

Understanding Student Motivations to Improve Learning: Bridging the Generational Divide



Brian Graeb, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences
Denise Peterson, College of General Studies
South Dakota State University

Background/History

Early teaching experience- mastered content, presented material, encouraged questions, open and available, ACTIVE LEARNING.

Felt confident that students were understanding complex topics.

1st exam- "What do we need to know for the exam?"

"How do I get an A"

Background/History

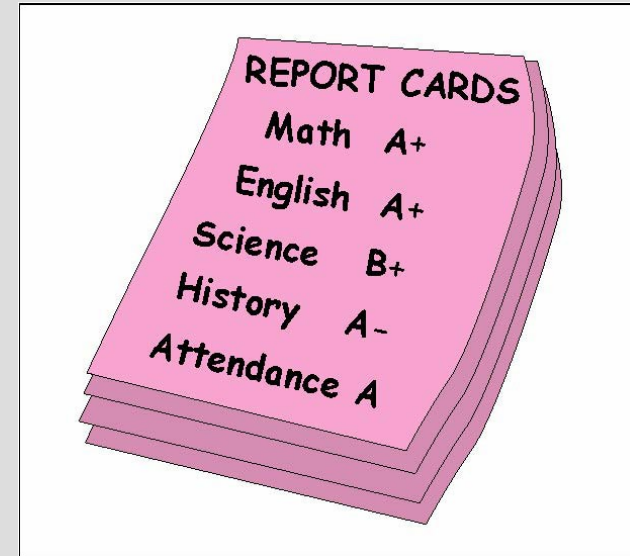
Perceptions (e.g., not interested in learning, laziness, entitlement, academic dishonesty)

Context and characteristics

Understand motivations

Modified classroom approach
Departmental efforts

Increased student learning

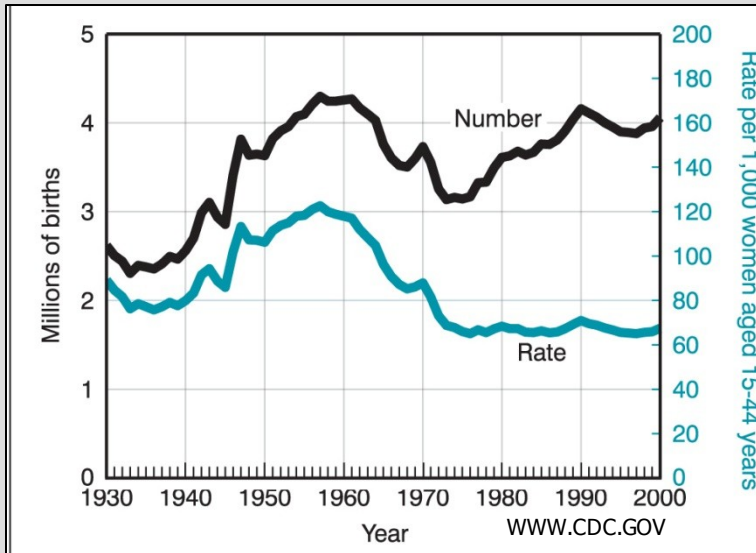


Overview

1. Generational characteristics
 - Generalities- fuzzy on the edges, many exceptions
 - How our experiences shape learning
 - Howe and Strauss (2000 and others)
2. Millennial perceptions
3. Approaches that compliment millennials
 - Classroom and workplace

Generations defined

Demographics



Baby boom
Baby bust

Cultural Trends



18-20 y
Similar experiences
Child standards
World events
Four year cycles??

Baby Boomers



Experiences

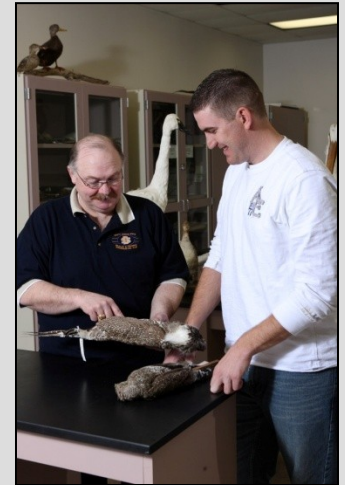
Civil Rights movement American High Fertility Boom

Loosening child standards Postcrisis generation

Classroom and workplace

Interactive Traditional classroom setting

Dedicated Hard work Non-authoritarian



1970

1980

1990

2000

Birth Year

Generation X

Experiences

Fertility Bust Latchkey kids End of cold war

Home computers Internet as useful tool



Classroom and workplace

Work/life balance Learn by doing

Need feedback and flexibility
(but don't look over my shoulder)



1950

1960



1990

2000

Birth Year

Millenials



Experiences

Fertility Boom Tightening child standards

911/terrorism Internet Diverse

**Helicopter
parents**

Classroom and workplace

Pressured Achieving Team oriented

Technology Please look over my shoulder
(and tell me how to get an A)



1950

1960

1970

1980



Birth Year

Millennial perceptions

Motivated by grades

YES! But, very interested in learning.

