

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

2006

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

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## School Climate in America

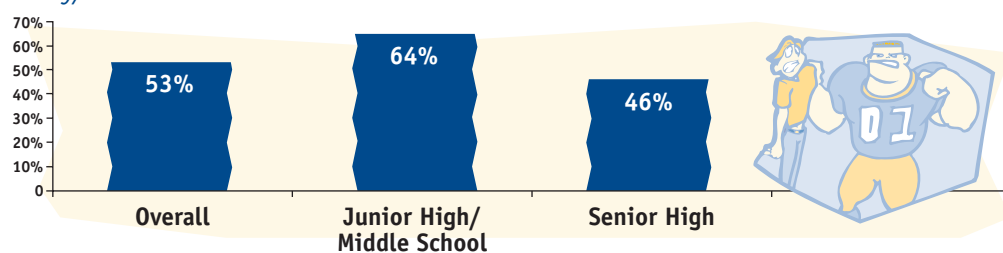
By Dana Markow, Ph.D.; Senior Director, Youth and Education Research

A school environment where students feel safe and secure is a school climate that fosters learning. The behaviors and attitudes of students, teachers and other school staff contribute to a school's climate. One measure of school climate is the level of harassment experienced by students. The Harris Interactive Youth and Education Research Group recently conducted a survey addressing this issue on behalf of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. *From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America* is a national online survey of 3,450 students aged 13-18 and 1,011 secondary school teachers. The survey explored the views of students and teachers regarding verbal and physical harassment and examined harassment based on perceived or actual personal characteristics of students.

Several categories of harassment were addressed in the survey, including: verbal harassment (being called names, threatened, etc.); physical harassment (being pushed, shoved, etc.); physical assault (being punched, kicked, injured with a weapon); and sexual harassment (unwanted sexual remarks or unwanted touching). Students were asked how often these types of behaviors occurred in their school overall and to them in particular. Students and teachers were also asked how often harassment occurs that is related to perceived or actual characteristics of the victim, including appearance or body size, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression (i.e., how traditionally masculine or feminine one acts), race or ethnicity, disability, or religion.

Students reported that harassment is not a rare phenomenon. Sixty-five percent of students say they have been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted at school during the past year because of their actual or perceived appearance or body size, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, race or ethnicity, disability, or religion. Teachers are aware of this issue. Half of secondary school teachers (53%) describe bullying and harassment as a serious problem at their school. Teachers in junior high/middle schools are more likely than senior high school teachers to report that harassment is a serious problem (64% vs. 46%).

### Teachers Reporting That Bullying And Harassment Is A Serious Problem At Their School % Very/somewhat serious



Source: "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America"; n=1,011 U.S. secondary school teachers (January, 2005); How serious of a problem is bullying, name calling or harassment of students at your school?

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## Editorial: Our Take On It

**John Geraci**

Vice President

Youth and Education Research

The New Year always brings a lot of thoughts regarding the future. It is a time for youth marketers to think ahead and to spot emergent trends. It is challenging to think past next quarter's numbers or our day-to-day responsibilities and come to an understanding of what the world might be like five, 10, or even 20 years into the future. However, it is when we have a clear vision of the longer term that we truly have a compass by which to anchor our strategies.

Peering into the future needn't involve a crystal ball or crazy thoughts. Too often trend forecasters make 100 wild predictions and then claim success when a handful of them come true. It is more valuable to look at broader, underlying trends, and then consider how they might affect the specific issues you are facing in your organization.

Over the next decade, an overriding youth issue will be this: the next, post-Millennial, generation is now taking shape. What might the world look like for the next batch of youth marketers?

This next generation of kids will be distinctly different than Millennials. History tells us that generations do not proceed **linearly** from one to another; new generations tend to represent a clean break in mindset and take on their own character.

