



CAMPBELL-EWALD A PUBLICATION OF THE CAMPBELL-EWALD REFERENCE CENTER 30400 VAN DYKE, WARREN, MI 48093

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You Are Special

Maybe today's Gen Yers are too special. Some psychologists think so, and they are concerned. Looking at scores from psychological surveys taken by more than 16,000 college students across the country over more than 25 years, these researchers found that almost two-thirds of recent college students had narcissism scores that were above the average 1982 score. Thirty percent more college students showed elevated narcissism in 2006 than in 1982. The survey asks students to react to such statements as : "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place," "I think I am a special person," and "I like to be the center of attention." Many trends in American culture have contributed to the increase in narcissistic attitudes of these college students. The self-esteem programs that many elementary schools began 20 years ago are one factor. Other trends such as permissive parenting, increased

materialism, and the fascination with celebrities and reality-TV shows have left their mark. The popularity of Web pages and blogs devoted entirely to themselves has contributed to Gen Y's sense of self-centeredness, also.

The researchers are worried by the rise in narcissism because of its consequences for both individuals and society. Self-centered people have trouble forming emotional bonds with people and often lack empathy. They are aggressive when they have been insulted or threatened and tend to have problems with impulse control. One of the researchers says, "I'm concerned we are heading toward a society where people are going to treat each other badly, either on the streets or in relationships." When everyone is self-described as 'above average,' a huge clash of superegos could be expected.

(LOS ANGELES TIMES)

Heading for Home

You've heard of "boomerang kids" who return to their parental homes as adults after being out on their own?

Now there are "boomerang seniors" who moved to Southern states in their early retirement years and are returning

to their home states in the North to be closer to their children as they age. Often these seniors who return have lost their spouse, are lonely, and are in failing health. They want to live close to their children and grandchildren as they need more help. The numbers tell the story. In 2005, estimates revealed that 121,000 people ages 75 and older left the South from 2000 to 2005, and 87,000 arrived. In a comparable survey a decade earlier, 57,000 of that age group left the South, and 92,000 moved there. Another survey from the Census Bureau found that for the first time, slightly more people ages 85 and older left Florida than settled there. An analysis of the numbers suggests that those 75 and older who left the South were fairly evenly divided between married and widowed. More of the movers were likely to be women and white.

One demographer notes, "The South, and Florida especially, has been a magnet for yuppie elderly: younger seniors with spouse present and in good health. These are a catch for communities that receive them, because they have ample disposable incomes and make few demands on public services. The older senior population, especially after 80, are more likely to be widowed, less well off and more in need of social and economic support."

For that older population, it just makes sense to move back to the area where their children live. And the adult children often are happy to have them closer to home so they are able to avoid long-distance caregiving. As one octogenarian commented, "Friends are all right when you're well, but when you're not, you need family."

(THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Hanging Up on Landlines

One day soon no one may remember what a ringing telephone sounds like, as the number of Americans with traditional landline phones has declined sharply over the past three years. About one in eight households did not have a landline telephone in the first half of 2006; three years earlier it was about one in 20. A recent Census Bureau estimate indicated that over 5 million Americans do not have landline home phone service, while the trade organization for wireless carriers estimates that 72 percent of the U.S. population has cellphones. This trend has ramifications for the survey research industry because typically, pollsters sample households via traditional landline telephones. That may underrepresent those most likely to own only cellphones—younger and poorer

people and those who rent rather than own their home.

Despite the steady growth in cellphone ownership, though, consumers are encouraged to retain their landline phones. For safety reasons, landlines are desirable because they have their own power sources. In the case of a power outage, a cordless landline phone won't work without power when a cellphone runs out of battery. Consumers also recall the times when cellphones did not work during disasters. However, experts predict that the number of people abandoning landline phones will continue to grow. When one in four 18- to 24-year-old Americans use only cellphones, landline use appears doomed.

(ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Staying Home With the Kids

Dads are beginning to grapple with work-and-family issues that women have faced for years, as more working fathers resist business travel in favor of spending more time with their family. Nearly 50 percent of male senior executives say they are more likely to ask for less travel during their job negotiations than they were five years

ago. One in four fathers is dissatisfied with his work-life balance because of work demands outside of normal working hours, according to another survey. Now men are feeling more comfortable in refusing travel-related assignments and asking for accommodations in their schedules so they may participate in special family events. The comments of one father typify the new attitude: “Taking care of family has taken priority over business travel.”

Employers wrestling with retention and recruitment issues are paying attention. They are developing programs to curtail business travel by allowing employees to set their own schedules, permitting fathers to take their families on business trips, and using technology such as webinars, webcasts, and video training to substitute for travel. As one company spokesman notes, “It’s important to keep employees happy, (to) help them balance work-family-life demands and also look for ways to improve productivity and efficiency.” An author who has written on fatherhood explains, “Employers are slowly, slowly getting on board with this. Fathers used to be considered good fathers if they worked hard. Things have definitely changed.”

(USA TODAY)

New-Fashioned Sewing Circles

The old-fashioned art of sewing is making a comeback. A national sewing association estimates that there are about 35 million sewing hobbyists in the U.S., up from roughly 30 million in 2000, and sales of one popular sewing machine have doubled in the past six years. But sewing’s appeal is not limited to little old ladies, the budget-minded, and neohippie handicrafters. Inspired by the desire for a unique look and the popularity of reality-TV shows about the fashion world, today’s sewers are more likely to be young and hip. Because many of them had mothers who never sewed, they’re looking outside their homes for guidance. Sewing clubs in high schools and colleges are thriving, and there are even summer sewing camps and after-school classes for kids as young as nine. Books offering step-by-step instructions for all kinds of sewing projects are popular.

Some older newcomers to sewing head to chic sewing lounges, where machines can be rented by the hour and experienced seamstresses are available to share their expertise. At these lounges novices can take classes on making everything from handbags to cocktail dresses. Other newcomers

join virtual sewing circles on the Internet where they exchange tips on the best hem styles and where to find inexpensive fabric. Online sewing groups help people with niche interests, from fashioning Goth-style clothing to sewing only with pre-owned clothing, to find others with similar interests. For many, the comments of an owner of one sewing lounge sum up their feelings, “People look at sewing differently today. It doesn’t always save you money, but it does empower you.”

(TIME)

Murphy Brown Lives

Although the number of out-of-wedlock births has reached a new high in the U.S.—nearly four in 10 babies were born to unmarried women—it’s not teens who are driving the trend. Unlike two decades ago when teen girls were synonymous with unwed mothers, today’s new unmarried mothers are much more likely to be older, in their 30s and 40s. All women are having babies later; more than a quarter of the 4.1 million babies born in 2005 were to women ages 30 to 54. The women who are single and having babies have often put off marriage and family for careers. They find that there is no stigma to raising children out of wedlock, as

single mothers are integrating into the mainstream. Though some of these pregnancies are unexpected, many older women have gone to great lengths to give birth, often turning to in-vitro fertilization using sperm banks and donor eggs. One woman who has founded a networking group for single mothers remarks, "Society's attitude has changed a little in that people understand that this is an option for single women who have not found the right man, or were divorced in their 30s, and really do want to become a mother."

At the same time as older women become single mothers, births to teenagers continued a downward spiral that began in 1991. Girls ages 15 to 19 accounted for 40.4 births per 1,000 females, the lowest ever recorded. Black teenagers ages 15 to 19, who historically have held the record for out-of-wedlock births, have shown the biggest decline, 3 percent last year. Part of the reason for the decline is that young people are having less sex and using more contraception. Another factor is the relatively healthy economy in which black teen girls can see a place for themselves so don't want to derail their future with teen pregnancy and parenthood. For the older women who choose to have an out-of-wedlock child, their biological clocks are ticking.

