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ABSTRACT

Nearly 1,600 youths from across Indiana took part in this poll about prejudicial attitudes and behaviors toward others. More than 8 in 10 students reported that racist attitudes were found among students in their schools. Many described tensions and some open conflict as outcomes of racist attitudes held by both white students and students of color. Still, 82 percent of the respondents felt that minorities who worked hard had an average or better chance of getting ahead. Sexism was also reported to be widespread, although 6 in 10 respondents said they did not feel personally affected by it. Similar proportions of males and females reported positive and negative impacts stemming from gender. Questions about poverty revealed that most respondents broadly over- or underestimated both the federal poverty level and the proportion of Indiana youths living below the poverty line. "Youthism," or adults' negative attitudes toward young people, also was explored. Many students ascribed negative attitudes to these adults. Many students felt there were no real solutions to these prejudicial attitudes and behaviors in their schools. Most, however, felt that attitude change had to come from individual willingness to learn to respect and accept others for who they are. The individual and group questionnaires are included.
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Indiana Youth Poll:

Youths' Views of Racism, Sexism and Poverty

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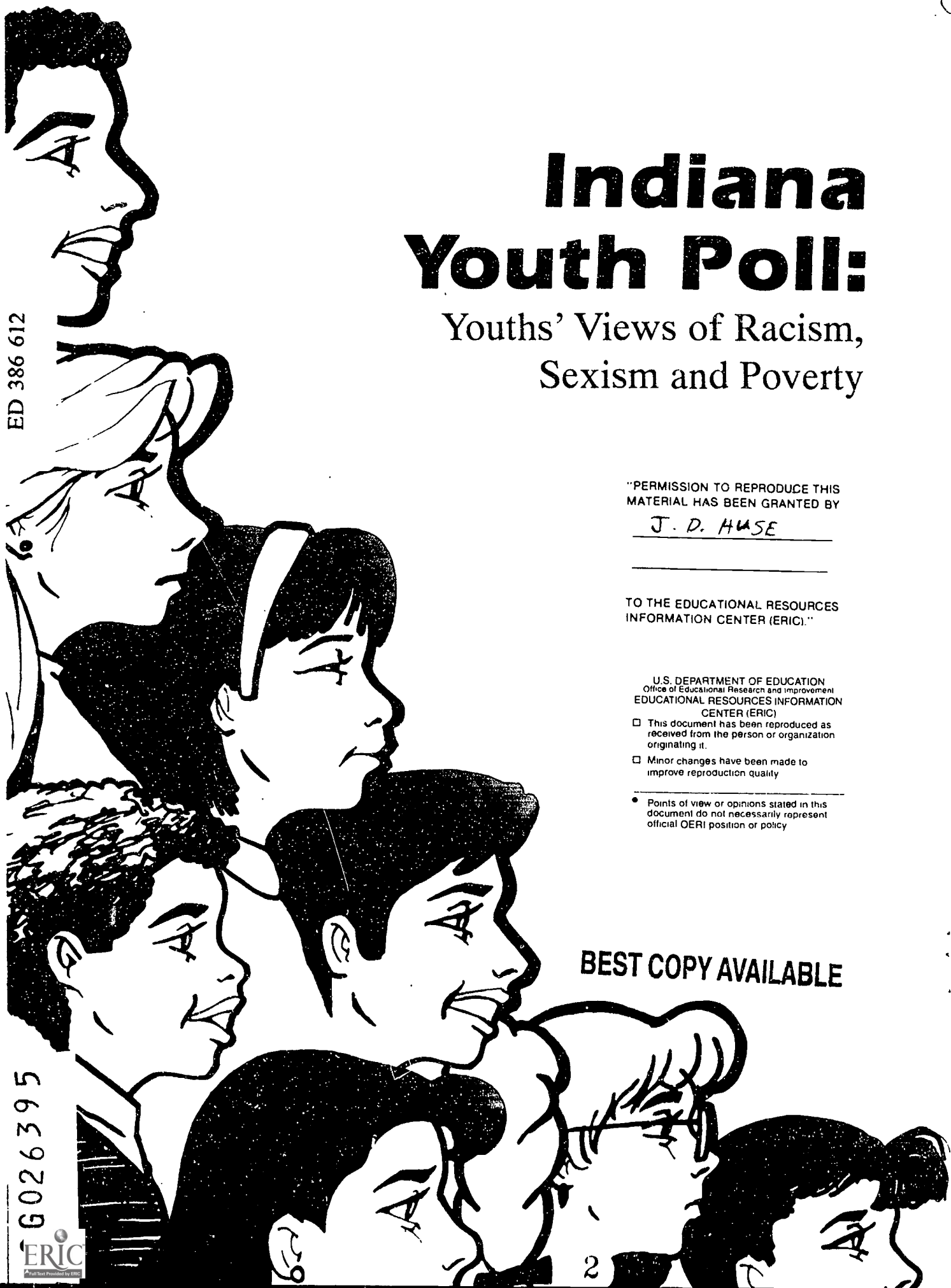
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About the Indiana Youth Institute

We believe that the state of Indiana can and should become a state that genuinely cares about its young people and that its national reputation should reflect that concern and commitment.

To enhance that commitment, the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI) works with adults who care about youth.

- IYI advocates for better service for Indiana's young people, both directly and in collaboration with others.
- IYI develops strategies to increase youth-serving professionals' knowledge, caring, and competence.
- IYI cultivates and supports innovative projects that hold promise for improving the lives of Indiana's young people.

We believe that the key to the success of young people is in the hands of the adults who care about them.

IYI is an intermediary agency that supports youth-development professionals and decision-makers with advocacy, research, and training.

INDIANA YOUTH POLL:

Youths' Views of Racism, Sexism and Poverty

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YOUTH POLL HIGHLIGHTS

This youth poll is about "isms"—those prejudicial attitudes and behaviors toward others different from ourselves which eat away at the foundations of our democratic society. The poll was designed by members of the Youth Advisory Council of the Indiana Youth Institute to gather straight answers from Indiana high-school students about the impact of racism, sexism, "social classism" and "youthism" on their daily lives. Nearly 1,600 students from across the state of Indiana took part in the poll. Their responses provide many insights on the difficulties Hoosier young people are facing in building strong, positive self images amidst peers who are the heirs of American society's bad attitudes and among adults whom they feel do not like them very much.

Youth polls gather information in two different ways, through individual and group questionnaires. The individual questionnaire gathers basic demographic information from each student and provides an opportunity to express personal views. Responses are tabulated and analyzed by standard quantitative techniques. For the second part of the poll, participants form self-selected groups. The student appointed as recorder reads and records responses to a series of questions that group members discuss. Questions often ask young people to move beyond their own experiences to form generalizations or to suggest solutions to problems. The group discussions provide a rich body of qualitative data. Responses are analyzed for patterns and themes. The students' own comments are included in the report.

More than eight in ten students reported that racist attitudes could be found among the students in their schools. Although a majority felt that they had not been affected personally, many of the group discussions described tensions and some open conflict as outcomes of racist attitudes held by both white students and students of color. Still, 82% of the respondents felt that minorities had an average or better chance of getting ahead, if they worked hard.

Sexism was also reported to be widespread in participants' schools. About six in ten said that they did not feel personally affected. Just about the same proportions of males and females reported both positive and negative impacts stemming from gender. Some of the commentary followed expected patterns. Females resented barriers to participating in some sports and activities and the double standard applied to sexual behavior. Males felt they were more often singled out for punishments

and suspensions and that their good-natured teasing was misunderstood. The students observed that both males and females experienced sexism but tended to react differently to the hurt it caused. Young men either tried to hide their feelings or responded with hostility; young women withdrew.

A previous youth poll revealed that high-school social hierarchies are related to the socioeconomic status of students' families. The young people who designed this poll wanted to explore more deeply the impact of family finances on experiences in school. Responses to two questions that attempted to gauge students' knowledge about poverty revealed that most respondents broadly over- or underestimated both the federal poverty level and the proportion of Hoosier young people living below the poverty line. About four in ten students noted that their families' financial status had an impact on their lives. Most frequently identified were the quality of the schools they could attend and the availability of money for college. In the group discussions, nearly a fourth of the responses about impact related to restrictions on social relationships within the school population. Nearly as many comments focused on the exclusivity reflected in the behaviors of better-off students.

The fourth "ism" was "youthism," a term we suggested to describe possible adult attitudes toward young people. Students were asked to describe the perspectives of four groups of adults—police, senior citizens, teachers and parents. Seven in ten group responses ascribed negative attitudes to these adults. Hoosier student responses were similar to those of Minnesota and Chicago-area students who answered this question. The nature of the negative picture shifted from one category to another. They thought police saw young people as "troublemakers," while seniors saw them as "loud" and "rude." Although more positive attitudes were ascribed to teachers and parents, many respondents felt that to teachers they were "lazy" and disrespectful and to parents they were "irresponsible" and lacking discipline.

The final questions asked students about possible remedies for "ism" problems in their schools. Many students felt there were no real solutions and a few proposed actions that can only be described as vicious. Most, however, felt that attitude change had to come from individual willingness to learn to respect and accept people for who they are. Many also stressed the need for better and more open communication. Some favored structured opportunities such as debates, assemblies, or forums, while others stressed just trying to get along. The youth poll findings suggest that there is much to be done to provide all students with a sense that equity is truly an American value.

INTRODUCTION

This is the last in a series of four youth poll reports that have examined life from the perspective of Hoosier high-school students, recent high-school graduates and out-of-school youth. In 1993 and 1994, nearly 1,600 young people from all parts of the state shared their thoughts and feelings about the ways that racism, sexism and socioeconomic status affect their lives.

Youth polls provide adults with insights that go behind the headlines and statistics that too often focus attention on the illegal or problematic behaviors of a few adolescents rather than the broad range of activities that form the everyday lives of more typical young people. The topic of this youth poll, the impact of racism, sexism and poverty on young lives, was chosen by the Youth Advisory Council of the Indiana Youth Institute (YI). Council members were high-school students from across Indiana, and all had been participants in one or more of YI's summer youth leadership camps. The leadership programs helped many of the young people confront, for the first time, their own attitudes toward people different from themselves. Council members wanted to give other young people an opportunity to discuss diversity issues and to provide readers of the report with a youth perspective on the impact of "isms" on their lives. Council members had an active role that went well beyond defining the topic of this youth poll. They helped to develop the initial questionnaire and refined two subsequent drafts. The questions reflect what these young people wanted adults to know.

The Indiana Youth Polls have been a project of the Indiana Youth Institute. YI is committed to helping Indiana become a state that truly cares about its young people. The vision that motivates the work of YI is summarized in the *10 Blueprints for Healthy Development* that may be found inside the back cover of this report. The *10 Blueprints* are based on the premise that

every child in Indiana—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, physically or mentally challenging condition, geographic location or economic status—deserves an equal opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

As young people grow toward independence, they become increasingly implicated in creating the environment in which they must make their ways. The findings of this poll underscore the reality that some young Hoosiers are the heirs of attitudes that motivate behavior which, in turn, can make life troublesome for persons different from themselves.

The Indiana Youth Poll method

The Indiana Youth Poll employs a distinctive blend of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies developed by the late Diane Hedin and associates at the former Center for Youth Development and Research at the University of Minnesota. Young people participate in the poll in two ways. First, they respond individually to a short questionnaire that provides demographic and other background information, as well as expresses their personal views. Most of the questions on the individual questionnaire are closed-ended, using check lists or scales representing degree of agreement or disagreement with a statement. For the second part of the poll, completing the group questionnaire, students form self-selected groups of about three to five members. These small groups function very much like focus groups. Each group appoints one member as its reader/recorder. This person reads a series of related, open-ended questions and records what group members say in the ensuing discussion. Both the individual and group questionnaires used in this poll are appended to the report. Completing both questionnaires takes about 50-60 minutes.

Summarizing the youth poll responses follows. Where appropriate, individual responses are coded and analyzed using standard quantitative techniques. Analysis of the qualitative data from the group questionnaires is more complex. First, the responses to each question are "sifted" to discover patterns and major themes. The number of times a given theme appears among the responses is tallied. Youth poll reports try to convey information in ways that capture both "the words and the music" of what the young people have told us.

The participants in this poll

Altogether, 1,584 young people responded to this youth poll. Participating schools and programs included: North Vigo High School, Terre Haute; 70001 of Indianapolis; Cooper Teen Center, Ft. Wayne; 4-H Junior Leaders, Ft. Wayne; Junior Leaders from across Indiana attending the 4-H State Fair Youth Leadership Conference; YMCA Teen Camp, Ft. Wayne; Life After High School Summer Initiative, Ft. Wayne; Robert J. Kinsey Youth Center, Kokomo; camp counselors from the Jewish Community Center, Indianapolis; Community Action Program, Indianapolis; Hispano American Multi-service Center Youth Group, Indianapolis; Christamore House Achievement Program, Indianapolis; Meridian Street United Methodist Youth

Fellowship, Indianapolis; Marion County Superior Court Juvenile Division Detention Center, Indianapolis; Peer Information Center for Teens, Richmond High School, Richmond; Harrison High School, West Lafayette; Mater Dei High School, Evansville; Connorsville Area Vocational School, Connorsville; Cardinal Ritter High School, Indianapolis; Lakeland High School, LaGrange; Tippecanoe Valley High School, Mentone; Penn-Harris-Madison High School, Osceola; Our Lady of Providence High School, Clarksville; Youth Resources of Southwestern Indiana, Evansville; Cathedral High School, Indianapolis; New Albany High School, New Albany; Ready for Life Program, New Albany; Floyd Central High School, New Albany; Scribner Junior High School, New Albany, and Hazelwood Junior High School, New Albany. Figure 1 shows the geographic distribution of respondents. Participants included students or recent graduates from 150 of the state's 352 public and 293 private high schools from around the state (Figure 1).

