

The next great generation?

Andrew Brownstein

The Chronicle of Higher Education; Oct 13, 2000; 47, 7; Research Library

pg. A71

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION • OCTOBER 13, 2000 A71

NOTEBOOK

Attention, Williams College students: If you've got a beer in one hand and a Ping-Pong ball in the other, you're in big trouble. College officials have banned all drinking games, including two popular pastimes called beer pong and Beirut, which involve tossing or hitting a Ping-Pong ball or a substitute into a glass of beer. If you succeed, your opponent is required to drink up.

"We're trying to cut down on high-risk drinking" in prohibiting the games, said Jim Kolesar, a Williams spokesman. "When people play them, they're drinking more than what we consider to be a safe level of one drink per hour per person."

If security patrols find evidence of drinking games on the campus, the students will face sanctions, including suspension.

"The college won't know of every instance of beer pong played, but if you could reduce it at all, it's worth trying," Mr. Kolesar said.

In a letter published in the *Williams Record*, the student newspaper, Dan Dickens defended his favorite game. "Beirut is not the scourge of existence, nor is it a necessarily dangerous enterprise," wrote the senior. "It is the safest drinking game I can think of because the drinking element takes a back seat to the competition on the table."

Benjamin Katz, a senior and editor of the *Record*, wasn't upset by the ban on the games. "The administration is using this not to really enforce some kind of police state," he said, "but rather to make it easier to step into dangerous situations."

Search, seizure, and speech.

A senior at the University of New Hampshire lost his volunteer job as a judicial adviser to students after he railed in the student newspaper about wrongful searches of dorm rooms.

Steven Callahan, a senior from Manchester, N.H., told the *New Hampshire* that residence assistants often "bully" students into allowing them to search their rooms for alcohol.

Two days later, William F. Fischer, associate director of student life, told Callahan to step down from his post, in which he counseled students facing disciplinary hearings for allegedly breaking university rules.

Mr. Callahan saw his removal as retribution for his statements in the newspaper reminding students of their constitutional right to refuse searches without a warrant. "This is what happens when you tell people to assert their rights on campus," he said.

Mr. Fischer, who oversees the campus judicial system, said the problem was that Mr. Callahan, by proclaiming his position in the newspaper, had "compromised his ability to be fair and neutral" as an adviser.

Mr. Fischer said he had never "personally investigated" any cases involving dorm searches. But Mr. Callahan said the issue came up as often as once or twice a week.

"I'm all for students not drinking in the dorms," he said. "But I'm even more for privacy rights."

STUDENTS

<http://chronicle.com/campus>

The Next Great Generation?

'Millennials' are hopeful and helpful, not coarse and cynical, book argues

BY ANDREW BROWNSTEIN

IT MAY BE HARD TO BELIEVE NOW, but in the early 1960's, it was still possible to find a Pat Boone record at the top of the pop charts or an Annette Funicello movie at the local Bijou.

The culture seemed so bland, in fact, that Clark Kerr, then president of the University of California system, predicted that the next wave of students was "going to be easy to handle."

By the end of the decade, that forecast had gone up in smoke like so many burning draft cards.

Forty years later, college administrators look at the Generation X culture of Eminem and *South Park* and predict that the students of the future will continue its coarse and cynical ways.

But if a new book is correct, those officials will follow in the unenviable footsteps of Mr. Kerr.

In *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (Vintage Books), Neil Howe and William Strauss argue that youth culture is on the cusp of a radical shift, much as it was in the *Beach Blanket Bingo* days of the '60's.

The "Millennials," the generation that begins with this year's college freshmen and extends into the near future, is team-oriented, optimistic, and, like the g.i.'s who fought in World War II, poised for greatness on a global scale, according to Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss. And, if the authors are right, many of those changes will be seen first on college campuses.

"I think campuses will be unrecognizable in the year 2010," says Mr. Strauss.

By the time the second decade of the new millennium rolls around, the Zeitgeist on campuses might be something like this: The least race-conscious and most female-dominated generation in U.S. history will have increasingly less patience for the politics of boomer faculty members and will rebel against university policies they see as promoting separatism. Admissions offices will increasingly be focusing on men, who will be dropping out in record numbers. In an age when the most important color is green, class will overtake race as the hot topic of debate.

WATCH OUT FOR PARENTS

Parents who once obsessed over their youngsters' Little League games will play an equally meddlesome role once their children go to college. Universities will create offices of parental relations to handle the avalanche of e-mail from mom and dad.

Boomer parents engaged in free love and talked about changing the world. The authors say that the far-more-modest Millennials, who even shied away from gym showers in high school, will talk about sex but work at making real changes in society.

