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Lost in Translation: Generational Slang and the Evolution of In-Group Language

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Lost in Translation:

Generational Slang and the Evolution of In-Group Language

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Mother: “That’s great honey, so totally skibidi!”

Child: “Oh, mom come on! Don’t say that; you’re embarrassing me!”

Mother: “What? I’m just being hip!”

Child: “Hip is absolutely not a thing anymore! Quit living in the past!”

If you’re just as confused as to what the correct usage of the word “skibidi” might be and why your Gen Alpha counterpart prefers it over something like “rad,” then you’re in the right place. Scenarios like this happen across the country with generations clashing, including conversations I have with my own family. I, a member of Gen-Z, have a Millennial older sister. We have even had confusion among speech patterns, though our age gap is only ten years. While the gap is noticeable in terms of maturity, it is surprising how it affected us linguistically. During my time in middle school, the word “lit” became a popular slang term. At the time, it meant that we were getting hyped up for something exciting, a gathering, a hangout, etc. When I used this term in front of my sister for the first time, she was concerned. Turns out, this term was the equivalent of “drunk” or “wasted” to the millennial generation and to Generation X. Of course, the misunderstanding was cleared up very quickly, but it still made me wonder how a term like that could change so quickly from one generation to the next.

It was clear to me at that age that language was much more complex than I could have imagined. Changes in languages were seemingly more common than I had expected. This hinted

at broader connections, not simply between slang and generational differences, but also between slang and identity. Perhaps slang could help someone identify as part of a generation. Common speech could be the factor that ties peers together. Not only this, but slang could be a conversational indicator that someone is older or younger than oneself. In this sense, slang could also be used to exclude older people or younger people from your own peer group, creating something unique to one generation.

There lies a bigger question in all of this. Why is this research important? What implications does this have for the public? Well, understanding the connections between slang, identity, and generations is important for a number of reasons. Understanding generational differences, with slang as a connecting factor, can also bring generations together. Learning more about how slang identifies a generation could especially bridge connections between parents and children. In terms of slang and identity, researching the idea of a connection may help us discover how peer groups are created or, more specifically, in-groups and out-groups. Finding ways to use slang exclusively to one generation could bridge oneself from the out-group to the in-group, creating stronger social bonds.

GAPS TO BE ADDRESSED IN EXISTING RESEARCH

This research will address a few gaps within the preexisting literature. The first gap is the larger scale connection between slang and generational identity, ranging from Generation X to Generation Z. While many of the sources cover connections with identity, they don't mention them on a broad generational scale with room for comparison across wide spans of age groups. For example, *A Sociolinguistic Study of American Slang* by Zhou and Fan refers to slang and its

connections to social factors and individuality, yet its scope is too broad and not specific to generations. The second gap that needs to be covered is what events and environments in each generation caused their specific slang terminology to form. This is sometimes covered in the existing research concerning racial differences, but not among peer groups in their entirety. Related to the idea of these in-groups is another main gap in previous research; what in-groups, groups made based on shared interests, traits, etc., exist within each generation, racially or socially. While *A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Slang in America* by Zhang briefly mentions the connections between slang and African Americans, it fails to go further in depth on a larger collection of groups. The last gap in the research is the overall shift in identity over time. While prior research covers some clues to identity evolution, this essay will cover a larger span and go more in depth as to why the change has occurred.

To truly go in-depth on this topic, certain concepts need to be covered first. Initially, this essay will describe the definition and origins of slang. Without understanding the origins of slang, it will be more difficult to understand the transition between nonstandard language among generations. It will then transition to each generation and their identifiable slang. Within each generational section, there will be information on historical contexts and in-groups within each generation. Lastly, this essay will analyze the transitions of identity. This means reviewing the differences among generational groups based on the context of the time they lived in as adolescents and how their language makes the change in identity noticeable. This research will suggest how the evolution of slang reflects generational shifts in identity, acting as a cultural and social marker that strengthens bonds within age groups while alienating others. This viewpoint is crucial to understanding the future development of identity, language, and in/exclusion.