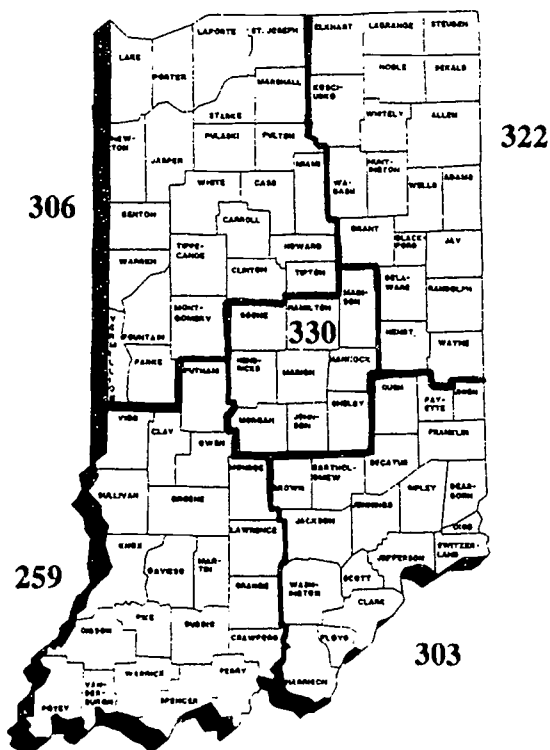
We must stress that the young people who participated in this youth poll *are not* a random sample of the youth of Indiana; poll responses should not be used to draw conclusions about *all* Hoosier youth. Nevertheless, we made great effort to include a representative sample of the state's young people, and the report contains a broad range of views from a diverse group (described in Table 1, p. 6).¹ It is safe to say that the comments of the youth poll participants can be used as a window on the perceptions of many Hoosier adolescents.

Students responding to the poll expressed strong beliefs that equality of opportunity and experience should be the norm for all young people. Their responses disclosed just as powerfully that in reality, equality is undermined by their own prejudices and discriminatory behaviors. Students also recognized that cutting across race and gender, there is also discrimination based on socioeconomic status. Personal identity is socially constructed. We were interested in how respondents felt adults regarded young people, and whether they had experienced a form of prejudice that might be called "youth-ism." They had, indeed.

It is our hope that educators, youthworkers and others whose work affects the lives of young people will use the findings of this poll as a foundation for discussions about the impact of racism, sexism, "social classism" and "youthism."

Many responses to questions on the youth poll reflect cynicism and doubt that anything can be changed. Yet many did feel that change was possible and that communication was the key. This report is Hoosier youths' pleas to be heard and taken seriously.

Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of Youth Poll Respondents*



*Does not include 64 students for whom zip code was not known.

Table 1. Characteristics of Youth Poll Participants

Gender:	%
Male	51
Female	49
Ethnicity:	
White	86
African-American	9
Asian	<1
Hispanic/Latino	1
Native American	<1
Other/multi-ethnic ^a	3
Grade in School:	
Junior high	2
Nine	24
Ten	15
Eleven	19
Twelve	36
Recent graduate/GED	3
Family Type:	
2 parent, biological	62
2 parent, blended ^b	13
1 parent, mother only	15
1 parent, father only	4
Other relatives	2
Nonrelatives	1
Extended family ^c	<1
Lives alone	<1
Other	<1
School type:	
Metropolitan	38
Suburban	22
Town	9
Rural	27
Other	1

(*n* = 1,584)

^aIncludes individuals who marked more than one ethnic category and those who marked "other."

^bTwo parents in household, one of whom is a step-parent.

^cFamily includes others besides parent(s) and their child(ren).

About this report

Throughout the report, we shall make reference to two important developmental tasks of adolescence: forming a personal sense of identity and acquiring a sense of personal efficacy. Chapter 1 examines ways that healthy development is frustrated by racist attitudes and behaviors. Chapter 2 looks at the perceived impact of sexism, and Chapter 3 discusses some of the ways that students feel socioeconomic status affects their lives. Chapter 4 explores the issue of "youthism" and ways that adult attitudes toward young people complicate their lives. The final chapter reports youths' views of the possibility of change and how this may occur.

We say again that it is our hope that the report will stimulate discussion among adults and young people. Readers will find a list of recent articles and books about adolescent life at the end of the report. We have also included some questions raised by readers who reviewed this report in its early stages. These questions can serve as a starting point for discussion.

Unless otherwise noted, findings are reported in one of three ways:

1. as percentages of the responses of 1,584 students,
2. as percentages of the 385 groups of students who included a given theme among their group responses, and
3. as percentages of the total number of separate themes included in all the responses of the 385 groups of students.

It should be clear from the text and from the title and content of a table which of the three "bases" is being discussed.

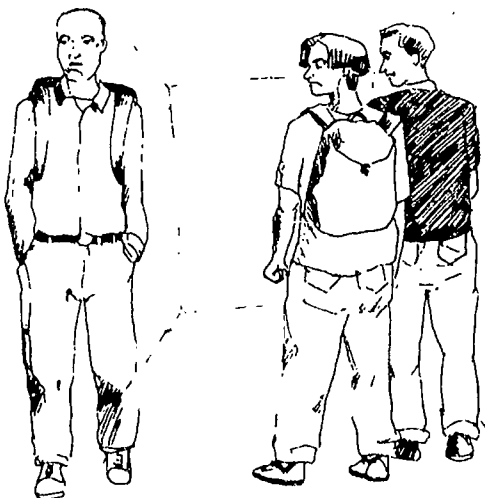
Specific responses to the Youth Poll questions are printed in bold-face italic type. With the exception of spelling corrections, their words appear as written.

THE IMPACT OF ETHNICITY: “RACISM”

There is growing recognition that all adolescents face similar tasks as they prepare for adult roles in families, workplaces and communities. Teens must adjust to rapid physical and emotional changes happening within, to changing social relationships in peer groups, and to changing academic expectations in their classrooms. They must learn to balance the time and effort spent on studying with the increased time they spend working and “hanging out” with friends. At the end of adolescence, they are expected to emerge as young adults who have a strong sense of personal identity based on mastery of skills and attitudes needed to obtain and hold a job, form families of their own and participate actively in the civic life of their communities.

Resources needed to support this journey from childhood to adulthood are not equally distributed. In recent years, research on adolescence has shifted from a focus on individual development and behavior to attempts to understand the ways that the circumstances and contexts in which adolescents grow up facilitate or impede their development. No longer is the onus for problem behaviors placed solely on the individual adolescent. Rather, increasingly youth development is seen as the responsibility of adults and community-based institutions.² The current youth poll focused attention on young people’s experiences in one formative context, Hoosier high schools.

Diversity among Indiana’s students



Indiana is not among the nation’s most racially and culturally diverse states. According to the 1990 census, only 13% of the state’s citizens younger than age 18 were people of color. This proportion compares with a minority population of 31% in the nation as a whole. Although the 1990 census found families of color living in all 92 counties in Indiana, 83% of Hoosier African-Americans younger than age 18, compared with 30% of Hoosier white children, lived in five counties with large urban centers (Allen, Lake, Marion, St. Joseph and Vanderburgh). About 66% of Hispanic/Latino children also lived in these five counties. Numbers of Native American and Asian-American young people are small in Indiana; unfortunately, the numbers of youth poll participants who identified themselves

The perceived impact of race/ethnicity

as members of these groups or as bi-racial, were too small for separate analysis.³

The experiences of Indiana's young people with ethnic diversity varies widely. In most urban areas of the state, desegregation efforts have attempted to create racial balance in the schools. However, residential patterns within the state also dictate that many students attend schools that are still entirely white, while others attend schools with student bodies more than 90% minority. These differences are reflected in the students' responses to the questions on the poll.

Students were asked directly whether their racial/ethnic backgrounds had an impact on their high-school experience. Six in ten students (60%) answered "no" to this question, and another 22% said that they didn't know (Table 2). About one in ten (11%) felt that the impact had been positive, while nearly 4% indicated a negative impact (another 3% said "yes," but did not specify the nature of the impact). African-American students were more likely to say that race had an impact (35%) and that the impact had been negative (18% vs. 2% of white students).

The individual youth poll questionnaire repeated several questions from the *High Hopes, Long Odds* study. One series

Table 2. Has Race Had an Impact on High-School Experience? (by Ethnic Group)

Impact?	White	African-American	Total*
No	62	37	60
Yes, unspecified	2	5	3
Yes, positive impact	11	12	11
Yes, negative impact	2	18	3
Don't know	22	25	22
No answer	1	2	1
<i>n</i> =	1,367	137	1,584

* Includes students of other races: the samples from other groups were too small for separate reporting of responses.

of questions asked respondents to rate the life chances of several groupings of people compared with those of average Americans (assuming that they all work hard). Four of the groupings were relevant to this youth poll: minorities, women, working class people and poor people.

Using a five-point scale (much better, better, average, worse and much worse) students rated the chances for “minority groups” to get ahead.⁴ Ratings from the youth poll participants are very similar to those given by participants in the *High Hopes, Long Odds* study.⁵ Slightly more than half of the students felt that minorities’ chances were about average. About 30% of all youth poll respondents felt minorities’ chances were better than average, and about 18% felt they were worse (Table 3). When the responses of African-American and white youth poll participants were compared, however, small but interesting differences appeared. African-American students were less likely than white students to say minorities’ chances were about average (35% vs. 52%, respectively). They were more likely than white students to say that minorities’ chances were better (39% vs. 30% of white students). African-American students were *also* more likely than white students to rate minorities’ chances as worse than those of other groups (26% vs. 18%).

Table 3. Students’ Ratings of Minorities’ Chances to Get Ahead

Chances	Indiana	<i>High Hopes, Long Odds</i>	
	Youth Poll %	10th Graders %	12th Graders %
Much better	7	8	8
Better	24	30	24
Average	51	53	53
Worse	16	9	13
Much worse	2	1	2

Another of the questions borrowed from the *High Hopes, Long Odds* study, asked: “How would you describe the relationships between students of different racial and ethnic groups in your present school?” Again the distributions of responses from the two studies were similar (see Table 4, p. 10). Youth poll respondents reported varying degrees of tension and friendship among students in racially diverse schools. About one in five respondents attended a school where the student body was

entirely white. The group discussions provide a richer source of information about tensions and relationships.

Table 4. Relationships Between Students of Different Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds in School

	Indiana	<i>High Hopes, Long Odds</i>	
	Youth Poll %	10th-Graders %	12th-Graders %
Tense	10	8	11
Get along, but few friendships between white and minorities	15	17	16
Many friendships between whites and minorities, but some tension	30	25	26
Many friendships between white and minorities and little tension	26	31	27
Does not apply; only one major ethnic group present	19	20	21

Groups responded to the question: "Do you think people in your school have attitudes that reflect racism?" A count of "yes" and "no" answers revealed that a large majority (81%) of the students felt that racist attitudes were present in their schools. We went on to ask them to describe the ways that racism affects students. Two consequences stood out: fights and other forms of violence (recorded by 21% of the groups) and pressures against having friends of different backgrounds (recorded by 17%). The following comments about relationships were typical:

It affects our friendship and ... relationships. If one race found out that you have dated another race, that person breaks up with you.

You see whites together and blacks together—never all together.

The school can't work together. School is divided. People outside of school affect people inside. Discrimination is stupid.

In a negative way, it creates tension. People in the minority feel left out, have to create their own groups to stick together.

Not treated equal; friends aren't made; people have feelings hurt; causes fights.

People make false assumptions about them. It separates people into certain groups.

Lunch tables are separated between blacks and whites. At dances, blacks are separated from whites.

There aren't many interracial relationships (friendships). Every side feels somewhat discriminated against. This causes more fights.

It's not all hate racism, there is so many little clicks. Most kids don't talk to the Thailand kids at our school because they are different.

We are friends with people of different races in school but out of school, we don't do things with them.

Some students felt that relationships had deteriorated to violence, or threat of violence.

Because all of the white people are subject to violence because blacks feel whites are out to get them.

There are a lot of black/white fights. Blacks get away with too much. They expect special benefits and treatment because they're a minority.

Always fights involving racism, if someone looks or says the wrong thing.

Causes people to fight. People are bringing guns to school.

Causes fights, causes ridicule, drives people crazy when they speak their own language and we can't understand.

KKK, Nazi punks, scaring people.

There were a lot of fights during school between Hispanics and whites. A lot of people just think they're better than everyone else.

Confederate flags in trucks. Doesn't affect us 'cause we're white and we don't care what others think. Starts racial fights. Blacks take everything we say the wrong way.

Students feel intimidated and afraid for their well-being. Students skip school.

About 10% of the discussions mentioned the impact of racial tension and attitudes on the learning environment.

There are several fights. Students aren't secure. Teachers are intimidated and uninformed.

Teachers seem to show favoritism to certain ethnic groups.

