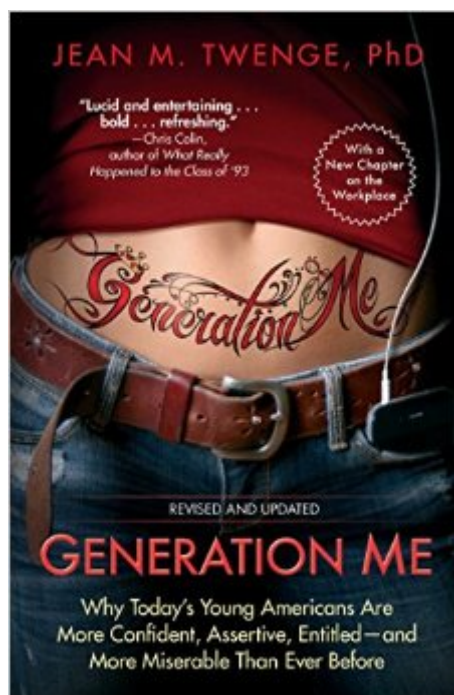


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Generation Me - Revised And Updated: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled--and More Miserable Than Ever Before



Synopsis

In this provocative and newly revised book, headline-making psychologist Dr. Jean Twenge explores why the young people she calls "Generation Me" are tolerant, confident, open-minded, and ambitious but also disengaged, narcissistic, distrustful, and anxious. Born in the '80s, and '90s and called "The Entitlement Generation" or Millennials, they are reshaping schools, colleges, and businesses all over the country. The children of the Baby Boomers are not only feeling the effects of the recession and the changing job market—they are affecting change the world over. Now, in this new edition of *Generation Me*, Dr. Twenge incorporates the latest research, data, and statistics, as well as new stories and cultural references, to show how "Gen Me-ers" have shifted the American character, redefining what it means to be an individual in today's society. Dr. Twenge uses data from 11 million respondents to reveal shocking truths about this generation, including dramatic differences in sexual behavior and religious practice, and controversial predictions about what the future holds for them and society as a whole. Her often humorous, eyebrow-raising stories about real people vividly bring to life the hopes, disappointments, and challenges of Generation Me. Engaging, controversial, prescriptive, and funny, *Generation Me* gives Boomers and GenXers new and fascinating insights into their offspring, and helps those in their teens, twenties, and thirties find their road to happiness.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First, the high points. The author has a lot of interesting survey data that she uses compare the attitudes of "baby boomers" and "generation me". She shows how today's youth are much more

accepting of other races, cultures and sexual orientations; how people are open about their feelings; how women no longer face the kind of discrimination that they did 30 years ago; how young people want to do fulfilling things with their lives and are more self-reliant than ever. And of course we see the downside: narcissism due to what can only be described as too much self-esteem; an unwillingness to take personal responsibility; too much of a focus on money and celebrity; and an epidemic of depression that no one has yet found a cause for. The contrast between the generations is very interesting - dating someone outside your race is no longer an issue; the average woman in 2005 has a more aggressive personality (as measured by her survey) than the average man did in 1968. All cool stuff, and it would have been great if the author could have distilled the most significant of these differences into a single chapter. Unfortunately, she didn't, and I found this to be a very frustrating read overall. She discusses the mismatch between the ambitions of young people and the careers they ultimately end up in. She is right to question kids who want to be "made" into famous hip-hop stars or models or actors, but she also sneers at all of the kids who want to be doctors, lawyers, dentists, etc.

I'd describe this book as an interesting yet flawed work- it raises some interesting questions, but often fails to follow through with incisive analysis. Any book that attempts to describe "a generation" is going to raise objections of over-generalization and, therefore, anyone who writes such a book really should start by explaining just why, exactly, this is a useful characterization. At a minimum, there are problems of periodization, inclusiveness, and timeliness. Some generations have been shaped by world-historical events (e.g., WWII, Cold War, Great Depression) but, since that does not seem to be the case here, then why define a generation as beginning in 1973 instead of 1982, or 1989? And, although the author beats pretty hard on the diversity drum, her observations often seem entirely centered on her own white, liberal, upper-middle-class self. Perhaps that's inevitable, but, if her "generation" generalities do not include those who are non-white, non-liberal, or non-middle-class then she should explicitly say so. The primary thesis of this book seems to be that a sort of extreme individualism is characteristic of her "Generation Me." One problem with this is that it may be too soon to say- after all, a similar survey of young adults in 1928 might have reached similar conclusions, yet a survey of the same people in 1948 might well have discovered a greater accommodation to collective action and personal sacrifice. Also, she seems to define "generations" largely on the basis of a shared common popular culture without any apparent awareness that conformity to an omnipresent, highly commercialized popular culture just might be antithetical to a more authentic individuality. The book seemed particularly weak in discussing family and marriage.

In general, I thought this book was quite good. It is not dry or academic at all, as I was expecting it to be. The research is explained briefly and then illustrated with anecdotes. Most of the conclusions are, I feel, intuitive and correct, and I felt like she was describing the experiences of my family and friends. If there is a great weakness to the book, it is the book's failure to emphasize that the problems it addresses basically stem from poor philosophy, which is the underlying why to the how of poor child-rearing that she describes. I laughed out loud at her sequelae on hot-button political issues like multiculturalism, on which she lapses into the ideological language that she has effectively just been deriding. In sum, she says we need to move forward into the brave new world of the 1950s tweaked in just the way she wants it tweaked--a pretty amorphous and naive plan viewed from a soc-anth or poli-sci perspective. Part of the reason that this failure creates a weakness in the book is that it ties her down to prescriptions that continue to deal with symptoms rather than underlying causes. Her advice to GenMe on avoiding depression essentially amounts to taking over-the-counter supplements instead of prescription meds (that was another place I laughed). My completely unprofessional diagnosis is that the failure is connected to her own inability to overcome the GenMe mould. And why should she try when the basic difference between her and her confreres is that she has achieved what GenMe wants (prestigious job, satisfying unmarried lover, national fame, etc.)?

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