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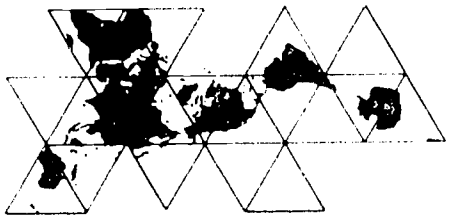
ABSTRACT

The opinions of nearly 17,000 college-bound and noncollege-bound high school seniors concerning a wide range of issues of both personal and social significance were surveyed in 1979 at the end of the senior year. Developing successful personal relationships, particularly a good marriage and family life, ranked at the top of freshman goals in life, and satisfaciton and success in work were also central concerns. In large proportions they preferred marriage, wanted children, and seemed willing to accommodate the needs of those children. Students' ratings of very important aspects in a job and of the desirability of different work settings are considered. Highest ratings were assigned to jobs that are interesting and make use of a person's skills. The most preferred work settings are those that provide the greatest independance and involve the least external control. The majority of the high school student respondents were employed and most were making fairly good money. While the students had positive expectations for their own future, they were considerably more pessimistic about how things will go for the country and the world over the next five years. Specific problems they are worrying about are summarized. The national issue that has been of greatest concern to recent high school classes has been crime and violence, and an issue that historically has been of less worry, the energy shortage, has reached a level of comparable concern. Dru ise, pollution, and economic problems rank next among student conc . Slightly less often on the minds of seniors are the issues of possible nuclear conflict, race relations, hunger and poverty, and population growth. Their views on national defense and the military, politics and the system, and their ratings of institutions in society are also addressed. (SW)





monitoring **the future**

occasional paper series

paper 4

# FEWER REBELS, FEWER CAUSES: A PROFILE OF TODAY'S COLLEGE FRESHMEN

Jerald G. Bachman
Lloyd D. Johnston

**Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of the Lifestyles and Values of Youth**

As its title suggests, this study is intended to assess the changing lifestyles, values, and preferences of American youth on a continuing basis. Each year since 1975 about 17,000 seniors have participated in the annual survey, which is conducted in some 130 high schools nationwide. In addition, subsamples of seniors from previously participating classes receive follow-up questionnaires by mail each year.

This Occasional Paper Series is intended to disseminate a variety of products from the study, including pre-publication (and somewhat more detailed) versions of journal articles, other substantive articles, and methodological papers.

A full listing of occasional papers and other study reports is available from Monitoring the Future, Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

# FEWER REBELS, FEWER CAUSES:

# A PROFILE OF TODAY'S COLLEGE FRESHMEN

*Monitoring the Future Occasional Paper 4*

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1979

NOTE: Data tables have been updated to include responses from the class of 1980. The text remains unchanged.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Dawn Bare, whose assistance in preparing this manuscript included generating and organizing data, editing, and a wide range of other activities that supported the research. We appreciate also the work of Walter Gruhn in preparing the 1979 data for analysis ahead of schedule, and Pamela Kittel in carrying out the analysis runs. Thanks are also due to Stephanie Zimmerman and her colleagues at Westinghouse Learning Corporation who facilitated questionnaire scoring in order to accommodate our needs for early reporting. We appreciate the contributions of our colleagues Patrick O'Malley and Regula Herzog in several of the areas reported in this paper; and we acknowledge also the contributions of Arthur Miller, Maria Sanchez, and Graham Staines in making available data from other studies of attitudes about political matters and about work.

Throughout the nation the members of the class of 1983 are about to begin their years of college study. What is this incoming class of freshmen like? And how does it compare with earlier classes?

Compared to their predecessors in the late 1960s, today's students are quieter, less conspicuous in dress and behavior, and less given to excesses in their political views and actions. No question about it, young people these days are less flamboyant than those of a decade earlier. But to be more accurate about it, we should say that the flamboyant minority of a decade ago does not have much of a counterpart today.

Why is there less student activism these days? The answer is both obvious and important: Today's problems are a great deal more complex than those which occupied center stage a decade ago—the answers are less clear, there is less of a sense of who are the villains and the heroes, and it's just a lot harder to build up a healthy sense of moral outrage. In the sixties students could see white police brutalizing black demonstrators; they could see atrocities committed daily in Vietnam; and many of them faced with the prospect of the military draft had to decide whether to serve unwillingly or flee to Canada. It was easy to get angry and the targets were clear.

Now, in the late 1970s, there are fewer causes and fewer rebels. Not many people would claim that racial and sexual equality have arrived, but few would deny that real efforts have been made in those directions. Environmental problems certainly have not been resolved, but now there seems more of a national commitment to deal with these problems. (And the efforts made thus far have helped people to realize the enormous complexities and difficulties involved in solving them.) Most important, the nation is not currently involved in any Vietnam-like situation; and, for the present at least, there is no draft.

Lacking such dramatic external crises, students these days are freer to concentrate on the more immediate issues in their personal lives—their own hopes and plans. And in large measure, those hopes and plans fit pretty well the conventional view of the "American dream" of marriage, children, a good and secure job, an attractive home, and a wide range of other material advantages.

Does all this mean that students in the current generation should be characterized as "conventional"? We think not. Although a number of their values might be described as "conventional"—or, for that matter, "traditional" or "conservative"—there are other views and values which do not fit. Students today show a considerable tolerance for alternative lifestyles (e.g., cohabitation outside of marriage). Many of them use marijuana although it remains illegal. Their views on racial issues and sexual equality are probably more flexible and liberal than those of older Americans. And some of their views about our major institutions are hardly what most people would label as conservative or as accepting of the status quo.

It thus seems clear that no single label—conservative or liberal, conventional or radical, turned off or turned on—is likely to fit today's freshmen. They are reaching adulthood during a period of great complexity in social issues, and great awareness of that complexity. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find a similar complexity in their views about many of these issues.

All too often our observations about youth are based on what Joseph Adelson has described as "atypical fractions"—the delinquent, the disturbed, or the ideologically volatile (Psychology Today, February, 1979). A series of surveys we have been conducting at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research is intended to improve this situation. We have been gathering information which characterizes broad and representative cross-sections of young men and women throughout the United States.

Several months ago we completed a survey of this year's entering freshman class as they were finishing their senior year of high school. This was the fifth in an annual series of such surveys, started in 1975 under the title "Monitoring the Future—A Continuing Study of the Lifestyles and Values of Youth." For a detailed description of the study design and purposes, see Bachman and Johnston (1978); considerable information is also provided by Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley (1979).

In 1979 nearly 17,000 seniors—college-bound and non-college-bound alike—completed questionnaires which covered a wide range of issues of both personal and social significance. Because of the breadth of the subjects covered, the material in our survey is divided into five different questionnaire forms; about 3,300 seniors responded to each form. Questions were included about social and political participation, attitudes about appropriate roles for women and men, attitudes toward other races, views on energy and the environment, drug use, personal plans, and so on.

At the request of the editors of Psychology Today, we have used the very early results of that survey as the basis for a profile of this fall's freshman class.* We will look at their personal plans and aspirations, their perspectives on national problems, and their views about politics and "the system." (We have also looked at comparable data for the previous four classes, in order to check for recent shifts and trends. Wherever substantial shifts have occurred, they are noted.) Before presenting the profile of this year's class, let us define the groups we will be describing.

The college-bound group consists of those twelfth graders who, just a few months before high school graduation, stated that they "probably" or "definitely" would complete a four-year college program. There is, of course, some slippage

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*It should be pointed out that this occasional paper is essentially the manuscript which was submitted to Psychology Today, augmented with additional data from the high school classes of 1976, 1977, and 1978. The final form of the article in the September, 1979 issue of Psychology Today is a greatly shortened version. It should also be noted that this paper results from a very early, and necessarily somewhat limited, examination of 1979 data. It is made available in the interest of timeliness, and is not based on an in-depth analysis of all the issues touched upon.

between such plans and actual attainments, and only about half of those planning to complete four years of college can be expected to do so. However, the great majority are entering college this fall as freshmen. Our high school sample also provides an important comparison group—those high school seniors who did not expect to complete four years of college. (While some of them will obtain post-high school training in vocational programs and/or two-year college programs, evidence from other research indicates that very few of them will become college graduates. As a matter of convenience, we will often use the term "noncollege group" to refer to those not expecting to complete four years of college.)

## Personal Plans and Aspirations

Developing successful personal relationships, particularly a good marriage and family life, rank at the top of freshman goals in life. One of our survey questions presented a list of major life goals, and asked: "How important is each of the following to you in your life—not important, somewhat important, quite important, extremely important?" Responses are summarized in Table 1. Four out of five of the college-bound seniors rated "having a good marriage and family life at the top of the scale. Two-thirds did the same for "having strong friendships." Studies of adults of all ages suggest that these are wise priorities, since satisfaction with marriage and family have rather consistently proven to be central determinants of overall life satisfaction.

Another central factor in life satisfaction is work. Nearly two-thirds of the college-bound rate it extremely important to find steady work, and be successful in that line of work. But in spite of their stress on job success, only one in six considers it extremely important to "have lots of money." (Another one-third rate it quite important.)