Scares the hell out of them and it ruins their concentration and they can't learn as well.

They don't like it and they want to quit school.

Most white students get into smarter classes.

Some teachers give black students hard times.

It affects how well they concentrate, because they're worried about a racial comment.

When racism is brought up in class discussion, more people are not open, in fear of starting racial tension.

Discourages success of all students, not only minorities. Creates tension.

Another group of responses (9%) focused on name-calling, the way people "look" at one another, and pick on each other.

Verbal bashing, physical violence, racist comments.

There are comments about niggers, spics, wops, etc., but most of the kids turn around and have friends of a different race. The only problem is illegal immigrants.

The supposed "minorities" are really "majorities" so Caucasians are the ones who get picked on and have lower self-esteem.

The comments that are made and the looks kids give. Everything is said or done for no reason, just because something is different or they have an accent.

Because we influence white power and KKK. It's everywhere! Written on bathroom walls and drinking fountains. Have "for whites only" written on them.

The victims are ostracized and made fun to their faces. The bystanders are angry and frustrated and are also ridiculed for sticking up for the victims. The racists are being that way and will not change.

Students make fun of and make jokes about colored people or non-white people. Also students who make lower scores are laughed upon.

People calling other people niggers and wiggers. People make fun of the handicapped.

Several students in all white schools recognized that racist attitudes were present, although there was no open tension. Some also recognized that they were not well prepared to interact with people different from themselves.

People are racist even though there aren't any black people here.

They hold grudges against people they don't even know.

We are an all white school and we don't want blacks in school.

In our school we have a lot of KKK activity. No blacks will go to our school; if they do, they leave within 2 days.

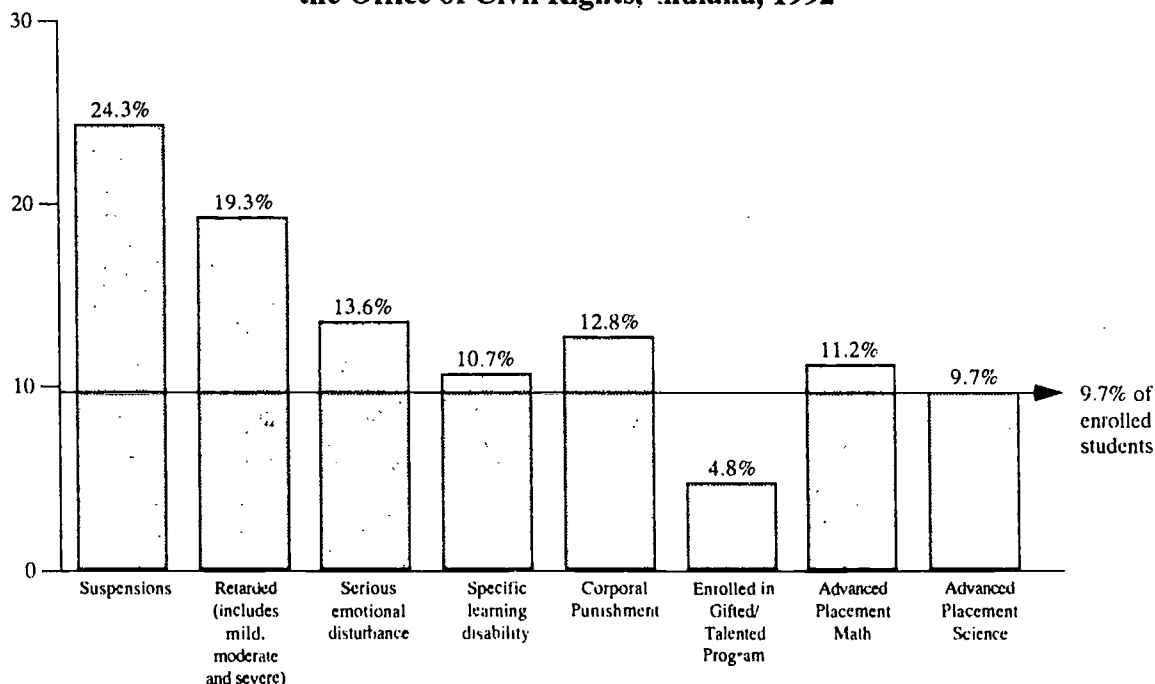
Ethnic groups are dumb. Mostly whites go to this school.

No blacks, lack of exposure to culture. Do not know how to deal with it.

The majority of students attending our school are white. Many use racial slurs when talking of different ethnic groups. This act is contagious and spreads to other students. Even though the groups aren't here to hear it, they are still racist.

Data from a 1992 survey conducted by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) suggest that some African-American students have different experiences in Hoosier schools than do white students.⁶ The OCR conducts this survey periodically as a way of monitoring compliance with federal Civil Rights statutes in states' schools. In Indiana, African-Americans represent 9.7% of the total enrollment in grades K through 12. All things being equal, one would expect African-Americans to be about 10% of the students in the categories monitored by the OCR. This is not the case, however (Figure 2). African-Americans received 24.3% of the suspensions and 12.8% of the corporal punishments. They were more likely to be labeled retarded, seriously emotionally disturbed, and specifically learning disabled. On the positive side, they were enrolled in advanced placement math and science classes in about the expected proportions. However, only 4.8% of the students enrolled in programs for the gifted and talented were African-American.

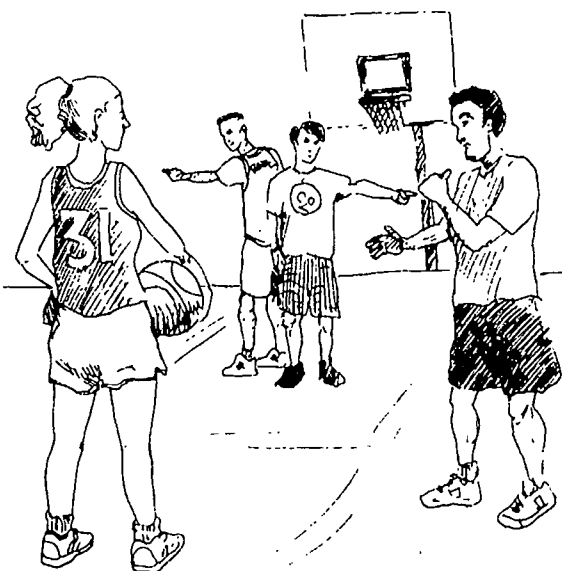
Figure 2. African-Americans as a Proportion of Students Enrolled in Grades K-12 and as a Proportion in Categories Monitored by the Office of Civil Rights, Indiana, 1992



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

THE IMPACT OF GENDER: “SEXISM”

The perceived impact of gender



Issues of gender equity have been a prominent topic in the education debate in recent months. Several national studies have suggested that even after two decades of federal mandates such as Title IX, many schools continue to discriminate in sports programs and short-change girls by undermining their confidence in more subtle ways. Previous youth polls that explored high-school life and peer relationships revealed that some students felt gender had led to unequal opportunity in sports and extracurricular activities and unequal treatment in the classroom. In this youth poll, we confronted the issue of “sexism” head on.

Respondents were about equally divided by gender: males 51% and females 49%. We asked them: “Have you personally felt that being male or female has had a positive or negative impact on your high-school experience?” Not quite six in ten (58%) said “No” to this question. Interestingly, males and females answered this question very similarly (Table 5). Young women were just slightly more likely to report a negative impact stemming from gender. Among the responses from the few students who answered the follow-up question asking them to describe the nature of gender impact, the most frequent response was differential treatment (mentioned by 5.5% of the females and 1.5% of the males).

Another question borrowed from the *High Hopes, Long Odds* study asked students to rate the chances women, compared to other groups of Americans, had to reach their goals, if they worked hard. Just under half (48%) of the youth poll respondents felt that women’s chances were about average. The responses were similar in the two studies (Table 6). The responses from male and female youth poll participants were very similar. The young women were very slightly more optimistic about women’s chances (46% said better and 4% said worse) than the young men (43% said better, and 8% said worse).

Several questions on the group questionnaire asked the students to discuss gender issues. By a slight majority (54%), stu-

dents said they thought that there were people in their schools who had sexist attitudes. The most frequently mentioned effect was having to deal with disrespectful and demeaning comments from other students.

Guys are too vocal and disrespectful to the girls.

Students argue over which gender is better, male or female. Males and females make slurs and jokes about each other.

Harassment makes them angry and feel cheapened. Chauvinists make us feel dumb and useless.

Guys tend to sexually harass women in halls. Even though some say it in jest, the things are still being thought and said.

Girls feel like they can't say their opinion sometimes. Guys compare girls to TV people.

People yell at good looking girls or guys in our school.

Just a general battle of the sexes, making fun of each other.

We think that the sexism at our school is all joking, playful bantering.

The women are radical feminists who pick on guys. It's bad.

Many believe that women are good for nothing. The thought is mutual on the other side.

Table 5. Has Gender Had an Impact on High-School Experience? (by Gender)

Impact?	Gender		Total*
	Male	Female	
No	60	56	116
Yes, unspecified	2	3	5
Yes, positive impact	10	9	19
Yes, negative impact	2	8	10
Don't know	25	24	49
No answer	<1	<1	<1
<i>n</i> =	806	775	1,584

* Includes three students who did not answer the question about gender.

Differential treatment from teachers and different access to sports and clubs were other prominent themes in the discussions about gender.

Teachers need help. They ask the guys to do it. If spirit signs need to be made, girls are always asked.

Teachers either relate to "jocks" or flirt with girls in class.

Male teachers favor male students. Female teachers favor female students.

Some male teachers say things that make the female students feel 2 inches tall. When they say unnecessary comments.

The teachers like girls better. They think God is a woman.

Teachers belittle girls for being female—male students pick up on it, too. Sometimes it goes so far as affecting student grades and teachers' judgments.

Guys get better grades than girls; guys get more attention.

Guys get suspended for everything—girls nothing. Guys are accused of sexual harassment.

There is nothing for the girls to do. Some girls are beginning to think that women are the master race, but school clubs won't elect a girl president and up.

In gym class, the guys push over the girls like they are awesome and girls don't know how to play. Guys are so stupid. A guy just now was talking to a girl saying, "Hey, stupid girl."

Boys don't like when girls do some things like play basketball or want to be around with "the guys." They feel that girls can't play basketball.

Sportswise—males are more dominant. Our soccer team had to wear the guys' soccer teams' warm-up shirts for jerseys.

Table 6. Students' Ratings of Women's Chances to Get Ahead

Chances	Indiana	<i>High Hopes, Long Odds</i>	
	Youth Poll %	10th-Graders %	12th-Graders %
Much better	13	15	12
Better	33	39	37
Average	48	42	46
Worse	5	3	5
Much worse	1	1	<1

Many teachers make sexist jokes, and the football team expects great respect from female students.

Girls are treated better. Guys must watch their actions while girls are more free.

The guys get better deals at our school. The guys always make remarks about the girls being losers. Guys' sports get more recognition.

Girls are not taken seriously about sports. Girls can't get on the football teams, only powderpuff and everyone only takes that as a big joke. Girls can play football. Also in gym class, girls are thought to be weak and not able to play contact sports or participate with the guys.

Girls are babied. It's pathetic. If they want to be considered equal, they should have to register for the draft. If they're so important to this country, then they should sign up to die for it!! Once again, the white male is the whipping boy, struggling against the odds. Our only crime? Being white and male.

Recent attention has tended to focus on the disadvantaged position of young women, yet the comments make it clear that students perceive sexist attitudes to have an impact on young men as well. Data for Indiana from the 1992 survey conducted by the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education suggest that males may well get harsher treatment than females in some areas. Males represented 51.5% of the total enrollment in grades K through 12, but they received 72.9% of the suspensions and 88.5% of the corporal punishments (Figure 3). Males were also more likely than females to be labelled mentally retarded, seriously emotionally disturbed, or specifically learning disabled. Males were just about on target for enrollment in advanced placement math classes and in advanced placement science classes. Males, however, were only 46.4% of the students enrolled in programs for the gifted and talented.⁷

Sexism and sexuality

At mid-adolescence, young people are struggling with another developmental task: learning to form stable and productive peer relationships, including heterosexual relationships. Some responses suggest that sexism is often tangled with sexuality. Some students expressed confusion and others, resentment over "double standards" for the consequences of their behavior.

Some girls do not want to go to certain classes because they know how the guys will act. The five of us girls get turned on when a guy is sexist toward us.

Some males think that a woman's life should be lived in a kitchen, bare-foot and pregnant. Other males think that a woman's private parts are to be used as sexual toys and nothing else.

A girl could have sex with a lot of guys and be a slut. If a guy has sex with a lot of girls then he is a stud. Girls are also treated like tokens to boys. We think there isn't sexism to boys.

Walk around calling people names like bitches, hoes, tricks, sluts, cunts, floozies.

Girls are usually used as punch lines and punching bags.

