Perceived Entitlement among Amillenials versus Baby Boomers: A Cross-Generational Examination

Eliza Comer
Utah State University

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PERCEIVED ENTITLEMENT AMONG MILLENNIANS VERSUS BABY BOOMERS: A CROSS-GENERATIONAL EXAMINATION

by

Eliza Comer

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

Business Administration and Marketing
in the Department of Management

Approved:

Thesis/Project Advisor
Dr. Aaron Brough

Departmental Honors Advisor
Dr. Shannon Peterson

Honors Program Director
Dr. Kristine Miller

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT

Spring 2017
Abstract

As the Millennial workforce grows, understanding how Millennials are viewed—specifically in terms of entitlement—is an issue that merits attention, since perceived entitlement could negatively impact the extent to which an individual’s contributions are valued in the workplace. While prior research suggests that Millennials are entitled (Allen 2015; Fisk 2010; Myers 2010), it neglects how perceptions of entitlement may differ across generations. We aim to address this gap by examining whether Baby Boomers and Millennials differ in their perceptions of what constitutes entitled behavior. Specifically, we test whether an individual’s age, together with situational factors, may influence the extent to which an identical behavior is perceived as entitled.

We addressed our research question in three stages that involved multiple research methods. First, we reviewed the existing literature on entitlement to better understand what behaviors are typical of individuals who are viewed as entitled. Second, we conducted exploratory research to understand qualitative differences that may exist in perceptions of entitlement by running four focus groups comprised of either Baby Boomers or Millennials. Third, leveraging the focus group findings, we performed an experiment involving over 400 participants across the United States to test our hypotheses regarding generational differences in perceptions of entitlement.

Consistent with prior research that Millennials are more entitled than other generations, our focus group results suggested that Millennials are viewed as more entitled than other generations, both by themselves and by Baby Boomers. Similarly, our experimental results did not reveal a difference across generations in perceptions of what constitutes entitled behavior. Together, these findings suggest that behaviors judged to constitute entitlement are viewed
similarly across generations, and may be exhibited more frequently among Millennials than Baby Boomers.
Acknowledgements

Thank you, Dr. Brough, for working with me on such a crazy deadline and for guiding me through the twists and turns of academic research. I had no idea how hard it would be, but you were there to help me every step of the way.

Dr. Peterson, thank you for being such a great friend and mentor! I wouldn’t be who I am today without you.

Amber Summer-Grahams, without you, my Honors thesis could never have happened. Thank you for helping me make this happen, it has made such a difference.

Thank you to the Huntsman School of Business, the Management Department, and the University Honors Program for making my education valuable and my research possible.

And finally, thank you to my husband, Cameron Comer. You were my rock and whenever I thought I couldn’t finish my research, you got me through the doubt. I love you.
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Introduction

The Millennial generation is one of the most studied generations of all time. With the recent surge in data-driven marketing and human resource management, Millennials have come under scrutiny and have been analyzed thoroughly. Millennials are considered open-minded, team-oriented, and impact-motivated, but they are also thought to be self-centered, disrespectful, and entitled (Myers, 2010). Truly understanding Millennials is becoming increasingly important as Millennials will consist of half the workforce in 2020 as well as the largest consumer group (Allen, 2015).

While many studies show the negatives and positives of Millennial characteristics, no study analyzes how those characteristics may be perceived differently across generations. Currently, Millennials are considered one of the most entitled generations and this has caused potential friction between two generational groups in the workplace: Millennials and Baby Boomers (Bennett, 2012).

Does this negative perception of entitlement harm Millennial contributions in the workplace? We set out to study what behaviors are perceived as entitled, and whether perceptions of entitlement differ among Millennials and Baby Boomers.

Literature Review

Existing literature generally describes Millennials as entitled. For example, a recent Times Magazine article detailed research showing that Millennials were simply the “Me, Me, Me generation” and only cared about themselves (Stein, 2013). The article portrays the Millennial generation as lazy, selfish, narcissistic, and fame-obsessed, with little to no mention of positive qualities in the generation. Books have been written specifically on Millennial entitlement,
labeling Millennials ‘Generation Me’ and detailing how Millennials are shaping what it means to be an individual in America today (Twenge, 2014; Twenge, 2013; Eyre, 2011).