At least one question in the series might be taken as an indicator of idealism or altruism. About 23 percent of the college-bound consider it extremely important in life that they "make a contribution to society," and another 37 percent rate it quite important. While these percentages are lower than most others on the list, it should be remembered that this broadly stated goal may appear rather distant and unattainable to many individuals. The same may be true of "becoming a leader in my community," which only one in ten rates as extremely important. As we will see later, the answers to other questions suggest that a considerably larger proportion hope that their work will involve something worthwhile to society.

The most sweeping goal in our list is "finding purpose and meaning in my life." This is one of those intangibles which the college experience is supposed to help provide, and two-thirds of the college-bound rate it extremely important. But the quest for purpose and meaning is by no means limited to the college-bound; their high school classmates rate it important in nearly equal proportions. In fact, the ratings provided by those not planning to complete college closely parallel the ratings described above, except that somewhat fewer of the noncollege group give top ratings to being successful in their line of work, making a contribution to society, and being a community leader. Overall, however, the priorities of the two groups are really quite similar.

Given that students assign such great importance to a good marriage, family life, and work, we will take a more detailed look at their plans and aspirations in each of these areas.

Table 1

Things Rated Extremely Important in Life (Items 1410-1540)

| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| A good marriage and family life | 75 | 74 | 76 | 79 | 76 | 71 | 7 | 75 | 76 | 77 |
| Strong friendships | 65 | 64 | 68 | 69 | 69 | 53 | 57 | 60 | 57 | 57 |
| Finding purpose and meaning in life | 68 | 66 | 69 | 66 | 65 | 60 | 58 | 62 | 62 | 58 |
| Finding steady work | 63 | 59 | 64 | 65 | 63 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 67 | 67 |
| Being successful in my work | 58 | 58 | 62 | 63 | 59 | 46 | 49 | 50 | 52 | 50 |
| Having lots of money | 14 | 15 | 14 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 22 |
| Making a contribution to society | 24 | 25 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 13 |
| Being a leader in my community | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

Marriage and Parenthood. By the end of their senior year in high school, just over one percent of this year's freshman class reported that they were already married, while about three percent said they were engaged. Their high school classmates not expecting to complete college were about three times as likely to be married or engaged (item 60).* In the long run, the great majority of both groups (about four out of five) expect to marry and have children (items 6130-6150). Most freshmen consider the ideal time for marriage to be sometime after they finish college, whereas their noncollege peers tend to prefer marriage a year or two earlier (item 8330).

The majority of both groups consider it "very likely" they will stay married to the same person for life, and most of the rest think it "fairly likely" that they will (item 6140). (Perhaps those in the latter group are somewhat more realistic, given recent statistics on divorce rates.)

The college-bound are not much different from their high school classmates in terms of their thoughts about having children. Neither group has yet given much attention to the subject, since about half say they have thought about it only a little, while another ten percent say they haven't thought about it at all (item 8340). There is a very large difference between the sexes, however, with young women twice as likely to have thought a lot about whether to have children and how many they would prefer. The most popular number of children is two; but nearly half of those expressing a preference would choose three or more children. (Only four percent prefer none.)

While there are few differences between males and females in preferred number of children, there is a distinct tendency for the women to prefer a longer interval after marriage before having their first child (item 8370). This probably reflects their greater concern with the impact that childbearing will have on their careers. Although the great majority of women planning to complete college want

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*The notation (item 60) indicates that the information about marital expectations comes from a question in the Monitoring the Future questionnaire series which has been assigned that item number. This form of notation is used throughout the paper to indicate the questionnaire item(s) corresponding to particular statements in the text. (When data are presented in a table, the question source is noted on the table rather than in the text.) The item numbers remain the same regardless of varying locations of a particular question from year to year.

These item numbers are also used to reference all questions in the annual data volumes, to which the reader interested in examining the questions and response distributions in more detail is referred. The three volumes containing the information from the classes of 1976 through 1978 are available now (Bachman, Johnston, & O'Malley, 1979a & b; Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1979); the volume containing the data from the class of 1979 will be available at a later date. Data from the class of 1975 are also available (Johnston & Bachman, 1979); however, there was a high level of missing data on the college plans measure in 1975, thus making it inappropriate to report separate tabulations for the two college groups. It is for this reason that 1975 data have not been included in most of the tables in this paper.

children, only about four percent expect to be full-time homemakers at age 30. The proportion is higher among the noncollege women, but it has been falling steadily—from 22 percent in 1976 to only 13 percent in 1979 (item 10320).

The fact that the great majority in both groups reject a long-term role of full-time homemaker almost certainly reflects the massive impact of the women's movemen.. Given their interests in both children and career, the problem for these women will be to find an appropriate balance between the sometimes conflicting demands of their family and their work.

.Our survey includes a series of questions designed to get at some aspects of this problem.* Each student is asked to "imagine different kinds of married life that you might have." The questions cover preferences for husband and wife working full-time, less than full-time, or not at all; and the questions also distinguish between a couple with no children and a couple with one or more pre-school children. For a couple with no children, the most preferred arrangements involve the wife working either full-time or part-time; however, many would find it acceptable if the wife did not work outside the home. The college-bound group is above average in its tendency toward having both partners working full-time (items 6160-6210).

When one or more pre-school children are added to the equation, preferences shift dramatically. Two-thirds or more of both college and noncollege groups then rate it "unacceptable" to have the wife working full-time. The most desirable arrangement for both groups—and particularly the college-bound group—is to have the wife be a full-time homemaker when young children are present (items 6220-6270). This does not mean that the father should have limited responsibilities for child care. To the contrary, the arrangement most frequently rated as desirable—particularly by the college-bound group—is to have both parents share equally in caring for the child(ren) (items 6280-6320). (This seems a bit impractical if the father has a full-time job outside the home. We suspect that this is better interpreted as a goal—a desire to have the father play as important a childrearing role as possible within the confines of the traditional "breadwinner" position.)

There are, of course, differences between the sexes in their responses to these questions. The females are somewhat more likely to favor the wife working full-time when no children are present, or working at least part-time when there are small children. Perhaps the most interesting thing about these male-female differences is not that they occur, but that they are really not very strong. Although the young women in this freshman class certainly do have long-term career aspirations, they are not massively abandoning the "traditional" pattern of the wife managing the home full-time while her children are small. It seems clear, both from these data and from other questions in the survey, that these young adults—both male and female, college and noncollege—are strongly committed to the principle of giving time and attention to their children.

Another place where traditional conceptions have not changed concerns the husband working less than full-time. Any such arrangement is still viewed as

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*This section is adapted from a more extensive analysis of these data reported by Herzog, Bachman, & Johnston (1979).

unacceptable by most of this generation, both male and female, college and noncollege. This means, of course, that the male sex role is much more narrowly circumscribed than the female one, at least when it comes to majority views about any lifestyle involving less than full-time work. (It should be noted, however, that the college-bound group is a bit more tolerant than the others when it comes to the husband working part-time while the wife works full-time.)

In sum, when it comes to marriage and parenthood, today's high school graduates and college entrants do not exhibit any radical break with the past, judging by their own plans and preferences. In large proportions they prefer marriage, they want children, and they seem willing to make accommodations to the needs of those children. Still, there certainly have been some important shifts in the attitudes of American youth concerning this realm of behavior (and they still seem to be changing, but rather slowly during the later 1970s). The idea of wives working full-time, particularly when there are no pre-school children, is now widely accepted by males as well as females. Along another dimension, the majority of high school seniors, whether college-bound or not, are fairly tolerant in their views toward "a man and woman living together without being married" (item 12770). On the other hand, they are a great deal less tolerant of "a man and woman who decide to have and raise a child out of wedlock" (item 12880). We interpret these responses as indicating a willingness to let people "do their own thing" so long as others—such as children—are not adversely affected.

Work and the Workplace. "If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you'd like for the rest of your life, would you want to work?" This question is an old standby in survey research as a simple measure of the intrinsic value people place on work. Consistent with the high importance they assigned to work as a life goal, more than four in every five of those planning to complete college say they would want to work—a higher proportion than in a recent survey of the adult work force (Quinn & Staines, 1979). And only slightly fewer of their noncollege classmates gave the same answer. On still a third question about work, three-fourths of both the college and noncollege groups agree (or mostly agree) with the statement "I expect work to be a very central part of my life" (item 8070). Looked at from the other side, only about 15 percent of the college-bound (and about 28 percent of their noncollege peers) agree with the statement "To me, work is nothing more than making a living" (item 8060). Obviously, the work ethic is far from dead in this generation.

There are, nevertheless, limits to the commitment to work. For example, half of the college group and two-thirds of the noncollege-bound say they would like a type of work they could forget after the workday is over (item 8050). We suspect that the importance placed on family life and other interpersonal relationships by this generation of young adults goes a long way toward explaining their desire to place limits on their commitment to work.