DEFINING SLANG CLEARLY

What exactly is "slang?" I believe it is an indicator of the identity of a culture, specifically similar age groups. Its precise definition has shifted greatly over time. Many modern dictionaries even have a slew of contrasting definitions (Fabjančič 28). The *Encarta World English Dictionary* defines slang as having two components: 1) "Very casual speech or writing … playful replacements for standards ones [words and/or phrases] … short-lived, and are usually considered unsuitable for formal contexts" and 2) "Language of an exclusive group … often deliberately created and used to exclude people outside the group." Both the *American Heritage College Dictionary* and the *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (NOAD)* refer to other related terms such as "argot" or "jargon" to describe slang and its usage. The term "argot" originally began as a synonym for the term "cant" in the nineteenth century. The primary purpose of "cant" is to "deceive, to defraud, to conceal," as it was the former language of beggars and thieves, emerging around the sixteenth century (Adams 8). "Jargon" on the other hand, "typically belongs to professions or interest groups" (Adams 8). Ultimately, slang has evolved from these terms to mean nonstandard terminology, used in informal contexts, lasting for a short period, usually with playful intent. Because slang is inherently tied to informal and group-based communication, it becomes especially prominent among younger generations, who are actively forming their identities.

SLANG AS A YOUTH PHENOMENON

This nonstandard terminology is commonly thought of as the language of the youth. Younger people tend to be more involved with the creation of slang terms. It is often used in the adolescent stages of rebellion to express attitudes about societal structures (Zhou and Fan 2209). Teens and college-age individuals are the leading "consumers" of slang in the United States (Zhou and Fan 2211). A few social functions of slang in the United States align with goals of adolescents: Pursuit of Identity, Emotive Expression, and Politeness (Zhou and Fan 2212). This shows that society has offered opportunities to express emotions more freely among younger generations, helping to build relationships and rapport. Politeness refers to the ability to create a friendly atmosphere. Slang helps to maintain social connections and intimacy (Zhou and Fan 2212-2213). Slang has become a method for younger members of society to exclude their elders and create the feeling of being "in-the-know," therefore making more friends within their peer groups. This is made obvious when you think of an adolescent rebellion in conjunction with reviewing differences in terminology over time. This further implies that slang has likely been a generational creation, with each generation forming their own in-group language.

But really, how does slang as a youth phenomenon connect to the overall formation of identity? To put it simply, uniqueness of identity begins to develop in the age of adolescence. Using varying slang is the same as an adolescent's rebellion. Young people are trying out different styles or different words to see what fits their personality, and later, their unique identity. Using particular slang, just the same as a form of clothing or hair style, connects adolescents with other peers like themselves, leading to further internal exploration of their inner self through outward expressions.

In the modern era, slang can have many implied meanings. This leads other groups to be excluded from the conversations of adolescents. Not all teens understand slang associated with

their generation. Some will begin to use it so that they themselves do not become isolated from their peers or appear outdated. This is also prominent among urban versus rural areas. Different slang can emerge from differing environmental conditions. Not only that, but slang varies among informal and formal scenarios. These factors produce a constant evolution of language. With the availability of social media on a wide scale, slang has even more opportunities to evolve than ever before. Almost every teen has the ability to access the internet, sharing language across the globe and creating a new form of community outside of the traditional face-to-face format (Rosyadi Za 4). While slang is often associated with modern youth culture, its role in shaping identity is not new. Examining historical examples reveals that slang has long functioned as a marker of social and generational identity.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF GENERATIONAL SLANG

Having discussed slang as a generational creation and a voice of youth, analysis of historical examples will further prove this point and expand the idea that slang is not solely a modern creation. Slang is estimated to count for about 10% of all words comprehended by the average American (Widawski, Twentieth Century Part One 381). This statistic alone makes it obvious that slang is a major part of American culture. As we review examples, it will become evident that slang is a useful marker for sociocultural advancements and a way for peer groups to connect. Slang serves like a historical indicator, especially because of its widespread use in "newspapers, radio, telephone, television, and the Internet" (Widawski, Twentieth Century Part One 382).