One of the more prominent studies on Millennial entitlement was conducted by researchers at the University of Tennessee and Bucknell University, who used an equity sensitivity instrument to measure whether Millennials are more entitled than Gen Xers and Baby Boomers. The study found that Millennials did exhibit a significantly higher entitled score on the equity sensitivity instrument than other tested generations. The study mentions that high individual entitlement scores seem to be linked to high individual narcissism scores, but that this relation needs to be researched further (Allen, 2015). This type of narcissism has been identified as on the rise in American culture. More people are focusing inward and acting destructively toward society as they try to benefit themselves only. However, the rise in narcissism has not been linked to only one generation as of yet, but is shared by each generation (Twenge, 2013).

Entitlement itself has been studied on a non-generational basis in order to determine its effects on society. Based on a Psychological Entitlement Scale, which was proven reliable and valid, entitlement correlated negatively with agreeableness and emotional stability. Furthermore, entitlement was shown to have a pervasive and negative effect on social behavior, such as selfishness in a relationship, willingness to take candy meant for children, and aggressive behavior after a threat to one’s ego (Campbell, 2004). Other research looked at non-generational employee entitlement as a “pervasive and pernicious social issue…that has considerable significance” and studied how such excessive entitlement was rewarded in the workplace through reward programs and special treatment (Fisk, 2010).

Besides entitlement, generational differences have been researched and tested to see how generational differences affect the workplace. For example, corporations and businesses are
having difficulty retaining Millennial workers. One study showed that Millennials are highly motivated by small establishment size and moderately motivated by co-worker support, flex time, paid leave, and other benefits. Negative factors on Millennial retention consisted of unions, extreme hours, and irregular schedules (Campione, 2015). Other studies focus on how to improve leadership styles to capitalize on Millennials’ tech-savviness and creativity (Holt, 2012) or on how to create a work environment where three to four different generations can work together effectively. One suggestion given is to have a more open collaborative space and a less hierarchal structure to appeal more to younger generations and to help older generations adapt to the changing environment (Bennett, 2012).

Some researchers are seriously concerned at the lack of studies done on the generational factor in the workplace. One study showed how generations create their own unique culture and traditions and how diverse age groups value distinct leadership characteristics differently. Generational grouping and age seem to form as unique of a culture as ethnicity or religion and so needs to be thoroughly studied in order to develop current and future leaders to meet the demands of each different generation (Arsenault, 2004).

Several major generational differences that need to be recognized by management were explored in a recent study. The study hypothesized that Baby Boomers would be less mobile in their jobs and would be more compliant at work and that Gen Xers would be less likely to work overtime than either Baby Boomers or Millennials. While there was data to support the hypotheses, the researchers concluded that generational differences played less of a role in the workplace than stereotypes would suggest (Becton, 2014). This study clearly contradicts the one referenced above, making it difficult for employers to apply insights about Millennials and generational differences.
Another complicating factor is the fact that most research on generational differences has been descriptive rather than theoretical. Descriptive data has clearly identified that generational differences are an important factor in the workplace, but that there are no practical applications of this descriptive research to make it useful. It states that one way to make the research more theoretical is to view the generations as a “social force” rather than just a demographic variable (Lyons, 2014). Some practical applications have tried to surface, but have clearly not yet made a mark as managers and employers struggle to cross the generational gap and maintain Millennials in the workforce (Kyles, 2005).

All these studies paint a somewhat confusing picture. While most sources claim that Millennials are entitled, others state that entitlement is a cross-generational issue. While some sources claim that generational differences are an important factor in the workplace, others state that it is less of a factor than one would think. Some studies even claim that, despite the plethora of available research, not enough practical research has been done to solve the problem. Managers and employers still struggle to retain Millennial talent and Baby Boomers and Gen Xers still struggle to understand the up-and-coming Millennial generation. With all the confusion, is it any wonder that so many negative perceptions exist, especially when the negative characteristics of Millennials are so often emphasized in modern media?

**Hypotheses**

Negative perceptions of Millennials exhibiting entitled behavior, even when there is no reason to believe entitled behavior has been exhibited, have caused friction between Millennials and other generational groups (Bennett, 2012). To test whether those negative perceptions actually existed, we developed three hypotheses.
H1: Baby Boomers will use Millennials as examples of entitled behavior instead of citing their own age group as examples. Millennials will also cite Millennials as examples of entitled behavior.

H2: Baby Boomers and Millennials will rate Millennials as more entitled than Baby Boomers who exhibit an identical behavior.

H3: Baby Boomers will consider themselves less entitled than Millennials. Millennials will consider themselves more entitled than Baby Boomers.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted multiple focus groups and then refined focus group questions and distributed the questions through a national survey.

