

Random Rumblings of a Great Sandwich

Ours is the greatest generation, ours is the craziest generation. We are the Baby Boomer Generation that is also the sandwich generation between our parents' Greatest/Silent Generation and our children's Generation Y/Z (see Table 1). We are the Chinese-born Americans (CBA) sandwiched between our Chinese-born Chinese (CBC) parents and our American-born Chinese (ABC) children. We are the sandwiched CBA baby boomers. We are the sandwiched "me" generation. We are the meat of our sandwich. We are dead meat.

Table 1 - Names of Generations

Generation Name	Births Start	Births End	Youngest Age Today*	Oldest Age Today*
The Lost Generation - The Generation of 1914	1890	1915	103	128
The Interbellum Generation	1901	1913	105	117
The Greatest Generation	1910	1924	94	108
The Silent Generation	1925	1945	73	93
Baby Boomer Generation	1946	1964	54	72
Generation X (Baby Bust)	1965	1979	39	53
Xennials -	1975	1985	33	43
Generation Y - The Millennials - Gen Next	1980	1994	24	38
iGen / Gen Z	1995	2012	6	23
Gen Alpha	2013	2025	1	5

(*if still alive today) (Source: <https://www.careerplanner.com/Career-Articles/Generations.cfm>)

We CBA baby boomers share many common characteristics of our fellow baby boomers who must deal with those characteristics typical of our parents' and children's generations (see

<http://www.marketingteacher.com/the-six-living-generations-in-america/>). We share the pains and challenges of our fellow boomers at large. What sets us apart are our cultural heritages. To preserve some of our heritage and to maintain most of our sanity, we become the open-minded guardians of our parents' traditions and values, and we become the bold co-creators of our children's. We become the diligent intergenerational communicators and multilingual translators among our three generations. We become the dutiful interpreters of English and Chinese languages (including Chinglish, Mandarin, and other regional dialects) used in our families and communities. We are the indispensable arbiters between our young and our elders. We are the great cultural mediators between the East and the West.

In Confucian philosophy, which our parents and ancestors have selectively adopted for their needs, filial piety is the virtue and duty of respect, obedience, and care for one's parents and elderly family members. It is considered the highest moral obligation, akin to a birthright, of our parents' generation and generations past. We are morally obligated to honor our parents' wishes without questions, or else we are condemned. Starting with our generation, however, practicality of filial piety becomes questionable. Our parents were expected to feed, clothe, and shelter us when we were young, and expect the same in return when they become old. We are similarly expected to feed, clothe, and shelter our children when they were young, but we can no longer expect the same from them reciprocally when we grow old. Our parents may claim their right to live with us and be cared for by us when they get old. A retirement community or nursing home is most likely our only option when we get old. For better or for worse, filial piety is dying with our generation. It did not start with us, but it will end with us. May it rest in peace when we rest!

Children's education remains the highest priority for us, as for our parents before. Learning from books has many rewards - fame, power, golden mansions, and gorgeous beauties – or so we were told. Now we tell our children to study hard, play hard, read e-books, and follow Instagram and tweets. Things may change over time, but kids' preference of learning from their own mistakes over listening to their elders remains mostly unchanged. Academic achievement is no longer the only criterion of success for our children in schools. Participation in a wide variety of individual and team enrichment programs involving bands, music, sports, and other extracurricular activities becomes an essential part of modern educational experience. Admission into gifted and talented programs and selective colleges or universities is a serious business requiring serious early planning that includes entrance exam and essay preparation classes, and individualized and professional coaching. Selecting or switching to a more profitable major or degree program requires careful planning. An advanced degree from a prestigious medical, law, or business school is ideal for our bragging rights, whereas a science or engineering degree is barely acceptable. Liberal arts? What liberal arts? Don't even think about it! Lifelong learning is merely a profitable means to our children's lifelong success and happiness.

With a M.D., J.D., MBA or PhD on hand, life can be grand. Indeed, life can be very grand at \$200 grand a year, and the more the merrier. True, money may no longer buy complete happiness. But money can still enhance our happiness in small doses, one grand at a time. Necessities like education, health care, housing, transportation, food, and clothing all require money before other higher joys of life. Life without adequate money for our physiological and security necessities and other social and egocentric joys cannot be too happy. We must provide financial resources to our children and parents when needed. We become the family bankers and

ATMs. We are our family's money trees. We worry about money and happiness all the time. We worry about tradeoffs and balance between money and happiness often. While our parents tend to value money over happiness, our children may value happiness over money. We value money and happiness over ourselves. We work hard to earn money and gain happiness, we then slave over both. We become slaves of money and happiness.

We value family over ourselves. Family has values, and we have family values. Regardless of our cultural heritage, families usually start with marriages. Arranged marriages of our parents' generation is now old-school. The trend of delayed marriages of our children's generation worries us. We worry about our children marrying too soon or too late. We worry about our children marrying too high or too low. We worry about them marrying someone with potentially incompatible or incomprehensible culture, language, race, religion, political stance, mental and physical states, financial and social standing, and/or sexual orientation. We worry about being politically or morally incorrect on marriage and too many other things. We worry about being accused of having incorrect or fake family values. We worry about incorrectly communicating our values to our parents, children, and others. We worry way too much about too many things.

Those worries seemingly unique to our sandwich generation are but the tip of the iceberg of our worries. Far too many of our worries are cross-generational and even universal. Many of our worries transcend generations and are compounded by the increasing complexity and multitude of our physical, mental, and social environments. Indeed, we live in the most interesting yet worrisome era aggravated by our unprecedented technological advances. We exploit these advances without fully knowing their risks and consequences. We become technology-enabled

abusers and bullies. We abuse people around us and are abused ourselves. We abuse and pollute elements of our living environment. We abuse and addict ourselves with alcohol, drugs, gambling and online games. We abuse others by assaulting them physically and with guns and other weapons. We abuse others mentally or intellectually with mass propaganda and brainwashing, and misguided religious beliefs or political ideologies. We bully others physically or virtually with higher positions of authority and power, and with fake news and tweets. Our worries grow constantly over time. Our anxieties increase exponentially with age. We want to be good - as good persons, spouses, friends, employees, coworkers, neighbors, and citizens of our nations and our planet. We want to be good children to our parents and good parents to our children. We want our generation to do good and be good. We want to be a good sandwich.

There is much to worry about being a good sandwich. There is so much to do in so little time. We may not be able to choose our sandwich bread, but we could choose other ingredients to improve the overall quality of our sandwich. A sandwich meat by itself does not make a good sandwich, but a high-grade meat could enhance a sandwich's taste. Adding fresh toppings like lettuce and tomato, upgraded condiments like herbs and spices, and flavorful spread could make a sandwich more wholesome and enjoyable. We should not just be the dead meat in our sandwich. We can and must enrich our sandwich through proper planning, preparation, and seasoning with quality ingredients. Knowledge through continual education and training, maturity through increased experience and communication, and wisdom through unceasing introspection and self-realization are key ingredients we must apply to our sandwich to make it more meaningful and joyful. We must refine our knowledge, maturity, and wisdom together with

our parents and children to actualize our great sandwich. We can be the greatest sandwich. Let us
be.