

Trends & Tudes

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

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Do America's Youth Support the Iraq War?

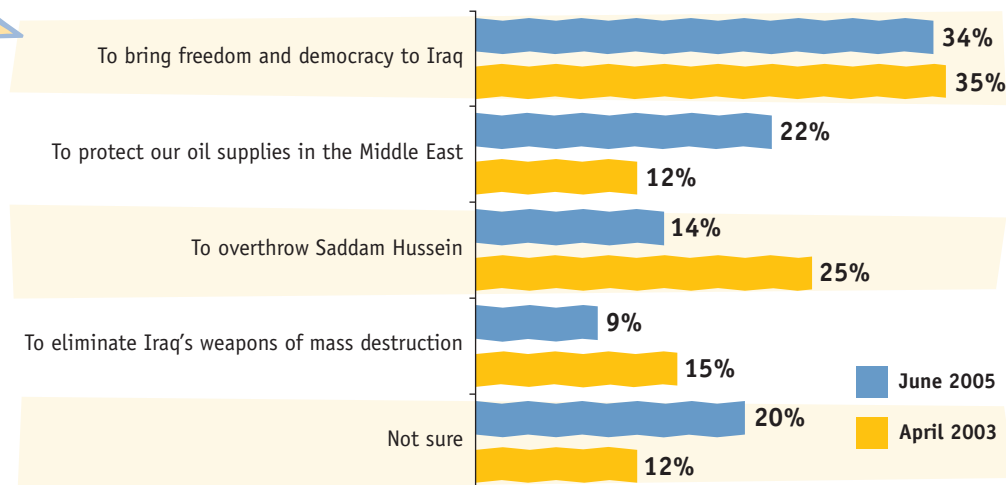
In April 2003, about a month after the onset of the war in Iraq, Harris Interactive conducted a poll among kids and teens using our YouthQuerySM omnibus service. At that time, the United States was newly engaged with the Iraqi military and 46% of U.S. 8- to 18-year-olds favored the war, 25% opposed it, and 29% were not sure.

In June of 2005, a little more than two years later, Harris Interactive conducted a follow-up poll of kids and teens, using many of the same questions. In a nutshell, youth support for the war has been cut nearly in half from the level of support experienced in the initial survey. In June 2005, 24% of 8- to 18-year-olds favored the war, 48% opposed it, and 28% were not sure.

In this issue of *Trends & Tudes*, we take a close look at these two polls to shed some light on the reasons behind the falloff in youth support for the war in Iraq. While it is natural for support for a war to begin high and decrease over time, the poll results demonstrate some interesting youth attitudes.

First, although eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) was presented as a core justification for the war, even in 2003 few kids or teens felt that this was the United States' main purpose for going to war. Then, as now, young people felt that the main purpose of the war was to bring freedom and democracy to Iraq. This would suggest that the United States' inability to locate WMDs in Iraq is likely not a primary reason for the lack of youth support for the war, as it was never a top concern for them.

In this war, what do you think has been our purpose?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, U.S. Youth Ages 13-18; April 16-23, 2003 (n=624) and June 15-20, 2005 (n=754).



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YOUTH AND EDUCATION
The Harris Poll® PEOPLE

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Editorial: Our Take On It

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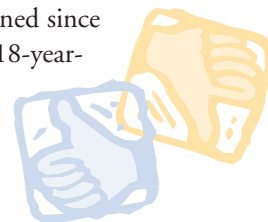
Last weekend I was listening to a local talk radio program when an adult listener called in. He described teenagers today as “rude,” “uncaring,” “disrespectful,” and “uneducated.” As the host probed the caller for the source of his anger toward youth, it came out that the caller was basing his judgment of today’s youth not on any direct contact he had with teens, but rather on portrayals of them by the media. He freely admitted that it had been years since he had a direct conversation with a teen. To him, all teens were taking behavioral cues from hip-hop lyrics, they were all dressing provocatively, and they all could care less about school. Teens didn’t properly respect the older generation and had no sense of pride toward the country.

This caller’s attitude is prejudice by all definitions – judging an entire group negatively, not out of any direct experience, but out of preconceived ideas. The caller was projecting his own frustrations onto a disenfranchised group.