(CHICAGO TRIBUNE)

The Climate Has Changed

Today's business schools are going green, as MBA students are enrolling in courses about environmental policy and stewardship. A recent survey found that 54 percent of business schools require a course in environmental sustainability or corporate social responsibility. Business schools are devising ways to integrate global warming into established courses, as well as instituting new classes. One innovative course on environmental sustainability examines how current business models have created severe strains on the environment and tackles how business leaders should reconcile the virtues of free-market capitalism with the need for more sustainable corporate practices. As one professor says, "The idea is to change the discourse away from the notion that [these issues pose] limits and constraints on growth, and move it toward thinking about how they could be viewed as real opportunities for new businesses and rethinking existing business models."

Students recognize the need for these courses, too. Not only do they care about the environment, but they seem to understand that climate change is a critical issue for many industries,

and the more they know about it, the better placed they are in the job market. The professors in these courses are surprised and pleased at the response of the students; "We thought it would be popular among a niche of do-gooders, but even the investment-banker types are interested," one instructor notes. Most of today's MBA students care a great deal about working for a company that is considered socially responsible. So offering these green courses would seem to be a "win-win" for all—students, employers, and the environment.

(LOS ANGELES TIMES)

Pill Popping in the Boomer Years

The old Bob Dylan refrain "everybody must get stoned" still reverberates for many baby boomers—one analysis shows that boomers made up about half of all people nationwide who died of drug-related causes, mostly overdoses, in 2003. Hospital emergency rooms reported treating more than 400,000 boomer-aged patients for drug overdoses in 2004. And one of the few comprehensive studies of the problem found that 3 million Americans older than 50 had used illicit drugs such as

marijuana, cocaine, or heroin, or had misused anti-anxiety, anti-depression, or other prescription drugs in 2004. Boomers are responsible for a spike in drug and alcohol abuse that is expected to skyrocket in coming years.

With more heavy drinkers, more reliance on powerful prescription drugs for pain relief, and more exposure to pills for dieting, insomnia, depression, menopause, and children's attention-deficit disorder, the boomer generation has researchers worried about their future. As the inevitable aches and pains of aging—loneliness, grief at the loss of loved ones, health woes, stress, and lower standards of living—set in, boomers who turn to “self-medication” could be in for big trouble. The medical director of one insurance company puts it this way, “I think it’s a silent, unappreciated problem that has the potential to tarnish the baby boomers’ golden years.”

(SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE)

Enjoying Helping People

More Americans than ever are volunteering—29 percent of adults were serving as volunteers in 2005, a 30-year high, according to a recent report from an organization which

tracks volunteerism. The head of the organization notes, “There are no other countries that have the kind of deep-rooted volunteering that we have...We can fundamentally solve some of our most intractable problems.” Volunteerism in America has its roots in the barn-raising and harvest seasons of many years ago. Today’s volunteers contribute their time to mentoring, drug rehabilitation and other social issues, education, youth—anywhere there is a need for extra help.

Three age groups—older teens, baby boomers, and seniors—are driving the upsurge in volunteerism. Older teens have more than doubled their volunteering rate since 1989 from 13 percent to 28 percent. And as these teens grow and boomers retire, bucking the expectation they will slow down, together they could expand volunteerism even more. One federal agency has launched a push to boost the number of U.S. volunteers by 10 million to 75 million by 2010. The rise in volunteerism has been assisted by factors other than the volunteer’s sense of satisfaction, too. Some high schools and colleges require community service as part of their curriculum. Companies which give employees time off to volunteer notice more productivity from their employees and higher retention rates. Ultimately,

though, one volunteer summed up the rewards of volunteering this way, “I think maybe being able to help someone or maybe being able to offer something that is not expected, that can make people feel good.”

(CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR)

Sliding into Debt

For many seniors, their credit cards have become their safety net, and the net is beginning to fray. Among households of people 65 and over, the average amount of credit card debt more than doubled from 1992 to 2004, according to one study. In that time period, the percentage of households 55 and older with overall debt grew faster than the rate of the overall population. For those 75 and older, the average debt load shot up 160 percent to an average of \$20,234. One study found that the average credit card debt for consumers 65 to 69 skyrocketed 217 percent over the last decade to \$5,844. And seniors 65 and older represent the fastest-growing age group seeking bankruptcy protection.

