



## **Generational trends in entitlement from a multi-dimensional approach**

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### **Abstract**

The psychological construct of entitlement has received attention in recent years and is frequently used to describe the Millennial generation. Yet, research has not been conclusive in supporting this assertion. One issue impacting current research on entitlement is the myriad definitions being used to describe the construct. Some research has focused on entitlement as a unidimensional personality trait that is directly related to narcissism, while other research has suggested a multidimensional structure that encompasses social psychological elements as well. The current study examined the relationship between the two definitions of entitlement and generational trends according to each conceptualization. Small to moderate correlations were observed between the components of the two conceptualizations of entitlement. Results of a MANOVA indicated no generational differences according to either conceptualization; additionally, SES and gender did not moderate the relationship between generation and entitlement.

**Keywords:** Entitlement, Generation, Social Psychology, Personality Psychology, Narcissism

### **Entitlement**

The concept of entitlement has been defined by researchers in varied ways (Campbell et al., 2004; Emmons, 1984; Naumann et al., 2002; Tomlinson, 2013; Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). Along with each definition comes different approaches to measuring the construct and inconsistencies in the conclusions being drawn by researchers about entitlement and its correlates. This presents challenges for those aiming to understand trends associated with entitlement for several reasons. First, the inconsistencies that are present in previous research make it difficult for researchers to draw conclusions about the current knowledge base. Second, researchers are forced to evaluate the multiple established definitions and measures of entitlement and select one perspective over another, presenting the risk of excluding valuable components of entitlement from their studies. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the different definitions of entitlement and how they interface with one another. Establishing a clearer understanding of the concept of entitlement may lead to a consensus about how to study the predictors and outcomes of entitlement and how it impacts society.

The construct of entitlement has received attention across a variety of fields of study, including political science, management, psychology, and marketing, among others. It has also been applied across academic, professional, political, and social settings (Tomlinson, 2013). The research that has been done in each discipline has informed the knowledge base across disciplines, with some common elements spanning various fields of study. For example, the centrality of the element of deservingness is common across various conceptualizations of entitlement (e.g., Campbell et al., 2004; Feather, 1999; Fisk, 2010). However, while multiple researchers agree that deservingness is related to entitlement, they vary in their views about what role it plays. On one hand, deservingness has been differentiated from entitlement, with deservingness implying that the individual has done something to earn the desired outcome, while entitlement does not require any such action on the part of the recipient (Feather, 2003;

Feather 2008; Weiner, 1985). Following this, some researchers suggest that entitlement reflects an unwarranted belief of deservingness, implying that the individual expects to have their needs met regardless of their own behavior (Campbell et al., 2004; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). This suggests a socially undesirable characteristic wherein the individual has unjustified expectations about what they deserve. Yet others link the idea of entitlement to social norms and obligations, suggesting that people have the right to certain benefits or support based on their social position and situation (Black, 1990; Feather, 2003; Lessard et al., 2011; Nozick, 1974). This position reflects a more prosocial characteristic in which all individuals deserve to have a basic set of human rights. These varying approaches exemplify that despite a common focus on deservingness, there is still little consensus regarding what role deservingness plays and how it is interpreted. The current study will focus on entitlement as a psychological construct that can be understood and applied across multiple settings and fields. Within the field of psychology there are two prevailing approaches to conceptualizing the construct of entitlement: the personality psychology perspective and the social psychology perspective.

### **Personality Psychology Approach**

The personality psychology perspective of entitlement grew out of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA, 1980) description of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), which included entitlement as a component of narcissism. Within the context of NPD, entitlement refers to an expectation to receive special favors or treatment without having to engage in behaviors that justify such favors or treatment. This led researchers to utilize a conceptualization of entitlement that emphasizes a pathological and maladaptive nature of the construct (Campbell et al., 2004; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). For example, Raskin and Terry's (1988) definition of entitlement includes the expectation of receiving special favors as well as exemptions from conventional social norms. In line with this definition, the first measure that was widely utilized to research entitlement was the Narcissistic Personality Inventory's Entitlement subscale (NPI-E; Raskin & Terry, 1988), which exemplifies the close ties with NPD.