We asked a number of questions about things that people look for in their work. Table 2 shows various job characteristics included in the list, and indicates how many in each group (college and noncollege) rated each characteristic as being "very important" to them. Highest ratings go to jobs that are interesting and make use of a person's skills. And over 60 percent think it is very important to have a job where they can see the results of what they do, where there are good chances for advancement and promotion, and where the future is reasonably predictable and

## Table 2

### Things Rated Very Important in a Job (Items 10090-10310)

| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Interesting to do | 90 | 91 | 91 | 93 | 90 | 86 | 89 | 88 | 87 | 86 |
| Uses skills and abilities | 74 | 74 | 74 | 74 | 74 | 68 | 74 | 70 | 70 | 70 |
| See results of what you do | 60 | 60 | 61 | 61 | 58 | 57 | 57 | 60 | 58 | 59 |
| Good chances for advancement | 54 | 59 | 61 | 64 | 61 | 59 | 63 | 65 | 66 | 64 |
| Predictable, secure future | 60 | 60 | 61 | 63 | 63 | 63 | 64 | 66 | 66 | 66 |
| Chance to make friends | 55 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 54 | 54 | 57 | 53 | 56 | 53 |
| Worthwhile to society | 49 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 41 | 43 | 39 | 40 | 39 |
| Chance to earn a good deal of money | 41 | 41 | 43 | 47 | 48 | 51 | 54 | 57 | 60 | 60 |
| A job most people look up to, respect | 34 | 35 | 37 | 37 | 38 | 33 | 34 | 36 | 35 | 35 |
| High status, prestige | 20 | 21 | 23 | 26 | 25 | 19 | 22 | 25 | 24 | 23 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

secure. More than half also rate it very important that the job provide a chance to make friends. Prestige seems to come out last as a dimension of importance in its own right, although this may occur because students feel uncomfortable about appearing to be status conscious. Only about one in four assign a rating of very important to "a job that has high status and prestige," but half again as many give a comparable rating to "a job that most people look up to and respect."

The dimensions described above do not show large differences between the college and noncollege groups. But there are some differences of opinion regarding two other possible job characteristics. About 48 percent of the college-bound group consider it very important to have "a job that is worthwhile to society," compared with 40 percent for the noncollege group. Conversely, 60 percent of the noncollege group considers it very important to have a job which provides "a chance to earn a good deal of money," while 47 percent of the college-bound rate that as important.

Several of these dimensions of job importance have been changing over the last several years. In particular, there has been a slight rise in importance attached to advancement, money, and prestige. The high aspirations of the college-bound, and the substantial differences between them and their noncollege high school classmates, are strikingly clear when we consider what sorts of occupations they expect to attain by the time they are thirty. Sixty-four percent of this year's freshmen expect to be professionals, and almost a third of this group (twenty percent of all freshmen) expect to enter professions requiring a doctoral degree or a roughly equivalent amount of education (professions such as medicine, law, dentistry, etc.) (item 10320). Given these occupational aspirations, we would expect many freshmen to be looking toward graduate or professional school after college. In fact, just over half of them do, although most of these say it is "probable" rather than "definite" (item 520).

By way of contrast, only a small proportion of the noncollege-bound (fewer than one in six) expect to enter any of the professions. The more frequently chosen occupations for this group are clerical or office work for many of the females, and skilled or semi-skilled (blue collar) work for many of the males (item 10320).

A different perspective on job preferences is provided by a set of questions which ask for ratings of nine different types of organizational settings as possible places to work. The rating scale ranges from "not at all acceptable" to "desirable" (with "somewhat acceptable" and "acceptable" as middle points on the scale). Table 3 lists the nine settings and shows the proportions of the college and noncollege groups rating each as "desirable" and as "unacceptable." Clearly, the most preferred work settings are those which provide the greatest independence and involve the least external control. Thus, being self-employed heads the list, followed by working in a small business, or with a small group of partners. Equally clearly, the work setting preferred by the smallest numbers and rejected by the most is military service, followed by police agencies. (This does not, incidentally, mean that young people are anti-military or anti-police; it simply means that very few of them would care to work in that kind of organization.) In the middle ranges of acceptability as work settings are schools, social service agencies, government agencies, and large corporations—all of which tend to be somewhat impersonal bureaucracies, though less regimented than the military or police.

Several of the organizational settings show sharp differences in their acceptability to the college group versus the noncollege group. The largest

Table 3

Desirability of Different Work Settings (Items 11800-11880)

| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Being self-employed | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 44 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 45 | 42 | 42 | 43 | 47 | 46 |
| Not Acceptable | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 10 | 10 |
| A small group of partners | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 21 | 20 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 17 | 17 | 18 | 17 | 17 |
| Not Acceptable | 9 | 10 | 9 | 10 | 7 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 11 |
| A small business | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 24 | 22 | 23 | 22 | 21 |
| Not Acceptable | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| A school or university | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 28 | 23 | 18 | 21 | 16 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| Not Acceptable | 14 | 15 | 19 | 15 | 16 | 34 | 38 | 37 | 34 | 33 |
| A social service organization | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 23 | 21 | 18 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 15 | 11 |
| Not Acceptable | 14 | 18 | 20 | 17 | 18 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 23 | 22 |
| A large corporation | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 14 | 16 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 16 |
| Not Acceptable | 9 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 7 |
| A government agency | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 21 | 19 | 15 | 19 | 16 | 15 | 16 | 13 | 14 | 14 |
| Not Acceptable | 15 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 18 | 26 | 26 | 28 | 28 | 24 |
| A police department | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 14 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 11 |
| Not Acceptable | 24 | 30 | 30 | 29 | 30 | 29 | 33 | 33 | 31 | 33 |
| The military service | | | | | | | | | | |
| Desirable | 10 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| Not Acceptable | 42 | 48 | 47 | 50 | 51 | 37 | 40 | 43 | 48 | 47 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

difference, and perhaps the most predictable one, involves "working in a school or university"—a prospect which is rejected by a large proportion of the noncollege group. The noncollege group also shows much lower interest in the idea of "working in a government agency." In fact, across most of the job settings included in the list the noncollege group appears a bit more "selective" than the freshmen in their ratings of desirability and unacceptability. Only military service clearly attracts more of the noncollege than the college group, and that occurs simply because very few freshmen these days rate the military as an attractive work setting. (It is also the case that very few expect to serve.)

The attractiveness ratings for military service have been declining steadily since we first asked these questions of high school seniors in the class of 1975. At first blush that would seem to be very bad news for the all-volunteer force. But it turns out that attractiveness ratings for some other organizational settings have been declining also. It would seem that freshmen, as well as the rest of their high school classmates, have grown more selective about the settings in which they would prefer to work.

The one very interesting exception to this tendency toward greater selectivity involves "working in a large corporation." The proportions of both groups who rate this as desirable have been increasing over the past few years. (Only 14% of the college-bound in 1975 and in 1976 rated it desirable, compared with 23% in 1979.) Perhaps more significant is the fact that the proportions rejecting large corporations as "not at all acceptable" have declined steadily to a point where very few would rule out that sort of a work setting. If some have reservations about the power and influence of large corporations (and, we'll see later, a majority do), that doesn't mean that they rule out the possibility of working for them.

Money and Materialism. About eighty percent of the college-bound held a paying job near the end of their senior year in high school, working an average of 16-20 hours a week (item 590). The proportion working, and also the proportion working more than twenty hours a week, has been going up about two percent each year for the last few years. Earnings have also been rising, due mostly to inflation. Last spring about thirty percent earned more than $200 a month, another thirty percent earned at least $100 a month, another sixteen percent earned less than that, and the remaining 24 percent did not hold a job (items 600-610). (Their high school classmates not planning to complete college tended to work more hours and make more money.) These figures confirm what many observers have noted and many merchandisers have turned to advantage: teenagers have a good deal of money at their disposal, and much of it is available for what economists call "descretionary spending."

Not all of the college-bound were equally likely to have held a job during their senior year. More males than females worked, and they tended to work longer hours and earn more money. Racial differences were substantial; compared with whites, blacks were more than twice as likely to have no job late in their senior year, and those who were employed tended to work fewer hours.

A number of our survey questions reveal a strong consumer orientation during the high school years, and suggest that this pattern is likely to continue. Three-quarters of the females, and about half as many males, say they "very much enjoy shopping for things like clothes, records, sporting goods, and books." Most of the rest say they like it "pretty much." About 80 percent of the females and 70 percent

of the males care pretty much or very much about "having the latest fashion in clothes, records, leisure activities, and so on." On the other hand, most reject the idea of keeping up with the Joneses—three-quarters say they care little or not at all about whether their family has most of the things their friends and neighbors have. Incidentally, along these dimensions there are virtually no differences between the college and noncollege groups (items 12020-12040).

A clear majority of both groups agree or mostly agree with the statement, "My family and I often buy things we really don't need; we could get along with much less" (item 10060). When asked what is the smallest amount they would be content to own in the future, about 45 percent of the college group and nearly as many of the others say they could be content to own less than their parents own. Most of the rest could be content to own about as much as their parents (item 12060).

