

What Makes Generation "Me" Tick?

A Study in Hyper-Narcissism

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II Timothy 3:1-4 says:

II Timothy 3:1-4 (*Amplified Bible*) But understand this, that in the last days will come (set in) perilous times of great stress *and* trouble [hard to deal with and hard to bear]. For people will be lovers of self *and* [utterly] self-centered, lovers of money *and* aroused by an inordinate [greedy] desire for wealth, proud *and* arrogant *and* contemptuous boasters. They will be abusive (blasphemous, scoffing), disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy *and* profane. [They will be] without natural [human] affection (callous and inhuman), relentless (admitting of no truce or appeasement); [they will be] slanderers (false accusers, troublemakers), intemperate *and* loose in morals *and* conduct, uncontrolled *and* fierce, haters of good. [They will be] treacherous [betrayers], rash, [and] inflated with self-conceit. [They will be] lovers of sensual pleasures *and* vain amusements more than *and* rather than lovers of God.

Scoffers suggest that this harsh judgment seems to be a perennial complaint that someone from an earlier generation makes against the next emergent generation, often citing a statement wrongly attributed to Socrates: "Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority." Actually, this bogus, apocryphal quote was penned by a British graduate student in 1907.

Two weeks ago, Debbie Young lent me a highly researched book, loaded to the stratosphere with statistics and examples, exploring generational changes over an expanse of six decades, written by Dr. Jean Twenge, Professor of Psychology at San Diego State University, who has authored more than 140 scientific publications and six books—including this one, *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are more Confident, Assertive, Entitled- and More Miserable Than Ever Before* and *The Narcissism Epidemic* (co-authored with Dr. W. Keith Campbell), both demonstrating a total, provable, causal relationship between the excessive permissive self-esteem programs introduced by the Boomers, but totally absorbed by the Generations X, Y, Z, comprising Millennial and post-Millennial generations, collectively termed the Me Generation—or the Me, Me, Me Generation.

According to Twenge and Campbell, these toxic, narcissistic programs celebrated by the Boomers have arrested their offspring in super-entitled, ego-inflated adolescence and have rendered them completely unprepared for adulthood.

This blunt conclusion stems not from a speculative theory or conjecture, but is based upon highly distilled empirical evidence, processing 33 studies on generational differences based on data from 11 million people, perhaps the most sustained, extensive, longitudinal generational study of ever taken.

Dr. Twenge warns that

Narcissism [hyper-individualism] is the darker side of overly positive self-views [profusely encouraged by the Boomer generation]. Narcissists are overconfident, not just confident, and are so focused on themselves they have a difficult time taking someone else's perspective. They also feel entitled to special privileges and believe that they are

superior to other people. As a result, narcissists are bad relationship partners and can be difficult to work with. Narcissists are also more likely to be hostile.

(Reflecting on Ronny's sermonette ["Who's Sending the Looters?"], the majority of protestors—or at least a large segment—in Portland were Millennial-aged females.)

Sadly, the offspring of Joseph and Manasseh, often spoiled brats with the tendency to forget (as Richard pointed out last week ["The Doctrine of Israel (Part Twelve): Joseph"]) the source of their blessings, have somehow been singled out for the curse of their parents' apostasy and assimilation with the world, and their parents hopelessly botched-up childrearing or abdication of childrearing.

We know that a causeless curse will not alight (Proverbs 26:2), but the converse is also true. We know that if we train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6), but the converse is also true.

According to Dr. Twenge,

Generation Me has the highest esteem of any generation, but also the most depression and anxiety. They imagine themselves more equal, but more cynical. They expect to follow their dreams, but are anxious about making that happen. Narcissism has caused young people to be less giving (for example, to charity), have inflated expectations, display less empathy, have higher materialism, cheat more often, have less committed relationships, undergo more plastic surgery, and display more anger and aggression.

Citing interviews conducted by Christian Smith in his book *Souls in Transition and Lost in Tradition*, "Most young Americans espouse "moral individualism," believing that morality is totally a moral choice."

Twenge and Campbell observe that religious affiliation is declining and the None religion (or the narcissistic worship of self) is in ascendancy. I would encourage you to read John Ritenbaugh's commentary, "The Nones, Atheism, and Immorality," which was posted on cgg.org last night. The number of entering college students who named "none" as their religious affiliation tripled between 1983 and 2012 (from 8% to 24%). The number who say they "never" attend religious services doubled between the 1970s and the 2010s.

Cheating is rampant among Generation Me as compared to the Boomer generation. A 2008 study found that 95% of high school students said they had cheated by copying from someone else or using crib notes. Another survey found that 34% of high school students admitted to cheating on an exam in 1969, which rose to 61% in 1992 (Gen X) and to an incredible 74% in 2000 (the first wave of Generation Me).

The sanctity of marriage has also been rendered a joke among Generation Me. In the late 1950s, only 30% of young people approved of sex before marriage; by the late 1990s, 75% approved. The change was even more striking among young women: Only 12% approved of premarital sex in the 1950s, compared with 80% more recently.

Living together or cohabiting has replaced marriage, while hooking up has replaced dating. According to an NBC/People poll conducted in 2012, half of young teens said their sexual contact was outside of a relationship, revealing that the average college student hooks up with eight people

over four years. Not surprising is that AIDS is on the increase in Generation Me, as well as the practice of abortion to eliminate the inconvenience of having children.

Dr. Twenge's research also reveals Generation Me's despising of the work ethic, their refusal to accept responsibility, their embracing of the victimhood mentality, their rudeness and refusal to take correction, their arrested adolescence, delayed adulthood, their sense of entitlement, and their bitter disappointment of their unrealistic expectations conflicting with reality.

The excessive self-esteem propaganda conducted by media, progressive education, and helicopter parents throughout the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s have thrown Jacob's current offspring into profound adulthood shock. It resembles the antinomian Protestant focus on cheap grace with no works or responsibility. Brothers and sisters, generationally speaking, we reap what we sow, and we sow what we reap.