This conceptualization was later updated by Campbell et al. (2004), who described psychological entitlement as a "pervasive feeling of deserving more than other people" (p. 31), which may lead to expectations of benefits and/or resources which are disproportionate to the amount of effort exerted toward goal attainment (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Campbell et al. (2004) also updated and expanded on the NPI-E with their Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES). However, this measure remained a unidimensional conceptualization of entitlement that is closely aligned with NPD, emphasizing maladaptive, pathological, narcissistic characteristics. Yet, this conceptualization of entitlement remains one of the prevailing perspectives used today in research on entitlement.

### **Social Psychological Approach**

Other researchers propose a multidimensional structure of entitlement that expands beyond the narcissistic perspective to view entitlement as a personality characteristic that includes prosocial traits in addition to the pathological characteristics described above. From a social psychological perspective, social justice and fairness underlie the sense of deservingness that characterizes entitlement (Feather, 1994, 1999; Lerner, 1987). This type of entitlement is not considered to be an inherently pathological personality trait, but rather a behavioral tendency that could serve to be beneficial or maladaptive, depending on context. An example of beneficial entitlement would be the belief that one should receive equal compensation for equal work. This aligns with Fisk's (2010) discussion of legitimate entitlement or deservingness where the reward is commensurate with the effort expended. This approach expands beyond simply believing that one deserves more than other people and also encompasses advocacy against injustice and unfairness (De Cremer et al., 2009) as well as demands for greater compensation for work performed (Majors et al., 1984; Moore, 1991; Pelham & Hetts, 2001).

Through the lens of the social psychological perspective of entitlement, Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al. (2017) established a three-dimensional, comprehensive model that encompasses three entitlement attitudes: active entitlement, passive entitlement, and revengefulness. Active entitlement focuses on self-promotion by taking action to achieve one's goals without infringing on the rights of others. Passive entitlement emphasizes the individual's perception that his or her community has an obligation to serve his or her interests. This view of entitlement focuses on people's expectation that the government and/or

other individuals will satisfy their needs. The third dimension entails a maladaptive element, whereby the individual has an inability to forgive prior harms and has a tendency to seek revenge. Based on this model, the researchers developed a measure, known as the Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire (EAQ), which reflects the multiple dimensions of entitlement.

Based on the myriad variation in the way that psychological entitlement is conceptualized and measured, it is incumbent on researchers to seek deeper understanding about how the definitions used in prior research impact the conclusions that are drawn, explore how the various models relate with one another, and establish consensus about how to define the construct of psychological entitlement. Despite the lack of consensus that currently exists regarding entitlement, this topic has received considerable attention in recent years, particularly in reference to a set of characteristics ascribed to young adults. Entitlement has become a catch phrase commonly used to refer to the Millennial generation. However, questions remain as to whether these assertions are in fact accurate reflections of generational differences. Before exploring the research that directly addresses these questions, a discussion of both developmental and generational characteristics is warranted.

### **Entitlement Across Generations**

A generation refers to a cohort of individuals who share similar birth years, leading them to be exposed to similar life experiences, such as historical events and popular culture, during crucial stages of development (Pew Research Center 2015; Mannheim, 1927; Tolbize, 2089; Twenge & Campbell, 2008). These shared experiences lead each generation to develop a unique set of attitudes, values, norms, expectations, and reactions to situations (Abrams & von Frank, 2014; Bernstein & Bhugra, 2011; Pilcher, 1994). Yet, it is interesting to note, that a globally accepted timeframe for each generation does not exist. For example, the Baby Boomers are the only generation defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and includes anyone born between 1946 and 1964. Nonetheless, having clearly demarcated age cohorts allows researchers to analyze generations to better understand their similarities and differences over time (Dimock, 2019). With generational identity being a stable construct over time (Lyons & Schweitzer, 2017), generational differences present a diversity issue that may impact individuals in the workplace, the school, and in social settings (Arsenault, 2004). For this study, we followed the generational cohorts as defined by the Pew Research Center. Baby Boomers were born 1946-1964; members of Generation X were born 1965-1980; and Millennials were born 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015).

