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Rethinking Generational Theory: How Technology Has Revolutionized the Digital Consumer

ELIZABETH PENNA

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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Jennifer C. Coupland
Clinical Professor of Marketing
Thesis Supervisor and Honors Adviser

Margaret Meloy
Professor of Marketing
Thesis Reader

* Electronic approvals are on file.

ABSTRACT

Behavior is influenced by many factors in an individual's life such as society, culture, familial structure, and history. William Strauss and Neil Howe's generational theory is built on their observations of a recurring pattern in American history where society goes through a recurring cycle of turnings and archetypes every 80 years. However, other than an individual's age location in history, their theory does not account for many forces that affect behavior. The emergence of technology has rapidly shifted lifestyles, behavior, and the rate of progress in America. This analysis aims to dispute the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory by uncovering the ways the pace of innovation and mass adoption of technology has influenced society and behavior.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Looking back on the past two decades, the “normal” the world once knew has completely shifted to a new way of life with a reinvented way of living. The past twenty years, especially the most recent few, have taught the world a set of lessons and brought forth challenges that people never thought they would face. Each lesson is rooted in one particular concept that most find hard to grasp: change. However, change is inevitable, and the processes of change are nothing new to the history of humanity and how society develops. In the same way that our world has recently endured a drastic shift, most people are unaware that the world they know and the systems in which they operate have been changing in front of them for years and will continue to. America, and the rest of the world, are constantly evolving from what it was. People get older, trends become outdated, and a new sense of normal approaches. These past two decades- decades filled with innovation, crisis, and perseverance- have created a powerful force of change that redefines our ways of thinking, being, and buying.

Before the emergence of the 21st century, there have been many times in history when our world has gone through a similar cycle of challenges, lessons, and redefining what “new normal” means. Each time this cycle occurs, where historical events impact our ways of living, a new group of individuals emerges with unique behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. This is how a generation is created: each generation can be directly connected to a subset in history where significant change brought forth new ways of thinking. The sociological study of the constructs of generations provides insight into how historical events affect the future development of society. Further, this type of research aims to identify how behavioral shifts create new subsets

of individuals - cohorts of people that can be grouped because of their life stage location during a significant time in history and how they affected their behavior. One sociological theory of generational formation comes from Neil Howe and William Strauss in their book, *The Fourth Turning*. Their work theorizes a recurring pattern in American history and identifies an interrelationship between recurring eras and generational personas (Strauss, Howe, 1997). However, the cyclical nature of the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory does not account for modern development in society, more specifically, one that has not only changed the way the nation lives and operates but has done it at an unprecedented rate: technology. Strauss and Howe did predict a Crisis turning in America at the start of the 21st century, but it is far different from any other past turning in history. With rapid innovation and technological advancement, the past two decades are far different and more complex than what Strauss and Howe theorized.

In the past two decades, the technology revolution has reinvented almost every area of life, from media, communication, and business to medicine, warfare, and the pace of innovation. The world today is interconnected in ways never seen before. In fact, in 2020, less than 7% of the world was online (World Economic Forum, 2020), but in 2022, over 62% of the global population has access to the internet (DataReport, 2022). The rapid adoption and advancement of technology has resulted in people that largely rely on digital platforms on a personal, community, and nationwide level. Its integration into society has forced generations of people to adapt and develop, learning to not only coexist with our devices, but to live interdependently with them. Therefore, this reliance on technology has created a behavioral shift across all generations, a shift that Strauss and Howe did not account for. By limiting their theory to account for only historical events and broad social forces, they exclude an entire layer of how new inventions and means of communication can disrupt cycles of history.

From a marketing standpoint, looking at the forces that define a generation and the sociological constructs that outline historical patterns and influences of societal progress is necessary for understanding consumers. Generational segmentation is one of the most popular marketing strategies brands use today. Generations are formed from shared experiences, which translates into an identity of shared beliefs, values, and behaviors, especially in their purchasing activity. The historical events that led to the shaping of each generation also led to the development of who they are, how they think, and what they buy. But the integration of technology into society has shifted the pace of innovation and progress and fostered reinvented ways of accessing information, combating crises, and behaving, both in society and in the market. Consumers are now digitally connected and dependent, transforming old markets and opening the doors for new ones. From online banks to stores to transportation, payment, healthcare, and communication, companies must find ways to appeal to the behavioral changes of their consumers and adjust their business to match the digital era in America.

The following report aims to dispute Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory by uncovering how the innovation of technology has rapidly changed society, business, and cross-generational consumer behavior. While it is true that historical events have a significant impact on generational identity, the time-range restrictions and generalized descriptions of each turning and archetype in their theory do not apply to America and American generations since the 1990s, the time when technology was mass-adopted in the U.S. By further examining the Strauss-Howe Theory of Generations, other research on generations, historical events, and the psychology of consumer behavior; this thesis will aim to explore the following research questions:

1. What defines a particular generation?

2. Why is Strauss and Howe's Generational Theory no longer applicable to American society?
3. How has the innovation of technology changed the pace of society?
4. How can companies adapt to the rapid innovation of new technologies and prepare for the consumer behavior shifts that will inevitably arise?

Chapter 2: Consumer Behavior

To fully understand how historic events segment individuals into groups and how these generational groups develop a distinct identity of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, it is important first to understand what consumer behavior is and how it is formed. According to the American Marketing Association, consumer behavior is “the study of how customers, both individuals, and organizations, satisfy their needs and wants by choosing, purchasing, using, and disposing of goods, ideas, and services” (AMA, 2022). The primary goal of business is to drive revenue but to achieve this, a company must first understand the who, the what, and the how: *who* they are selling to, *what* these individuals need, and *how* to get them to buy a company's product or service.

The core intention of any consumer purchase is to fulfill some unmet need or want, and the objective of business when creating any product or service is to fill the gap left by that same unmet need or want. This mutually beneficial relationship drives the constant cycle of consumption. By human nature, people are always searching for something to improve the quality of their life. That is the essence of evolution and innovation. With this idea in mind, a company must be able to identify and target these unmet needs at any given time. However, this is a process that is dynamic and ever-changing. Needs and wants and consumer preferences change all the time, so the key is to anticipate them before they arise. The question is: how?

The reality is that attempting to understand and anticipate purchasing behavior requires one to understand the many forces and factors that affect a customer's life. What people buy and why, represents so many pieces of an individual's identity. It can reveal more than just the products in their shopping cart, but also who they are, what they represent, and how this was formed. Because of this, the study of consumer behavior is beyond the facets of psychology and

business and extends into economics, biology, sociology, history, health and medicine, politics, and culture, just to name a few (Jacoby, 2002).

For businesses, the best way to understand their consumers is to know who they are. What types of people are buying their product? Where do they live? How old are they? What do they stand for? By gaining insight into the subset of the population that consumes their products or services, a company can better market to them, innovate for them, and build a lasting relationship with them.

Segmentation and Targeting Strategies

According to the Corporate Finance Institute, market segmentation and targeting “refer to the process of identifying a company’s potential customers, choosing the customers to pursue, and creating value for the targeted customers” (CFI, 2022). Typically, this is done in a three-step process that looks at segmentation, targeting, and positioning. Segmentation identifies groups of customers that share similar needs. Targeting is the step in which the brand will choose the group of consumers they want to focus on, usually based on factors such as size, potential profits, and location of the group. Then, positioning involves creating value for the company that appeals to the chosen group (CFI, 2022). For this report, this section will focus on segmentation strategies.

There are many ways a business can segment its consumers, but three broad strategies are commonly used: demographically, psychographically, and behaviorally. Demographic segmentation looks at consumer features such as socio-economic class, age, race, gender, etc. Psychographic segmentation involves lifestyle, interests, opinions, and individual differences of a consumer, such as their personality. Behavioral segmentation tends to evaluate a consumer's

buying habits, such as their loyalty to brands, purchase occasions, and emphasis on convenience, price, and status of the product (CFI, 2022).

Another well-known and highly utilized method of segmentation is generational marketing. Generational marketing segments consumers by their generational grouping. Today, there are six remaining generations in America: The G.I. Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and the most recent arrival, Generation Z. Interestingly, generation segmentation evaluates consumers demographically, psychographically, and behaviorally. In a loose definition, generations represent people in the same age range (demographic) with similar values, attitudes, and behaviors (psychographic and behavioral). This type of segmentation strategy allows businesses to look at many different aspects of their consumers' lives. With the vast amount of information available about generations, they can effectively segment and target their desired consumer group effectively.

Chapter 3: Literature Review: Generations

Strauss and Howe: The Fourth Turning

William Strauss and Neil Howe are known for their research and work on generations and history. In their 1997 book, *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy*, Strauss and Howe expand on their knowledge of generations by identifying a cycle in American history in which the formation of generational personas emerges from recurring mood eras with a new social, political, and economic climate. The Strauss-Howe Generational Theory is a complex and interesting system of ideas that evaluates the ways American history and generational behavior are intertwined. Today, their work is applied through their founding of LifeCourse Associates, a publishing and consulting firm built to apply this theory in seven practices: marketing and entertainment, workforce, strategic planning and finance, higher education, K-12 schools, and military (LifeCourse, 2022).

Strauss-Howe Generational Theory

The Strauss-Howe Generational Theory describes a phenomenon in American history in which the nation goes through four recurring cycles - *Crisis, High, Awakening, Unraveling* - that make up an 80-to-100-year period, referred to as a *saeculum*. The saeculum is designed to mirror a long human life span, as each turning reflects one phase of life. The four cycles, also known as *turnings*, are triggered by an emerging persona, known as an *archetype*, in which a generation of individuals develops new attitudes and behaviors. These attitudes and behaviors set the stage for the coming years by instituting a social mood or era. The archetypes - *Prophet, Nomad, Hero,*

Artist - coincide with the various turnings. Strauss and Howe's theory applies this notion to generations in history, tracking back to the late 15th century. Hence, their standard for defining a generational range is typically 20 years, reflecting one cycle in the saeculum and corresponding to a persona, which is applied to the young adulthood phase when the group of individuals is coming of age. Their theory expresses the idea that "history creates generations, and generations create history [...] this symbiosis between life and time explains why, if one is seasonal, the other must be" (LifeCourse, 2022).

Generations

The work of William Strauss and Neil Howe is built based on generational research. They define a generation as "the aggregate of all people born over a span of roughly twenty years, or about the length of one phase of life" (Strauss, Howe 1997, pg. 16). Further, cohorts of individuals must share the following three criteria:

- **Age Location in History:** Persons with membership in a particular generation share an age location in history in which they experience significant historical events and social trends during the same phase of life.
- **Common Beliefs and Behaviors:** Individuals within a generation are influenced by the events they experience in their early life stages and thus tend to share common beliefs and behaviors such as basic attitudes about risk-taking, culture, values, civic engagement, and family life, etc.

