

The Angle Society: The future is now

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The E. H. Angle Society was born on November 17, 1930 at the Lake Shore Club in Chicago.¹ But the history of the Society had started much earlier as reported by Dr. George W. Hahn in his classic 1955 paper entitled "The History and Philosophy of the Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontia." The Society originated from the desire of Angle School graduates to carry forward Dr. Edward H. Angle's legacy. Twenty-two of the former members of the 1922 Edward H. Angle Society of Orthodontia established the Society with four components (Eastern, Midwest, Northern California and Southern California). The two most recent components to be added were the Northwest Component (March 1947) and the North Atlantic Component (seceded from the Eastern Component in 1964).

Today, the Angle Society is truly international with members in many countries around the world. It is currently 629 members strong and the membership has been stable over the past few years. As we reflect on the rich heritage of the E. H. Angle Society of Orthodontists (EHASO), we cannot resist asking the two questions that Dr. George Hahn asked twelve of his members over 50 years ago: "Why should there be an Angle Society?" and "What does the Angle Society mean to you?"¹ A composite of the replies included the following: "The Angle Society should continue to live because it means there is an ideal over and above the average that is worth living and striving to attain. There is in the society a fellowship, not as the word is commonly used, but a fellowship in which there is no selfishness, no jealousy, no deceit, but an honesty of purpose in which every man is held in that esteem which gives him a feeling of pride tempered by humility...There is an inspiration that comes from personal contact with men whose object is not self-glorification but a willingness to give freely of what they have learned with only the thought of helping others..."¹

Our membership is at a crossroads and how we choose to embrace current societal change will determine and shape the Angle Society for the next 50 years. Perhaps, a better understanding of the membership of our profession and our specialty can help us define our goals for the future.

The gender and the age of our professional and specialty memberships are shifting. The number of

women and minorities entering dental school continues to increase. Women comprised 46.0% of the dental school applicants and 45.1% of the enrollees in 2011.² Minorities comprised 13.4% of the dental school applicants and 12.9% of the enrollees during the same period. Data from the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) shows that 21.1% of orthodontists are currently women. In terms of age, the composition of our specialty's membership reflects the changes that are seen in the current workforce. For the first time in its history, our specialty recruits members from three different generations: Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1979) and Generation Y or Millennials (1979 to present). In 2007, 37% of the AAO members were Baby Boomers and 36% were Gen-Xers.³ In 2013, a shift in the membership of the AAO has been observed as the first of the Baby Boomers have started to retire. The number of AAO members that are Baby Boomers is slowly decreasing (31.3%) and the number of AAO members that are Gen-Xers has increased to 41.9% (Fig. 1 is provided by the AAO).³ The number of AAO members that are Millennial has also increased to 6.9% in 2013.³

The distribution of the EHASO membership is represented in Fig. 2 (data provided by the E. H. Angle Society of Orthodontists) and the striking features of this diagram include the large cohorts of Active members (49%) and Senior Active/Retired members (41%) and the relatively small cohort of Affiliate members (future Active members) (13%).

The challenge for our components is to communicate the ideals of our society and successfully recruit new members who share the ideals of the Angle Society that are most likely to be Gen-Xers or Millennials. So, let us look at some of the generational differences and commonalities that exist among our members and use those attributes to strengthen our membership recruitment.

The Baby Boomer generation (born from 1946 to 1964) was, until 2011 (first Baby Boomers retiring), the largest cohort in the workforce of the United States with the well-known attributes of loyalty and competitive workaholicism.^{4,5} This generation was shaped by historical events such as the economic growth that followed World War II, the Kennedy and King assassinations, The Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War and

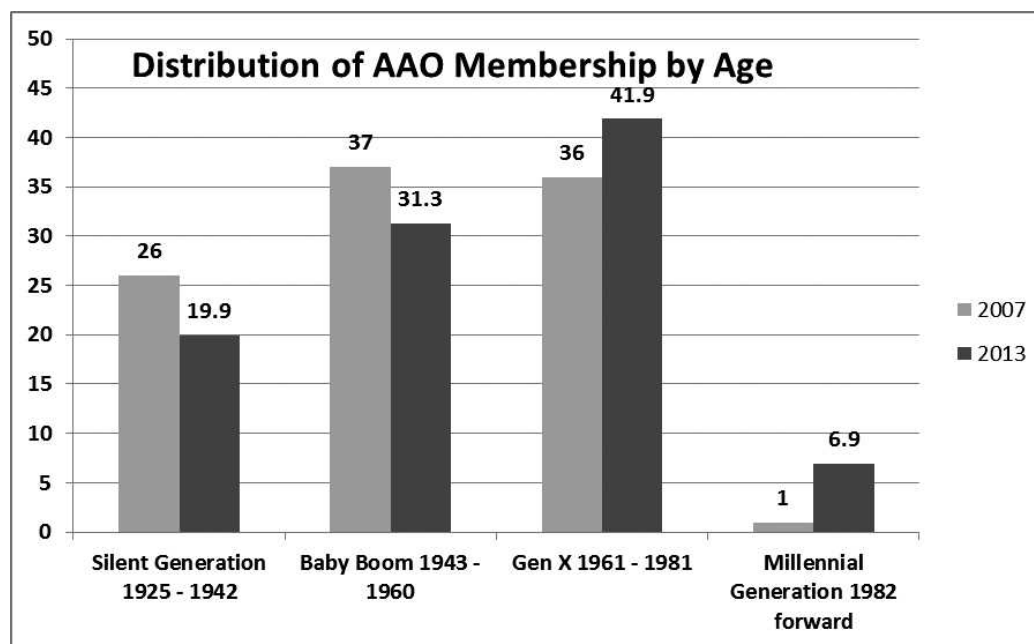


Figure 1. Distribution (%) of the AAO membership by age and generations. (Provided by the AAO, July 2013).