Focus Group Methodology

First, we analyzed secondary research to determine how Millennials were commonly viewed in society and in academic research. While positives were mentioned in the academic research, most Millennial characteristics that were talked about through media were negative. Negative stereotypes more often than not included words such as “entitled” or “undeserving” (Stein, 2013). Based on these negative stereotypes, we wrote focus group questions to further discuss the issues with a small group of individuals.

The second step in the research process was to hold focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to explore perceptions of entitlement across generations in a semi-structured format and to refine questions that had been drafted for the experiment. Four focus groups were held in Logan Utah over the course of two days involving a total of 16 participants, of whom 6 were Baby Boomers (ages 50-65) and 10 were Millennials (ages 18-33). Focus group times ranged from 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Participants were local, with the Millennial groups comprised
predominantly of college students. Food was provided, and participants received $10 gift cards for participating in the study. To avoid group bias, participants were asked to write down responses to all questions before answering vocally. For a detailed list of questions used in the focus groups, please see Appendix A.

**Focus Group Results**

Focus group results provided several interesting insights. The first question all four groups received was “What do you think ‘entitlement’ means?” Surprisingly, some Baby Boomers were confused by the question and two different definitions emerged. One definition was to believe you should receive special treatment without deserving it, or something along those lines. The other definition was the more traditional meaning of the word, which was having a right to something. For example, one person said that entitled meant “completion of a contract and being paid for services.” A couple participants brought up the fact that veterans are entitled to benefits because of the work they have done serving the United States. Millennials, on the other hand, only thought of the meaning as negative. One possible explanation for this generational difference in the interpretation of entitlement is that Millennials have been so exposed to media’s portrayal of their own entitlement that they no longer see the word as meaning anything other than undeserved special treatment.

Next, focus group participants were asked to describe an experience where they had witnessed entitled or unentitled behavior. One might have expected each group to reference their peers as examples, since they are likely more familiar with their own generation. Consistent with this expectation, Millennials referenced both the younger generation for exhibiting entitled and
unentitled behavior. In contrast, Baby Boomers referenced the younger generation as showing entitled behavior and the older generation as showing unentitled behavior, which supports H1.

When participants were asked, “What caused entitlement?”, Baby Boomers referenced the participation trophies that were given to Millennials and how ungrateful Millennials were for their hard work. One Baby Boomer stated entitlement was caused by the “ease of self-gratification by a society that caters to the individual” and another that entitlement was due to “lack of appreciation for those on whose shoulders we stand on.” Millennials mentioned upbringing as the main cause of entitlement, referencing gratitude as the way to eradicate entitled behavior. One Millennial stated “I think entitlement stems from a background without any struggle or hardships, monetary or otherwise.”

Next, participants were presented with several scenarios. One scenario given consisted of a snack bar, hereafter referred to as the Snack Bar Scenario, and the second scenario consisted of asking for a promotion, hereafter referred to as the Promotion Scenario.

In the Snack Bar scenario, participants were asked to discuss the behavior of an employee who requested chips be provided at the company-sponsored snack bar. Both groups expressed that asking for chips to be added was not entitled behavior as long as the employee expressed gratitude for the snack bar before asking. Millennials were especially proactive in trying to come up with a solution, with one Millennial participant suggesting that the employee should volunteer to purchase the food for the snack bar and include chips when he or she went shopping for supplies. The responses in this example were similar across all groups; Baby Boomers and Millennials alike highlighted the importance of expressing gratitude before asking what was seen as a favor or as special treatment.

In the Promotion Scenario, participants were told:
"The youngest member of your team met with your boss and demanded a promotion due to their past contributions. Due to this meeting, the boss has agreed to promote this team member."

Participants were once again fairly similar in responses, with a couple of key differences. One difference was that the Baby Boomer groups were the only age group to draw attention to the word ‘youngest.’ Having the youngest member of the team demand a promotion made many of the Baby Boomers uncomfortable. Another difference was in the Millennial responses. While all groups expressed dislike at the use of the word ‘demanded,’ Millennials mentioned that an employee, young or old, had to speak up for what they wanted in such a competitive working environment. Baby Boomers did not mention the need to speak up and would often state that the boss would promote an employee if the employee deserved a promotion, without the employee needing to ask.

