Exploring Engagement and Retention of 1st Year Gen Z Students Post Pandemic

November 3, 2023

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Overview

1. Understand and reflect on the various Generations dominating college and adulthood right now
2. Identify Covid implications on transition
3. Identify first-year student trends in data at Iowa pre and post pandemic and discuss how and why they have shifted
4. Identify takeaways and best practices for engaging and retaining students

Our Audience

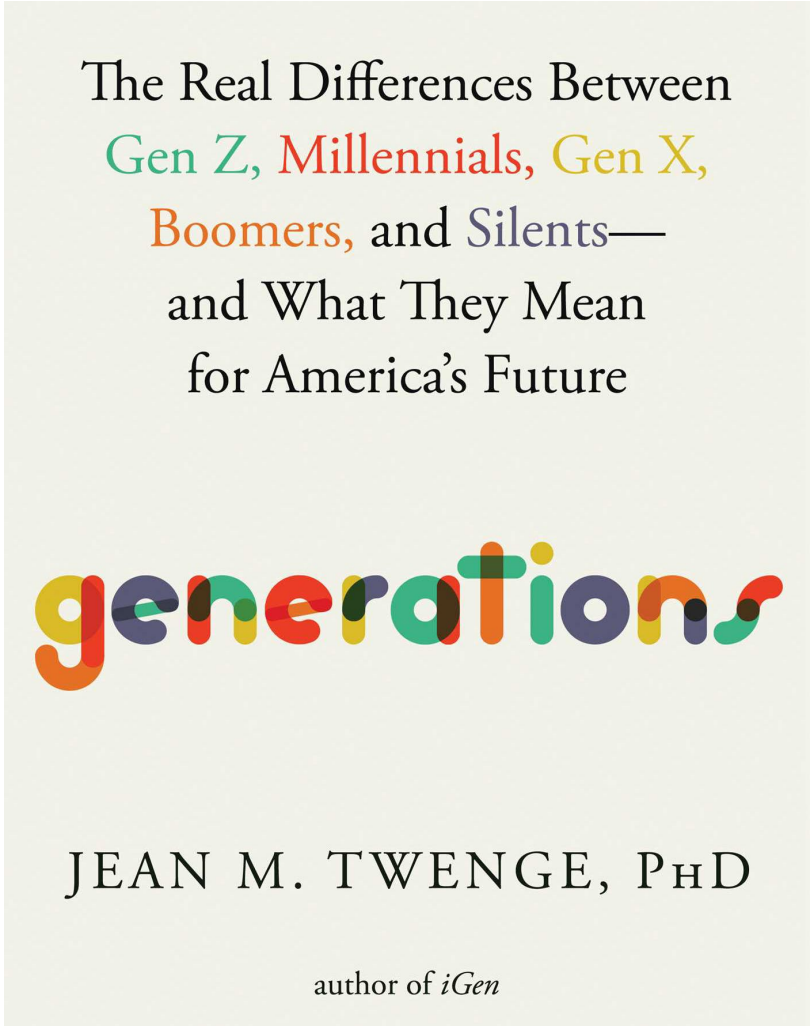
- Who is in the room?
  - Generations
  - Professional Affiliation

Activity

Generational Perceptions of College Aged Students

Generational Framework

- Published in 2023
- Dr. Jean M. Twenge
  - Professor of Psychology
  - San Diego State University
- 24 National Datasets



Generational Framework, cont.

- Technology Model of Generations
  - Examining the cluster of years based upon technological impacts
  - Major events are important, but are not driving factor

- Technology also drives...
  - Individualistic mindset
  - Slow vs. Fast lifestyle

- Generational differences are created based upon the mixture of all four mentioned components

Generational Timeframes

Reference points for generations:

- **Boomers:** born 1946-1964
- **Generation X:** born 1965-1979
- **Millennials:** born 1980-1994
- **Generation Z:** born 1995-2012
- **Polars/Alpha:** born 2013-2029

Boomers

- Born 1946-1964
- Population in 2021: 70.2 million (21.1%)
- Attended college in the 60's, 70's, and early 80's
- 1 in 8 achieved a college degree
- Currently hold 53% of the nation's wealth
- Benefited from the emergence of a stable middle class (brought on by advances in technology)

Famous Boomers: Dolly Parton, Cher, Sally Field, Bill Murray, Robin Williams, Tom Hanks, Brad Pitt, Whoopi Goldberg, Garth Brooks, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Bill Gates, Jeff Bezos

Boomers: Perception & Impact

- Dominating society due to increase in population
- Individuality as a form of rejection and the choices they were provided:
  - Draft policy changes (after Vietnam)
  - Protests of government and civil unrest
  - TV influencing new ideas and perspectives
  - Improved healthcare allowed for more time to focus on self
  - Self-Help books become a genre of books
- Self-fulfillment will bring them happiness

