

TEACHING ACROSS GENERATIONS



**BAKER COLLEGE
EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING DEPARTMENT**

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Course Description

This two-hour module provides participants with a thorough examination of the psychology of learning in general and adult learners in particular. Participants will learn how apply the latest research in learning theory for more effective teaching practices. Participants will also learn how to meet the needs of adult learners in their teaching, addressing the different learning styles and preferences of different generations of learners. Since each generation responds differently to motivation and teaching styles, this session will prepare instructors to balance and address these different needs.

Course Outcomes

- Articulate the importance of andragogy in an adult learning context
- Identify important components of transformative learning
- Compare characteristics of the Silent, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and the Millennial generation
- Compare and contrast differences between generations related to learning and teaching
- Select teaching strategies to meet the needs of different generations

Overview

The composition of the college classroom today is vastly different than ten or twenty years ago. Adult students are returning to college in record numbers and for a variety of personal and professional reasons. Adult learners make up a large segment of the student population and working with adult learners is often different than working with younger students this situation can be problematic for instructors who are unprepared to deal with such differences in the classroom.

When most of us think of a college classroom, the “traditional” student comes to mind. It is a natural connection to make, however it is no longer a valid assumption. As a matter of fact, “only 17% of students enrolled in college today are in the eighteen to twenty-two group we generally thin of as traditional college students” (Duderstadt, p. 17). “In place of the young, male student who lived in the dorm and carried a full-time load, college campuses often have a student population that predominately female with an average age in the late 20s” (Belcheir, 1998, p. 3). Adult learners, whoever they may be, make up the large majority of our student population and working with adult learners is often different than working with younger students. One of the main issues with the previous statement is the determining exactly what is an adult student? At what age does a learner cross the threshold between young adult and adult and should age matter to educators?

Good teaching practices are good teaching practices regardless of the age group at which they are aimed. However there are some techniques that work better for learners of certain ages based on some fundamental generational differences beyond the learner’s control. In addition, adults tend to learn differently than traditional students because of the history and experience they bring into the classroom, so it is imperative that the instructor be cognizant of these psychological and generational differences when selecting teaching strategies and designing learning activities.

Recent trends in education have indicated a movement toward a more learner-centered style of instruction rather than the more traditional instructor-centered model. “We in adult and higher education have increasingly moved toward more active, collaborative, and experience-based forms of teaching and learning” (Dirkx, 2003). This shift toward making the learner the focus of the classroom is generally espoused as an effective method for reaching adult learners based on the andragogy theory first advanced by Malcolm Knowles, but many instructors have not incorporated these trends into their classroom repertoire. Black (2003) describes this issue as one of “rigid higher education system unwilling or unable to adapt to the reality inherent in such a diverse generation of learners” (p. 13).

Instructors entering the classroom prepared to teach in a more traditional manner are facing a backlash from the adult learners who make up a significant number of their students. “In a 10-year period, enrollment of persons ages 25 an over

rose by 22 percent” (Belcheir, 1999, p. 3), indicating that this trend is unlikely to abate any time soon. Instructors are unprepared to deal with the current composition of the modern college classroom and have not updated their teaching practices to reflect the actual demographics of their students.

Baker Colleges strives to be a model of inclusion for all students and while not every learning situation will target each learner’s preferred style, instructors should strive to incorporate many different types of learning activities and strategies into each class session. This professional development module will introduce you to some of these generational differences and provide you with some strategies for teaching to a truly diverse generational classroom.

Thus, instructors need to consider student age as an important factor when selecting teaching methods and strategies but often have no information about teaching techniques designed to target learners of varying ages. Instructors should be aware of all the potential factors that can impede or promote learning.

Demographics of the Baker College classroom

There really is no such thing as a typical Baker College student. Demographics will vary by campus, program, and term. However, some generalizations can be made across the system to help instructors better understand the students in their classrooms.

Baker considers students to be adult students if they have been out of high school for at least one year. Interestingly enough, much of the current growth in attracting new students comes from the high school market, meaning that there are more traditional students in our classes than ever before. This is a significant shift from the previous years where the majority of our students were adults. This trend actually makes the issues covered in this session more important, since we are now facing students from more diverse age ranges.

Previously, most instructors at the college and university level were concerned with teaching the “traditional” student, typically defined as a student between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two years old. However with the influx of adult learners into the classroom, the previously accepted rules of instruction are changing. Kilgore (2001) notes that “commonly held assumptions about generic learners and learning are irrelevant and even willfully oppressive when recklessly applied to all kinds of people without regard for their unique life experiences and attributes such as race, class, and gender” (p. 53). “More than ever, the gap between the instructor and the student is widening. Roles are changing” (Microsoft Corporation, 2003).

On-ground, the typical student is a 28 year old female. She is typically pursuing her first post-secondary degree and is seeking to improve her current work situation. Other relevant statistics include:

- 71% of Baker's students are female
- Approximately 70% have at least one child
- 75% of students work at least part time in addition to attending school
- 33% of our students are transfers from another institution
- 78% of Baker students are Caucasian
- 16% are African-American
- 6% identify as other

As Duderstadt (2000) states, "no longer are the students on our campuses drawn primarily from the ranks of middle and upper-class high school graduates" (p. 17). We have a wide range of students from varying socio-economic levels at our institution at any given time, and need to make every effort to include all of these factors when designing our courses.

Does this mean that you should shy away from including technology that some of our students may not have access to at home? No, it just means that you might need to work with the students to reinforce how they can access the technology at the campus location and be prepared with flyers for the Learning Support Center on your campus or of the hours for the computer labs.

Psychology of adult learners

It is commonly understood that students, particularly adults, learn differently. "The learning styles, attitudes, and approaches of high school students differ from those of eighteen- to twenty-two year old college students. The styles, attitudes, and approaches of adult learners differ yet again" (Oblinger, 2003, p. 37). Instructors must be aware of these differences with selecting course activities and planning class sessions to better attend to the needs of all of their learners.

What is the definition of an adult? According to Knowles (1984), "the psychological definition is one who has arrived at a self-concept of being responsible for one's own life, of being self-directing" (p. 9) Much of the current literature defines an adult learner as someone over the age of twenty-five, but does not differentiate between varying generations. Traditional learners will be considered those learners in the Millennial generation or those who are eighteen to twenty-three years old. For our purposes, the classification of an adult includes members of Generation X, the Boomer and the Silent generation, making your job more difficult with each generation of learners. Why is that? It is because "life experiences shape the way people expect to learn" (Darling, http://www.elementk.com/training_advice/htm/05-02-learninggen.asp). The time period in which you grow up has a significant impact on the way you learn as well

as the way you expect to be taught. As instructors, understanding the fundamental differences between learners in your classroom will help you meet all of their needs more effectively.