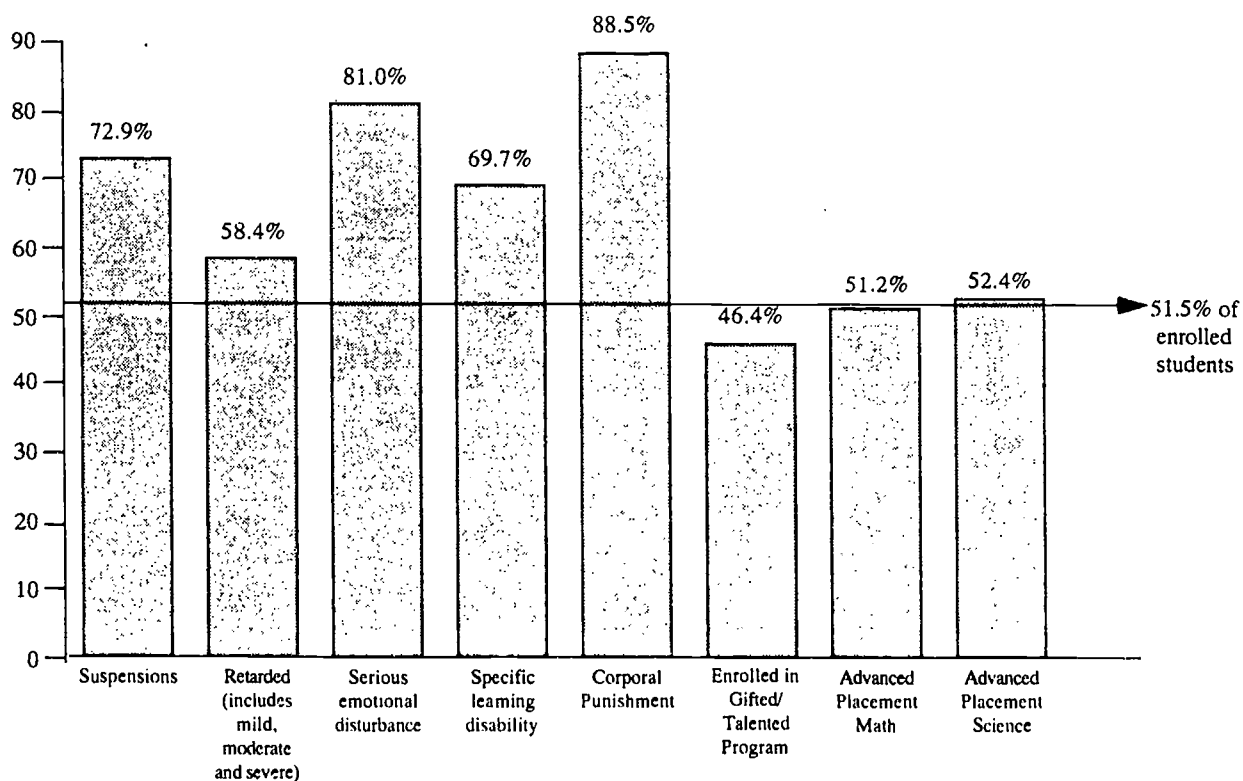
People are horny, and they start having sex at a young age and turn into nymphos.

The majority of the high school boys are just out for one thing. They "want it."

Other groups noted the impact of sexist attitudes on students' self-esteem.

People are too offended when just joking around, feelings are hurt, self-esteem lowers.

Figure 3. Males as a Proportion of Students Enrolled in Grades K-12 and as a Proportion in Categories Monitored by the Office of Civil Rights, Indiana, 1992



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights.

Different effects on males and females

Lowers self-esteem until they feel something is wrong [with them].

Self-esteem is affected. Girls are more affected than the guys, because the guys are more apt to make the rude comment out loud. Girls do it too, but they're more likely to not exploit it. They're more embarrassed to say it or do it.

It lowers self-esteem and makes it harder to work with guys when their attitude is women need to go and cook them something, and women think all men are sexist pigs.

People lose self-confidence and become narrow-minded. The males and females become angry or mean to each other and it's really stupid.

The small amount of sexism that occurs keeps some students from really being themselves. Being afraid keeps kids from achieving their goals. Sexism promotes lower self-esteem.

A final discussion question asked if sexism has the same or different effect on males and females. Of the 327 responses, 21% expressed the opinion that it was the same for both genders. A larger group, 27%, thought it was harder on females. Only 5% said that it was worse for males. Some of the same themes that appeared in the previous question showed up in this discussion as well.

Females are more prone to sexism; they are more vulnerable. Males tend not to be discriminated against.

Females are more subject to sexism. It can be more degrading to females. Teachers treat males/females different depending on their own opinions. It usually equals out in the end.

No, the guys usually pressure the girls to do things. You don't find many girls pressuring guys.

Different. Sexism tends to only pertain to women because men are supposed to be the superior.

Guys don't see the problem, girls do.

Different. Girls don't make as many rude comments. Guys are on quotas for the workforce.

Male teachers tend to be more nicer to the girls and it seems that female teachers don't like male students. Females don't get charged for sexual harassment.

DIFFERENT!! Males are constantly accused of sexism. Females are not. It does go both ways though. Because females are always the "victim," they tend to demand special rights, just to be "fair."

Different. You don't think of doing the same things to a woman as you would a guy (unless he/she was a fag).

Men and women stereotype each other, but in different ways. Most men think women are helpless and should stay in the kitchen. Most women think guys have to be dumb, and not considerate.

If a girl comes up to you and grabs a guy's butt, he doesn't care. But if a guy goes up to a girl and grabs her butt, he gets slapped. Wassup!?

2 said Same, 1 said Different. I think some males think of women as disposable play things. They treat us as emotional punching bags. 18,000 years of dominancy dumped on us when we've lived for only 18.

Another group of responses (24%) suggested that the difference in impact was based on differences in reaction to sexist remarks or treatment by males and females.

When a woman teacher gets on a guy or when a male teacher gets on a girl. Guys are more confident. Don't care. Whereas girls are more considerate of other opinions and self-conscious.

Guys don't really care if you say anything about them. Girls get upset and take it kind of hard.

We think females take it more personally, but males try to prove they're "man" enough to take it.

Different. Girls take everything a lot more seriously than guys do.

Girls tend to take the comments more to heart. The guys and girls have tension between them when sexism occurs.

Different. A lot of sexism directed to females is harassment. Girls tend to stereotype. Boundaries are blurry.

Males—hostile, hurt, but too macho to show it. Females—withdraw.

Men take it worse, but don't show it as much. Depending on the individual, really. Women don't take it worse, but act upon it.

Males get more aggressive. Females get either depressed, angry, withdrawn, but usually not hostile.

Different. Degrades females, upgrades males. Is often pointed toward females. Women rebel against what is said, men let it blow over.

THE IMPACT OF FAMILY INCOME: “SOCIAL CLASSISM”

Some social scientists have expressed the view that gender, race and ethnicity have less to do with young people's life chances than the socioeconomic status (SES) of their families. Anecdotal information from the Youth Advisory Council members suggested that family resources were a significant factor in the way students sorted themselves into the powerful peer groups and “cliques” that dominate high-school social life.⁸ Some felt that low-income students faced barriers within some school systems as well: they were often “guided” away from the college-prep track into general studies or vocational/technical programs and away from more challenging classes. Thus, we were interested in exploring the impact of family finances on students' school experience.

Estimating family income

Several questions related to family income were included in the poll. To provide a reference point, we asked students to estimate the income of their own families with the following question:

The median income for families in Indiana is about \$34,000 a year. This means that half of Hoosier families have incomes *above* \$34,000 a year, and the other half have incomes *below* \$34,000 a year. How would you describe your own family? (A lot above, Somewhat above, Right around, Somewhat below, or A lot below the median income)

About six in ten (59%) reported family incomes above the median; one in four (25%) reported family incomes right around the median and the remaining one in seven (14%) reported family income below the median. Students of high-school age generally have incomplete knowledge of their families' finances and, when guessing, tend to overestimate. Thus, the reported income distribution must be considered more a reflection of the students' perceptions of how relatively well-off their families are rather than an accurate indication of family income.



Estimating poverty

Youth Advisory Council members had often used the term “poor” in discussions about the poll. We wondered if their understanding of “poor” bore any relationship to the official definition that the U.S. Office of Management and Budget uses to establish the official annual poverty level for the nation. When we discovered that this group estimated the federal poverty level to be anywhere from less than \$1,000 to \$35,000 annually, we decided to probe students’ understanding of poverty on the individual questionnaire. The actual poverty level for a family of four was \$14,350 in 1993, and \$14,800 in 1994, the years in which the youth poll was conducted. Responses falling in the category \$14,001-\$15,000, only 12% of the total, were considered correct (Table 7). More than a third (38%) of the students underestimated the poverty level, and the same proportion (38%) overestimated it (11% of the students did not answer the question). There were no differences in the distribution of responses by gender or family income of the respondents.

We went on to ask the students to estimate the proportion

Table 7. Students’ Estimates of Poverty Level Income for a Family of Four

\$	%
< 10,000	25
10,001 - 14,000	13
*14,001 - 15,000	12
15,001 - 20,000	18
> 20,001	20
No answer	11
<i>n</i> =	1,584

*Correct response.

of people younger than age 18 who were poor. Again, the range was far wide of the mark—from less than 10% to more than 75%. During the period that the youth poll was conducted, about 16% of young Hoosiers and 20% of young people in the nation as a whole lived in families with incomes below the poverty level. Therefore, we accepted as “correct” responses, those that fell within 16% and 20%. Only 12% of the responses fell in

that category (Table 8). Only 17% of the respondents underestimated the proportion living in poverty, while a surprising two-thirds (66%) overestimated the proportion in poverty.

Table 8. Estimates of Proportion of Young Hoosiers Living in Poverty, by Family Income of Respondent (*n* = 1,482)

Estimated Percentage of Poverty	Respondent's Family Income			Total
	Above Median %	Around Median %	Below Median %	
< 10 - 15 %	20	19	12	19
*16 - 20 %	13	11	11	12
21% and above	67	71	77	69
<i>n</i> =	913	364	205	1,482

*Correct response.

Differences by gender were small. Male respondents (20%) were slightly more likely to underestimate the proportion in poverty than female respondents (15%). Students living in families with estimated incomes above the median were also more likely to underestimate the proportion living in poverty than students from families with incomes below the median.

The perceived impact of family finances

Respondents were asked directly whether their families' financial situations had had an impact on their high-school experiences. A little more than a fourth (28%) said "No," and nearly another third (31%) answered "Don't Know" to this question (Table 9, p. 26). About 40% reported an impact, but only 7% said that the impact had been negative. Gender differences were too small to report. Not surprising, students who had estimated their own family income as above the median were more likely to report a positive impact, and those who estimated their own family income as below the median were more likely to report that the impact had been negative. Because they had answered the previous question as "No," or "Don't Know," two-thirds of the students did not go on to describe the impact of family income. Among those who did respond, however, the most frequently mentioned consequences

were increased possibility of attending a better school, having money to buy what they need in order to keep up with the latest “in” things, and being able to participate in more activities.

Table 9. Has Family Financial Status Had an Impact on High-School Experience? (by Income)

Impact?	Family Income			Total
	Above Median %	Around Median %	Below Median %	
No	27	31	29	28
Yes, unspecified	6	4	5	5
Yes, positive	37	19	10	28
Yes, negative	4	7	19	7
Don't know	26	39	38	31
No response	<1	<1	0	<1
<i>n</i> =	942	379	216	1,584

The *High Hopes, Long Odds* study had asked respondents to estimate the chances for poor people and working-class people to get ahead. The youth poll asked the same question, and again, the results from the two studies were very similar (Table 10). Students felt that people from the working-class had considerably better prospects than did poor people. There were no real differences in ratings that related to the gender or family income of the respondents.

“Social classism” in school

On the group questionnaire, students were asked to assess the relative importance of family income by agreeing or disagreeing with the statement: “Some researchers say that family income has become a more important factor than race or gender for the chances of succeeding in life.” Nearly two-thirds (65%) agreed with the statement and 35% disagreed. The relative importance of social class conveyed in their responses to this question is consistent with responses to ratings given to the chances for success of women, minorities and poor people described above. Only 6% of the students felt that “women” had a worse or much worse chance for success than

did most other people. The proportion rating “minorities” chances for success as below average rose to 18%, but a clear majority (62%), rated “poor people’s” chances as worse or much worse than average.

Students gave a variety of responses to the follow-up question: “Why do you think this?” The most frequently given responses (22%) related to chances for going to college. This did not come as a surprise since so many of the respondents to the earlier *High Hopes, Long Odds* study had expressed concern about being able to afford postsecondary education. Nearly six in ten (59%) of those respondents saw lack of money as a major or minor barrier to the achievement of career goals. Youth poll participants echoed such concerns.

Because without money people aren't offered the same chances in life. Higher education is expensive and many cannot afford it.

Colleges look at income often, even though they may not admit it. Income gives some people security, therefore, self-confidence.

Because people are becoming more tolerant of different races and now are starting to look at how well off people are.

Table 10. Students' Ratings of Poor and Working Class People's Chances to Reach Goals

Working Class People	Indiana	<i>High Hopes, Long Odds</i>	
	Youth Poll	10th Graders	12th Graders
	%	%	%
Much better	12	10	6
Better	37	37	29
Average	47	50	59
Worse	3	3	5
Much worse	1	<1	1
Poor People			
Much better	3	5	4
Better	9	13	9
Average	25	25	27
Worse	42	42	43
Much worse	20	15	17

Some people can't afford college expenses. Poor people are intimidated by rich people.

Your income affects your self-esteem, which affects the way you perform and [you] have a better chance of getting into college.

