

# Trends & Tudes<sup>SM</sup>

4 Volume  
1 Issue

January

2005

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

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## • EDITORS •

### Kelly Bagnaschi

Senior Research Assistant  
 Youth and Education Research  
 800.866.7655 Ext. 7164  
 kbagnaschi@harrisinteractive.com

### John Geraci

Vice President  
 Youth and Education Research  
 800.866.7655 Ext. 7444  
 jgeraci@harrisinteractive.com

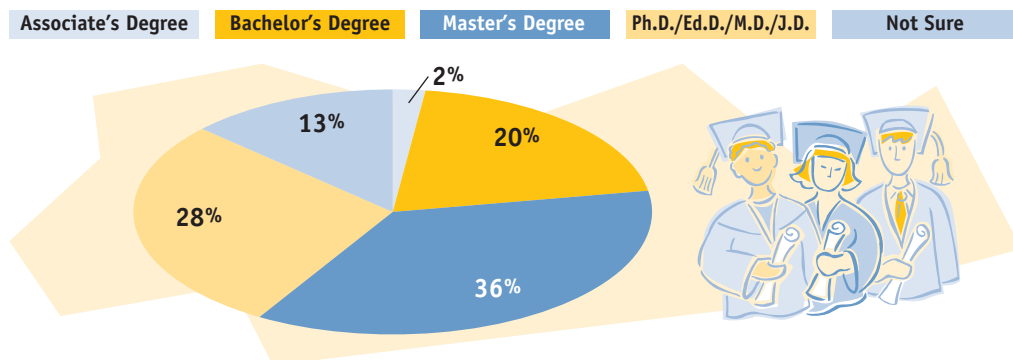
## How Do High School Students Select a College?

Harris Interactive is proud to announce its recent alliance with Hobsons, an organization that assists colleges and universities throughout the world in their recruitment efforts. Together, we have launched a new syndicated study called CollegePulse, providing higher-education marketers with insights they need to effectively position their colleges with today's high school students. This month's issue of *Trends & Tudes* shares some highlights from CollegePulse 2004.

College enrollments are at an all-time high and are expected to increase. However, all is not well for American colleges and universities. Competition for the 16 million students that will attend a college or university next year is intense and the target population (high school students) is increasingly sophisticated and brand-conscious. In short, college and university recruiters must now work harder and smarter than ever before. And, they often must lead the transformation of their institutions to become customer-oriented organizations.

The leading edge of Generation Y is just past the college years and the bulk of the generation will enter college in the next decade. This is a sizeable generation, characterized by its diversity, optimism, teamwork and high expectations. They have magnificent ambitions when it comes to college. As the graph below shows, 64% of college-bound high school students expect to earn a master's degree, or higher, someday. Generation Y is fast becoming the best-educated generation in history.

### What is the most advanced degree you expect to get some day?



Source: Hobsons CollegePulse powered by Harris Interactive – 2,244 college-bound high school students interviewed online in November 2004.

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION  
**The Harris Poll**® PEOPLE

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## Editorial: Our Take On It

**John Geraci**

Vice President

Youth and Education Research

If there is one thing that researching kids and teens teaches you it is this: they have a unique perspective. Even though we were all once in that demographic, we simply won't understand their viewpoints without really taking the time to listen to them. As the marketing field has begun to concentrate more and more on youth, the need for reliable youth market research has grown as well.