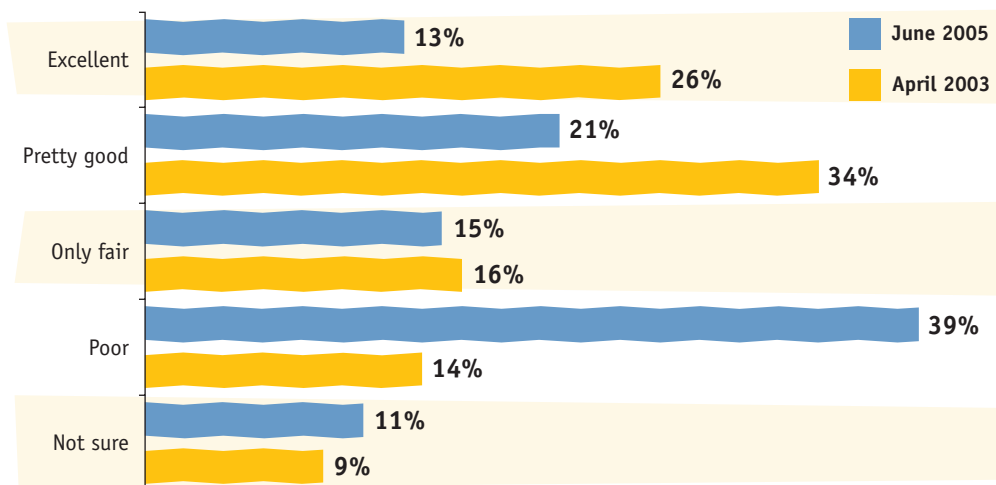
This type of attitude is unacceptable when it applies to other groups, such as minorities or women, yet seems to be an accepted prejudice when applied to youth. Despite the radio host’s

The lack of support may stem from a growing perception that the United States might not win the war. In April 2003, 88% of 8- to 18-year-olds felt that the United States would win the war, while in June 2005, this number dropped to 57%. In addition, there is a growing uncertainty about how long the war may last. In April 2003, there was a perception among youth that the war would be quick – with only 7% expecting it to last more than a year. Currently, 53% of kids and teens think the war will continue for more than a year.

President Bush’s approval rating for his handling of the war has declined since 2003. As the graph below shows, in April 2003 half (50%) of 8- to 18-year-olds thought the President was doing an excellent or pretty good job of handling the war. Currently, that support has fallen to 34%.



How would you rate President Bush on his handling of the War in Iraq?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, U.S. Youth Ages 13-18; April 16-23, 2003 (n=624) and June 15-20, 2005 (n=754).

Young people are now more likely to disagree with their parents about the war in Iraq. In June 2005, 55% of kids and teens agreed with their parents’ point of view about the war. Back in April 2003 this percentage was 62%. Kids and teens are also far less likely to be talking to their parents about the war than they were two years ago.

However, kids and teens are also much less likely to be discussing the war with their teachers or their friends. In April 2003, 52% of kids and teens told us they spoke with teachers about the war sometimes or very often; in June 2005 this percentage had fallen to 39%. In addition to having less support among youth, the war is also no longer top-of-mind for them.

The war has taken a toll on national pride among U.S. kids and teens. During the first month of the war, 55% of 8- to 18-year-olds said that the war in Iraq made them proud of their nation, compared to just 32% today.

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efforts, the next three adult callers to the program expressed similar views.

It may sound like a trip back in time, but the attitudes expressed by the callers to this radio program were an expression of something we thought went away but really hasn't:

the generation gap.

These adults all recalled an idealized adolescence – one where there were positive influences on youth everywhere, young people respected adults and authority, and media influences were largely positive. To them, everything has gone downhill from the time they were young.

