

Cognitive Ontogenesis of the Individual and the Theory of Generations

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Abstract

This article examines the theory of generations in relation to cognitive ontogenesis and socio-psychological development. The theory of generations is considered as an interdisciplinary explanatory model that helps describe how historical events, social changes, technological transformations and cultural contexts influence the values, behavior and cognitive orientations of different age cohorts. The article critically discusses the concepts of the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta. At the same time, it emphasizes that global generational classifications should not be mechanically applied to every society, because each nation has its own cultural code, historical experience and system of value transmission. On this basis, the article proposes an initial periodization of Uzbek generations according to major socio-historical transformations experienced during the last century.

Keywords: generation, generational theory, cognitive ontogenesis, social psychology, ethnopsychology, youth, values, digital culture, Uzbek mentality, socio-historical development.

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Introduction

Understanding the cognitive ontogenesis of the individual requires attention to the broader phylogenetic and socio-historical development of humankind. In every historical period, societies have given special importance to the upbringing of the younger generation, because older generations have perceived youth as the symbolic continuation of the nation and its future.

At the same time, young people have always shaped their own life orientations in accordance with their needs and the demands of their time. The future of any nation depends on the effectiveness of intergenerational continuity, the transmission of values and the ability to adapt inherited cultural patterns to new historical conditions.

The theory of generations provides one way of describing how different cohorts adapt to particular social, political, economic and technological circumstances. Although the theory has a complex and sometimes controversial structure, it remains useful for social psychology and ethnopsychology because it draws attention to the relationship between historical context, values, behavior and cognitive development.

Theoretical Background and Critical Considerations

The modern version of generational theory was popularized by American authors Neil Howe and William Strauss. In 1991, they published *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*, and later expanded their approach in *The Fourth Turning*. Their work proposed that generations are shaped by shared historical experiences and that these experiences influence collective values, expectations and social behavior. However, generational theory should not be treated as an unquestionable scientific truth. It has been criticized for overgeneralization, insufficient empirical verification and the risk of stereotyping millions of people who differ in personality, education, social background and life experience. Therefore, the theory must be used cautiously and analytically rather than as a rigid typology.

Despite these limitations, generational theory helps researchers imagine how technology, geopolitics, economic growth and crisis, parenting norms, educational philosophies, mass media and cultural context can affect the socio-psychological development of people who grow up in the same historical period.

From an ethnopsychological perspective, it is especially important to recognize that generational boundaries based on one country's history cannot be automatically transferred to other societies. Each nation has its own cultural code, historical memory and value system. Therefore, global classifications should be supplemented with national-historical analysis.

Generation as a Socio-Psychological Construct

In social research, a generation is usually understood not simply as a group of people born within a particular time interval, but as a cohort connected by shared values, life experiences and collective events. War, economic crisis, political transformation, epidemics, technological revolutions and cultural shifts can leave a deep imprint on people's behavior, worldview and ways of thinking.

The question of differences between "fathers and sons" has been discussed since ancient and medieval philosophy, while the scientific study of generational change became more pronounced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Generational analysis allows researchers to observe how social relations, moral norms and cultural expectations change over time.

Uzbek ethnopsychological thought also emphasizes the role of historical continuity. M.M. Mamatov noted that every state and socio-economic environment gives rise to a young generation that reflects the conditions of its time. The viability of customs, traditions and rituals depends greatly on how the younger generation internalizes and practices them.

The Silent Generation

The Silent Generation generally refers to people born between 1928 and 1945. In the Western classification, this cohort is often associated with discipline, responsibility, endurance and a strong orientation toward stability. Their childhood and youth coincided with severe historical conditions, including the Great Depression and the Second World War.

Many representatives of this generation were raised in conditions of poverty, scarcity and social uncertainty. As a result, thrift, practicality, loyalty to work, respect for duty and commitment to family obligations became important values. Their socio-psychological profile reflects the need to survive and preserve order under difficult circumstances.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are usually identified as those born between 1946 and 1964, during the period of increased birth rates following the Second World War. This generation grew up amid economic growth, social change and technological progress, which created broader opportunities for education, professional development and material stability.

Education, achievement and collective goals are often described as central values for Baby Boomers. The expansion of the middle class increased possibilities for consumption, housing and professional mobility. In youth, many representatives of this generation were enthusiastic about social change, while in adulthood they often placed greater value on stability, tradition and protection of the lifestyle they had built.

