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Gen What? An Audiologists Guide to Generational Differences

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March 6, 2019

Introduction

- My background...
- Getting to know you...
- Why this topic is important...



Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Define Millennial, Baby Boomer, Gen X, etc., and what the broad characteristics are based on research.
- Explain how generational characteristics can help or hinder workplace relationships as well as patient relationships within the field of audiology.
- List ways in which the field of audiology might need to change to accommodate for the shift in generational culture.

What is a Generation?

- All of the people born and living at about the same time, regarded collectively
- Also described as the average period, generally considered to be about thirty years, during which children are born and grow up, become adults, and begin to have children of their own.
- Often grouped by shared experiences and life-changing events
- Who Defines a Generation?
 - Not the US Census Bureau- They only even recognize Baby boomers, who they state are those born between 1946 to 1964.
 - The media? Sometimes, for example the Wire article published in March of 2014 (<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/>), 1 or
 - The Pew Research Center? Recently published [article2](#) on where the Millennial generation ends.

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What is commonly believed and published about the “generations”?

- Disclaimer: I do not claim this is the ONLY or most CORRECT info out there. Even the dates have been disputed multiple times by many theorists. (Tried to find most commonly referred to and accepted information to share ☺)
- Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen-X, Gen-Y, Millennials and “Post-Millennials”
- Birth Ranges
- AKAs
- Influencers (not talking about YouTube)
- Core Values and Attributes
- Assets etc.

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Traditionalists

- **Born** 1900-1945
- **AKA:** Silent Generation, Forgotten Generation, “Greatest Generation”, etc.
- **Key Influencers:** WWII, Korean War, Great Depression, New Deal, Rise on Corporations, etc.
- **Examples of “Core Values”:** Conformity, Law & Order, Respect for authority, Patriotism, Duty before pleasure, etc.
- **Key Attributes:** Committed to company, Conservative, Hard working, Fiscally prudent, Thrifty, Task oriented, etc.
- **View of time in workplace:** Punch the clock, work hard while there.

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Baby Boomers

- **Born** 1946-1964
- **AKA:** Moral Authority, flower children
- **Key Influencers:** Civil Rights, Vietnam War, Sexual Revolution, Cold War/Russia, etc.
- **Examples of “Core Values”:** Anything is possible, Independent, self-assured, Disciplined, Team oriented, etc.
- **Key Attributes:** Work before life, Good in a crisis, Loyal, etc.
- **View of time in workplace:** “workaholic”, visibility is important.

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Generation-X

- **Born** 1965-1980
- **AKA:** “Gen-X”, Post-boomers, (no other well known names)
- **Key Influencers:** Watergate, Energy Crisis, Dual Income families and single parents, Latchkey Kids, Y2K, Downsizing, End of Cold War, etc.
- **Examples of “Core Values”:** Diversity, Entrepreneurial, Higher Education, Cynicism/skepticism, Pragmatism, etc.
- **Key Attributes:** Adaptability, Antiestablishment mentality, Crave independence, Results-focused, Work to live, etc.
- **View of time in workplace:** “project-oriented”, get paid to get the job done.

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Millennial

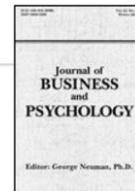
- **Born** 1981-2000 (highly variable) some say 1977-1997 it sometimes goes to 2004??
- **AKA:** Generation “Me”, Gen-Y, Generation-Next, etc.
- **Key Influencers:** Internet, 911, digital media, school shootings, Divorce as “norm”
- **Examples of “Core Values”:** Consumerism, Inclusion, Competition, Civic Duty, Importance of technology and information NOW, etc.
- **Key Attributes:** Optimistic, Sheltered, Used to being busy and multitasking, thrive on personal attention, Ambitious but often unfocused, at ease in teams, value self and impact over work title, etc.
- **View of time in workplace:** Do not want to be measured in time, often see work as the space between weekends, focus on effective work, “smart not hard”

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Are Generations more than just “Stereotypes”?