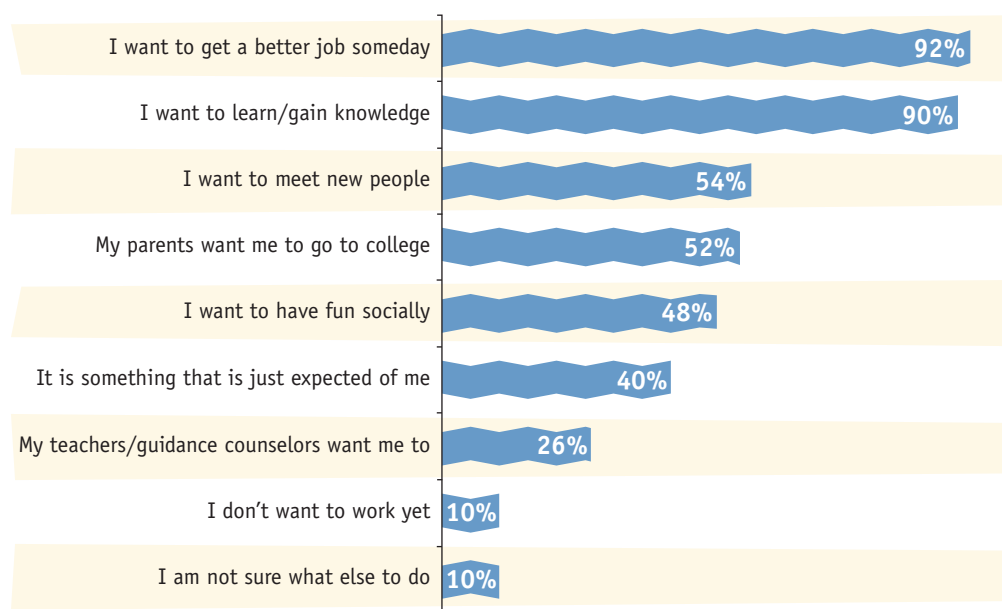
Why is there such a focus on youth markets these days? One might say it is because they are a fast-growing demographic, but they are actually not the fastest-growing demographic in the United States – older Americans are. In fact, although there are more children in terms of numbers than at any other time in history, the percentage of the U.S. population that is under 18 is currently at an all-time low.

Another answer might be their enormous spending power, but the reality is that the holy grail for marketers is women and mothers, who are the key decision makers and influencers for most family spending. Eight- to 21-year-olds have incomes of about \$198 billion, or roughly \$3,400 per capita. Although they control about double the income they did just a generation ago, that is hardly a spending figure that should knock your socks off.

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Why go to college? Our presumption is that Generation X students went to college primarily out of inertia – their parents commanded them to, they hadn't considered other things to do post-high school graduation, and college was viewed as a time of socialization and self-discovery to learn about career and life opportunities. This mentality has changed. Generation Y goes to college for plain and simple reasons: they want to learn and to enhance their job prospects. They do not go to college because of the expectations of others or because it's simply the next thing to do.

### We'd like to understand the reasons you have decided to go to college. How important are each of the following reasons? (% Extremely/Very Important)



Source: Hobsons CollegePulse powered by Harris Interactive – 2,244 college-bound high school students interviewed online in November 2004.

We have seen this repeatedly in research studies: Gen Y is an optimistic, driven cohort of young people. The virtues of college have been impressed upon them from a very early age. They do not view themselves as part of a system and do not go to college through inertia or indecisiveness about what else to do. They have worked hard to get to college and understand the financial burden it will place on them and their parents. They view themselves as customers, and demanding ones at that.

The two most important qualities of a prospective college underscore this view – programs of study available and quality of teaching are the key decision criteria used by today's students. Career placement and financial aid are also very important, as they weigh into the cost/value tradeoff today's student is making. Atmospheric criteria – such as the weather, college sports teams, location, etc. – are unimportant items when choosing a college.

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The reason marketers care about youth markets is subtler. The reality is that most people in America look to youth for new product ideas or trends.

Nearly every one of us may wonder, at some point, what being young again would be like. We miss being teenagers the instant we turn 20. We follow the products teenagers think are cool, we pay attention to the TV shows and movies they are watching, the products they buy, and as a society we all acknowledge that teens are the arbiters of cool. VH1 has even launched a new program, *My Coolest Years*, with a focus on "coolness" and the high school experience. It is really a bit of a national obsession that we are enamored with young people. They have a disproportionate influence over all of society.

