

UNDERSTANDING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES



KRIS MAILEPORS
KRIS@BUSHIDOLEADERSHIP.COM

WHAT'S THE TITLE?

UNDERSTANDING...not resolving

Goal: To offer you a comparative look at different generations in the workplace and present reasons/origins for their behaviors.

Understanding Generational Differences

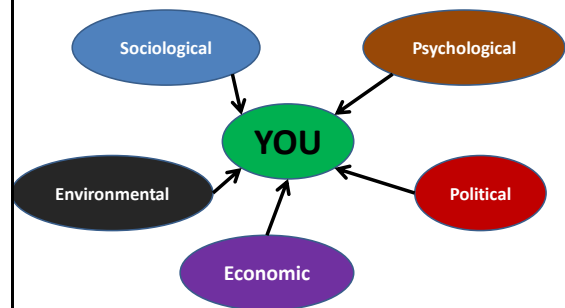
A "generation" is like any other demographic group

This session deals in some broad generalizations

Instead of viewing separate demographics, try to see a gradual evolution influenced as history is written

This is from an exhaustive lit review performed in 2010 and revised in 2019

Can't only consider the workplace...



Can't only consider the workplace...

YOU

"generation" means you may embody certain attitudes about:

- Family life
- Gender roles
- Institutions
- Lifestyle
- Politics
- Religion
- Culture
- View of the future

What's in a name?

Created by marketers to segment the consumer market
(Baby Boomers, MTV Generation/Generation X)

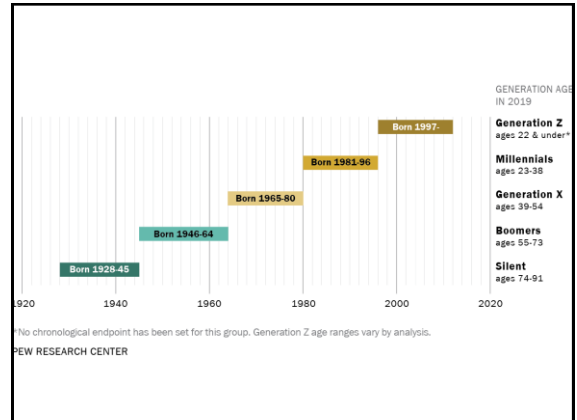
The names just caught on

"years" have an element of false precision

Generational Transition Years

Source: Pew Research

Generation	Events Separating	Cut-off Years
G.I. Generation	Turn of the 20 th century until The Great Depression	1900-1927
Traditional	The Great Depression until World War II	1928-1945
Baby Boomers	World War II until the social changes of the 1960s	1946-1964
Generation X	Social changes of the 1960s until the 1980s Tech Boom	1965-1979
Generation Y	The 1980s Tech Boom* until; 9/11, communications economy, social media boom, Great Recession?	1980-1996
Generation Z (?)		1997-??



Let's start with a basic definition...

Traditional Career: single employer, moving up the ladder, relying on company-specific training to succeed, passively letting the employer define career progress.

1-3 employers over one's lifetime

Traditional Family: Working father, stay-at-home mom or mom that works in a female-dominated career (teaching, nursing, secretarial)



The G.I. Generation, 1900-1927

- Most were in adolescence or adults in the great depression
- Greatest contribution to the WWII effort (war meant something different then)
- Built America as a superpower, founded suburbia, brought us to the moon
- "Civic grandeur" –Tom Brokaw
- Only about 1% of today's workplace (board members & politicians)

Traditional Generation 1928-1945

- Grew up watching older people make great sacrifices on their behalf (war, Great Depression)
- Long term commitments to family and career
- Ran most government, corporate and educational institutions during the social upheavals of the 1960s

Traditional Generation 1928-1945

- Showed first signs of “midlife crises”
- Triggering divorce boom and a “hands-off” parenting style for early Generation X
- These are the parents of some baby boomers, but mostly Generation X and the grandparents of Generation Y

Baby Boomers
Generation X, Y
and “*the other one*”

99% of the workforce today

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

- Largest “generation” in US history at over 83 million (Generation Y ~80 million)
- The name comes from sociological phenomenon after WWII; GI’s returned home to have children
- No available birth control
- Advances in medical health

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Key Shaper:



Social reform of the 1960s;
civil rights, protesters,
women’s liberation,
questioning authority &
corporate machines

Feminism was the major change
which started in the home.

