

Millennials,
generation xers and
baby boomers:
interviews on
generational differe...



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Introduction

Millennials, Generation Xers and Baby Boomers are the three dominant living generations currently residing in the United States. These three groups provide major influence over the culture American culture, even though their ideas about sex, sexual identity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation differ, their opinions are strong and offer a small glimpse into the defining characteristics of these three generations. Millennials are more open-minded when it comes to sex and relationships. Generation Xers place a higher importance on sex in their romantic relationships than Millennials. Baby Boomers typically got married before turning 30, but divorced quicker than younger generations contributing to a 50% divorce rate between the 70's and early 00's. Within this paper, individuals from these three generations will be interviewed in order to clarify facts from fiction. Perception can be reality, but by conducting interviews of the various age brackets one has a chance to gain some understanding of the inner workings of others.

Millennials (ages 20-35)

Javelin Research noticed that not all Millennials are currently in the same stage of life. While all millennials were born around the turn of the century, some of them are still in early adulthood, wrestling with new careers and settling down, while the older millennials have a home and are building a family (Kanasa, 2019). This statement is an identifier of my first subject; Ashlee.

Born in 1992, Ashlee is currently a 27 years old African-American female who is currently in a serious “relationship” but refuses to refer to her significant
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other as her boyfriend. Ashlee upon first appearance, appears to be the typical millennial; dressed in tight fitting clothing, several (at 4 visible) tattoos, constantly checking her smartphone, and displaying a look of impatience that seems to scream: “Hurry up, I have something or anything better to do”.

The interview begins with questions about her demographics. As stated earlier Ashlee is an African-American female who recently received her Bachelorette’s degree in Psychology. She currently works in her field as a mental health technician and crisis intervention specialist at a group home for troubled youth. Ashlee grew up in an upper middle-class family consisting of a traditional mother and father until they divorced around the time she was 11 years of age. Our subject states she took longer to graduate college than others due to her attempting to find something that interested her and would allow her to reach a certain level of financial stability. When asked about how gender has played a role in her life, she states that being a woman alone is hard enough but being a Black woman is a whole different issue. Ashlee says people are stunned when she tells them that she doesn’t have any children and ever more stunned when they find out she is college educated. So with that response, it was obvious that she has experienced certain levels of sexism, stereotyping and discrimination. Ashlee claims that going to a predominantly white high school prepared her for the “real” world’s attitude towards blacks and those who do not fit in with society’s ideals as “normal”. Growing up in a Christian household, helped Ashlee to accept those of other cultures with welcoming arms. When asked about her sexual orientation, the respondent is extremely adamant, physically and

verbally that she is heterosexual. She admits that she has several close friends and family in the LGBT community, but the values that she learned as a child don't coincide with that lifestyle. She does however, have a respect for the LGBT community and believe that they should be treated accordingly. As the interview ends, Ashlee takes a selfie and posts on Instagram. " The grind doesn't stop" reads the caption, as she leaves the area on her way to one of her two jobs.

This interview was interesting because at various points throughout the interview, the subject displayed numerous characteristics associated specifically with millennials to include education, consciousness, entrepreneurship and progressive thinking.

According to a British study published in 2018, millennials are the most educated generation in Western history. 34% of 25 to 29 year-olds Americans held a bachelor's degree, master's degree, professional degree or doctoral degree last year, a higher share than in any year in data going back to 1968, according to Matthew Chingos, a senior fellow at Brookings. The share will probably increase as Millennials, usually described as those born after 1980, mature (Luck Attitude, 2019).

When Ashlee stated that she was heterosexual, but tolerant of those who live that lifestyle, she demonstrated two traits that are common of millennials; consciousness and progressive thinking. Socially conscious mindset is one of their most defining trait of Gen Y. As the most ethnically and racially diverse generation in US history (43% of adults are non-white), Millennials have learned to embrace the differences in one another (Luck

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Attitude, 2019). Social issues are where Millennials hold the most progressive views. In terms of homosexuality, interracial relationships, gender roles, immigration, and religion, poll after poll and study after study confirms that Millennials hold decidedly more progressive views than all other generations alive today, and in history (Luck Attitude, 2019).

That last trait displayed by our subject was an entrepreneurial spirit. Although our subject currently has two jobs for the same company, she spoke on about future plans to open her own counseling firm following in the footsteps of her mother. Ashlee believes, like many millennials, recession has shown that there is no job for life and that we live in the economy of SELF, where only YOU are responsible for what is going to happen with your life. Millennials are enthusiastic about creating their own luck and work opportunities through life (Luck Attitude, 2019).