Although most of them don't express a strong need to own more than their parents, 54 percent of the college-bound (compared with 41 percent of the noncollege group) expect that they will, in fact, own more. Very few expect to own less (item 12050). This personal optimism contrasts sharply with the general feeling among them that a crimp in the national lifestyle is pending. Over three-quarters agree that "there will probably be more shortages in the future, so Americans will have to learn how to be happy with fewer things" (item 6030). It is clear, however, that they have not yet had to transfer their sense of pessimism regarding the state of the nation to their own material expectations.

What kinds of things do they want to own? A majority of both groups are committed to the "American dream." They want to own their own home (not an apartment or condominium) with a big yard, well-kept lawn, appliances, stereo, and the like. Having a car is quite or extremely important to three out of four; but two-thirds consider it not important to have a large (full-sized) car or a new car every two or three years, and about half assign little importance to having more than one car. About half think it quite or extremely important to have "clothes in the latest style" (items 13835-13940).

Are these students' material aspirations unrealistic given the economic situation they are likely to face? Perhaps, in part. During high school many were experiencing what might be termed premature affluence. The great majority were employed, and most were making fairly good money. Although many saved for college, a good number also spent a lot of their income for "discretionary" purchases—cars, records, stereos, and attractive wardrobes—rather than for rent or groceries. Up to this point in their lives, today's youth have enjoyed much more purchasing power than their parents did at a similar age, so it is perhaps understandable that many expect the pattern to continue.

Of course, it cannot—at least not on the level that some experienced during high school. Five years from now, they will find that necessities such as food and housing will cut down on the proportion—and in many cases the actual number—of dollars available for discretionary spending. But if their material expectations are somewhat unrealistic, their disappointments in future years may be cushioned by attaining goals which they rate more important than "having lots of money": marriage, parenthood, friendships, and meaningful work. And, after all, most said they could be content to own no more than their parents.

Outlook on Their Personal Future. Judging by their plans and expectations for marriage, family, work, and material goods, today's high school seniors—both the

college and noncollege groups—see their personal futures in mostly positive terms. When asked to think about how their lives will go in the next five years, the overwhelming majority (close to nine out of ten) say they expect things to get much better or somewhat better. (Most of the rest think things will stay about the same. Only a handful think things will get worse (item 9960).) Apparently any risks or difficulties associated with leaving the home and taking on more responsibilities is outweighed by the prospect of the new challenges, freedoms, and privileges they think adulthood will bring.

## Outlook on the Nation's Problems

While this year's students have rather rosy expectations for their own future, they are considerably more pessimistic about how things will go for the country and the world over the next five years. Since 1976 each class has been more pessimistic than the one preceding; but the shifts were rather small until this year when the proportion of pessimists (those who expect things to get worse for the country) jumped by a full twenty percent. This year three out of five of the college-bound think things will get somewhat worse or much worse for the country during the next five years, while only one in five think things will get better (item 9940). Their outlook is just about equally gloomy for the rest of the world (item 9950). So at the same time that they are looking forward with anticipation to their own status in life, the majority are also feeling unsettled about the social conditions which surround them. (And the noncollege group is even more pessimistic.)

Some of the specific problems they are worrying about are summarized in Figure 1 and Table 4. The national issue which has been of greatest concern to recent high school classes has been crime and violence (with roughly half saying they often worry about it). However, an issue which historically has been of less worry—the energy shortage—has now reached a level of comparable concern, partly because concern over energy has been rising but also because concern with crime has been declining somewhat. Drug abuse, pollution, and economic problems rank next among student concerns, with about 30% of senior saying they worry often about each. Slightly less often on the minds of seniors are the weighty issues of possible nuclear conflict, race relations, hunger and poverty, and population growth.

Several of these issues were a greater source of concern to earlier classes than they are to students today—pollution, population growth, hunger and poverty, and economic problems (though economic concerns are now rising again). But today's seniors worry more than their recent predecessors about the possibility of nuclear war, perhaps in part because of the public discussions prompted by SALT II. The proportions concerned about drug abuse and race relations in the country have remained fairly constant over the past several years.

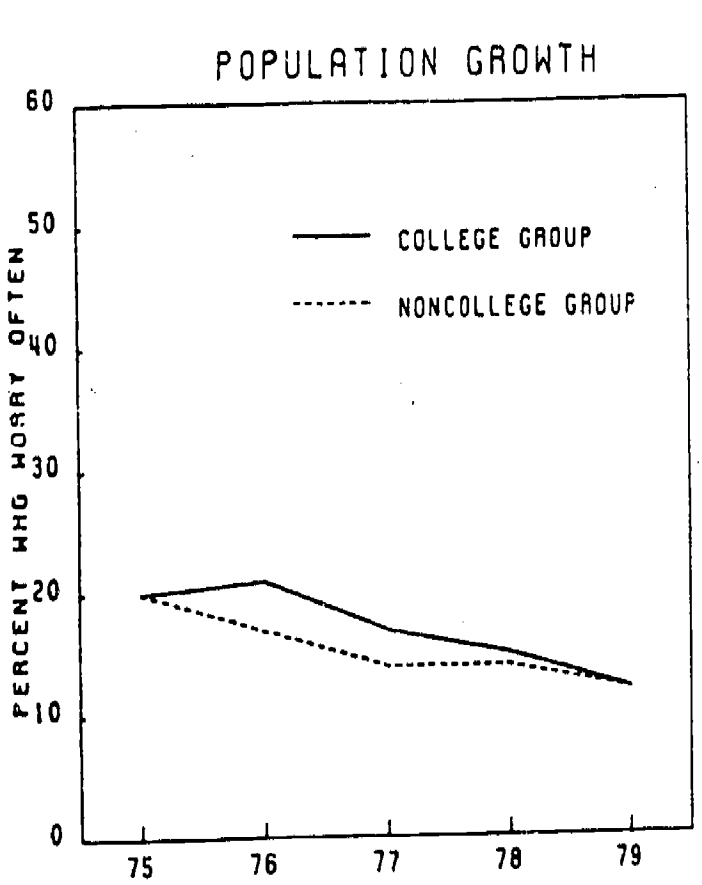
Crime and Violence. According to recent polls, worries about crime have ranked high among the concerns of most Americans. For those in our survey the concerns may have a particularly vivid basis, at least if the high schools are the violent places portrayed in the media. Our survey asked seniors to report whether they themselves had been the victims of various sorts of crime. The results are disturbing. Recounting the events of the past twelve months, 28 percent reported being threatened by an unarmed person but not actually injured, while 14 percent actually suffered injury at the hands of such a person. About 5 percent reported being injured with a weapon, and another 14 percent reported being threatened (but

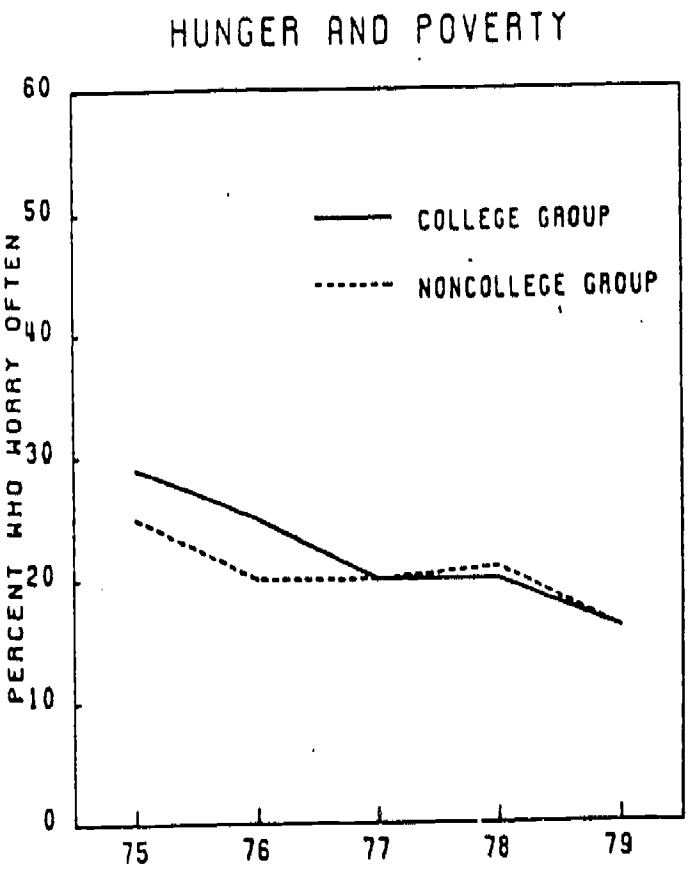
Table 4

Problems Facing the Nation (Items 11660-11760)

| Of all the problems facing the nation today, how often do you worry about each of the following? | Percent Who Worry Often | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | | |
| | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Chance of nuclear war | 8 | 12 | 15 | 16 | 20 | 27 | 7 | 9 | 15 | 14 | 19 | 25 |
| Population growth | 20 | 21 | 17 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 20 | 17 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 10 |
| Crime and violence | 53 | 56 | 52 | 48 | 45 | 39 | 54 | 52 | 53 | 50 | 46 | 38 |
| Pollution | 40 | 41 | 38 | 34 | 30 | 25 | 35 | 31 | 33 | 27 | 24 | 20 |
| Energy shortages | 40 | 30 | 44 | 33 | 48 | 50 | 33 | 27 | 36 | 30 | 45 | 48 |
| Race relations | 22 | 24 | 22 | 24 | 19 | 17 | 16 | 17 | 19 | 16 | 14 | 11 |
| Hunger and poverty | 29 | 25 | 20 | 20 | 16 | 18 | 25 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 16 | 17 |
| Economic problems | 33 | 29 | 24 | 21 | 29 | 36 | 30 | 20 | 18 | 15 | 18 | 28 |
| Drug abuse | 27 | 31 | 29 | 28 | 29 | 28 | 34 | 31 | 33 | 33 | 32 | 30 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.