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Baby Boomers...
questioned big, civic institutions and began a
widespread anti-establishment mentality.

They wanted something of their own...

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

The Majority of this generation saw a working
father and a stay-at home mother
(*traditional environment*)

...yet they saw transition into *non-traditional*
families

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

These are the first “helicopter parents” to Generation Y; more hands-on than prior generations.

This may be connected to a comfort with filling the role of MENTOR in the workplace

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Careers were normally hierarchical & traditional

- Working remotely, telecommuting, virtual offices did not exist
- Draw a distinct line between personal life and professional life
- General values: freedom, creativity, tolerance, materialism (strengthening middle class of the 80's)

Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Materialism?

- Driven to strive for top titles and the highest salary
- Defined by personal sacrifice (working long hours)
- Financial acquisition; 70% of US wealth
- Think of any 80's movie...someone is driving a hot car

...these are all “objective” career aspirations (tangible)



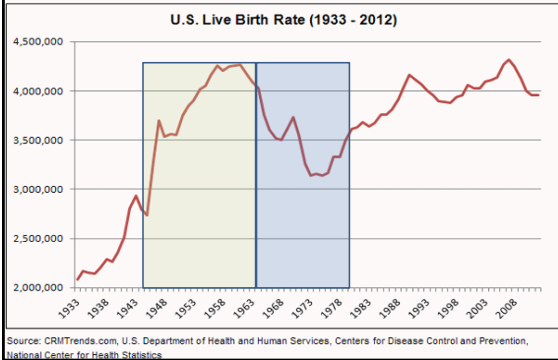
Baby Boomers 1946-1964

Most of their professional development came without email or texting...

...they value direct communication face to face or over the phone (real time)

Generation X 1965-1979

Generation X 1965-1979



Generation X 1965-1979

Available birth control lead to:

- later marriages
- more women in the workplace
- higher divorce rates.

Single people were less likely to conceive than a married couple

Generation X 1965-1979

Gen X grew up under both the Traditional and Baby Boomer Generation, who are very different.

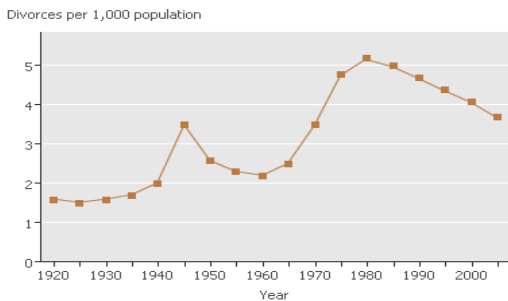
Gen X received a very MIXED influence for traditional and nontraditional values.

Influence was heavily weighted from the Baby Boomers

Generation X 1965-1979

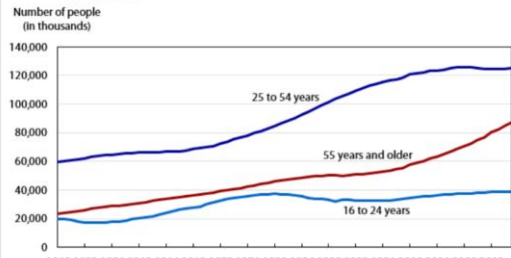
Two trends on Generation X

Generation X 1965-1979



Generation X 1965-1979

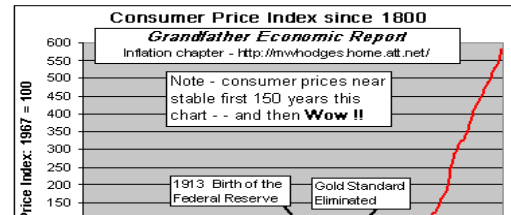
Figure 2. Civilian noninstitutional population (total), by age, annual averages, 1948-2015



Generation X 1965-1979

- It was the norm for both parents to be working (married OR divorced)
- Gen X came home to empty houses
- Both parents working was not JUST because of women in the workplace...