Beginning in the 1900s-1910s, there were major developments in terms of technology, transportation, immigration, and warfare. Even at the beginning and end of World War I, many euphemisms for military equipment or actions were relevant. Therefore, many terminologies have become associated with these innovations or cultural moments. Examples include:

- **The Big Apple**: n. [1909] New York City
- **Straphanger**: n. [1905] a person who rides the subway or bus
- **Ace**: n. [1916] a pilot who has shot down many enemy aircraft
- **Dog Tag**: n. [1918] a soldier's identity disc
- **Pineapple**: n. [1918] a hand grenade

(Widawski, Twentieth Century Part One 382-385)

Moving into the 1920s-1930s, we have a revolution in music, film, the beginning and end of Prohibition, and of course, the Great Depression. Jazz music was on the rise in the 1920s and continued to expand into the 1930s. Performers like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington not only pushed a revolution in music, but a revolution in African American entertainment and traditions being recognized beyond the African American community. Film continued to develop in the 1920s with the silent film industry. Stars like Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton lit up the screen. The expansion of the entertainment field brought encouragement in the post-war era of prosperity for Americans to enjoy more leisure time. The beginning of Prohibition in the 1920s was intended to reduce the sale of alcohol but brought an onslaught of organized crime families and commercial corruption. The 1930s brought about an end to the financial prosperities of the 20s and an economic plummet known as the Great Depression. However, even with this economic downturn, the entertainment industry experienced an explosive boom in African American jazz and swing music. Much of the slang of the time refers to these topics:

- **Fuzz**: n. [1929] a policeman or the police
- **Goon**: n. [1921] a hired thug
- **Cut**: n. [1937] a recorded song
- **Moolah**: n. [1937] money
- **Skid Row**: n. [1931] a run-down area in town, known for the underworld

(Widawski, Twentieth Century Part One 385-389)

GENERATIONAL SEGMENTATION

Now that we understand slang as a youth phenomenon and some of its historical roots, it is time to turn to the generations that will be included in this research. Understanding the context of each generation's identity will further reveal why they make certain linguistic choices. Language is a direct influence of the circumstances involving our culture and the people in related peer groups.

Before delving into each generation, it is important to first define what we mean by "generation." The term "generation" has usually referred to different familial generations, passing through family lines. In recent years, "generation" has begun to refer to a social group of individuals born around a similar time and that share a similar culture when growing up (Balon 280). Jean M. Twenge, discussing generations, refers to the generational influence on values, attitudes, personality traits, and behavior as "substantial." Twenge completed research that sought to find the root cause of generational differences and how to uncover those differences. Among her findings, Twenge pointed to technology as the most significant contributing factor to generational differences. However, technology-related differences are not always the result of

direct interaction. She notes factors such as a slower life trajectory and individualism as outside effects that play a key role in determining generational differences as well (Balon 281).

After reviewing data sets related to fields of alcohol usage, life goals, political affiliation, happiness, views on gender, and other aspects of life, conclusions could be drawn about each generation's historical context. It should be noted that some perspectives about generations in a historical context may be stereotypical (Balon 280-281). It is important to avoid this thought process as it can be damaging to the individuals involved and to the research it pertains to. With all of that in mind, let's review Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.

GENERATIONAL SLANG BREAKDOWN

Understanding a brief history of each generation is vital because it is a direct correlation between their surroundings and the slang they use.