Generation X

Generation X, often associated with the birth years from approximately 1965 to 1980, experienced the beginning of the digital revolution and globalization. These processes influenced their attitudes toward work, independence and personal life. They are frequently characterized by pragmatism, individualism and a results-oriented approach.

Unlike the more traditional Baby Boomers, Generation X is often described as valuing autonomy, material independence and work-life balance. Growing up during periods of social transition encouraged practical thinking and readiness to adapt to changing economic and cultural conditions.

Generation Y: Millennials

Millennials, or Generation Y, are commonly described as people born from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s. They entered the new millennium as children, adolescents or young adults and were shaped by rapid technological development and increasing globalization. They are sometimes called the “thumb generation” because of their early familiarity with mobile communication technologies.

Millennials are often associated with technological competence, openness to diversity, career orientation and continuous self-improvement. Training courses, seminars, additional education and flexible career strategies are characteristic of their developmental

environment. Tolerance, environmental awareness and self-development occupy an important place in their value system.

Generation Z: Zoomers

Generation Z, or Zoomers, generally includes those born between approximately 1997 and 2010. They are the first generation to grow up in a fully digital environment in which the internet, social media, smartphones and computer games are constant elements of conscious life. This has left a significant imprint on their worldview, values and behavior.

Zoomers are comfortable with technology and often use it intuitively. They are accustomed to fast information flows, multitasking and rapid switching between activities. Communication through messengers, gaming, learning and homework may occur simultaneously in their daily experience.

This generation may become a powerful force in the development of contemporary society because of its openness, technical skills and readiness for cooperation. At the same time, some researchers argue that Zoomers' approach to knowledge and memory is changing: instead of memorizing information itself, they may prefer to remember how and where to find it online.

Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha is generally understood as the cohort born between 2011 and 2024. This younger generation is still in the process of formation, but it is already distinguished by deep immersion in digital technologies. The term "Alpha" was popularized by marketer Mark McCrindle and symbolizes the beginning of a new era.

The prospects of Generation Alpha are closely linked to technological progress, global transformations and new models of parenting and education. Social networks and communication applications increasingly become part of children's social environment. Through screens, children learn to interact with the world, and this affects their social skills and understanding of communication.

At the same time, excessive dependence on gadgets and social networks may reduce the quality of face-to-face communication and increase risks related to narcissism, egocentrism and weakening of empathy. Successful development and education require a balanced approach to

technology, mutual understanding between parents and children, and conditions for physical, social and emotional development.

Generation Beta

Generation Beta is a term used for children who will be born approximately between 2025 and 2039. They are expected to grow up in a fully digitalized world, where algorithms, artificial intelligence and virtual socialization will be integrated into everyday life. Remote work, online relationships and digital environments may become as natural as offline interaction.

This future generation will probably mature in a period when neural networks and artificial intelligence are part of daily life, including culture, education, health care and social communication. However, the full psychological and social consequences of this environment cannot yet be predicted with certainty.

Toward an Uzbek Generational Periodization

While it is possible to name generations from the perspective of global scientific and technological development, it is also necessary to approach the question through the specific features of Uzbek national mentality and historical experience. The history of the Uzbek people over the last century demonstrates the strength of intergenerational bonds and the role of cultural continuity.

The behavior of each generation reflects the way young people internalize and adapt to major transformations in the social system. On this basis, an initial periodization of Uzbek generations may be proposed as follows: the generation of struggle against atheism beginning in 1917; the generation of repression and caution beginning in 1938; the generation of stagnation and cotton dominance beginning in 1961; the generation of free thought and independence beginning in 1991; and the generation of renewed worldview beginning in 2017.

This proposed classification should be regarded as an initial scholarly attempt rather than a final model. Future research, empirical analysis and interdisciplinary discussion are needed to refine it and to connect it more precisely with the psychological characteristics, values and cognitive orientations of Uzbek youth.

Conclusion

Generational theory offers a useful framework for understanding how historical and socio-cultural contexts influence behavior, values and cognitive development. However, it must be used critically, because generations are never homogeneous and individual life trajectories do not fully correspond to rigid typologies.

For Uzbek society, the study of generations should combine global theoretical perspectives with ethnopsychological analysis of national history, cultural memory and value transmission. Such an approach can help understand contemporary youth more deeply and design more effective strategies for education, upbringing and social development.

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