



Narcissism and Entitlement in Millennials: The Mediating Influence of Community Service Self Efficacy on Engagement



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ABSTRACT

There is a rapidly growing body of research on the more negative aspects of the expanding millennial population. Alternatively, the current study explores possible benefits resulting from millennial traits typically considered to be negative, specifically entitlement and narcissism. The authors hypothesize that self-efficacy generated by the creation of service opportunities, may not only improve engagement, but may also lessen the influence of negative millennial traits including entitlement and narcissism. Hypotheses were explored using a sample of 239 millennials. Following Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method for mediation, we found that the model tested was fully mediated. Results and discussion follow.

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1. Introduction

As the number of millennials in the workforce has steadily increased over the past decade, so has the number of studies focusing on this group. Generally defined as individuals born in the early 1980s until 2000, many of these studies highlight the negative and undesirable aspects of this group's role in the workplace (Strauss and Howe, 2000). Some of the worst criticisms have described this cohort as being overly self-absorbed, concluding that narcissism levels had risen 30% as compared to previous generations (Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge, 2014). Alternatively, some research has yet to yield discernable generational differences in regards to areas such as egotism, self-enhancement, antisocial behavior, time spent working, and the importance of social status over the last 30 years (e.g. Trzesniewski and Donnellan, 2010). Interestingly, research indicates a relationship between the traits of civic engagement and volunteerism with narcissism in millennials (2008 Cone Millennial Cause Study). The current study explores whether high rates of self-absorption in millennials can be employed via service opportunities to promote positive outcomes. Specifically, we explore the mediating impact of community service self-efficacy on the relationships of narcissism and entitlement with engagement.

1.1. Narcissism and Entitlement in Millennials

Millennials have been branded as being narcissistic and entitled (Gallup, 2013). Although theoretically similar, entitlement and narcissism uniquely contribute to increasing levels of one's sense of self (Rose & Anastasio, 2014). For instance, increased levels of entitlement have been empirically linked to self-serving attributional biases (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). For narcissists, there is a tendency to form inflated self-perceptions or overestimate their own abilities. Extant literature indicates that narcissists tend to self-enhance their agentic characteristics such as task performance, intelligence, and leadership ability, consistently rating themselves as better than average on these traits (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Judge, LePine and Rich, 2006). These are especially relevant in a generational context as millennials dislike entry-level positions because they fail to meet their standard for challenging and meaningful tasks as such positions can be viewed as "beneath" their contrived higher order skill set (Tulgan, 2009).

1.2. Narcissism, Entitlement, and Engagement

Some research proposes that millennial behavior may be related not just to intentions, but also to self-perceptions of competencies (Twenge, 2006). Narcissism and entitlement have been shown to correlate with higher levels of self-efficacy (Crappell, 2012) and work engagement (Andreassen, Ursin, Eriksen, & Pallesen, 2012). This is consistent with existing research that suggests these personality characteristics are correlated with civic engagement activities (Mechler & Bourke, 2011) and volunteerism (Brummel & Parker, 2015; Brunell, Tumblyn & Buelow,

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2014). Narcissists are conceptualized as attention seekers, which may explain why they are more likely to engage in activities that allow opportunities for garnering attention (Carpenter, 2012). Since self-efficacy perceptions can influence the willingness to volunteer (Lindenmeier, 2008), those who perceive themselves as highly capable may also feel compelled to assert themselves in a given context. Particularly, narcissistic ambition and an entitled disposition may lead to higher levels of work engagement, as well as feelings of being driven to work (Andreassen et al., 2012; Brummel & Parker, 2015; Burke, Matthiesen & Pallesen, 2006). Through participation in organizational activities, narcissists may achieve a positive motivational state of gratification. Similarly, entitled individuals tend to value their own contributions more than others and may validate this self-perception through participation.

1.3. The Mediating Influence of Community Service Self Efficacy

Research indicates that volunteering and community involvement activity has increased among the younger generation (Dalton, 2008). Millennials believe their time makes a uniquely meaningful contribution and that they are personally responsible for making the world a better place (Cone, 2008; McGlone, Spain & McGlone, 2011; Winograd & Hais, 2014). Considering the evidence of the relationship between narcissism and engagement, millennials may be driven to make a meaningful contribution because of their narcissism and entitlement rather than in spite of it. Thus, we expect increased levels of entitlement and narcissism to lead to increased levels of interest in community service. A challenge for employers is to influence millennial employees with narcissistic and entitlement predispositions in such ways as to increase their engagement levels. The answer may lie in opportunities for entitled individuals and narcissists to boost their self-perception in particular regard to service, as both constructs have been associated with increased levels of self-perceptions.

