



# Echos of a Boom

## Connecting the subliminal dots between generations.

*Today's grandparents may not realize it but they have been charged with babysitting an 800-pound gorilla – one that looks awfully familiar.*

The undisputed heavyweight champ of generations is, of course, the Baby Boom cohort, as we have been told ad nauseam. And now, with their patented blend of self-interest, bravado, reflexive generosity and nose for the new, they are entering the grandparenting years in a massive stampede. Baby Boom Grandparents are babysitting (and buying for, and hovering over, and mentoring) an enormous new generation of grandchildren. These are the so-called Millennials, born in the 1980s and 90s and they number almost 76 million – slightly less than the staggering headcount of the Boomers. So, the two largest generations are now marching, toddling, in-line skating, running, or shuffling along, grandchildren with their grandparents.

The average age of first-time grandparents is 48. That means that the oldest of Boomers, on average, have grandchildren who are about 12 years old, and the youngest Boomers, born in '64, will be having their first grandchildren, on average, in the next 6 years. Taken alone this is merely natural and noteworthy: but the values shared between the two generations will be a key to marketing success when targeting the grandparent audience. Expect the grandparent to subliminally connect with the Millennial grandchild for these reasons:

Echo: Baby Boomers were raised in the first truly child-centric society history has ever known. The Millennials are the second such generation, the “Baby-on-Board” Generation. They have been indulged, protected, and monitored as no generation ever has before.

Echo: Both Baby Boomers and Millennials grew up in the two most prosperous eras of U.S. history, the 50s/60s and the 90s. Both groups have experienced not just rising expectations, but seemingly limitless future economic horizons.

Echo: It took a coddling village in the 1940s, 50s and 60s and it is widely accepted that the grandchildren of Boomers will be reared in a village that is a cross between the real village of the past and the virtual one of the MySpace and buddy listed-future.

Echo: Echo: Important social bell-weathers have radically improved since the nadir of the late 1970s and early 1980s, norms that both Baby Boomers and their grandchildren



in turn have profited from. Adolescent pregnancy, truancy, substance abuse, crime, suicide, and violence as a whole are diminishing to levels not seen since the early 1960s.

Echo: They are socially privileged, flexible, outgoing, optimistic, talented, well educated, collaborative, tolerant, opinionated, influential, and achievement-oriented. They've always felt sought after, talented, and indispensable. Who are they? Boomers and their grandchildren.

Echo: Both the Boomers and their grandchildren were preceded by generations that were – fairly or unfairly – minimized as to their strength or importance. (The Silent Generation and the “Slackers” or Gen X-ers.)

Echo: Both Boomers and their grandchildren were born into a time of unsurpassed American geopolitical power and both have had their social serenity shattered by unimaginable tragedies (JFK, MLK, and RFK assassinations and the attacks of 9/11 being complimentary experiences.)

Other common social and cultural characteristics and experiences of the two generations:

- Focus on family
- Structured childhoods
- Expectations of success
- War in distant land
- Civic-minded
- Inclusionary mentality
- Want to be like their peers but be unique
- Don't want to be hurried or prodded
- Will consider a company's products if the company is known for their altruism, hip attitude, or devotion to quality
- Are loyalists, if task-masters as consumers
- Eager to search for the unique and hard to find items

Is it any wonder that the Volkswagon Beetle was born again in the 90s? Or that the Beatles - yes those Beatles - are one of the best selling bands among the under 21 set? And, try this on for size:

In 1970, Coca-Cola introduced the nearly metaphysical notion that “Coke Is The Real Thing.” The bland “Have A Coke And A Smile” ran in 1979 and 1980. However, the vintage theme reappeared in the late 80s into 1990 as “Can't Beat The Real Thing.”