- Common Perceived Membership: Conscious of the shared traits and experiences between those born in a range of similar years, individuals in a generation have a sense of common perceived membership within their grouping (Strauss, Howe, 1997, p.).

Turnings

By nature, historians recognize patterns throughout time and within social circumstances. In their theory, Strauss and Howe identified a pattern in modern history. Their work states that society has moved into a new phase, or turning, about every two decades over the past five centuries of American history. Strauss and Howe define a turning as “an era with a characteristic social mood, a new twist on how people feel about themselves and their nation” (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 99). A turning occurs once every 20 years, or around that time, which coincides with the time span of one phase of human life. Four turnings occur in one saeculum and follow the same order: High, Awakening, Unraveling, Crisis. In theory, each turning is crucial and required for the cycle to occur sequentially.

Strauss and Howe compared the four turnings to the four seasons, representing Awakening and Crisis as the solstices, summer and winter, and the High and Unraveling as equinoxes, spring, and fall. A Crisis or Awakening occurs when society moves in a new direction: an Awakening when there is a culture change, and a Crisis when there is a change in public life. A High or Unraveling happens when society unifies toward that new direction: a High when the public believes the issues of a Crisis have been reconciled, leaving a new order behind, and an Unraveling when the public believes that the Awakening has been reconciled, leaving behind a new culture (Strauss and Howe, 1997, pg. 100).

The figure below represents the various cycles and turnings Strauss and Howe identified in the last 500 years of American history:

The Turnings in Anglo-American History				
SAECULUM	THE TURNINGS			
	<i>First (High)</i>	<i>Second (Awakening)</i>	<i>Third (Unraveling)</i>	<i>Fourth (Crisis)</i>
Late Medieval	—	—	Retreat from France (1435–1459)	War of the Roses (1459–1487)
Tudor	Tudor Renaissance (1487–1517)	Protestant Reformation (1517–1542)	Intolerance & Martyrdom (1542–1569)	Armada Crisis (1569–1594)
New World	Merrie England (1594–1621)	Puritan Awakening (1621–1649)	Reaction & Restoration (1649–1675)	Glorious Revolution (1675–1704)
Revolutionary	Augustan Age of Empire (1704–1727)	Great Awakening (1727–1746)	French & Indian Wars (1746–1773)	American Revolution (1773–1794)
Civil War	Era of Good Feelings (1794–1822)	Transcendental Awakening (1822–1844)	Mexican War & Sectionalism (1844–1860)	Civil War (1860–1865)
Great Power	Reconstruction & Gilded Age (1865–1886)	Third Great Awakening (1886–1908)	World War I & Prohibition (1908–1929)	Great Depression & World War II (1929–1946)
Millennial	American High (1946–1964)	Consciousness Revolution (1964–1984)	Long Boom & Culture Wars (1984–2008)	Global Financial Crisis (2008–2029?)

Figure 1. Strauss and Howe, Turnings in Anglo-American History

The following describes the characteristics of each turning, adapted from *The Fourth Turning* (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 101-104):

The first turning is a *High*, which brings forth a revival to society after a Crisis. Communities want to move forward from the recent Crisis and embrace new civic order. They feel a sense of fulfillment from their collective accomplishments and look to solve any open societal issues. Personal sacrifice is no longer needed, but order and unity are still a priority to the majority of people. The nation's, along with individual's, survival is no longer threatened, and their energy is transformed into a hunger for investment, growth, and strength. This creates a time with support for establishments, political stability, and success for businesses. Security remains highly important and cooperative individuals work towards a purpose, even though a few outsiders' express uneasiness. People are less averse to taking risks, but life is relatively

amicable and uniform. Feelings of shame that come along with conformity reach a climax, gender gaps widen, and people are starting families and having kids more than before. War and other crises are unexpected, other than the repercussions of the recent Crisis. Over time, civic life comes back to a sense of order, but the spirit is at an all-time low, leading “people to worry that, as a society, they can do everything but no longer feel anything” (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 101). The last High in America was post-World War II, a time that is marked as the all-time high in the nation’s history. In this point of history, Baby Boomers were born and in childhood, the Silent Generation was coming of age, and the G.I. generation was entering midlife.

The Second Turning is an *Awakening*, which comes with strong opposition against the High’s like-minded institutions and altruistic reason. People shift priorities, giving more importance to their inner world than their outer. New spiritual motives and social principles emerge, along with progressive agendas that try to harmonize conformity with independence. The success and security of the recent High are openly looked at with contempt but are also secretly taken for granted. Society begins searching for what is within and trying to find meaning in themselves. The youth abandon accepted institutional order, and communities have a hard time coming together towards a common goal. As this progresses, people stop thinking that discipline equates to progress, leading to disagreement over any public effort that entails collective control. Wars are unpleasantly fought and negatively remembered. An intense passion for spirituality overshadows societal problems, and risky lifestyles become increasingly accepted. A feeling of guilt replaces the sense of shame, public order falls, and crime and drug use rise. Gender gaps narrow, and having children is done in unsafe and unprotected ways. After a time, the eagerness dies down, leaving society as it was before, a wreck.

The most recent Awakening in America was the Consciousness Revolution that began in the early 1960s. At this time, Generation X was born, and in childhood, Baby Boomers were coming of age, and the Silent Generation was entering midlife.

The third turning is an *Unraveling* when society welcomes the cultural forces set free by the recent Awakening. Individuals have gone through their spiritual revival, and moral demonstrations, and tried out new ways of life. People feel satisfied with themselves as individuals and forcefully declare a social climate of realism, autonomy, free enterprise, and blind patriotism. Personal pride is high, but public confidence diminishes with splintering culture, disputes over values, and eroding civic habits. Indulgent lifestyles continue alongside increasing disapproval for deviant behaviors. Feelings of guilt reach an all-time high. Gender gaps become almost nonexistent, families are steady, and safeguards are put to protect children. Societal problems are put off, and strong public action becomes hard to achieve. Wars are fought with virtuous passion but lack unity or follow-through. Over time, skeptical division becomes intense negativity and hopelessness. During a High, “obliging people serve a purposeful society, and even bad people get harnessed,” but during an Unraveling, “obliging society serves purposeful individuals, and even good people find it hard to connect with their community” (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 103). The threat of public disaster draws out a feeling of powerlessness and indifference that starkly contrasts the feelings of a High.

The last Unraveling in America began in the 1980s. Before that, the nation went through an Unraveling around World War I. At this time in history, Millennials were born and in childhood, Generation X was coming of age, and Baby Boomers were entering midlife.

The fourth turning is a *Crisis*, spurred by the fear of sudden and distressing threats, threats that once would have been disregarded or put off. Substantial worldly risks and dangers

take precedence over the messes and complications of life, resulting in one urgent belief: the society must triumph. This demands strong public unity, assertive organizations, and personal sacrifice—individuals back efforts to employ public authority, whose victories gain even more support from the community. The government does its job, barriers are taken away, and laws and customs that have combated change for so long are pushed to the side. The fear of uncertainty leads to a decline in spiritual interest and deviant behavior. Feelings of shame arise as people think of what they did to avoid guilt. Public order strengthens, people become risk-averse, and crime and drug use subside. Families stabilize, gender gaps widen, and young people concentrate on worldly accomplishments. Wars are fought with fierceness and for maximum results. Over time, the mood becomes one of fatigue, liberation, and positivity. Invigorated by trust in community and authority, leaders provide society with optimism, and the community longs for excellent and simple things.

America is currently nearing the end of a Crisis, but before, the last Crisis was during The Great Depression and World War II. In the current crisis, Generation Z was born and is in childhood, Millennials are coming of age, Generation X is entering adulthood, and Baby Boomers are in elderhood.

Archetypes

Strauss and Howe often refer to mythology and ancient history as a spark their curiosity in their research. Their book states that “mythical archetypes assist people’s understanding of who they are and what they should live up to” (Strauss and Howe, 1997, pg. 75). The idea of the fourfold pattern in nature dates to Greek mythology and the sixth century B.C. Hellenic

philosophers believed that all worldly phenomena could be groups as two pairs of opposites. As time developed, these ideas expanded, and the Hellenic theories dominated Western thought about personality differences amongst individuals. While these ideas were mainly applied to individuals, Strauss and Howe saw how they could be used in generational groups (Strauss and Howe, 1997, pg. 72-73).

Generations represent individuals who live through the same experiences during the same phase of life. Consequently, these events shape who they are as a collective group, leading to shared attitudes and points of view about society, the world, and where they belong within it. In writing their first book, *Generations*, and expanding on their ideas in their second book, *The Fourth Turning*, Strauss and Howe theorized that generations develop specific personas sequentially that reflect the nation's climate at that given period. They identified four generational archetypes: *Prophet*, *Nomad*, *Hero*, and *Artist*. A cohort's archetype coincides with when the group was coming of age during a specific turning in American history. It is also important to note that Strauss and Howe believed that as the generation ages, their persona changes yet maintains an "enduring underlying identity" (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 16). The table below represents the various archetypes through the cycles of turnings:

Moods of the Four Turnings

GENERATION ENTERING...	FIRST TURNING (HIGH)	SECOND TURNING (AWAKENING)	THIRD TURNING (UNRAVELING)	FOURTH TURNING (CRISIS)
ELDERHOOD	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
MIDLIFE	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>
YOUNG ADULTHOOD	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>
CHILDHOOD	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>Nomad</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>Artist</i>

Figure 2. Strauss and Howe, Archetypes in the Turnings

There following describes the characteristics of each archetype, adapted from *The Fourth Turning* (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 84, 95-97):

Prophet personas are born during a High, during a time of revitalized communities and societal unity. They are raised as coddled post-Crisis children, come of age as egotistic fighters during a spiritual Awakening, enter midlife with virtue and righteousness during an Unraveling, and enter elderhood with wisdom during a Crisis. This group is remembered for their fervid coming-of-age and ethical and principled elderhood, rooted in vision, values, and religion. Historical prophet leaders include Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt, all individuals who were moralists and spurred ideals that led to righteous wars. The Baby Boomer generation is an example of a prophet archetype.

Nomad generations are born during a spiritual Awakening when youth revolts against established institutions and new social and spiritual standards are introduced. They grow up as unguarded kids in the Awakening, come of age as isolated individuals in an Unraveling, emerge as practical midlife leaders in a Crisis, and enter elderhood with a sense of resiliency. Nomads are remembered for their disorderly young adulthood and their initiative in midlife. Their attributes are rooted in liberty, survival, and honor. Historical nomad leaders include George Washington, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower, recognized as realists who tackle obstacles head-on. Generation X is an example of a nomad archetype.