Individuals who are members of a specific generation are frequently described as possessing a certain set of personality characteristics. Entitlement is one such characteristic that has received a lot of attention in recent years, particularly with regard to the Millennial generation. While individual differences are present within each generation, there also tend to be trends that develop among members of a generation as a result of a set of shared experiences that they are exposed to during their formative years (Pilcher, 1994). In fact, generations are believed to be a more effective predictor for making personality generalizations than other social variables, such as gender, race, or religion (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Interest in entitlement, particularly as it relates to the Millennials, is found in both academic research and popular media (Campbell et al., 2004; Stein, 2013; Textor, 2007; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). But despite the attention focused on this topic, there has been little consensus about whether the Millennial generation does in fact demonstrate higher levels of entitlement than previous generations. One factor that may contribute to this lack of consensus is the variability in the definitions of entitlement used in the literature. In many cases, psychological entitlement has been conflated with narcissism, making it difficult to isolate entitlement as its own construct. The majority of research focused on generational differences in psychological entitlement has generally studied entitlement as a component of narcissism and used the NPI-E to measure the construct (Campbell et al, 2004; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). This presents a gap in the literature, highlighting a need to use a more holistic definition of entitlement when investigating generational differences.

Prior to drawing conclusions regarding generational differences in entitlement, discussion is warranted about factors that might contribute to such differences. Lyons et al., (2005) found that each successive generation, beginning with the Baby Boomers, is less intrinsically motivated. This move away from intrinsic motivation and toward a dependence on external motivators may contribute to

increases in entitlement, as a focus on external motivators has been linked to entitlement (Weiner, 1985). Research has suggested that Millennials expect to receive a reward commensurate with the effort they expend, pointing to a dependence on external motivators when completing tasks, and in turn higher levels of entitlement (Alexander & Sysko, 2013). Relatedly, Millennials have been found to desire instant gratification (Pham et al., 2008). Fisk (2010) suggests that individuals with high levels of excessive entitlement have expectations of instant gratification and rewards disproportionate to their effort, and at times with little regard to how this impacts others. In addition, Millennials are more likely than Baby Boomers or GenXers to feel they do not get the workplace recognition and respect they deserve (Gursoy et al., 2013). These trends suggest that Millennials are likely to display higher levels of entitlement than previous generations.

Nonetheless, the extant research has yielded mixed findings about whether generational differences in entitlement do in fact exist. Some studies using the personality psychological approach to entitlement found that younger adults have higher levels of entitlement than older adults (Foster et al., 2003; Stronge et al., 2018) and that Millennials have higher levels of narcissism than Baby Boomers (Twenge et al., 2012). However, one must consider whether these differences hold true using more comprehensive definitions of entitlement that extend beyond the pathological perspective that is tied to narcissism. In addition, generational research tends to be cross-sectional and does not account for whether observed differences may be attributable to the participants' respective positions in the life cycle, rather than their membership in a particular generational cohort (Pew Research Center 2015). For example, there is research to suggest that entitlement does decrease throughout adulthood, which may account for the popular assertions that Millennials, who are currently young adults, are more entitled than older adult populations (Foster et al., 2003; Gilani et al., 2020; Stronge et al., 2018; Wilson & Sibley, 2011). Thus, from a developmental stance, as individuals advance in years and mature, their level of entitlement changes. When accounting for these decreases in entitlement across the lifespan, no generational differences in entitlement were observed in a study in New Zealand that examined both longitudinal and cross-sectional trends (Stronge et al., 2018).