Generation X 1965-1979



1970: Min Wage \$1.45, Median Income \$9,700
average home sale 23,600, College was \$1,400/yr
2018: min Wage \$7.25, Median Income 59,000
Average home sale 188,000, College 19,000

Generation X 1965-1979

- Sometimes called “latch-key children”
- Learned independence, autonomy, and individuality from parents not being home
- Parents in the 70s, 80s, and even 90s could not telecommute or work from a cell

Generation X 1965-1979

Also shaped by the massive corporate layoffs and outsourcing that started in the 80s
...so they have a diminished organizational commitment.

Gen X can be cynical, less loyal to an employer, and overly independent. They like to distance themselves from organizations

Generation X 1965-1979

Gen X are the US entrepreneurs! 73% of all entrepreneurs (~14.6 million Self Emp filed 2016)



Generation X 1965-1979

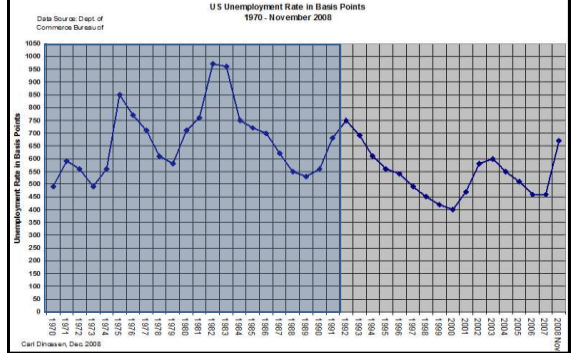
Ushered in “work-life balance” and began to have the technology to work it into their lives.

They focused on firms that offer flexibility as a perk

Generation X 1965-1979

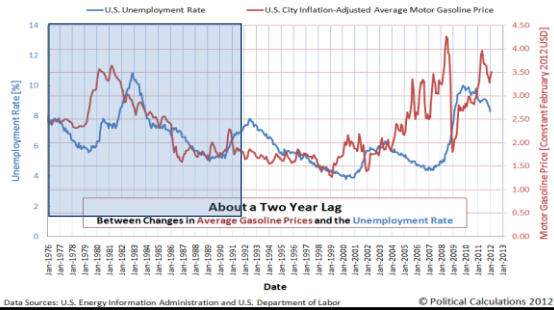
...this Independence is partially fear based

Generation X 1965-1979

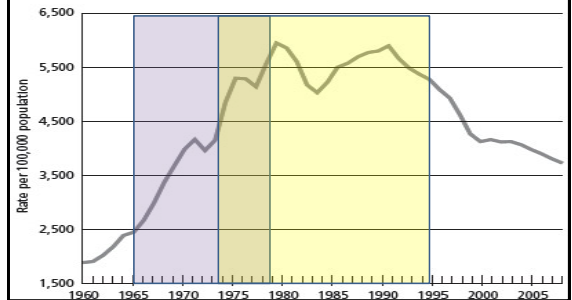


Generation X 1965-1979

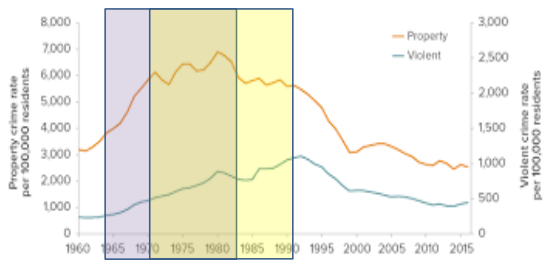
Inflation-Adjusted Motor Gasoline Prices and U.S. Unemployment Rate, January 1976 to February 2012



