Who are our students?

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Equity moment – generational identities

The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents—and What They Mean for America’s Future

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Generations

• Large-scale longitudinal data analysis from broad range of sources with data collection going back decades and longer

• Lots of insights into trends in
  • mental health, educational rates, incomes, attitudes about identity, equity, and activism, free speech, individualism, etc.
  • delineated by generation, race, gender, educational level

• Fundamental multigenerational trends:
  • Rise in individualism and expectation of freedom to be who you want to be
  • "slow life"
Who are our students?

- Multiple generations
- All races and gender IDs
- 1% D1 athletes; many D3
- From PA, US, around the world
- Sun never sets on Penn State

Number of PSU students as of Fall 2022 census. Source: Penn State Office of Planning, Assessment, and Institutional Research (OPAIR)
SILENTERST (BORN 1925-1945) 6% U.S. OF 19.7M POPULATION IN 2021

BOOMERS (BORN 1946-1964) 21.1% U.S. OF 70.2M POPULATION IN 2021

GEnEratION X (BORN 1965-1979) 18.5% U.S. OF 61.4M POPULATION IN 2020

MILLENNIALS (BORN 1980-1994) 20.5% U.S. OF 67.9M POPULATION IN 2020

GEnEratION Z (BORN 1995-2012) 23.0% U.S. OF 75.9M POPULATION IN 2020

POLARS (BORN 2013-2029) 9.5% U.S. OF 31.4M POPULATION IN 2020
Gen Z – "slow life"

• They wait to
  • Get their driver's license
  • Drink alcohol
  • Date
  • Work for pay
  • Have sex

• What does that mean for us?
  • We are the front-line support for Gen Z related to first-time experiences w/out parental oversight

Percent of U.S. 12th graders engaging in adult activities, 1976-2021
Gen Z – is

• More lonely
• Less satisfied with life
• Expect to be cared about as a whole person
• Expect to choose whether they feel well enough or safe enough to go to work
• Highly cautious
• 2x likely to be clinically depressed – this started pre-COVID
  • Admission rates for suicide amongst teens doubled from 2008-2015
  • For those in their early 20s, suicide increased 41%
• More distrusting of traditional institutions, but more trusting and demanding of mental health support
Free speech

Percent of U.S. incoming college students who believe speech should be regulated, 1967-2019
Gen Z – inclusion and impact

• Last generation where one racial group is the majority in the US

• Stella Keating, 1st transgender teen to testify to the US Senate in 2021
  • "as a high school sophomore, I'm starting to look at colleges, and all I can think about is this: less than half of the states in our country provide equal protection under the law. What happens if I want to attend college in a state that doesn't protect me?"
  • "my generation is creating a country where everyone belongs. ... every young person, regardless of who they are or who they love, should be able to be excited about their future.

• Less interested in job that gives status; far more interested in a job where they can help others and that is worthwhile to society

• Empathy is making a comeback; Gen Z wants to make a difference
Gen Z – what else do they want?

• Strongly favors choice and flexibility
• Need more structure and more direction having had less experience with independence and decision making
• Highly practical, realizes importance of hard work.
  • HS seniors more likely than Millennials to say they are willing to work OT
Locus of Control Matters

• Believing the "cards are stacked against you" is referred to as an external locus of control.

• If you believe you are in control of your life, that's an internal locus of control.

• People with an internal locus of control
  • 40% more likely to engage in healthy behaviors
  • much less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression

• Internal locus of control is a better predictor of academic achievement amongst children of color than any other variable.
Normalizing Inclusion

• Best way to foster inclusion is not pointing out people's bias, but telling people inclusion is the norm

• Sohad Murrar's studies:
  • Placed a poster in some classrooms noting that 93% of students support diversity and inclusion.
  • Students who saw the poster were later more likely to have positive attitudes towards diversity
  • Black and Latinae students in those classrooms reported better treatment.
  • In contrast, telling people their peers frequently engage in discriminatory behavior is likely to create a less inclusive climate b/c discrimination is normalized.

• I.e., inclusion is improved when the inclusive attitudes of the many, rather than the biased attitudes of a few, are emphasized
Median household income of U.S. adults 25 years old and older in 2021 dollars, by education level, 1967-2021