CHAPTER 27: GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Generational differences are the subject of much popular speculation, but relatively little substantive research. Among the speculations are suggestions that instructional designers should take generational differences into account when developing instruction and that games and simulations will be more effective learning environments with today’s younger generation than they have with earlier ones. This review examines the evidence in both the research and popular literature that supports (or fails to support) these speculations. Most of the popular literature on the subject of generational differences appears to rest on limited data, almost always conducted by survey methods characterized by a lack of reliability and validity data. The most recent research based upon rigorous analysis of previous psychological studies do yield some evidence of substantive generational differences, especially between those generation born before and after 1970. Recommendations for further research in this area include examining generational differences across the whole spectrum of socioeconomic status and in international contexts as well as implementing innovative design-based research approaches to accommodating generation differences in the process of instructional design.
Keywords with definitions:

**educational technology research**: research focus on describing, predicting, understanding, and designing effective applications of technology to serve the goals of education, training, and performance support.

**generational differences**: the theory that people born within an approximately 20 year time period share a common set of characteristics based upon the historical experiences, economic and social conditions, technological advances and other societal changes they have in common; the term first came into popularity in the 1960s when it was used to distinguish the rebellious Baby Boomer generation from their parents.

**instructional design**: the systematic process of analyzing, designing, developing, implementing and evaluating instruction; also known as instructional systems design.