

# SPECTRUM

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## Metanoia

# Boomers and thirteeners

by John Valk

Alexis de Tocqueville, a 19th C. French statesman and social philosopher, once stated that "among democratic nations each generation is a new people." That observation is shared by Neil Howe and William Strauss. However, in their article, "The New Generation Gap" (Atlantic Monthly, Dec. '92), they claim that an increasing chasm and tension is emerging between two current generations. Baby Boomers, those born in the years 1943-60, appear to differ radically with Thirteeners, those born in the years 1961-81, when it comes to ideals, morals and goals.

The authors state that the Boomers were the most indulgent children of the present century. They entered their teens on the wave of a golden era, emulated the Beatles, staged university sit-ins, advocated unrestricted sex, booze and drugs, and brought the Vietnam War to an end. As they currently enter mid-life, their tune changes somewhat. Today they are "obsessed with values, back-to-basics movements, ethical rectitude, political correctness, harsh punishment and a yearning for the simple life." In stark contrast to the generation before them, they seek to redirect public institutions to what they consider a socially redemptive purpose. According to them, crime and poverty require serious attention; health and education serious redirection.

Thirteeners, on the other hand, are that emerging generation — thirteenth to know the U.S. flag and Constitution — which lack not only a precise label, but everything the Boomers value. Alternately called "Generation X", "Xers", "Baby Busters", "posties", (as in post-yuppies), they exalt a physical frenzy spiritual numbness, a revelry of pop, a pursuit of high-tech and guiltless fun. Theirs, according to the authors, is a carnival culture of bottom lines: only, bodies and brains. They shade their eyes with Ray-ban Wayfarers, cover their ears with Walkman's bleating heaving metal, alternative rock and rap, are academically non-inclined, politically non-interested, flirt with suicide, see "wilding" as recreation and face date-rape trials.

The emerging gap, or hostility, state the author, occurs because Boomers, whom critics call smug, narcissistic, self-righteous, intolerant and puritanical, cannot understand, let alone accept, the cynicism, pragmatism, moral ambivalence and alienation of the Thirteeners. Thirteeners, on the other hand, realize that they live in an entirely different world, where learning survival skills may be the best education they can get. Most alarming is their sense that they are products of a generation that did not want them.

In a few short decades North Americans went from a family culture of "My Three Sons" to one of "My Two Dads." As more mothers demanded space in the workplace, more toddlers required space in daycare. Adults saw, for the first time, not children but careers, automobiles, monster homes, boats, vacations and clothing as necessary for "the good life." Birth control, abortion, sterilization, affairs, separations and divorce consumed domestic conversations. "Latchkey Kids" boomerang children" became common but ugly new phrases in teen lexicons, as did public debt, down-sizing and restricted enrollment. Thirteeners were born into a child-hostile nation enamoured with over-consumption in a sea wash with affluence. Also for the first time, theirs will be the generation which will not only not outpace their parents, but will be lucky just to keep up. What is their greatest obstacle: "those damn Boomers"?

There is an increasing number of Boomers returning to university. On some campuses their numbers

may exceed 35% of the student body. At UNB, where some refer to themselves as "Zoomers", they meet Thirteeners in and outside the classroom.

Having grown up in a period that was also supposedly experiencing a "generation gap", I came quickly to realize that the problem was really one of communication. If indeed an increasing chasm is emerging between Boomers and Thirteeners, then here at UNB, an institution where we learn to communicate, a golden opportunity is at hand for two generations to come together and talk to each other. Perhaps the *Brunswickan* could serve as a forum for such discussion.

Communication via the printed media, valuable in itself, will not be sufficient however. What is most valuable is face-to-face exchange: people simply talking to, not past, each other. Perhaps the discussions could begin over spaghetti — every Friday, 5:00 PM, Monte Peter's Residence, Apartment #2, Bridges House. Boomers and Thirteeners are welcome.

GENERATION GAPS/ They usually occur due to a lack of communication, yet here at UNB there is a golden opportunity for two generations to come together and talk.