Finally, participants were asked whether they thought the Millennial generation was entitled and to write down their thoughts about why Millennials were so often seen as exhibiting entitled behavior. Millennials all agreed that their generation was viewed as entitled, but a fifth of them said that the Millennials were entitled and the rest said that Millennials were not entitled. When the Millennial participants were asked why they thought their generation was entitled, they mentioned that Millennials have not yet had to work for what they have and so the generation can often take things for granted. All Baby Boomer participants agreed that the Millennial generation was entitled, but they disagreed about why. Some Baby Boomers thought it was a communication disconnect, others thought it was unrealistic expectations from Millennials themselves. Only one Baby Boomer mentioned that his or her own generation might be entitled as well.
At the end of the focus group, a couple of Baby Boomers mentioned that their perspective on entitlement had changed and that they no longer thought Millennials were so terrible. One said it was the first time he or she had ever had a constructive conversation on entitlement stereotypes and that they wished there was more dialogue happening on the issue.

**Experimental Methodology**

The experiment was designed to determine whether Baby Boomers and Millennials differed in their perception of entitlement in an identical behavior. Participants were 437 Americans (107 Baby Boomers and 300 Millennials) recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Each participant received $0.35 after completing the survey and each survey took an average of 4.7 minutes to complete.

All participants were first provided with a definition of entitlement in order to avoid any confusion about what type of entitlement was being discussed. Participants were then asked to describe a person who had exhibited entitled behavior and to report the person’s gender, age, and income level. Age was the key variable of interest, but gender and income were included to disguise the true purpose of the survey so as to prevent demand effects.

Next, to determine whether or not an employee’s age would influence the perception of entitled behavior, we presented participants with scenarios in which certain factors were systematically manipulated between participants. The scenarios were similar to those used in the focus groups, but had been refined based on comments received in the focus group. For the Snack Bar scenario, the target was described as either a Baby Boomer or a Millennial. To control for gender as well as time worked at the company, eight different variations of the scenario were devised. An example of the variation shown to participants in one condition is:
Jamie is a 58-year-old female who has been with her current employer for the past 5 years. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

Participants were then asked to rank Jamie’s entitlement on a scale of 0 to 100, with 0 being not at all entitled and 100 being extremely entitled. Depending on the condition, Jamie was described as a male or a female, aged 28 or 58, who had been at the company for 5 weeks or 5 years.

For the Promotion scenario, in addition to manipulating the target’s age and gender, the revenue contribution of the target was also varied in order to manipulate the extent to which the target deserved or did not deserve the promotion. Based on the focus group results, the strong wording of ‘demanded’ was kept to invoke strong emotions and participants were shown whether or not the employee actually deserved the promotion. Eight different variations of the scenario were introduced, with one of the variations listed below as an example.

*Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Employee</th>
<th>Age of Employee</th>
<th>Revenue Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>$63,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katy</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>$47,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>$38,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suppose that one of the team members, John, met with his supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that John’s actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

Participants were then asked to rank the behavior as reflecting a sense of entitlement from 0 to 100, with 0 being not at all entitled and 100 being extremely entitled. Depending on condition, the target was described as a man or a woman, age 25 or 55, and deserving or undeserving of the promotion (based on revenue contribution relative to other team members). Please refer to Appendix B for the full experimental stimuli.

Finally, participants were asked whether they considered themselves entitled and were given the options of ‘Definitely Yes’, ‘Probably Yes’, ‘Might or Might Not’, ‘Probably Not’, and ‘Definitely Not’. This question was followed by some demographic questions, such as gender, work status, and industry.

Experimental Results

When interpreting the results, it should be noted that the sample size of the Baby Boomer group was much smaller than that of the Millennial group. This could be due to the fact that the survey was distributed online, and Millennials tend to be more familiar with technology and comfortable using such platforms.

To test H1, participants were asked to detail an example of an entitled person that he or she knew. Some interesting data came up when analyzing these open-ended responses. For example, Millennials are more likely to use the word ‘expect’ or ‘deserve’ in their description of a person exhibiting entitled behavior, such as “They act entitled by thinking that they deserve everything” (36% of Millennials v. 19% of Baby Boomers). Baby Boomers, on the other hand,
are more likely to use the word 'work,' such as “People who acted entitled think things should be
to them for free, or no work on their part” (17% of Baby Boomers v. 13% of
Millennials). The graph below illustrates the percentages of Baby Boomers and Millennials that
used a specific word to describe an entitled person.

Then, respondents were asked to state the age of the entitled person described in the
example. Surprisingly, Baby Boomers did not exhibit the same pattern of responses as the Baby
Boomers in the focus group. Baby Boomers were more likely to list an older person in their
entitlement story (M=48.35, MED=49) than Millennials (M=32.97, MED=29); F(1,427) = 88.77,
p < .0001). These results do not support H1 and are inconsistent with the findings of prior
literature and responses obtained from focus group participants.

