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LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

**Young People Talk about Their
Hopes and Prospects**

PREPARED BY
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LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects

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LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL:

Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects

Life after High School: Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects is a large-scale examination of the aspirations and experiences of America's young adults ages 18 through 25.

Commissioned by The College Board, GE Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation and KnowledgeWorks Foundation, *Life after High School* is an in-depth study based on a national random sample telephone survey of young adults, along with focus groups in California, New Jersey, Texas and Wisconsin (see Methodology for more details). The study sample of more than 1,300 young people includes those who have bachelor's and associate's degrees, those who have graduated from vocational and technical schools, those who never went on to higher education or who dropped out, those who are full-time students, and those who are immersed in the world of work. Public Agenda, a nonpartisan research and citizen education group, designed and conducted the study and prepared this summary of the results.

Paths Diverging

A number of key questions propelled this research. We wanted to learn what lies behind the fundamental and sometimes life-altering choices young people make during the years after high school. What, for example, influences their decision to continue schooling or to look for a job? What beliefs and assumptions guide them? What constraints limit

them? What roles do financial reality, family expectations and social context play? Are there individuals who step in to help and encourage them as they search for their own best path? Or, do many young people fall into their future as much by chance as by design?

Given the long-lingering educational and income inequities that affect so many minority youth, we were especially interested in learning more about the expectations and experiences of young people in different racial and ethnic groups. Consequently, the study also included analysis of the perspectives of young adults in four key groups – African Americans, Hispanic or Latino Americans, Asian Americans and white Americans.¹

Decisions, Dreams and Barriers

For many, the most heartening message from *Life after High School* will be that the vast majority of today's young adults – be they African American, Hispanic, Asian American or white – believe strongly in the value of going to college after high school. Most see higher education as a way to both earn society's respect and insure career advancement and financial security. As one young man, a college-bound African American, put it: "I'm going to just have a better life."

¹ We recognize that there are different preferences concerning the use of "Latino" and "Hispanic." In this report we use the term "Hispanic," because, according to surveys by the U.S. Census, this is the preference of majorities in this group. It is also the terminology the Census itself uses. We have shortened the Census Bureau's "non-Hispanic white Americans" to "whites."

Basically, that's the main reason [I am going on to college]."²

Some experts have voiced concerns that some African American youngsters underestimate the importance of higher education, or that too many look down on it as irrelevant or "acting white."³ But the survey for *Life after High School* demonstrates convincingly that large majorities of all young adults aspire to better themselves through education. Regardless of race or ethnic background, regardless of their parents' income or educational attainment, regardless of whether they themselves go on to college or not, most young Americans believe that continuing to study after high school is an advantageous step.

Trading Down in Education

Even so, the reality is that roughly 1 in 3 young Americans do not go on to any form of higher education, and many of those who do, don't end up graduating, according to the U.S. Census.⁴ In fact, rates for successful college completion have not changed appreciably in recent years. *Life after High*

² Unless otherwise specified, the term "college" as used in this report refers to the full range of post-secondary educational options, including 2-year colleges, 4-year colleges and technical schools.

³ Researchers have suggested that the academic achievement of minority students is hindered by a fear of the label "acting white," earned for superior performance in or too much attention to academic work. John Ogbu, from the University of California, Berkeley, is one oft-cited anthropologist whose theories on the subject have been cited by such prominent figures as Bill Cosby and Senator Barack Obama (Steptoe, Sonja and Ann Arbor. "Closing the Gap," *Time Magazine* 29 Nov 2004).

See also, "The Year in Ideas," *The New York Times*, 12 Dec 2004.

⁴ Sixty-four percent of students enroll in college immediately after graduation. Of those, 63% graduate within six years (*Current Population Survey* U.S. Census 2002).

School explores the complex set of reasons that may underlie this finding. Not surprisingly, affordability is a major factor, one that affects both whether young people continue their education and which school they attend. Notably, most African American and Hispanic young adults who do go on to college report that they would have attended a different school if money had not been a consideration. About half of Asian American youngsters say this is true for them as well.