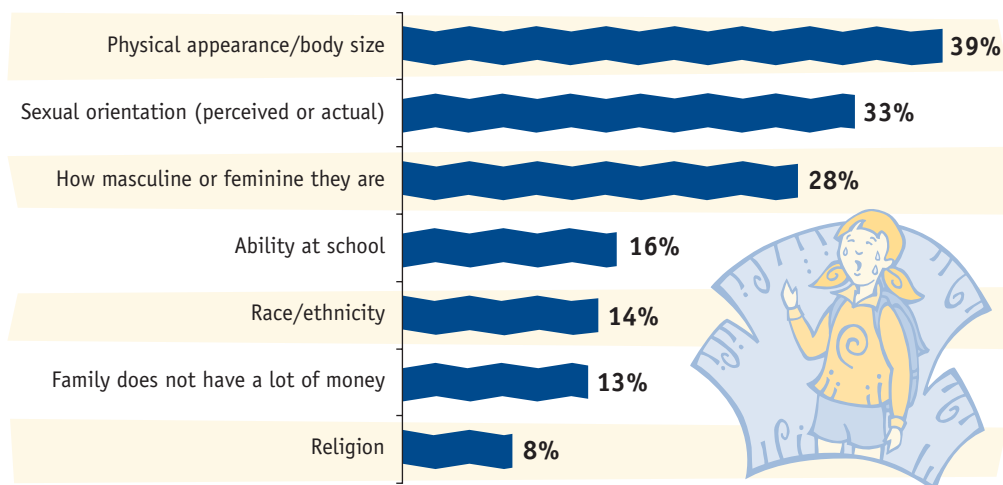
What will the next youth generation look like? How will it "break" from the Millennial generation and establish its own identity? These questions are answered by looking at the influences that will be around this new generation as they are being born and how will this affect their overall world view.

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Why are students harassed? According to teens, the most common reasons why students are harassed are because of their physical appearance or body size, their perceived or actual sexual orientation, or their gender expression. Harassment because of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status or religion are much less frequent.

### At your school, how often are students bullied, called names or harassed because of their...?

% Very often/often



Source: "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America"; n=3,450 U.S. students ages 13-18 (January 2005)

Harassment is a particularly common experience for lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) students. Six percent of 13-18 year old students identify as LGBT; they are three times more likely than other students to feel unsafe at school (22% vs. 7%). Ninety percent of LGBT students say they have been verbally or physically harassed in the past year, including 65% who say they have been verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, 16% who say they have been physically harassed and 8% who say they have been physically assaulted for this reason.

Most teachers and students report that their schools have policies for reporting incidents of harassment or assault in school, and many of these policies specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity. The survey revealed that school anti-harassment policies that specify sexual orientation or gender identity are associated with several positive outcomes for their students overall.

Students whose schools have inclusive harassment policies are less likely than other students to report a serious harassment problem at their school (33% vs. 44%); and to report that students are frequently harassed in school because of their physical appearance (36% vs. 52%); their sexual orientation (32% vs. 43%); or their gender expression (26% vs. 37%).

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Let's consider what may happen in some broad categories:

**1. Politics.** The next youth generation will grow up in a time of either real or perceived terrorist threats, and will become conditioned to these threats to the point where they won't really affect their daily lives. Their guard will always be up, but these threats will be so constant that young people will become a bit immune to them. They will continue to distrust the nation's political leaders.

**2. Globalization.** It sounds cliché, but technology is making the world smaller and globalization will be an important underpinning for the next youth generation. Continued outsourcing will forge more cross-cultural relationships, and the emergence of China and India will open up a world that has been largely hidden to the west in previous generations. The implications to youth are that cultural influences from what have previously been far-off places will have a clear pathway to the young.

**3. Education.** The next youth generation will be the most tested generation in history. The stress placed on children regarding school achievement will peak reaching hysteria similar to the post-Sputnik era. A hyper-emphasis on core subjects will harm their creativity in other fields. This generation will have a tight "curricula for life" and will become rather homogeneous as a result. As a result, creativity in their music, their art, and their thinking will be muted. They will be constrained by a prescribed path that is carved for them by adults.