Hero generation groups are born during an Unraveling after an Awakening brings forth an era of individualism, independence, and national patriotism. They grow up as sheltered, guarded children, come of age as courageous team players in a Crisis, enter midlife as prideful, sometimes arrogant, adults, and become strong elders during a new Awakening. Heroes are remembered for their victorious coming of age and pompous accomplishments in elderhood.

Their characteristics are rooted in community, affluence, and technology. Historical hero leaders include Thomas Jefferson, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan, who built powerful and well-reasoned institutions in America, were outspoken supporters of economic security and public optimism and upheld reputations for their civicism and knowledge. Generation Y, also known as Millennials, is an example of a hero archetype.

Artist personas are born during a Crisis when the world goes through danger and uncertainty that leads to personal sacrifice, assertive organization, and collective solidarity. They grow up as guarded children, come of age as fragile post-crisis young adults, enter liberated adulthood as indecisive leaders during an Awakening, and become compassionate elders. Artists are remembered for their untroubled coming of age and mid-life leadership. Their traits are rooted in pluralism, expertise, and due process. Historical artist leaders include John Quincy Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, all individuals who were “sensitive and complex social technicians and advocates of fair play and the politics of inclusion” (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 97). The Silent Generation and Generation Z are both examples of the artist archetype.

Turnings and Archetypes in American History

The table below represents the various archetypes through generations and turnings over the past 500 years:

Recent Generations and Their Archetypes					
	ERA				
	1908–1929 (Unraveling)	1929–1946 (Crisis)	1946–1964 (High)	1964–1984 (Awakening)	1984–2008 (Unraveling)
KEY EVENTS	Four Freedoms World War I Prohibition Scopes Trial	Crash of 1929 New Deal Pearl Harbor D-Day	McCarthyism Levittown Affluent Society Little Rock	Kent State Woodstock Watergate Tax Revolt	Perestroika National Debt Culture Wars Simpson Trial
ENTERING ELDERHOOD (AGE 63–83)	Progressive (Artist) <i>empathic</i>	Missionary (Prophet) <i>wise</i>	Lost (Nomad) <i>tough</i>	G.I. (Hero) <i>hubristic</i>	Silent (Artist) <i>empathic</i>
ENTERING MIDLIFE (AGES 42–62)	Missionary (Prophet) <i>moralistic</i>	Lost (Nomad) <i>pragmatic</i>	G.I. (Hero) <i>powerful</i>	Silent (Artist) <i>indecisive</i>	Boom (Prophet) <i>moralistic</i>
ENTERING YOUNG ADULTHOOD (AGES 21–41)	Lost (Nomad) <i>alienated</i>	G.I. (Hero) <i>heroic</i>	Silent (Artist) <i>sensitive</i>	Boom (Prophet) <i>narcissistic</i>	Gen X (Nomad) <i>alienated</i>
ENTERING CHILDHOOD (AGES 0–20)	G.I. (Hero) <i>protected</i>	Silent (Artist) <i>suffocated</i>	Boom (Prophet) <i>indulged</i>	Gen X (Nomad) <i>abandoned</i>	Millennial (Hero) <i>protected</i>

Figure 3. Strauss and Howe, Recent Generations and their Archetypes

Other Generational Research

The term “generation” has a wide range of different meanings and forms worldwide. Modern dictionaries, such as Merriam-Webster, provide three definitions of the word, all rooted in the idea of ancestry, lineage, and grouping individuals by age (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Research on the methods of determining generational ranges identifies “at least four different interpretations of the term, including biological, genealogical, demographic, historical, and cultural” but note that the most commonly recognized is the sociological interpretation, as “almost all of them are based on the assessment of the distinction between generations formed under the influence of certain external events” (Karashchuk et al., 2020).

In all research areas, different experts will have varying views when forming their theories. In terms of defining a generation, the formation of these age cohorts is based on a researcher’s perspective on history, culture, and sociology, the country they are studying, and the criteria they abide by (Karashchuk et al., 2020). Russian generational experts Shamis and Nikonov (2017) say that a generation is “a group of people with the same values, born during a certain period, having experienced the same external events in childhood” (Karashchuk et al., 2020). Interestingly, another Russian researcher, Miroshkina (2017), divides generations of the 20th century into groups spanning 20-years, but just before the emergence of the 21st century, she reduced the range of a generation to 10 years (Karashchuk et al., 2020). Based on the judgments of different researchers, modern work on generations has cohort groupings that differ in the range of years, length, and name. Strauss and Howe (1997) have time-range definitions that differ from most other organizations, such as Pew Research Center and The Center for Generational Kinetics, a leader in generational research, speaking, and solutions (GenHQ). While these ranges are quite similar, this can confuse an individual’s identity and perceived

membership with their generation. Mainly, there are many debates over where the Millennial generation ends and where Generation Z begins. Consequently, many people close to the borders of generational guidelines, those on the cusp of being in a different grouping, often share similar experiences and attitudes with their peers who also fall under these circumstances. Older members of Generation Z share many similar characteristics to younger Millennials. Older Millennials have similar views as younger Gen Xers, which applies to the past generational groupings in history.

Another approach to studying age cohorts is made by arguing that the development of varying qualities and behaviors of groups in different historical eras is not caused by the effects of education and environment. Instead, they say that changes in the characteristics and behaviors of individuals can be attributed to technological progress (Karashchuk et al., 2020). This is an interesting perspective for many reasons. First, it acknowledges the processes of technological innovation and the impact those advancements have on society. However, it fails to recognize the degree and way technology would impact history and a massive influence on society and the environment. Therefore, based on many research opinions, I believe the key to understanding generational is to find a balance between age, historical placement, and unanticipated technological forces.

In studying generations, Pew Research Center utilizes generational analysis to analyze groups of people over time and evaluate their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes on different societal issues. Their time-range definitions of each generation are based on demographics, historical events, pop culture, and the mutual opinions of fellow researchers. Therefore, they say that generations “should be thought of as guidelines, rather than hard-and-fast distinctions” (Pew Research Center, 2015). Their approach to analyzing cohorts of people born in similar locations

in history is notable because they use a wide range of factors to group people together and track them over time. Looking at the concept of a generation as guidelines instead of defined groupings allows for more flexibility and accounts for differences within generational behavior and similarities between generational groups.

Pew Research Center

The Pew Research Center has done extensive studies and reports on different generations and their beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and trends. According to a report about generational research, they believe that age is a crucial feature of understanding an individual because it explains what phase of life they are in - childhood, young adult, midlife, retiree - and their membership in a group of people born at a similar location in history. Hence, it is one of the most widely used tools to describe differences in attitudes and behavior (Pew Research Center, 2015). Researchers study age as a variable to follow people over time, an approach called cohort analysis. This method is extremely valuable as “age cohorts give researchers a tool to analyze changes in views over time [and] provide a way to understand how different formative experiences interact with the life cycle and aging process to shape people’s view of the world” (Pew Research Center, 2015). Generations are the most popular way to organize age cohorts by grouping people born over a 15–20-year time range.

While it is true that the political, social, and economic climate, as well as advances in technology, science, and business, have a direct effect on the formation of an individual’s identity, in a 15–20-year time span, about the length of a generation, the world can, and has proven to, change significantly. An individual’s age during a particular historical moment,

especially their phase of life, will dramatically influence the way that person views the world and behaves. Someone born at the start of a generational boundary might have different experiences than an individual born at the end of the boundary. Hence, Pew Research Center acknowledges that a generation can have a varied mixture of people because of the long time range, resulting in smaller cohorts within the larger group. Understanding the diversity within a generation is crucial in analyzing behavior (Pew Research Center, 2015).

To account for these differences, Pew Research Center identifies three effects that can develop differences in attitudes between generations: life cycle effects, period effects, and cohort effects:

Life cycle effects describe how differences between younger and older individuals can largely be attributed to their respective positions in the life cycle. For example, older people are far more politically active than their younger counterparts simply because of their stage in life. In the United States, a citizen cannot vote until 18, so it makes sense that children and young adults would have lower voter rates than their parents or grandparents. Since they cannot vote until this age, or possibly older, based on the cycle of an election, younger groups might not seek out information about politics or actively engage in civicism because they feel they have no say at this stage in their lives. As they get older, these younger generations will increase their political engagement. For example, in 2015, Millennials were far less engaged in politics than older generations. Even after only a few years, their engagement has reportedly increased as they age. The 2014 midterm election was the first time Millennials were able to vote.

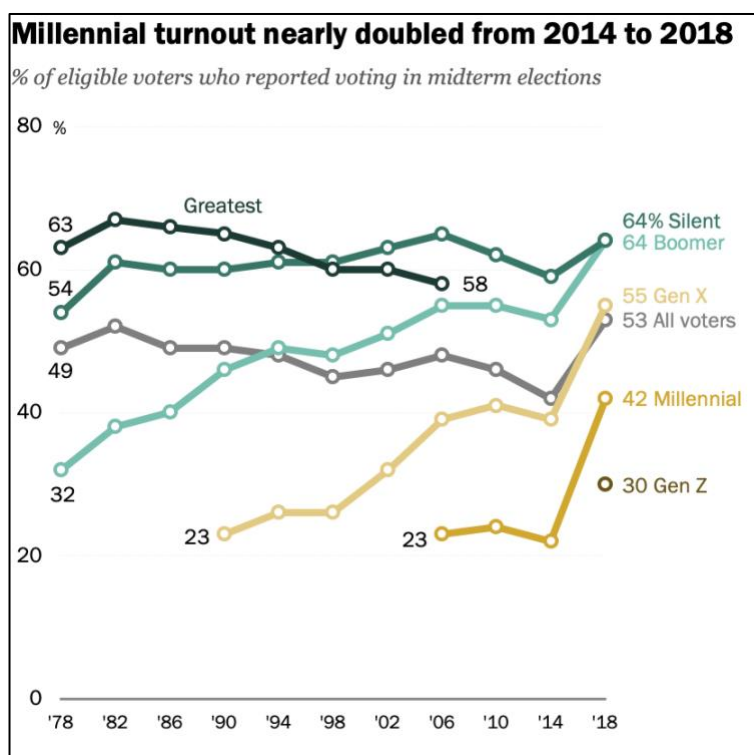


Figure 4. Pew Research Center, Millennial Turnout in Midterm Elections

In this election, when Millennials were aged 18-33, they had significantly lower voter turnout and civic engagement. About 22% of them voted, compared to a 60% turnout rate from members of the Silent generation. However, in the 2018 midterm election, Millennials doubled their voter turnout to 42%, narrowing the gap with older generations like the Silent and Boomer generations, who had a 64% turnout (Cilluffo, Fry, 2019).