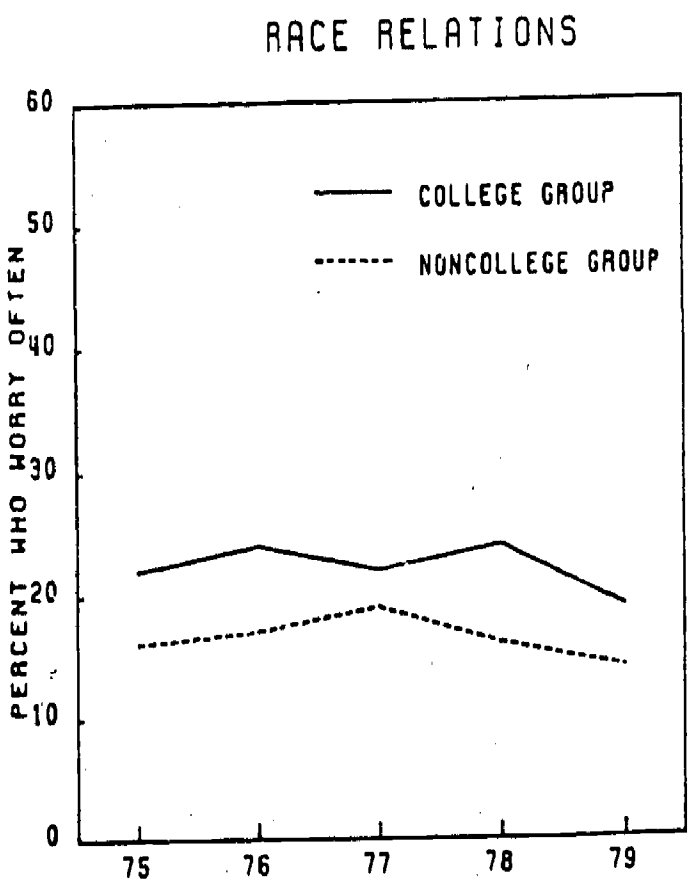
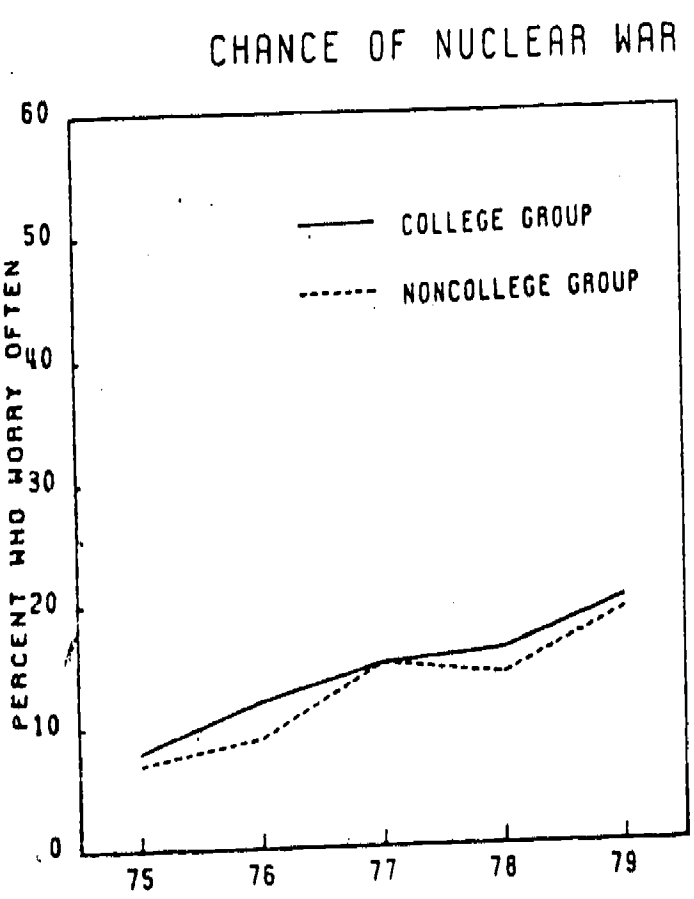
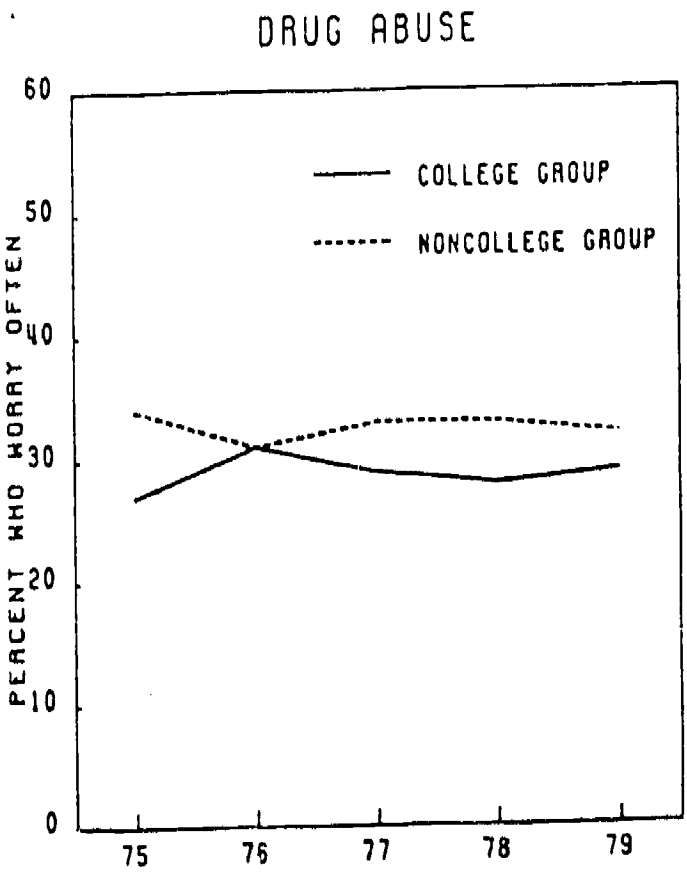




Figure 1.

Problems Facing the Nation

(Items 11670, 11720, 11710)



