Yo, Grandma, How’s it Hangin’?

With four separate generations, traditionalists, baby boomers, generation X, and millennials, coexisting in the world there are bound to be some major differences and these differences can lead to disagreements and hard feelings to each other. There are many factors that form a generation as well as their way of speaking. In more recent years, the gap in language between generations has been growing quicker than the past couple hundred years. This is partially due to the growing use of social media, extreme popularity of movies and video games, and the change in dynamics between the old and the young. Through my study of language dissimilarities between generations I found that these differences make it harder for the generations to communicate properly and therefore connect with each other due to the extreme variances in backgrounds, views, and priorities specifically in the work place.

Anyone familiar with working with people in different age groups should agree that the difference of opinions between them can lead to an unhealthy workplace. Between the generations, they each have their own values, experiences and work ethics. Traditionalists prefer to adhere to rules, not question authority, and appreciate dedication and sacrifice (West Midland Family Center Generational Chart). Baby boomers are considered the “me” generation and are against war and the government, wanted equal rights and opportunities, and wanted to work, questioned everything, and trusted no one over thirty, they want to make a difference (WMFCGC). Generation X is all for balance and diversity, are highly educated with high job expectations, and they are self reliant and suspicious of the Baby Boomer’s values (WMFCGC). Millennials are all for self achievement, civic duty and extreme fun, they are highly competitive, very social and spiritual, and are considered the most educated of the generations (WMFCGC). Each generation also had different influencers and experiences. Traditionalists were from 1900-1945 and have lived through many wars and hard times. During their life they have already experienced World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam war, and the Cold War. Each of these wars helped to shape this generation as people, changing the way they view people from other countries as well as their ideas about the American government. Through these views, their language also took its own shape. Along with their prejudices comes a style of speaking. This generation is known to speak in a more racist form. This does not just include the common racism of their time period against African Americans, but also anyone involved in the wars their generation fought in such as Koreans and Germans. This prejudice leaks out, even unintentionally, as they speak. They can use different words and have different feelings about things that have to do with this. This also goes for the other generations. The Baby Boomers are those born from 1946-1964 and they also had some hard times to go through. Along with the Vietnam War and the Cold War, this generation was very involved with Civil Rights. Through the Civil Rights movement, people’s ideas and beliefs were beginning to change. More people were getting on the side of equal rights for everyone which lead to more acceptance of other cultures. With this mix of cultures and ethnicities, the English language also changed and incorporated the more slang and phrases from the African American community. This generation was also the first involved with the Sexual Revolution. Birth control pills were first released onto the market in 1960 proving that the views on sex were changing. People were no longer sticking to the no sex before marriage stance and with this new sexual freedom, woman took the chance to become more educated and more advanced in their careers before settling down and getting married. This meant that women began to have more of a position in every day society which means that the woman’s voice was being heard and with that also came more changes to the English language.

With this information, people can better learn what drives the generations and what they find important. How does this help the generations connect and work together in the work place? When people understand each other’s core values and beliefs, it helps them to get a better perspective on why people act the way they do. They begin to understand that growing up in different times will affect the way a person acts and talks, specifically in the work place. When it comes to the work ethics of the generations, their values begin to change as the years progress. Traditionalists take up about five percent of the work place (WMFCGC). They are all about saving their money and buying things with cash (WMFCGC). They are very dedicated to completing the tasks they are given and getting the job done. One of the biggest things they believed in is “authority is based on seniority and tenure” (WMFCGC). Baby Boomers take up about forty-five percent of the work place. They are very driven and “Invented the fifty-hour work week” (WMFCGC). This generation is considered workaholics. They began to be “skeptical of authority but are becoming similar to traditionalists- time equals authority” (WMFCGC). This group was very “hesitant of taking too much time off work for fear of losing their place on the corporate team” (WMFCGC). Generation X is more balanced than the traditionalists and baby boomers. They “work smarter and with greater output” (WMFCGC). They are all for structure and direction and are more self-reliant. The generation is “skeptical of authority figures [and] will test authority repeatedly” (WMFCGC). Millennials take up only around ten percent of the current work place. They are thought to be ambitious and tenacious. There are more entrepreneurs in this generations who test authority figures but still look up to them for guidance (WMFCGC). They are very “effective workers but [are] gone [at] 5PM…” (WMFCGC).