Life after High School also explores the precarious career track of young adults who enter the workforce without any higher education or after dropping out of college, and it sheds some light on why young men are less likely to continue their schooling than young women are. According to the survey, the large majority of young people who go directly to work are in their jobs by chance, not by specific choice, and they are substantially less likely than those with degrees to see their current job as the opening to a future career.

New Answers, New Questions

Life after High School offers thought-provoking answers to some persistent questions about young Americans' aspirations and whether families, teachers, mentors, and others successfully inspire them to believe in education's ability to improve their lives. Most young people have absorbed the "you've got to go to college" message. Many are acting on it in their personal lives.

But the study also raises some troubling questions. With such widespread belief in higher education, why do so many young people still miss out on it? With so

much emphasis on higher standards in high school, why do so many young people still say their high school should have done more to get them ready? And how much of a factor is affordability? According to the young people surveyed here, high tuition costs are still a deal killer for many who might otherwise continue their education.

Finally, few would deny that many individuals shape constructive, honorable and satisfying lives without higher education, and there is a useful debate about whether all young people need or will even tolerate more schooling after high school. Even so, it is worth asking how comfortable we are with the haphazard, “let the chips fall where they may” career path so

many young people who are not in college seem to be pursuing.

For the vast majority of youngsters, it seems we have been successful in inspiring a goal. Whether we also provide the real-life, down-to-earth assistance, mentoring and guidance they need to work toward it is another matter. And whether we match young adults’ belief in attending college with equal success in completing their degrees is an even more challenging question. At Public Agenda, our hope is that *Life after High School* will move the conversation about higher education on to some of these eminently practical and very important matters.

FINDING ONE: High Hopes

Most young Americans are optimistic about their futures and, regardless of race or ethnic background, believe that attending college makes a genuine and significant difference in how people fare in the world. Although young African Americans and Hispanics are less likely to have college-educated parents or acquaintances, they are more likely than their Asian American or white peers to say that graduating from college is seen as an impressive accomplishment among their circle of friends.

Despite reports of a mixed U.S. economy and headlines proclaiming the large number of good jobs being outsourced overseas, nearly all of the young adults surveyed in *Life after High School* are optimistic about the future. Almost 9 in 10 of each of the groups surveyed (86% African American, 88% Hispanic, 88% Asian American and 88% white) say they expect their financial circumstances to improve by the time they are 30, with approximately 2 out of 3 in each group saying they expect things to “get much better” (71%, 68%, 65% and 66%, respectively).

A Reliable Recipe

Census Bureau data suggest that today’s young adults will follow a variety of paths in the years after high school. In 2002, for example, about 12% were enrolled in a four-year college and another 30% were taking classes at a two-year college or technical school.⁵ A majority (55%) were not pursuing additional formal schooling. By the time they have been out of high school for 8 years, about 4 out of 5 will have pursued some form of post secondary education.⁶

But in spite of their different experiences – and the different cards life will deal them – the survey data show that most of the young adults clearly believe that attending college is a reliable recipe for finding a rewarding job and more comfortable life circumstances.

“That’s Notable, and I Respect That”

One young man in a focus group described his image of someone with a college degree, “I think of someone who has accomplished something, more so than the rest of our peers. It is an accomplishment to get your bachelor’s degree and finish in four years. That’s notable, and I respect that.” A young woman told us, “No matter what you do, people are going to look at you and say, ‘Oh, she has got a college degree.’”

These sentiments are strongly reinforced by the survey data. Approximately 8 in 10 young adults agree that “people respect you more when they know you’ve graduated from college” (77% African American, 81% Hispanic, 85% Asian American and 81% white). And approximately 9 in 10 agree with the statement, “it’s easier to move up in a company when you have a college degree” (89% African American, 94% Hispanic, 89% Asian American and 92% white).

⁵ *Education Enrollment*, U.S. Census 2004.

⁶ *Principal Indicators of Student Academic Histories in Postsecondary Education*, U.S. Department of Education 2004.

Many of the young people we spoke with offered real-life, personal examples of the impact that higher education has in American life. In California, a young Hispanic woman spoke about the price she paid because she did not have this advantage: "I was working [in the same company] for five years. I gained a lot of skills, but when the company was going through a crisis, I was one of the persons laid off, because I didn't have the education to back up my skills." A white college student in Texas described what he sees in his job in human resources: "Ninety-five percent of the people that we place – if you don't have a degree, you don't get considered....It is brutal, but these companies are looking for successful people, and that's a measure of success." In the survey, overwhelming majorities of young adults agree that "in the long run, you will make more money if you have a college degree (84% African American, 90% Hispanic, 92% Asian American and 88% white).

