

Do today's young people really think they are so extraordinary?

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When asked about the state of today's youth, former president Jimmy Carter recently mused "I've been a professor at Emory University for the past twenty years and I interrelate with a wide range of students... I don't detect that this generation is any more committed to personal gain to the exclusion of benevolent causes than others have been in the past."

Now research is beginning to support this notion. An article appearing in the February issue of *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, found no evidence that today's young people have inflated impressions of themselves compared to the youth of previous generations.

Psychologist Kali Trzesniewski of the University of Western Ontario and her colleagues Brent Donnellan and Richard Robins measured narcissism — a personality trait encompassing characteristics like arrogance, exhibitionism, and a sense of entitlement — in over 25,000 college students from 1996 to 2007. The researchers then compared their data to similar studies conducted in the late 1970's to mid 1980's and found no evidence that overall levels of narcissism had increased.

Levels of "self-enhancement" — the tendency to hold unrealistically positive beliefs about the self — were also assessed in a sample of high school seniors. As with college students, the high school seniors showed no prominent increase on this component of narcissism.

"Today's youth seem to be no more narcissistic and self-aggrandizing

than previous generations,” write the authors.

The findings run counter to previous research and media reports claiming that narcissism has been steadily increasing among college students, leading some behavioral scientists to dub today’s youth as “generation me.”

But it appears, at least for now, that the youth of American have won a reprieve from being scolded as more aloof and self-involved than previous generations.

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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