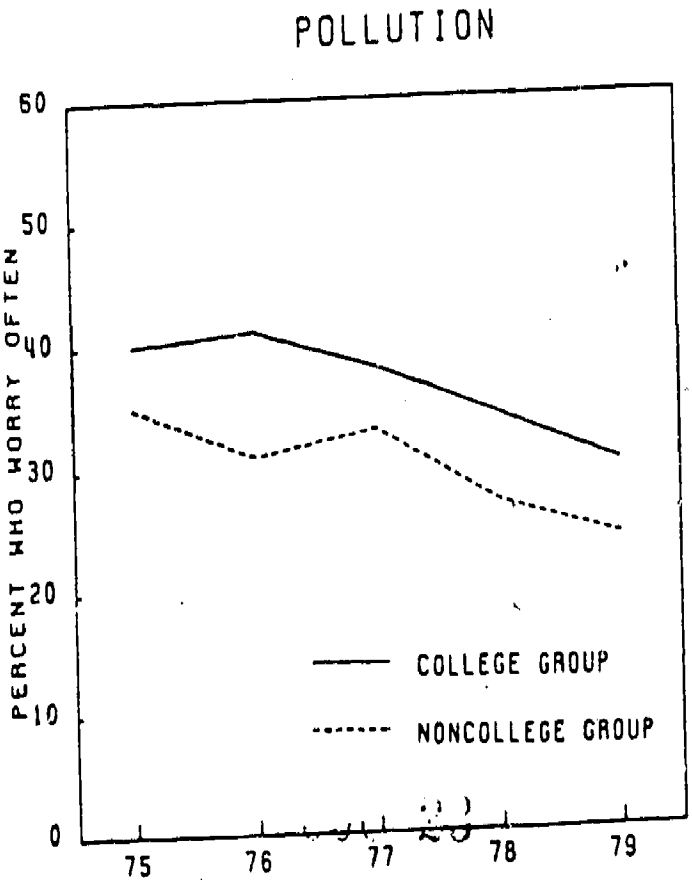
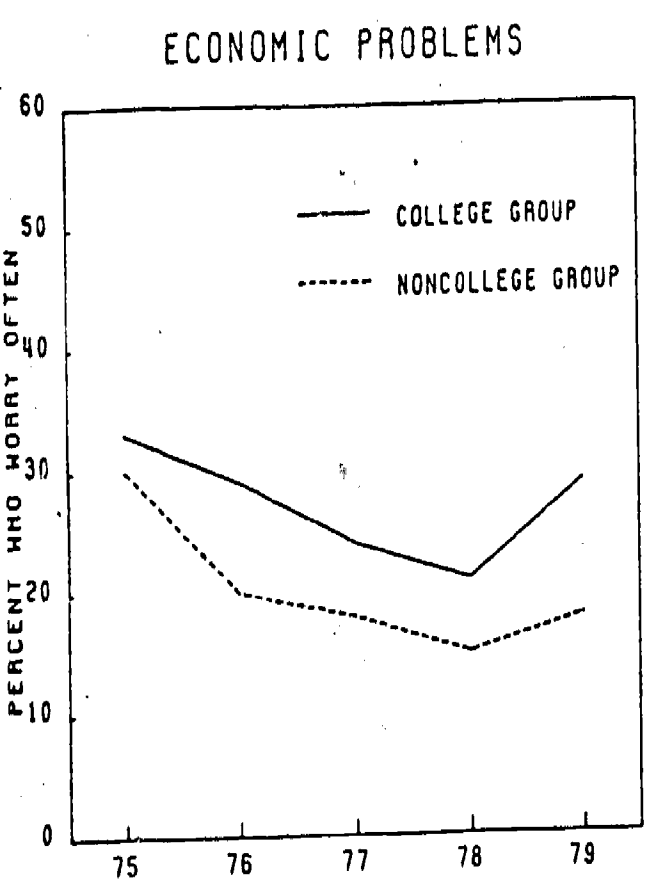
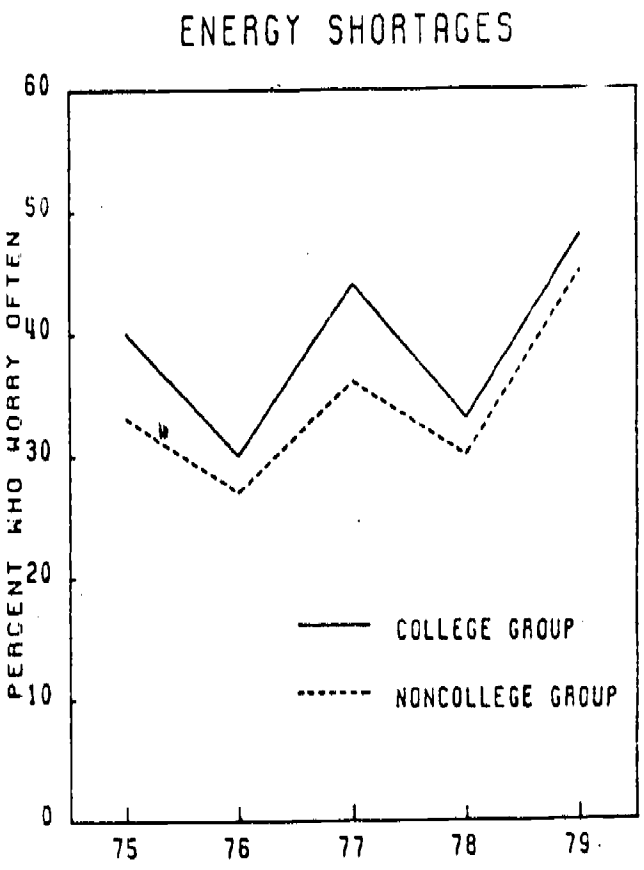




Figure 1 (cont.).
Problems Facing the Nation
(Items 11660, 11760, 11690)



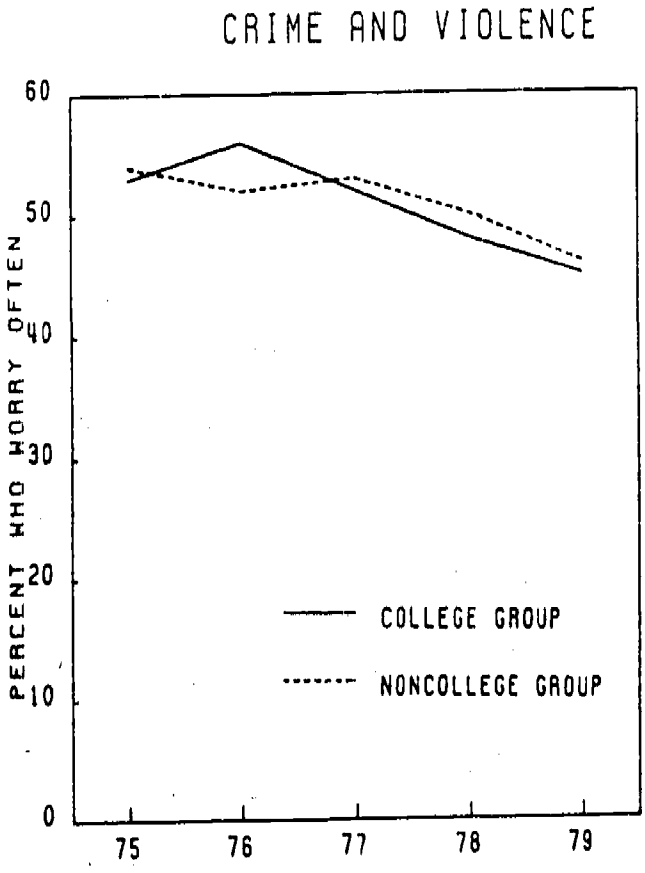




Figure 1 (cont.).
Problems Facing the Nation
(Items 11750, 11700, 11680)

not injured) with a weapon. Close to half reported being victims of minor theft (something worth under $50), and one-third reported that something they owned was deliberately vandalized (items 6680-6740).

The great majority of these experiences occurred while inside school, on school grounds, or in a school bus (items 9871-9877). The college-bound and noncollege-bound seniors differed little in their reports of victimization; the college-bound are a bit more likely than average to be victims of theft, and a bit less likely to be victims of assault. Males are more often victims than females, they are also (by their own reports) much more likely to be the perpetrators of theft, vandalism, and interpersonal agression (items 6520-6670).

Of course, high school students associate mostly with people their own age. Since people that age have just about the highest levels of criminality of any age group, perhaps it should not come as a great surprise that they are often the victims of crime, or that they worry more often about crime and violence than about any other national problem.

Environment. Today's freshmen express a considerable concern over the deterioration of the environment and the use of scarce resources. The overwhelming majority agree with the statement that "pollution has increased in the U.S. in the last ten years," and most feel that the government and the media have not exaggerated its dangers. About 60 percent of all freshmen reject the assertion that "America needs growth to survive, and that is going to require some increase in pollution." Three-quarters agree or mostly agree that "people will have to change their buying habits and way of life to correct our environmental problems." They also strongly support banning products which risk harm to the environment, and they favor "pollution taxes" to encourage less environmentally damaging ways of producing products (items 9970-10070).

Over the last several years we have found the college-bound to be somewhat higher than their classmates in level of environmental concern and in willingness to make sacrifices to help deal with the problems.

Energy. The energy problem is another concern on the minds of freshmen. Over the past several years our surveys have asked about efforts that have been made to cut down on energy consumption. About four out of five freshmen report that in their house or apartment an effort is made to reduce heat during the winter to save energy; and about two-thirds report that they make an effort to cut down on the amount of electricity they use (items 12000-12010). (These proportions have been virtually unchanged since 1977.)

But perhaps the area in which young people have the greatest discretion about whether they reduce energy consumption is in the use of automobiles. Cars are an exceedingly important part of the lifestyle of high school and college students. The majority of seniors not headed for college own cars, as do a substantial minority of the college-bound. Most of the rest have access to a car (items 11970-11980).

Consistently over several recent years, roughly half of the seniors (both college and noncollege groups) reported making some or quite a bit of effort to cut down on driving in order to save gasoline. Our survey of the high school class of 1979 was conducted last spring in the midst of considerable attention to gasoline shortages; nevertheless, responses differed only slightly from those in 1978. More

than 40 percent of the seniors with driver's licenses said that they had made "not very much" effort, or none at all, to cut down on driving (item 11990).

Race Relations. While about one in five of the college-bound state that they often worry about race relations in this country, most seem fairly optimistic about the way things are going. When asked whether relations between whites and blacks have been getting better or worse, three-quarters of the college-bound group (and two-thirds of their high school classmates) say better or a little better, and most of the rest say relations have stayed about the same. Interestingly, blacks and whites give just about the same range of responses to these two questions, with slightly higher proportions of blacks at the positive end of the scales (item 11950). Asked to evaluate the experiences they personally have had with people of other races, a large majority say very good or mostly good, and most of the rest rate the experiences as mixed. Only a handful rate the experiences as predominantly bad (item 8310).