Cohort effects are when differences between generations can result from the unique historical situations that members of that group experience, particularly during the stage in life where their opinions and beliefs are the most influenced. In certain circumstances, this is simply because one age cohort experienced an event that younger cohorts did not. For example, older generations, such as the G.I.s and Silents, lived through The Great Depression and World War II and experienced the postwar era of progress and public unity, which largely shaped their beliefs.

Younger generations were not born yet, so there is no way for them to be affected by these historical events. Similarly, members of the Silent and Baby Boomer generation lived through and were a significant part of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. The social and cultural climate before this movement, one of racial inequity and segregation, and the mood during the movement served as a massive force in forming these generations' attitudes and behaviors. In other circumstances, a historical event can significantly impact one generation more than others because of their stage in life. Young adulthood is extensively studied as a crucial time when an individual's identity develops, and their opinions about the world are formed based on their experiences.

Lastly, *Period effects* are seen when events and circumstances, such as wars or recessions, and broad social forces, such as an increase in civil rights, concurrently impact an entire population, regardless of age or generation. These effects are said to have lasting effects on a whole people and can unify behavior and attitudes in certain areas. For example, following the Watergate scandal of the 1970s, overall public trust in government was at an all-time low, regardless of age or political affiliation. Since then, confidence in government has fluctuated over time but has never reached the point seen before. Another example is the effects of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, when all of America unified in their opinions of national security and defending the country against terrorism (Pew Research Center, 2015).

The technology boom that began in the 1990s and soon took over the 21st century is an essential example of a period effect. The introduction of the Internet and personal devices, along with the speed of innovation and the effects technology had on science and medicine, widely changed the way people lived their lives, regardless of generation.

Shaping Generational Behavior

Recognizing the forces that contribute to within and between generational differences contributes to our knowledge of how behavior is molded across time. Looking at the historical eras that shaped generations gives researchers and brands insight into the events that molded the collective attitudes of many individual people. This is crucial in knowing the context that a person lived through and how that contributes to their behavior as consumers. Nonetheless, I believe it is equally important to consider forces outside of history, such as the effects outlined by the Pew Research Center, to understand how many different factors work together in the formation of identity and behavior. People can experience events through different lenses and perspectives, whether from location in history, phase of life, or other demographic factors. Additionally, distinct age cohorts can similarly experience events, regardless of age or stage of life, simply because of the sheer magnitude of the historical moment. Attributing behaviors, values, and stances of issues solely to the historical events that one lives through during young adulthood hinders a researcher's ability to truly understand that person and the broader group they belong to.

While Strauss and Howe's theory deeply examines the relationship between turnings and generational archetypes and aims to describe and predict eras and generational personas in America, it fails to consider other equally important factors that can disrupt society and affect behavior. Strauss and Howe thought that when society is hit with a significant event, "it transforms all members yet transforms them differently according to their phase of life responses" because "the stress of the Great Event leaves a different emotional imprint according to the social role each is called on to play - differences reinforced by the social interactions in each group" (Strauss and Howe, 1997, pg. 48). While this might be true, their theory limits

history by placing it in a cycle, a cycle that is dependent on recurring moods and attitudes over centuries. What if a turning is disrupted by a major, unexpected event that radically shakes the entire nation? What if a new turning is triggered quicker than anticipated? And, what if the generation of that time does not respond the way Strauss and Howe predicted? Does this break their theorized cycle completely, or does society revert to the recurring nature of turnings? All these questions are seemingly unaddressed by Strauss and Howe in the 1997 publication of *The Fourth Turning* and the development of their ideas, resulting in missing pieces within their theory and an American fourth turning that puts all these issues in the spotlight.

Chapter 4: Strauss-Howe Theory in Motion: Is America Still in a Cycle?

The world operates in interesting ways, ways that exemplify the complexities of life and society. Looking back on the past 500 years, it can be hard to understand why certain things happen, especially those that shift entirely how individuals and groups operate in their daily lives. Why do wars break out? What makes culture change over time? Why do people act the way they do? Consume the way they do? Is there a way for us to prepare or even predict the future? Most of us would simply say that we have no answer - we don't know what causes wars or what leads to a collective change in thought and behavior, and we cannot predict the future. But, in the development of their theory, Strauss and Howe aimed to explain the patterns of history and predict the events of the future by understanding the driving forces of societal change.

However, I would argue that it is pretty impossible to predict the future, especially for Strauss and Howe. While they may have foreseen a Crisis in America at the start of the 21st century, their proposed thoughts about all the Crisis details are far from accurate. It is essential to understand the context of history and how it shapes individuals to better appeal to and communicate with them as consumers. But that is only one piece of the overall picture. When applying the theory to business, relying on this knowledge alone will lead to a disconnect between a brand and its consumers. Throughout my research on generations and by dissecting the various elements of the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory, I have found several discrepancies in their work, particularly when applying it to 21st century America.

Criticisms of the Strauss-Howe Theory

First, I want to preface this by saying that the work of Strauss and Howe is widely accepted in research and was developed as a very complex, well-thought-out theory. It was modeled based on the past centuries of American history and the events and social moods that repeatedly occurred over time. However, a theory should also be able to pass the test of time and, in this situation, account for forces of societal and behavioral change outside of historical eras and their corresponding moods. While recognized by many within the area of generational research, there are still major criticisms of their work, both foundationally and in the application. This report aims to dispute the Strauss-Howe generational theory by identifying discrepancies in its application to 21st century America and American generational groups. Specifically, the emergence and mass adoption of technology in the late 1990s has disrupted the theory's prediction of this fourth turning, such as the characteristics and timing of the cycles and predictions about various generations and their archetypes.

Lack of Evidence

Many have noted that Strauss and Howe's generational theory is based on observation and therefore lacks substantial empirical evidence (van Eck Duymaer van Twist, Newcombe, 2021). Strauss and Howe identified a pattern in the history of America by categorizing different periods that occurred and assigning them specific turnings and archetypes. They then used this pattern to try and predict future eras and generations by following the order of the recurring cycle they witnessed. In applying the Strauss-Howe theory to future periods, they are making

overgeneralizations about society, its complexities, and the unpredictability of humans and nature. There are several aspects to this.

First, Strauss and Howe failed to acknowledge any historical events that did not align with their theory. Each turning lasts about 15-20 years and has a constant mood and archetype throughout by their theorized definition. However, majorly important events happen within a 15–20-year timespan that do not line up with the descriptions of each turning and changed the attitudes of many people during that time. The boundaries of each turning neglect to acknowledge any “mini-crisis” that happens within the turning and the effects on behavior and society.

Another critical piece is how well their theory predicted how history and society would unfold in the 21st century. Strauss and Howe aimed not only to describe the recurring phenomenon they saw in history but to apply it to the future as a way for organizations and businesses to prepare for what was coming. However, both the timing and characteristics of their theory did not line up with what happened in America. Strauss and Howe were correct in predicting a Crisis in the nation, but only to that extent. All the details, such as the timing and characteristics of the current Crisis, have not matched their theorized descriptions.

The past three decades do not coincide with Strauss and Howe’s predicted time range for the Unraveling and Crisis turnings in 21st century America. In their theory, the most recent American Unraveling occurred from 1984 to 2008, and the current Crisis will span from 2008 to 2025. However, arguably, the Crisis should have begun in 2001, with the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror. By nature, a Crisis is triggered when an immense threat is put on a nation, and that nation is required to mobilize, unify, and respond. By basic definition, the events of 9/11

should have been the trigger for a Crisis to occur, meaning that the proposed turning started earlier than reported.

Consequently, this affects the entire cycle of turnings and personas and their alignment with generational formations. Strauss and Howe's predicted range for Millennials is 1982 to 2004, but the typical range is widely accepted as 1981 to 1996. Due to this discrepancy in the time-range definition of Millennials, they are entering young adulthood far before predicted and therefore are experiencing events in their formative years that Strauss and Howe did not account for.

Additionally, in defining the turnings and archetypes, Strauss and Howe illustrated very detailed descriptions of the social and cultural climate during each turning and the attitudes and characteristics of each archetype. However, these descriptions are far too narrow and limited. Specifically, dividing the cycle into four turnings to represent an entire era under one consistent mood - Crisis, High, Awakening, and Unraveling - is far too general and does not consider the magnitude of things that happen, or can happen, within 20 years. Mainly, Strauss and Howe's description of a Crisis turning is framed as one major crisis occurring and playing out over 20 years. Any other events are said to be repercussions or elements of the one major crisis. In the history of America, this might have happened a few times. In the last American Crisis, from 1929 to 1946, the Great Depression and World War II are the events that made up the turning. There were not many other notable events worthy of a "crisis" title in this time period. Then, these events were so impactful because they widely affected all of America, regardless of location, belief, age, job, etc.

However, in this current Crisis, the characteristics are far different from those described in theory. To start, there has not just been one major crisis that has lasted 20 years and had

repercussions. Many “mini” crises have occurred, each of which was rooted in different problems and therefore affected behavior very differently. For example, since 2000, America has experienced 9/11, the War on Terror, multiple school shootings and acts of gun violence, the Recession of 2008, many natural disasters (Katrina, Sandy), the Boston Marathon Bombing, the government shutdown in 2019, corruption and attempted insurrection in government, and most notably, the global COVID-19 pandemic. And now, Americans are experiencing the effects of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, even halfway around the world. While the only “generalized” crises from that list - meaning that the entire nation was *directly* impacted - are the Recession and COVID-19, the other events have also had a significant impact on society and behavior due to the mass spread of information through media as a result of the technology boom.

Further, the very characteristics of a “Crisis” do not apply to America's social and cultural climate during this fourth turning. Based on Strauss and Howe's description, a Crisis is typically described to unify the nation as the triumph of society is the top priority. Therefore, society during this time is theorized to have strong public unity, strong institutions, and personal sacrifice. Further, individuals at the time supported authority figures, and their decisions, and government does its job as prescribed by democracy and the constitution. There is a decline in deviant behavior within communities, public order strengthens, and crime and drug use subside. Gender gaps are said to widen, and younger generations are said to combat the crisis victoriously (Strauss, Howe, 1997, pg. 101-104).

While they accurately predicted a “Crisis” at the start of the 21st century, the social and cultural climate could not be further than the one outlined in their theory. In fact, the past two decades have been full of political polarization, government corruption, nationwide division in beliefs, an increase in crime and drug use, and an abundance of deviant behavior. The general

American public is more divided than ever and has been for many years. During President Trump's administration, the social mood was widely divided and full of opposition, polarization, and public turmoil. The American government has not operated in the ways outlined by the Constitution, and there has not been unwavering and universal support for any decisions made. In fact, in 2019, the US government went into a 35-day shutdown, and in both 2019 and 2021, President Donald Trump was put on impeachment trial, something never seen before in history. In 2021, the political division reached an all-time high after the election of Joe Biden, when the Republican party made efforts to overturn the election and extremist right-wingers stormed the Capitol in an attempted insurrection. Beyond the apparent discrepancies seen within government, the nation is more disconnected than ever before. Public disputes over almost every major issue have incited a conflict many thought would end in another civil war. From topics like racial inequity, police force, gun violence, and taxation to the issue of state decisions and national health mandates following COVID-19, American citizens are fighting every proposed solution and outcome possible.