Entitlement

Perhaps, but willing to accept grading system with CLEAR description.

Laziness

Not at all. Structure and understanding.

Academic Dishonesty

Rising, differing views, clearly define
Actively engage

Classroom strategies

Technology

Expected- Desire2Learn, WebCT, etc.

Facebook/texting vs. email

PowerPoint?

Still appreciate writing on
the board

Know your strengths



Classroom strategies

Ability to access information

Internet vs. Library

Explain reliability of sources



“Fuzzy” notions on plagiarism
Should be CLEARLY defined
Largely unintentional??

Classroom strategies

Feedback and Structure

Clear description of grading process

Rubrics

Expectations- e.g., Blooms taxonomy

“A for effort”

Structure in all things

Increased effort!

Hard for a Gen-Xer to comprehend

Structured creativity

Classroom strategies

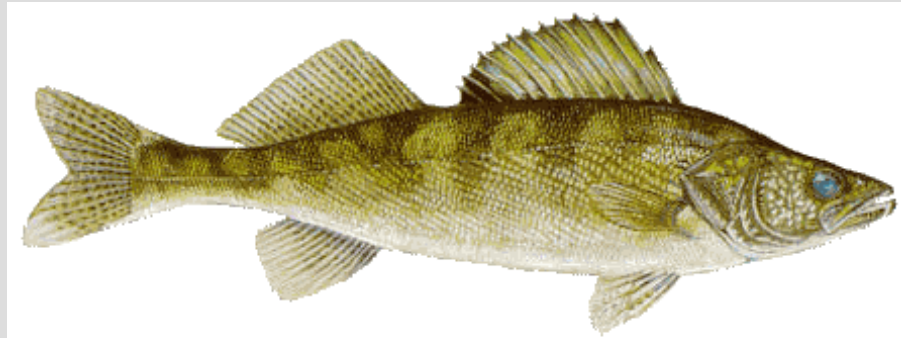
Group work and diversity

Group paradox?

Want to work in groups, but complain about group work.

Diverse background and experiences

Increasingly urban- less general knowledge

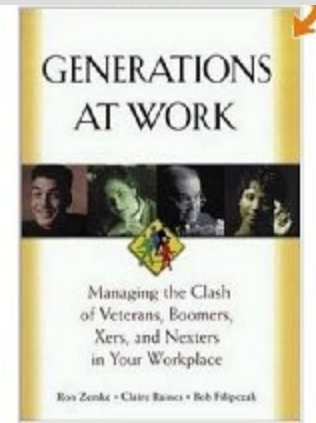
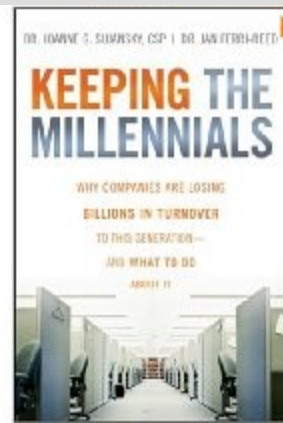
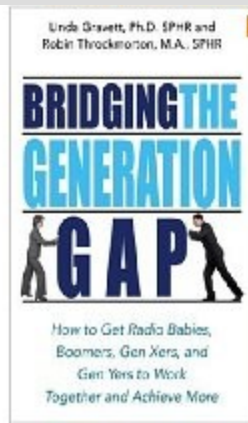
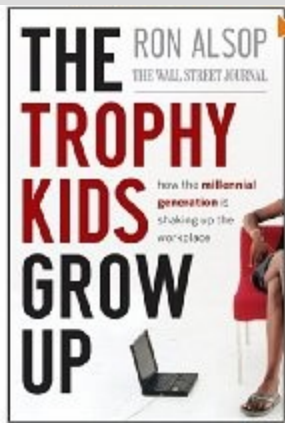


Millennials in the workplace

Same characteristics, similar strategies

Feedback, structure, and CLEAR directions

Tech savvy, multitasking, positive attitude, collaborative, etc.



Millennials and Higher Ed.

Motivations/characteristics

Modified teaching approaches

Enhanced student learning!

The Future

N=6-8 years

Changing generalities?

Large collective interest



Background/History

Early interactions...

Student- "What are you looking for on the exam?"

Me- "The correct answer."

Student- "Is this answer what you want?"

Me- "Is it correct?"

Student- "I think so, but is it what you want?"

The bottom line "What answer will get me an A?"