Why not pedagogy?

Until the mid-1920s, learning theory did not differentiate between children and adults. It was not until 1928, when Edward Thorndike published his studies the learning abilities of adults that this field began to take shape. Thorndike demonstrated that adults have the capacity to learn, something that had previously been assumed but not substantiated by research until then. Further studies by Thorndike in 1935 and Sorenson in 1938 indicated that adults did have an ability to learn that was substantially different from children. Old assertions that learning was unnecessary past the age of early adulthood were gradually replaced with new ideas about the importance of adult learning, both for the individual adults and for society at large (Knowles, 1973; Truluck & Courtenay, 1999).

Now that adults were proven to have the capability to learn, another strand of research pushed forward mainly by Eduard Lindeman in 1926, proposed that adult education needed to be more student-centered rather than teacher and subject-centered. Revolutionary for its time, this work began the current push toward the self-directed learning trend prevalent in adult education theory today, making concrete the notion that “learners become increasingly self-directed as they mature” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 8). Lindeman later influenced the work of Malcolm Knowles in his formation of the theory of andragogy.

These two strains of adult learning theory continued separately until the mid 1960s when Malcolm Knowles began working on his andragogy theory of adult learning. He published his results in his revolutionary book, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species* in 1973, although he actually introduced the term in 1968 in a series of articles (Rachal, 2002). He contrasted pedagogy, which is the art and science of teaching children, with his andragogy theory. Literally translated, andragogy is the art and science of teaching adults and became the “most persistent practice-based, instructional methods issue in adult education” (*Ibid*, p. 211) for quite some time.

Andragogy defined

At its core, andragogy holds that adult learners must be treated differently than children due to the fact that they come to the learning experience, whether formal or informal, in a different manner. Knowles (1973) puts forth the following as basic components of quality adult learning:

- Adults must first understand why they need to know something before they actually invest time in learning it
- Most adults have a fully formed self-image and tend to become resentful when these images are not valued in a learning situation

- Adults need to feel as if their life experience is important as it helps them make connections between old and new knowledge
- Adults will generally prepare more for a learning situation
- Adults “want to learn to solve or address a particular problem, and are more satisfied with their learning if everyday experiences, is practical, or is current” (Draves, p. 11).
- Adults are more intrinsically motivated to learn than children are. They are in the learning situation by choice and do not require the extrinsic motivational rewards that children do.

Relevance and practicality

Adult students need to see their learning as practical and relevant, particularly in a formal higher education setting. Their learning is real and meaningful, as noted by Trueman and Hartley in 1996, “mature students had better study habits than the younger students in that they engaged in more ‘deep’ and less ‘surface’ learning than did the younger students” (p. 201). Adults don’t tend to like “busy work” and will often resist work that they perceive to be unrelated to the course content or their goals. This is one reason that educators of adults need to spend time setting the context of an assignment and helping the students make connections between what they are doing in class and what they will use this knowledge/information for after their coursework is complete.

Educators can help facilitate this process by spending time before the learning event differentiating the need to know information from the nice to know information. Often adult learners will want a “bottom line” version of the information and ensuring that the most relevant practical information is covered will help adults feel that they are not wasting their time. In addition, this classification can actually become useful for the learner to help them make connections in their learning and their lives.

Occasionally it might be important for the learners to understand what they don’t know to better set the stage for the learning experience. A pre-test that mirrors the course final or some other type of assessment instrument such as a short, in-class paper or a question and answer session with the instructor will often help demonstrate the lack of knowledge and help to create that need for learning that adults seek. One caveat to this process is to ensure that the assessment isn’t too difficult or demeaning in any way since that might potentially decrease their enthusiasm for the learning experience rather than increase it.

Self-image

Adults use their experiences to build their self-identify, so it is important that educators communicate their respect for the manner in which adults view themselves in addition to the respect for the experience itself. “If in an educational situation an adult’s experience is ignored, not valued, not made use of, it is not just the experience that is being rejected; it is the person” (Knowles, p. 11), which will cast a negative light on the learning experience and can once

again become a hindrance to both you and the learner. You will then need to work harder to regain that learner's respect and attention to continue with the learning experience. This is a concept that could be particularly valuable to instructors in developmental education departments, due to the fact that "undereducated adults have little to sustain their dignity other than their experience" (p. 11).

Life experience

Adults, even younger Generation X and Millennial students, enter into a collegiate learning event with some life experience to help guide their thinking. They have, over the course of their elementary and secondary work, gained a better understanding of who they are as a person and have begun, if not completed, the process of identifying their values and beliefs which define their operating norms. Andragogy "assumes that adults enter into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youth" (Knowles, p. 10), so ignoring the experience of adults, particularly older adults, will tend to serve as a barrier to learning for that student.

As Knowles (1984) points out that "for many kinds of learning, adults are themselves the richest resources for one another" (p. 10), so taking the time to explore the experiences of your students can lead to a more comprehensive learning experience for all involved. The negative side of this issue is that adults have generated ideas and operating norms based on those very experiences we want to value and occasionally it is difficult to open their minds to new ways of thinking and being. It has been said that it is more difficult to unlearn something than it is to learn it in the first place, so adult educators must be prepared for some discomfort in the learning process.

Preparation

Adult students also have a tendency to manage their time better, possibly because of the other life circumstances that surround them as they are in school. Trueman and Hartley conducted a study of three student groups: younger students (under age 21), borderline mature students (ages 21-25) and adult students (age 25 and older) in which they found that the adult students reported the most use of time management strategies, however this use of good time management did not necessarily translate into better academic performance overall, but is a good start towards understanding why some students are easily overwhelmed and others appear to be handling the stress of school.

Motivation

Most learners do not embark on a learning experience until they experience a need, whether it is a career enhancement or a personal goal. Often this need and the learning that results from their attempt to meet it results in a form of cognitive dissonance, where they experience a shift in their thinking that conflicts with what they already believe to be true. Until they are able to resolve this dilemma, true

learning can not occur, but sometimes the struggle is difficult, on the part of the learner as well as on the part of the instructor watching it occur.

