

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review summarizes and analyzes the topic, research questions, and hypothesis. The key topics are an introduction to Gen Z, and how members of this generation learn and use DM, an exploration of DM within graduate education, and the identification of gaps in the literature with questions for further study. Although current research on CBTE graduate degrees and Gen Z are non-existent,²⁹ which highlights a significant gap in current scholarship, there are numerous resources on DM and Gen Z that provide principles for and insights into the discussion. In most books, articles, and other sources focused on such topics as how to minister to Gen Z students, reaching the next generation, and leadership training.³⁰ For instance, a Google Scholar search for the term “competency based theological education” revealed three relevant items, two of which are dissertations.³¹

²⁹ There is a growing body of literature on CBE (competency-based education) and higher education., but in this research, the researcher did not encounter any sources engaging specifically with CBE and graduate education.

³⁰ For example, in Google Scholar, the terms “digital media and education” had over 5,200 hits. Also, the term “digital natives” had over 149,000 hits using Google Scholar, and the term “Gen Z” resulted in over 37,000 results. Thus, there are too many publications on digital media, Gen Z, and other terms available online to be discussed in a brief literature review. The researcher researched over one hundred articles, websites, blogs, books, and more and reached a saturation point of discovering similar themes and oft quoted scholars in the field that help engage with my qualitative findings, highlight the gaps in current research, and present some intriguing questions for further study.

³¹ The two dissertations are Karla Lousie McGehee, “Exploring the Perception of and Experience with Competency-Based Theological Education Among Select Senior Administrators, Faculty, and Students: A Case Study,” (PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2019), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, <http://www.proquest.com/openview/e8265f910ba41fa4fec8c9952c8f9621/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>, and Andrew Christian Pack, “Spiritual Formation in the Context of Seminary-Level Distance Competency-Based Theological Education,” EdD thesis, (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 2021), <https://hdl.handle.net/10392/6587>.

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Chapter two is divided into six sections. First, an outline of the process of finding sources to include in the literature review is presented. Second, a snapshot of Gen Z is provided to familiarize the reader with the upcoming generation of learners and leaders. Third, some key sources on how Gen Z students learn based on research from undergraduate HE studies are reviewed. Fourth, the predominate learning platform used by Gen Z (YouTube) is summarized. Fifth, the scholarly gaps in the literature are reviewed. Sixth, some questions are presented for further study and how the review connects to this project is discussed.

The research discovers sources discussing the benefits of social media use in the classroom, how to engage with Gen Z students in HE, and how to use technology in HE for connecting with Gen Z students. Thus, the review is focused on Gen Z and technology from an HE foundation, as these are the students who are entering graduate CBTE programs or will enter them soon. Knowing how Gen Zers learn, can help shape future iterations of CBTE graduate programs or address any deficiencies present in the current program. Although the amount of research on CBTE and Gen Z is limited, this research provides an opportunity to address this gap. Thus, it adds to the discussion on preparing CBTE graduate programs for Gen Z students entering seminary education.

Several themes emerged in the literature review, as well as identification of the key scholars in the literature on Gen Z and HE. Some themes that arose from the research, are heutagogy or self-directed learning,³² the prevalence of YouTube for learning, collaboration and collaborative learning, intrapersonal learning, and applied learning. Further, the terms “digital immigrants” and “digital natives” are prevalent in much of the literature when discussing Gen Z.

³² This term will be discussed later in the chapter.

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Process of Finding Sources

This DMin project began with a question sparked from a book review of Schnackenberg and Johnson's *Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z*³³ that the researcher wrote in 2019. At the time, the researcher was not enrolled in the DMin program. Yet, the question percolated in his mind as it pertained to the future of CBTE. Although Schnackenberg and Johnson's book is about undergraduate students, the researcher thought the questions and topics the contributors discuss could apply to graduate students, particularly to those enrolled in the CBTE programs at Northwest Seminary and enrolled in programs offered at ACTS Seminaries and other ATS schools. The CBTE degree programs at Northwest are operating well and attract new students every year. However, a nagging question remains: "Are these programs prepared for the upcoming Gen Z students entering graduate education in the next three to five years?" The research questions and hypothesis in this DMin project aim to answer this important question.

