

Trends & TudesSM

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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The Fountain Of Youth: What Is The Ideal Age To Be?

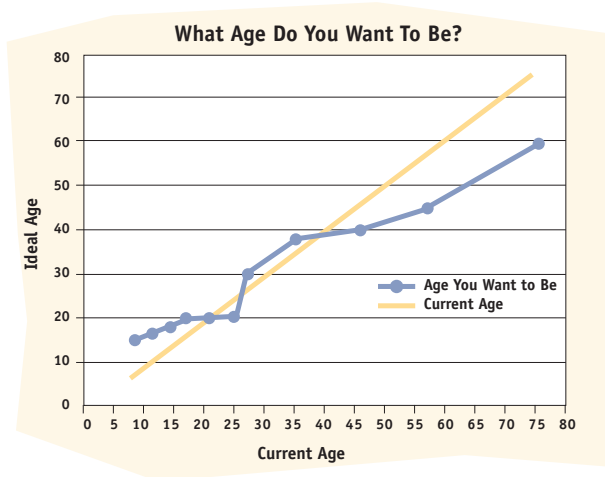
It has long been postulated by youth marketers that young people are aspirational and are influenced by their older siblings, classmates and friends. Advertisers commonly cast actors a few years older than the intended age target in ads, and even the word “teenager” has come to appeal mostly to younger teens and tweens and is shunned by older teens.

But what age do young people really want to be? And how does our perception of an “ideal age” change as we mature into adulthood?

To provide insight into this issue, we looked at results of our syndicated YouthPulseSM study, which asked 8- to 21-year-olds about an ideal age. We also perused the findings of a recent Harris Poll[®] that posed a similar question to adults.

As the chart below indicates, there seem to be three distinct phases relating to perceptions of an ideal age. Initially, before about age 19, kids and teens aspire to be *older* than they currently are. The younger the child, the larger the differential – for example 8-year-olds want to be about seven years older than they currently are while 16-year-olds want to be about two-and-a-half years older.

Then from early adulthood into middle age (ages 19 to about 40), people go through a period where they are comfortable being the age they are – where they view the ideal age to be within a year or two of their current age. Somewhere around age 40, a midlife crisis of sorts ensues, and people begin to pine for their youth. Past age 40, respondents tell us they feel that the ideal age to be is younger than their current age, and the gap between current and ideal age widens as they enter the senior years.



Source: For ages 8-21, data are taken from Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM. For ages 22+, data are taken from The Harris Poll[®] #61, October 2003. Question wording varied between the two sources.

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION
The Harris Poll[®] PEOPLE

Editorial: Our Take On It

by **John Geraci**
Vice President of Youth and
Education Research

I've been thinking a lot recently about issues that our counterparts in higher education face. Many marketing directors, admissions directors and enrollment managers are beginning to realize the unique challenges they have when marketing to the current youth generation. The academic world moves forward methodically and sometimes sluggishly, and, in some sense, has been slow to adapt to important social and cultural changes that have manifested themselves in the character of Generation Y.

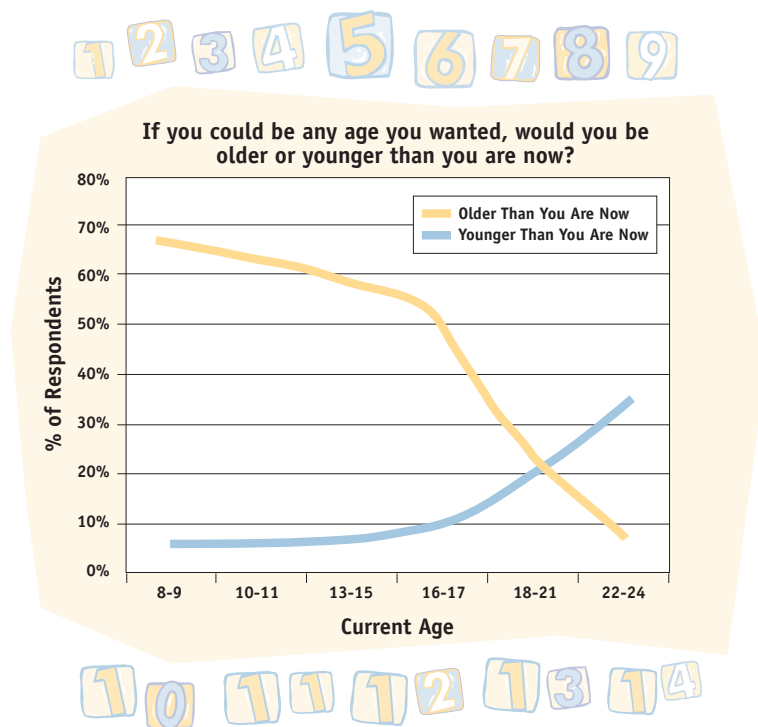
There has been a huge shift in "market power" in higher education from the seller to the buyer. No longer are students and parents willing to entrust their education without question to a system – they now demand to be active participants in the process.