Generation X (ages 36-49)

Being born in 1977, I make the cutoff for being considered a member of Generation X. I have my own opinions about being a member of this generation, but in an attempt to eliminate biases I chose to interview someone who would appear to be the opposite of what I consider myself. I chose to interview someone that most people would think we have nothing in common based off of physical appearances. I am a 42-year old Black man. Michelle is a 40-year old White woman. Based on these demographics alone, our opinions and views of society should differ. One would surely think that before conducting this interview.

Generation X, or the post boomers, were born between 1965 and 1981. They are 45 million of them and they are typically forgotten by the media, despite their rising power in the workplace. Currently, more Gen X'ers are raising children, don't believe they will be retiring when their parents did, and are looking for a flexible work environment. They are home owners, make many of their purchases online and are saving for their retirement (Schawbel, 2015). For this interview we touched on a few of the topics listed in the previous section.

Michelle is 40 year old mother of two who is currently engaged to be married after being married previously for 5 years. Although Michelle is $\frac{1}{2}$ Inca Indian heritage, she identifies as White because she has never met her biological father. While Michelle was raised in a predominantly White environment consisting of a two parent household, she is currently engaged to an African American man and both of her children are of mixed, $\frac{1}{2}$ Black, $\frac{1}{2}$ White heritage. Michelle's upbringing included a traditional family that consisted of her step-father working and her mother being the homemaker, but due to her step-father being enlisted in the military she moved quite often when she was younger. Due to various moves in her younger days, she was exposed to various cultures worldwide. Her worldwide views have influenced her life presently as she considers herself more progressive than her peers.

When approached about questions of gender a sex-related issues, Michelle was very animated and excited to offer her opinions. Michelle believes that it is a woman's job to cook and clean for her family since that was the way she was raised. She believes that the man's job in the household was to provide for the family even if the woman of the house chooses to work. Michelle has <https://assignbuster.com/millennials-generation-xers-and-baby-boomers-interviews-on-generational-differences/>

always maintained employment, but feels as if she has been stereotyped due to her choice in significant others. She states that she often feels as if she doesn't belong to any specific demographic due the constant judgment she receives. On sight you would think that she is a typical White woman, but place her children or her mate in the picture and you would immediately reassess that judgement. Michelle claims that her skin is usually too dark for Whites to accept her, so she naturally gravitated to other cultures who were more accepting, mainly African-Americans. As far as discrimination, Michelle claims to have experienced it a greater rate than one would expect. As progressive as we would like to think this country is, according to Michelle a lot of establishments and people are still not open to the idea of interracial relationships. As far as sexual harassment, she claims to deal with it on a regular basis, but is a firm believer that if someone is approaching you in an unwanted way then it is a personal responsibility to get them to adjust their behavior accordingly.

This interview was very interesting for several reasons. The first reason would be that I assumed that by Michelle being a White woman that a certain level of "White privilege" went along with that. While not experiencing as much blatant racism as the average Black person may experience, she has dealt with discrimination on a whole new level mainly from those that identify in the same demographic. Second, she like many other Generation Xers, are concerned with financial stability and providing for her children's future. With two teenagers aged 16 and 15, her main concern is being able to provide the opportunity for them to go to college.

Having a child recently graduate from college and one with plans to attend in the next year and a half, I understand her struggle.

Lastly, during our interview Michelle displayed a desire for work/life balance and being flexible when it comes the workplace. This seems to be a common theme among my generation as we are often considered a “lost generation” or “middle child” of generations. Unlike previous generations, Generation X works to live rather than lives to work. As of 2010, their assets were statistically double their debts. Compare this to those born during the more frugal years of the Depression and World War II — this generation’s assets were valued at 27 times their debts that same year. Gen Xers appreciate the fun in the workplace and espouse a work hard/play hard mentality. This generation’s managers often incorporate humor and games into work activities (Kane, 2019).

Baby Boomers (ages 50-65)

My final interviewee was from the Baby Boomer generation, and his journey to 60 years old is something to behold. James is a 60-year old Black man who is preparing for retirement from his second career after retiring from the military in 1996. He offers a lot of insight to how society has progressed and how things that supposedly have changed, are still the same.

Baby boomers were named for an uptick in the post-WWII birth rate. At the end of 1946, the first year of the baby boom, there were approximately 2.4 million baby boomers. In 1964, the last year of the baby boom, there were nearly 72.5 million baby boomers. The population peaked in 1999, with 78.

8 million baby boomers, including people who immigrated to the United States and were born between 1946 and 1964 (CNN, 2018).