A number of surveys have shown that college-educated whites hold more positive (i.e., less discriminatory) racial attitudes than those without a college education. This pattern shows up clearly only among those whose college experience occurred in the post-World War II years. Until a few years ago the most plausible interpretation seemed to be that the college experience itself was responsible for these differences. Our own longitudinal study of young men, completed several years ago, revealed modest differences in racial attitudes between those whites in the high school class of 1969 who went to college and those who did not. However, these differences were quite evident by the end of high school, before any socializing effect of college could have taken place. We interpreted our findings as suggesting that "the seventies represent a stage in which (a) the brighter and more able students show more positive racial attitudes before they leave high school, and (b) the gap in racial attitudes between educational groups is growing smaller" (Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 1978, p. 147).

The more recent findings from high school seniors in the graduating classes of 1975 through 1979 fit very well with this interpretation. The college-bound are consistently, but only slightly, more favorable than their classmates toward having people of other races included among their friends, supervisors, co-workers, neighbors, and children's friends. The more important finding is that both the college and noncollege groups show overwhelming proportions saying that these various forms of interracial contact would be acceptable and, in many cases, desirable. Only small proportions (generally about ten percent of college-bound, and fifteen to twenty percent of noncollege-bound) express reservations about such contact (items 8110-8240). If their answers are to be believed, the attitudes of this new generation bode well for the future of race relations in this country.

Drug Abuse.* It may not be surprising that a number of students find themselves worrying about drug abuse, given the degree to which they are exposed to it in their peer group. By the end of their senior year in high school over a third of all students have illicitly used at least one drug other than marijuana at some time. Using marijuana has become commonplace for this age group, and the

*This section is adapted largely from material included in an extensive report on drug use and related attitudes (Johnston, Bachman, & O'Malley, 1979).

proportion using continues to rise. Nearly all students have at least some friends who use it, six in ten have tried it themselves, a third have used it twenty or more times, and one in every nine or ten seniors tokes up daily or near daily. (In fact, a substantial rise in daily use over the last few years is now of considerable concern to policy makers and health experts.) By way of contrast, the proportion reporting daily drinking has remained rather steady over the last five senior classes at around 6%.

Fortunately, despite the growing numbers using marijuana, the proportion who go on to the more serious illicit drugs (like stimulants, sedatives, hallucinogens, or narcotics) has been quite stable for the last four years. Particular drugs have been rising in popularity (e.g. cocaine) while others have been declining (hallucinogens and sedatives), but the overall proportion involved in the illicit use of any of these drugs has remained quite steady.

There are substantial differences between the college-bound and those not heading for college in their degree of involvement with illicit drugs. The differences are not so great in terms of the proportion of each group which has tried them, but rather in terms of the proportion who have become more heavily involved. Daily use of marijuana, for example, is nearly twice as high among the noncollege-bound as among their peers, and frequent use of most of the other illicit drugs also tends to be disproportionately concentrated in this group. (Frequent alcohol use and, in particular, regular cigarette smoking are also much more common in the noncollege segment.)

It may come as a surprise that, while illicit drug use is more common in this generation than in any preceding one, the majority of today's youth still hold quite conservative views on the subject. Over three-fourths of the seniors disapprove of someone even experimenting with the more serious illicit drugs (i.e. drugs other than marijuana), and most strongly disapprove such experimentation. The majority believe that users of all such drugs run a substantial risk of harming themselves and/or others. While the risk believed to be attached to simply experimenting with various of these drugs has been declining slightly, personal disapproval of using them has remained unchanged.

Marijuana presents the one exception to this pattern of a steady conservatism by the majority. Disapproval of this drug has continued to decline in the last few years as actual use has been rising. Now, occasional use receives the acceptance of the majority, and experimentation the acceptance of nearly all. However, regular marijuana use still is seen as unwise and is viewed with disapproval by two-thirds of all seniors despite the fact that an increasing minority has been using regularly.

Concerns about the health consequences of drugs certainly are not the only factors limiting their use. To take one important example, we find that students who are the most involved in religion are considerably less likely than average to use drugs. Both religious involvement and abstention from drug use probably reflect a young person's pre-existing tendency toward traditional values, and we suspect that adherence to traditional values explains in large part the limited numbers who are attracted to illicit drug use. Alcohol use, on the other hand, which is not proscribed under traditional American mores, is almost universal in this age group. Nine in every ten high school seniors used alcohol in the prior year and 40% reported heavy drinking on at least one occasion during the two weeks prior to the survey. (Heavy drinking is here defined as five or more drinks in a row.) And there is no sign that

this traditional drug has become any less popular among American young people over the last half decade; in fact, if anything, we have been observing a modest increase in its popularity (though not a dramatic increase as is sometimes suggested in the media).

National Defense and the Military. When we think of college students in the late sixties, the spectre of anti-war protests and demonstrations spring immediately to mind. Are today's students much different?

According to an earlier series of surveys reported by Yankelovich (1974), anti-military sentiment on campus probably hit its peak around 1970 and started to decline soon thereafter. Since 1975 our own surveys of high school seniors have shown predominantly positive views of the military, with the noncollege-bound a bit more "hawkish" than their counterparts.

About 44 percent of the college-bound think that the U.S. military is doing a good or very good job for the country (a 6 percent drop compared with 1976-1978). Just over three-fifths think the armed services presently have just about the right amount of influence on the way the country is run, while just over two-fifths think the level of military spending is just about right. The remainder of the college-bound are split, with the larger portion preferring increased military influence and spending rather than less. Among those not headed for college, the tilt is even stronger in that direction. Although the majority in both college and noncollege groups sees military spending and influence as at least adequate, the proportion preferring some increase has grown slowly but steadily since 1975 (items 8380-8510).

Preferences that the U.S. should be number one in military power have risen somewhat over the past several years. In 1979, 64 percent of the college-bound disagree (or mostly disagree) with the assertion that "the U.S. does not need to have greater military power than the Soviet Union" (up from 52 percent in 1975). On the other hand, opinion is split just about evenly over the stronger statement: "the U.S. ought to have much more military power than any other nation in the world." Here again, the views of the noncollege group average just a bit more "hawkish" than those of the college-bound (items 6480, 6490).

Views about what constitute appropriate uses of this military power show some degree of complexity, if not inconsistency. Three-quarters of the college-bound and slightly more of the noncollege group tend to agree that "the only good reason for the U.S. to go to war is to defend against an attack on our own country." Nevertheless, about three-fifths of both groups also agree (or agree mostly) that "the U.S. should be willing to go to war to protect its own economic interests." There is a good deal less enthusiasm for the statement "there may be times when the U.S. should go to war to protect the rights of other countries"—those who disagree outnumber those who agree by almost two to one (items 5690,6460,6470). This reluctance very likely reflects, at least in part, the memories of Vietnam. But it may also show the effects of more recent events such as Middle East tensions and talk of reinstituting the military draft.

For young people finishing high school, the military is more than just an instrument of national policy. It is also an institution in which they might spend the next several years of their lives. How do they feel about that possibility? They see military service as a good place to get more education, advance to more responsible positions, and even have a personally fulfilling job. On the other hand, the military

is not perceived as a good place for people to get their ideas heard or get things set right if they are treated unjustly by a superior (item 11170). In balance, the overwhelming majority of freshmen and a large majority of their high school classmates seem to think that military service is a fine idea and a worthy calling—for someone else.

## Views on Politics and the System

Given all the concerns about national problems reviewed above, and given the growing pessimism about the possibility of things getting worse in this country over the next five years, the question arises as to whether young people still have much confidence in the nation and its system of governance. Apparently many of them do. About two-thirds of the college-bound (and 56 percent of the noncollege group) agree or mostly agree with the statement, "despite its many faults, our system of doing things is still the best in the world" (item 1630).

But what about some of the institutions which help to make up the system? We listed a dozen and asked students to rate them in terms of the honesty and morality of their leaders, how good a job they are doing for the country, and whether they should have more or less influence than they do now. The results are summarized in Tables 5 through 8. Perhaps the most important thing to note is that the relationships among the different questions are fairly complex—the world is not seen simply in terms of the "good guys" and the "bad guys."

There are several institutions which do seem to get consistently positive ratings. An overwhelming majority think that the nation's colleges and universities are doing a good or very good job for the country. (The ratings for public schools are, incidentally, much less enthusiastic.) As we have already discussed, the military is another institution with relatively few critics, many who think it is doing a good job, and about one third who think it ought to have more influence. The U.S. Supreme Court also gets mostly favorable ratings.

The President and his administration, and also the Congress, get more mixed reviews. They score very low in terms of the job they are doing for the country, and a lot of seniors think there are considerable problems of dishonesty and immorality. Still, a fair number think the President and Congress ought to have more influence than they do now—perhaps on the assumption that having more influence would help them do a better job.

Large corporations are more likely to be seen as doing a good job, but they also get poor ratings on honesty and morality. The picture for major labor unions is much the same, except that fewer rate them as doing a good job for the country. Significantly, a substantial proportion of seniors feel that both of these major elements in the private sector should have less influence in our society.

There is a strong law and order theme sounded by this year's graduating seniors. As we noted earlier, one of the national problems they worry most about is crime and violence; and now we see that the institutions most often nominated for increased influence are the police and law enforcement agencies. Just about half think they should be more influential, even though they get only about average ratings in terms of morality or how good a job they are doing.