How could this have happened to a generation which has traditionally been reluctant to go too far into debt? Experts blame a variety of factors. Health care, housing, and energy costs

have soared in the last decade. Seniors' shrinking or stagnating incomes mean that one illness or disability can plunge them into crushing debt. As one elder-law attorney observes, "Retirees don't always have the ability to say 'I'll work harder, I'll work more' if they need more money in retirement." Many seniors find themselves quickly in unaffordable debt where they are unable to make minimum payments or pay late fees on credit cards which were extremely easy to obtain. Many experts expect credit problems will only increase as baby boomers reach retirement age. One study found that consumers within 10 years of retirement are spending an average of one-third of their income in debt payments. One money manager notes, "For a variety of reasons, boomers won't have the nest eggs they'd like, and they won't have the pensions and health care benefits that many of today's retirees enjoy. Things will only get worse."

(USA TODAY)

Can I Get Away on Vacation?

A growing number of Americans are skipping part of their vacations—often because they feel more insecure about

their jobs. In 2006 nearly one-third of American workers gave up some vacation days because they had too much work or responsibility to take the time off. One study estimated that workers gave back 574 million vacation days last year, worth about \$75.72 billion based on worker's average hourly wage. That means Americans gave up four vacation days, one day more than the year before. "With the downsizing and companies being leaner in terms of staffing,...companies are trying to do more with less, and people are busier than ever. It is more difficult to take the time off because it affects the work, and employees tend to feel guilty about it," remarks one benefits consultant.

The experience of American workers contrasts greatly with the situation in Canada, Australia, and many European countries, the study found. Americans have the least amount of vacation—14 days—and forgo more of it than others. The French have the most vacation, with 39 days off, and 40 percent of them took three-to-four week vacations during the summer, compared with the one-week getaway that 40 percent of Americans take. While some American employers have developed flexible vacation policies that allow workers to carry over vacation days into the following year, or have it accrue in a vacation bank, many

others merely expect the work to get done, vacation days or not.

(DETROIT FREE PRESS)

What Time is It?

The way we keep track of time is changing with the times. More and more people do not bother with wearing watches any longer. In large part, they are relying on the electronic devices they carry with them, such as their cellphones, portable music players, and personal digital assistants, to keep them on time. Not surprisingly, young people are especially dependent upon such devices rather than the more traditional watches. One study found that nearly two-thirds of teens never wear a watch; only about one in 10 wears one every day.

Watchmakers have noticed the declining appeal of their products. While Americans spent over \$5.9 billion on watches in 2006, that figure was down 17 percent from sales figures of five years earlier. As a consequence, some watchmakers have tried to add more functions to their products, with watches which act as heart rate monitors and others which serve as GPS trackers. Luxury watches continue to sell, but one researcher notes that these brands are

as much about fashion as about function. For many Americans, wearing a watch symbolizes the stress they feel. But one historian says it's not really time itself that's the problem. Rather, he observes, "It's that we live in an increasingly synchronized world. You don't really relieve all the stress unless you get out of the world where time synchronization is so important." And in today's age of globalization, synchronization has only increased in scope. At this rate, the wristwatch will become like the pocket watch—extinct.

(ASSOCIATED PRESS)

Why Teens are Working Less

Teen employment has hit historic lows in the last three years, and experts say we should be worried. In the summer of 2006, 37 percent of teens nationwide worked—nearly 11 percent fewer than were working in 1989, the peak of a nationwide economic boom. One labor professor notes, "If adult employment fell by the same rate teen employment has in the last 10 years, that would be the greatest job loss in American history since the Depression."

Teens want to work, but many simply cannot find a job. Employers are more apt to hire immigrants rather than teens for many jobs. In order to supplement their incomes, workers 55 and older are taking many retail jobs that teens used to have.