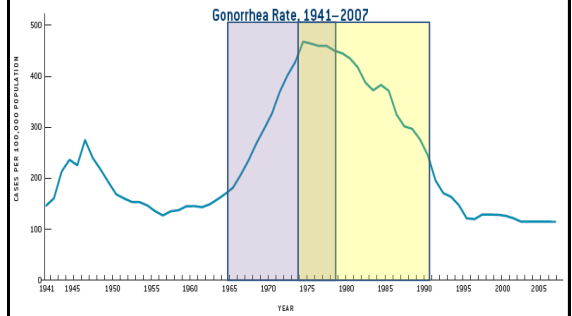
Generation X 1965-1979 US crime rate



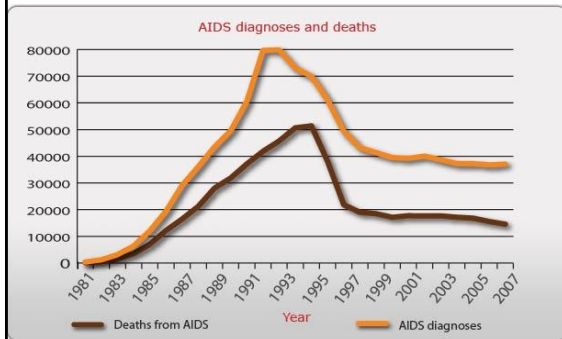
Generation X 1965-1979 US crime rate



Generation X 1965-1979



Generation X 1965-1979



Generation X 1965-1979

Generation X witnessed their parents getting downsized more than any other generation

This led to placing LESS importance on job security. They knew it wasn't dependable.

They saw loyalty to employees dry up, so they were less loyal

Generation X 1965-1979

Generation X sees job relationships as more transactional than personal (Mad Men)



They redefined job satisfaction:

Pay-titles-security-promotions all took a backseat to increased leisure time and lifestyle options

Moved from OBJECTIVE measures

Generation X 1965-1979

Generation X, a separate demographic, or a bridge between Baby Boomers and Generation Y?

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

New behaviors emerged in young workers entering the workplace around the year 2000...

- Optimism
- Sense of entitlement
- Team orientation
- A need for mentoring

Organizations started to change practices to accommodate these behaviors

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

DISCLAIMER...

Like with all the generations, we are only now beginning to understand Generation Y now that they aged more and the next demographic begins to enter the workplace

We've only seen this for 15+ years, but most generations are fully defined over 15-20 years

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation Y are the “digital natives”

- Exposed to technology as their first and primary tool
- IMed in high school, many had cell phones
- Homework mostly typed and researched online

This preference to communicate all things via technology can conflict with existing chains of communication in an organization

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation X, a separate demographic, or a bridge between Baby Boomers and Generation Y?

1. Members of Generation Y are optimistic compared to Generation X's cynicism.

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation X, a separate demographic, or a bridge between Baby Boomers and Generation Y?

2. Members of Generation Y are team players compared to members of Generation X's fierce independence.

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation X, a separate demographic, or a bridge between Baby Boomers and Generation Y?

3. Members of Generation Y accept and follow authority compared to members of Generation X's disdain and resistance toward it.

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation X, a separate demographic, or a bridge between Baby Boomers and Generation Y?

4. Members of Generation Y are over-parented compared to Generation X's relative parental neglect.

This over-parenting has grown

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

If having two working parents was a new thing to Gen X, by Gen Y's time, parents were better at it with more technology (Mobile Workforce, etc)

(varies by industry)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Also, parents of Generation Y had children when they were older, generally speaking:

Baby boomers: **22**

Generation X: **25**

Generation Y: **27**

Older parents can mean more mature caregivers; less neglect, better financial stability

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Being able to work more flexibly, parents involved their Generation Y kids in many sport and social activities—possibly to keep them out of all the societal dangers that existed just years earlier...