GENERATION X

Beginning my research with Generation X, I found that they were quite different to previous generations in many ways. Generation X grew up with the beginnings of modern technology. Generation X is also notable for another reason; they became adolescents in the middle of the switch from collectivism to individuality and were on the cusp of the slow-life strategy. Previous generations, especially those that were adolescents during the world wars, had a focus on improving the progress of society for the common good and promoting patriotism. After the wars, however, young people had time to think more about their personal wants, rather

than the needs of the public. This refers to that change of collectivism, for the common good, to individualism, for oneself. Individuals in this generation also began achieving life milestones later than their predecessors, hence the term slow-life strategy. This generation also began the downfall of the "traditional" family model. More people began getting married later in life or began having children out of wedlock. Generation X reveals the first steps towards individuality in terms of slang usage (Balon 281). Many words developed as slang by Generation X are now common elements of speech. Phrases such as "chill," "bummer," or "DINK" stem from language development in the teen years of Generation X (Generation Finder).

- **Fashion Victim**: n. [1984] someone who tries to dress fashionably but never succeeds
- **Fuckload**: n. [1984] a large number or amount
- **McJob**: n. [1986] an unstimulating, low-paid job with no prospects
- **Plastic**: n. [1980] a credit card or credit cards
- **Yuppie**: n. [1977] a young urban professional
- **Homeslice**: n. close friend

How do these phrases specifically tie into the identity of Generation X? A notable term is a "fashion victim." This term arose directly from the new focus on individualism, with a slight angle toward collectivism. Calling someone a "fashion victim" usually was due to them not fitting into the status quo or what was considered mainstream because of their styling failures. As for a "McJob," there is another connection to individuality. Young people entered the workforce wherever they could so they could gain their own personal access to money without dependency on their families. "Plastic" ties into this with the development and spreading popularity of credit

cards. Spending is a direct expression of individualism because you can possess something of your choosing, as long as you pay interest, of course. “Yuppie” is another term referring more to the collectivism side of Generation X. Young urban professionals were on the rise in the corporate world, but to stay in that lifestyle without any deviation into the “fun” side of life, you would be seen as a number. As for our terms “homeslice” and “fuckload,” they are not specifically connected to the identity of Generation X, but rather a product of the time. “Homeslice” is very dated in comparison to the modern “homie” or “bro.” “Fuckload,” on the other hand, remains a popular term into the 2000s, showing the chance for longevity for any slang term. These examples show that even early modern slang reflected shifting values toward individualism, reinforcing the idea that language evolves alongside generational identity.

MILLENNIAL

Moving on to the children of Boomers and Generation X: Millennials. Millennials are considered the “most planned” generation of all time. Therefore, Millennials were instilled with a sense of self-importance very early in their childhood. Individualism and narcissism have become some of the defining traits of this generation. These traits stem from the idea that Millennials are very self-important and that it is “paramount” to their personality (Balon 281-282). This will further connect individuality in language, particularly slang among young people.

- **Emoticon**: n. [1990] a symbol made from punctuation marks, used to denote emotion; a portmanteau phrase combing the words emotion and icon
- **MILF**: n. [1992] a sexually appealing older mother

- **Wigger**: n. [1990] a white teenager who imitates the style of inner-city African Americans
- **Adulting**: v. to engage in an activity/behavior involving responsibility or decision-making, usually taken care of by fully developed adults
- **Basic**: adj. describes someone who is ordinary, unoriginal; interested in only mainstream or popular things
- **Shipping**: v. used to describe a potential romantic relationship between fictional characters, fan fiction, or celebrities, whether or not there is any romance between them

