCCESS

YEARS

waitbutwhy.com
Gen Y kids were raised with a sense of optimism and unbounded possibility and told that they could be whatever they wanted to be, instilling the special protagonist identity deep within their psyches.
I suppose I could be President...but is politics really the **truest** calling of my heart? No...no that would be settling.
Career goals of Gen Y as a whole have become much more particular and ambitious; and

Lucy has been given a second message throughout childhood . . .

You're Special
Lucy's Career

The careers of other GYPSYs
This delusional because this is what ALL Gen Ys think, which defies the definition of special . . .

**special | 'speSHel | adjective:**
better, greater, or otherwise different from what is usual.

Most people are not special -- otherwise "special" wouldn't mean anything!
Lucy's Career Path Expectation

Because just wait till the world sees how amazing I am
Expectations

Frustration, disappointment

Reality
Advice for Lucy:

1) **Stay wildly ambitious.** The current world is bubbling with opportunity for an ambitious person to find flowery, fulfilling success. The specific direction may be unclear, but it'll work itself out -- just dive in somewhere.

2) **Stop thinking that you're special.** The fact is, right now, you're not special. You're another completely inexperienced young person who doesn't have all that much to offer yet. You can become special by working really hard for a long time.

3) **Ignore everyone else.** Other people's grass seeming greener is no new concept, but in today's image crafting world, other people's grass looks like a glorious meadow. The truth is that everyone else is just as indecisive, self-doubting, and frustrated as you are, and if you just do your thing, you'll never have any reason to envy others.
Generation Z (Generation Next, We Generation)
Age in 2014: 2 -19

Population in 2004: 23 million and growing rapidly

- Don’t know much about Gen Z yet
- Do know a lot about their environment (highly diverse with higher levels of technology)
  - Customized instruction based on diagnostics with remediation or accelerated achievement opportunities
  - Highly sophisticated media /computer environment
  - More internet savvy

http://www.socialmarketing.org/newsletter/features/generation3.htm
More on Gen Z

Still learning about this cohort

- Grown up in era of great political dysfunction
- Global events could impact like Columbine & wars
- More tolerant, respectful, and embracing of diversity
- More socially aware, community minded, and change oriented, but *not* as community service oriented (want to fix underlying issues, concerned about climate change and terrorism)
- Experienced much more turmoil, economic stress than Gen X → deal with failure and bounce back better
- More collaborative (electronic communication = in person)
- Expected to follow, respect, and seek out input from authority and parents (stuck with parents through tough times)
- Confident and see through superficialness
Digital Mindset (all movies have CGI, most waking hours online)

• Short attention span (>distractions & believe they are better multi-taskers)

• Want instant answers and struggle to evaluate info critically → quick to take first info as truth (opinions over facts, first web-page)

• Assume they can find information when needed (don’t need to write anything down)

• Appear lacking manners (trying to be straight, to the point emails in text language, not much sacred time texting in church or during important family event)

• Text a lot (50% report 100 messages+ per day)
• Love pictures, love to share
  • you tube (93% weekly use, 50% daily)
  • Twitter and blogs > Facebook or instagram

• Use phone for everything, EXCEPT to speak on

• Love constant and immediate feedback (will check online for grades and be impatient about getting grades and other feedback)

• Prefer learning from network of relationships and internet (>authority, printed materials) in just in time manner (don’t have a speech for a while so don't need to go to a speech workshop)

• Really like to share their opinion to feel good about contributing their own knowledge
Y, Me First Generation*

- More financial liberal, more stability
- More optimistic, budget surplus
- Service-oriented
- Confident because safe
- I am best so I will be saved
- Electronic savvy
- Facebook to connect
- Pre-scheduled activities
- Wanna learn - google it

*Not fully supported by research

Z, We Generation

- More conservative, looking for safety
- More realistic, seen more hard time
- Social-change oriented
- Confident because know i can bounce
- If we all take a pay cut we can save
- Electronic reliant
- You tube to connect
- On demand and just in time activities
- Wanna learn something - you tube
Brain Development

Latest neuroscience research provides a new dimension to understand . . .

**WHY** traditionally aged college students engage in inappropriate behaviors, even when they are smart enough to know better

*New Dimensions to Psychosocial Development in Traditionally Aged College Students*, Blimling, Gregory S.; About Campus, Nov – Dec 2013
College Students

- Engage in high-risk behaviors
- Often lack good judgment
- Frequently fail to consider the consequences of their actions
- Become more influenced by peers than common sense
- Neglect to manage their time effectively
- Engage in hedonistic behavior (sexual adventurism, binge drinking, and drug experimentation)
• Men ‘overachieve’ in these behaviors (women more effectively process social and emotional signals in other people)

• Behaviors seem to stop around the age of 23 for women and about two years later for men
Recent evidence from research on neurobiological development

• Our brains continue to change throughout our lifetimes (particularly malleable during adolescence)

• Prefrontal cortex changes dramatically during the traditional college years

• Places end of adolescence at ~age 24

• Divides adolescence into three stages:
  • early adolescence (11 - 13)
  • middle adolescence (14 - 18)
  • late adolescence (19 - 24)
Prefrontal Cortex

Controls executive functions
- consider consequences in advance of actions
- risk-taking
- perseverance
- time management
- decision making
- planning
- sensation seeking
- understanding other people’s perspectives