If, in fact, younger generations are becoming increasingly more entitled than preceding generations, one would expect that overall levels of entitlement in the population would be gradually increasing over time as each new generation ages. However, studies examining trends in entitlement across multiple decades have yielded inconsistent findings. Some researchers have found that entitlement in college students increased slightly from 1982 to 2007 (Trzesniewsky et al., 2008; Gilani et al., 2020) and that narcissism is increasing over time (Twenge & Foster, 2010), while other research has found no change in entitlement over time (Donnellan et al., 2009; Stronge et al., 2018; Twenge & Foster, 2010). These inconsistencies in the literature may be attributable to methodological limitations, such as cohort effects, reliance on convenience samples of college students, and restricted age ranges in samples (Stronge et al., 2018). For example, much of the research examining entitlement in Millennials has primarily studied members of the age cohort that fall within the Millennial generation, without examining similar trends in other age cohorts. This makes it difficult to conclude that any trends in entitlement are specific to the Millennial generation (Terracciano, 2010; Twenge et al., 2008). The use of college student samples makes it questionable to generalize findings to the general population, especially as the cost of attending college rises over the years, making it accessible to an increasingly unrepresentative portion of the population (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). In order to evaluate cohort effects observed across multiple studies, Twenge and her colleagues (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2001; Twenge & Foster, 2010; Twenge et al., 2008) have utilized a cross-temporal meta-analysis technique for examining generational differences, which correlates mean values attained across multiple studies with the year the data was collected. However, this approach has also been criticized for lack of generalizability, inflating effect sizes, and overlooking individual differences (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2019).

### **Correlates of Entitlement**

When considering the various conceptualizations of entitlement, certain demographic variables lend themselves to show interactions with the construct of entitlement. For example, studies using the personality psychology approach have consistently found males to have higher levels of entitlement than females (Ciani et al., 2008; Foster et al., 2003; Grijalva et al., 2015; Wasieleski et al., 2014; Wilson & Sibley, 2011). However, this relationship has not been examined from the social psychological

perspective, and findings have been inconsistent as to whether males and females show similar trends in narcissism and entitlement across different age ranges (Donnellan et al., 2009; Grijalva et al., 2015; Twenge & Foster, 2010; Twenge et al., 2008; Wilson & Sibley, 2011). Therefore, further examination is warranted to understand the role of gender in rates of entitlement across generations.

Similarly, from a conceptual perspective, socioeconomic status can be expected to show a relationship with entitlement based on the individuals' expectations of what they deserve. From the personality psychology approach, a small body of research suggests that individuals from higher socioeconomic status show a higher level of entitlement (Kraus et al., 2012; Piff, 2014; Piff et al., 2010; Snibbe & Markus, 2005; Stephens et al., 2007; von Hermann & Tutić, 2019). However, it is also important to consider whether social class will interact differently with the social psychological approach to entitlement, given the focus on social justice, fairness, and the expectation that the government will meet certain basic needs, which is likely to differentially impact individuals from lower socioeconomic status (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). Therefore, more research is needed to explore the relationship between socioeconomic status and entitlement.

### Purpose

Prior research on entitlement has taken varied approaches to defining and measuring the construct of entitlement, with some research focusing on a maladaptive, pathological conceptualization focused on narcissistic characteristics. Meanwhile, other research has conceptualized entitlement as a multifactorial construct with certain prosocial characteristics in addition to the maladaptive component. Therefore, the current research aims to blend those two conceptualizations and investigate the extent to which they relate with one another. Additionally, the current research examines generational differences in entitlement using both conceptualizations of entitlement. The following research questions were examined in this study:

- Is there a correlation between the two conceptualizations of entitlement as measured by PES and EAQ?
- Do the generations differ on their levels of entitlement according to each definition of entitlement?
- Does gender serve as a moderating variable for the relationship between generation and entitlement?
- Is there an interaction between gender, generation, and SES on entitlement?
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### Methods

#### Participants

Participants were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a crowdsourcing marketplace that connects researchers with workers interested in participating in research surveys. MTurk workers who were born between the years of 1946 and 2000 and reside in the United States were invited to participate in this study. Participants were compensated \$1.00 upon completion of the survey. Power analysis indicated that a sample of 126 participants was necessary to obtain a medium effect size. For the current study, 316 participants were obtained, suggesting that more than the necessary sample size was obtained to observe effects. Of the 316 participants that completed the survey, 105 were from the Baby Boomer generation (born 1946-1964), 106 were from Generation X (born 1965-1980), and 105 were from the Millennial Generation (born 1981-2000). Stratified sampling was utilized so that data collection was discontinued when the desired sample size was obtained for each generation. Detailed demographic information is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Demographic variables*