Gen X

- Born 1965-1979
- Population in 2020: 61.4 million (18.5%)
- Attended college in the 80's, 90's
- 43% of Gen X 18-21 year-olds enrolled in college
- Currently hold 28% of the nation's wealth
- More TV generation, but unified pop culture experiences due to less choice on TV

Famous Gen Xer's: Molly Ringwald, Will Ferrell, Tina Fey, Jimmy Fallon, Dave Chappelle, Elon Musk, Brett Kavanaugh, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Eminem, Janet Jackson, Kurt Cobain, Tupac Shakur

Gen X: Perceptions & Impact

- Often the "middle child" of the generations, the Latchkey kids
- Progression of fast-life to slow-life as they age
  - TV/Pop Culture is still celebrated today
  - Last generation to grow up analog
  - First to harness the power of the internet
  - Having children started to be uncoupled from being married
- Markedly more confident in themselves than Silents or Boomers
- Married later than any previous generation in American history - Self-reliance was a point of pride, no longer a protest
- Lack of trust increased as income equality rose

Millennials

- Born 1980-1994
- Population in 2020: 67.9 million (20.5%)
- Attended college in the late 90's, 00's, early 10's
- 52% of Millennial 18-21 year-olds enrolled in college
- Currently hold 6% of the nation's wealth
- Millennials are having fewer children than any generation in American history

Famous Millennials: Taylor Swift, Chris Evans, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Zac Efron, Beyonce Knowles, Chance the Rapper, Justin Bieber, Mark Zuckerberg, Pete Buttigieg, LeBron James, Colin Kaepernick, Serena Williams

Millennials: Perception & Impact

- High expectations due to the period of optimism
  - Increased higher education attainment; college is the goal
- Shift in national narrative
  - "Millennials kill everything" incites more clicks & engagements
- Leaned into the slow-lifestyle with no rush
- Mental Health
  - Most optimistic and self-confident generation in history
  - Increased technological connections instead of physical
  - Events & reality of adulthood rub against the optimism of youth

Boomers and Gen X vs. Millennials

- 32% more Millennial teens were "very happy" compared to Gen X teens
- Millennial teens less likely to suffer from serious mental health issues than Gen X teens (40% decline in teen suicide between generations)

- Mental Health flip for Gen X and Millennials as Adults
  - Killing marriage and religion = unhappiness. In a 2019 poll, 22% of Millennials reported feeling lonely compared to 9% of Boomers, and 30% of Millennials said they often or always felt lonely compared to 15% of Boomers

Gen Z

- Born 1995-2012
- Population in 2020: 75.9 million (23%)
- Attending college currently: mid 2010's - present
- 57% of Gen Z 18-21 year-olds are enrolled in college
  - 77% said they were planning on a 4-year institution in middle school / high school
- Gen Z conducts more of their social interaction online and less in-person
- Most racially and ethnically diverse generation of American adults to date

Famous Gen Z: Timothee Chalamet, Kendall Jenner, Kylie Jenner, Zendaya, Lil Nas X/Montero Hill, Billie Eilish, James Charles, Hailee Steinfeld, Olivia Rodrigo, Simone Biles, Katie Ledecky, Naomi Osaka, Trayvon Martin, Barron Trump

Gen Z: Perceptions and Impact

- •Overtly focused on "authenticity" & confronting free speech
  - Focused on safety, avoid feeling uncomfortable
  - Trigger warnings & safe spaces become norm
- Latched onto the individualism even more than previous generations
- Slow-life styles impacting the drive to "grow up"
  - View adult decisions as something that can wait until forced
  - More observation and rules means less exploration
- Pessimism & negativity is on the rise
- Every indicator of mental health and psychological well-being has become more negative among teens and young adults since 2012

"When technology extends the lifespan and requires more education to attain economic independence, parents have fewer children and those children grow up more slowly.“