What “REAL” research exists?

- Published in 2010; Jean M. Twenge evaluated published evidence on generational differences³.
 - “A Review of the Empirical Evidence on Generational Differences in Work Attitudes”
 - Twenge’s research review suggests that:
 - Work is less central for younger compared to older employees.
 - Older employees have a stronger work ethic compared to younger employees.
 - Younger employees more highly value leisure compared to older employees.
 - Younger employees self-report more workplace individuality compared to older employees.
 - However, two crucial points deserve strong emphasis:
 - In contrast to the assertions of the media and many pop theorists, these findings are the only “scientifically validated” generational differences emerging in the literature.
 - No other generational differences emerged in workplace or personal values in any study, despite the fervent assertions you are constantly confronted with.



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Many articles/studies were reviewed below is a summary chart (based on chart published) of the **only** findings Twenge found to be empirically valid

| Trait or Work Value | Findings |
|---|---|
| Work Ethic | Traditional > Baby-Boom > Gen X > Gen Y |
| Work centrality | Traditional > Baby-Boom > Gen X > Gen Y |
| Altruistic values (helping, volunteering) | No differences |
| Leisure values | Gen Y > Gen X > Baby-Boom |
| Job satisfaction and intention to leave | Gen Y > Gen X in job satisfaction Conflicting results for intention to leave |
| Individualistic traits and attitudes | Gen Y > Gen X > Baby-Boom > Traditional |
| Intrinsic values (meaning, using talents) | No differences |
| Extrinsic values (money, status) | Gen X > Gen Y > Baby-Boom |
| Affiliation or social values | Longitudinal: Baby-Boom > Gen X > Gen Y Cross-sectional: Gen Y > Gen X > Baby-Boom |

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Cross-sectional vs. Longitudinal Studies

- Most studies are Cross-sectional
 - Multiple generations interviewed at same point in time. (interview conducted in 2018 for those at age `9, 26 and 72- but all in 2018)
 - Issue? Confound generation with age. How can you separate what is generational vs what is a factor of their current age?
 - Example the “ex hippy” 
- Longitudinal Studies
 - Follow the same group of individuals over time through their age changes
 - The GENERATION doesn’t change... even though they might.
 - Twenge uncovered only **three** longitudinal studies on generational differences in the workplace (Families and Work Institute⁴, 2006; Smola and Sutton⁵, 2002; Twenge et al., in press).
 - All three studies focused on the centrality of work and **do indeed suggest** that work becomes more central as people age

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More from the literature:

| Authors | Implication |
|--|--|
| Real, Mitnick, and Maloney, 2010 ⁶ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No practical generational differences in work ethics, job values, or gender beliefs in a national sample of 2,581 blue-collar workers |
| Trzesniewski, Donnellan, and Robins, 2008 ⁷ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzed data from 26,867 young adults from 1982 to 2007, finding no evidence that narcissism and self-centeredness had increased. They conclude, "These results cast doubt on the belief that today's young people have increasingly inflated impressions of themselves compared with previous generations." |

So it ALL just Stereotypes?

- Is it all fake, is it all the Media's fault? Real or not, research shows WE believe it- so there is impact and it shapes us.
- AchieveGlobal surveyed 350 employees at all levels in China, Germany, Singapore, the United Kingdom⁸, and the United States (Manhertz, 2007).
 - Younger employees were more likely to think they are "more efficient in multitasking" and "more creative" than older workers.
 - Older employees were more likely to think that they "have a stronger work ethic" than younger workers and that younger employees "demand more recognition"
- Why does this matter?