Most of these needs are developed as a result of shifting life and developmental circumstances, such as:

- Life (affect) circumstances including
 - Divorce
 - Death of a spouse
 - Retirement
- Work status changes including
 - Job loss, requiring the adult to return to school to obtain new skills to be a viable member of the workforce again
 - Promotion, where the learner feels the need to update or obtain new skills to keep pace with a change in job status
- Career changes, where the learner identifies a new career path and returns to school in an effort to obtain the skills necessary to pursue the new career

As research in the field of adult education continued, andragogy as a theory was called into question due to the lack of empirical studies to support its use (Rachal, 2002). One of the main issues is the “absence of a clear meaning as to what procedures constitute andragogical practice” (*Ibid*, p. 211). There are so many teaching strategies that could be considered andragogical that it was difficult to narrow them down to something that could be studied empirically. In addition to this issue, the issue of how to measure whether or not the learning is evident because “effectiveness” is largely determined by learner achievement which is often measured by tests and grades; but for Knowles, tests and grades are anathema to the very idea of andragogy” (*Ibid*, p. 211). Andragogy began to fall out of favor during the late 1980s and early 1990s for precisely this reason.

One of the main issues inherent in the andragogical model is the fact that most learning, at least in college classrooms, requires that the instructor have some sense of where the learning event is headed before it begins. However, “instructor objectives represent a devolution from the andragogical ideal” (*Ibid*, p. 216). Almost all college courses have learning outcomes, but the very fact that the instructor or the institution has pre-defined these outcomes violates the principle of allowing adults to direct their own learning and to derive their own outcomes from a learning event.

As Knowles continued his work in the field of adult learning, he came to understand that andragogy is less of a learning theory and more of a structured environment “defined more by the learning situation than by the learner” (Merriam, 2001, p. 6) and his published works began to “reflect his evolving view of andragogy as a continuum” (Rachal, 2002, p. 219). Rachal goes on to suggest that “there are degrees of andragogy-ness and that implies that the

appropriateness of andragogy is situational” (p. 224). This is important because this indicates that the basic components of andragogy listed above can apply to learners of various ages as long as the facilitator organizes the learning situation in such a way that these components are inherent in the design of the learning event. It is possible to use the concepts of andragogy in an elementary or secondary environment, so the idea that andragogy just speaks to adults is questionable at best.

One of the main components of adult learning theory in general that is not specific to andragogy is the idea adult students need to see their learning as practical and relevant, particularly in a formal higher education setting. Their learning is real and meaningful, and they approach the learning process differently, as noted by Trueman and Hartley in 1996, “mature students had better study habits than the younger students in that they engaged in more ‘deep’ and less ‘surface’ learning than did the younger students” (p. 201). “It is the instructor’s responsibility to see that learners work on tasks that are meaningful and relevant to the community of practice” (Pratt, 2002, p. 10). Allowing the learner to focus on what is meaningful and relevant for that learner honors one of Knowles basic tenants of andragogy, that of valuing the learner for the experience they bring to the learning event.

Self-directed learning

Proponents of self-directed learning say that adults will learn better when allowed to plan their own learning, often with the help of a facilitator rather than an instructor. Knowles (1984) notes that if adults are not allowed to direct themselves and are treated like children, they experience a kind of cognitive dissonance, one where “this condition expectation conflicts with their much deeper psychological need to be self-directing, and their energy is diverted way from learning to deal with this internal conflict” (p. 9). This appears to indicate that if adults are given enough control over their learning, they will eventually take charge of the learning experience to make it meaningful for them. However, he goes on to note that one of the main problems with this proposition is the fact that “even though adults may be totally self-directing in every other aspect of their lives—as workers, spouses, parents, citizens, leisure-time users—the minute they walk into a situation labeled “education,” “training,” or any of their synonyms, they hark back to their conditioning in school, assume a role of dependency and demand to be taught” (*Ibid*).

One of the issues with this concept is that at Baker, there are limits to the manner in which the students are allowed to direct their own learning. For instance, while it is perfectly appropriate to give the students a choice about which assignments they would like to complete to achieve the course outcomes, it is inappropriate to allow the students a hand in selecting which course outcomes they would like to complete. When faculty and staff at Baker College use the term self-directed, it generally does not extend to allowing the learner to choose their own course outcomes as those are pre-defined by the College.

Learning contracts work well for these types of situations, where the learner and the facilitator work together to clarify what is to be learned, when it is to be learned, and how it is to be assessed. It is important to hold the student to this contract and to be responsible for completing your portion in a reasonable amount of time.

Transformative learning

Another of the major learning theories that became popular in the late 1980s and 1990s is the notion of transformative learning. This theory is can also be used to consider learning from a generational perspective since its main focus is that learning originates from a place of discomfort. This theory, originally developed by Mezirow and later adapted by others, is less important when considering teaching the Millennial generation, but really speaks to the motivation of Generation X, Boomer, and even members of the Silent generation that are present in the college classroom.

Transformative learning begins when the learner is made aware of a gap in their knowledge and an issue and thus begins the learning process. The major steps involved in transformative learning are listed below as identified by Patricia Cranton (2002); however other implementations also exist under the transformative learning umbrella.

1. The learner experiences an activating event, one that exposes the difference between what they thought they knew and what is actually happening. Earlier versions of this theory identified this as a single event, later work has noted that “several events may converge to start the process” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 19).
2. The learner then begins to “articulate assumptions” (p. 66) about their current mental models and how this new information fits with their currently thinking.
3. The learner then begins the process of critically reflecting on how strongly the previous knowledge came to be held and what it means to him or her.
4. The learner then begins to investigate alternative viewpoints.
5. The learner then engages others in discussion about both previously held assumptions and new information learned during their search for facts and ideas.
6. The learner revises his or her assumptions to make them fit better with new information.

7. The learner begins to put the new assumptions into practice.

Transformational learning speaks to the very nature of adult learning and can be seen as an extension of Knowles andragogy theory as well as a separate theory that can be put into practice by adult educators more easily than the andragogy theory. It can be empirically tested since much of it depends on the role of the learner rather than the environment in which the learning occurs. The experience of the learner is always the basis for growth and change and only the learner can make those changes in a manner and time which best suits them. “Knowledge is not “out there” to be discovered but is created from interpretations and reinterpretations in light of new experiences” (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 16).

Major issues with transformative learning theories include “ignoring the affective, emotional, and social aspects of the learning process” (*Ibid*, p. 17).

Transformative learning, once seen as a linear, stepped process is now defined as a more fluid “complex process involving thoughts and feelings” (*Ibid*, p. 18) than previously considered. Other issues with the original theory are those of relationships in and among the learner and the environment and the context in which the learning takes place to be vital. No long-term studies were found on the use of transformative learning in the higher education classroom, which calls into question its effectiveness and continued use.