Not only has this resulted in the division we see, but it has also coincided with a high rate of crime and public violence and destruction. For example, following the death of George Floyd, dangerous and violent riots broke out across the nation as protestors and looters burned buildings, destroyed brick-and-mortar businesses, and stole goods from significant stores. And to address the familial and gender aspect of Strauss and Howe's description, their assumptions are far from true. Gender gaps in America have not widened at all; if anything, they have narrowed to the most minor point in history. Women are entering the workforce at an unprecedented rate, and even more so due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where many people had to start working to support their families.

Archetype Predictions

Based on their theory, Millennials are deemed to be the “Hero” archetype by Strauss and Howe. This reflects those born during an Unraveling who come of age in a Crisis, enter midlife in a High, and join elderhood in an Awakening. When dissecting the application of their theory to generations, Millennials do not fit their archetype for many reasons. Researchers have criticized their prediction, saying that the “generalized understanding of millennials, and other groups, is based on anecdotes and assumptions, which are neither accurate nor useful” (Croner-i, 2017).

First, the “hero” archetype is most notably known to become “heroic young team-workers of a historical crisis” (Strauss, Howe, 1997, p. pg. 95-97). However, this was not true. Dissimilar to members of the G.I. generation, from whom this archetype was inspired by Millennials were far too young to mobilize for the War on Terror. They could not rise as heroes during the 2008 Recession, largely because of how strongly it is affected them financially. And the COVID-19 pandemic was not a problem that the young generations of the world could save. Instead, a plan needed to be sorted out by government officials, medical professionals, and scientists, all of whom were far older.

Neil Howe and William Strauss went forward to write a book about Millennials, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Strauss, Howe, 2000), in which they predicted the ways that Millennials will form as a group with attitudes, beliefs and behaviors based on their Hero archetype. Many of these predictions were based on the persona they assigned to the Millennial generation and the characteristics it held. However, most of them were wrong. Let’s go through a few (all cited from Strass, Howe, 2000):

1. They claimed that Millennials would be the wealthiest cohort and have more money to spend than any generation prior. That was far from the truth. Millennials were hit by the 2008 Recession harder than any other group, resulting in a massive increase in student debt, higher rates of unemployment, and lower salaries in available jobs. Many of them have now deferred large purchases, like homes and cars, and other significant milestones, such as starting families (Kurt, 2022).
2. Strauss and Howe said that the media would lose interest in Millennials during the 2010s, but the opposite has happened. Millennials are now the largest generation ever and are increasingly important to American society, both socially and economically. By 2019, the Millennial generation overtook Baby Boomers as the largest living generational group, with over 73 million individuals (Bialik, Fry, 2019).
3. Their archetype framework predicted that this generation would be very religious, but Millennials are the least religious generation ever, with 25% saying that they are unaffiliated with religion (Liu, 2010).
4. Strauss and Howe claimed that school uniforms would be integrated into schools more by institutions and power, resulting in a significant influence that would lead the Millennial generation to be collectively minded, similar to the Silent Generation in their early lives. But uniforms never became widespread, and Millennials are known to be a diverse and outspoken generation.
5. Like the last point, they said that Millennials would be collectivists who embrace military and national service and have more conservative beliefs. Millennials have

low trust in political institutions and are far less patriotic than other generations.

While voter turnout is high in this group, it is likely because they are voting for change, not supporting the current government officials or system. Millennials are not conservative, as they are the only generation in which a majority, 57%, holds consistently liberal or mostly liberal. Only 12% have conservative attitudes (Pew Research Center, 2018).

6. Millennials would bring chivalry back and emphasize manners, modesty, and old-fashioned gender courtesies. This piece of their prediction failed to recognize the emergence of online dating, social media, and hookup culture. Technology has a significant impact on how Millennials communicate and interact with friends in relationships. Similarly, Millennials often view physical intimacy as less meaningful, describing these relationships as “friends with benefits” (Parker-Pope, 2019).
7. Millennials would marry and have kids younger. However, Millennials delay marriage later than any other generation (Bialik, Fry, 2019).

To further prove that previous archetypes do not apply to modern American generations, Generation Z is not representative of an Artist archetype and has many variations from the description of this persona. This archetype is predicted to be born during a Crisis, come of age in a High, enter midlife during an Awakening and become elders in an Unraveling.

Characteristically, they are sheltered and overprotected as children and quiet and sensitive as they enter young adulthood. Artists are said to be placid as kids, unfulfilling and interdependent as young adults, and transition from conformists to experimentalists in midlife. However, Generation Z is precisely the opposite. Gen Zers, while still mostly in their first phases of life,

are known to be independent, outspoken, and vastly influential in society. They mirror a few commonalities to the children and young adults of the Silent Generation, who were complacent and conformist in their youth. This deference from their theory can partially be attributed to the fact that they wrongly predicted the characteristics of America during the current Fourth Turning and hence, were wrong about the persona that coincided with that era. However, a piece in this is that Strauss and Howe did not account for the boom of technology and how much it would integrate into society and affect group behaviors.

Other Influences on Behavior

Most notable to me, the Strauss-Howe Generational Theory does not consider other factors in society that cause major changes in behavior and consumption, such as technology and medicine. The theory lies on the foundation that the social and cultural climate that an individual lives in during their formative years is directly reflected by their attitudes and behaviors. However, by basing the theory on past historical events, Strauss and Howe did not foresee the effects that technology would have on society and the pace that new technologies would be mass-adopted and innovated. Further, the impact that different inventions and medical advancements had on behavior during the 20th century was excluded from their theory. But there are several different ways that technology has influenced change in society, both now and in the past. In the past, inventions and advancements in medicine, science, and consumer goods have all been possible because of technology. Two notable arrivals in the market that greatly affected behavior was the introduction of the birth control pill in the 1960s and the smartphone's release in the early 2000s.

Birth Control

In their theory, Strauss and Howe do not mention how past inventions and advancements in the 20th century affected America and its citizens. For example, the development of medicine over the past century has had a massive effect on the familial structure and the population. One of the most important medical advancements was the introduction of birth control during the 1960s. The birth control pill changed the familial structure and many areas of social life, “including women’s health, fertility trends, laws and policies, religion, interpersonal relationships and family roles, feminist issues, and gender relations, as well as sexual practices among both adults and adolescents” (Tyrer, 1999). The women’s rights movement during the 1960s and ’70s had a lot to do with the release of the pill and the power it gave women over their choice to have a child (Tyrer, 1999). It gave them control over their bodies, but it also gave women control over their lives.

Once birth control became widely available, American women found a new sense of independence, and many looked to pave their paths in life. More women went to college and gained an education, studying for degrees in largely male-dominated fields, such as law, medicine, and business. In 1970, men accounted for over 90% of medical degrees and over 95% of law degrees and MBAs. But, after the emergence of birth control, women began to enter these fields, and by 1980, they made up about one-third of the degrees in all these fields (Harford, 2017). A study done by Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz tracked the availability of birth control to women in America and found that the enrollment rates in educational courses, the number of women in the workforce, and their salaries all increased substantially. Hence, their findings suggested that birth control played a crucial role in allowing

women to delay milestones such as marriage and children, and in turn, they were able to invest in their careers (Goldin, Katz, 2002).

Another major shift that resulted from birth control was the perceptions of marriage and unmarried sex. Prior, women largely abstained from sexual activity until they got married and had kids, which was done when they were still young. Birth control changed the dynamics of marriage and relationships completely. People married far later than ever before, even women not on the pill, and unmarried women could do as they pleased without the risk of pregnancy (Harford, 2017). A report done by the University of Pennsylvania reported on the relationship between contraceptive technology and declines in marriage. Their report included a graph that showed the median age of marriage for women, along with the fraction of women in each age group that had never been married.

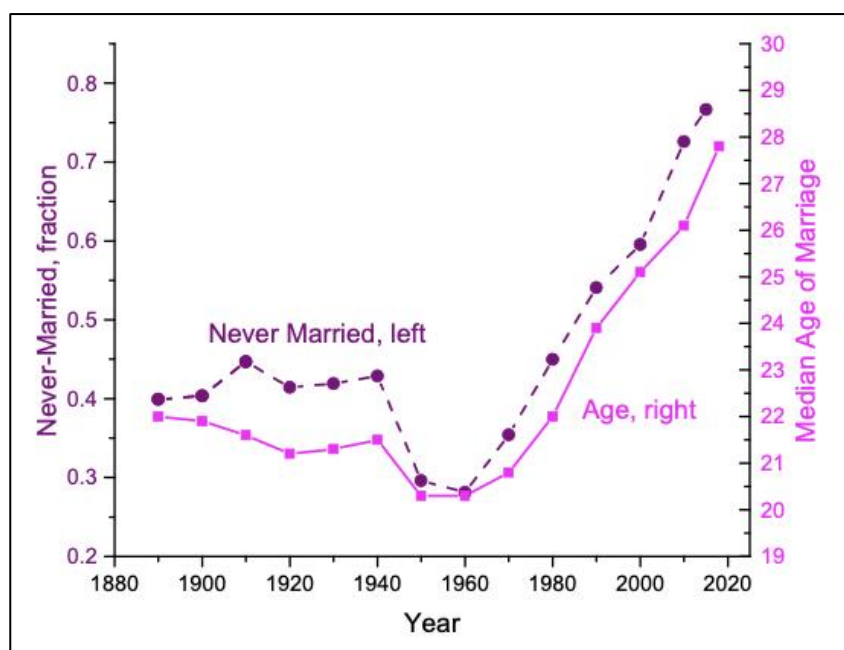


Figure 5. Median Age and Percent of Marriage Amongst Women in the US

As you can see from the graph above, after the 1960s, when birth control was introduced, there was a massive increase in the median age of marriage and the percent of women that were never

married (Greenwood, Guner, Kopecky, 2020). With this control over their lives, women were now independent, both as individuals and consumers. They could make their own choices about spending their money and the products they bought.

In their theory, Strauss and Howe note that during the Awakening, which was the turning when birth control was introduced into society, risky lifestyles became increasingly accepted, gender gaps narrowed and having children was done in unsafe and unprotected ways. They attribute these characteristics and social trends to the Awakening, saying that they recur in every Awakening turning and result from the desire for individuality, spirituality, and personal freedom that is lost to collectivism in a High. But, all those things, from unprotected sex to narrowing gender gaps, happened because birth control gave women, and their partners, a safeguard against unwanted pregnancy. While it was just a pill, the invention of birth control is quite important in history, as it served as a catalyst for change and reconstructed the social and gender norms in society.