Some educators worry that some Americans regard higher education as little more than a credential and fear that contemporary society places relatively little value on what is actually taught and learned in college.⁷ Young adults themselves appear divided on this. Nearly half of the 18-through-25 year-olds surveyed (49%) say that to them college is important precisely because it offers "a credential that employers with good jobs look for." Twenty-six percent suggest that college is advantageous because it "helps make you a responsible adult" and another 23% say it's important because it provides "real skills" that help individuals succeed at work. As we point out in Finding Four, there are some

⁷ See for example, "Take My Advice..." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 2004.

interesting differences between young men and young women in this area.

We heard various opinions in the focus groups on the subject. A young woman in New Jersey believed that college "...teaches you a lot of responsibility. You're now on your own. Your mom and dad aren't doing everything for you." In Texas, a young college graduate questioned whether the skills she learned in college were necessary for her job: "Sometimes I will look back and – I went to school, and I studied, [but] I do barely anything that I studied in my real job."

Still, regardless of the exact nature of the benefits, approximately 3 in 4 young adults (78% African American, 76% Hispanic, 76% Asian American and 73% white) agree that "college helps prepare you for the real world." A recent high school graduate elaborated by saying that, "If I was thrown out into the real world now with what I learned from high school, I would be screwed. I think college serves as a good basis to prepare you for real life after college and to make you a successful person."

Not surprisingly given these beliefs, majorities (53% African American, 71% Hispanic, 69% Asian American and 53% white) say they plan on teaching their own children that going to college is "a requirement" rather than leaving it up to their children to decide. One 19-year-old who is now working full time but plans on going back to school for electronics and welding said: "I'll tell [my daughter] to stay in school...I don't want my child to be busting her butt at McDonald's all day, coming home all tired. I'd rather see her sitting at a desk, typing on the computer, looking at the Internet."

A College Degree – Impressive or Just Routine?

The survey here confirms what national data show: Going to college is still not commonplace for young African Americans and Hispanics. In the current study, Asian American (27%) and white (18%) young adults are considerably more likely than their African American (10%) or Hispanic (9%) peers to have earned a bachelor's or graduate degree. Asian Americans (54%) are the most likely to say that "virtually all" of their friends either go to or have gone to college, and 37% of whites say this. The numbers are noticeably smaller for African American (30%) and Hispanic (20%) young people.

And with college attendance less common in some African American and Hispanic neighborhoods and homes – young adults from African American or Hispanic households are less likely to have two parents who are college graduates (20% African American and 13% Hispanic compared to 35% Asian American and 35% white) – some experts have worried about a subset of youngsters who seem to

denigrate those who achieve academic success, the so-called "acting white" dilemma.⁸ Although the reasons are not wholly understood, social scientists and psychologists speculate that these young people see academic achievement and higher education far out of their own reach and protect themselves against disappointment by belittling or rejecting it.⁹

Some young adults may be entrapped in this mindset, but based on this work, the vast majority is not. Of the young people surveyed, just 7% of African American, 3% of Hispanic, 1% of Asian American and 2% of white young people say that graduating from college is something that most people in their circle of friends "look down at." In fact, roughly half of young African Americans (46%) and Hispanics (53%) say that most of their friends are "really impressed" by someone who graduates from college. In contrast, 7 in 10 Asian American (70%) and 68% of white 18-through-25 year-olds say that graduating from college is "just something routine and expected" among their circle of friends.

⁸ Seventeen percent of African American and 11% of Hispanic adults have completed a bachelor's degree or more, compared with 30% of Whites (*Current Population Survey U.S. Census* 2003).

See for example, Steptoe, Sonja and Ann Arbor. "Closing the Gap," *Time Magazine* 29 Nov 2004.

⁹ See also, "Achievement Motivation in Rural African-American Female High School Honor Graduates," *Annual Conference of the Eastern Educational Research Association* 1997.