Because if you don't have money, then you can't get into a college. If you know that going through high school, it will mess up your high school education.

A number of other groups (19%) felt that income had an impact on popularity and available options.

We think this because lots of money usually means lots of friends, but money does not guarantee happiness.

People focus on appearance and glamour more than anything else.

Children who are able to participate in sports with other children have a definite advantage. If you go on vacations and can afford to do things where you learn things, you have more chances.

We don't want to hang out with welfare people.

It's because people don't want poor people working for them. In schools, people don't want to be associated with "poor people."

People think that if you're poor, you're not worth the trouble.

If you don't have nice stuff—car, clothes—it's hard to be popular.

Wealthy people get whatever they want. The middle class have to work hard for it, and the poor learn to do without.

Other groups (10%) felt that if someone had money, obstacles created by race and gender could be overcome.

More money means more opportunities—college, etc. Race and gender are more acceptable in our generation. Money takes you places.

If you start out with money it's easy to get by no matter what your race is. If you start at the bottom, you will try harder. People that are white believe that they have more power than Blacks because of some people who already have power, like the president and Jesus.

There are more chances for minorities to get jobs. There seems to be more importance put on how much money than what color you are.

We think that money means everything. Your color doesn't matter. If you have money then you can do anything, even change your color like Michael Jackson.

Because if you have more money, you are more popular, no matter what your gender or race is.

Others (6%) disagreed, however, and felt that race would remain an issue.

Because just because of money, don't mean people will forget about race.

Money means power. If you are Black and have a lot, people assume you did something illegal.

Because your income doesn't hurt you like racism does.

Racism and sexism is still there. People don't usually exclude many people due to income.

You can be rich, but if they see your different race, they'll think different of you.

Another group of respondents (6%) felt that individual effort was all that mattered in the long run.

The income really doesn't matter—it's how you hold yourself in school.

Because in order to succeed, it's important that you work hard and don't worry what other people think.

Because you could be good at something and get a scholarship, even if you're poor.

Because it doesn't really count if you have a good income. It matters how hard you work in life.

Disagree. Because you can do anything you put your mind to easier with money, but [you are] still able to do it. We don't think gender and race are important anymore.

Attitudes reflecting “social classism”

The group questionnaire went on to ask respondents if people in their schools had attitudes that reflected “social classism”—i.e., attitudes related to how well off a person is. Nearly three-fourths (72%) said “Yes,” with the remainder (28%) saying “No.” Those who said “Yes” were asked to describe the ways that “social classism” affected the students in their schools. The most frequently given responses (22%) described restrictions on relationships:

Cliques are formed based on what you can afford to do when the clique goes somewhere. You hang around your own class and often, those “below” you are considered inferior.

There is a group of people that make most or all the decisions being made in the schools.

Popular kids are rich. If there's a lot of competition, the rich kid will get the win. Rich people have more power.

Well-off people feel that poorer people are no good. Also richer people stick with richer people, while poorer people stick with poorer people.

The students that are well off are prone to date older people, hang out together, have nicer clothes, and go to parties with alcohol. They either are involved in all of the "popularity" clubs (Student Council, SADD, etc.) or they are too cool for everything.

Because people with higher incomes seem to bond.

They tend to stick to their own. Example: preps-preps, dirties-dirties, underclassmen—well, you get the idea.

If someone's parents have money, they think they just "can't" associate with poor people.

Separates the students. Both rich and poor have adopted attitudes of loftiness and are not willing to interact.

Responses from 21% of the groups focused primarily on the behavior and attitudes of better-off students.

Cheerleaders think that they are better than other females. The way students dress has a big effect on our school. People who dress poorly are talked about.

Makes lower-class people sad. Extra, very rich people think they are wonderful.

People with \$\$ tend to be snobby, so average-income students don't like them.

If you don't have the money to buy the right kinds of clothes, people look down on you. If you don't buy the best brand, you're treated like dirt!

People who are in popular groups think they can rule the earth, but they're wrong.

Rich people won't hang around with poor people. They make fun of the way people dress.

People judge you by what you wear, what you drive, and where you live. People who don't have that kind of money are usually left out, even if it isn't a conscious decision.

Some students felt that other factors were more important than family income in separating students:

We think that it affects no one, because everyone usually sticks together in their own cliques. The large separation of students at [school] is between the drug users, or "freaks," and the non-users, or "jocks," "preps."

One group noted that things were not always as they seem:

One girl lives in a rich neighborhood where all corporation owners in the town live. They say she is so rich, but she isn't. Another girl's family lives in an apartment, owns 2 drag cars and a tanning bed. They are broke, but everyone thinks they are rich. A third girl owns two houses—one they built and another small one. They are not as rich as people think they are because her dad is a vet.

The students' comments reveal the same ambivalence about the relative importance of socioeconomic status, race and gender factors found in the social science literature. Whatever their position, however, the students expressed a keen awareness that life's playing field is not always even.

ADULT ATTITUDES TOWARD YOUNG PEOPLE: “YOUTHISM”?



Sources of
adult attitudes

Young people form images of themselves in social contexts. As they move toward young adulthood, these contexts are increasingly dominated by peers and are, in effect, their own creations. We have already explored some of the ways that young people's own attitudes and behaviors toward peers can undermine healthy development. Most adolescents, however, still spend much of their time in contexts where adults hold much of the power. Several times, we have noted the importance of nurturing environments for the development of a positive self-image and sense of personal efficacy. Young people build their images of themselves through internalizing *their* conceptions of how they think *others* perceive them. The sociologist Cooley first called this process the “looking-glass self.” The actual responses of others are not the essential elements in the process of self-development; it is, rather, one's *perceptions* of what one believes one is seeing “reflected” in the faces and actions of others in the social environment that is crucial.

We were thus interested in exploring young people's perceptions of the ways that adults see them. More than a decade ago, youth polls conducted in Chicago⁹ and Minnesota¹⁰ found that a dismaying number of young people felt that adult images of them were primarily negative. We wondered if today's young Hoosiers would share these perceptions. We used the group questionnaire to explore this issue.

We asked: “We hear about “agism” or bad attitudes toward the elderly. Do you think there are bad attitudes toward young people which we would call ‘youthism’?” Three-fourths of the young people responding to this question answered “Yes”; only a fourth answered “No.”

The next question asked why they thought people had these attitudes. Several themes emerged. The students felt that adults have a bad image of teens generally and that adults often ste-

reotype all on the basis of the behavior of the few that they hear about in the media. They feel adults view them as incapable and have a desire to control them. They also feel that adults are resistant to change and don't understand present-day life pressures.

Some people generalize too much. If a store owner has one bad experience with a young shoplifter, all young people become suspects.

Because some youth wear outrageous clothes. It's like social classism. Bad apples, generalize. Think we are all bad.

Times are changing and youth are being blamed.

They think all kids are bad, think kids should be exactly like they were.

They judge the youth by the bad things we do instead of good things.

Because they think that you have to be older to be wise. Perceive/judge us by dress codes. It's natural. Think you have to live forever before you have intelligence.

They're jealous of our youth. We have no say (voting).

Us young adults are not allowed to drink or smoke and they say if they made it legal, we would be alcoholics. WRONG! People do these things to piss adults off and if it's legal then it won't work any more, so a lot less people will drink and smoke. And elderly people don't think we know what the hell we're doing just because they did it differently "back in their days." Well, there's just some things the "New Generation" does better than others! One of them happens to be finding a way to turn up the volume on our stereos louder than they ever could. So be it.

News reports make us look bad. Some of us are pretty decent. They never report the good things. All they show is violence in teens.

People look at the bad and don't remember the good. They see the bad kids and base their opinions on that. There are a lot of problems and they like to blame it on us and say there is no hope.

Teen violence is all over the media and you never hear of youth doing good.

"Teens" are not mature enough to make decisions. Adults don't believe that teens can be adult enough to act civilized.

They (adults) feel youths are incapable of making informed decisions. The world is becoming corrupt and they are blaming us for it. The world was corrupt a long, long time ago.

Until you are eligible to vote, you are meaningless.

Police, senior citizens, teachers and parents

*They are older and don't realize that we haven't lived their lives,
collected their wisdom and bitterness.*

They see us as leaders in a few years and they are scared.

A few groups felt that some adult views were justified.

Some of the wilder youths give the rest of us bad names.

Sex causes it.

The image we've projected, and they don't care.

*Teenagers think they know everything and their parents are
wrong. We should respect these people. They lived their lives
and at least deserve that.*

We went on to ask them what four different groups of adults—police, senior citizens, teachers and parents—think about people their age. Alas, young people in Indiana responded very similarly to those from Chicago and Minnesota. When all responses were combined, they revealed overwhelmingly (70%) that young Hoosiers felt adults' perceptions of young people are negative (Figure 4). Police were viewed as holding the most negative views (83%) followed by senior citizens (80%), teachers (60%) and parents (52%). Many of the student comments related to the contexts in which they would be likely to meet these groups of adults.

Police

“Officer Friendly” of grade-school days seems to have been forgotten. The young people mentioned most frequently the term “troublemakers” as the image police have of teens. The term appeared in a fourth of the comments. Terms such as “not trustworthy,” “delinquents,” “bad,” and “wild” also appeared regularly. In considering the students' comments, it is good to remember that police are probably the most likely of the four adult groups to appear in settings where young people are engaging in illicit or troublesome behaviors. Some of the student responses included:

*Immature; don't like us; like to mess with us; live to suspend our
licenses.*

We're very aggressive, all armed.

Intimidating; delinquents; we are a menace to society.

Some police officers feel that kids look for trouble.

Think we're troublemakers; take advantage of their badges.

Obviously not very well. The cops just sit in our parking lot assuming things will happen. They don't trust us.

They look at us as targets to get us to the jail or tickets.

Some think that if you wear a hat or a bandanna you are in a gang. So they bother you.

A few groups gave law officers some credit for caring about them.

They think we are troublemakers; officers with children understand us better.

They trust us, but the trust can be easily broken.

Our small town police don't have much to worry about us youths.

Good. Because if you need their help, they're there for you.

Senior citizens

Although students still felt that senior citizens viewed them negatively, their comments did not have the vehemence of the responses related to police. Again, the responses seemed to reflect circumstances where the young people might have tangled with older adults. Terms such as "wild," "loud," and "rude" dominated their commentary. Several thought that seniors viewed them as intimidating, and others felt that they held a range of opinions.

Think that we are all confused kids.

Either love us or hate us; either think we're super and sweet or we're ruining our lives.

Bad, get us in trouble.

We're rude, loud, obnoxious, irresponsible.

They don't like our morals and values and music and trends.

They think we've changed everything.

We think most of the time they like us. They just like to compare how things were back then.

They think we are socially unacceptable, because they are used to the old days.

If we are walking in a group they think we are hoodlums and are going to hurt them.

No respect; no home training. Some understand your pain. Disobedient.

They're scared. Most of them are nice but some are rude to us, especially if we dress intimidating.

We don't care about much. We are immature and are young whippersnappers who don't know what we are doing.

We make them feel special and accepted.

Teachers

Again, although the comments often suggested that respondents felt teachers viewed young people in the negative, the students gave them some credit for caring and trying to understand. The comments often related to the learning context. Terms such as "smart asses," "lazy," "disrespectful" and "stupid" appeared regularly.

If you don't make straight A's, you're troublemakers and you're not worth nothing.

We don't wanna learn, don't wanna get ahead. Just here 'cause we have to be.

A bunch of jerks.

Think we're inconsiderate butt-heads.

Irresponsible and we're not here to learn. They see only the ungrateful students and stereotype us all.

That we have a lot of lost potential.

We are their paycheck, but some really care.

They think we're brats and should be caged.

Talk down like we're garbage. We're not worthy to be in their presence.

Try to let us know that we are intelligent and we can make the future better.

Young ones relate well. The older ones aren't as understanding, but still good listeners.

Different sides. Some know what it's like to be young and understand. Some refuse to accept us as we are.

We are inspiring, yet disrespectful. Some of us are talented, soon to be leaders. We are unwilling.

We need to be serious in class, but I think they understand us more than some people.

Parents

The most positive perceptions were reserved for parents, although as was true for the Chicago and Minnesota students, many felt that their parents saw them in the same negative light that other adults did. Some of the responses suggested that students found their parents bewildered. Terms such as "irresponsible," "immature," "lazy," and "undisciplined" appeared frequently in the negative column. A number of groups switched their responses from describing how parents viewed them to how parents treated them. For example, many groups simply said that their parents "like" or "love" them, "understand" them, "care" and "help" them.

Accuracy of perceived images of youth

Think teenagers think they know it all and all they do is party.

Think that we are very special but we often do not think before we act.

They commit us [to institutions].

Some parents care and some don't.

Half love us and half don't know.

Think we need to have approval from them for everything.

We are a lost generation.

Like their children, but think others are bad influences.

Love their kids; some exceptions.

Think kids have lost all values and are just "wild."

Feel that some teenagers are bad, but they never want to admit their child could be one of them.

They are always telling us to do better without recognizing what we have done.

The parents just don't know a lot about us.

Parents are untrusting, suspicious, and don't know what's going on.

They think kids are getting worse and worse and also think they are disrespectful. They lay the responsibility for naiveness and problems on the kids.

They believe in us, but they'll always have their doubts.