	Total	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Total Participants	316	105	106	105
Gender				
Male	154 (48.7%)	44 (41.9)	56 (52.8)	54 (51.4)
Female	161 (50.9%)	60 (57.1)	50 (47.2)	51 (48.6)

Not Reported	1 (3%)	1 (1)	0	0
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Caucasian	252 (80.4%)	92 (87.6)	82 (77.4)	80 (76.2)
African American	26 (8.2%)	5 (4.8)	12 (11.3)	9 (8.6)
Asian	16 (5.1%)	4 (3.8)	3 (2.8)	9 (8.6)
Hispanic	9 (2.8%)	1 (1)	4 (3.8)	4 (3.8)
Multi-Racial	6 (1.9%)	1 (1)	3 (2.8)	2 (1.9)
Native American	3 (.9%)	1 (1)	2 (1.9)	0
Not Reported	2 (.6%)	1 (1)	0	1 (1)
<b>Geographic Region</b>				
Northeast	81 (25.6)	28 (26.7)	25 (23.6)	28 (26.7)
South	99 (31.3)	28 (26.7)	36 (34)	35 (33.3)
Midwest	59 (18.7)	20 (19)	22 (20.8)	17 (16.2)
Southwest	25 (7.9)	13 (12.4)	8 (7.5)	4 (3.8)
West	49 (15.5)	14 (13.3)	15 (14.2)	20 (19)
Not Reported	3 (.9)	2 (1.9)	0	1 (1)
<b>Setting</b>				
Urban	89 (28.2)	25 (23.8)	32 (30.2)	32 (30.5)
Suburban	162 (51.3)	59 (56.2)	50 (47.2)	53 (50.5)
Rural	64 (20.3)	21 (20)	24 (22.6)	19 (18.1)
Not Reported	1 (.3)	0	0	1 (1)
<b>Education Level</b>				
< high school degree	3 (.9)	0	1 (.9)	2 (1.9)
High school degree	25 (7.9)	11 (10.5)	7 (6.6)	7 (6.7)
Some college	80 (25.3)	22 (21)	25 (23.6)	33 (31.4)
Associate degree	42 (13.3)	13 (12.4)	18 (17)	11 (10.5)
Bachelor's degree	105 (33.2)	38 (36.2)	31 (29.2)	36 (34.3)
Master's degree	59 (18.7)	20 (19)	24 (22.6)	15 (14.3)
Doctoral degree	2 (.6)	1 (1)	0	1 (1)
<b>Household Income</b>				
Less than \$25,000	42 (13.3%)	9 (8.6)	12 (11.3)	21 (20)
\$25,000-\$34,999	57 (18%)	23 (21.9)	17 (16)	17 (16.2)
\$35,000-\$49,999	48 (15.2%)	17 (16.2)	13 (12.3)	18 (17.1)
\$50,000-\$74,999	83 (26.3%)	28 (26.7)	29 (27.4)	26 (24.8)
\$75,000-\$99,999	44 (13.9%)	19 (18.1)	13 (12.3)	12 (11.4)
\$100,000-\$149,999	30 (9.5%)	4 (3.8)	17 (16)	9 (8.6)
\$150,000 or more	11 (3.5%)	4 (3.8)	5 (4.7)	2 (1.9)
Not Reported	1 (.3%)	1 (1)	0	0

## Materials

### Demographic Information

A survey was conducted to collect demographic information, including gender, race/ethnicity, age/generation, residential area, education level, occupation, and income level. Age/generation was classified by having participants identify their birth year. The researchers then sorted the responses into generation groups. These groups were defined as follows: Baby Boomers born 1946-1964; Generation X born 1965-1980; and Millennials born 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2019). Residential area was classified using two variables: geographic location and environment, which was defined as urban, suburban, or rural. Education level was determined by highest level of school completed or highest degree received. The range of responses was less than a high school degree through a doctorate. The occupation question asked in which industry the participant was currently or most recently employed. Income level was defined as total household income, ranging from less than \$25,000 to \$150,000 or more.