In the Snack Scenario, one unexpected result came from the Snack scenario. The main
effect of identifying as self-entitled had a significant effect on entitlement ratings in the snack
scenario (F(4,436) = 10.13, p < .0001). Respondents who considered themselves more entitled
rated the person in the scenario higher on the entitlement scale than those who did not consider
themselves entitled. Once again, this warrants further exploration. No other main effects had a significant affect.

In the Promotion Scenario, there was no statistically significant effect of the target’s gender on perceptions of entitlement, so these two conditions were collapsed in the subsequent analysis, reducing the total variations from eight to four. There was no main effect of participant age on entitlement scores, nor was there a main effect of whether the target deserved the promotion. However, the interaction between age in the Promotion scenario and whether or not the person deserved the promotion came close to having a significant result ($F(1, 389) = 3.58, p < .0591$). These results provide only weak support for H2.

The graph below illustrates the generational comparison between the two groups for the promotion scenario.
One interesting result from the survey was the difference in answers between respondents who were employed and respondents who were unemployed.

As illustrated in the graph above, unemployed Millennials ranked the undeserving Baby Boomer lower in entitlement, while employed Baby Boomers ranked the underserving Millennial lower in entitlement. Other than those two differences, responses were driven primarily by whether the participant was employed or unemployed. The interaction effect of participant age classification and employment status (unemployed or employed) on perceived entitlement was significant ($F(2,389) = 3.38, p < .0352$) and could warrant further investigation.

The majority of both Millennials and Baby Boomers did not identify as entitled. The charts below illustrate the distribution of those who considered themselves ‘Definitely’ or ‘Probably’ entitled versus those who considered themselves ‘Definitely Not’ or ‘Probably Not’ entitled.
Despite a general preference to avoid identifying as entitled, Baby Boomers were significantly less likely than Millennials to identify themselves as entitled ($F(1,436) = 12.63, p <$
In fact, Baby Boomers were twice as likely to identify themselves as less entitled than Millennials, which supports H3.

Dividing the Promotion Scenario results into categories based on those who considered themselves entitled and those who did not, there is once again an interesting distribution. As illustrated in the chart below, Baby Boomers who identify as entitled consider deserving Millennials and undeserving Baby Boomers entitled, more so than any other group. The result is not statistically significant, although it is an interesting trend.

Some results from the survey may not have been statistically significant due to the low volume of Baby Boomer responses received and the method of distribution.

**Discussion**

Based on the focus group, it would seem that Baby Boomers perceive Millennials as entitled even when no entitled behavior has been exhibited. Millennials were the first group mentioned when entitled behavior was brought up and the last group mentioned when it came to
unentitled behavior. Additionally, every Baby Boomer participant stated Millennials were entitled, although some participants qualified their answers by mentioning communication malfunctions or perception differences. These results would align with the secondary data gathered on Millennial entitlement, where the perception of entitled behavior is there even when the study does not specifically relate to entitlement. The *Time Magazine* article (Stein, 2013) written about Millennials is a great example of this phenomenon.

The experimental results failed to support H1 and H2, and some of the experimental results do not align with the results from secondary research and focus group answers. H3, on the other hand, was supported. Further investigation will need to be done to test this effect.

**Future Research Topics**

For the purpose of this research project, the goal was to show whether or not negative entitlement perceptions existed for Baby Boomers about Millennials. In the future, we would change this project in one of several ways.

First, on the scenario questions, we would have identified the individual as a Millennial or as a Baby Boomer rather than use the more objective number for age. By specifically titling the scenario individual as a Millennial or a Baby Boomer, the connection is made more obvious and more personal bias from participants is brought into the answers, which might have produced statistically significant results.

Second, we would have changed the measure of entitlement from a 0-100 scale to a 1-10 scale, with 10 being ‘Definitely Entitled.’ By shortening the range, participants may show a more polarized response rather than a neutral response. Additionally, using a more extreme manipulation, such as increasing the magnitude of the difference between the target’s revenue
contribution and that of the target’s team members in the Promotion Scenario, might have yielded different results and shown what we were expecting to see in the data.

Third, we would have liked to explore whether there was a difference in Millennials’ and Baby Boomers’ locus of control. Maybe Millennials have a more external or internal locus of control than Baby Boomers, which could result in different behavior or different responses to the survey questions.

