

Ok, Boomer: Intergenerational Relations and Unsolicited Advice

by Alp Ünal Ayhan

“Ok, Boomer” marks the end of friendly generational relations, says Taylor Lorenz on the New York Times. There is a significant truth to that, as there is a growing negative sentiment against older generations among the late Millennials and Zoomers. This is mainly due to the deepening inequalities, increasing exposure of existing disparities, differences in attitude towards different social groups, and the conflicting views on global climate change. Especially Zoomers blame older generations for creating and sustaining a world order of social and economic systems that is not fit for them and refusing to change it despite the younger generations emerging as it benefits them.

I guess this is a good time to say this anger and bitterness directed towards Boomers and Gen X’ers is not a resentment against elderly people in general. Some members of older generations, arguing in bad faith, are quick to brush calls for accountability off as ageist. Nevertheless, members of younger generations tend to think they are the ones that will live with the consequences of the older generations’ actions and it is righteous of them to question the behavior of past generations.

Generational tensions have always existed. Newer generations have always replaced older ones with more progressive ideals and principles. We have seen this become pronounced as Millennials grew up and encountered a world that was not really built for them. They became the first generation to earn less than their predecessors, despite being part of the workforce that is the most productive ever¹. Between struggling to house themselves, building their families and trying to stay afloat in a worsening job market and economy, they deviated from a lot of norms and standards older generations held. In the middle of these generational clashes the Generation Z arrived, which is even more deviant and even readier to challenge the rules, structures and systems the older generations worked so hard to build and maintain. As the first generation that grew up with the Internet from the start, with income and wealth equality skyrocketing in the last few decades, climate change becoming the climate crisis and the unsustainability of certain social systems, Zoomers are less willing to take advice from older generations about politics, the economy, social issues and personal relationships.

If you are a person that is online, you must have witnessed this tension by yourself. It is a play in two parts: Boomers getting involved in Zoomer discourse generally with snarky remarks or a piece of outdated advice and receiving a clapback that includes “Ok, Boomer.” Depending on the place it can drag on to become an endless Twitter fight or rarely it can

¹ [CNBC make it, "Millennials earn 20% less than baby boomers did—despite being better educated". Accessed October 2020.](#)

end in agreement and understanding of other generations. Even though arguments between members of different generations are very common online, you do not need to look very far to see some examples offline. Think about all the times your parents or grandparents gave you advice on something you already knew about. The times when a random person on a bus told you to lose or gain weight. All the times you felt humiliated as a member of a marginalized group in front of a group of old people debated your existence with you.

While I am by no means endorsing rebelling against your parents, cussing out your grandparent or being rude to elderly people online or offline, would not you think it would be better if we listened to advice from the generation that failed to address so many of the problems we face today, and has fundamental differences in ways of thought and worldviews from us?