



Article

# Cognitive Thinking and Countermeasures on Generation Gap

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**Abstract:** The generation gap refers to the difference, opposition and conflict between two generations in the aspects of thought, values, behavior, life attitude, interests and hobbies. This paper holds that generation gap is a very normal social phenomenon. The survey found that the rapid changes in the social environment, the different experiences of the two generations and the differences in educational background will affect people's attitudes towards life, work and social issues, thus affecting interpersonal communication and even parent-child relationship. This paper proposes to improve communication skills and eliminate the barriers of generation gap.

**Key words:** generation gap; Influence; Communicate; Parent-child relationship.

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## 1. Theoretical framework: The social phenomenon of generation gap

In a broad sense, the generation gap refers to the psychological distance or psychological estrangement between the younger generation and the older generation in terms of ideological methods, values, life attitudes, interests and hobbies. It was proposed by American anthropologist M. Mead in his book *The Generation Gap* in the late 1960s. Narrowly refers to the psychological gap or psychological estrangement between parents and children. The generation gap mainly exists between the two generations of adults and young

people, and the differences between parents and children are not inevitable. As long as parents recognize the impact of cultural changes on their children and adjust their attitudes to their children accordingly, there will be no conflict between parents and children.

Western scholars have three popular opinions on the generation gap: First, represented by M. Mead, the generation gap is a social phenomenon that exists universally in human generation relations. The second is Douvan, who believes that there is no generation gap at all, but an illusory imagination created by people for scaremongering. The third is represented by American social psychologist Hill, who believes that there are differences, differences and conflicts between generations in thought, value orientation and moral concepts, which is undeniable, but there is also consistency in attitude and behavior, and this consistency is universal and frequent. Due to different times, environments and life experiences, two generations often have different views on reality and the future, which is within the range of mutual acceptance, without hostility and disrespect.

Generation gap refers to the differences, antagonisms and conflicts between two generations in ideas, values, behavior patterns, life attitudes, interests and hobbies. Due to the rapid changes in the social environment, the two generations have different experiences and different education, so people's attitudes towards life, work and social issues are bound to be different. The existence of generation gap is a normal social phenomenon.

## **2. Issues related: Influencing factors of generation gap**

There are many factors affecting the generation gap, which involve different stages of individual development, social and cultural background, education level, family environment and so on. The following is a detailed analysis of these influencing factors:

The first Influencing factor: Growth stage

Individuals will experience physiological and psychological changes in different stages of growth, especially in adolescence, the enhancement of independent consciousness and self-centered tendency will aggravate the concept difference between parents, thus forming a generation gap.

The second influencing factor: social and cultural background

Different social and cultural environments will have different influences on individuals. For example, in the era of rapidly developing information technology, there are significant differences between the younger generation and the older generation in receiving and processing information, which may lead to the formation of a generation gap.

The third influencing factor: education level

Differences in education levels affect individuals' cognitive abilities, ways of thinking and values, which may create differences between generations and exacerbate the generation gap.

The fourth influencing factor: family environment

Family education mode, communication mode, parent-child relationship and so on will affect the formation of the generation gap. For example, a family atmosphere of openness and communication may help narrow the generation gap, while a family environment of closure and lack of communication may exacerbate the generation gap.

The fifth Influencing factor: social changes

Rapid changes in society lead to changes in lifestyle and values, which may be difficult to share immediately between generations, thus forming a generation gap.

The sixth Influencing factor: personal experiences

Each person's unique experiences influence the formation of their world view and values, and these experiences may differ between generations, forming a generation gap.

The seventh Influencing factor: psychological and physiological factors

As people grow older, their psychology and physiology will change, and these changes may also affect the formation of the generation gap.

The eighth influencing factor: values and beliefs

Personal values and beliefs also influence the generation gap. Different beliefs and values may lead to differences between generations, exacerbating the generation gap.

In general, the above factors affecting the generation gap are very complex, which involves multiple levels of individuals and society. Understanding and recognizing these influencing factors will help us better deal with and solve the generation gap problem.