Fourth, while the study tried to determine if unfounded negative perceptions exist, it did not focus on the consequences of said negative perceptions. It would have been interesting to see if Millennials are being discriminated against in their workplace contributions because their suggestions are seen as entitled or ungrateful. Trying to explore this area of the study might have led to observational research or an additional experiment, and may have led to a project focused less on theory-testing and more on practical applications in the workplace.

Finally, we would have changed the goal of the study to focus on finding different explanations for Millennial behavior other than entitlement. In an interview with a Millennial expert, Mike Maughan from Qualtrics, it was suggested that Millennials may be considered entitled because they are asking for constant attention the workplace. But the need for attention is not because Millennials are attention hogs, but because Millennials have a need for constant feedback and want to make immediate improvements. Millennials do not want to wait for the year-end interview to be better, they want to be better now (Maughan, 2017). Another explanation was brought up in focus groups where it was suggested that Millennials are more empowered than other generations because they have seen individuals make huge changes by doing simple things like posting a video or writing a blog. Perhaps Millennials are empowered to make change and so they are trying to change the workplace for the better, which is coming off
as entitled and ungrateful behavior. Exploring these different types of explanations would have been an interesting addition to our research.

**Conclusion**

Our experimental results failed to provide support for two of our three hypotheses. However, our data raise some interesting questions about the research currently being done about entitlement. The results suggest that Baby Boomers and Millennials do not perceive each other as more entitled when a reward is deserved. Further research will need to be done to reconcile the discrepancies between the results of the focus group and experiments. As Millennials enter the workplace, they can benefit from knowing that they will be judged by their own merit and not by stereotypes. And as managers and employers welcome Millennials into the workforce, they can rest assured knowing that stereotypes will not divide the workplace and hurt future Millennial contributions.
Reflective Writing

Participating in Honors research was one of the most challenging and enlightening accomplishments of my college experience. As a business administration and marketing major, I had never been exposed to in-depth research; all the surveys and focus groups I had run were easily manipulated and clearly focused on whatever my professor wanted. I had never done research on my own before. My honors thesis gave me the perfect chance to find out what research was like when there was no one there to give you an outline.

The Beginning

I started out my research on the wrong foot. Students are meant to begin their research at least a year before they graduate. I, on the other hand, in a fit of indecision, did not start applying for Honors work until February of my graduating year. My first piece of advice: DO NOT DO THIS TO YOURSELF. As I went deeper into my research, I learned that I was excited about the topic I had chosen and that I was actually interested in the subject matter. However, due to my limited time, I did not have enough flexibility to fully explore my hypothesis and the many different options available to me. Plus, it made deadlines extremely stressful.

Not only should you start early, but you should learn how to apply for Internal Review Board (IRB) approval. Applying for IRB approval sucked up an entire month of my research time since we could not get started on any primary research until we receive permission to do so. Apply early and check often on your application to make sure everything is going through the system properly. The IRB can be picky, so plan time in your schedule for getting its approval.

Besides applying early and learning about the IRB, the most important favor you can do for yourself is to pick a good mentor. That was the only way I made it through the stress and the
deadlines was because I had a great mentor who was willing to work with me. Dr. Brough was always willing to discuss my research and add any new ideas. I think he was as excited as me about the research and the results. If you have a good mentor with you from the beginning, the process goes a lot smoother, especially if you are starting late.

Finally, if you are not good at statistical analysis, find a friend who is. Having someone there to talk me through the statistical regressions and analysis saved me hours of time and energy and made me understand my results a whole lot better.

The Middle

Once you have started (hopefully early), and you have picked your mentor, applied for IRB approval, and found your statistically savvy friend, things start getting fun. If you are doing primary research, the middle is where you begin to gather your data. If you are doing secondary research only, then you better start reading fast.

Developing focus group questions and survey experiments was my favorite part of the process. This is the part where you finally get to be creative. Spend plenty of time with your mentor discussing the types of questions you want to ask and where you would like the process to go. You will start bouncing ideas off of each other until you finally have a good idea of how the experiments or interviews should be run. Dr. Brough, my mentor, was instrumental during this process, especially for the surveys.

Developing questions is a great time to begin investing in backwards research. Backwards research is where you determine what you will expect to see if you ask that particular question and determine if that result is actually what you are trying to find. For example, in my survey, we had a question about entitlement that was not entirely necessary. If I had invested
more time in backwards research, I could have determined this early and gotten better survey results. Focus groups can help with developing good questions and finding out early on what kind of results you might get from a larger data sample.