The profile of adult images that emerges suggests that in general, the youth believe that adults do not value them or treat them with respect or trust. While reading through the students' views of adult images, however, some might find some justification for these adult views. Many of the negative views, it might be claimed, stem from the adolescent behaviors from which these various groups of adults feel they have to protect young people. And here lies the rub. Because young people are engaged in the developmental struggle for independence and a personal value system, they often reject the need for guidance. We were interested in whether students felt the adult images were correct or whether they had a different view of themselves.

Most of the young people (58%) had previously said that adult images were negative. This group frequently felt that these

images were wrong. Some of their protests included:

No, we're good kids. You can't label all youths as a group. We are everyday people and we're different.

No. We walk in a group because we're friends, not in a gang. Me and my friends are nice, not little hoodlums. We wear hats and bandannas because we want to, not because we are in a gang.

We are responsible and we have a good head on our shoulders and we know that we are the future, and we do try. Some get into trouble but most of us are trying to be civilized human beings.

No, because they always stereotype by what they see on TV. We are wiser for our age, but are weaker! I ain't laughing for nobody. When I get where I want to be, I will laugh at everybody who tried to hold us back.

[We are] smart, intelligent, not criminals. Just young adults making mistakes.

They are wrong. We are just trying to survive in this world and the changing times.

No. Just a young adult trying to make it in an adult world and we're trying our hardest.

A few groups agreed that the images adults have of youth are correct. Most of these groups however, had already said that they felt adults had generally *positive* images of young people.

Yes, we are important because we are the future of the world.

We are just like they were. We are smart, intelligent, and capable of making informed decisions. Respect authority. If I defy it, I know the consequences.

Yes, they are correct. I think that we act mature enough that we should not be hassled. We actually understand and comprehend. We act better and with respect when given respect.

Two responses summarized poignantly, the ambivalence of several of the groups:

We're worse than our parents think, but we are still good. We're wandering souls trying to find our place. Adults think in extremes, but we're actually somewhere in the middle.

The youth today is just like it has been through the years. There are good kids and bad kids. To some extent the pictures adults have are correct, but the majority of kids have a bright future.

Their own chances for meeting their goals

When it came to themselves, most of the students who participated in the youth poll seemed to feel that their own futures were bright. In answer to another question borrowed from the *High Hopes, Long Odds* study, nearly three-fourths (72%) of the young people felt that their own chances for meeting their goals were better, or much better than average (Table 11). Another fourth (25%) of the students felt that their chances were average, while only 3% saw their chances for achieving their goals as worse, or much worse than average. This same intense personal optimism

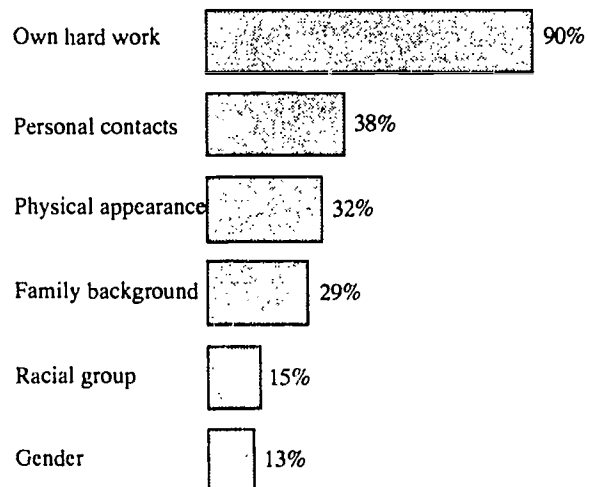
and belief that hard work could overcome any barrier came through in the answers to other questions on the youth poll. For example, nine in ten students said that their own hard work was "Very Important" in determining how far they would go in life—more important than any of the other characteristics named. (Figure 5). Yet, such high hopes can be fragile and easily betrayed by experience, particularly for those who do not have strong family and community supports to help them reach their dreams. Surely adults can ease these students' journeys by learning to look beyond the troublesome few, and even the sometimes bizarre dress and the loud music of the many, to see young people

as they would like to be seen: each as an *individual*—valuable, intense and filled with promise.

Table 11. Students' Ratings of Their Own Chances to Reach Goals

Chances	Indiana Youth Poll	<i>High Hopes, Long Odds</i>	
	%	10th-Graders %	12th-Graders %
Much better	31	35	33
Better	41	43	45
Average	25	21	22
Worse	2	1	1
Much worse	1	<1	<1

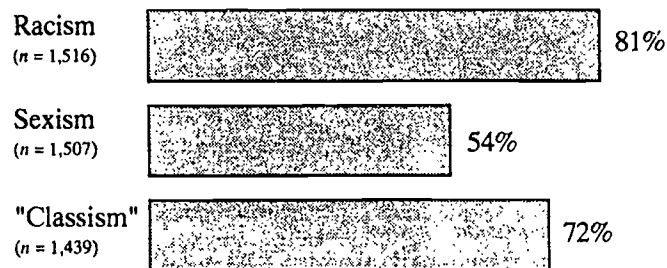
Figure 5. Percentage of Students Who Rated Personal Characteristics as "Very Important" in Determining How Far They Will Go in Life



LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS

Groups were asked to tally members' answers to questions regarding the presence of racism, sexism and "social classism" in their schools. A clear majority stated that some of their fellow students held attitudes that reflected each of the "isms" (Figure 6). Students saw racism as most prevalent (81%), followed by "social classism" (72%) and sexism (54%). Most groups recognized that these prejudicial attitudes had significant consequences for the individual students who bore the brunt of discrimination and that prejudice created an undesirable climate in the school as a whole. Thus, another set of questions invited the students to discuss possible solutions to the problems created by racism, sexism and "social classism."

Figure 6. Students Who Feel "Isms" Are Present in School



Whose responsibility?



The first question in this series asked: "Whose responsibility is it to change negative attitudes and behaviors?" More than four in ten (43%) of the groups said that responsibility rests with each individual:

It is your own responsibility to change your negative attitudes and behaviors. You can only change yourself.

No one can change you. You have to be willing to change yourself.

It has to start with the individual and then it has to spread to the family and community. The offenders are the ones unaware of it's effect.

The individuals, and that's every individual. The coming generations.

It's your own. If you're a senior in high school, you should have enough responsibility for your own actions. If you're not able to do that, then you have a lot of growing up to do.

It is our responsibility because we are the next generation and no one else will do it.

You have to be able to, 'cause if you can't, then you're not gonna be able to change anyone else.

Another frequent theme (22% of the responses) was that attitude change is *everyone's* responsibility.

It is everybody's responsibility—especially the teenagers now.

Everybody's. Each individual's mood is reflected by the people around them. Therefore, if someone is mad, then it will reflect in some way on others.

It is everyone's responsibility to change negative attitudes and behaviors and to educate themselves.

Everybody's. It is everybody's [responsibility] for being like we are.

About 40% of the responses placed the onus for change on adults, particularly parents. Teachers, counselors and school administrators were mentioned frequently. A much smaller number called national leaders and the media to task.

Everyone, specifically parents.

Parents, teachers camp counselors, celebrities (rock/movie stars).

Parents. But, if parents are like that, it is hard to change your child. I think it has to come from yourself. Yeah, but if your parents are like that, then how do you know better?

Everybody. Especially faculty and teachers who interact with students and communicate with them on a daily basis.

The students have the main responsibility, but parents also have to help out and give a positive home influence.

Peers, parents, society, and teachers. Everybody had a different answer for this question.

First, our parents should educate us that no one is better than anyone else. It is also our teachers' responsibility to set a good example. Then it is our responsibility.

Ours, everybody. Parents should raise children without prejudice. Teachers should reinforce this.

Parents and idol figures need to teach their children positive attitudes and behaviors. After the child is grown, it is his responsibility.

A great deal needs to be taught at home, but it must be reinforced at school. Media also needs to back the school.

What can be done?

The question that followed sought solutions to the problems of racism, sexism and "social classism." Although the students gave separate responses for each of the "isms," the themes were similar. About 10% of the groups said that nothing could be done to change the effects of negative attitudes, and some went further to suggest malicious solutions.

Not a damn thing!

[Racism] will never be abolished. It will always be, because it'll be passed down from generation to generation.

Social classism: You can't really. You just fall into a group.

Nothing. For every wetback to swim back with a Black under each arm.

Shoot the Blacks. Shoot the fags. Shoot the poor.

Keep their mouth shut. Make the Mexicans speak English.

Make white power.

By far, the most frequently raised solution was simply to learn to respect and accept people for what they are.

Try to get along with each other and realize they are people too.

Be accepting, look past color; take time to get to know others. Give everyone a chance. Work in groups. Make friends of the opposite sex. Understand that materialism sucks.

Mix with people outside cliques and regular friends. Stand up for yourself if you think [sexism] is a problem. Be less self-centered, mingle and get out of your comfort zones. You could be missing out.

Explore your friendships by being friends with people of other ethnic [groups]. Prove guys' sexist attitudes wrong by succeeding in doing things guys say we can't do. Be friends with the lower class.

Start with the next generation. Racism is out of control. Stand up for yourself and others, and against those who are sexist. Students can try to mix and mingle with other [social] classes.

Make your opinion known. Get a group of nonracist people together. Educate. Offer protection to females. Offer rape counseling. Money isn't that big of an issue.

Stop looking at outer appearances. Respect the differences between male and female and support each in what they do.

Convince yourself that money is not important as a friendship.

They can be friends to people who are different and accept them for who they are on the inside. Respect the people of the opposite sex. Don't be rude about it and know the difference between joking and harassment. Treat them like equals. Become friends with them and try to get them to be with everyone else, so it is undivided. Don't worry about what you or they wear.

Racism: You can't teach 'cause nobody will listen. You shouldn't spread negative attitudes. It's a personal thing. Do your part.

Sexism: Confront it. If you feel it is happening, say something. You have to confront it, don't ignore it.

Social classism: Be a "free thinker." Don't classify. Don't stereotype. Don't treat people based on looks.

Love everyone for what is on the inside, not the outside. Learn that boys have weaknesses and strengths, as do girls. Respect everyone for what they have, not what they don't have.

Encourage multicultural activities and courses about cultural awareness. Acknowledge achievements of both sexes. [Everyone wear] uniforms.

We went on to ask, "How can everyone in the school work together on these issues?" More than one in ten groups (13%) said that there was no way to make it happen.

First you must wait until Hell freezes over. Then, we can all sit down and have a little chat.

It's too big—they can't. Have more things like this [survey].

They can't because we don't want to change.

You can never do it. Everyone has their own beliefs. They'll never get rid of them.

They can't. You can't get people to work together to do anything. People are too set in their ways and you have to start younger—grade school.

There's no possible way that we can work together. Although we feel that racial and sexist issues aren't too severe in this school, cliques are alive and well in our school, so there's a lot of discrimination between groups. Many won't work together.

Good luck getting everyone to work together! No one seems to care.

My school is too stubborn to work together. All most people do is push people away and make little groups.

It is impossible because our school is very racist and very provincial.

Two major themes stood out among the positive solutions offered: simply getting along and promoting better, more open communication. Each was mentioned by 19% of the groups.

Talk it out; educate themselves; have open minds.

We need to be open and we need to be able to say what we feel without worrying about being beat up. We need to have assemblies as an entire school to talk about these issues openly, not just listen to one person preach at us.

Create a committee or forum where students can have input on these issues. It's always going to exist, and there's not much you can do about it.

Don't talk about it. If someone starts pissing people off, then take it upon yourself to shut them up. Take a stand.

Accept everyone for who they are. Treat other people the way you want to be treated. Take time to learn more about each other's background.

There needs to be some type of conference where both parties—schools and teachers/administrators are able to voice their opinions. Also there needs to be an outlet where students can help solve the problem which is just as important. It's not a question of how, but what you're going to do.

Step over the boundaries and accept everyone. Support or discussion groups may help individuals come together and respect one another.

Talk it out. They can't. It's like asking all the countries, and asking them to just talk it out.

Improve student relations. Prove them wrong. Try to be peacemakers. Don't be racist yourself.

School can make programs for everyone. Ex.: Racial Awareness Program.

Everyone put all their ideas together and discuss them, and when you put everyone's ideas together, you come up with good ones.

A number of groups (12%) suggested forming clubs or special discussion groups; some added that existing clubs needed to be less exclusive and to encourage broader participation. Other groups suggested convocations or rallies, having speakers, or working through the student council. Taken altogether, the solutions offered suggested that openness to change varies widely from individual to individual and from school to school.

What students want
adults to know

At the end of the group questionnaire, we asked: "What do you most want the adults who read this youth poll report to

know about the ways that racism, sexism, 'social classism' and 'youthism' are affecting the lives of students?" The responses contained a mixture of anger, cynicism, frustration, and hope.

We care very much about these issues, but we feel useless and unable to make a difference. We get chances but they always fail.

I don't think this survey has any purpose. Why not take a poll that represents things that can be changed. Nobody cares about things that can't be changed. This is a cheap attempt to make us think our opinions count. You're not fooling anyone.

I want them to know we don't give a shit about anything.

If people have a problem with who I am or my color, I'll fight them. It doesn't bother me that we have racism or sexism or any others.

These issues really affect us because we often get made fun of, get into fights with our peers, and are looked down on by others. Even if we are less fortunate and we are different doesn't mean that we are troublesome.