### Psychological Entitlement

Two instruments were used to evaluate entitlement: the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004) and the Entitlement Attitudes Questionnaire (EAQ; Żemojtel-Piotrowka et al., 2017). The PES is premised on defining psychological entitlement as a pervasive sense of deserving more and being entitled to more than other individuals, thus conceptualizing entitlement as a unifactorial personality characteristic that emphasizes maladaptive, pathological, narcissistic characteristics. The PES consists of nine items scored on a 7-point Likert scale with a Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Campbell et al., 2004).

The EAQ is a multi-factorial model of entitlement, encompassing three types of entitlement which are dependent on the relationship between self-interest and other people or institutions. The first type, active entitlement, is focused on self-promotion and self-reliance in goal attainment. The most important aspect of the second type, passive entitlement, is the individual's focus on social groups that serve to promote the person's interests. The final type, revengefulness, is the need to protect one's self-interest when a situation may cause it to be violated. This lends itself toward a tendency to take revenge and be unforgiving of perceived wrongs. This instrument consists of 15 items, with 5 items per entitlement type and was validated in 28 countries. The Cronbach's alphas for each entitlement type were .77 (active), .88 (passive), and .80 (revenge) respectively (Żemojtel-Piotrowka et al., 2017).

### Procedures

Participants completed an anonymous survey through SurveyMonkey. Upon completion of the survey, participants received \$1.00 compensation, which was credited to their MTurk accounts. Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 26.

### Results

The first research question asked whether the personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement as measured by the PES is correlated with the social psychological conceptualization of entitlement measured by the EAQ. A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relationship between scores on the PES and the three factors of the EAQ (Active Entitlement, Passive Entitlement, and Revenge Entitlement). Inspection of scatterplots suggested that the relationships between variables were linear and that there were no outliers of concern. Tests of skewness and kurtosis and examination of Normal Q-Q Plots suggest all variables are approximately normally distributed. The personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement measured by the PES had a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation with Active Entitlement,  $r(312)=.36, p<.01$ , with 13% of the variance accounted for; a statistically significant, small positive correlation with Revenge Entitlement,  $r(312)=.22, p<.01$ , with 5% of the variance accounted for, and a statistically significant, small negative correlation with Passive Entitlement,  $r(312)= -.12, p<.05$ , with 1% of the variance accounted for. Among the three factors of the EAQ, Active Entitlement had a statistically significant, moderate positive correlation with Passive Entitlement,  $r(312)=.30, p<.01$ , with 9% of the variance accounted for; and Revenge Entitlement,  $r(312)=.46, p<.01$ , with 21% of the variance accounted for. There was no significant correlation between Passive Entitlement and Revenge Entitlement.

**Table 2**

*Pearson correlations for main study variables*

	AE	PE	RE
PES	.356**	-.124*	.222**
AE		.302**	.464**
PE			.072

*Note.* PES=Psychological Entitlement Scale, AE=Active Entitlement, PE=Passive Entitlement, RE=Revenge Entitlement, \*= statistically significant at  $p<.05$  level

The three remaining research questions were evaluated simultaneously. These questions include:

- Do the generations differ on their levels of entitlement according to each definition of entitlement?

- Does gender serve as a moderating variable for the relationship between generation and entitlement?
- Is there an interaction between gender, generation, and SES on entitlement?

In order to evaluate these three research questions, a two-way MANOVA was run with three independent variables – generation, gender and income – and four dependent variables – Psychological Entitlement (measured by the PES), Active Entitlement, Passive Entitlement, and Revenge Entitlement.

There was a linear relationship between all dependent variables, as assessed by scatterplot, and no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by Pearson correlation ( $|r| < 0.9$ ). There were no multivariate outliers in the data, as assessed by Mahalanobis distance ( $p > .001$ ); however, there were a total of 25 univariate outliers, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. Each data point was examined for data entry errors and measurement error and all outliers were assessed to be genuinely unusual values that were meaningful, so outliers were included for analysis. All dependent variables were normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ( $p > .05$ ). There was homogeneity of covariance matrices, as assessed by Box's M test ( $p = .012$ ), and homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance ( $p > .05$ ).