Focus groups were by far my favorite part. Take advantage of this research tool because it allows you to go in depth and find out unique answers to your hypothesis. Plus, it allows you to refine your survey questions before you send them out on a mass scale. Meeting with small groups of people and hearing their thoughts on an idea I cared so much about was one of the most enlightening parts of the research process. It allowed me to better understand the demographics I was looking at and to see where I should go with my survey. If you have the chance, I would highly recommend using focus groups in your research.

Surveys, for me, were the nightmare. Luckily I had help from Dr. Brough or else I would never have made it. If you want statistically significant results, be prepared to give yourself plenty of time to collect the data because even if you are using a survey distribution platform, it can take a lot of time for the results to come in. Plus, then you get to analyze the results, which also takes time. This is where your statistics friend comes in handy because they can help guide you through the analysis. Despite the difficulty, surveys are a great tool for collecting large amounts of data from a diverse group of people. The results you get, once you understand what you are looking at, are fascinating and it is fun to manipulate the variables by analyzing different groups together.

The End

After you have developed your hypothesis and gathered all your data, you finally get to write about what you have learned. Once again, you are going to need time. Have I emphasized
time enough? Writing 5,000-10,000 words on a complicated topic that has hopefully never been written about before is difficult, especially if you are similar to me and have never written an academic research paper before. Luckily, once again, you have your mentor there to help you. They will let you know where to go because they have done things like this before. Your first draft is going to be bad; just accept it. But also accept that it is going to get better.

After you've gathered everything, you get to present on your research. This was another part of the research process that I loved. Introducing people to ideas that you have worked so hard on and seeing that they are interested in the topic too, is thrilling. My advice here is to practice your presentation style. Many of the presentations I saw might have had great ideas, but the ideas were so poorly presented that I could not get excited about them. Do not do this to your idea. You have worked so hard on it, make sure you take the time to learn how to communicate what you have done for your research to other people. If you don’t, all that hard work will be wasted.

Take Away

Honors research is hard. It’s exacting and it takes longer than you might think. However, it is also rewarding. I can now walk into my job knowing how to obtain IRB approval, develop and run a focus group, write an unbiased survey, and then combine all my data into a well-written research paper than I can talk intelligently about. Even better, I can now recognize good and bad research and I can ask the right questions when someone presents research data to me. If you have the time and energy to take it on, you would be a fool not to. If you don’t have the time or energy, find some, because you would be a fool to miss out on such a great opportunity.


Appendix A

Focus Group Questions:

1. What do you think “entitlement” means?

2. Please list an experience where you witnessed entitled behavior. Be as detailed as possible.

3. Do you know someone who is entitled?

4. Why do you think they are entitled?

5. Do you know someone who is not entitled?

6. Why do you think they are not entitled?

7. What do you think causes entitlement?

8. When a good or bad event happens in your life, do you feel like you are in control or that some other factor is influencing the situation (i.e. fate)?

9. Your employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. You think the snack bar would be better if it included chips, so you suggest to your boss that chips should be added.

   Please write down your thoughts about the behavior in this situation.

10. The youngest member of your team met with your boss and demanded a promotion due to their past contributions. Due to this meeting, the boss has agreed to promote this team member.

   Please write down your thoughts about the behavior in this situation.

11. Why do you think the Millennial generation is often considered “entitled”?

   Do you think that the Millennial generation is entitled?

12. Please add any other thoughts you may have concerning entitlement.
Appendix B

Research Survey Questions:

Q31: Please review the informed consent document before proceeding with this survey.

Q32: I have reviewed the Letter of Informed Consent and wish to proceed with the survey

☐ Yes, I have reviewed and wish to proceed (1)
☐ No, I do not want to proceed (2)

Condition: No, I do not want to proceed Is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey.

Age: What is your current age (in years)?

Q33: What is your MTurk Worker ID?

E_Open: Those who act entitled seem to believe that they deserve special treatment or privileges without needing to earn them. Please describe someone you know who acts entitled. Which of their behaviors cause you to think that they are entitled?

E_Gender: What gender is this person?

☐ Male (1)
☐ Female (2)

E_Age: How old is this person?

E_Income: What is this person's approximate income?