FINDING TWO: Someone to Watch Over Me

Vast majorities of young adults – across all racial and ethnic groups – say their parents and teachers encouraged them to aim for college. But large numbers also report that there were not enough counselors in their own high school, and they are divided on the degree to which they received individualized guidance from them.

Life after High School shows that most young Americans recognize the benefits of higher education and, for most, parents, teachers, mentors and others played a forceful role in developing that belief. About 6 in 10 young Americans say that when they were growing up, the attitude at home was that their parents strongly expected them to go to college (61% African American, 59% Hispanic, 86% Asian American and 63% white). A young Hispanic man explained his parents' perspective: "It's basically, you go to college, and you get to live well.... They used to tell me and my brothers and sisters, 'Do you want to be successful? Do you want to live in a house?.... Go to college.'"

According to the young adults in this survey, most parents encourage their children to go to college, but higher income families are even more likely to do so. Nearly all (91%) young adults whose parents are well off reported that their parents instilled in them the importance of college, compared to 76% of young adults from lower income families.¹⁰

Teachers Who Take an Interest

Majorities of all young adults also say that when they were in high school they had "a teacher who really

took an interest in [them] personally and encouraged [them] to go to college." Perhaps surprisingly, more than 6 in 10 (62%) young adults who have not gone on to higher education say this, compared with 67% of young adults who have. And the survey does not show substantial differences among racial and ethnic groups. Seventy-four percent (74%) of African Americans, 69% of Hispanics, 63% of Asian Americans and 66% of whites say they had a high school teacher who watched out for them in this way.

Similarly large majorities – again across racial and ethnic lines – also say that in high school they had "a teacher or coach who really inspired [them] and motivated [them] to do [their] best," (79% African American, 70% Hispanic, 69% Asian American and 76% white). Although some observers have criticized American education for focusing attention on college-bound youngsters at the expense of others, most of the young adults surveyed here (63% African American, 57% Hispanic, 63% Asian American and 59% white) report that teachers in their school gave "about the same" amount of attention to college-bound and non-college bound students.¹¹ About a third of each group reports that the teachers in their high school focused mainly on the kids headed for college.

¹⁰ Low-income young adults reported their parents' household income to be less than \$25,000 per year; higher-income young adults reported \$75,000 or more.

¹¹ See for example, "Study: Technical high school would fill need," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* 2003.

“If She Can Do It”

In the focus groups, a number of young adults expressed their good fortune in having individuals in their lives – teachers, coaches, mentors and others – who inspired them to set goals and strive to succeed in higher education. One 23-year-old woman from a struggling African American family was quite eloquent when she talked about an experience she had going to the doctor’s office. “What inspired me to go back to school is, I went to the doctor – I had a 26-year-old doctor, she was from India. If she can do it – she’s all the way from India – what am I doing?” Later on during the focus group she emphasized, “Like I told you, I went to my doctor, and my doctor’s 26. I wanted to be around her, instantly. I wanted to go see what she did....I wanted to know everything.”

Others spoke about having uncles or siblings who encouraged them and served as role models. But the inspiration and reinforcement often came from multiple and sometimes unexpected sources. One young man in the Texas focus group explained his more intrinsic motivation, “nobody has ever graduated from college in my family. That’s my driving force.”

Counselors: Not Enough to Go Around

In most high schools, school counselors have a special responsibility to advise students and help them plan for their future. It is here, the survey suggests, that the lack of sufficient numbers of counselors and the harried schedules they face may be something of a weak link in the process.

More than half of the young people surveyed (53%) told us that there were not enough counselors in their

high school, with 4 in 10 (41%) saying the ratio of counselors to students was about right. Asian American and white young adults are less likely to complain that “there were too few counselors” in their high school (58% African American, 55% Hispanic vs. 47% Asian American and 50% white).

Among those who say they met with a counselor during their high school years (91% of the sample), the reviews are mixed. About half (52%) say their school counselors “usually made an effort to really get to know me and to treat me as an individual,” while about half (47%) say, “I usually felt like I was just another face in the crowd.” African American students are the most likely among the subgroups to say they received individualized treatment from their high school counselors (60%, compared with 52% Hispanic, 51% Asian American and 53% white young adults).