Higher education is the number one aspiration for many parents and children. On a recent poll we conducted among teenagers, "getting good grades in school" and "not having enough money to pay for college" were top-level fears. More teens were worried about getting into and paying for college than were worried about getting AIDS, contracting cancer,

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It is far more common for a tween or a teen to state that they want to be older than they are now than to say they want to be younger than they are now. As the chart below shows, it is at about age 19 that these lines intersect, and that young adults begin aspiring "backward in time."

College students often look backward to younger siblings and friends for cues on trends. They live in a world that is more protected from outside influences, and seem to realize that it truly is the case that late teens are the style gurus and the arbiters of cool in society.



Source: Harris Interactive YouthPulseSM.

Just because young adults look backward for an ideal age doesn't imply that they don't aspire forward or that they fear the future. Our YouthPulse study indicates that teens and young adults, by age 30, expect to be married, have children, own a house and car, be in a career they like, and be physically fit. They expect to have it all, and to achieve great things from a career, family and financial perspective. At the same time, teens and young adults tell us that they realize the teen years are devoid of the everyday stresses of a career, paying bills and family responsibilities. Although they look forward to these responsibilities, they take the time to enjoy the teenage life stage while they can.

A press release from *The Harris Poll*® cited in this issue can be found at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=410

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being cool, or finding a boyfriend or girlfriend. Education and the attainment of a higher education is a top-of-mind concern from a very early age.

Parents report to us that paying for their child's education is their foremost financial concern – more important to them than saving for retirement or day-to-day financial worries. Furthering the education of their child is the number one reason parents say they purchase a computer or Internet access for the household. The financial stress of paying for college starts for many parents the moment their child is born.

Given that parents and children have been thinking about higher education for years, if not decades before the first day of orientation, it should be no revelation that the days of being “passive” consumers of colleges are gone forever. Parents don't just drop their kids off at college and forget about them until the first holiday break – rather they keep in touch, visit more often, and advocate for their children. They demand greater service. They are more connected to their children than previous generations. Parents are even more likely to happily accept their child's boomerang-style return to the household after receiving a degree.

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Come See Us at the National Assembly of School Arts Agencies Annual Meeting

Harris Interactive will be presenting the results of a new poll on December 5 at this event in Charleston, SC. For more information, go to:
http://www.nasaa-arts.org/nasaanews/nasaa_am_03.shtml

Come See Us at the Advertising Club's Event: "Gen Y: Spending Power and Trends in the Youth Market"

Harris Interactive will be speaking at this event on December 8 at the Westin in New York City. For more information, go to:
<http://www.theadvertisingclub.org/event/events/000172.html>

Come See Us at the College Marketing Summit

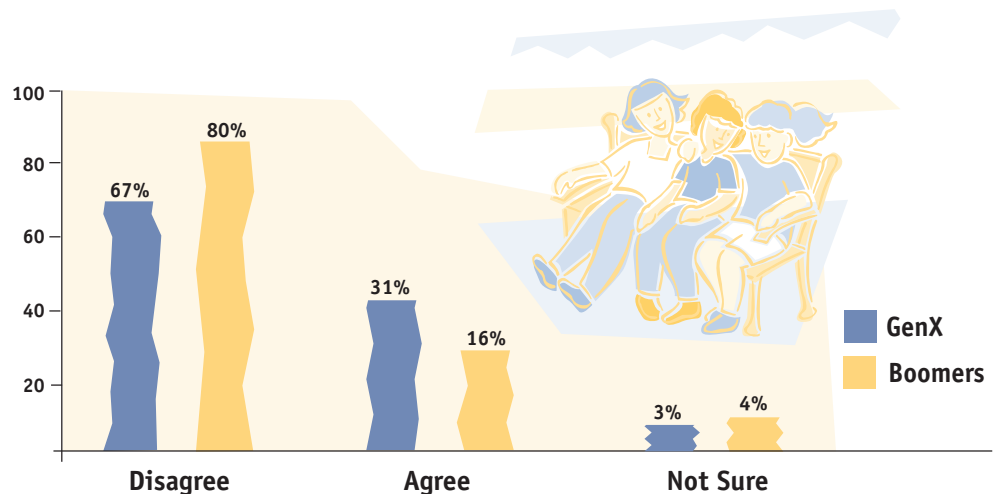
Along with 360 Youth, Harris Interactive will be presenting “Peek Into the Minds of Today's College Students: Key Findings on the Habits and Lifestyles of This Powerful Demographic” at the College Marketing Summit on December 9 in Scottsdale, AZ. For more information, go to www.iqpc.com

