

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

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

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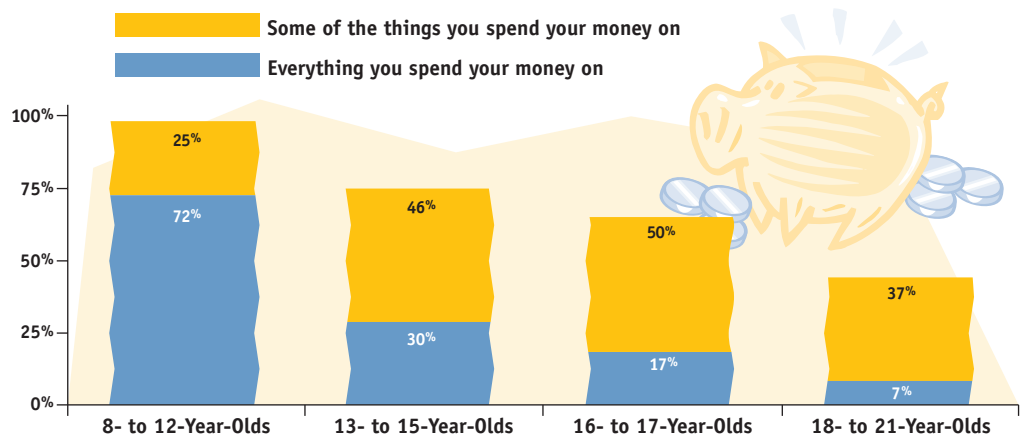
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## Kid-fluence, the “Nag” Factor and “Pester Power”

Despite the increasing desire that kids and teens have for independence, parents remain a centering point of their lives. While the need to develop self-sufficiency and control is a natural part of growing up, today’s youth generation is characterized by parents who, perhaps at arm’s length, maintain an active oversight of their children’s activities. This includes oversight of kids’ development as consumers.

Before kids turn 13, a large majority tell us that their parents know at that point what their children spend their money on (see Table 1). This changes quickly as kids advance from the elementary to middle school years, yet even throughout high school we find that many teens feel their parents know about some of the things they purchase.

**TABLE 1**  
Do your parents know about...?



Base: Harris Interactive YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> – Summer 2003

During the teen years, the amount of money young people feel they can spend without parental permission is low – especially considering the amount of discretionary income they have. Before age 16, kids and teens do not feel they can spend more than about \$24 without asking for their parents’ approval.

One finding is clear: parents remain a part of the “consumer” lives of girls for far longer than they do with boys. In the college-age range, boys tell us they can spend \$469 on average without parental permission compared with girls spending \$198 on average.



YOUTH AND EDUCATION  
The Harris Poll<sup>®</sup> PEOPLE

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## Editorial: Our Take On It

by John Geraci

Vice President, Youth and Education Research

Research and marketing to young people, and especially children, has evolved slowly over the past three decades. For most of the 1970s, marketing plans rarely considered kids directly, and even well into the 1980s, most marketers directed their kid marketing efforts at parents. In the 1980s, we saw a shift as marketers began to target children more directly in advertising and product design, and in response the research world turned from being parent-centered to being child-centered. Academic studies of children as consumers didn't appear in the literature before the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a discipline, youth marketing remains in its infancy.

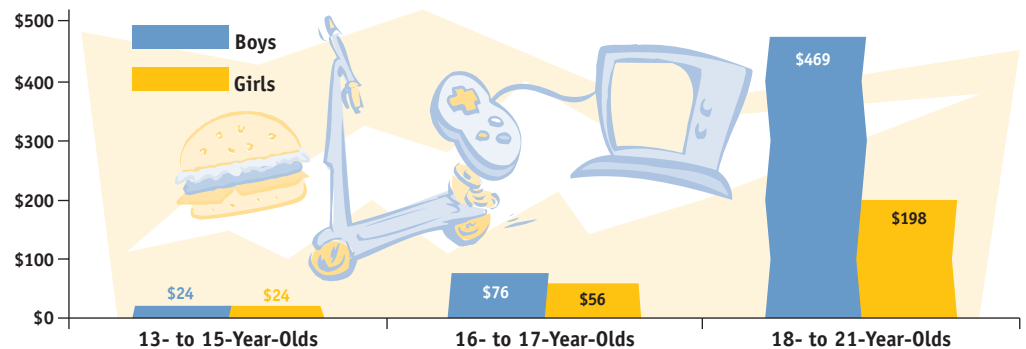
There has been a longstanding supposition in the kid marketing world that if you try to appeal to a child and a parent at the same time, you will fail to succeed with both. I would like to challenge that thinking – in today's world, if you cannot appeal to parents and children at the same time your youth marketing effort is doomed. You have to appeal to both to be successful.