Transformative learning considers a student’s cognitive and identity development as well as “the importance of the meaning-making process” (*Ibid*, p. 17). In this way, it can be an effective lens for looking at learning across several generations since students develop cognitively and form their identity in different stages of their lives. A student will often identify him or herself one way as a young adult and approach learning in a particular manner due to that identification, but as the maturation process occurs, both the student’s identity and cognitive thinking processes will change, often making the student drastically different when he or she returns to school. It is in this context that the generational differences can become a factor since students from all four major current generations can be present in a college classroom at the same time and it is up to the instructor to manage this classroom and teach to each generation’s learning preferences.

Defining the Generations

What impact does any of the above have upon you as an instructor? How does knowing that you have learners from different generations in your classroom help you? You could already tell that, just by looking over the students who enroll in your classes. This is definitely not news to you. However what might be news is that you have to work even more diligently to reach students than you may have previously.

To begin the discussion, we will look at each of the generations in slightly more depth, providing you with some typical generational characteristics that you can

expect when dealing with students of varying ages. Remember that not every member of a generation will exhibit all of the characteristics ascribed to the generations below, but it is fair to say that many members of each generation have these tendencies. Members born very early or very late in a generation will often have more in common with the preceding or subsequent generation and can take on a bridge status between the generations. The information below is designed to provide a general outline of typical characteristics of people born during a specific generation, not a blueprint for each member of the cohort.

Strauss and Howe (1991) define a generation as a cohort born in a twenty to twenty-two year span and defined by certain characteristics inherent in most members of that cohort. Other definitions of a generation speak more toward shared values and beliefs (Zemke et al., 2001; Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Arsenault, 2004; Caudron, 1997). Learners in today's college classroom may be drawn from the Silent generation (1925-1942), the Baby Boomer generation (1943-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), or the Millennial generation (1981-2001). Strauss and Howe identify characteristics of each generation in their 1991 book *Generations*. A short description of each generation and some of its major characteristics is below.

Silent

General characteristics

The Silent generation is composed of people born from 1925-1942. This generation is smaller than both the one who preceded it (the GI generation) and the one that succeeds it (the Baby Boomers). This is a generation born into the middle of the Great Depression but few have any significant memories of it, except for the way that it affected their parents and older siblings.

Comprised of approximately fifty million members, this generation was born too early for the heroics of WWI and too late for the sexual and social revolutions of the Boomers. "The Silent widely realize that they are the generational stuffings of a sandwich between the get-it-done GI and the self-absorbed Boom" (Strauss and Howe, p. 281). As a result, this generation does not ever appear to be comfortable with their lot in life. Strauss and Howe go on to refer to the Silent generation as "the only living generation whose members would rather be in some age bracket other than the one they now occupy" (p. 285).

When you see members of this generation in your classroom, it is generally because they want to be there, to learn new skills or to keep from being bored. Occasionally they will be in school as a result of a career choice, but since many members of this generation are already in retirement age, theirs is truly learning by choice more than any other generation right now.

The major focus for the Silent generation was the rise of the Baby Boom generation. The Silent had always looked to the GIs as role models but when the Baby Boom generation began its ascent, the focus shifted to them. Instead of

looking back to the GI, Silent began to look forward to the Baby Boomer and emulate some of the Boomer attitudes. This led to a characterization of the Silent generation of one “characterized by jealousies and role reversals” (*Ibid*, p. 281).

The Silent generation came to accept their place in life and appeared to be focused more on trying to understand their world than to change it. This is not the era of the large social movement; rather it is one of looking around the world and trying to determine how it can be made better. This is a generation once described by own instructors in college as being withdrawn and unimaginative. Ironically, it is also a generation that has spawned a large number of comics and songwriters, creative fields requiring great imagination.

Some of the most influential people of the Silent generation include:

- Marilyn Monroe
- Shirley Temple
- Jerry Lewis
- Andy Warhol
- Elvis Presley
- Woody Allen
- Phil Donahue
- Ted Koppel
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Family life

The Silent generation was one of increasing wealth at every time in their lives. Strauss and Howe (1991) identify this generation as one that “has enjoyed a lifetime of steadily rising affluence” (p. 281). They further go on to note that “from age 20-40, Silent households showed this century’s steepest rise in real per capita income and per-household wealth” (p. 284).

The Silent generation is characterized by members who were overprotected in their childhoods and suffered from the fear that disaster was just around the corner. In their youth, they were not as self-destructive as other generations, displaying the lowest twentieth century rates for teen suicide and crime. “Juvenile delinquents were less kids who did something bad than kids who did nothing” (*Ibid*, p. 287).

In *Generations*, Strauss and Howe note that this was the “earliest-marrying and earliest-babying generation in American history” (p. 284), men at 23 and women at 20, making many of them prime candidates for change with the sexual revolution occurred. They “used early marriage as a fortress against adult doubts about their maturity” (p. 288). Interestingly enough, this generation’s college educated women had more children than those who did not complete high school.

However, once the sexual revolution began, Silent women divorced in record numbers. “Silent men and women born between the mid-1930s and early 1940s showed the biggest age-bracket jump in the divorce rate” (p. 284) than any other generation. This drastic change had a negative effect on their children who were mostly Generation X, which will be discussed later. Many of the divorced Silent women never remarried but instead began the trend of the single, working mother.

School life

The Silent generation was not a generation defined as great or original thinkers. This generation is one where their own instructors in college defined them as “withdrawn, cautious, unimaginative, indifferent, unadventurous—and silent” (*Ibid*, p. 279). Members of this generation were not interested in conquering the world as they saw their elders do, but instead were intent on keeping their heads down, their noses to the grindstone, and their lives steady. They constantly looked to others for ideas on how to behave and what to think, preferring the ideas of others to their own.

Work life

The Silent generation will never be characterized as the take-charge kind of people that their predecessors, the GIs were or their successors, the Boomers are. “They have excelled at personal communication” (*Ibid*, p. 293), making them a generation for whom speaking and learning is more important than doing.

They are a generation interested in making the world a better place, producing helpers and aides in almost every profession, but no leaders. Members of the Silent generation advised Presidents for almost three decades but did not manage to produce a President of their own. America looks to this generation to “comment and mediate, but not to lead” (*Ibid*, p. 283). They themselves turn to the GIs for guidance about what should be done and to the Boomers for what is possible.