In order to assess whether gender, generation, and income interact to impact the combined dependent variables, the interaction effect between the three variables was examined. The interaction effect was not statistically significant,  $F(16, 871) = 1.098, p = .352$ , Wilks'  $\Lambda = .941$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .015$ .

In order to assess whether gender moderates the relationship between generation and the combined dependent variables, the interaction effect between gender and generation was examined. The interaction effect was not statistically significant,  $F(8, 570) = .510, p = .850$ , Wilks'  $\Lambda = .986$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ .

Finally, in order to assess whether generations differ on the combined dependent variables, the main effect of generation on the combined dependent variables was examined. This comparison was not significant,  $F(8, 570) = .494, p = .861$ , Wilks'  $\Lambda = .986$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ . Univariate main effects were examined to determine whether generations differed on any of the measures of entitlement. Generations did not differ significantly on Psychological Entitlement,  $F(2, 288) = .009, p = .991$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , Active Entitlement,  $F(2, 288) = .008, p = .992$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .000$ , Passive Entitlement,  $F(2, 288) = 1.018, p = .363$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .007$ , or Revenge Entitlement,  $F(2, 288) = .587, p = .562$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .004$ .

### Discussion

The most common conceptualization of entitlement within the social science literature comes from a personality psychology perspective and posits a unidimensional structure. This perspective frames entitlement as a pathological construct focused on narcissism, reflecting a stable and pervasive personality characteristic in which one believes that they deserve and are entitled to more than others (Campbell et al, 2004; Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Therefore, many studies have measured entitlement using a self-report measure that focuses on entitlement as a component of narcissism. However, some have argued that this conceptualization is too limited in scope, and instead propose a more multidimensional structure of the construct. This perspective, which grows out of social psychology, includes a focus on social justice and fairness and encompasses three components: active entitlement, passive entitlement, and revenge entitlement (Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). The current study sought to examine the relationship between the unidimensional, personality psychology conceptualization of psychological entitlement and the various components (active, passive, and revenge entitlement) of the social psychology multidimensional model, in order to gain further understanding of the global construct of entitlement. A second aim was to determine whether members of different generations demonstrated differing levels of entitlement, according to both conceptualizations of the construct. Finally, the researchers explored how income and gender might impact the relationship between generation and entitlement.

Results indicated that the personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement had a moderate positive correlation with the active entitlement component of the social psychological conceptualization. This relationship is consistent with what would be expected based on the definitions of the constructs and on previous research. Active entitlement, which involves a sense of agency in promoting one's own self-interest and relying on oneself to achieve goals, encompasses the narcissistic aspect of entitlement that characterizes the personality psychology conceptualization. The size of the

correlation was consistent with that of a validity study that was conducted on the EAQ (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). These findings suggest that there is some overlap between active entitlement and the personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement, with a common focus on deservingness. However, while the personality psychological conceptualization places focus on deserving *more* than others, active entitlement emphasizes self-reliance in achieving goals, accounting for the moderate strength of the correlations.

The personality psychology approach to entitlement showed a small positive correlation with revenge entitlement, suggesting that the tendency to protect self-interest by seeking revenge tends to co-occur with the more narcissistic characteristics of entitlement, despite being a distinct component of entitlement. This finding is also quite consistent with results of the validity study conducted on the EAQ, which found a similar correlation between these variables (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). Revenge entitlement, like the personality psychology conceptualization, captures an aspect of the maladaptive characteristics of entitlement, accounting for the tendency to co-occur. However, while revenge entitlement specifically refers to a refusal to forgive harms that are done, the focus of the personality psychology approach is simply on an individual feeling that they deserve more than others.

In contrast to the other components of the social psychological approach to entitlement, the small correlation between the personality psychology approach and passive entitlement is negative, indicating that those who believe that other people or institutions have obligations to them are less likely to demonstrate the narcissistic characteristics found in the personality psychology approach. However, this correlation is very small and is not supported by the validity study of the EAQ, which did not find a relationship between those two variables (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017). Among the three factors of the social psychological model, active entitlement was positively related with both passive entitlement and revenge entitlement, while there was no relationship between passive entitlement and revenge entitlement.