Employers should be worried because teens gain critical skills from early work experiences; without those skills they often lack the "habits of paid work." And playing sports or volunteering doesn't make up for the lack of these skills for teens. As the director of a non-profit concerned with workforce development puts it, "Working as a team, completing tasks, and taking responsibility. Kids learn these skills through employment. Employment provides an important opportunity for kids to learn from adults other than their teachers or parents." While getting a foothold in the labor market is especially important for teens who enter the workforce directly after high school, it is also true for those who attend four-year colleges. One recent study of U.S. executives reported that entry-level employees, including graduates of four-year colleges, lack critical skills in written communications, professionalism, problem-solving, and

leadership. Not only employers should be worried; everyone should be concerned about how the U.S. can compete in a global economy with an entering workforce with so little experience and so few job skills.

(KNOWLEDGE@WHARTON)

High-Powered PTA Parents

Many public schools across the country, especially in affluent suburbs, have seen their parent groups become increasingly more corporate. With many members who stepped out of high-profile careers to become stay-at-home parents, traditional parent-teacher associations (PTAs) or parent-teacher organizations (PTOs) have evolved into sophisticated multi-layered organizations bearing little resemblance to the mom-and-pop groups that ran bake sales a generation ago. Today's PTAs and PTOs have grown into powerful forces at many public schools, where they raise thousands of dollars for the school and handle administrative functions such as screening acts for school assemblies and signing contracts with instructors for after-school programs. At the

same time, the high degree of parental involvement leaves some parents with the idea that they have the right to tell those in charge how to run their schools. One observer notes, "Some of these parents who are temporarily retired from professional life have come from positions of authority and are very much used to giving orders. In some cases, it's become a problem."

These high-powered parent-teacher organizations have influenced their schools in many ways. One school updated its report cards after complaints from the PTA about readability, while another extended its recess period after PTA parents pressed for more time for their children to exercise. The PTOs have streamlined special lunch services in order to make more money, given teachers money for supplies, and underwritten the costs of new playgrounds and writing workshops, amid budget cutbacks. And just as happens in their children's schoolrooms, some parents have found that these parent groups are dominated by cliques; those not in the popular cliques can find themselves shut out from coveted assignments.

(THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Bigger May Not Be Better

Home buyers may finally have big enough homes for themselves. A new study by the building industry predicts that the size of new homes will be between 2,300 and 2,500 square feet by 2015; in 2006, the average home built in the U.S. was 2,459 square feet—up from less than 2,000 square feet in the 1980s. The average home size has been continuously rising over the past decades as people bought homes not to meet functional needs but for their "lifestyle." Now, some analysts of the home building industry predict a backlash against supersized McMansions and 4,000-square-foot houses that dominate many American neighborhoods. They foresee a boom in demand for high-density urban homes marketed to baby boomers who are ready to give up their big homes.

Even if homes stop growing in size, experts predict that they will change. Living rooms may vanish—last year 40 percent of the houses built did not have a living room. Instead, buyers are expected to want bigger family rooms, kitchens, and bathrooms. They also

want higher ceilings; by the middle of the next decade, most new homes will have 9-foot or taller ceilings. Home buyers also seek more living levels. In 1973 two-thirds of new homes were one story, while today more than half of U.S. houses have two or more stories. And increasingly houses will be covered with masonry or synthetic materials on the exterior. One researcher for the building industry predicts, "Wood we think will be completely out. In upscale homes stone will be used more commonly than any other material." Homes may not get bigger, but they will probably get fancier and more expensive.

(THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS)

Fewer Paying By Check

Are we about to see the end of check writing? The Federal Reserve thinks we're getting closer. That institution estimates that 49.5 billion checks were paid in the U.S. in 1995, but according to the most recent estimates, that figure had dropped to 36.6 billion in 2003. That decline has prompted the Federal Reserve to close more than half

of its 45 check-processing centers and will result in a mere 18 such centers to be operational next year.