Why? First it is important to realize that Generation Y is very different from its Generation X predecessors. While Gen Xers were all about independence,

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**TABLE 2**  
How much can you spend without your parent's permission?  
(Median Shown)

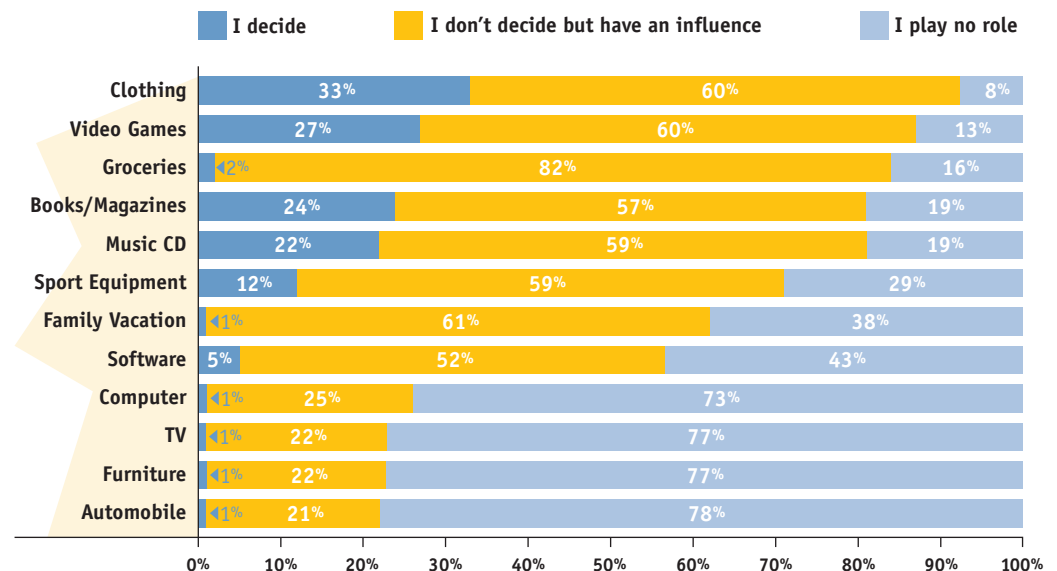


Base: Harris Interactive YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> – Summer 2003

Parents obviously have an important role to play for kids as consumers, but what about vice versa? Kids exert considerable influence (what we deem “kid-fluence”) over others’ purchases – purchases that are made by others for themselves and by others for the household. In fact, the influence that kids have on others’ spending is a much more important marketing force than the money they spend directly on themselves.

Kid-fluence varies greatly by age and by product category. As the table below shows, 8- to 12-year-olds tell us that they have the most influence on categories such as clothing, video games and groceries, and less influence on big ticket items like automobiles, furniture and televisions.

**TABLE 3**  
What role do you play when your family buys the following?  
(Percent of 8- to 12-Year-Olds)



Base: Harris Interactive YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> – Summer 2003

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rebelliousness, and individualism, Gen Y values teamwork, structure and respect for parents.

Today, households are far more child-centric than a generation ago, resulting in “team” decision making. There is a new dynamic we have seen emerge between parents and kids. This shift has profound implications for marketers who are witnessing its impact on purchases that once were the realm of just parents alone or just youth alone. Many purchases are now made through a process of “family dialogue.” This collaborative, copurchase process is transforming consumer behavior: Consider how parents and kids interact with each other when marketing to either one.

For many categories and over the past 20 years or so, the research industry has tried to understand the needs of children by interviewing parents. This was effective previously as children lived in a parent-centric household. More recently, marketers have gone directly to children. But, often we miss that important decisions are made in collaboration.

Why else include parents in your kid marketing efforts? Because on some level, almost all youth purchases need to be justified to the parent in some way. The only exception may be immediately consumable items – and parents are often with their kids when they buy these items. Even if a child purchases an item with

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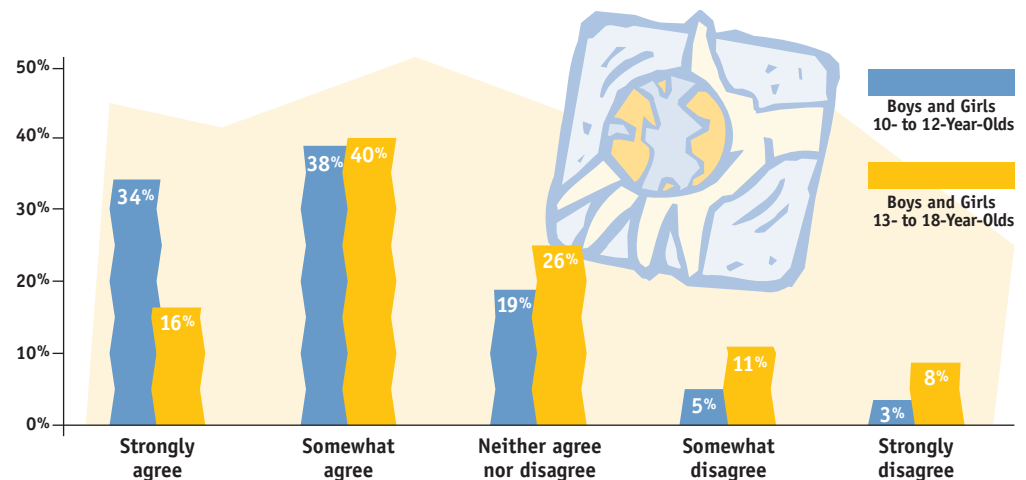
## Ask a Question...