Silent women returned to the workforce in droves during the divorce craze of this period. Many of these women returned to “traditional” professions such as nursing, teaching, and secretarial work, traditionally lesser paying jobs. As noted by Strauss and Howe, women of this generation “virtually disappeared from fields like engineering and architecture” (p. 284) but would later appear as vocal feminists.

Significant events

The Great Depression was one of the most significant events in the life of the Silent generation, but not necessarily for its direct effect on members of this generation. The Great Depression affected how their parents and older siblings saw the world and thus impacted the Silent generation. They were raised with the issues of the Depression in mind constantly, which altered their view about many things as they aged.

Notably, almost all of the key players in the civil rights movement came from the Silent generation, including Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X. This is a generation devoted to mediation and to building bridges between other generations, other races and other cultures, fitting perfectly with the nonviolence movement of many of the leaders of the civil rights era. This is truly the “helping generation”, one where change comes from “a self-conscious humanity and tender social conscience” (*Ibid*, p. 282) rather than through violence and anger.

Members of the generation “have been less successful in forging a sense of national or personal direction than any generation in living memory” (*Ibid*, p. 292) and thus are content to let others make the decisions while the Silent generation works to make those decisions more palatable. They still wish that they could be somewhere else in time, which is why their return to school at times is not all that unsurprising. This is a generation who is changing the world’s ideas about what a senior citizen should look like and what they should do. Fueled by their internal dissatisfaction and desire to be something else, they are among the fastest generation of people learning to use the Internet for both communication and entertainment.

Baby Boomers

The 78 million Baby Boomers (now mostly called Boomers since the word “baby” no longer seems to fit them) are a generation that is constantly at the forefront of everyone’s minds. This generation, born between 1943 and 1960, has always existed in a world of their own making and design. Members of this generation are used to being the center of America’s attention at all stages in their lives. “As children, the world was child-focused; as young adults, the world was young-adult focused; as yuppies, the world was yuppie focused” (*Ibid*, p. 301). Now, as the older members of the cohort edge closer to retirement, the issue of Social Security is a hot topic because it now affects them. Members of this generation are not used to operating in the background and this attitude pervades in their actions at home, at work, and in the classroom.

Boomers do not have many of the self-identity issues that the Silent generation has, mostly because the world they inhabited as children and young adults is one that they had a large part in creating. They have not ever been an “ignored” generation, as the Silent before them tended to feel and Generation X after them definitely feel. Boomers have always defined their world and to a certain extent, the world of others around them. They are a generation without a sense of generational identity as other generations have, but with a definite sense of their importance in both place and time.

Family life

Boomers are focused on mind, body, and soul and in some ways, always have been. They were born into a health conscious era and were subjected to more

medical procedures in the name of preventative medicine than any other generation before or since. Boomers continued this health craze well into their current ages, along the way encouraging the popularity of “health” food, organic food, working out, self-help books, and popular diets like Atkins and South Beach. Their physical appearance is important to them as well as their perceived healthiness and physical well-being. This is the group that flocked to each new fitness craze during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s and will most likely continue to do so well into their elder years.

Boomers are also spiritual creatures, both founding and attending institutions of spirituality, though not necessarily churches, in record numbers. This trend began as Boomers rejected the spirituality of their parents and sought new and different ways to express themselves; “Boomers found their parents’ world in need of a major spiritual overhaul, even of creative destruction” (*Ibid*, p. 302) who go on to note that Boomers are considered the modern “Consciousness” Generation, where “coming of age, they applied their critical thinking—and new principles” to place themselves in the position of the nation’s moral compass. And yet, in contrast, Boomers never seem quite done. They are intent on constant improvement. They fueled the large increase in the number of self-help books published since the 1960s.

Boomers saw themselves as a generation in revolt against their parents, the G.I. generation. “The Boom ethos remained a deliberate antithesis to everything G.I.: spiritualism over science, gratification over patience, negativism over positivism, fractiousness over conformity, rage over friendliness, *self over community*” (*Ibid*, p. 302). They began to emphasize this difference by rejecting the male G.I. identity and everything it stood for. They did not seem to have such a visceral reaction to their mothers, but rejected wholesale the influence and values of their fathers. This led, in part, to the Boomer consumerism, a rejection of waiting to be able to afford something before purchasing it, instead “developing a unique brand of perfectionism in consumption” (*Ibid*, p. 302).

Boomers are generally the product of “whole” families. For the most part, they had happy, well-adjusted childhoods when the world was a safe place to be. They grew up in an era of television, but it was television that the whole family watched together. Family life was organized around Boomers and their needs and they have continued that trend into their families today. Boomers are almost the exact opposite of the Silent generation, in that both sexes often waited until later in life to have children.

School life

Boomers continued the downward trend in SAT scores throughout almost their entire childhood. They did however benefit from an increase in grade inflation, giving rise to the mentality that Boomers were a smarter generation than those who came before. Upon entering college in 1969, 4% of Boomers had an A

average, compared to 11% in 1978 (Strauss and Howe). Institutions of higher learning didn't miss the grade inflation boat, reporting that "from 1969 to 1975, the average collegiate grade rose from a C+ to a B" (p. 306), in addition to providing students with alternative grading systems for three-fourths of their institutions.

Boomers in the classroom are achievement oriented and internally focused. In returning to school, Boomers tend to be extremely grade focused and "despite their enthusiasm for learning, they have a lot of anxiety about returning to school" (Wagschal, 1997, p. 23), and "they are concerned and need to be reassured that they are going in the right direction and that they clearly understand what is expected of them" (*Ibid*).

Work life

Boomers were not the first generation to work hard, but were the first generation to make doing so a badge of honor rather than a necessary fact of life. In the era of the "yuppie" of the 1980s, when this generation was completely in the workforce, 60-70 hour weeks were not uncommon and were even looked upon as a sign of success. It was rare for a Boomer to consider themselves successful and work what was previously considered a traditional work week.

Boomers have spent their lives fighting against the traditional G.I. role models, particularly when it comes to sex roles in society. Boomer males are more comfortable than either G.I. or Silent men in some of the more traditionally dominated female professions while female Boomers are once again making strides to regain the momentum that the Silent women lost in male-dominated fields. Boomer women also feel the need to ensure that their standard of living is at the level they seek, becoming "the first since the peers of Jane Addams to fear that early marriage and family may actually worsen their future household standard of living" (Strauss and Howe, p. 304).