Watergate. The Baby Boomers grew up with financial security for their families and at a time of unprecedented economic growth and they currently hold positions of critical decision-making and management.^{4,5} In 2011, the first of the Baby Boomers started to retire and the number of Gen-Xers started to increase in the workforce. The Gen-Xers (born between 1965–1979), and often referred as the “latch-key” kids, grew up in families with dual working parents, experienced financial downsizing, outsourcing, the rise of the AIDS epidemic and rapid societal changes. These events shaped the Gen-Xers as being self-reliant, fun loving and independent,

and highly conscious of maintaining balance between family and work.^{4,5} They are creative and entrepreneurial and are often disconnected from the Baby Boomers. As a result, they are the “forgotten” generation sandwiched between Baby Boomers and Millennials.

The last generation currently entering our workforce and membership pool is the Gen-Y (1980-to present) or Millennials. The Gen-Yers were probably the most wanted generation of the 20th century, resulting in very tight bonds with their families and their Baby Boomer parents. These Millennials have grown in an era of unprecedented economic expansion unlike their

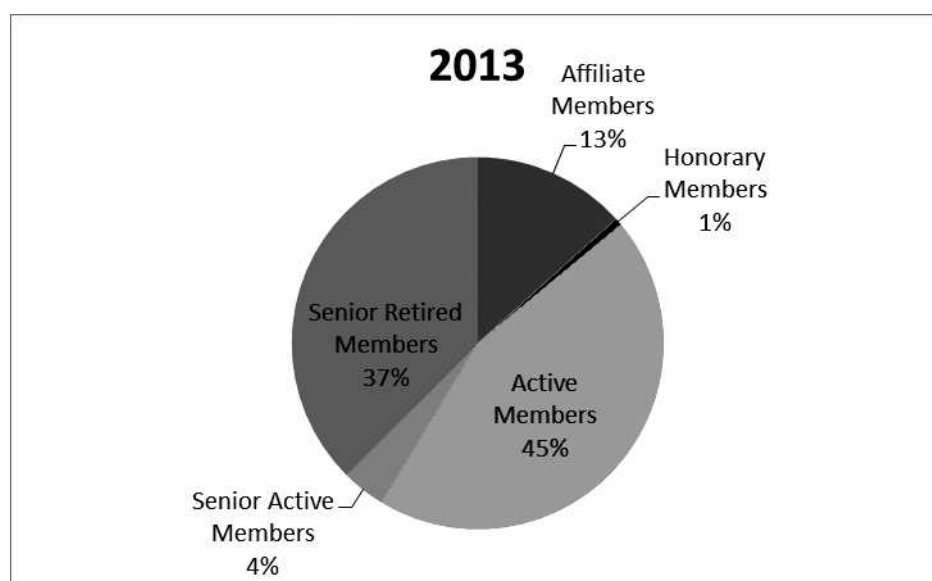


Figure 2. The 2013 E. H. Angle Society Membership distribution (Provided by the EHASO, July 2013).

predecessors.^{4,5} Historical events such as Columbine and 9/11 have shaped this generation raised with MTV, cell phones, social networking and instant communication. The Millennials are the digital generation, optimistic and inclusive by nature, globally aware and accepting of diversity. They are civic-minded and prone to volunteerism. This technology savvy generation shares a sense of independence with their predecessors and needs instant gratification and attention. They are also well connected to their Baby Boomer parents and share with them some of the same values and paradoxes that have characterized the Baby Boomers.

As we reflect on the words of George Hahn and the meaning of the EHASO, "There is an inspiration that comes from personal contact with men whose object is not self-glorification but a willingness to give freely of what they have learned with only the thought of helping others", we understand that every generation feels and can respond to this powerful message.¹

Today, our mission is to deliver this message to the future membership in a way that will convey the passion that we feel to be a part of this fellowship and inspire others to join the Society. This message of excellence needs to be delivered to appeal to these various demographic groups. This editorial does not mean to hold the answers but rather, wishes to ask that every member focus on making this fellowship more dynamic and interactive, more inclusive and diverse, so the Edward H. Angle Society continues to attract those who aspire to attain this level of excellence. Identifying and recruiting members who hold these ideals true should be easier in a digital world where communication is instant and connecting with others is effortless. Becoming a member of the Angle Society should be a highly desirable and noble goal for many in our specialty. The appeal to become a member must come from our collective and concerted effort to create a path of unselfish giving and sharing of our knowledge and passion for excellence in all aspects of Orthodontics, a path to membership where

prospective members feel that our true concern is to better ourselves in an environment conducive to learning from one another with the generosity and kindness that characterizes true leaders in any field. Our Society will continue to evolve as a group promoting openness and excellence, inclusiveness, a fellowship of excellence so exciting and rewarding that everyone aspires to be part of this great journey! This introspection may help us discover potential barriers that may exist on the path to attaining membership in the Angle Society. Together, we can start to address these challenges and work toward establishing an "Angle Experience" that would be rewarding to our potential and future membership.

So, let us focus on the core values that are characteristics of these three generations and offer an "Angle Experience" that is appealing for its scientific and clinical excellence and rewarding for its fellowship. Our apparent differences are powerful assets in an evolving society that aims to promote excellence and spread an inspiring and meaningful professional message. The EHASO is on a path of renewed growth and each member has a responsibility to spread this message of excellence to allow the society to continue to flourish and fulfill its mission.

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