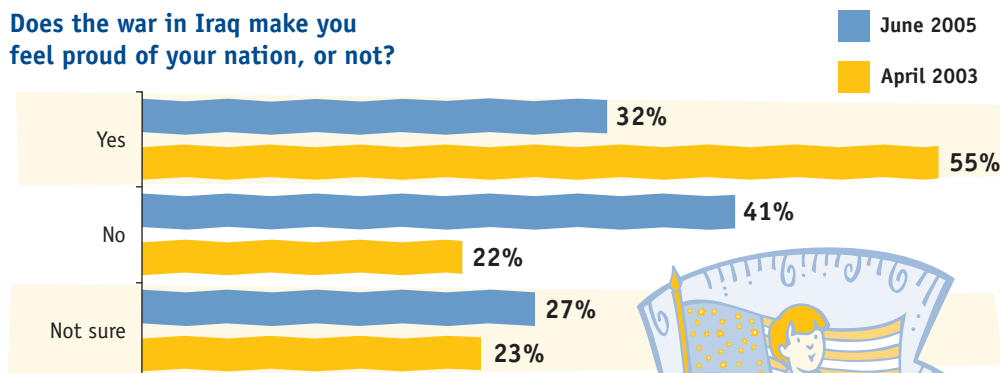
The generation gap lives on. It seems unfair to compare the travails of one generation of teens to another's past experience. Different historical times produce different stresses. We know in our polling work that recollections of childhood become more and more positive as time passes. People rate their high school experiences better the longer they have been out of school. It seems that over time, negative memories of childhood fade quicker than positive ones. So, in any time period there will be a tendency for adults to have a bit of an idealized recollection of their teen years.

An unfounded negative view of the younger generation by adults can be dangerous. Young and old are codependent. Youth cannot

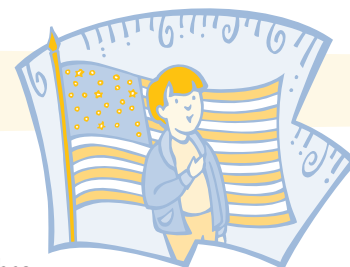
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Does the war in Iraq make you feel proud of your nation, or not?

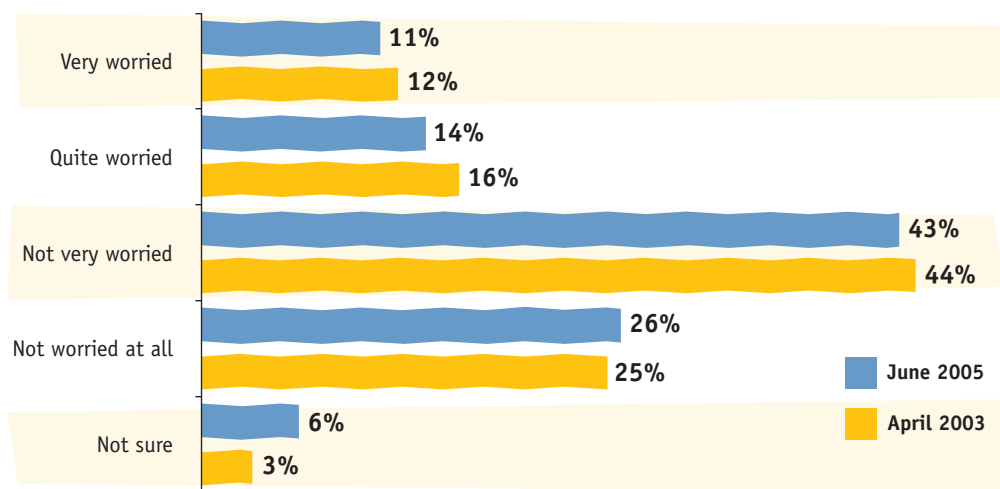


Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, U.S. Youth Ages 13-18; April 16-23, 2003 (n=624) and June 15-20, 2005 (n=754).



Although the nation's youth are growing less supportive of the war, their fear of terrorism striking close to them has remained unchanged. The chart below shows that across the entire 8 to 18 age group, the level of worry about terrorism striking close to them is about the same as it was in April 2003. The older portion of this age group, teenagers, have become less concerned about terrorism taking place close to them. Overall, youth fears of terrorism striking nearby are moderate.

How worried are you that terrorist attacks might take place where you live, go to school, or where your parents work?



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, U.S. Youth Ages 13-18; April 16-23, 2003 (n=624) and June 15-20, 2005 (n=754).

Youth support for the war in Iraq is waning, but this has not compelled young people to action. In April 2003, 13% of kids and teens told us they would be likely to join in a protest against the war, while 32% said they would be likely to join in a demonstration in support of the war. These percentages moved to 19% against and 15% for in June 2005. So, while 45% of 8- to 18-year olds were likely to join a protest or demonstration in April 2003, just 34% would be likely to do so in June 2005.

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progress without the support of adults – as parents, role models, employers, and supporters of education. Likewise, our adult population is dependent on youth for Social Security, the defense of the nation, and for continued prosperity.