“Have You Heard Anything?”

These differing views of counselors were especially evident in the focus group in Texas. One young woman recalled that her high school counselor “was always asking me, ‘Have you heard anything?’ [regarding college acceptance]....I was in and out of there a lot. I felt like he was like that with everybody.” But others had less positive memories. Another student told us: “I would go in and ask for [something], like what they thought about colleges, and they are like, ‘There is a filing cabinet right outside in the hall.’” For another, the experience was mixed: “They pushed you to take the SAT and stuff, and they would help you with transcripts and stuff, but they didn’t really try to figure out what I was going to major in or anything.”

Interestingly, when young people in the San Jose focus group were asked what advice they would give to someone just starting out in high school, tips on how to communicate with counselors came up frequently. “I have a younger sister and she’s actually going to be a freshman, so I tell her....know your counselor and tell her, ‘This is what I want to do; help me find the best school that I could get into,’” one young woman said. Another advised: “I would tell them....to have a personal friendship with their counselor. Ask questions about everything, the SATs, colleges, and have a clear mind. If you know what you want to do, tell your counselor...and [ask], ‘Can you help me with information that I need to get there?’”

Whether they were bound for college or not, about half of the young adults surveyed say they got specific advice from a high school counselor on what courses they needed to take to prepare for college (46% of those who never went on to higher education vs. 52% of those who did). More than 4 in 10 (43%) give good marks to their counselors for “letting students know about jobs and training programs available to kids not going to college.”¹² In

this particular area, white young adults are the least likely of the subgroups to say their counselors were helpful (41%, compared with 55% of African Americans, 49% of Hispanics and 47% of Asian Americans).

To SAT or Not to SAT

Counselors get better reviews for keeping students informed about deadlines for the SAT exam or scholarship applications than offering specific guidance. More than 7 in 10 young people say their counselors were helpful here (72% African American, 71% Hispanic, 72% Asian American and 74% white young adults). Large majorities also say “virtually all students” in their high school were expected to take the SAT (70% African American, 68% Hispanic, 64% Asian American and 60% white). Asian Americans, however, are the most likely of the groups to report that they actually took the test in high school (75%, compared with 67% of African Americans, 64% of Hispanics and 63% of whites). Not surprisingly, those who come from higher-income families are also more likely to say that they took it (75%, compared with 58% from lower-income families).

¹² Twenty-seven percent of the young adults surveyed said they didn’t know enough to answer this question.

FINDING THREE: Just What Can I Afford?

Despite believing in higher education and getting encouragement from parents, teachers and others, many young people compromise on or set this goal aside because of finances. Lack of money is not the only reason young adults don't go on to college, but it is a recurring theme, especially among African Americans and Hispanics. And the money dilemma continues even for those who do get their foot in the college door. The majority of African Americans and Hispanics – and about half of Asian Americans – say that they would have selected a different school if money were not a consideration.

“My mother always encouraged me to go to college. She tried to get me to go right when I graduated from high school....telling me how important it was....I listened, but I didn't do anything.” This comment came from one of the focus group participants for *Life after High School*. In fact, very large majorities of young adults – across demographic lines – recognize the importance of higher education in today's world, and most indicate, like the young man quoted above, that parents, teachers or others urged them to pursue that goal (as discussed in Finding Two). Still, many young Americans do not go on to any form of higher education after high school.

People Who “Just Don't Like School”

In the survey, young adults were asked to speculate on why it is that some young people do not go on to college, and as a group, they are divided on why this is so. Finances are a possible explanation, of course, but 28% of young adults say that the most typical reason people don't go to college is that some people “just don't like school;” 17% suggest that people who don't go on probably didn't have an adult in their life “to guide them.”

These speculations don't appear to be that far off the

mark. Responses among young adults who are not pursuing higher education confirm that a dislike of and a lack of success in school are important factors. Approximately 1 in 4 of the 18-through-25 year-olds who dropped out or didn't go on to college say it was because they were tired of school (28%). Another quarter (24%) say that they didn't have the grades, while another quarter (24%) say their career goals simply didn't call for a college degree (24%).