Jean Twenge

Summary of Generational Traits

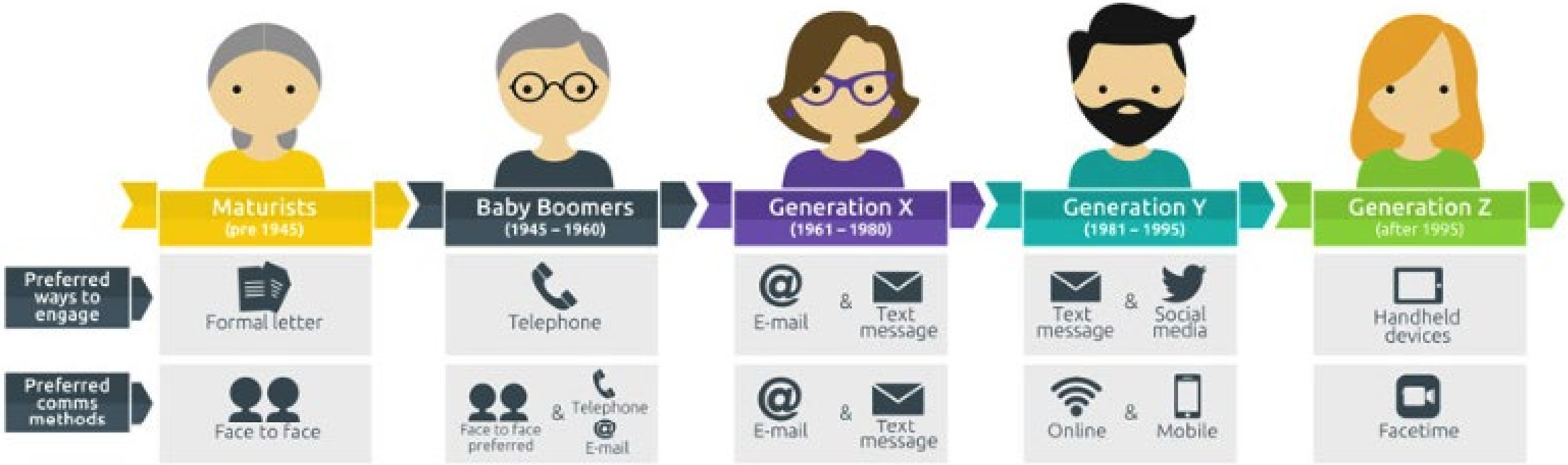
Boomers
- Breaking traditional rules
- Striving for gender equality
- Self-focus
- Fewer kids, more divorce
- More mental distress and depression

Gen X
- Children of divorce = adaptability, world weariness
- Independence
- Toughness, Cynicism, Negativity
- More suicide as teens, stable mental health as adults

Millennials
- Highly educated
- Pervasive perceptions of poverty
- Delaying committed relationships and parenthood
- Happy as teens but depressed as adults

Gen Z
- Growing up slowly (longer childhood)
- Delayed adulthood
- Interest in physical and emotional safety
- Dissatisfied and depressed

Communication Styles



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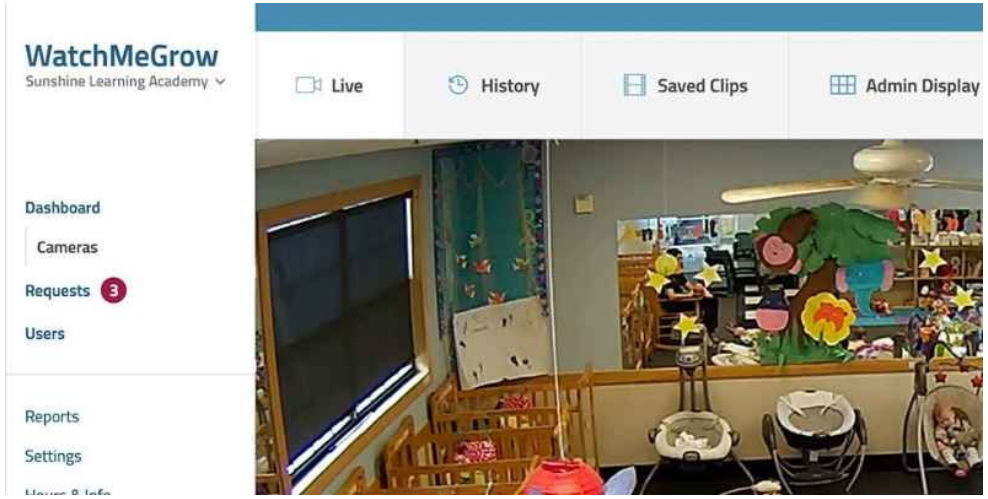
Technology changes in the last decade



Infinite Campus

Schedule

T1 T2 T3

Term T3 (03/02/2022 - 06/01/2022)

DAY: T

EB	PE Acad Waiver 7:45 AM - 8:35 AM	Rm: -
1	AP Music Theory 8:50 AM - 9:37 AM	Enriquez, Luigi Rm: 142
2	AP Statistics 9:42 AM - 10:29 AM	Witt, Gregory Rm: 202
3	Spanish IV 10:34 AM - 11:20 AM	Montilla, Javier Rm: 239
4	Band/Orchestra 11:25 AM - 12:41 PM	Welch, Jon Rm: 146
5	Pers Finance 12:46 PM - 1:32 PM	Fickel, Diane Rm: 121
6	AP Physics 1:37 PM - 2:24 PM	Harding, Matt Rm: 15
7	Contemp Lit 3:14 PM - 4:00 PM	Escorcia Herrera, Dulce Esmera Rm: 107
AR	Drama	Nahra, Katy Rm: -
AR	Counselor	Breitbach, Paul Rm: -