Has the generation gap gotten worse or better recently? In one sense, there is evidence that there is less of a gap today than there has been traditionally. Young people are tight with their parents, respect them, and rebel not by doing things their parents don't approve of, but by succeeding more than their parents did. They see parents as role models and are not afraid to ask them for advice.

Yet, we see a collision of sorts between the generations when it comes time to enter the workforce. Many Gen Y members have had protection and structure around them from an early age, and the working world is the first time they have experienced substantial negative feedback. The early working years are the first time that Gen Y has had to reduce its lofty expectations and they don't like it. Social commentators are starting to refer to a "quarter-life crisis" that the current youth generation will face – the sudden realization that goals they have been working for may not be attainable.

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More kids and teens have become wary of serving in the nation's armed forces. About four in five (81%) favor an all-volunteer force, while 4% support a draft and 15% are unsure. In June 2005, just 4% told us if they were old enough to serve in the military they would volunteer to fight in the war in Iraq. In April 2003, this percentage was almost triple that rate, at 11%.

Harris Interactive will continue to track youth attitudes towards the war in Iraq. The polling numbers we have to date suggest that interest in the war has fallen and that support for the war is currently quite low. Causes for the lack of support seem to be a lack of support for the President and a worry about how long the war will continue.

A press release regarding this poll can be found at <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NewsID=945>

What Do Kids and Teens Think?

This month, we offer responses – in young peoples' own words – to the following question:

If it were up to you for a day, what would you serve for lunch in the school cafeteria?



"Pizza, pizza, pizza."

"Something simple and healthy. Like good spaghetti, salad, taco, or a sub sandwich."

"Try to have a wide variety for kids to choose from. (What my school does now)."

"I would serve italian sausage and pasta in a sauce with garlic, tomato, mushroom, and with a side of salad with balsamic vinaigrette."

"Chicken fingers, french fries, and make your own ice cream sunday."

"Healthy but good tasting food. And a lot more variety."

"Edible food like real pizza, an assortment of meats. Not all fried and fatty foods."

"Healthy food and cheaper food."

"Variety of different foods everyday, including a pasta bar."

"Healthy foods, less fat, more salad bar stuff type."

"Real fresh fruit and salads, real chicken, and thoroughly cooked pizza."

"Quality food that's tasty and healthy."

"Fresh fruit, carrots, peanut butter and jelly, and milk."

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Online Omnibus, U.S. Youth Ages 13-18; June 15-20, 2005 (n=754).

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At the same time this is happening, we sense that direct contact between generations has decreased. We live in neighborhoods built for privacy and with little common area for interaction. Many communities do not have a central hub of activity where the generations mingle. The lack of contact can contribute to a prejudicial feeling on the part of both old and young.

Fortunately, our polling data show that the callers to this radio program do not represent the majority of adults. Most treasure children and young people and are very concerned about the social issues that affect them. The generation gap has been around throughout recorded history, and we'd be naïve to think it will disappear with Gen Y.

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

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

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Ask a Question...

And get some answers. Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuerySM youth omnibus. Just send us an email (HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter. YouthQuery is your chance to ask one or a series of questions of 1,100 young consumers nationwide, and get accurate, projectable answers within days. To learn more about YouthQuery, contact us.

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 one-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.

It's 8 a.m.—do you know what American kids are doing?

YouthPulseSM 2005 to be released

You need to know almost as much about the youth market as you would if they were all your own children. How they spend their time, how they spend their money, their hopes, fears and aspirations and which parts of the kid experience are totally different today than they were a decade—or even a year—ago. YouthPulseSM is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2005 study is about to be released. To learn more about YouthPulse, contact us.

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.

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Imagine your research directly and immediately influences your CEO's decisions and dialogue. Now imagine your CEO is the President of the United States.

On Tuesday, August 30, publisher John Wiley & Sons will release the paperback version of *The Greatest Communicator: What Ronald Reagan Taught Me about Politics, Leadership, and Life*. The book, written by Dr. Richard Wirthlin, founder of Wirthlin Worldwide®, tells the real-life tale of how this respected researcher became one of Ronald Reagan's most trusted advisors and the chief architect of Reagan's two successful White House bids. Filled with high emotion, reason, and political intrigue, you'll enjoy the personal perspective Dr. Wirthlin brings to this inside look at the high-stakes world of presidential polling.

Buy this book at Amazon.com and bn.com.

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