The current research indicated that generations did not differ in their levels of entitlement, based on a combined conceptualization of the various components of entitlement reflected by both the personality psychology conceptualization and the social psychological conceptualization. Similarly, when each component (the unidimensional personality psychology conceptualization and each of the three components of the social psychological conceptualization) was examined individually, generations were not found to differ on any of the components of entitlement. Furthermore, gender was not found to moderate the relationship between generation and entitlement. Finally, no interaction was found between gender, generation, and income in their effect on entitlement. When interpreting these findings within the context of the current literature base, there is limited comparison that can be made, due to the limitations of the current literature. While popular culture has placed great attention on the discussion of Millennials demonstrating higher levels of entitlement than previous generations, this topic has not been widely addressed by empirical research. The literature that does exist on generational differences in entitlement has largely conflated the construct of entitlement with narcissistic personality traits and has yielded inconsistent findings. A critical review of the literature by Perry and Irwin (2011) looked at generational differences vis-à-vis work values. They concluded that many studies did not find a difference across cohorts, yet those concluding there was a difference did not differentiate between generational cohort and age. Other limitations of the extant research include the use of a cross-sectional research design, and the failure to control for certain variables including gender and ethnicity. A meta-analysis of 20 studies focused on generational differences in relationship to work related variables, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment found moderate to small variations across generations. The authors concluded any differences that existed were not attributable to membership in a particular generational cohort (Costanza et al., 2012).

### **Significance of Findings**

The results of the current study contribute meaningfully to the study of entitlement and support a shift in the conceptualization of the construct. The weak to moderate relationships between the personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement and the three components of the social psychological conceptualization of entitlement suggest that the unidimensional, pathological conceptualization that is commonly used constitutes one aspect of entitlement, but that it does not fully capture the multidimensional nature of the construct. This corroborates previous research suggesting that a shift

from a narcissism focus to a more comprehensive conceptualization of entitlement is warranted (Zemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017).

The current study also provides an important addition to the existing body of literature, which has been the focus of only a small number of studies and has failed to reach consensus about the presence or absence of such generational differences in entitlement (Strong et al., 2018; Trzesniewski et al., 2008; Twenge et al., 2012). The extant research in this area has also been limited by its narrow definition of entitlement, focusing solely on the personality psychology conceptualization, which is closely aligned with narcissism. Therefore, the current findings strengthen the current knowledge base that suggests that generational differences in entitlement do not exist. Furthermore, this finding held across all dimensions of entitlement, and therefore extends prior research beyond the personality psychology conceptualization of entitlement. While some make claims that low socio-economic status individuals expect to be provided for by others, a key feature of passive entitlement, results of this study did not support that income or gender influenced entitlement.

### Limitations

As with all research, several limitations were present in the current study that may have impacted the results. As a self-report survey, ratings of entitlement may be impacted by participants' lack of insight, self-perceptions, or attempts to respond in a socially desirable way. In addition, due to the recruitment procedures, the sample was limited to individuals who selected to participate in Amazon Mechanical Turk and chose to complete the survey in exchange for a small financial compensation. Therefore, the responses obtained from this sample of participants may not be representative of the population at large. Finally, as a cross-sectional study, the researchers cannot account for any differences that may be attributable to the age or developmental level of the participants.

### Future Directions

Future research examining generational differences should employ strategies that capture not only cross-sectional data, but longitudinal data as well. This will allow comparisons across generations as well as across time, increasing confidence that any observed differences are attributable to generation status. Furthermore, data that is collected from multiple sources, including an objective third person observer would address the limitations associated with self-report studies.

### Conclusions

Overall, the current findings lend support for the use of a multidimensional approach to studying entitlement. Employing this approach will enable researchers to more thoroughly understand the trends and the correlates associated with the various aspects of entitlement. When examining generational differences in entitlement from a multidimensional approach, no differences were found in the levels of entitlement reported by members of the Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Millennial generations. Furthermore, this finding held when examining each dimension of entitlement individually. Therefore, the findings did not support the presence of generational differences in entitlement. These results call into question popular assertions about the Millennial generation displaying high rates of entitlement and support a multidimensional structure of the construct of entitlement.

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