In other words, an individual's desire to participate in an activity is moderated by both personality characteristics and self-perceptions of ability. Manipulations of self-efficacy perceptions could, in fact, influence willingness to volunteer (Lindenmeier, 2008). However, these studies, although informative, do not address the form of self-efficacy specifically related to service activities. As stated previously, millennials are seeking opportunities to make meaningful contributions to their organization and to their world so a more specific form of self-efficacy must be assessed.

Community service self-efficacy (CSSE) assesses the perception that one has the ability to make a meaningful contribution to one's community through service (Reeb, 2006). CSSE was originally created to assess service learning program objectives and validate the goals and impact of service experiences (Miller, 1997). However, for the purpose of this study, CSSE is viewed as a focused sub-measure of generalized self-efficacy. Therefore, utilizing a millennial sample, it is expected that CSSE will influence the relationship between the desired individual outcome attitude of engagement and the typically negative attitudes of entitlement and engagement. Specifically, higher levels of CSSE should result in increased levels of engagement among narcissistic and entitled individuals. Thus we propose [Hypotheses 1 and 2](#):

Hypothesis 1. . Community service self-efficacy mediates the relationship between narcissism and engagement.

Hypothesis 2. : Community service self-efficacy mediates the relationship between entitlement and engagement.

2. Method

2.1. Participants.

A total of 239 undergraduates (122 Female, and 117 Male) ranging in age from 19 to 25 years ($M = 22.5$, $SD = 1.45$) participated in the

study. Volunteers were recruited from service learning courses in business from a sample of millennials at a large public university in the Southeast United States via an online survey instrument. Participants received extra credit for voluntarily participating in the survey.

2.2. Measures and procedures.

All participants completed a questionnaire via an online survey program containing demographic questions and measures to assess participants' feelings about their organizations, work styles, and personalities in the context of a course-specific service learning project. While 262 surveys were started on the survey platform, 239 complete responses were obtained. Responses to the scales included in the study were recorded using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". No significant sex differences were observed in the scales measured across the sample. Therefore, it was not included in any further analysis.

2.2.1. Psychological Entitlement.

An eight-item scale was used to measure *Psychological Entitlement*. Items were taken from the Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004). Psychological Entitlement Scale, designed to measure entitlement across situations. *Psychological Entitlement* assesses generalized feelings of being deserving. Sample items include "If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be the first lifeboat" and "People like me deserve a break every now and then". Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Coefficient α for the eight-item scale was .83.

2.2.2. Narcissism.

A ten-item scale was used to measure *Narcissism*. The scale used was Hendin and Cheek's Hypersensitive Narcissism scale (1997), designed to assess overestimation of one's own abilities and excessive self-admiration. Sample items include "I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others" and "I am secretly 'put out' or annoyed when others come to me with their troubles, asking me for my time and sympathy". Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Coefficient α for the ten-item scale was .74.

2.2.3. Community Service Self-Efficacy

Community Service Self-Efficacy (CSSE) was measured with the ten-item Reeb et al. (1998) scale. The scale is designed to assess an individual's confidence in his or her ability related specifically to the performance of community service. The scale was validated in 1998 (Reeb, Katsuyama, Sammon & Yoder, 1998) and more recently in 2006 (Reeb, 2006). Researchers have typically utilized the scale to measure students' perceptions of CSSE before and after participating in service-learning activities involving the community (Ferrari, Matteo, Karahalios & Williams, 2012). Sample items include "I make meaningful contributions to the community through service" and "I find community service opportunities which are relevant to my interests and abilities". Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Coefficient α for the scale was .95.

2.2.4. Engagement.

Engagement was measured using Young's (2011) 18 item scale designed to capture an individual's energy, enthusiasm, and identification with an organization. The scale assesses engagement across state, trait, and behavioral facets. Sample items include "I routinely look for ways to do my current job better" and "I feel like the work I do every day makes a difference". Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert-type response format ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Data reduction via confirmatory factor analysis,

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