TEACHING THE ECHO BOOMER GENERATION: DOES ONE SIZE FIT ALL?

**Helena Czepiec and Juanita Roxas, College of Business Administration,
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Pomona, CA 91768;
hczepiec@csupomona.edu, jroxas@csupomona.edu**

**Lars Perner, Department of Marketing, Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California,
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0443; perner@marshall.usc.edu**

ABSTRACT

Echo Boomers are attending college in record numbers and many are choosing to major in business. Due to their large numbers and to the widespread belief that Echo Boomers require distinctive handling, they are having a big impact on higher education. However, they remain a puzzle to many of the faculty and administrators who try to teach them.

According to the literature, Echo Boomer learners are portrayed as self-confident, practical and results oriented, not interested in memorization, career-oriented, having short attention spans, easily bored, preferring to be judged on their effort rather than on their achievements, not necessarily wishing to be compared to others, more interested in learning how to do things rather than in memorizing facts, technically savvy, and stressed.

They like to learn by doing and experimentation, rather than in a more rule-based manner; through stories; in a team; and through pictures and interactive, multimedia presentations; and prefer to see the big picture rather than be bogged down in details.

This study attempts to determine how monolithic Echo Boomer learners really are with respect to their learning-related values and activities. It was based on a sample of 361 business students. Their responses were factor analyzed and a cluster analysis was performed on the results.

Four dimensions emerged for Echo Boomer learning-related values: (1) input versus output (egalitarianism); (2) academic drive (desire for learning); (3) practicality/career orientation (greed); and (4) stress/perceived overwhelmed. Two dimensions emerged for Echo Boomer learning activities: (1) non-computer-based, and (2) computer-based. The perceived learning effectiveness of various classroom activities were grouped along six factors: (1) computer-based learning; (2) blackboard-based learning; (3) project-based learning; (4) presentations; (5) traditional methods; and 6) applications.

Are all Echo Boomer learners the same with respect to values and behaviors as so much of the literature suggests, or do subgroups exist as has been shown in prior generations? Do the subgroups of Echo Boomers learn differently? Based on cluster analysis two clusters emerged. The first group seemed to reflect the hypothesized boomer values less than did the second one. Foreign born and Asian students were more likely to fall into the second cluster.

Differences among the clusters were significant on egalitarianism, perceived overwhelmed, desire for learning, and greed (values). Surprisingly there were no significant differences on computer versus non-computer-based learning activities. Both those who subscribed more to Echo Boomer values and those who did not learned similarly from computer-based learning, blackboard learning and applications. However, there were significant differences in perceived effectiveness of the following types of learning: project learning, presentation learning, and traditional methods. Those who identified more with Echo Boomer values seemed to learn more from group-oriented, interactive activities. This relationship also held true for presentation activities.

Those who did not hold Echo Boomer values as strongly as expected learned more from traditional activities.

References Available on Request