When meeting James for this interview, I pull up to his paved driveway that has 5 vehicles, all immaculately clean, parked at various points throughout the massive paved area. James is dressed in cargo shorts, sneakers and a graphic t-shirt displaying the insignia of the branch of military he enlisted in in 1976. He offers me a seat at the table on one of his two decks of his approximately 2, 000 sq. ft. home. Its “ cocktail” hour as he likes to call it, the time of day he likes to refer to after all of his daily errands have been completed. He offers me a cool “ cocktail” and being as though the temperature is well above 90 degrees on this particular day, I oblige.

As we begin the interview, James is looking at CNN at a television located near where we are sitting. “ F-ing A**hole”! He says. This is in response to seeing our Commander in Chief on the screen. I figure, this is as good a place to start as any. Needless to say James is not part of the 46% who agree with the current Presidential administration, as a matter of fact he compares this admiration to the Nixon admiration. “ You can’t trust any of them, I fought for this country.” Indeed James is a veteran from two tours in Iraq under two different administrations (both Bushes) and sees some of the same propaganda used in past administrations to root for a “ criminal”. James is not surprised at Trump’s decorum since being elected, “ Trump is an entitled 70-year old White man who has never worked for anything in his life. He probably still uses the word colored. I don’t expect anything from him, because I know a lot of people around his age that feel the same way.”

Discrimination and stereotyping were a constant in his life for probably the first 30 of his existence, according to James. Growing up in the South in the late 50's and 60's it was a way of life. Even after enlisting in the 70's he learned that the games didn't change, just the people. What irritates James is the fact that young people used these obstacles as excuses for not succeeding. While he claims there is still a fair amount of racism and discrimination within our society, no one is out right attempting to keep you from your constitutional rights like he had to endure during desegregation. He also feels as his race has not progressed at the rate they should have and believes that young blacks do not take enough initiative to solve their own issues. James believes in a hard day's work for an honest day's pay. He's saved his money for a rainy day and even after 3 marriages, 5 children and 10 grandchildren, he considers himself financially stable and is looking forward to retirement within the next 3 years. He plans to live his days as a single man who can enjoy being a grandfather as well as serving as a role model to those in need of guidance.

Having interviewed James was resourceful as well as entertaining. While James is literally old enough to be my father, he was able to relate very well with someone much younger. James' thoughts on such issues as gender identity and gender roles has progressed as he stated: " When you get married and divorced 3 times, you kinda have to adjust your way of thinking towards women. Even if you give them everything they want, they still want to feel as if they're contributing and that they matter. It took me several years to realize that which is why my first marriage ended after 20 years." And while James has progressed in some areas, others need more time to set

in. When asked about gender identity James gave me a look of confusion but clarified what her issue was. “ In my day you were born a boy, you dressed like a boy and acted like a boy. Wasn’t any confusion. You were what you were born. But I have to admit that I feel sorry for these kids today, because no one has the courage to break it to them that everything aint for everybody. What I mean by that is the gender identity thing is different from the LGBT thing. Back in the day, people were gay but because it wasn’t the thing to be they kept it to themselves or associated with other gay people. Nowadays it seems like that agenda is put in place before kids even have a chance to know what their identity is. Television, Internet all that seems like it’s putting extra pressure on these undeveloped minds to fit in because being different is the new cool”. Not that I agree with his summation, but it is an interesting theory.

James is the quintessential Baby Boomer because he displayed several of their defining characteristics. James’ 20 year commitment to the military as well his 20 plus year commitment to his current job exemplifies a strong work ethic, discipline and goal oriented attitudes associated with Baby Boomers. His ability to become financially stable demonstrates a resourcefulness and goal centric drive exhibited by this generation. Surveys have found that the Baby Boomer generation is preparing for the next stage of life in very different ways than generations prior. It was common for generations before the Baby Boomers to stay with a company for three or even four decades before retiring. Today though, many Boomers continue sharpening their professional skills, in large part because 65% of this generation foresees working past retirement age, or not looking towards

retirement at all. Only 32% are counting on social security as their primary income source. Obviously, attitudes toward aging are changing (Arhctecture. org, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion it can be identified that generational differences have varying opinions on things influencing our culture. Millennials are more entrepreneurial, Generation Xers seek more work/life balance and Baby Boomers have saved for a rainy day and will not let society alter their values. Where does it leave the American culture? In my opinion, a very good place. While this study was not all-inclusive, it did offer a glimpse of what the American has the potential to become. Millennials are on the cusp of surpassing Baby Boomers as the nation's largest living adult generation, according to population projections from the U. S. Census Bureau. Millennials are expected to overtake Boomers in population in 2019 as their numbers swell to 73 million and Boomers decline to 72 million (Fry, 2018). This presents the possibility of Millennials and seniors will make up roughly half of the population of the average American city. This could lead to more collaborative efforts on a cultural level between the youngest current generation and the oldest. Perhaps a return to old school values presented in a new school format could help ease some of the social tension currently facing this country.

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