### **3. Action research: Generation gap and parent-child communication**

As an important key to maintain intimate relationship, communication is also the core issue of whether the generation gap between the two generations leads to conflict and damages the relationship between the two generations. In a survey of 2,001 respondents conducted by the Social Survey Center of China Youth Daily, 75.4 percent felt their parents were too dominant. The two main signs that respondents think parents are too strong are refusing to communicate (55.2%) and controlling (53.3%), and parents think they have the right to read their children's diaries is a typical sign.

As for the question "is there a communication barrier between parents", the survey results show that 41.67% of the surveyed students believe that there is indeed a communication barrier between parents. But at this time, as the younger generation of children, they are eager to be able to achieve good communication with their parents in an equal attitude.

According to the survey of middle school students and their parents aged 12-17 in cities and counties of Jilin Province, most children have the willingness to actively communicate with their parents and about 90% of children are willing to actively discuss their own matters with their parents.

Action research is a research method that aims to solve practical problems through reflection and practical action. On the topic of generation gap, action research can be used to explore and resolve differences and conflicts between generations. Here are some steps for action research on the generation gap.

Step 1 Determine the research question

First of all, it is necessary to clarify the specific manifestation and impact of the generation gap, such as parent-child communication barriers, differences in values, and different education methods.

Step 2 Design and implement an action plan

Design and implement specific action plans based on research issues. For example, parent-child communication activities can be carried out, inter-generational dialogue and communication can be organized, or educational activities can be carried out within the family.

#### Step 3 Collect data

In the process of implementing the action plan, relevant data and information should be collected, for example, data on inter-generational communication and interaction patterns should be collected through questionnaires, interviews or observations.

#### Step 4 Analysis and reflection

Analyze the collected data to understand the effects of the action plan, identify problems and challenges, and reflect. For example, the participation of parent-child communication activities and the quality of intergenerational interaction were analyzed.

#### Step 5 Adjust and optimize the action plan

According to the results of analysis and reflection, the action plan is adjusted and optimized. For example, based on feedback from parent-child communication activities, improve the way the activities are designed and implemented.

#### Step 6 Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of changes work well in the generation gap and the long-term effects of action research. For example, regular questionnaires or interviews are conducted to understand the latest situation of the generation gap.

Through the action research of the above steps, we can better understand and solve the generation gap problem, promote the understanding and communication between the generations, and establish a more harmonious family relationship.

### **4. Generation gap attribution: misperception leads to communication failure**

The root cause of this communication problem between elders and juniors lies in the "imposition" of ideas under the authority of paternalism. The difference between elders and juniors is only a generational difference, but Chinese parents, influenced by traditional concepts, tend to have a wrong perception that they have the right to control and dominate everything of the juniors, and try to impose their own ideas on the juniors, which leads to problems.

According to a survey of 3,328 people conducted by the Social Survey Center of China Youth Daily through China Yahoo and Public Opinion China.org.cn, 76.5 percent of the respondents said there are a lot of parents who interfere excessively with their children, with 32.4 percent saying there are a lot of parents, and 90.2 percent of the respondents feel that such parents exert great pressure on their children.

Because of the natural authority of the elders, they want to impose their own social needs and life concepts on the younger generation, so as to cultivate the younger generation who meet their expectations in their hearts. It is such an unequal communication relationship that makes the way of communication unreasonable. Some inter-generational differences, under the mode of communication suppressed and mastered by the elders, are easy to intensify into

contradictions, antagonism and conflict, and eventually form an insurmountable generation gap between the two sides.

Attribution about Negative communication triggers emotional problems as following:

Paternalistic authority means that in the family, the parents (usually the father or parents) have the decision-making power, control and dominance, and family members (especially children) need to obey the authority of the parents. In such a family model, parents have high expectations and requirements for their children's words and deeds, and their children's autonomy and personality may be limited.

Children who grow up under the authority of their parents will have difficulty forming good positive communication habits. According to a study by the American Psychological Association, the way parents communicate is strongly linked to their children's emotional problems. Studies have found that children who experience negative communication styles (such as criticism, blame, apathy, etc.) in their home environment are more likely to develop emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, and behavioral problems.

