

## Chapter 3

# Historical Perspectives of the Concept of Child and Technology Innovation

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Technology has and does influence the social-cultural development of any population. Some see environment, social, cultural, or philosophical factors as the catalyst for the concept of child and technology innovation. Others view the concept of child and technology as the catalyst for change in social-cultural environments. In order to better understand the relationship of child and technology in a historical context, we must first understand the historical significance of technologies' influence on culture and the development of child as a social influence. Often, as technological advances increase, the generation gap grows, as the concept of child changes to become a driving influence on educational environments. This chapter provides the historical context for the changing educational power structures influenced by technology and how the role of child has evolved from that of a small adult to a major social-cultural influence through the innovations of technology.*

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## **INTRODUCTION: TECHNOLOGY, DISCOVERIES, AND INTERVENTIONS**

In an historical analysis of the impact and influence of technologies on their contemporary societies, it is obvious that we have experienced tidal waves of change with the introduction of seemingly insignificant (or at least taken for granted) discoveries or inventions by humans (Gallivan & Srite, 2005; Hughes, 2004; Winston, 2003; Williams & Edge, 1996; Layton, 1974; Fleck, 1958). It is without question that computer-based technology affects every person on this planet. For example, we have orbiting satellites photographing every square inch of land in even the remotest parts of the world; and with this technology, we have the capability to capture and view real time and still images on home computers. Advanced computer technologies are all around us; and are becoming increasingly more common and essential part of life in the twenty-first century. Hand-held devices that simultaneously provide communication, information, calculation, and entertainment functionality are available and easily accessed by young children. Yet as we examine the influence of modern technologies on our lives, either directly or indirectly, many conclude that what we are experiencing now is somehow a new phenomenon, that we, as a society, were somehow less affected by the existing technologies prevalent during those “happier” days. Indeed, popular commentators and broadcasting editorialists lament that these are highly complex times that we live in, and publicly pine for a less gadget-oriented life. The social-cultural relationships with technology are often conflicted, often first viewed as a complication in lifestyles.

The conflicting relationships between technology and an existing social-cultural system of established norms can create a cultural gap across age groups. As technological advances increase the evidence of social-cultural views of the child and related change also increases.

In a similar manner the concept of child historically has often been viewed as a conflicting relationship with the adult expectations of norms, values, and society. The “gap” between generations is nothing new.

*The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers. - Socrates (470 – 399 BC)*

The culture and influences of technological advances can differ from traditional definitive criteria of groups, dependent on the acceptance and uses of technology. A technologically-influenced culture and society is identified by its populace’s ability to access and use its defining technologies. In the modern world, many if not all of our activities of daily life, such as, employment, leisure, communication, finances, shopping; and even child-rearing and education are affected by, or involve various levels of exposure to technology. Advancements in technology and technological resources have been a run-away freight train that does not seem to be leaving children behind as much as it appears to be leaving earlier generations behind. With the evolution of new technologies brings, of course, controversy; we can choose to believe that technologies have either simplified or complicated our lives. We either perceive that these advances are contributing to our efficiency, accessibility, and organization as our reach for relationships, knowledge, and products is just a “CLICK” away and has stretched across socioeconomic systems, cultures, and continents. Or, we may perceive that technology and technological resources produce fears and anxieties regarding individual and societal safety, challenge our ability to function in a modern society, inhibits

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