Recent Research for Public Release

From time to time, the Harris Interactive Youth Research team is fortunate to work with media, leading foundations and non-profit organizations, and we often are able to release the results of some of these studies publicly.

Kids to the Rescue?

During my retirement, my children will be my safety net:



Note: Percentages were rounded

Source: Allstate/Harris Interactive poll of 1,474 adults born between 1946 and 1979, as cited in USA Today. Margin of error +/- 3 percentage points.

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We've raised the best-educated generation in history and also the most intelligent consumers. They are likely to understand the investment that both they and their parents have made, and will demand well-appointed living arrangements, improved food, the latest in technology, and an education provided by experts who focus on teaching as well as their own research interests. They will be their own best advocates.

Colleges and universities are wising up fast. They are hiring more people from outside higher education as marketing directors and PR managers. Parent relations is becoming an official university function. Educators are starting to realize that although higher education is special, the marketing challenges they face are not unique. In short, they are beginning to look to the youth marketing industry for inspiration.

Just a few short years ago, I would call on college admissions personnel and implore them to consider marketing concepts such as brand building and management, measuring their brand equity, and understanding their target audience and tailoring their product to their unique needs. At that time, my audience was not yet receptive, as college personnel preferred to remain insular in their thinking, and took umbrage to considering

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Coming Soon! 360 Youth College Explorer: 2003-2004, Powered by Harris Interactive

360 Youth College Explorer, the annual study of college students powered by Harris Interactive, will be available in January on a subscription basis. This is the only study of its kind to provide marketers with insights about the entire college market of 18- to 30-year-olds, including: full- and part-time students, students at 2- and 4-year institutions, and undergraduate and graduate students. This year's topics cover income and spending, financial services, online behavior, technology and wireless, entertainment, food and dining, and much more! Contact us at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com for details.

National Do Not Call Registry

As you may know, after much legal maneuvering, the National Do Not Call Registry (NDNCR) finally took effect on Oct. 17, 2003. To date almost 50 million households have signed up – and that number is bound to increase.

Harris Interactive has conducted research that shows that 42% of those who have signed up as of early September do not understand that market research calls are exempt from the registry. Given this misconception among the public it's safe to say that regardless of pending legal ramifications (i.e. the NDNCR is deemed illegal, or market research loses its exempt status), the future of telephone data collection is in jeopardy.

To learn more about the impact the NDNCR may have on market research from a variety of trusted authorities and organizations, visit www.harrisinteractive.com/DNC

If you have already realized the negative effects of the registry, or want to learn more about alternative means of reliable data collection, please contact us at 877.919.4765.



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something as special and important as a college education as being a business.

That has all changed. The world of higher education is largely undifferentiated – with many institutions with similar programs and offerings seeking essentially the same student base. For many, this has essentially created a commodity out of higher education, leading to tremendous price pressure at a time of shrinking governmental funding and endowments.

The successful higher education institution of the future will be much more customer driven – and will be willing to vary its offerings and its communications. It will learn from some of the more agile youth marketers how to keep its brand relevant and flexible. And, it will create a higher education experience that parents and students will look forward to with nervous anticipation, rather than fear.

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp.

The 2003 Wave of YouthPulseSM is Now Available

YouthPulse, Harris Interactive's lifestyle and attitude study of 8- to 21-year-olds, is now available on a subscription basis. YouthPulse provides important insights to youth marketers and can help connect your organization with the Millennial generation. Contact us at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com for details.

Contact Us

To make suggestions regarding this newsletter or to discuss a business issue involving youth or the people and issues that influence today's youth, please contact our Information Desk at 877.919.4765 or info@harrisinteractive.com.

Note to Subscribers

You received this newsletter because you provided your contact information to a member of our youth research team. If you would prefer to be removed from our distribution list, please send an email to HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net and write the word "Remove" in the subject line. If others in your organization are interested in receiving our information, please have them forward their email address to HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net.