The Smartphone

While telephones were invented in the late 19th century, their features and abilities have rapidly changed in the past two decades. The first telephone is very different from the cell phone today. The first mobile phone was released in 1984 by Ameritech Mobile Communications. The product, the Motorola DynaTAC 8000x, retailed for \$3,995 and was a two-pound device operating on a 1G. In 1989, the design and size of the Motorola were improved. The first classified “smartphone” became available to consumers in 1994 from IBM, called the Simon Personal Communicator. Its features included a touch screen, a calendar, a contact list, and the

ability to send and receive emails. It took the market at \$1,100 each and sold over 50,000 units within its first six months (Jackson, 2018). In 2000, the smartphone connected to a 3G network for the first time, allowing people to use their devices for much more. However, while phones had decreased in price, the cost of data to use the 3G network was far too much for most people (Tocci, 2019).

In 2007, the pace of technology changed when Steve Jobs put the first iPhone on the market. This phone “gave consumers the ability to browse the web just as they would on a desktop computer” (Tocci, 2019). The phone had an unrivaled battery time and ranged from \$499-\$599 for a 4 to 8GB level. In 2022, 15 years later, the smartphone has reinvented society and revolutionized the relationship between individuals and their devices. Today, Apple has a net worth of \$2.85 Trillion (Choudhary, 2022). Data Reportal, We Are Social, and Hootsuite found that the connected world is growing faster than before the pandemic. The figure below shows key headlines from the Data Reportal 2022 digital report (Kemp, 2022):

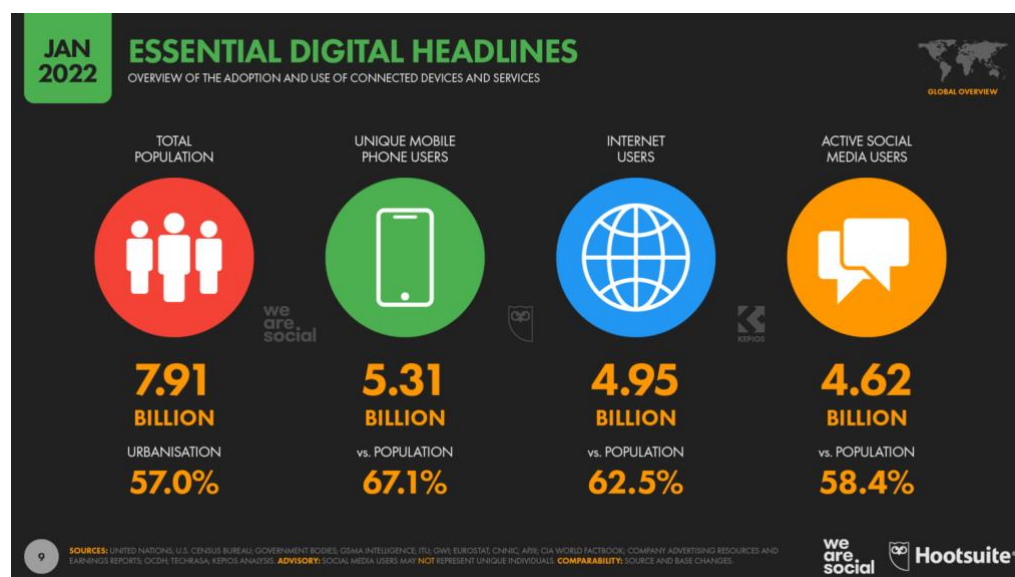


Figure 6. Data Report, 2022 Digital Headlines

The introduction of smartphones also came the opportunity for new markets and products.

Without this device, there would not be apps or social media, two successful industries that have changed the corporate world and the entire world.

Technology, specifically smartphones and social media, has shifted the entire nation and, as a result, forced people to adapt to a new digital way of living, regardless of age or generation. This powerful force has created a nation of people dependent on their phones for everything from communication and work to healthcare, payments, banking and taxes, and gaming. The reliance on smartphones has also brought forth an entirely new consumer, one that is more connected, more informed, less patient, and is likely to purchase a brand's products right from their devices (Rose, 2020). Across generational lines, almost all individuals are comfortable shopping online and interacting with brands, whether through consuming content or making purchases, online platforms, and social media. While younger generations, like Millennials and Gen Z, have higher digital usage rates, older generations are still heavily active in the digital space as users and consumers. In fact, in 2020, eMarketer reported that 62.1% of Baby Boomers in the United States would be digital buyers (eMarketer, 2020).

While the emergence of the smartphone was a massive source of social and cultural change in America, Strauss and Howe's theory did not predict the rate of penetration and innovation of technology and the magnitude of influence that it would have on American society and the formation of behavior. Based on their observations of history, technology has never entered society or evolved at the rate of the 21st century. By focusing on the recurring cycle of turnings, Strauss and Howe failed to see how innovation can speed up society's rate of change. According to the World Economic Forum, in 2000, less than 7% of the world was online, but in 2020, over half of the global population had access to the internet, and that grows by the day

(Hillyer, 2020). The underlying truth is that the pace of technology adoption has occurred at an unprecedented rate. Strauss and Howe did not indicate that technology would take over society the way it has, but as a result, their theory is no longer applicable to 21st century America.

Chapter 6: How Technology Has Revolutionized the Consumer Cross-Generationally

It is hard to remember a world without advanced technology. Most people use their smartphones, computers, and other devices every day, sometimes all day. In 2021, consumers logged 3.8 trillion hours on their mobile phones and downloaded over 230 billion apps (Avery, 2022). The social and cultural atmosphere in America is largely dictated by technology and its role in society. It has transformed all aspects of life and had both positive and negative effects on the population. While Strauss and Howe predicted the current Crisis in America, they were not able to anticipate the ways that technology would change the very characteristics of this current fourth turning. There are three major ways that this Crisis is unfolding differently:

1. Rather than one main event that directly impacts the nation as a whole, there are now many events, or “mini-crises”, that, as a result of mass media and communication, have lasting impressions on society and the behavior of individuals and generational groups.
2. Technology allows for a faster post-Crisis recovery period than ever before.
3. Technology has changed and arguably unified, the cross-generational consumer behavior and the digital consumer experience.

Mass Communication and Mini-Crises

In the past, major historical events only had massive impacts on the entire population of America if they were nationwide crises, such as wars, natural disasters, or medical pandemics. In Strauss and Howe’s theory, they describe a Crisis turning by having one major crisis, and any other incidents are a result of that larger event. Based on the patterns in history, their

generalization of this phenomenon would make sense, however, their work fails to recognize the role that mass media and the widespread of information has on society and their knowledge of said events. While many things happened across the country every day, the only source of mass communication before the 1950's was the newspaper and the radio, then the television became a major medium for news (Griffin, 2017). While Americans listened to the radio, read the newspaper, and watched their TVs to stay up to date with current events, there were limited sources and stations to find information. Over time, the channels that Americans looked to and trusted for information began to turn into a business, like most things in America have. As the years went by, three channels - ABC, CBS, and NBC - turned into hundreds of them, all different with a specific audience and market, turning news into a product (Griffin, 2007). Today, there are over 3,000 outlets in America that refer to themselves as newsrooms, not including bloggers, podcasts, talk radio, and social media accounts (Legg, 2021).

Technology - smartphones, computers, tablets, TV - has created an abundance of information sources of every nature. Now, almost every event is reported on and accessible for Americans to learn about on a wide range of platforms. Consequently, localized crises, meaning events that directly impact a certain geographic area and a small number of people, have become more large-scale and recognized across the country. These "mini-crises" are affecting the entire population as they become national news. Since 2000, America has experienced the terrorist attack of 9/11, the War on Terror, natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and Sandy, school shootings and gun violence, the 2008 Recession, the Boston Marathon Bombing, political polarization, racial inequity, hate crimes, a government shutdown, two presidential impeachment trials, an attempted insurrection in Washington D.C., and a global health pandemic. Each of

these historical moments has been broadcasted across thousands of media pages, aiming to reach as many readers as possible.

A report from FEMA outlines the role of mass media in a crisis or disaster and shows that the media plays a crucial role before, during, and after these events. When these events happen, “[the media] devotes all their airtime or much of the space available to that single story” (Scanlon, 2011). Media plays many parts in a tragedy or crisis: they warn people about what is or is going to happen, give them information and updates on the situation at hand, try to put down rumors or conflicting stories from other outlets, and answer any questions or doubts the nation may have. And every single source is doing the same thing. Hence, “the media does not only cover dramatic events, but they also cover them in a massive way” (Scanlon, 2011). By doing this, information reaches people at an incredibly fast rate, moments after it has happened. A major tactic of the media is to “humanize” events by focusing on the people that are involved, resulting in stories that can exacerbate or distort the impacts of an event. The report states that “such individuals are covered by the media because they stand out [and] these atypical cases are often presented as if they were typical [...] for the audience, the apparent image is one of total destruction” (Scanlon, 2011). Interestingly, the media reports on many incidents, even ones deemed minor, and the vast amount of attention given to these events leaves viewers with the idea that the “mini-crises” are more powerful and detrimental than they are (Scanlon, 2011).

By framing mini-crises as largely detrimental events that possess danger, people attach a significant amount of emotion, especially fear and uncertainty. Regardless of whether an individual was directly affected by or connected to one of these events in some way, everyone feels personally impacted by them. In fact, in witnessing an overload of media stories about disaster, people can be psychologically impacted, even if they have no ties to it. The American

Counseling Association says that “when we see and hear exhaustive news reports of tragic events on a regular basis, it can bring on real physical and emotional reactions [...] this is called vicarious trauma [which] makes you wonder how safe you are as you realize that whatever happened, or something similar, could easily happen to you” (ACA, 2017). An example of this is the attitudes toward school safety among students and their parents after a school shooting or act of gun violence. A Pew Research Center report found that 57% of teens say they are somewhat or very worried about the possibility of a shooting happening in their school.

Similarly, 63% of parents of teenagers are at least somewhat worried about a shooting at their child’s school (Graf, 2018). This primarily affects their attitudes about gun control and mental health awareness in America and what the nation’s major institutions and businesses are doing to solve these societal problems. The Journal of Services Marketing found that companies that adopt and support gun control policies have higher brand favorability amongst consumers in favor of those policies (Cabano, Attari, Minton, 2022).