Randomize Display of Questions on Snack:

Snack_BB_F_5Y: Jamie is a 58 year old female who has been with her current employer for the past 5 years. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

Jamie is... (1-100)

Snack_BB_M_5Y: Jamie is a 58 year old male who has been with his current employer for the past 5 years. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

Jamie is... (1-100)
Snack_Mil_F_5Y: Jamie is a 28 year old female who has been with her current employer for the past 5 years. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ Jamie is... (1-100)

Snack_Mil_M_5Y: Jamie is a 28 year old male who has been with his current employer for the past 5 years. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ Jamie is... (1-100)

Snack_BB_F_5W: Jamie is a 58 year old female who has been with her current employer for the past 5 weeks. Jamie's employer provides a snack bar for employees to use. Jamie thinks the snack bar would be better if it included chips and suggests to management that chips should be added. To what extent do you feel that Jamie's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

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______ Jamie is... (1-100)

Randomize Display of Questions on Promotion:

D_Mil_M: Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Employee</th>
<th>Age of Employee</th>
<th>Revenue Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>25</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katy</td>
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<td>$47,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suppose that one of the team members, John, met with his supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that John's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ John is... (1-100)

D_BB_M: Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$38,000</td>
</tr>
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Suppose that one of the team members, John, met with his supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that John's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ John is... (1-100)

U_Mil_M: Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.

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Suppose that one of the team members, Sarah, met with her supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that Sarah's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ Sarah is... (1-100)

Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.

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Suppose that one of the team members, Sarah, met with her supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that Sarah's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

______ Sarah is... (1-100)
Imagine that a five-person team is responsible for sales within a company. Below is a table showing how much revenue each team member contributed during the last year.

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Suppose that one of the team members, Sarah, met with her supervisor and demanded a promotion based on his revenue contributions. To what extent do you feel that Sarah's actions reflect a sense of entitlement?

Sarah is... (1-100)

Q8: Do you consider yourself entitled?
- Definitely yes (5)
- Probably yes (4)
- Might or might not (3)
- Probably not (2)
- Definitely not (1)

Gender: What is your gender?
- Male (1)
- Female (2)
EmpStatus: Which statement best describes your current employment status?
- Working full-time (1)
- Working part-time (2)
- Not working / Retired (3)

EmpYears: How many years have you been a full-time employee in the workforce?

EmpSize: How many employees work in your establishment?
- 1-4 (1)
- 5-9 (2)
- 10-19 (3)
- 20-49 (4)
- 50-99 (5)
- 100-249 (6)
- 250-499 (7)
- 500-999 (8)
- 1000 or more (9)

EmpType: Where are you employed?
- PRIVATE-FOR-PROFIT company, business or individual, for wages, salary or commissions (1)
- PRIVATE-NOT-FOR-PROFIT, tax-exempt, or charitable organization (2)
- Local GOVERNMENT employee (city, county, etc.) (3)
- State GOVERNMENT employee; 5-Federal GOVERNMENT employee (4)
- Federal GOVERNMENT employee (5)
- SELF-EMPLOYED in own NOT INCORPORATED business, professional practice, or farm (6)
- SELF-EMPLOYED in own INCORPORATED business, professional practice, or farm (7)
- Working WITHOUT PAY in family business or farm (8)
Industry: Which of the following industries most closely matches the one in which you are employed?
- Forestry, fishing, hunting or agriculture support (1)
- Real estate or rental and leasing (2)
- Mining (3)
- Professional, scientific or technical services (4)
- Utilities (5)
- Management of companies or enterprises (6)
- Construction (7)
- Admin, support, waste management or remediation services (8)
- Manufacturing (9)
- Educational services (10)
- Wholesale trade (11)
- Health care or social assistance (12)
- Retail trade (13)
- Arts, entertainment or recreation (14)
- Transportation or warehousing (15)
- Accommodation or food services (16)
- Information (17)
- Other services (except public administration) (18)
- Finance or insurance (19)
- Unclassified establishments (20)

Code: Thank you for participating in today's study. Your unique completion code is: ${e://Field/mTurkCode2}. Please enter this code into the HIT in Mechanical Turk to receive payment. Please note that you may enter the code only once; attempts to enter multiple codes will result in non-payment. After entering your code, please click on the "Next" button below to ensure your data has been recorded.
Author Biography

Eliza Thacker Comer is a senior at Utah State University studying Business Administration and Marketing at the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business. In her four years at the college, Eliza has competed nationally in marketing and sales management competitions, winning MVP at the Wake Forest Marketing Analytics Summit and taking 2nd place at the International Collegiate Sales Competition. A Huntsman Scholar, a Buehler Scholar, a Koch Scholar, and a Merrill Scholar, Eliza has been highly involved at the School of Business. Additionally, Eliza has been president of the Society for International Business and Economic Development and of the Huntsman Marketing Association, where she turned the HMA club into a weekly class of 50 dedicated marketing students. After graduating in Spring 2017, Eliza will move to Philadelphia to work for General Mills as a Business Management Associate.