Boomers, given their bent towards creativity and individualist nature, excelled at fields that required both of these skills. Advertising, writing, and other creative media outlets all became viable options for Boomer workers, who appreciated their opportunity to challenge themselves to do more, better, faster.

Significant events

Vietnam and its after effects were significant events in Boomer history. "The effort to avoid service in Vietnam was a more pervasive generational bond than service in the war itself" (Strauss and Howe, p. 306). Boomers voiced their strong opinion that the G.I. generation was bungling the situation in Vietnam and resorted to both draft dodging as a common practice, in both intent and action. Many Boomers returned to school or married to avoid the war while "one in twenty-five abused his body to flunk a physical" (p. 306). Ironically enough, the numbers of Boomers in actual combat was one in sixteen, yet two-thirds of the

eligible Boomer men reported some kind of deliberate action on their part to avoid service (p. 306).

The sexual revolution affected Boomer women more than men, but its effects were enough to shape the generation's ideals about sex until they would have children of their own. The Summer of Love, Woodstock, Make Love not War were all signs that Boomers were again rejecting wholesale the values of their G.I. parents of marriage, monogamy, and loyalty to a place where "Boomer women tripled their relative propensity to commit adultery" (Strauss and Howe, p. 206).

Notable members of this generation include:

- Oliver North
- Janis Joplin
- Steve Martin
- Gilda Radner
- David Letterman
- Oprah Winfrey
- Steven Jobs
- Spike Lee
- John McEnroe

Generation X

Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981, came of age when it wasn't fashionable or desirable to be a child. Generation X suffered the backlash from the world's focus on Baby Boomers and their world view was negatively shaped as a result. The very number of members in this generation, approximately 70 million, indicates how little the child was valued or appreciated in this era. Their outlook on life is one where "the real world is gearing up to punish them down the road" (*Ibid*, p. 317). They even invented a word to describe this generation of children: "throwaways", where America essentially gave up on this generation, teens by this time "who were beyond hope" (*Ibid*, p. 37) to focus on the younger Millennial generation "who were redeemable" (p.37).

Sometimes called the modern "Lost" generation because of their lack of roots or solid generational identity, members of Gen X have learned to forge their own way in the world and not depend on others for help, leading others to consider them "shocking on the outside, unknowable on the inside" (Strauss and Howe, p. 319). While a Boomer knew that they were something special, a Generation X child knew just the opposite. This is a generation of children who grew up mired in an age of death, "growing up in a generation that forced [you] to see that a loving, intimate relationship could lead to death" (Wagschal, 1997. p. 25), where homicide and drug-related deaths soared, where children were committing suicide "more frequently than any generation since the Lost" (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 326), where more children were murdered than ever before. In polling

high school seniors, “those born just after 1960 came of age much more fearful of a national catastrophe than those born just before” (p. 317).

Family life

The anti-child era began with their parents, many of whom were from the Silent generation, which began to divorce in record numbers. When Boomers had the sense that they were worth “suffering” for in unhappy marriages, Gen X children had concrete proof that they were not. This was a generation of the struggling single mom, working to provide for the children’s physical needs and less concerned with their developmental and emotional ones. This gave rise of the latchkey child, one who was responsible for getting themselves home from school alone and often left unsupervised in the afternoons. They are almost a direct reversal of their parents, who were strictly supervised and guarded. They openly question their elders and “have acquired an adult like fatalism about the weakness and uncertainty of elders” (*Ibid*, p. 322).

From early childhood, a member of Gen X was not raised in a social environment. They were often placed in front of television as children and while educational television became a part of their world in the early 1969 with the rise of such televisions shows such as Sesame Street and Mr. Rogers, this is a generation that spent a lot of time in front of the television and not nearly enough time developing social networks with their peers. It has been said that this is an antisocial generation and to a certain extent, this is true as they had little opportunities, except for school, to develop peer relationship skills.

As children of the 1980s, these children faced death around every corner. They watched the news and saw people dying in droves from AIDS. In the middle of the generation, they saw the rise in homicides committed by teens and adults rise sharply during these years. Drug deaths began to increase during this era where cocaine and crack were the drugs of choice. Perhaps most frighteningly, they began to kill themselves in near record numbers, at a pace of almost five thousand per year in the mid 1980s. Slowly this generation began to reverse these trends, but not before the full impact of these social issues began to weigh heavily upon them. Members of Generation X “have encountered, at every phase in life, a world of more punishing consequence than anything their Silent or Boomer elders ever knew” (*Ibid*, p., 321). To combat this, members of Gen X have “built a powerful survival instinct, wrapped around and ethos of personal determinism” (p. 322).

Pop culture also conspired against these children developing a positive self-image, in some of the movies and other items of their childhood. During the 1970s, one of the major movie themes were of “evil children”, considering some of the most successful films of this era were Rosemary’s Baby, The Exorcist, and The Omen.

School life

Scholastically, a minor decrease in grade inflation occurred during the late 70s and early 80s, where “youths born in 1961 received 10 percent fewer high school A’s and 10 percent more C’s than those born in 1960” (Strauss and Howe, p. 325), giving rise to the idea that this was not a smart generation. While the SAT scores have begun to rise near the later end of the generation, this generation was heavily criticized for being lazy and dumb. “Every year through the 1980s, new reports of their academic scores have triggered harsh elder assessments of their schooling and intelligence” (p. 320). Often called the Slacker generation, children of this period were not given the sense that great things were or could be expected of them. Books like *Generation X Goes to College* and *Dumbth* have been written to reinforce these ideas. In the college classroom today, Wagschal (1997) notes that Generation X students are more likely to “lament the quantity of reading, class presentations, research reports, and exams that were required.” (p. 23).

This is the first generation to be less educated than their parents, as Gen Xers, did not proceed to college immediately after high school as many of their parents and the Boomers before them. Strauss and Howe report that only 37 percent of the Gen X class of 1980 completed college within seven years of high school graduation compared to 58 percent for Boomers in 1972 (p. 325). Convinced that it was up to them to make their own way in life, many Xers rejected the notion that college was a requirement for them and instead ventured into the workforce to see what they could make of themselves. They cite heroes such as Bill Gates for this trend.

Work life

During the 1990s when almost all of this generation was in the workforce, a backlash developed against the Boomer workaholic mentality and many of the current “work/life balance” programs were developed. Xers do not see a need to work themselves to death to benefit someone else and have less employer loyalty than any previous generation. Xers will often pursue lateral employment moves if they have a sense that it will benefit them in the long run. A typical member of Generation X will not only change jobs if necessary, he/she will also make complete career changes if sufficiently motivated, most often by money. The typical Generation Xer is expected to be between jobs at least five times, and to change industries three times (Chew, www.nsbs.ns.ca/SR-archives/SRv22no4-genx.html), compared to a Boomer or Silent, who may make less than half of those moves over a lifetime.