Another crucially important point in media's mass spread and communication is how information is disseminated to the public. Because information comes from more sources than ever before, people are overwhelmed by the number of varying opinions and facts displayed in the news and online. In this digital era, information is readily available for anyone who wants it, and news spreads as fast as the send button can be clicked. The limitless possibilities of posting information online caused a trend to emerge: fake news. People are overwhelmed by social media platforms and outlets full of opposing opinions, conflicting facts, and polarized viewpoints each day. It is almost impossible for individuals to decipher what is wrong and what is right, and this has led to a distrust in both information and significant institutions of power (Okamoto, n.d.). Trust in social media has hit a historic low of 27% (Salmon, 2021) and over 80% of U.S.

adults say they get different facts depending on which source they look for news (Shearer, 2020). The bottom line: Americans look at media as misleading and biased thought by the mass spread of information.

This distrust in media has also led to a distrust in advertising, causing companies to shift how they reach consumers. Kantar reported that advertising is the least likely source people would use to find out information about a business, as only 14% of people say they trust advertisers for this. Further, social media has been ranked as the least trusted channel, with only 17% of people saying that Facebook and Twitter are reputable (Southgate, Bubani, 2021). More so now than ever, consumers are looking for product reviews from peers and people to whom they feel connected, rather than relying on traditional advertising mediums. Additionally, consumers are more analytical about their purchasing decisions and picky when picking out a product and making a conversion. The vast assortment of products available has “made abundance a burden, purchase is now more complex for consumers, especially online, as they navigate a new world of search, research, and influence” (Library, 2019). With so many options, brands must be able to compete on every level. If a customer is going to a store to buy toothpaste, they are likely to arrive at an aisle full of floor-to-ceiling different brands, each highlighting the benefits and distinctions of their product. The consumer, while overwhelmed, will take the time to look at the various brands and make their decision based on the dimension that is most important to them, whether that be a lower price, a cleaner brand, or even one that their friend had recently bought. Whatever the situation is, so much information and choice alter the way consumers approach purchasing situations and view advertising.

Overall, the information boom of the technology era is shifting the way people receive and react to media, news, and advertisements. Mini crises are met with the same fervor and

intensity as major tragedies, making people feel personally affected by them. In turn, their attitudes about the topic or event are primarily influenced. Further, the mass spread of information is leading people to distrust both significant institutions and media, and advertisers. Companies need to find ways to rebuild that trust and connect with their markets. And finally, the vast amount of choice and information is causing people to be more pragmatic about their purchasing decisions, considering many features that have been unnoticed in the past.

Faster Recovery Periods

With the rapid innovation of technology comes a faster rate of change and recovery in all areas of life. From medicine to science, electricity and energy, warfare, technology, and all that lies in between, the world is accelerating at a pace that has never been seen before in history. Think back to 50 years ago. No one owned a personal computer or cellphone; they did not even exist. Today, not only do people own computers and phones, but those devices now have the technology to track movements, personalize advertisements, and measure physiology. Beyond that, innovations like artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things are becoming an “enhancer of human capabilities” where “technological evolution has reached a point where it can help us overcome our own cognitive short-comings” (Björling, 2018). Old technology assists in developing new tech, and this cycle continues at an exponential rate. This happens because each version improves from the previous one, and as this happens, the momentum from version to version gets faster and faster.

Further, as technologies become more effective and popular, they gain more attention and receive more funding and resources to improve them further (Berman, Dorrier, 2016). This is

how evolution works, and it has sped up since the start of the 21st century. It took about 64 years for the telephone to reach 40% of households during the 1900s, but it took less than ten years for smartphones to achieve that same penetration rate in the 2000s (McGrath, 2013).

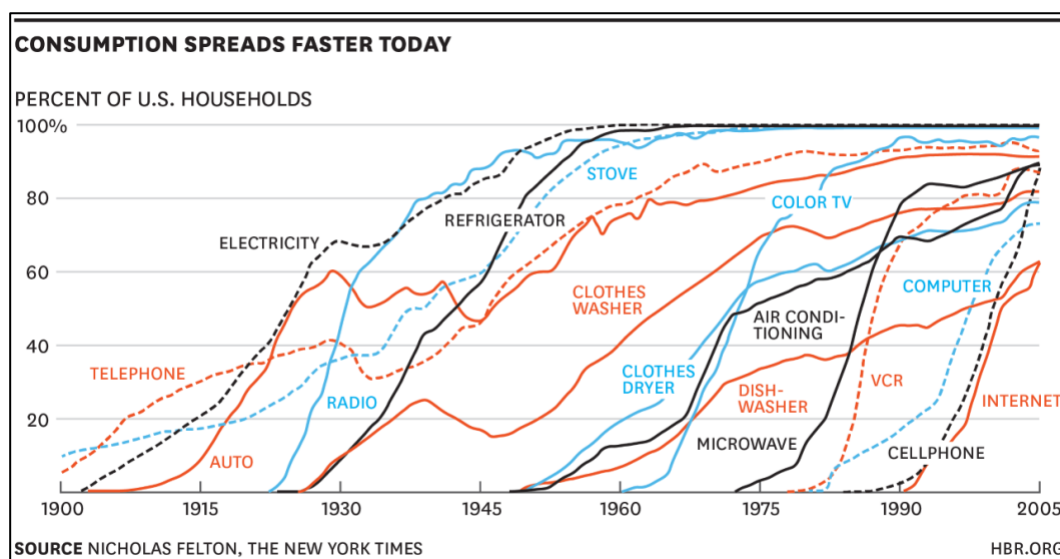


Figure 7. Consumption of Technologies 1900-2005

The rapid rate of progress has allowed America to combat problems quicker and more efficiently than ever before. Strauss and Howe's generational theory assign turnings to a 15–20-year time period, each of which contributes to the 80-year saeculum that mirrors the processes of the natural order - growth, maturity, entropy, and death/rebirth (Strauss and Howe, pg. 100). They theorized that it takes about the length of the turning for each era to unfold. Therefore, each Crisis turning, which involves one major incident, occurs over the course of 20 years. Then it takes another 20 years for the nation to recover and stabilize during a High. However, arguably, the pace of advancement in the 21st century has significantly shortened this cycle of crisis-recovery. That is reflected in the number of “mini-crises” in the past two decades and how quickly the nation moved forward and anticipated the next event. There are many different areas

in which technological advancements have contributed to faster recovery periods after a crisis or tragedy. Notable examples are in medicine and business.

Within medicine, technological advancements have propelled society forward and increased the effectiveness and efficiency of care. One advancement that has progressed significantly is the creation of vaccines. Vaccines are a massive piece in preventing and combating the spread of disease in society. However, it has been a long and complex process to create and introduce a vaccine to the public in the past. Typically, 21st-century medicine has taken 10-15 years to develop, test, and regulate a vaccine (Lilienfeld, 2018). Historically, the mass spread of disease and illness would have significant effects before any measure was created. For example, the 1918 influenza pandemic infected over 500 million people and left 675,000 people dead in the United States. It was not until 30 years later, in 1945, that the first flu vaccine was available to the public in America (Childs, 2021). However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world in 2020, organizations and governments mobilized their resources as quickly as possible to develop a solution. With significant funding and access to resources and technology, researchers and scientists were able to come together and create a vaccine. The virus that causes COVID-19 was first identified in December 2019, and by December 2020, Pfizer developed a vaccine that received emergency use authorization from the FDA (Solis-Moreira, 2021). Two years after the initial worldwide lockdown, over 66% of the United States is fully vaccinated (Our World in Data, 2022).

Business is also a crucial area of technological advancement, with product development, market research, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, databases, and much more. These business model functions are also essential when a crisis arises, as companies can utilize their power and resources to help the nation and society recover and stabilize. Factories all over

quickly shifted their production to create products that would assist in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. 3M is a manufacturing company that produces the N95 respirator masks worn to protect frontline workers from the virus. During the pandemic, they helped combat the shortage of covers by doubling their production output and importing almost 200 million masks from other factories. One of the most interesting adjustments companies made was converting their materials to produce necessary supplies for hospitals and healthcare workers. During the pandemic, one of the product innovations was the transformation of alcoholic beverages to hand sanitizers. Bacardi Liquors, an alcoholic beverage company, altered its production lines to supply enough alcohol to “produce over a quarter million gallons of hand sanitizer [that was] donated to local organizations and emergency workers” (Stebbins, Suneson, 2020).

Similarly, another product adjustment was by Fanatics, an apparel manufacturer that makes jerseys for major sports leagues. Their company shifted the production of materials to make masks and gowns for healthcare professionals. Another example is car manufacturers. Massive car manufacturing companies, such as Ford, GM, and Tesla, used their resources to make ventilators for hospitals, face shields, and respirators (Stebbins, Suneson, 2020).

Not only are technological advancements within business critical, but a crisis provides companies with a unique opportunity to adapt, grow, and innovate to the new climate of society and trends in the market. McKinsey released a report that outlined why innovation in a crisis is more critical than ever, noting that it is the “key to unlocking post-crisis growth” (Am, Furstenthal, Jorge, Roth, 2020).

The following figure shows the results of a survey administered to over 200 organizations in various industries:

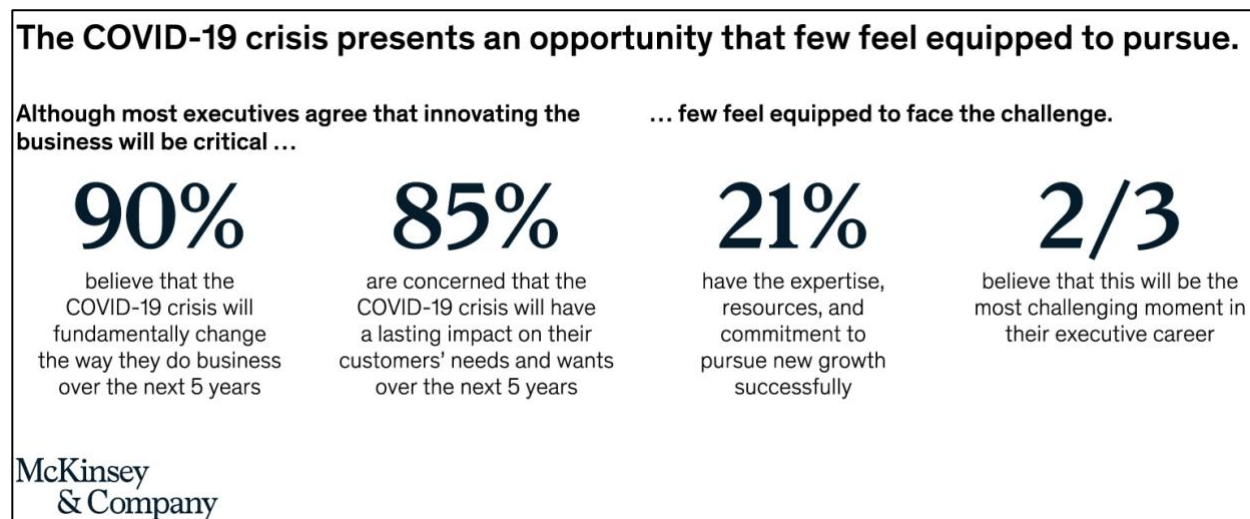


Figure 8. McKinsey, Opportunities for Businesses Post Crisis

McKinsey believes that in times of crisis, urgent actions include “adapting the core to meet shifting customer needs, identifying and quickly addressing new opportunity areas being created by the changing landscape, reevaluating the innovation initiative portfolio and ensuring resources are allocated appropriately, and building the foundation for postcrisis growth to remain competitive in the recovery period” (Am, Furstenthal, Jorge, Roth, 2020). A critical piece of this is how a crisis radically changes the needs of a consumer and how businesses must be able to adjust and respond accordingly. During COVID-19, the shift to digital was an essential change for companies in all fields, as people were unable to physically shop, interact, or connect for an extended period. Consumers began to gravitate towards brands that provided digital services, such as Zoom and Instacart. Zoom, a video conferencing company utilized for business, transformed overnight into a service that people used for various purposes during quarantine, such as workout classes, social calls with friends and family, and telehealth appointments. Two years after the pandemic, many companies, organizations, and universities are still using Zoom

as an option for remote work and learning. During a crisis, consumers experience a significant impact on their behavior, whether financially or psychologically. Either way, rapid innovation is vital for companies to retain the ever-changing consumers in their market and assist in the recovery period.