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

1. Raised under an umbrella of safety. All kinds of new rules and regulations for their environment:

Product safety, labor laws, child seats, airbags, child pornography crackdown, bicycle helmets, locked houses, school security, after school programs, school and workplace sexual harassment awareness, internet monitoring...out playing with friends?

300

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

2. High levels of confidence from new paradigms in parenting

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

3. They have added pressure to excel in school, sports, and other endeavors from “helicopter parents”

After having kids, what to parents do now compared to the 50s?

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

4. More educated than any generation before them; more have attended and finished college.

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

...what this can mean is a sense of entitlement from education, pressure to excel, high confidence from a sheltered upbringing (where fears and challenges were minimal).

But...

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

What are the common behaviors within Gen Y?

*But...this high level of advocacy is also manifested in **overdependence** and a **deficit of coping skills** for autonomy or difficult solo decisions.*

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation Y comprehends life much differently than the others. They don't know life without:

Vaccines, complex video games, writing homework on computers, and conducting research on the internet.

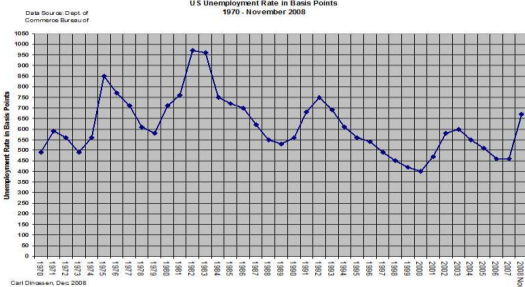
Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Generation Y does not have much parental **military** experience, as **the 80s and 90s** were mostly peace times.

There was very little exposure to as much strict discipline as the other generations

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Until 2008, no one in Generation Y had seen a serious economic recession (1990 was not)



Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Parenting has been a **different** beast to Gen Y

Divorced, separated, and never-married moms:

1960: raised 5% of all children

2000: raised 20% of all children

2010: raised an estimated 25% of all children

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Parenting has been a *different* beast to Gen Y

From 1960 to 2010, the number of **non-two-parent families** (e.g. *single mom, single father, time with separate and remarried parents*) has almost **tripled!**

Traditional → Non-Traditional

How many same-sex parents raised kids in 1980?

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Parenting has been a *different* beast to Gen Y

With complex family dynamics, Gen Y has created an ability to juggle-task, schedule many things together, and may bring this to the workplace...

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

So even though parents were working MORE, Generation Y had more supervision, more family time, and thus closer relationships with parents, even if separated.

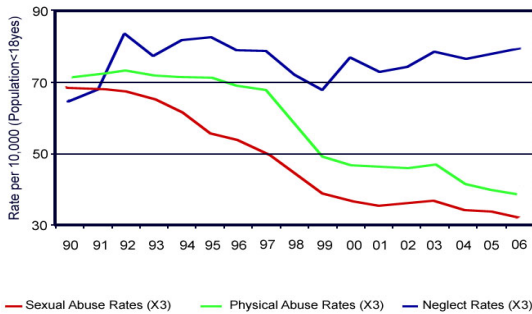
Generation Y is more likely to move back home long term after college than any other generation at the same age (not just money)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

How has parenting changed?

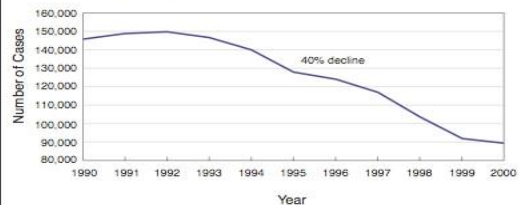
Generation Y 1981 - 1996

US Child Maltreatment Trends



Generation Y 1981 - 1996

Figure 1: Estimated Number of Substantiated Cases of Sexual Abuse in the United States, 1990–2000



Source: Authors' analyses of data from 1990–2000 National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) reports (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1992–2002).