A New View of Students

	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Millennial
Overall mood	controversial	cynical	passional
View of authority	respected	ignored	questioned
Academic standards	rigorous	lazy	lightening
Parental role	protecting	distant	intruding
Violence and risk-taking	normal	high	conventional
Pop culture	controversial	alienated	bland
Racial/ethnic consciousness	isolated	accepted	questioned
Counterculture fields	arts and humanities	business and high tech	politics and social science
Community service	high	low	rising
Main arguments	about war and culture	about race and gender	about class and culture
The big question	what does it mean?	does it work?	how do we build it?

If, at first blush, it is hard to accept the notion of children reared on *Barney and Boyz II Men* being "the next great generation," consider the evidence:

According to national surveys cited by the authors, homicide, violent crime, abortion, and pregnancy among teens have all plummeted at the fastest rates ever recorded. Teen suicide rates are falling for the first time in decades.

The Millennials' views are diametrically opposed to those of their parents. Half of Millennials say they trust political leaders to do what's right all or most of the time, according to a 1997 CBS News/*New York Times* poll. A 1998 Primedia/Roper National Youth Opinion survey found that, when asked "What is the major cause of problems in this country?" more teenagers named "selfishness" than anything else.

SOMETHING MORE IDEAL

Those on the leading edge of the generation say they are aware—sometimes painfully so—the pressure to become better than their parents.

"I think we are being molded into something more ideal," says Alexandra Kagan, a freshman at Union College, in Schenectady, N.Y. "It was like reality hit . . . and people realized society was on a downward spiral. They're trying to have us conform to a new standard, rather than have us run all over the place like they did."

Millennials, as portrayed in the book, are a generation accustomed to following rules. They grew up with uniforms in elementary school, new achievement tests in junior high, and metal detectors in high school.

Far from the image conveyed in the media of an idle youth, the authors argue, Millennials are programmed by their parents to an extraordinary degree, with ambi-

tious schedules of homework and extracurricular activities.

"I don't want to say my childhood was rushed," says Christopher Loyd, a freshman at San Antonio College who was interviewed by the authors. "It was just very busy."

The reason that Mr. Kerr and current prognosticators come out wrong on the youth question is that they assume that each generation will be a linear extension of the one before, according to Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss.

The authors hold a Hegelian view of history that predicts generations will evolve in cyclical patterns: Each new generation attempts to solve a problem facing the previous youth generation, corrects the behavioral excesses it sees in the current midlife generation, and fills a social role being vacated by the departing elder generation.

Hence, if the authors are right, the Millennials will form the communities that alienated Xers longed for, heal the societal fabric worn by narcissistic boomers, and build institutions as did their g.i. forebears.

"Boomers and X are a very libertarian combination, and that's what they're rebelling against," says Mr. Howe.

Every generation has an icon who comes to symbolize its ethos. For the college students of the 60's, it might have been Abbie Hoffman or Timothy Leary.

The Millennials are too young yet to have their own symbol, but Craig Kielburger, a 17-year-old Canadian, may come close.

When he was 12, Mr. Kielburger read a newspaper article about a Pakistani boy his age who was sold into bondage and mur-

STUDENTS

Continued From Preceding Page
 dered when he spoke out against child labor. Using the Internet, Mr. Kielburger mobilized volunteers, and within five years, had established Free the Children, a 100,000-member organization that assists children's causes around the world.

In the authors' view, Mr. Kielburger's vision is a precursor of the

kind of change and organization of which Millennials are capable. "This is a generation that will build rockets to go to Mars rather than make movies that wonder whether we should," says Mr. Strauss.

Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss make an unlikely pair of historians. Mr. Howe is an economic-policy consultant and a senior adviser to the

Concord Coalition, an organization formed by several former U.S. senators to battle the federal deficit and protect Social Security. Mr. Strauss is the director of the Capitol Steps, a Washington-based satirical-theater troupe.

They met in the 1980's, and their mutual interests led to the 1991 publication of *Generations* (William Morrow), a study of 14 American generations from Plymouth Rock to the present. Though academic respectability largely has eluded them, their four works have won critical acclaim and the ear of the powerful. Vice President Al Gore called *Generations* "the most stimulating book on American history I have ever read."

But to some, the authors' generational theory sounds like the sociological equivalent of a Ouija board.

"It's impossible to separate generations that way," says Arthur E. Levine, president of Teachers College of Columbia University and coauthor of *When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of Today's College Students* (Jossey-Bass, 1998). "These are just stereotypes."

CONSISTENT MESSAGE

The authors counter that their theories are easily tested. Besides, they add, they've been saying pretty much the same thing for more than a decade. In 1991, when it looked to most critics like the youth culture was spinning out of control, Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss were virtually alone in forecasting that crime rates would fall and academic performance would rise by the end of the decade.