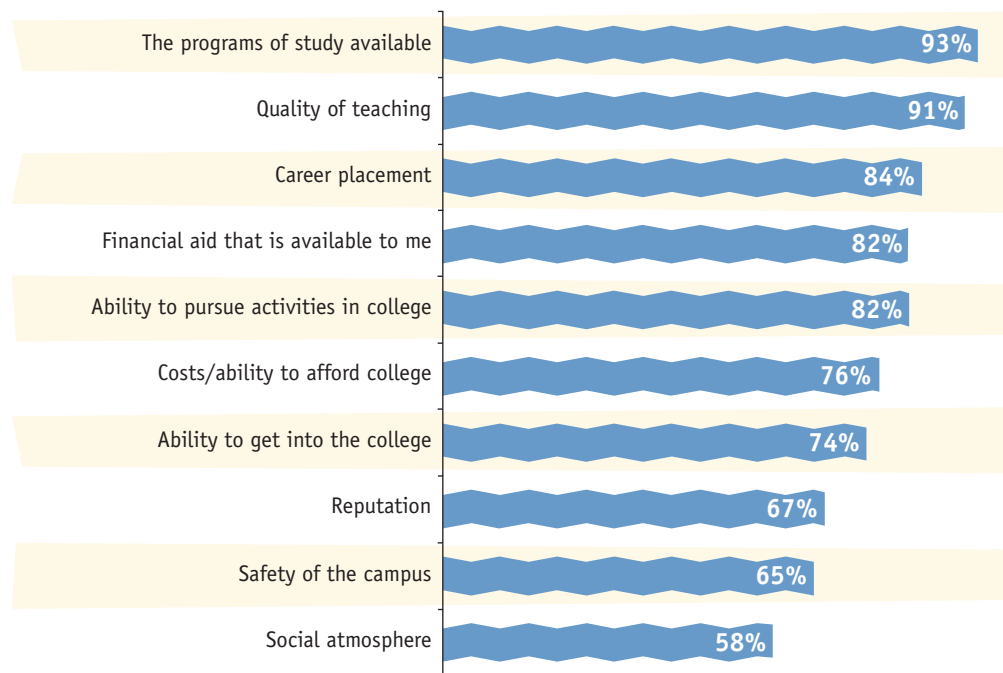
I used to tell clients that in the past 20 years, America had become youth-centric. I think we have gone beyond that now – we are now youth-obsessed!

What this means is that kids and teens have a degree of influence over purchasing decisions that dwarfs their actual spending power. We conducted a study a few years back that showed that those under the age of 18 either directly or indirectly influenced 1 in 3 consumer dollars spent in America. That is one third of the consumer economy!

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**Think for a moment about how you will choose which college to go to. How important are each of the following to you? (% Extremely/Very Important)**



Source: Hobsons CollegePulse powered by Harris Interactive – 2,244 college-bound high school students interviewed online in November 2004.

The message to higher-education marketers is clear: do not ignore the basics when marketing your institution. Today's students are making decisions on straightforward criteria: Does the college have the programs I want? Is the teaching of high quality? Can I get a job when I graduate? Can I afford the institution?

CollegePulse is a syndicated research study now available on a subscription basis. To learn more, contact Clay Bond at Hobsons at 800.927.8439, ext. 6048 or [cbond@hobsons-us.com](mailto:cbond@hobsons-us.com).

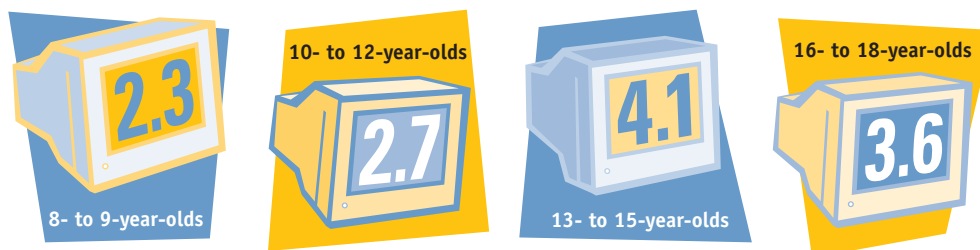
## Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup> youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter.

### ...Get an Answer

The following question was submitted by Molly Smoller of Bradford Schools:

**In one Internet session, how many times do you check your email? (Mean shown)**



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>, Boys and Girls, November 18-22, n=1,203

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The result in an advertising context is that we have seen a deluge of advertisements and media directed toward youth. It is almost impossible to justify these ad expenditures from the amount of money young people have to spend. But smart marketers view this on a higher plane, and understand that it truly does make business sense to focus campaigns on the young.

Traditional media models simply don't work with today's young people, however. We conducted a study for Yahoo!® that showed that teenagers currently spend more time online than they do watching television. We have all heard about media proliferation and how this has complicated our ability to reach consumers. Young people have grown up in a media world that confuses most adults. Most young people find the control they have over media is fun and empowering. Yes, they are immune to most advertising. But they are not immune to advertising environments that allow them to be in control of their own experience. And that is a point I stress. There has been an enormous shift in power from the media to the consumer. You cannot dictate to young people – they are the ones in control. Young people want to customize and control their media experiences. They don't want you to distract them from that, and, if you do you will lose them.