The widespread availability of debit cards and the growing popularity of credit cards are the biggest factors in the decline. From 2000 to 2003, the number of debit card transactions nearly doubled from 8.3 billion to 15.6 billion, and the number of credit card transactions jumped from 15.6 billion to 19 billion. Together, credit and debit card use accounted for 43 percent of all noncash payments in 2003, up from 33 percent in 2000. In addition, the practice of scanning checks and converting them into electronic payments, as more merchants are doing, accounted for 11 percent, about 8.9 billion checks, of all noncash payments. Consumers and merchants are embracing debit and credit cards, rather than checks, for several reasons. Many consumers like the convenience of the plastic cards and the consolidation of all of their financial transactions on one statement at the end of the month. Merchants prefer the use of electronic payments because they get paid more quickly and avoid the hassle of dealing with checks with insufficient funds. Processing checks electronically

is also cheaper than processing paper checks. While checks do continue to be written, many wonder for how much longer that will be the case.

(LOS ANGELES TIMES)

Driving to a New Attitude

Baby boomers may be on the verge of making a major turn in their car-buying habits. Since the 1970s when they began buying imports, to the '80s when they preferred minivans, and then the last decade of sexier and brawnier sport-utility vehicles, boomers have had a huge influence on the automotive market. After decades of indifference, they are beginning to change their buying habits in response to global warming. Environment-conscious consumers have more choices than ever: both car and truck hybrid vehicles, diesels, high-mileage small cars with traditional gasoline engines, and ethanol-powered vehicles.

In studies, focus groups, and surveys, Americans are increasingly showing that they understand global warming and want to do something about it; 74 percent of Americans in 2006 said

that they have a good understanding of global warming, up from 53 percent in 1992. One analyst characterizes today's boomers as carrying an "idealism gene" from the 1960s and early 1970s. They went through a "quality of life" phase in the '80s and '90s when they wanted to be pampered and indulged. Their world view changed after the terrorist attacks in 2001, and they began to pay closer attention to national and international issues, including the use of fossil fuels. She finds, "The environment is meshing more and more with economic issues themselves." Boomers "see these environmental issues as part of the problem, not some separate thing to focus on." Another researcher sees boomers as having environmental concerns when they purchase cars but for a different reason. He predicts a coming era of preening and pretentiousness related to the environment. He notes, "Buying a car is usually 90 percent related to you. It's not about saving the world. It's about making a statement about yourself and your values and that you are caring and conscientious. 'Hey, look at me—I'm somebody who's special.'"

(THE WASHINGTON POST)



All Media, All the Time

Multitasking is happening everywhere around us, and a variety of new studies corroborate that fact and illustrate some of the ramifications. One recent forecast estimates that this year Americans will spend 9.5 hours in a 24-hour day with media, by far the most time spent in any daily activity. Surprisingly, however, another study found that people don't even realize how frequently they engage in "concurrent media exposure," or exposure to content from multiple media simultaneously. The study found that "only 61 percent of [respondents] recorded one or more

episodes of concurrent media exposure, while 100 percent of participants in the observational study were found to engage in [it]." Obviously, the computer's ability to easily shift from e-mail to a Web site to a phone call is well suited to concurrent media exposure. At the same time, television seems to discourage concurrent exposure—only about 17 percent of time spent watching TV is shared with another medium, compared with an average of more than 65 percent of computer-based activities.

Among people younger than 35 electronic/digital media has been elevated to constant-companion status. One study revealed that the 18-24 age

group spends more minutes per day than any other age group on instant messaging, mobile phones, music, video use, and game consoles. It is not unusual for young males to stack two TVs—one for TV-watching and the other for video games—"so they can use both simultaneously," one study reported. Predictably, print media isn't part of the concurrent exposure for the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups. Experts see this concurrent media exposure only increasing as more media and more devices become available since, as one researcher remarks, "There aren't enough hours in a day to increase time spent with media."

(MEDIA POST PUBLICATIONS)

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