It is precisely because children grow up in such families that they lack the ability to cultivate good communication with their parents, so there are obstacles and difficulties when the differences between the two sides should be eased through communication rather than intensified. In the final analysis, this difficulty is because the elders in the process of the formation and cultivation of children's communication ability is missing or misleading. The generation gap is formed due to the strong attributions of the two parents

Under the patriarchal authority, the generation gap may be forced out for the following reasons:

Example 1st: Limits from autonomy

In families with patriarchal authority, children's autonomy may be limited and they need to act according to their parents' expectations and regulations, which may lead to the children's inner needs and ideas being ignored, resulting in a generation gap with their parents.

Example 2nd: Lack of communication

Paternalistic authority may lead to inadequate communication between parents and children. Parents may pay too much attention to their children's studies and grades, while ignoring their children's inner world and emotional needs, which may lead to the formation of a generation gap.

Example 3rd: Values difference

Under the patriarchal authority, parents may impose their own values and beliefs on their children, while ignoring the formation and growth of their children's independent thinking and values, which may lead to the generation gap.

Example 4th: Role stereotypes

Patriarchal authority may reinforce gender role stereotypes, for example, boys may be expected to take on family responsibilities and girls may be expected to focus on housework and caring for younger siblings. This stereotype may lead to a generation gap between children and their parents.

Example 5th: Educational strategies

Under the patriarchal authority, parents may place too much emphasis on academic achievements and neglect their children's interests and hobbies, which may cause children to lose enthusiasm for learning, resulting in a generation gap with their parents.

### **5 Problems solving: Application of Mental Hygiene and Psychological Counseling**

In order to reduce the generation gap under patriarchal authority, schools should encourage parents to develop the following methods.

Method 1st: Enhance communication

Establish good communication channels with your children, pay attention to their inner needs and emotions, and respect their opinions and ideas.

Method 2nd: Encourage autonomy

Give children some autonomy, encourage them to make decisions according to their own interests and abilities, and cultivate their independence.

Method 3rd: Respect values

Respect your children's values and beliefs, engage in intergenerational dialogue with your children, and try to understand and accept their perspectives.

Method 4th: Eliminating Stereotypes

Children are encouraged to pursue their own interests and career goals, regardless of gender, with equal support and opportunities.

Method 5th: Diversified education

Pay attention to the all-round development of children, in addition to academic results, they should also pay attention to their interests, moral character and social skills.

Through the above methods, parents can establish a more harmonious relationship with their children and reduce the generation gap under the authority of the patriarchal system.

### **6. Strategies and suggestions: Understand communication and empathy**

To sum up, understanding, communication and empathy are key factors in bridging the generation gap. Here are some suggestions on how to reduce the generation gap through these factors:

Suggestion 1st: Enhance understanding

Try to understand the other person's point of view and feelings, and try to see things from the other person's point of view.

Understanding the different backgrounds and social environments in which generations grow up helps to understand each other's behaviors and attitudes and to increase awareness of cultural differences between generations through education and learning.

Suggestion 2nd: Promote communication

Establish an open communication environment that encourages both parties to express their thoughts and feelings.

Use active listening techniques, such as nodding your head, maintaining eye contact, and repeating words to show that you're paying attention and to resolve differences through dialogue and discussion, not bickering and finger-pointing.

Suggestions 3rd: Cultivate empathy:

Try to feel the other person's emotions and put yourself in their shoes.

Offer support when the other person is experiencing difficulties or setbacks, showing care and understanding.

Creating an emotional connection through shared experiences and stories helps increase mutual understanding and empathy.

Suggestions 4th: Respect differences:

Respect the other person's personality and choices, and don't belittle or mock them even if you disagree with them.

Avoid using stereotypes and prejudices to judge each other, but instead base it on facts and facts.

Suggestion 5th: Joint activities:

Engaging in shared activities, such as cooking together, exercising, or traveling, can help increase understanding and intimacy.

Connect through shared goals and interests, such as working on a project together or participating in an interest group.

Suggestions 6th: Education and guidance:

Parents should teach their children how to be independent and responsible individuals, while also guiding them to understand the expectations of families and society.

Children should also learn from their parents' experience and wisdom and respect their parents' lifestyle and values.

Fulfilling above suggestions, parents and children can better understand each other, reduce misunderstandings and conflicts through effective communication, and build deeper emotional connections through empathy. In this way, the generation gap can be gradually narrowed, so as to establish a more harmonious family relationship.

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