It can be challenging to reach youth, but it can also be rewarding. We recently conducted a fascinating

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## What Do Kids and Teens Think?

This month, we are starting a new feature for *Trends & Tudes*. We will be asking young people what they think about a variety of issues, and will share some of their open-ended answers with you. Have an idea for a question? Just let us know.

### If you could be Principal at your school for one day, what would you do?

*"Have all the kids become the teachers and the teachers become the students and let the principal see how the kids are really treated by the teachers as students."*

*"I would actually listen to the students, and try to figure out what would make their school life better."*

*"I would make lunch time longer, ban testing and homework for that day, free hall passes, no dress code, give out 'no homework' passes to use during the year, and have a cool radio station stop by and give out free stuff. I would also like to give all the teachers at least \$20 for having to live through that day."*

*"I would have a vote for the students to see what teachers they liked. Then based on the vote, personality, and teaching experience I would know which teachers to keep and which to not. I would also crack down harder on bullies."*

*"I would let kids chew gum – no homework that day and try to have Usher come to our school and have a concert."*

*"Free milkshakes. Only a little bit of homework. Let kids sleep. Only one rule. No being mean to people."*

*"I would like for the day to be one big celebration. I would reach out to the kids not as popular and make sure they were part of it."*

*"I would allow students to use their cell phones during class. Not during test or anything like that, but so they could text each other without having to pass notes. I think it would be fun."*

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study for Hearst Magazines that showed that although for many categories young people might not have an enormous current spending history, their brand aware-ness and affinities develop in the early teen years. The study also showed that once a brand affinity is built, it rarely changes.

Let me repeat that: brand awareness and affinities develop in the early teen years and once a brand affinity is built, it rarely changes. If you wait until a consumer has aged into your category, you will be too late to make an impression on them.

This is true for an incredible range of products and decisions – for products such as lipstick, toothpaste, carbonated soft drinks and automobiles; for the decision to join the military, decisions on which college to attend, decisions not to start smoking or taking drugs.

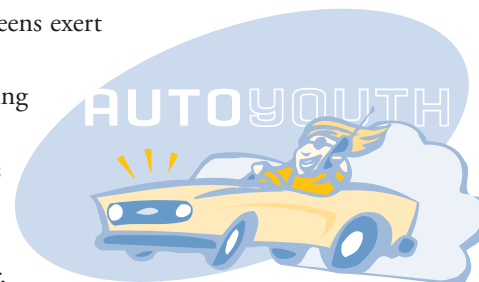
This new American consumer is young, and to stay with them you need to research them wisely and realize they control their media environment. Simply joining the mass marketing fray will not get you noticed. They have grown up in a unique time and have a unique perspective. Take the time to listen to them, research them carefully and you may reap enormous rewards.

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## AutoYOUTH<sup>SM</sup> Brings Together Youth and Automotive Expertise – With Powerful Results

In a joint effort between our Youth Research and Automotive & Transportation Research groups, Harris Interactive presents the first annual study providing in-depth market knowledge in this area. AutoYOUTH's study design and survey was co-designed with extensive OEM, advertising agency and supplier feedback, and answers key questions, including:

- How much influence do young adults and teens exert on their family's vehicle purchase decision?
- How are brand preferences formed with young adults and teens?
- What role do parents play in a young adult's vehicle purchase decision?
- What media do young people utilize – magazine, cable TV, network TV, newspaper, Internet and/or radio – when getting informed about a new vehicle?



AutoYOUTH surveys over 3,000 U.S. panelists each year from its own Youth and Automotive Insights panels, particularly U.S. Generation Y-Millennials from ages 13 through 30. To learn more, please contact us at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com).

## Get Smart!

Did you know that Harris Interactive conducts up to five free webinars a month? Spanning a variety of business issues facing a handful of industries, these 1-hour interactive sessions allow you to catch up on the latest research advancement, proprietary industry findings, and best practices. Register for one or more sessions at <http://harrisinteractive.webex.com>. Visit often as our schedule changes weekly.

## Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of *Trends & Tudes*, please visit our website at [www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters\\_k12.asp](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/newsletters_k12.asp).

## 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 us at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com).

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