In the case of *Millennials Rising*, many students and administrators say they can already see indicators of the trends predicted by the authors.

"Five or six years ago, students were real angry," says Linda Kuk, vice president for student affairs at the Rochester Institute of Technology. "There was an overwhelming sense of entitlement. It was always 'I pay your salary, and you should do what I say. Screw your rules.'"

Those attitudes are slowly starting to change, she says. Students are still getting in trouble, but are more likely to take responsibility for their actions. When tragic events occur in their lives, Ms. Kuk said, students tend to be more resilient.

"They seem, on the whole, happier," she says.

In the eyes of Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss, the generational tone of the Millennials was set by the determination of their parents to avoid the neglectful child-rearing practices of their past. The Millennials' college experience will be marked by parents who give new meaning to the word "overprotective."

"The parental perfection complex is coming to college," says Mr. Strauss. "Picture the parents watching youth soccer becoming the parents watching the admissions process—with the stakes even higher."

The authors predict that the push for higher standards in elementary and secondary school will be transferred to college. There will be increased calls for pregraduation competency testing and the elimination of remedial classes. The line between the haves and the have-nots will be drawn over issues like who can afford college-selection counselors and private tutors. With the competition intense, rejected students and their parents will complain more and more about a perceived unfairness in admissions.

The authors' notion of an Office of Parental Relations is not science fiction. There's already one at the Rochester institute, and many others have emerged in recent years.

Some younger students find all the parental attention a tad embarrassing. "My parents walked me through every step of the admissions process," says Mr. Loyd. "During orientation, it was humiliating. I was walking around campus with my mom."

CHANGING CAUSES

On the social front, the old boomer causes tied to race and gender will fade, the authors write, "to the chagrin of aging faculty." In their place, there will be new questions—about class and the dwindling numbers of men. As women increasingly take over the leadership of student government and clubs, and men flee academe for the workplace, "how to bring young men back into higher education will become recognized as a national problem," the authors state.

John N. Gardner, executive director of the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College, in North Carolina, says the trend is already well underway.

"Men are in for a rude awakening," he says. "There are very few things that I am sure of, and that's one of them. It's the biggest change I've seen on campuses in 33 years."

In an otherwise optimistic take on the current youth culture, *Millennials Rising* strikes one loud note of discord.

With their love of rules and trust in institutions, the Millennials could be led astray by a demagogue or use technology in Orwellian ways, the authors write. Mr. Howe and Mr. Strauss note that the G.I. generation, which the Millennials are supposed to emulate, came of age at the same time as others who followed a strong leader in the pursuit of a giant cause: their counterparts in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia.

But a less fanciful possibility is that a generation that combines the cultural conservatism of the 50's with the Big Government politics of the 60's might just turn out . . . boring, prone to practicality rather than creativity or introspection.

Lucy E. Rollin, a professor of English at Clemson University and author of *20th Century Teen Culture by the Decades* (Greenwood Press, 1999), says she has noticed that her recent students demand that "everything be spelled out" in detail and have trouble thinking for themselves.

"I was trying to get them to write with their own voice," Ms. Rollin recalls. "But they couldn't use the word 'I.' They said their high school teachers never let them use it. It was sad, really."

Then again, Ms. Rollin was born in 1941, making her a member of the so-called Silent Generation. The tides of history were different then.

accurate and reliable scores
 careful test design and scoring
 commitment to quality education
 comprehensive research program
 efficient computer-based scoring system
 exhaustive pre-testing
 expert advisors, committees
 highly skilled test developers
 Internet-based score reporting
 longstanding reliability and consistency
 meticulous review process
 official score reports with photos
 ongoing test improvements
 required essay
 sensitivity to institutions' concerns
 standardized delivery procedures
 uncompromising integrity
 unparalleled test design standards

TOEFL
 Test of English as a Foreign Language

Test of English as a Foreign Language
 Test of English as a Foreign Language
 Test of English as a Foreign Language
 Test of English as a Foreign Language

=TRUST

Join our Internet mailing list at
www.toefl.org/edlindx.html

www.toefl.org
 1-800-446-3319

ETS

Copyright © 2000 by Educational Testing Service. Educational Testing Service, ETS, the ETS logo, TOEFL, the TOEFL logo, and are registered trademarks of Educational Testing Service.

When it comes to building community...
Dominican University
 makes things happen!

Thank you, Dominican, for selecting
Trammell Crow Company
as your capital project partner



DOMINICAN
 UNIVERSITY
www.dom.edu

HigherEdJobs
 .COM

DESIGNED EXCLUSIVELY FOR FINDING
 JOBS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Over 1,200 faculty and staff positions
- Job openings at nearly 300 schools
- View all jobs for FREE
- New jobs added daily

Make your job search academic...
 go to www.HigherEdJobs.com!