The terms chosen to represent the Millennials are from a widespread range of influences. "Emoticon," for example is part of the transition into the modern technological age. Emoticons, later leading to emojis for Generation Z, are a form of emotional expression in the online sphere for Millennials. The term "basic" is reminiscent of the individuality focus from Generation X. This term was developed to describe those who are "too" mainstream and have personality based on that. "Wigger" is another term used to describe a personality. This term is derived from hate speech used against African Americans and refers to white teens in the suburbs who try to mimic African American culture in a stereotypical way. "Adulting" was created because of the slow-life strategy in which Generation X began slowing down the time that they achieved life milestones such as getting a job or getting married. Therefore, "adulting" describes how that slow-life strategy expanded, now making formerly mundane life achievements into a bigger deal. "Basic" is a term used to describe basic personalities or fashion. As with Generation X, expression of individuality persisted, creating a need for a term for those who aren't expanding their horizons. Lastly, "shipping" is a term directly related to Millennials sharing interests with

one another. Liking characters from the same show or book with someone encourages one's imagination to expand, creating this new "shipping" facet as part of engaging oneself in pop culture. These terms demonstrate how technological and cultural shifts shaped not only communication styles but also reinforced identity within the generation, further separating them from others.

GENERATION Z

Generation Z is very different from previous generations in that they have grown up with modern technology for their entire lives. Especially considering the growth of social media; rates of teen self-harm, depression, and suicide are on the rise. Besides the points of technology and its negative influences, there are positive ones as well. Social media has given Generation Z the opportunity to have public, widespread discourse on gender, sexuality, and further discussions on openness. Generation Z also differs from prior generations in that they hold back on achieving typical milestones for their age, such as gaining licenses to drive, moving out of their parents' homes, and getting married. Many Gen Z's cling to a sense of emotional and physical safety by pushing back milestones and prioritizing personal comfort (Balon 282).

- **Cooked**: adj. used to describe a situation or person as being in serious trouble, exhausted or finished
- **Glaze**: v. to give excessive or insincere praise
- **Low-Key**: a little or subtly; not trying to make a big deal out of it

- **Rizz**: adj./n. social charm or smooth talk that makes someone good at flirting or making friends
- **SYBAU**: a harsh and aggressive command to tell someone to stop talking
- **Yapping**: v. to talk a lot about any variety of topics

(Slang Compass: Navigate Youth Culture)

The above terms selected to represent Generation Z were chosen because of their popularity on social media, where most of the terms originated. “Cooked” developed as part of Generation Z’s focus on emotional language, in this case, a feeling of exhaustion. “Glaze,” sometimes used in an insulting sense, reflects behavior that is insincere. Generation Z is a generation known for wanting genuine conversations, leading to the creation of this term. A more common related term is “Suck Up” with precisely the same definition. The term “Low-Key” is used in many different contexts among Generation Z. “Low-Key” tends to be used to describe emotions subtly. “Rizz” is a shortened version of the word “charisma.” “Rizz” is a good example of how a term can still sound like the original word it is based on, yet be confusing for older generations who do not use it. “SYBAU” stems from technology usage. It is similar to terms such as “LOL” or “LMFAO” in the way that it is an abbreviation. “SYBAU” is more literally defined as “Shut Your Bitch Ass Up.” Lastly, “Yapping” is a term used to describe when someone is spewing lots of words at once. This individual would be called a “Yapper.”

The rapid evolution and digital spread of these terms highlight how strongly slang now functions as both a unifier within the generation and a barrier to those outside it.

SLANG AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

Language is considered to be the most impactful tool for communication in an individual's social life. Language is needed for daily communication; therefore, it grows as a central part of socialization. Understanding a language's meaning ensures a connection from one person to another. Delivering a comprehensible message to one another achieves the goal of social connection and community expansion. Another component of this is understanding the language in both its written and oral forms. This ensures an even wider breadth of connection (Rosyadi Za 4). More importantly, what is slang's effect on social connection?

Slang allows groups to isolate and establish a particular identity based on the language that they use; but what do we mean by that? Using a particular phrase allows you to enter a community sphere with other individuals, especially if it is used correctly. We refer to these groups as in-groups. An in-group is a collection of individuals who share a common trait or interest as a part of who they are, language in this case, and connect strongly based on that shared factor (The Sociology Institute 2). For example, Generation Z grew -up in the age of the internet; therefore, they connect much faster through social media in comparison to generations that grew up without it. Where there is an in-group, there will also be an out-group. An out-group is a collection of individuals who are not a part of the in-group because they do not share the common interests, traits, or factors of that in-group. Out-groups may feel hostility to or distance from the in-group (The Sociology Institute 2). It can be hard to break into an in-group; therefore, if you fail to push through the barrier, it pushes you further into the out-group. Refer back to the dialogue between the mother and son example in the introduction.