### ...Get an answer

Adam Siegel from the WonderGroup submitted the following question:

### How much do you agree with the following statement...?

**“I would like to learn more about how I can help save and protect the environment.”**



Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuery<sup>SM</sup>

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. Send your question to [HI\\_Youth\\_research@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:HI_Youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) today. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of *Trends & Tudes*.

## You’re Invited

Below is a list of events where the Youth Research team will either present, exhibit or sponsor. For a complete list of Harris Interactive events, including free audio conferences that you can attend, please visit <http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/calendar.asp>

### Teen Power 2003

Harris Interactive is proud to be a sponsor of Teen Power 2003, September 15-18, in Chicago. John Geraci is the chairperson of the event, and we will be leading a conference panel session on September 16 entitled “Empowerment or Exploitation?— A Panel Discussion of Ethics and Youth Marketing.” For more information, please visit [www.kidpowerx.com](http://www.kidpowerx.com)

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his/her own money and with no input from the parent, the parent will know about it and require some sense of justification for it.

It can be unclear who is influencing a purchase and who is the decision maker. Kid-fluence is a powerful force, but misunderstood. Our studies on youth spending continually show that the influence they have on the spending of others is far greater than their own spending. Youth marketers and critics of youth marketing tend to focus on one element of kid-fluence, often termed “pester power” or the “nag factor.” Focusing on this element presumes that most kid-fluence is exerted via direct requests for branded products. This is not an accurate characterization of how kids and parents interact. Our studies have shown that direct requests for products are relatively rare, but that tacit, unspoken influences are where the true market power of children exists. Parents spend many times more on items for their children based on their own perception of their child’s preferences than on products for which they have received a direct request. And, parents actively seek out opinions from their kids far more often than kids express their own preferences.

Further, we often fail to recognize the single biggest aspect of kid-fluence – the influence young people have on purchases adults make for themselves. What is the

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### ARF Week of Workshops

Along with Yahoo!, Harris Interactive will present at the ARF Week of Workshops on September 23 in New York. Our session, “An In-depth Look at Teens and Their Everyday Lifestyles,” will present the results of a groundbreaking study recently conducted for Yahoo! and Carat Insight of how teens and young adults choose media. For more information, go to [www.TheARF.org](http://www.TheARF.org)

### AMA Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education

Harris Interactive will present “What Do Youth Marketers Know that Higher Education Marketers Should?” at the AMA Symposium on November 5 in Miami. For more information, go to [www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com) or <http://ecommerce.ama.org/evsystem/symposium.htm>

## Recent Research for Public Release

The Harris Interactive Youth Research team works with media, leading foundations and nonprofit organizations. Occasionally, we are able to release the results of the research to the public. We extend our thanks to our client, America on the Move™, for granting us permission to share its recent research with you.

### America on the Move™

America on the Move (AOTM) is a nationwide movement designed to promote healthy eating and active living in order to stop weight gain in America and the many health complications that result from being overweight. AOTM is an initiative of the nonprofit organization – the Partnership to Promote Healthy Eating and Active Living.

As part of AOTM’s launch in July 2003, Harris Interactive was commissioned to survey Americans age 13 years and older on their attitudes and behaviors regarding physical activity and nutrition.

The study found that teens and adults spend an average of eight hours a day sitting and another four hours a day watching TV or playing video games. In addition, most Americans (89 percent) do not know weight gain can be stopped by small changes in diet such as eating 100 fewer calories a day.

For a complete overview of the study, you can download a PDF document from <http://americaonthemove.org>



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primary savings goal for most parents? The education of their children. Why did they choose the make and model of vehicle they did? The needs of their children. Why was the household computer bought? The parent felt it would enhance the educational progress of the child. Why did they choose the pair of jeans they bought? They took cues from their teen on what is cool.

What can amaze marketers is the influence children have over adult purchasing categories that you may not expect. From the choice of a hotel to a vacation destination, to adult apparel purchases, to the TV shows the family watches, the influence of youth is often in places we don't expect. We once did a study that showed that as much as one in three consumer dollars spent in the United States is either spent or influenced by someone under the age of 18. That is one-third of the consumer economy. However, most of this market power is not exerted alone – it is done in collaboration with parents.

On the research front, we are seeing more and more clients seeking to interview parents and children from the same household, so that the opinions of one can be related to the attitudes and behavior of the other. We believe this approach will be the future for youth research – understanding the household decision process will hold the key to future success.

## Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

To view previous issues of Trends & Tudes, please visit our website at [http://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 our Information Desk at 877.919.4765 or [info@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com)

## Note to Subscribers

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If you know someone who would like to subscribe to *Trends & Tudes*, please have him/her send an email to [HI\\_youth\\_research@harrisinteractive.net](mailto:HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) with the word "Subscribe" in the subject line.

And, of course, thank you for reading *Trends & Tudes*.

## The 2003 Wave of YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> is Now Available

YouthPulse, Harris Interactive's lifestyle and attitude study of 8- to 21-year-olds, will be available September 1 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](mailto:info@harrisinteractive.com) for details.