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

The big difference?

Building esteem and *participation* became the goal over *harsh discipline* from traditional times

Break an expensive vase?

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

...At Work?

...follows some of Generation X's job satisfaction.

Less importance on tangible motivators:

- Long term advancement
- High Salary
- Title status

More importance on intangible motivators:

- Balance
- Social contribution
- More personal experience of 'career' (work is a lifestyle, not their life)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

Since they were highly involved in social and sports activities as children, many prefer an active **team environment**

...NOT just coworkers...what's the difference?

- They're prone to involve other members of Generation Y in projects...it's just a comfort level

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

Since they were highly involved in social and sports activities as children, many prefer an active **team environment**

- Are eager to have mentors and be closely managed (almost micromanaged).

...this is an opportunity, as Baby Boomers usually embrace the role of mentor in the workplace.

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

Since they were highly involved in social and sports activities as children, many prefer an active **team environment**

- They have a need for ongoing training and personal development and will easily lose job satisfaction if they are not getting a steady flow of new skills

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

All of these influences are likely to contribute to the high expectations of Generation Y

They expect their jobs to be not only well paying, but meaningful toward their personal and professional goals.

(more so than other generations)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

Generation Y enters the workforce and their first **major shock** is that there is much less reinforcement than they have been used to in school and at home (i.e. their entire lives)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

To be clear...

The "instant gratification" attitude that comes from growing up in technological abundance and nurturing environments

DOES NOT FIT

with the traditional ideas of career, where hard work and short-term sacrifice would pay off in the long term.

Gen Y and the Baby Boomers speak different languages here

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

For Generation Y?

Small goals (as part of the regular larger goal) with tight deadlines to feel a sense of accomplishment on a **regular** basis

(what a Baby Boomer is happy to get once a month, Gen Y should get in smaller doses every few days)

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?



For Generation Y?

What do
They do?



When they hire a Gen Y recruit...the first thing that happens is they are given a Baby Boomer mentor and are put into an informal team of Gen Y peers to promote teamwork and support...

Generation Y 1981 - 1996

At Work?

Generation Y does not care about **JOB SECURITY** like a Baby Boomer. They seek **CAREER SECURITY**

...they seek marketability and employability...

Counterintuitive: to keep Generation Y employed and happy, work to increase their employability.

What's Gen Y Doing After Graduation?

Results based on Experience's "Life After College" Survey, June 2008



experience

Perspective makes things MUDDY

So Baby Boomers have been heard saying that Gen Y workers aren't loyal, or that they are "disrespectful"

...But the Gen Y worker in the same situation is just expecting companies to be more aware of their needs

This is an issue of perspective and understanding; they have a different idea of respect, but do know how to show it.

Perspective makes things MUDDY

Some practitioners contradict and overlap one another

Finding clear, objective categories and descriptions of behavior is not possible

What makes more sense....

As older generations are writing history, younger generations are responding to it; *embracing* some things and *rejecting* others.

What makes more sense....

...baby boomers resisted government and big business because they were afraid of not having individual power and not having achievements of their own.

Generation X seems to have taken that with them, as they are the largest group of entrepreneurs.

What makes more sense....

In contrast...

...Generation Y has greater allegiance to big government to care for the people and uses technology to support globalization of big business (CHINA)

**What' s Next?
Millennial 2's?
Gen Z?**

Understanding

Most workplace conflict is a result of a misunderstanding; two people thinking about things differently and communicating without clarity...

Sometimes, we have the same goal, the same values, but express them differently.

THINK DISHWASHER

So What Makes A Generation?

1. It solves a problem facing the prior youth generation, whose style has become dysfunctional in the new area
2. It corrects the behavioral excesses of the current midlife generation (parents)
3. It fills the social role vacated by the departing elder generation