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- Hayward et al. (1997): 30% of hiring managers saw older employees as difficult to train, 34% saw them as unable to adapt to new technologies, and 36% saw them as too cautious.
 - In the same study, 79% of hiring managers saw younger employees as less reliable than older employees.
- Rupp, Vodanovich, and Crede (2006): Managers with significant age-based biases cited older employees for poor performance more often and more severely than they cited younger employees.
- Are we guilty of this in Audiology? How do age and generational differences play into what we do? How we hire? How we plan?
 - Ex: Baby boomer feels that millennial is lazy due to not “living to work” whereas Millennial sees their older colleague as slow because they need to work so many hours to get the job done.
 - Research actually shown millennials are actually tenacious and due to tech savvy and growing up with a lot of distractions (TV, phones, internet, etc.) can get work done on the go and not at a desk.

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What do we do in audiology? How do we change?

- Don't make assumptions, allow each person show you their attributes. Be aware of what may be, same as you would in any interaction, but keep your mind open.
- Actual comments/questions for a talk that I gave:
 - “I can't seem to keep any of these young audiologists, I invest in them, I train them, I pay for their licenses, etc and they leave after a year or two. How do I make them stay?”
 - “My boss is a Baby Boomer and doesn't seem to appreciate anything I do. I have worked in my role for 6 months and do not feel valued.”
 - “Since when do audiologists no longer realize that their paycheck is their “reward” for doing good work. Good work and happy patients are the baseline expectation, why do they seem to need a trophy for showing up and doing their job?”
 - “My new hire isn't serious about their job. Socializing and being on their phone is all they care about. I feel like they are allergic to hard work.”

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Actual comments/questions for a talk that I gave:

Longevity doesn't mean same as loyalty. If longevity is not as important to this generation, maybe we change our benefits and not pay for all the training, or have a sign on contract, where they will be reimbursed for all initial training after a term of x years? Be creative, one size may not fit all.

“My boss is a Baby Boomer and doesn't seem to appreciate anything I

Boomers do not generally rely as much on recognition for their satisfaction, it isn't necessarily a value of theirs, so don't be so sensitive if you do not get it. If you really feel it is important, you may have to speak up. Focus on the PLATINUM RULE. showing up?”

Again, this is PERCEPTION. Millennials and post-millennials grew up with smart phones and believe they are multitasking, that their phone is not getting in the way of their work. They also do not think of the traditional 9-5 as the only time that work can get done. They may have also figured out a way to work on their phone. Be curious. Try to focus on the output you desire, and let go of what you see as right and wrong. Now...if they are sacrificing patient care quality (looking at phone during a patient appointment, not for research) you of course can have practice rules. Be explicit if phones or personal internet use is off-limits. Do not assume they would assume.

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What good can come of all of these generations working together?

- Embrace the strengths of each group, try not to focus so much on what divides:
 - Millennials and post-millennials are the most tech savvy of any generation before, strong consumer focus can help audiology in new frontier of storefront and OTC, the decision makers (the children of elderly patients and the parents of pediatric patients, are in large order of the Millennial generation. Embrace what they can teach you.
 - Younger generations have a strong focus on collaborating with others, they are so connected to other fields, people, are used to reaching out. This is important in changing healthcare climate.
 - Baby Boomers and Generation X'ers have real-life experiences that are invaluable to new professionals. Don't be quick to write off experience if it doesn't line up with text books.
 - No one generation, in my opinion has solved the “jenga” of work/life balance. Maybe it will take a diverse team approach to come up with new ideal?

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continued In summary: Focus on What We Share¹¹

- RESPECT – feeling valued as a unique individual is key for all humans.
- COMPETENCE – feeling valued as knowledgeable and experienced. People have a powerful need to hone and demonstrate skills.
 - Opportunities to develop and show competence—as well as recognition for effort and results—are powerful motivators for every generation.
- CONNECTION – collaborating with trusted colleagues and co-workers. Regardless of age, people want to collaborate.
 - Studies show this intrinsic need more powerful than extrinsic needs, such as the desire to earn rewards or avoid punishment.
- AUTONOMY – exercising self-control within guidelines to achieve shared goals.
 - People crave autonomy, or freedom, to shape their work to support the work of others.
 - This kind of flexibility helps people of all ages to thrive in an organizational setting.

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Thank you for your attention 😊

- Questions?
- Comments?

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