Generation X, in the workforce, requires personalized feedback at regular intervals. However their distaste for micromanagement makes this task difficult for employers. They are the first to push for the flex-time arrangements that are becoming more common due to their “non-traditional orientation to time and space...don’t think much of work hours, believing, instead, that as long as the job gets done, it’s not so important where or when” (Zemke et al,

www.millennials.com/Training99.html). It is not difficult to presume that this dislike for regular hours and locations will extend to the classroom, causing great discomfort for the many Boomer and Silent instructors in our ranks.

Significant events

Many significant events have already been mentioned above, however a few that can be considered pivotal in the life of a typical Gen Xer were the Challenger explosion, which many of them saw live as schools broadcasted the launching of the first teacher in space to entire schools. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the massacre in Tiananmen Square also made a big impact on members of this generation as they too saw students being slaughtered for their beliefs and the composition of their world change rapidly. The end of the Cold War was also a key turning point in shaping this generation's views of the world.

Notable members of this generation include:

- Eddie Murphy
- Roger Clemens
- Michael Jordan
- Mike Tyson
- Len Bias

Millennial

To be a Millennial is to be considered “special” above almost all else. Millennials, born between 1981 (possibly 1982) and 2002 or 2003, are the students who are just entering our classrooms today and have changed the way that the world looks at children, much the same way as many of their Boomer parents before them. Divorce rates, among others, “either reversed or plateaued” (Strauss and Howe, p. 337) indicating America's complete shift to the era of the child.

Family life

Millennial children are coveted, wanted, and planned for above almost all else. These are children mostly of Boomer parents, who waited until they were older and more financially stable to have them and enjoy the benefit of the “lowest parent to child ratio in American history” (*Ibid*, p. 341). These are children who for whom the whole world loves. They have a sense of being more universally loved by their parents than almost any other generation before them. They are sheltered, whether it is in the early 1980s when they are babies with the “Baby on Board” signs or in their later years when television and video game ratings were implemented.

Millennial children are physically and medically more well-cared for than any other generation in history, however more children are diagnosed with learning and behavior disorders than ever before. An elevated birth mother age could also account for the increasing trend in mental retardation and/or other serious physical conditions (*Ibid*, p. 91), but overall, this is a generation so used to going

to the doctor to cure everything that they now run the risk of being immune to antibiotics. The suicide rate, so elevated in the Gen X era, has started to decline, along with accidental death rates for Millennial children. Issues that plague this generation include asthma, obesity, and Attention Deficit Disorder. Interestingly enough, female athletes are showing signs of body strain in the form of injuries, indicating a greater number of girls participating in sports activities.

Family life looks different for Millennials than it did for other generations. While there is still divorce, the rates are declining. When there is divorce, “a recent sure in single fathers reflects the growing desire of fathers to vie with moms for child custody” (*Ibid*, p. 129). Single-parent households still exist, but in a growing trend of single mothers and fathers who are choosing to remain single. Biracial adoption is becoming more common as the diversity of this generation continues to spread. Parents re-arrange work schedules to spend time with their children and are ensuring that their children have better supervision for the times when the parents can not be with them, a direct reversal of the Generation X trends of a decade or two previous.

Millennials, as a group, have more buying power than any previous generation as children. Marketing to children has increased, along with marketing to parents for products designed to enhance the intelligence of their children. Studies were performed to identify the types of music children should listen to in order to increase their intelligence in one academic area or another and entire industries have been built around products catering to the development of infants and toddlers. As older teens, Millennials are not afraid to go shopping with their parents and will often request their opinion as well as driving the purchasing decisions of their parents. Millennials are extremely brand-oriented and materialistic.

School life

Millennials have surely benefited from the negative attention focused on Generation X during their school years. During the 1990s, educational trends became focus upon “getting back to basics, teaching values, setting standards, and holding schools and students accountable” (*Ibid*, p. 147). Clearly the education provided to Generation X children would not do for this group and educational reform became a hot button issue across the nation. Test scores for Millennial students have improved over time, but it is difficult to say whether or not this is a direct result of all of these efforts or just the educational system and parents paying better attention.

Classroom teaching itself has changed dramatically in the last twenty years, with an increase in more active teaching methods that involve the students directly in the learning. In many ways, these new teaching methods mirror the andragogy theory put forth by Malcolm Knowles, where allowing students to make choices and guide the extent of their learning increases both motivation and attention to the learning task.

Paradoxically, Millennials are achievement oriented and heavily pressured to excel academically. As a result, they have a tendency to blur the lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a classroom. Much attention is now focused on the “cheating epidemic” when in reality, many Millennials will say that they are just confused as to where borrowing ends and stealing begins. The proliferation of information available on the Internet has increased the plagiarism issue because Millennials tend to think that anything that is online is widely known and available for use, often without citing.

Significant Events

The results of a poll of the Class of 2000 which allowed them to rank the top ten most significant events in their lives are below (*Ibid*, p. 19).

1. Columbine
2. War in Kosovo
3. Okalahoma City bombing
4. Princess Diana’s death
5. Clinton impeachment trial
6. O.J. Simpson trial
7. Rodney King riots
8. Lewinsky scandal
9. Fall of the Berlin wall
10. McGwire-Sosa homer derby

The ranking of Columbine as number one indicates an interesting dichotomy in the lives of Millennials. While on one hand this is a generation more afraid of going to school than of nuclear war, they also “acknowledge the role played by the growing peer pressure of their generation—a tendency to ostracize outsiders and compel conformity” (p. 19). The pressure on these children to conform to what others consider normal regularly places them in stressful situations where the tendency to snap is becoming more common.

Notable members of the Millennial generation include:

- Jessica McClure
- Baby M
- Hilary Duff
- Tiger Woods
- Kobe Bryant

Implications for the classroom

Like it or not, the era in which you grew up has helped to shape your expectations for the classroom. Generation X children, who grew up in the era of Sesame Street and Millennials, raised with even more interactive educational television, have the expectation that education will also be entertaining. It is what

they have come to expect and what the world has always given them. To refuse to participate in this “edutainment” is certainly an option for any instructor; however it will almost certainly make reaching these generations of learners more difficult than it needs to be.