The sources included in this review were selected to deepen an understanding of DM usage and Gen Z students and how to apply this knowledge in the graduate CBTE program context. Books and articles on social media, DM, and Gen Z abound beyond this project. Consequently, it would be impractical to investigate all the DM tools, methods, or shortfalls of technology and Gen Z in the current literature. Rather, this project seeks to discover areas that are working in CBTE for Gen Z students, identify areas of improvement discovered in the literature, and highlight some gaps for future research. An important part of the literature review

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³³ Eric Fehr, "Preparing the Higher Education Space for Gen Z," *The Wabash Center Journal on Teaching*, vol 2 (1), 2021: 284, <https://doi.org/10.31046/wabashcenter.v2i2.2894>.

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is an introduction to Gen Z and how members of this generation learn, which frames the conversation and guides which literature is reviewed in this chapter.

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A Brief Introduction

Defining a generation is difficult, but not impossible. However, one must be careful of assigning labels to people or a generation, as the label does not always apply, as shown in the qualitative findings in chapter four. “A word of caution,” notes Williams, “[t]he use of generational frameworks as a lens to anticipate unique learning needs is not new. While Gen Zers may share certain identities, values, and beliefs, individual differences need to be validated. Like a taxonomy, generational frameworks are a *lens* and not a *label*.”³⁴ Williams offers a good reminder that while a group of people born in a particular time frame may share common values and so forth, individuals matter. The findings in this project highlight this reality, but now seen through a lens mindset as highlighted by Williams.

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One lens that helps us to understand a generation are the moments in history that help define a generation and set the trajectory for their goals, values, and worldview.³⁵ The exact years where these generations are placed in history is debatable, but each generation falls within a certain zone of time from the 1900s to the present. The Silent Generation had World War I, the Baby Boomers had the 1960s, and the Hippies had Vietnam, and the assassination of J.F. Kennedy. Gen X is defined by the rise of the personal computer, the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, glam metal, Michael Jackson, the AIDS epidemic, and latchkey kids. According to

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³⁴ Williams, 59–60. Emphasis from the original article.

³⁵ Pew Research Center, “The Whys and Hows of Generations Research,” [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/), September 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2015/09/03/the-whys-and-hows-of-generations-research/>.

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Blakemore, “Generation X has been called ‘the latchkey generation,’ a group of people whose personal identity was in part shaped by the independence of being left alone after school.”³⁶ The Millennials followed with the development of the internet and the iPod and iPhone³⁷ on January 9, 2007. Then Generation Z, or iGen, emerged. This is a generation that has lived without ever knowing a time without the internet, are highly connected, and are experiential.³⁸ Some other characteristics of the Gen Z generation found in current research are they are self-sufficient, value trust and fairness, believe storytelling is a part of learning, focus on building skills, are creative, are hands-on, have high expectations, are pragmatic, and are self-informed.³⁹ This is a generation raised in a politically volatile world with increased social unrest, the War on Terror (which started with 9/11), and the economic collapse in 2008, a part of their lives.⁴⁰ Live-streaming, streaming services, and social media are the norm for this generation.

What defines Gen Z besides being born in a certain time in history? The answer to this question is explored in the next section.

³⁶ Erin Blakemore, “The Latchkey Generation: How Bad Was it?” *JSTOR Daily* (blog), November 9, 2015, accessed January 9, 2023, <https://daily.jstor.org/latchkey-generation-bad/>. Latchkey kids were children in the 1980s who tended to wear their house keys on a shoelace around their neck (such as the researcher).

³⁷ History.com Editors, “Steve Jobs Debuts the iPhone.” History.com, Last modified January 7, 2020, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/steve-jobs-debuts-the-iphone>. Also, Popova (“Teaching Generation Z.” 29) outlines the major generations of Silent Generation (1923–1943), Baby Boomers (1943–1963), Generation X (1963–1984), Millennials or Generation Y (1984–2000), and Generation Z (2000).

³⁸ Dana Schwieger and Christine Ladwig, “Reaching and Retaining the Next Generation: Adapting to the Expectations of Gen Z in the Classroom,” *Information Systems Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (June 2018): 46–48, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1179303.pdf>.

³⁹ Schwieger and Ladwig, 46–48. See also Szymkowiak et al., 1–10, and Elena Cickovska, “Understanding and Teaching Gen Z in Higher Education,” *Horizon Series A* 26 (2020): 275–290, <https://doi.org/10.20544/horizons.A.26.3.20.P22>.

⁴⁰ Schwieger and Ladwig, 46; Billy Wilson, *Generation Z: Born for the Storm* (Tulsa: Empowered Books, 2021), 30.

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