In-groups and out-groups are separated in a multitude of different ways. Some groups may be split racially, by social status, educational achievement, or age. Over time, each generation develops these groups depending on their individual factors and events that shape

their perspectives. Examples of events and factors include wars, music, television, sports, nationality, religion, or family values. For example, family values are shown to differ in the age that people get married now compared to 50 years ago. Generation X began this trend by getting married later in life than their parents and grandparents. This could create an in-group of traditionalists versus non-traditionalists. Another example of the change of identity is the shift in music from the early 1900s to the early 2000s. Rather than stars like Louis Armstrong, as mentioned previously, we now have a wide variety of genres that were unthinkable then due to the evolution of technology. This could develop an in-group of those who prefer early jazz versus modern hip-hop. In either example, there is language that follows with both which helps to separate in-groups and out-groups. Refer to "DINK" under Generation X for a term based on family values or "Cut" under Historical Roots: 1920s-1930s for a term on music. Another notable in-group dynamic we must address is racial groups.

African Americans are one of the largest contributors to slang terminology in the United States (Reyes 509). Often times, other racial groups will appropriate slang created by African Americans into their dialect and it can be beneficial. Using African American slang serves as a way to interact with this racial group in a positive way (Reyes 509). However, when used inappropriately, it can turn into a disaster. Refer back to "Wigger" under Millennials for a reference of how slang appropriation is done in a distasteful way.

ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY & ITS TRANSITIONS

Now that we have reviewed three generational segments and their individual slang terminologies, let's review how slang has facilitated both an intergenerational divide and a shared generational identity among peer groups.

Firstly, let's investigate commonalities within each generation as separate entities that foster a sense of shared generational identity.

Generation X has a distinctive identity in comparison to the generations before them. The two prior generations, the silent generation and the baby boomers, evolved in very different circumstances to that of Generation X. The silent generation was "influenced by the post-World War II environment," (Monte and Ligacion 138) while the baby boomers grew up in a period of "transformative social movements, including civil rights and anti-war protests" (Monte and Ligacion 138). These generations focused on the impacts of war on the economy, family values, and politics, but Generation X comes in at a time after this strong sense of social justice. They are often referred to as the "slacker" generation (Monte and Ligacion 138). They were entering adolescence at a time of economic turmoil and the rise of new, modern technologies. This meant Generation X formed an early sense of adaptability and independence. Because of economic turmoil, Generation X is centered on a work-life balance and employer loyalty to sustain themselves. Not only this, but their independence attitude also reflects their views on politics. Many Generation Xers have a "hands-off approach" (Monte and Ligacion 138) in comparison to other generations before them concerning trust toward political institutions and their sense of responsibility (Monte and Ligacion 138). More important to this study, however, is how their language connects to this identity. Terms such as "McJob" stated earlier reflect their sense of economic independence in finding any job available to make an income. Other terms such as "voodoo economics" (Widawski, Twentieth Century Part Two 123) also refer to making money.

- **"Voodoo Economics**: n. [1980] unrealistic or vague economic policy" (Widawski, Twentieth Century Part Two 123)

Voodoo economics and McJob show further distrust in the economy that is associated with Generation X. There is a clear connection between how slang terminology reflects the identity of a generation. Not only will it help Generation X connect with one another but also be a reminder of the shared time they grew up in, creating an in-group among their generation.