A Unified Customer Experience

In thinking about the characteristics of a Crisis, there is one feature of Strauss and Howe's theory that is important to touch on. During a Crisis, they theorize that society will unify as a collective group. While this has not been seen in the American public, there has been a shared sense of unity in another form: the consumer. Due to the rapid evolution and adoption of technology, consumers in today's market must shop digitally, and brands must operate online. While different groups of people, particularly across generational boundaries, have varying preferences in terms of buying, the pattern of digital shopping is universal. Similarly, with access to so much information and social media, people engage with their peers and brands online more than ever in overall age groups.

Referring to Pew Research Center's three effects that aim to explain differences in generational behavior, the boom of technology can be looked at as a period effect in history. Period effects are seen when events and circumstances, along with broad social forces, concurrently impact an entire population, regardless of age or generation. They are said to have lasting effects and can unify behavior and attitudes in certain areas (Pew Research Center, 2015). The emergence of advanced technology and the speed of penetration into society had a significant period effect on American generations. Across all areas of life, technology is now

integrated into daily activities. In their generational theory, Strauss and Howe said that the historical events that happened in the formative years of an individual's life would most impact their behavior and have lasting effects. However, there are so many events in history that essentially changed how certain generations behave, regardless of their phase of life. They lacked to account for the period effects in history and how they unify behavior across all age groups. When these period effects happen, it disrupts Strauss and Howe's theorized cycle of turnings and the archetypes of generations.

Forbes Technology Council says that “[technologies] are more immersive than ever, and with every generation, they assume previously unimagined functionalities” and that “this cultural shift toward smartphone immersion has potentiated a slew of behavioral changes” (Alexandro Pando). Further, a report from Entrepreneur evaluates ways that technology psychologically manipulates behaviors as different design methods and software keep consumers engaged with digital platforms and utilize data to personalize everyone's experience to their preferences, leading to an increase in consumption (Belanger, 2018). Essential design features such as app push notifications aim to draw users in. Tristan Harris, the co-founder of the Center for Human Technology and a vital member of the movie *The Social Dilemma*, explained how smartphones resemble the design of slot machines, utilizing the idea of “variable reward systems,” in which a person might or might not receive a reward. In the case of smartphones, a reward would be a notification or interaction with a peer on social media (Belanger, 2018). Technology also alters individuals' perceptions of their options, reinforces their beliefs, collects information that can be used to influence them later, gamifies everyday activities, and changes how humans communicate with each other. Various technologies, especially smartphones, can “nudge users to think and act in specific ways at specific times” (Belanger, 2018).

Further, advances in modern technology directly affect how and where consumers make choices, as 81% of U.S. adults own smartphones and rely on them for all areas of life (Esade Business and Law School, 2020). These technologies, such as intelligent interacts like Amazon Echo, Alexa, chatbots, and sensors, are created to mimic the behaviors and choices of humans. Since they interact with humans and each other, they are increasingly important aspects of the consumer decision-making process. With this comes “a flood of data that permits studying how consumers use their devices, but how this technological ecosystem is affecting the underlying psychology of how consumers gather information, interact, and decide” (Esade Business and Law School, 2020). So, not only is the boom of technology and social media unifying digital behavior and consumption across generations, the design features of these platforms and products are psychologically altering people's behavior.

To look further at how cross-generational behavior has shifted digitally, it is essential to examine how the Baby Boomer generation adapts to technology. As the older sector of the market, it is crucial to see how the behavior of Boomers has changed due to this technology revolution. Interestingly, while the first iPhone didn't come until 2007, all people, cross-generationally, have formed these same habits and tendencies as digital consumers. The adoption of technology by groups of older consumers has grown substantially in the past decade, narrowing the gap between America's most senior and youngest adults. Though only 45% of people aged 65 and up said they are active on social media, their presence grew fourfold in the past ten years, while younger generations have remained constant (Faverio, 2022). 84% believe social media is likely to improve their lives (Suciu, 2020). Consumers over 65 years old are said to be the fastest-growing group of online shoppers, and a 2021 study found that 52% of Boomers prefer to shop online during the holidays (Calandra, 2021). This data is proof that Baby Boomers

are more tech-savvy and active on social platforms than people believe. While there are gaps in the usage of specific social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, Boomers are adjusting to digital life and altering their behavior to fit into the digital world.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

“New technologies always reshape society, and it’s always tempting to worry about them solely for this reason” – Tristan Harris, *The Social Dilemma*.

Society is everchanging; that is simple. What’s not simple is the why and how behind the inevitable shifts among large groups of people. Many forces influence society and generations, each in different ways. The Strauss-Howe Generational Theory describes a pattern in American history where the nation goes through a recurring cycle of turnings and generational archetypes, each of which brings a new social and cultural mood to society. While there is truth behind the foundation of this theory, there are also major discrepancies that have been uncovered with the emergence of America’s fourth turning. Historical events do have a massive impact on the formation of generational identity, but they are not the only factor that does so. By building their theory off observations of history, Strauss and Howe did not account for the other elements, most notably, the revolution of technology. The pace of mass adoption and innovation of technology in America has had an extensive impact on society and consumer behavior, both individually and cross-generationally. In doing so, technology disrupted the cycle of Strauss and Howe’s theory, resulting in a current American crisis that is far different than what was predicted for three reasons: (1) the spread of mass media and communications has magnified “mini-crises” that as a result, have lasting impressions on society and behavior, (2) technology allows for a faster post-Crisis recovery period than ever before, and (3) technology has changed and unified, the cross-generational, digital consumer experience.

Implications for Future Research

In the future, it would be interesting to study further the ways technology has directly impacted society and behavior. Future research should look at how these advancements affected many different areas within America, such as government, medicine, and business. Additionally, evaluating how technology has overtly and covertly affected consumer behavior and consumer preferences in the market is an essential area of research for companies and organizations in all industries. By looking at this, businesses will better understand their consumers and the many forces that affect their choices, which can assist their brand in creating more personalized and effective marketing strategies.

Limitations of Research

There are many areas to investigate further and build on ideas in my thesis. A limitation of this work is that it lacks primary data and relies heavily on secondary sources and the observation of discrepancies in Strauss and Howe's theory. The report could strengthen its credibility and expand on its thoughts by gathering primary data. Further, I could not thoroughly discuss many of the effects that technology has on society, behavior, and business. Hence, certain important impacts have been excluded from the report and could be further touched on.

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ACADEMIC VITA of Elizabeth Penna

ELIZABETH J. PENNA

lizzie.penna6@gmail.com | ejp30@psu.edu | (610) XXX - XXXX

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University

Schreyer Honors College

Smeal College of Business | Bachelor of Science in Marketing

College of the Liberal Arts | Minor in Psychology

University Park, PA

Class of May 2022

WORK EXPERIENCE

Ogilvy

Client Services Intern

New York, NY

June 2021 - Aug 2021

- Participated in daily internal and client meetings to ensure projects were progressing on schedule and budget to support internal teams
- Produced a quarterly and YTD competitive audit for well-known baby food brand including organic and paid social reviews, SOV and spending data, and category implications to be used for the 2022 planning schedule
- Assisted in creative and developmental process for several client television, radio, and social advertisement campaigns
- Developed, with a team of interns, a new business proposition for a well-known rental car company with a GTM strategy and financial plan

Penn State Hillel

Social Media and Marketing Intern

University Park, PA

Dec 2020 - May 2021

- Communicated student experience and impact to stakeholders through creative reports on a monthly basis
- Monitored data regarding open and click-through rates to drive strategy
- Ensured the visual appeal of newsletters through a variety of design elements including graphic design and content creation

LEADERSHIP & INVOLVEMENT

Penn State Prime Student Marketing Club

Agency Account Manager

University Park, PA

Jan 2021 - May 2021

- Oversaw an agency team of students to consult with Nestlé's Hot Pockets team and create and pitch a full integrated marketing plan to our client
- Created various activations on owned, earned, and paid media platforms to engage consumers in a new demographic market
- Gained guidance from a mentor at Ogilvy to assist in achieving a successful final campaign

MKTG 497 Teaching Assistant

Jan 2022 - May 2022

- Assisted professor in planning and executing class materials such as lesson plans, feedback reports, project guidelines and examples
- Mentored student agency and brand teams, specifically the Account Manager and Brand Director, by meeting with students regularly to touch base on their progress and provide support and advice when necessary

Happy Valley Communications Firm

Associate Account Manager

University Park, PA

Aug 2021 - Dec 2021

- Collaborated with team of students to assist a new business with branding, social media, copywriting, website design, and general marketing
- Communicated with client to build their social media strategy and new business launch strategy

Penn State Dance Marathon (THON)

Alternative Fundraising Chair

University Park, PA

March 2019 – April 2020

- Organized over 27 fundraising events in benefit of THON that totaled in over \$170,000 raised
- Orchestrated a benefit dinner with over 250 people in attendance that raised over \$14,000 in proceeds
- Placed Top 5 at #4 in top fundraising Greek organizations on Penn State's campus

SKILLS

HARD SKILLS: Microsoft Excel, Word, and PowerPoint, UnMetric, Mintel, FB Ad Library, MOAT, Kantar, Canva, Google Drive and Google Docs, iMovie and Video Platforms

SOFT SKILLS: Strong communication, problem-solving, teamwork, creativity, and interpersonal skills