Table 5

Ratings of Institutions (Items 6890-7000)

| *To what extent are there problems of dishonesty and immorality in the leadership of. . .* | Percent who think that the institution has considerable dishonesty/immorality | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Large corporations | 42 | 40 | 41 | 41 | 41 | 32 | 35 | 30 | 33 | 30 |
| Major labor unions | 42 | 40 | 41 | 41 | 35 | 32 | 33 | 30 | 31 | 26 |
| Colleges and universities | 19 | 18 | 3 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 22 |
| Public schools | 23 | 22 | 26 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 26 | 23 | 28 |
| Churches and religious organizations | 17 | 19 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 18 | 21 | 23 | 22 | 23 |
| National news media | 33 | 35 | 36 | 36 | 34 | 33 | 33 | 35 | 32 | 32 |
| President and administration | 42 | 31 | 35 | 37 | 32 | 38 | 34 | 33 | 36 | 34 |
| Congress | 37 | 35 | 39 | 39 | 38 | 34 | 34 | 32 | 36 | 36 |
| U.S. Supreme Court | 20 | 21 | 19 | 23 | 20 | 23 | 25 | 26 | 25 | 26 |
| Courts and justice system | 26 | 25 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 23 | 26 | 25 | 24 | 27 |
| Police and law enforcement agencies | 35 | 31 | 33 | 31 | 32 | 31 | 34 | 32 | 34 | 32 |
| U.S. Military | 21 | 20 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 20 | 21 | 20 | 23 | 22 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

Table 8

Ratings of Institutions (Items 8380-8490)

| *How good or bad a job is being done for the country as a whole by. . .* | Percent who think that the institution has been doing a good job | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Large corporations | 30 | 31 | 37 | 33 | 29 | 33 | 34 | 38 | 33 | 29 |
| Major labor unions | 32 | 32 | 30 | 27 | 33 | 34 | 33 | 31 | 34 | 33 |
| Colleges and universities | 80 | 82 | 80 | 82 | 83 | 68 | 70 | 71 | 71 | 73 |
| Public schools | 45 | 41 | 36 | 41 | 38 | 46 | 46 | 43 | 44 | 44 |
| Churches and religious organizations | 55 | 59 | 58 | 58 | 62 | 56 | 54 | 56 | 57 | 61 |
| National news media | 60 | 60 | 61 | 61 | 60 | 60 | 59 | 61 | 58 | 58 |
| President and administration | 21 | 47 | 26 | 23 | 19 | 21 | 36 | 26 | 19 | 19 |
| Congress | 25 | 31 | 25 | 20 | 15 | 21 | 24 | 24 | 18 | 15 |
| U.S. Supreme Court | 40 | 42 | 39 | 36 | 33 | 31 | 32 | 31 | 29 | 26 |
| Courts and justice system | 28 | 29 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 22 | 25 | 25 | 24 | 23 |
| Police and law enforcement agencies | 41 | 38 | 37 | 40 | 39 | 39 | 36 | 38 | 36 | 35 |
| U.S. Military | 51 | 51 | 50 | 44 | 38 | 58 | 56 | 57 | 47 | 44 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

Table 7

Ratings of Institutions (Items 10570-10660)

| *Do you think the following organizations should have more influence, less influence, or about the same amount of influence as they have now?* | Percent who think that the institution should have more influence | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Large corporations | 7 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 16 |
| Major labor unions | 18 | 18 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 26 | 26 | 28 | 26 | 29 |
| Colleges and universities | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Public schools | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Churches and religious organizations | 42 | 45 | 45 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 45 | 44 | 44 | 47 |
| National news media | 18 | 17 | 16 | 18 | 18 | 24 | 24 | 26 | 23 | 23 |
| President and administration | 26 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 45 | 27 | 33 | 32 | 31 | 38 |
| Congress | 34 | 34 | 33 | 32 | 36 | 29 | 27 | 31 | 30 | 34 |
| U.S. Supreme Court | 35 | 37 | 34 | 36 | 37 | 32 | 33 | 35 | 35 | 36 |
| Courts and justice system | 39 | 41 | 38 | 38 | 32 | 35 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 |
| Police and law enforcement agencies | 51 | 51 | 49 | 53 | 55 | 51 | 52 | 50 | 51 | 51 |
| U.S. Military | 31 | 29 | 32 | 33 | 44 | 38 | 36 | 40 | 37 | 45 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

Table 8

Ratings of Institutions (Items 10570-10660)

| *Do you think the following organizations should have more influence, less influence, or about the same amount of influence as they have now?* | Percent who think that the institution should have less influence | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Large corporations | 64 | 59 | 53 | 56 | 55 | 42 | 40 | 37 | 39 | 40 |
| Major labor unions | 48 | 47 | 47 | 46 | 42 | 32 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 29 |
| Colleges and universities | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Public schools | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA | NA |
| Churches and religious organizations | 15 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 12 | 10 |
| National news media | 35 | 35 | 35 | 32 | 36 | 26 | 26 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| President and administration | 23 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 13 | 23 | 16 | 18 | 21 | 18 |
| Congress | 16 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| U.S. Supreme Court | 10 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Courts and justice system | 10 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 |
| Police and law enforcement agencies | 13 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 8 | 14 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 12 |
| U.S. Military | 18 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 14 | 12 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

In sum, today's seniors seem most alienated from big business and big labor. Though less than thrilled with the performance or integrity of the various branches of government, they would like to see them have greater influence than at present. Their attitudes about universities, churches, and the military as institutions are for the most part quite favorable. And, finally, they would like to see the police and other law enforcement agencies have more influence.

Tactics for Social Change. When asked about the proper tactics for bringing about social change, those planning to complete college make sharp distinctions between those actions which they approve and those which they disapprove. One set of questions asks whether students approve of various actions, and another set asks how effective they think each action strategy is likely to be. As Table 9 shows, the actions range from such widely accepted things as voting and writing to public officials all the way to committing property damage and personal violence. The critical dividing line for acceptability is legality; illegal actions receive little approval. The noncollege group shows a fairly similar pattern of answers, although the distinctions are not as sharp.

How effective do they see these actions as being? Again, the lawful actions get more votes, but an appreciable proportion feel that those actions of which they disapprove are nevertheless very effective or at least somewhat effective. For example, only about four percent of the college-bound approve of blocking traffic as a protest tactic, but about one quarter of them think it is effective. Practically none of them approve destruction and violence as tactics, yet nearly one in five think these are likely to be effective.

What about their own actions? Do many of the college-bound think they are likely to engage in various forms of political participation and activism? Nearly all expect to vote (94 percent, compared with 82 percent for the noncollege group). Other actions that they expect to take (or have already taken) include: writing to public officials (about half), boycotting certain products or stores (about one in three), working in a political campaign (about one in four). The proportion of the noncollege group saying they are likely to be involved in each of these possible actions is distinctly smaller (items 6390-6440). Thus, the college group is much more committed to taking action, as well as being somewhat more optimistic about its effectiveness.

Are today's students more conservative than their predecessors? It depends how you define conservative. In terms of public protest and defiance of the system there can be no question that they are less active than college students in the Vietnam war years. In terms of attitudes toward the police, the military, and defense policy generally, they appear to be somewhat more conservative than their recent predecessors. On domestic issues like racial equality and sexual equality they appear to be becoming more liberal. The same holds true for their attitudes about marijuana use (but not other drugs). And their desire for shift of influence away from the private sector (big business and big labor) and toward the public sector will send a chill through most conservatives.

When we ask the students what political labels they assign to themselves, the picture does not get much clearer. Over half of the college-bound, and still more of the noncollege group, say they have no preference or they haven't decided. (In the mid-sixties, only about one quarter fell into this category.) Asked to place themselves on a scale ranging from very conservative at one end, to radical at the

## Table 9

### Tactics for Change (Items 6040-6110)

| | Percent who approve of the tactic | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | College Plans: Complete Four Years | | | | | College Plans: None or Under Four Years | | | | |
| | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980* |
| Sign petitions | 78 | 75 | 75 | 76 | 78 | 62 | 61 | 59 | 64 | 60 |
| Lawful demonstrations | 71 | 71 | 73 | 73 | 73 | 59 | 56 | 57 | 56 | 56 |
| Boycott certain products or stores | 62 | 66 | 64 | 63 | 67 | 45 | 54 | 46 | 45 | 54 |
| Occupy buildings or factories | 16 | 15 | 15 | 17 | 17 | 24 | 24 | 27 | 28 | 27 |
| Wildcat strikes | 11 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 15 | 12 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 16 |
| Block traffic | 5 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Damage things | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Personal violence | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 7 |

*Data from the class of 1980 have been added, but have not been referred to in the text.

opposite end, 21 percent of the college-bound (and 37 percent of the noncollege group) still say none of the above, or don't know. For the rest, the most popular point on the scale is moderate, followed by liberal, than conservative. Fewer than three percent fall into either the very conservative or the radical ends of the scale. It seems clear from all this that one single label will not fit all—or even most—of today's youth.

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