Executive functions affect personality, emotional maturity, self-concept, behavioral self-regulation

Development inhibits socially inappropriate behaviors & controls social decision making
While PFC develops, adolescents

- More likely to speak before thinking about the effect on other people’s feelings
- Have difficulty learning from past mistakes
- Procrastinate because they have not yet developed the self-regulatory maturity to plan their time by trading spontaneity of moment for longer-term educational benefits
New Discovery

• How much **ability** to interact socially, develop self-knowledge, plan, and manage behavior **develops with changes in the PFC and its relationship with the limbic system** (brain areas that control mood, libido, anger, and similar emotions)

• Neuroimaging studies show a **significant reduction in gray matter volume** in the frontal cortex during adolescence
• Brain changes precede the cognitive control system necessary for self-regulation and impulse control

• The gap creates a period of heightened risk-taking and sensation seeking
• For most of traditional college years, students use conventional reasoning (living up to social expectations and roles) maintain interpersonal harmony, peer acceptance, and the desire to fulfill social normative expectations

• Not until ~age 24 might they use higher stages of reasoning (account for the differing values, opinions and beliefs of other people) to make moral judgments
Students have not fully developed the capacity for emotional self-regulation and decision making in complex social situations → often act directly on emotions without adequately weighing the risks, propriety, or consequences actions.

Peer presence, alcohol, and the drive for new sensations make their ability to adequately assess risk more difficult and the likelihood of their using good judgment more doubtful.
• In high-risk situations, dopamine floods the limbic system and increases excitement in anticipation of reward, which for adolescents could be peer approval

• Adolescents rely on the more familiar “gut-level” emotional impulse to act without weighing all factors
• When high school students leave home, they free themselves from many of the social constraints imposed by their family and high school experiences

• College offers new freedoms, less supervision, and more unstructured time

• Free to act independently based on their own emotional self-interests, including sensation-seeking, risk-taking, time management, and social engagement
• Rewarding situations becoming more rewarding when peers are present (students go to school with the same-aged peers and live in residence halls with them)

• Social media may intensify the influence of peers during the college years (Twitter, Facebook, texting, etc., and talking on cell phones)
PFC development and its relationship to the limbic system parallels behaviors described by Chickering and Reisser:

1. Developing competency
2. Managing emotions
3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependency
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships
5. Establishing identity
   6. Developing purpose
   7. Developing integrity
So, what’s a faculty member to do?
Some Strategies

Growing up digital: How the net generation is changing your world
(Don Tapscott, 2009)

Chapter 5
The Net Generation as Learners: Rethinking Education
‘[Students] want to learn, but they want to learn only what they have to learn, and they want to learn it in a style that is best for them.’

‘If the factory was the model of the typical 20th century American school, the craftsman’s shop or artist’s studio is the model for the 21st century educational delivery system . . . or the one-room schoolhouse of yesteryear where teachers had to customize education for each child.’
Be Informed
Accept/Embrace Reality
Stay Calm
Develop Patience
Be Proactive/Strategic
What YOU Can Do

• Be available, willing, and get to know your students, consider asking what motivates them
• Listen . . . to warranted and unwarranted opinions
• Guide problem solving by coaching them to think through situations and learn from mistakes
• Encourage with frequent positive feedback (take advantage of external motivation and help develop self-rewards)
• Provide information (clear expectations, +/-/+ ‘sandwich’ for feedback, arrange input from peers, encourage them to self-monitor and track)
• Maintain boundaries
• Consult and make referral(s) as needed
• Student focused, interactive learning (less lecture, more listening and conversing)
• Encourage students to discover for themselves (not easy, lots of up-front preparation) and think critically
• Encourage collaboration
• Tailor education to students’ individual learning styles (become a student watcher)
• Computer based, interactive self-paced curriculum
Tips for Educators

1. Don’t throw technology into the classroom and hope for good things
2. Cut back on lecturing
3. Empower the students to collaborate
4. Focus on lifelong learning, not teaching to the test
5. Use technology to get to know each student
6. Design educational programs according to the eight norms (choice, customization, transparency, integrity, collaboration, fun, speed, and innovation)
7. Reinvent yourself as a teacher, professor, or educator
Resources

Center for Educational Research & Teaching Innovation (CERTI)
http://certi.mst.edu/ 573.341.7276

Office of Undergraduate Studies
http://ugs.mst.edu/ 573.341.7276

Student Advocate Services and Information
http://studentadvocacy.mst.edu/ 573.341.4292

Student Success Center
http://studentsuccess.mst.edu/ 573.341.7596

LEAD
http://lead.mst.edu/ 573.341.7276

MISSOURI UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
Resources

Counseling, Disability Support, and Student Wellness (CDSW)

http://counsel.mst.edu/ 573.341.4211
http://dss.mst.edu/ 573.341.6655

FREE and Confidential 204 Norwood Hall
Monday – Friday 8 a.m. – 4:30 (appointments preferred)
After Hours  911 or S&T Police (341.4300)

University Committee for Assistance, Response, and Evaluation (UCARE)

http://communitystandards.mst.edu/behaviorform/index.html
573-341-4292
Resources

• Financial Assistance
  http://sfa.mst.edu/  573.341.4282

• Residential Life
  http://reslife.mst.edu/  573.341.4218

• Ask.Listen.Refer.
  http://www.asklistenrefer.org/mst
Wrap Up
Final Comments?