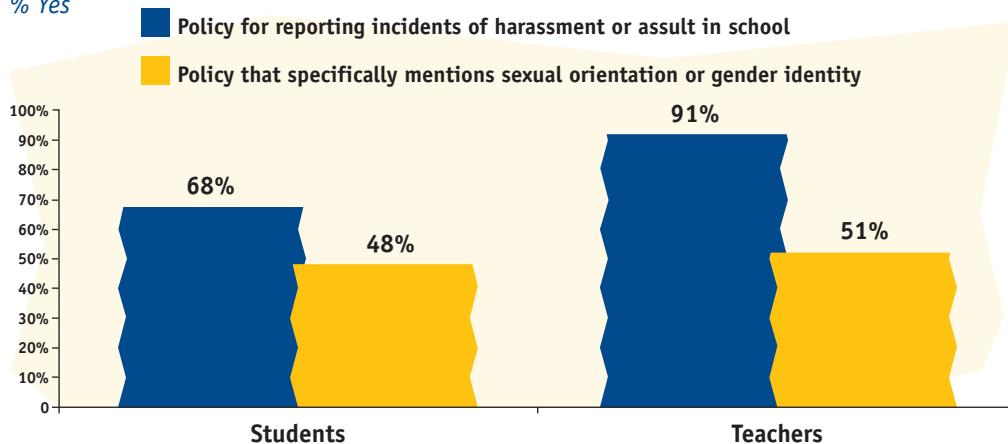
**4. Family.** The next generation will consist of children of Gen X parents predominantly. Gen Xers grew up in a time of newfound family strife – divorce rates were high, children were not held in particularly high esteem, the economy was stagnant, etc. There will be a retreat from the child-centric household we have today, as Gen Xer parents will compel

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## Does your school have...?

% Yes



Source: "From Teasing to Torment: School Climate in America"; n=3,450 U.S. students ages 13-18; 1,011 U.S. secondary school teachers (January, 2005)

The results of this survey highlight that harassment and bullying is prevalent in secondary schools – particularly at the junior high/middle school level. Harassment in school is often because of perceived or actual sexual orientation, the second most common reason after physical appearance or body size. Perhaps because of this, students whose schools have inclusive harassment policies report fewer safety problems. Hopefully, schools with a safe and supportive climate are those where students can focus on learning.

More information about the study, including the full report, is available at GLSEN's website: <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/home.html>

## Ask a Question...

And get some answers. Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? 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.

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

### YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> 2005 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. YouthPulse<sup>SM</sup> is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2005 study has just been released. To learn more about YouthPulse, contact us.

## 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).

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their children to find their own way and not be as coddled as they are today. Kids will still respect and admire their parents, but not in the same way Millennial children do. Another family trend will be the “rise of the grandparent” – demographics alone suggest that grandparents will be more prevalent in the lives of the next generation of children. There will be a resurgence of the extended family, and in many cases it will be highly extended, as divorce can result in children having many sets of grandparents. There will be a trend toward shifting our current reverence for children to a reverence of older Americans. Boomers will comprise the older American age demographic at this time, and Boomers have found a way to become the center of attention their whole lives so this can be expected to continue as they enter their sunset years.

**5. Technology.** The impact of technology tends to be overstated in the short run and underestimated in the long run. Ten years from now technology will be settling into its long-run (true) potential. Many times we fail to see how nascent a technology the Internet really is. Technology will stop being valued as a gadget and more as an integrated part of a young person’s life. It will become a tool and more invisible to them. Technologies will merge and become more seamless and be available everywhere. Technology won’t be seen as encroaching on their lives – it will instead be seen as woven into the fabric of their lives. However, the next generation will take a cue from the Millennials and keep themselves in control of their technological environment.

**6. Media.** The days of passive media will be waning, as kids create (and perhaps become a part of) their own entertainment experiences. They will value the seemingly infinite choices they have – but in reality will settle

for content from just a handful of sources that they then customize to their own needs. Unlike today, where “mass media” audience measurement often misses young consumers, the media being used a decade from now will allow the young to be counted, which will result in a greater targeting of them.

**7. Advertising.** The next youth generation will be well past the saturation point in terms of the amount of commercial messages they are exposed to and that influence them. Children will become largely immune to advertising’s effects. Because of their Gen X parental influence (a generation that is highly critical of everything), there will be a bit of a backlash towards advertisers. Advances in advertising won’t be in media or in creativity – rather it will be in the ability of advertisers to target their messages to a customized audience. In the saturated environment, staying relevant by reaching the right young person with the right message at the right time will be the key. The media department, to this date perhaps the least glamorous part of the agency, will become its most important element of success.

That summarizes some of the macro trends that may affect the next youth generation. The question then becomes how these trends will affect specific issues relevant to your organization. One word of caution to your long-term planning: do not assume that the next youth generation will be similar to the Millennials. Many youth marketers will, and a competitive edge will come to those who can understand the underlying characteristics of Generation “next.”

## 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.

## 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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