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## The Wimmin's Room

# Are you a feminist?

EDUCATION/ It should be geared towards reducing violence against women and eliminating sexism.

by Debbie Bartlett

Four years ago I decided to enroll in university because I felt that the domestic role I was engaged in was becoming too restrictive and routine (I mean how many times a week can you scrub the floors). At that time in my life if anyone had asked me if I was a feminist, I would have answered "No Way". After all I didn't go out and burn my bra (not that anyone would have noticed any difference if I had), I wasn't a man-hater, and I didn't participate in any marches or rallies supporting the feminist cause.

Now, four years later, if I am asked, "Are you a feminist?" I would have to respond "YES DEFINITELY". You may wonder what brought about this change, in fact that very question has been on my mind lately, so I decided to share a few of the reasons for this change with you throughout this column.

There has been two different types of influences which I can identify as helping me realize and accept that I am a feminist. First there has been the courses I have taken at university including Arts 1000, a couple of History courses, in particular, the Witches and Heretics course, and most of the Sociology courses, with the greatest influences coming from Soci 1000, White Collar Crime and Criminology. In the White Collar Crime course, I researched a paper on the

Dalkon shield, an IUD manufactured by A.H. Robbins in the early 1970's. The research showed that over 100,000 women became victims of this device, and they suffered; impairment or loss of child bearing ability, pelvic infections, defective babies, unwanted abortions, persistent pain, and in some cases death, all because they chose a form of birth control that they assumed was safe. I came away from that paper with the feeling that if it had been men who had suffered these types of injuries from a manufacturer's device, people would still be talking about what a tragedy it was. But the course that had the greatest influence on me accepting the fact that I am a feminist was the Criminology course I took from Sandy Wachholz. It was in this class that I was exposed to real feminist theories, written from a feminist perspective. Sure I knew there were feminists out there, after all I heard about Gloria Steinem, but it was this course that made me really look at the things that women were saying and writing.

On campus I have been influenced by a few individuals who made me realize that I am a feminist. First there has been Rita Hurley, she is one of those individuals who has that special gift of expressing her views in such a way that you have to agree with her. Another individual that has helped me along this journey towards feminism is Valerie Kilfoil, even though

I don't always agree with her views on things, she has been responsible for making me consider a few issues which I otherwise would not have even considered. Valerie also earns my respect for being an individual who is not afraid to bring controversial issues out into the open where they belong, and she earns my respect for helping to organize activities that have recognized the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and for her recent involvement in helping to organize activities that celebrate International Women's Week, in early March. The last individual here on campus that has helped me accept and embrace my new found feminism is Sandy Wachholz, who exposed me to my first examination of feminist theory, and she has always been there for me when I tried to track down other theories and writings.

There has also been one man who has helped me realize that I am a feminist. As strange as this choice may seem to some people, but the man that has helped me discover my feminism has been, Marc Lepine and his slaughter of fourteen women in Montreal on December 6, 1989. To think that women would be killed because they were working towards earning a university degree like me really hit home. After all I am doing the same thing as those women, and to make things even seem worse for me, was the

fact that I had left the very place that individuals like Lepine believed women should stay, The Home!

I have often wondered what can be done to change the prevailing stereotypes and attitudes in society that seems to lead to abuse. I agree with the idea that education should be geared towards reducing violence against women and eliminating sexism and socially imposed gender limitations. Individuals also need to be taught techniques of peaceful conflict resolution.

I agree with the statements of David Kilgour, a M.P. from Alberta, who states:

As I speak now I refer to men in this audience and beyond, all who have not yet fully accepted women as equal partners in all walks of life must critically examine our own latent prejudices, sexism and out-dated attitudes. The problems of violence is not a women's issue, it is society's issue in general and a man's issue in particular. We cannot legislate attitudes, but we can work to get them changed. It will be in the interest of all. (*Victims of Violence Report*, 1992, p. 34)

To those individuals who have helped me believe that being a feminist is nothing I have to be ashamed of, Thank You.