

UNDERSTANDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

International Chrysalis Institute

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Anticipated outcomes:

Know: Understand the dynamics and challenges of inter-generational relationships

Feel: Respect and appreciate generational differences and perspectives

Do: Determine ways to show a positive attitude and plan for sustaining agreeable relations with other generations

The major sociological generational breakdowns are as follow. Sociologists and other “experts” designate these breakdowns of modern societies. Note, we are not talking about people outside of a modern society; these people have their own social hierarchies and modes of being. Please note that the years that designate the groups are somewhat fluid. Sociologists differ by a few years. For our purposes, the years listed below are sufficient.

“Older adults” born before 1945

Baby boomers 1945-1960

Generation X 1961-1980

Generation Y, also known as Millennials 1981-2000

Youth 2001- present

Your task is to list characteristics of two of the generations using the two documents included in this section (“*Three Generations*” and “*Filipino Intergenerational Youth Study*”) plus your own experiences and knowledge. Use the “*Major Dimensions of Cultures – Categories for Understanding Cultures and Subcultures*” document below to analyze these two documents and your own knowledge and experience.

After a short time, we will ask the “so what questions,” that is, if we have social groups that are characterized by these characteristics, what does that imply for helping these people to become disciples of Christ?

Introduction

In order to **understand, appreciate** and **work effectively** between generations, leaders need to understand how various generational subcultures and cultures function.

The problem we have is that the research literature is not always reliable. Much of the research is flawed because of design flaws. For example, a study of 18-25 year olds focused only on a very select group of university students in an affluent suburb of Washington, DC thereby omitting all the remainder of that age cohort throughout the USA as well as the whole world.

It is reasonable to think that people in various parts of the world would function on different parts of cultural values continua. While university students and teenagers in the

major population centers of the world, exposed to main stream media and digital access, tend to aggregate around similar cultural values, one can expect that there are exceptions. If one surveys populations outside of major population centers, one will find major differences.

Therefore, it is important to know **what to look for** and not to just look at the “findings” of various research studies. Each of us needs to be a **cultural-sociological anthropologist** and not dependent on research by others. We need to be our own “researchers.” Thus the following document “Analyzing and Understanding a Subculture and/or culture.” This document will be our worksheet that will help us analyze the two sociological studies of intergenerational differences that are part of this packet of handouts.

MAJOR DIMENSIONS OF CULTURES - CATEGORIES for UNDERSTANDING

CULTURES and SUBCULTURES Note that these are bipolar opposites. One side is not better than the other. People are usually not on either extreme, but somewhere on the continuum between the two sides. We need to understand the categories and ask ourselves where any given group is with regard to that category. Does this sound “academic” and “heavy?” Probably so. But understanding cultures, even one’s own, is not academic but important. these various dimensions or categories are ways to help us analyze and understand our own culture and others with whom we come in contact. These materials come out of academic studies, but are very important for relating to those with whom we come in contact.

1. Values and Norms

a. Gratification (satisfaction, fulfillment, rewards, pleasures, etc.):

Immediate

Delayed (mediated)

b. Goals for life:

Collective goals, obligations
to one’s group (family, clan,
group, etc.)

personal goal oriented, priority is to achieve
personal success

c. Evaluating People, Objects

Cognitive standards, objective,
achievement & performance,
outcomes

Specific to each situation
and embedded in immanent
relationships

d. Relationship of Persons to Nature and “Supra-Nature:”

People subjected to Nature,
Nature rules

Humanity controls nature, or God
works through Nature and people

e. Relationship to Time:

Present, Now, slow
natural rhythms,
present and future
telescoped

Future orientation; planning, fast,
regulated by clock, calendar;
technology

f. Nature of Being Human

Being, existential, personal,
interpersonal

Doing, activity-oriented, impersonal

g. View of Universe

Holistic: reality composed of
one whole: integrated parts,
universal, focus is group &/or
society - not individual

Dichotomistic: life and reality composed
many discrete parts, atomistic, person is
focus, not group or society; disconnected

h. Nature of AUTHORITY/authority

Vested in rulers, "AUTHORITY,"
inherited authority, definitive social
roles, society centered around authorities,
sense solidarity with group, family, clan

Diffused & scattered authorities, many
authorities, no Absolute Authority, defined
by individuals, constantly changing, "my"
authority, determined ego-centrally

2. "argot" -- in-group lingo

3. **Distinct channels of mass communication** - culture's main mass media (if any)

4. **Unique styles and fads** (clothes, where shop, what to buy, how to comb hair, jewelry, body art, etc.) See also use of technology below.

5. **Status criteria** (How to be successful, to achieve, ownership & use of sub-cultures' status symbols - language, fads, values, channels of communication, identification with sub-culture)

6. Subcultural institutionalizations to meet needs

- subculture provides what main culture does not, e.g., entertainment institutions
youth-oriented magazines, older adult magazines, web sites,
things to pass the time, places to go, things to do that are subculturally related
divergent things to do
exciting things to do

7. Geography -- where people leave geographically and of almost equally important where they go to learn, hang out, work, have fun, recreate, be entertained, play, etc.

8. Use of technology -- availability of mechanical technology (cars, tram, train, bus, air planes, bicycles, etc.) and electronic and digital technology that allow people to escape (or leave) their immediate geography and go somewhere else either literally or figuratively. For example, internet, cars, bikes, skateboards, buses, planes, trains, body/surf boards, DVD's, mobile phones, texting, social networks, mobile phone apps, their own T.V. station (MTV), youth oriented movies and amusement parks, video games, concerts, T.V. programs, etc.

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