Moving on to Millennials, we have a generation entering the digital age. Millennials are known for their activist movements towards environmental justice and equality. This activism is further propelled by a growing access to the internet during their time as adolescents and young adults. This is supported by "platforms like social media" (Monte and Ligacion 138) and their widespread ability to share information quickly. Not only this, but Millennials are continuing to expand the digital market through online shopping (Monte and Ligacion 137). Refer to terms like "emoticon" and others like "net" and "blogger" for more information related to Millennials and the growth of technology.

- **Net**: n. [1990] the Internet
- **Blogger**: n. [1999] someone who regularly writes opinions on one's webpage (Widawski, Twentieth Century Part Two 123-124)

The terms "net" and "blogger" are direct reflections of the millennial connection to the rise of the internet and internet culture. "Net" of course being the shortened version of "Internet" and "blogger" referring to someone who writes their opinions publicly on sites where others can view it. While the focus of millennials is the introduction to technology, they also show a transitional period from non-technology of Generation X to the digital age of Generation Z.

Generation Z is the "first generation to grow up with smartphones and social media as integral parts of daily life" (Monte and Ligacion 136). Generation Z has a particular quality about them due to the expansion of online communication. Generation Z focuses on "mental health awareness" (Monte and Ligacion 138) more than other generations. This tends to lead Generation Z to use emotional language and convert it into slang terminology to lessen the stigma around mental health (Monte and Ligacion 138; Citera, Spence and Spero 69). Some examples of terminology based on mental health or emotions are "Crash Out," "Delulu," and "Mid."

- **Crash Out:** to lose self-control and have a sudden, emotional outburst
- **Delulu:** playful way to say someone is unrealistically optimistic
- **Mid:** average or underwhelming

(Slang Compass: Navigate Youth Culture)

Each generation has its own shared identity and behavior based on its cultural events and upbringing. The explanations above for each generation, including their terminology, further express the connection between peers in each separate group. This begs the question; how does it create barriers among the different generations?

With each generation growing up in a different time, the culture and social settings that surrounded them, in my opinion, are guaranteed to create a different identity per each generation. Generation X comes in as the generation with a more "pragmatic approach to social issues," focusing on workplace loyalty and feelings of personal responsibility (Monte and Ligacion 138). Generation X also marks a period of economic distrust, focusing on the "divide between wealth and opportunity" (Monte and Ligacion 138). Millennials are a generation brought up during the transition to the digital age. Unlike Generation X, Millennials have more social responsibility

rather than personal responsibility, thinking more for the public (Monte and Ligacion 138). Generation Z has grown completely in the digital age, meaning their interactions are mostly digitally based. They are noted as speaking out on mental health and social activism (Monte and Ligacion 138). For Generation Z, technology has become a large advocacy platform, almost expanding upon the basis that Millennials created with social responsibility. Though many think Millennials and Generation Z may seem similar based upon this, there is a difference solely because of their familiarity with the Internet and what precautions were taught at the beginning of the digital age versus Gen Z's present time in the digital age. The digital age on its own is a notable reason for a divide among Millennials/Generation Z and Generation X. While there are many differences between the generations, understanding their language is vital to bridge the gap between them.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This research reviews how the evolution of slang reflects generational shifts in identity, acting as a cultural and social marker that strengthens bonds within age groups while alienating others. Generations X, Millennial, and Z are cohorts separated by their upbringing and, more importantly, the language that connects them. Generation X uses language that reflects economic instability, the work-life balance, and a pragmatic social approach. Millennials use language that introduces the digital age, social responsibility, and activism. Lastly, Generation Z uses language that reflects totality in the digital age, mental health awareness, and emotional connection. Though they are all different, generations can connect based on the language they use or appropriate from other generational in-groups. This must always be approached with caution, as

incorrect usage can launch an individual into the out-group, or unaffiliated outcasts, from the in-group. Connection should build through the spread of language, and therefore identity and culture as well.

However, a new point of research comes into question whether generations begin to connect with their language across the in-groups. If all generations begin using a singular slang term so commonly that it enters the general lexicon, is it still considered slang in the first place?

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