Grade Book Updates

Recent Updates

Final Exam	AP Statistics		29.7/36 (82.5%)
Lab - Energy Practicum	AP Physics		10/10 (100%)
Test - Conservation of Energy	AP Physics		21/26 (80.76%)
Book 5 Reflection 2	Contemp Lit		
Book 5 Reflection 1	Contemp Lit		
Calc Probs (Shallow End)	AP Physics		5.88/10 (58.8%)
Universal Gravitation	AP Physics		1/13 (7.69%)
Enjury #1 - Springs and Things	AP Physics		8.62/9 (95.77%)
Painful Enjury #3	AP Physics		1.49/8 (18.62%)
Enjury #2	AP Physics		0/13 (0%)
Painful Enjury #4	AP Physics		0.64/17 (3.76%)
AP Exam Review: Unit 1 Practice Test	AP Statistics	MISSING	

Attendance

West HS 2021-2022

Please contact your student's building with questions.

T1 T2 T3

Term T3 (03/02/2022 - 06/01/2022)

COURSE	ABSENT	TARDY
AP Music Theory	0	2
AP Physics	0	0
AP Statistics	0	0
Academic Focus Time	1	2
Band/Orchestra	0	0
Contemp Lit	0	0
Pers Finance	0	0
Spanish IV	0	0
Totals	**1**	**4**

Covid Impact

- Enrollment in college dropped
- Mental Health concerns increased (reports of negative mental health symptoms)
- Remote learning was stressful (increase balance concerns – not just focused on college)

Covid Impact – Gen Z

- Adaptive change for 18 months (experiences and expectations)
- Mastered tech, but suffered more with missed social interactions and in-person events

Impact on Higher Ed

- How students engage – changed more because of who they are than Covid pandemic
- Increase in anxiety in parents can lead to increase anxiety in students
- Isolated group became more isolated

Implications – What does this all mean?

- Gen Z considered “digitally evolved knowledge workers”
  - Personalized experience (brands should know them well)
  - Curate their own experience

- Outcome focused
  - Learn by doing – seeking experiential learning

- Engage in activities they believe will help them achieve goals

Implications – What does this all mean?

- Gen Z has strong preferences and expectations about their educational experience
- Higher Education professionals may need to shift messaging
  - Previously, we held higher authority when the millennial or Gen X student wanted separation from parent
  - Now, students seek advice and help with decision making from parents
- Value of & access to community may need different messaging

College Students at Iowa (2016)

- Surveyed once in the first 6-weeks of the semester

Top Success

1. Wellness
2. Commitment to Iowa
3. Homesickness
4. Belonging & Fit
5. Overall Experience

Top Concerns

1. Time Management
2. Campus Involvement
3. Grit & Resiliency
4. Academic Behaviors
5. Mental Health & Safety

College Students at Iowa (2023)

Top Success

1. Commitment to Iowa
2. Mental Health & Safety
3. Financial Confidence & Understanding
4. Belonging & Fit
5. Wellness

Top Concerns

1. Time Management
2. Grit & Resiliency
3. Homesickness
4. Campus Involvement
5. Academic Behaviors

What Changed for Iowa students?

- → Homesickness went from Success to Concern

- → Mental Health and Safety went from Concern to Success
  - Anxiety increased for students at Iowa

- → Communication and engagement

- Belonging and Mattering

Take Aways

- Being informed on generational identities can help us shift intentionally
  - How we introduce resources and talk about experiences is important
  - Identifying ways to split messaging that focuses on the need of that generation (who is delivering messages)
  - Modalities / formats matter
- Gen Z is defined digitally but also seeks environments for co-creation with their education and peers

Take Aways – Digital Knowledge Workers

- Provide clear expectations as to the outcomes you expect of students but let students identify the tasks they believe are required of them to achieve those outcomes.
- Recognize and celebrate accomplishments and acknowledge individual contributions.
- Empower students to create a learner-led, self-organized, independent learning environment.
- Expect students to innovate and constantly improve both how they work and the quality of their output.

Take Aways

- Create an office culture or policy that embraces parental involvement
  - What is the protocol for when a parent calls and asks questions?
  - What legal implications are there about what we can and cannot share?
  - Communicate to parents when appropriate (i.e. emails, phone calls)
- Encourage parent & student dialogue as they transition into college
  - Conversation starters after the end of Orientation or Admission events
  - Communication plan for parent inclusion during the year

Take Aways

- Conversations around decision making & well-being (with both students and parents)
  - Normalize homesickness while also encouraging students to share those feelings with parents
  - Emphasize the journey – there will be ups and downs
- Build relationships with the folks on campus who work directly with parents often
  - Parent & Family Network at the University of Iowa

Reflection & Final Thoughts

Questions?

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Thank you!

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