Understanding Student Motivations to Improve Learning:
Bridging the Generational Divide

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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??

[Graph showing birth rates and numbers per 1,000 women aged 15-44 years over years 1930-2000]

[Image of cultural icons from 1950s]

[Poster for an Aquarian exposition in White Lake, NY, with a bird and the text "3 Days of Peace & Music"]
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

Birth Year

Generation X

Experiences
- Fertility Bust
- Latchkey kids
- End of cold war
- Home computers
- Internet as a useful tool

Classroom and workplace
- Work/life balance
- Learn by doing
- Need feedback and flexibility
  (but don’t look over my shoulder)

Birth Year
### Millenials

#### Experiences
- Fertility Boom
- Tightening child standards
- 911/terrorism
- Internet
- Diverse

#### Classroom and workplace
- Pressured
- Achieving
- Team oriented
- Technology
- Please look over my shoulder (and tell me how to get an A)

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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?”