The key thing to remember is that learning preferences don’t necessarily change with age. That means that a Millennial student, who is comfortable with multitasking and multimedia will always be comfortable with these things and is not likely to change. Silent learners will always be more comfortable with lectures and with the instructor in a traditional teaching style rather than a more participatory style that appeals to Millennials and Boomers. Generation X learners will always prefer individual work to group work and will generally complain the loudest when given a 20 chapter book to read. Conversely, members of the Millennial generation are readers, as evidenced by the increase in the publication of children’s books (think of the children waiting in line to buy copies of Harry Potter).

Refer to Appendix B for more information on specific teaching strategies for each generation.

What will work for you with everyone

- Ask for professional experiences from both Boomers and Xers
- Change activities often
 - Research currently shows the attention span of a typical adult to be 15-20 minutes at best
- Tap into the technological savvy and interest of Xers and Millennials
 - Will often drag Boomers into the technology realm with them
- Assign group roles for the first few team projects
- Work to foster a team environment
 - Consider the use of formal groups with clearly defined roles that are rotated throughout the group
- Enforce individual accountability for group projects
- Require participation in some form each class period
- Find the right mix of guidance, structure, and visibility for all groups
- Encourage discussion between the groups
- Recognize excellent performers individually
- Give individual work in addition to group work
 - Appeals to the individual nature of Xers and the Silent
 - Allows Boomers to be in charge of their own show

What will work against you?

- Trying to appeal to all generations in the same assignment
- Clashes will often come between Boomer & Xers and again between Xers & Millennials
 - Boomers tend to regard Millennials as children and will often give them more latitude
- Not allowing enough time for groups to become comfortable with one another before beginning a project
- Not allowing students with experience to bring that into the classroom
- Ignoring generational differences completely
- Not asking students to stretch beyond their comfort zones

Appendix A: Generational Comparison Chart

	Silent	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial
Size	52 million	Approximately 78 million	Approximately 70.2 million	Approximately 78 to 100 million (depending on which end year is used)
Other names		Consciousness generation Me generation	Modern “Lost” generation Slacker generation	Generation Y Echo Boom Generation Next
Heroes	GI generation	Themselves	Anti-heroes	Parents
Family life	Earliest marrying and babying generation Silent women divorced in record numbers Large numbers of women in workforce later in the generational cycle	Religious and/or spiritually oriented Health oriented Waiting until later in life to have children Have become “helicopter” parents	Adult oriented from an early age “Anti-child” movement Less parental supervision than ever before Little peer interaction in childhood	“Special” - eagerly anticipated Lowest parent to child ratio ever Universally protected Sheltered
Work	Large increase in number of people in “helping professionals” in 1960s	Workaholics Career focused	First to seek work/life balance Not constrained by time and/or place	Financially oriented More discretionary income than any previous group

Generational comparisons

	Silent	Boomer	Gen X	Millennial
School life	<p>Described in college as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawn • Cautious • Unimaginative • Unadventurous 	<p>Grade inflation at an all time high</p> <p>Overall SAT scores decreased from '46-'60</p> <p>Enjoy learning for learning's sake</p>	<p>Grade inflation decreased</p> <p>First generation to be less educated than their parents by both choice and circumstance</p> <p>Largest segment of online learners is in the Gen X cohort</p>	<p>Grade inflation on the rise again</p> <p>Expect active learning in classrooms</p> <p>Team-oriented</p> <p>Volunteerism as part of graduation requirements</p> <p>Readers</p>
Significant life events	<p>Depression</p> <p>Sexual revolution occurred while this generation was in mid-life</p> <p>Korean War</p>	<p>Vietnam</p> <p>Sexual revolution</p> <p>Kent State</p>	<p>Gulf War</p> <p>Berlin Wall comes down</p> <p>Challenger explosion</p>	<p>Columbine</p> <p>September 11</p> <p>Second Gulf War</p>
Notes	<p>Generation of jealousies and role reversals</p> <p>Focused on previous generation while young and subsequent generation in adulthood</p>	<p>Intense attention focused on this group for the entire Boomer lifespan</p> <p>Self-aware and self-centered (largest number of self-help books)</p>	<p>Mired in an age of death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS • Homicides/drug-related deaths increased • Suicidal (at a near record rate of almost 5000/year in mid 1980s) 	<p>Optimistic</p> <p>Conventional</p> <p>Racially diverse</p> <p>Pressured</p>

Appendix B: Classroom Implications Chart

Generation	Preferences/Styles	Instructional activities
<p style="text-align: center;">Silent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like the “traditional” classroom structure • Will not generally contradict or disagree with instructor in front of others • Does not enjoy being singled out in group discussions or for questions • Likes to practice alone, not in groups • Not likely to ask questions during discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize materials in bullet/outline form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Don’t provide too much information • Use at least 12 point type • Take your time through the important points • Don’t assume that all are techno phobic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Give computer/research assignments ◦ Fastest growing segment of population learning to use the Internet • Encourage periodic movement during class time
<p style="text-align: center;">Boomers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy working in creative and independent manners • Sensitive to criticism • Often possess significant professional experience • Require lots of interaction and “talk” time • Enjoy icebreaker and introduction activities • Prefer a spirit of collegiality in classroom • May have problems with authoritarian instructors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give plenty of time for Boomers to practice new skills alone • Use at least 12 point type for aging boomers • Have a tendency to “know” things but not be able to do them • Do not generally like role-play exercises • Enjoy most team projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Can serve as group leaders, appealing to their “me” focus • Organize materials with headings • Put details on a separate sheet

Classroom Implications (cont.)

Generation	Preferences/Styles	Instructional activities
Gen X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reliant • Require regular, if not constant, feedback • May lack interpersonal skills • Can be cynical • Require relevance in assignments and courses • Often impatient • Consider themselves to be technologically capable • Are adaptable and informal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School/life balance is important • Will resist group work outside of class • Use pop-culture examples if possible • Give lots of individual attention • Use most exciting material in short lecture (15-20 min) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use small groups to cover other material • Use bullet points when giving info • Use plenty of graphics and white space • Visual appeal is key • Explain why assignments, courses, skills are important on a regular basis
Millennials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accustomed to group work • Comfortable with active learning • Multi-task with ease • Technological experts • Goal and achievement oriented • Require more structure and mentoring • Learn from failure • Motivated by money and earning potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give lots of activities with several steps • Use the most up-to-date technology and references available • Tie course or program goals in with economic gain • Get creative or allow them to be creative with presentations, etc. • Give reading materials for lectures or supplemental information

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