It's very discouraging. I feel like I'm still in kindergarten. Nothing has changed, and we have no say so in our lives or education. School Sucks!

They put too much pressure on us. They need to be patient.

When raising your kids, tell them that they have no "strikes" against them. Whether they succeed or not is totally and completely up to them. Tell them everyone is equal and deserves their respect until they prove otherwise. Bad kids come from bad parents.

We want them to know that there's hope. We're not all sexually active, flunking out of school and juvenile delinquents.

We need positive attitudes from every adult and we don't need any more pressures in our lives, especially the ones who will be on their own really soon.

DISSOLVE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION!!!! Considering the recent herd towards affirmative action in regards to matters concerning race, gender, and gender preference, many of us are becoming discouraged and see a trend in which if you are a Black lesbian, any job is yours, if you desire. This trend is causing a peak division along ethnic and gender lines. We will find ourselves in a hyphenated America (i.e., Afro-American). This division has the potential to wreak havoc on our society. It's time to turn the tides against Affirmative Discrimination (Affirmative Action), and allow every great American to succeed on his/her own merit, without the help of Uncle Sam!!!

We are people too. We have rights pertaining to our lives as well. We're not all saints, but we're not all muggers either. We also have hopes.

That we are not easily categorized absolutes in that we are a mass of contradictions that need not be rejected out of hand, but rather, encouraged to do our best.

WE DON'T CARE. *We are sick of ism's because everyone in this country lays the blame on someone else. Get a life. If you're a minority, poor, or believe that gender really affects things, learn to think for yourself and take responsibility and live your own life.*

Teach by doing, not saying. Some kids learn racism, sexism, "classism" and youthism from their parents. It is not what they learn for themselves.

We want them to treat us with respect and not take into consideration our class or race. Take us for who we are and don't use stereotypes. Take the time to get to know us as a person, not a class, or race, or youth. We are all different!

Everyone needs love and there are a lot of people who do things just to get the attention they long for and know no other way to get it. Everyone is special and needs to be treated like a human being, regardless of age, money, sex, or race.

That it's all just a part of growing up and there's just not a whole hell of a lot you can do about it. You just have to live it out, day after day. Also for them to look back at their teenage years before they start complaining about our teenage years. Our teenage years are a lot better than theirs. (Ex.: Hippies! Need I say any more.)

These should not be used as excuses for doing less than your best. We feel you can overcome anything with hard work and determination.

We would like them to see that we are also human and that we have feelings. If you prick us, do we not bleed? Do we not hurt? We are the future. We love you. We love the world.

That there are more problems in the school system than most adults know about. There are more issues that affect young adults today than in the past. And most of the problems you can't help. It is just the way it is.

It makes self-esteem lower. It makes teenagers want to prove they're adults by having sex, drinking, and other outrageous things. We would rather have reasons for being told no, rather than just being told we can do something.

We're lovable and feel they need more parenting classes. They need to learn to love and teach us.

We really do look up to them. they need to watch their actions, because we do notice what they do and say. We walk in their footsteps.

We don't give a rat's ass what the adults in this world think. It's our life and we'll do what we want. We will rebel.

We will grow up to be just as judgmental as they are being. They

need to learn more about us before making judgements. [They] don't agree with a lot of what we do, but we're here because of them.

Many times we just don't care what they think. We just want to be left alone to do our thing. We let you do yours, let us do ours.

Not to worry about us. We'll grow out of it.

We need examples and adults who CARE.

[Adults] want us to say it's fine. They don't want to be bothered, feel it's too late. They want to look involved as though they care, but they really don't.

The adults need to be there to listen to us. We just want to be loved and someone to understand us. A shoulder to cry on once in a while would be nice. I wish we had decent counselors here!

That change is continuous and things aren't viewed in the same way as when they were our age. Children need to have open minds. Parents should not enforce their ideas in their child's mind.

We are just inexperienced. We need some wind beneath our wings, someone to show us the way. Better role models.

We are people too! Soon we will be running this country and you won't be able to do anything about it.

As in past youth polls, the responses of young people to this one give us all much to ponder. It is clear that many are the inheritors of the same prejudicial attitudes that created barriers for past generations of Americans. Particularly poignant are their comments about "youthism." We must think more about what it is like to try to form a strong, positive sense of self and personal efficacy in a world where young people feel hostility, if not at every turn, in far too many of their encounters with important adults in their lives.

It may seem that the students offered only simple solutions to the problems they face. Yet, solutions *can* be as simple as changing one's own attitude. Many thought that attitude changes were unlikely to happen, however, without better communication. And, by communication, they do not mean being "preached at." They want opportunities for open, two-way communication, and they want to be actively involved in "making it happen." Dare we offer them less?

How come ADULTS (whea!) are going to read this! Why not kids! Here's an idea! Government talking to kids. OOOHH!!! Oh, rapture!! Oh, Joy!!

NOTES

¹ Table 1 describes the ethnicity and families of the participants in the youth poll. At the present time, there is considerable debate about the appropriateness of "forced choice" survey questions (e.g., on the U.S. Census) that permit the respondent only one ethnic identity. We have tried to be more flexible with the youth poll questionnaires by providing the usual list of race/ethnic groups, but letting respondents "check all that apply." In Table 1, we combined the responses of those who checked more than one race/ethnic category with the responses of those who checked "other."

Family types also permitted flexibility in response. A two-parent "blended" family is one in which the young person is living with two parents, but one is a step-parent. An "extended family" is one that includes members other than parents and children; it may include aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

² R. Takanishi, "Changing Views of Adolescence in Contemporary Society," in R. Takanishi, Ed., *Adolescence in the 1990s: Risk and Opportunity* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1993), pp. 1-7.

³ U.S. Bureau of the Census - STF1A Magnetic Tape File. Base data from the 1990 U. S. Census obtained from the Indiana University School of Business, Indiana Business Research Center, Bloomington, Indiana.

⁴ It is always hard to know if respondents share a common understanding of such concepts as "getting ahead." The similarity in the responses from the two studies suggests that there is some shared meaning among young people of high school age.

⁵ S. Y. Abraham, S. L. Myers, and D. A. Zahs, *Indiana Youth Opportunities Study of 1991: Data File User's Manual*. 10th- and 12th-Grade Student Questionnaires (Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center, November 1994). This study, conducted by Gary Orfield and Faith Paul, was published serially as: *High Hopes, Long Odds: A Major Report on Hoosier Teens and the American Dream* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Youth Institute, 1993-1994). This study, conducted in 1991, gathered data from a true random sample of Hoosier 8th-, 10th- and 12-graders. The youth poll sample was a representative sample (i.e., it included young people from around the state, and proportions by gender and race/ethnicity in the sample were approximately what they are in the high-school population as a whole).

⁶ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. Preliminary data, April 1994. The numbers of Hispanic/Latino, Asian-American and Native American students in the survey were too small to provide a valid picture of their experiences.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. Preliminary Data, April 1994.

⁸ This was also a finding of J. Erickson, D. Hogan, and S. Hasbrouck, *Indiana Youth Poll: Youths' Views of Peer Relationships* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Youth Institute, 1994).

⁹ K. Popowski, *Chicago Area Youth Poll: Youth Views on Volunteering and Service Learning* (Chicago, IL: Cook County Sheriff's Youth Services Department, 1985).

¹⁰ D. Hedin, K. Hannes and R. Saito, *Minnesota Youth Poll: Youth Look at Themselves and the World AD-MR-2666* (St. Paul, MN: Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Minnesota, November 1985).

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Young people who created this youth poll and the adults who worked with them to bring it to completion hope that the findings will stimulate further discussion. We feel that the best way to get started is to repeat some of the questions from the group questionnaire. We have provided an additional set of questions that occurred to us as we read through the comments of the many participants in the poll.

1. Although the youth poll asked participants of all racial/ethnic backgrounds to describe the impact of racism, we were only able to report for African-Americans and whites. The sample contained too few Hispanic/Latino, Asian-American and Native American participants to provide separate analyses for these groups. Young people who come from relatively small race/ethnic groups tell us this happens a lot with the surveys they take, and they feel that their voices do not get heard. Do you think that being a member of a very small minority group poses some particular advantages or disadvantages? How might we give young people from small minority groups a stronger voice on issues that concern them?
2. Some readers of the youth poll report remarked that there are a lot of differences within groups that we did not take into account. For example, whites may be of Russian, Appalachian, German, or many other backgrounds; Hispanic/Latino young people may be Puerto Rican, Mexican, or from many other national backgrounds. They may be new immigrants or come from families who have lived in the U.S. since the 1500s. African-Americans, Asian-Americans and Native Americans also have many different backgrounds. What difference does it make that we lump people from diverse backgrounds together in a single category? Does it make chances to reach personal goals better or worse?
3. Although this youth poll did not ask about gangs, the subject was brought up in several comments made by respondents. What does race/ethnicity have to do with the way gangs form and how they carry out their activities? What impact does this have on young people who are not gang members? What can be done to reduce the conflict among members of different gangs and between members and non-members of gangs?
4. Some of the comments about the impact of gender from both male and female respondents suggested that the boundaries between good-natured kidding and sexual harassment are pretty fuzzy and a lot of people get into unexpected trouble. What can be done to help people understand where to draw the line?
5. Schools have many rules against sexual discrimination, yet many participants remarked that male and female students get different treatment from teachers, coaches, and administrators. In most schools, power lies with adults; many students fear reprisal if they complain. What part can students play in seeing that the rules are enforced?

6. A number of the comments about the impact of family finances seemed to suggest that many students feel there is almost a “natural” dividing line between well-off and poor students and that not a lot could be done about it. How do you feel about this? Do teachers and administrators reinforce this division as some students claimed? What part can students play in keeping everyone’s options open?
7. The *High Hopes, Long Odds* study report published in 1993-94 discussed several barriers students faced in achieving their goals. This study found, for example, that students and their families were very worried about finding money for college or other postsecondary education. But the study found that many students overestimated the costs of college. The study also found that many students were not taking the courses they needed to gain entry to postsecondary education. The researchers proposed that schools do a better job of providing program planning and career guidance to students. Have you noticed any changes in these areas in your school in the last year or so? If not, what could be done to improve the services available to students in your school?
8. Respondents to the youth poll felt strongly that “youthism” exists. They describe a lot of adults as hostile toward and mistrustful of young people. What impact does “youthism” have on students seeking role models among the adults they know? What part can young people themselves play in improving their “image” among adults? How does “youthism” affect the ability of young people to develop a strong, positive self-image?
9. Many young people responding to the poll suggested that there was little they could do about the “isms” that affect so many of their lives. Do you really believe this? Where does stereotyping come from? What can be done to break down the stereotypes that are behind all of the “isms”?
10. What concrete steps can you personally take to combat each of the “isms”—racism, sexism, social classism, and youthism—covered in this youth poll? How are you going to hold yourself accountable for carrying out these steps?

To Read More About Gender, Race and Poverty and Adolescent Life

The books and reports that follow provide additional insights on adolescent life. Several of these resources discuss peer groups and relationships. All of the books and reports may be found in the Indiana Youth Institute's Resource Center.

Publications of the Indiana Youth Institute

Orfield, Gary and Faith Paul, *High Hopes, Long Odds: A Major Report on Hoosier Teens and the American Dream*, 1993-1994.

Report of research that involved more than 5,000 Hoosier 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders, nearly 5,000 of their parents, and 389 of their guidance counselors. The study probed young people's aspirations for the future and the steps they were taking to realize these aspirations. Concludes with policy suggestions for lowering the odds faced by many of the state's young people.

Erickson, Judith B., *Indiana Youth Poll: Youths' Views of High School Life*, 1991.

Erickson, Judith B., *Indiana Youth Poll: Youth's Views of Life Beyond High School*, 1992.

Erickson, Judith B., Dennis Hogan and Stephanie Hasbrouck, *Indiana Youth Poll: Youths' Views of Peer Relationships*, 1994.

Reports summarizing the views of Indiana high-school students.

Smith, Doreen L., *Kids, Crime, and Court: The Juvenile Justice System in Indiana*, 1994.

Report provides a clear description of the juvenile justice system in Indiana—how young people enter the system, what happens to them when they are in it, and how they get out.

Smith, Doreen L., *Juvenile Justice in Indiana: Facing the Issues*, 1995.

Examines the problems facing Indiana's fragmented juvenile justice system. Draws together recommendations of many committees and task forces that have confronted the problems and examined solutions.

Erickson, Judith B., *The State of the Child in Indiana, II*, 1993.

Erickson, Judith B., *Kids Count in Indiana 1995 Data Book*, 1995.

Statistical summaries of data describing the well-being of Hoosier children, youth, and their families; reports include discussions of high-risk behaviors among adolescents.

Additional publications

AAUW Education Foundation, *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education* (Washington, DC: AAUW Education Foundation, 1992).

Beymer, Lawrence, *Meeting the Counseling and Guidance Needs of Boys* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 1995),

- Bezilla, Robert, Ed., *America's Youth in the 1990s* (Princeton, NJ: The George H. Gallup International Institute, 1993).
- Bock, R. Carrell and Elsie G. J. Moore, *Advantage and Disadvantage: A Profile of American Youth* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986).
- Braddock, Jomills, H., *Tracking: Implications for Student Race-Ethnic Subgroups* (Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students, Johns Hopkins University, 1990).
- Camino, Linda A., *Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Differences in Youth Development Programs* (New York, NY: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992).
- Children's Express, *Kids Voices Count: Illuminating the Statistics* (Washington, DC: Children's Express, 1994).
- Goodwillie, Susan, Ed., *National Hearings on Violence in the Child's Life at Home, at School & on the Streets* (Washington, DC: Children's Express, 1993).
- Children's Express, *Voices from the Future: Our Children Tell Us About Violence in America* (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1993).
- These outstanding publications were written and edited by the young reporters and editors of Children's Express. They are based on interviews with young people from across the nation.
- Coleman, Loren and Dan Porter, *Working with Rural Youth* (Portland, ME: Edmund S. Muskie Institute of Public Affairs, 1994).
- Curcio, Joan L., *Violence in the Schools: How to Proactively Prevent and Defuse It* (Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, 1993).
- Dryfoos, Joy G. *Adolescents at Risk: Prevalence and Prevention* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).
- Duvall, Lynn, *Respecting Our Differences: A Guide to Getting Along in a Changing World* (Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing Co., 1994).
- Edelman, Peter B. and Joyce Ladner, *Adolescence and Poverty: Challenge for the 1990s* (Washington, DC: Center for National Policy Press, 1991).
- Feldman, S. Shirley and Glen R. Elliott, (Eds.), *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- Funderburg, Lise, *Black, White, Other: Biracial Americans Talk About Race and Identity* (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, 1994).
- Gabelko, Nina H. and John U. Michaelis, *Reducing Adolescent Prejudice: A Handbook* (New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1981).
- Garbarino, James, *Children in Danger: Coping with the Consequences of Community Violence* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992).
- Gullotta, Thomas P., Gerald R. Adams and Raymond Montemayor, Eds., *Developing Social Competency in Adolescence* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990).
- Hacker, Andrew, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal* (New York, NY: Scribner's, 1992).

- Hamburg, David A., *Today's Children: Creating a Future for a Generation in Crisis* (New York, NY: Random House, 1992).
- Heath, Shirley B. and Milbrey W. McLaughlin, Eds., *Identity & Inner-City Youth: Beyond Ethnicity and Gender* (New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1993).
- Helmreich, William B., *The Things They Say Behind Your Back: Stereotypes and the Myths Behind Them* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publications, 1984).
- Hodgkinson, Harold, *The Invisible Poor: Rural Youth in America* (Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership, Center for Demographic Policy, 1994).
- Hopson, Darlene P. *Different and Wonderful: Raising Black Children in a Race-Conscious Society* (New York, NY: Prentice Hall Press, 1991).
- Ianni, Francis A. J., *The Search for Structure: A Report on American Youth Today* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1989).
- Jones, Reginald L., Ed., *Black Adolescents* (Berkeley, CA: Cobb & Henry, 1989).
- Lal, Shirley L., *Handbook on Gangs in Schools: Strategies to Reduce Gang-Related Violence* (Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press, 1993).
- Llewellyn, Chandra D., *African American Male: A Second Emancipation* (Washington, DC: National Urban League, Inc., 1992).
- Meier, Kenneth J., Joseph Stewart, Jr. and Robert E. England, *Race, Class, and Education: The Politics of Second-Generation Discrimination* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).
- Miller, Bruce A., *Distress and Survival: Rural Schools, Education, and the Importance of Community* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 1991).
- Miranda, Leticia C., *Latino Child Poverty in the United States* (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 1991).
- Sadofsky, Mimsy and Daniel Greenberg, *Kingdom of Childhood Growing Up at Sudbury Valley School* (Framingham, MA: The Sudbury Valley School Press, 1994).
- Sudbury School is a place where freedom is cherished, where mutual respect is the norm, where children and adults are comfortable with each other, where learning is integrated into life. Book is based on extensive interviews with former students.
- Sandefur, Gary D., *Divided Opportunities: Minorities, Poverty, and Social Policy* (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1988).
- Takanishi, Ruby, Ed., *Adolescence in the 1990s: Risk and Opportunity* (New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1993).
- Wishnietsky, Dan H., *Sexual Harassment in the Educational Environment* (Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa, Center for Evaluation, Development and Research, 1992).

INDIANA YOUTH POLL - 1993-94

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This youth poll was designed by the Youth Advisory Council of the Indiana Youth Institute. The questions relate to the impact of racism, sexism, and family income (we're calling this "social classism") on the lives of Hoosier high school students. Participation in this study is voluntary. Some of the questions deal with very sensitive issues. Council members hope that you will answer them. If you prefer not to, however, you may leave those questions blank.

Gender: Male Female

Age on last birthday: _____

Do you consider yourself: (Check all that apply)

White Asian Hispanic African American American Indian _____ Other

Grade in School: JH 9 10 11 12 HS Grad GED

School: _____
(if not in school now, list last high school attended)

Zip Code where you live: _____

Who of the following live with you?

Father Stepfather Grandparents Guardian
 Mother Stepmother Your own child Others (friends)
 Brothers or sisters Other relatives I live alone

1. Every year, the federal government sets a family income level called the "poverty level" for families of various sizes. What is your estimate of the poverty level income for a family of four in 1994? \$ _____
2. There are about 1.5 million Hoosiers younger than age 18. What is your estimate of the percentage who are living in families with incomes below the poverty level? _____%
3. The median income for families in Indiana is about \$34,000 a year. This means that half of Hoosier families have incomes *above* \$34,000 a year, and the other half have incomes below \$34,000 a year. How would you describe your own family?
 A lot above the median income
 Somewhat above the median income
 Right around the median income
 Somewhat below the median income
 A lot below the median income

- 4a. Have you personally felt that how well off financially your family is has had a positive or negative impact on your high school experience?
 No Yes, Positive Yes, Negative Don't Know

4b. If you said yes, please describe briefly what impact it had on you.

5. Now we'd like to know your opinion about the chances several different kinds of young people have to reach their goals, if they work hard. Compared to the average person in America, do you think that the chances for reaching their goals in life are much better, better, average, worse, or much worse for the following young people:

(CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ON EACH LINE)

Chances of getting ahead with hard work are:					
	Much Better	Better	Average	Worse	Much Worse
1. Poor people	1	2	3	4	5
2. College graduates	1	2	3	4	5
3. Minority groups	1	2	3	4	5
4. High school graduates	1	2	3	4	5
5. Women	1	2	3	4	5
6. Dropouts	1	2	3	4	5
7. Working-class people	1	2	3	4	5
8. Yourself	1	2	3	4	5

- 6a. Have you personally felt that being male or female has had a positive or negative impact on your high school experience?
 No Yes, Positive Yes, Negative Don't Know

6b. If you said yes, please describe briefly what impact it had on you.

7. How would you describe the relationships between students of different racial and ethnic groups in your present school?

	(CIRCLE ONE)
Tense	1
Get along, but few friendships between whites and minorities	2
Many friendships between whites and minorities, but also some tension	3
Many friendships between whites and minorities, and little tension	4
DOES NOT APPLY -- Only one major ethnic group present	5

- 8a. Have you personally felt that your race or ethnic background has had a positive or negative impact on your high school experience?

No Yes, Positive Yes, Negative Don't Know

- 8b. If you said yes, please describe briefly what impact it had on you.

9. How important do you think the following factors will be in determining how far you will go in life?

(CIRCLE ONE ON EACH LINE)				
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Unimportant	No importance at all
1. Your family background	1	2	3	4
2. Your sex	1	2	3	4
3. Your racial or ethnic group	1	2	3	4
4. Your personal contacts	1	2	3	4
5. Your physical appearance	1	2	3	4
6. Your hard work and effort	1	2	3	4

Group Questionnaire

Instructions for the Recorder

The recorder's job is very important. Without clear, accurate, and complete notes of the group discussion, we will not have a good understanding of your group's opinions.

The recorder's job is to write down as much as possible of what is being said in response to the questions. Don't decide what would be important for us to know; just write down whatever people say. Encourage everyone to participate and give opinions.

1. Read each question out loud to your group.
2. On the lines provided, begin writing everything and anything people say in response to the question. If you need additional space, use the reverse side.
3. After everyone has spoken, go on to the next question.
4. Before you begin, please read this paragraph to your group:

As group members, please try to make it easy to record your comments by talking slowly and clearly. This does not mean that your answer have to be well planned or carefully worded, although clarity would certainly help. You can be assured of confidentiality since no name will be recorded.

5. **When finished, clip all the Individual Questionnaires from your group members to the Group Questionnaire.**

Page 1

- 1a. We are calling racism the discrimination against someone or a group of people because of their ethnic, cultural or racial differences. Do you think people in your school have attitudes that reflect racism?

How many said yes? _____ How many said no? _____

- 1b. If any said yes, what do you feel are the ways racism affects the students in your school? Please be specific.

- 2a. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on someone's gender. Do you think that people in your school have attitudes that reflect sexism?

How many said yes? _____ How many said no? _____

- 2b. If any said yes, what do you feel are the ways that sexism affects the students in your school? Please be specific.

Page 2

3. Does sexism have the same or different effect on males and females? If you said different, in what ways? Please be specific.

- 4a. Some researchers say that family income has become a more important factor than race or gender for the chances of succeeding in life.

How many agree? How many disagree?

- 4b. Why do you think this? Please be specific.

- 5a. We are calling attitudes related to how well off a person is "social classism." Do you think that people in your school have attitudes that reflect "social classism?"

How many said yes? _____ How many said no? _____

- 5b. If any said yes, what do you feel are the ways that "social classism" affects students in your school? Please be specific.

Page 3

6. Whose responsibility is it to change negative attitudes and behaviors? Please be specific.
7. What can students themselves do to change the effects of negative attitudes in their schools?

RACISM -

SEXISM -

“SOCIAL CLASSISM” -

8. How can everyone in the school work together on these issues?
- 9a. We hear about “agism” or bad attitudes toward the elderly. Do you think there are bad attitudes toward young people which we could call “youthism?”

How many said yes? _____ How many said no? _____

- 9b. If some of you said yes, why do you think people have this attitude?

Page 4

10. What do you feel the following groups of adults think of people your age?

Police -

Senior Citizens -

Teachers -

Parents -

11. Do you think these pictures of youth are correct? If not, what are you and your friends really like?
12. What do you most want the adults who read this youth poll report to know about the ways that racism, sexism, “social classism” and “youthism” are affecting the lives of students? Please be specific.

10 Blueprints for Healthy Development

The Indiana Youth Institute's blueprints for healthy development of all Indiana's children are based on the premise that every child in Indiana—regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, physically or mentally challenging condition, geographical location or economic status—deserves an equal opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.

Building a Healthy Body

Indiana's youth will be born at full term and normal birth weight to healthy mothers. They will receive a well-balanced diet in adequate supply to grow strong bodies to acceptable height for their age. They will be provided a balance of physical activity and rest in a safe and caring environment. They and their families will have access to good medical care and educational opportunities that will teach them how to abstain from health-endangering activities and engage in health-enhancing activities.

Building Positive Relationships

Indiana's children will experience love and care of parents and other significant adults. They will develop wholesome relationships while learning to work collaboratively with peers and adults.

Building Self-Acceptance

Indiana's children and youth will perceive themselves as lovable and capable; they will act with self-confidence, self-reliance, self-direction, and self-control. They will take pride in their accomplishments. As they develop self-esteem, they will have positive feelings about their own uniqueness as well as that of others.

Building Active Minds

Indiana's young people will have stimulating and nurturing environments that build on their individual experiences and expand their knowledge. Each young person will reach his or her own potential, gaining literacy and numeric skills that empower the lifelong process of asking questions, collecting and analyzing information, and formulating valid conclusions.

Building Spirit and Character

Indiana's young people will grow up learning to articulate values upon which to make ethical decisions and promote the common good. Within safe boundaries, children and youth will test limits and understand relationships between actions and consequences.

Building Creativity and Joy

Indiana's young people will have diverse opportunities to develop their talents in creative expression (e.g., music, dance, literature, visual arts, theater); to appreciate the creative talents of others; and to participate in recreational activities that inspire constructive, lifelong satisfaction.

Building a Caring Community

Indiana's communities will encourage their young people to see themselves as valued participants in community life. In addition to being recipients of services that express the communities' concerns for their safety and well-being, young citizens will become resources who will improve their surroundings, support the well-being of others, and participate in decisions that affect community life.

Building a Global Perspective

Indiana's children and youth will learn to see themselves as part of the global community, beyond ethnic, religious, racial, state, and national boundaries. In formal and nonformal educational experiences, they will have opportunities to become familiar with the history, political issues, languages, cultures, and ecosystems that affect global life and future well-being.

Building Economic Independence

Indiana's young people will be exposed to a variety of educational and employment experiences that will contribute to vocational and career options. Their formal and nonformal educational experiences will prepare them to make the transition from school to work, to contribute to the labor force, and to participate in an economic environment that will grow increasingly more complex and will require lifelong learning.

Building a Humane Environment

All children will have access to a physically safe environment, free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence. They will have adequate housing and living conditions; safe neighborhoods; clean air, food, and water. Their environment will be free from toxins, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. All children will have an opportunity to learn how to protect their environment for the future.





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The Indiana Youth Institute was established in 1988 as an independent, nonprofit center. IYI is an intermediary agency serving the youth of Indiana by supporting adults who care about youth. It provides youth-serving adults and policymakers with research, training and advocacy.

Price: \$7.50