“That's Why I Started Working”

However, concerns about money – manifested in different ways for different people – are a recurring theme in the survey results. Almost half of the young people who dropped out of college or who never went at all indicate that financial concerns were to blame. Forty-nine percent say they didn't continue with college because they “wanted to work and make money.” A young woman from Texas recalled, “I wanted to be working. I didn't want to be in school forever....It drains money....I was offered an opportunity to work at a place doing something I am good at....I took the opportunity.” Forty-six percent say that they didn't pursue more education because they “couldn't afford it” and 46% say it was because they “had too many other responsibilities.”

“School is Not Cheap”

“It always worries me. Where am I going to get the money to pay for this?” a young man from Texas told us; “School is not cheap.” A woman in New Jersey who was debating whether to start school in the fall said, “I’ve been bartending, and I’m bringing home \$500 a week....I still don’t know if I see the entire good in college education.” In this survey, African American and Hispanic young adults are more likely to pinpoint lack of money as the key obstacle (35% for both, compared with 26% of their Asian American and 28% of their white peers).

As would be expected, those from less privileged backgrounds are more concerned about affordability issues than their financially comfortable peers. About half of young adults from families earning less than \$25,000 annually (49%) feel that “the vast majority of people who want to go to college and are qualified can find a way to pay for it,” compared to 64% of young adults from families earning more than \$75,000.

“It Would Have Been Very Hard”

A young African American man in Milwaukee shared his story. “I wasn’t the poorest of people, we weren’t the poorest...[but] when it came to college, I still needed money. My momma never did have money after a certain age. That’s why I started working....As far as going to school; it would have been very hard.”

Overall, the results on questions exploring why some young people don’t continue with education are relatively consistent across racial and ethnic lines. However, some findings in the survey suggest that

concerns about affording college weigh especially heavily on the minds of African Americans and Hispanics and that young adults in these groups are less confident that money can be found to pay for higher education. Most African Americans (54%) and Hispanics (53%), for example, believe that “lack of money keeps many people who should be in college from going.” In contrast, most of their white (59%) and Asian American (54%) peers believe that “the vast majority of people who want to go to college and are qualified can find a way to pay for it.”

“Student Loans are Pretty Easy to Get”

These divergent states of mind sometimes emerged sharply in the focus groups. To one young white man heading into junior year at college, money was certainly a consideration, but he also voiced confidence in his ability to make the equation turn out his way: “Student loans are pretty easy to get. I’d be worried about paying them off, but if you can’t afford it, you’ll be able to get the loans for it.” In contrast, a young African American, also offered a loan, voiced his anxiety about making ends meet. “They gave – not a grant, but a loan,” he explained. “The loan is for your books and stuff. It’s not for you to eat, and clothe yourself, and gas to get to work and gas to get to school.”

The common feeling among many African American and Hispanic young adults seems to be that they have little room to maneuver when it comes to finances. This may explain why African Americans (43%) and Hispanics (46%) are less likely than their Asian American (54%) and white (64%) counterparts to say that it’s “okay to take a year or more off” after

high school graduation rather than being ready to start college or go into the work world.

Can You Afford the School of Your Choice?

Being able to afford college is one thing, of course. Being able to afford the school of your choice is another matter. And there is strong evidence from this survey that many minority young adults trade down in their educational choices because of money concerns. That is, most young African Americans and Hispanics who are pursuing some form of higher education indicate that they are not attending the school of their first choice. Nearly 6 in 10 (59% African American and 58% Hispanic) who took the college path after high school say that they themselves “would have chosen a different school” if finances were not something they had to worry about. While a sizeable number (40%) of white young adults say they too would have picked a different school, most (60%) indicate that they did not have to make this compromise. Young Asian Americans are essentially split on this question – 51% say they would have gone to a different school if money wasn’t an issue, and 48% say this is not the case for them.

Academically Prepared?

The survey for *Life after High School* explored young adults’ views about both financial and academic issues pertaining to higher education. Perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, majorities of young adults – across racial and ethnic lines – admit that they themselves “could have paid a lot more attention and worked harder” in high school (69% African American, 75% Hispanic, 70% Asian American and 65% white).

Still, of those who have gone on to a 2-year or 4-year college, substantial numbers believe that high school teachers and classes should have done a lot more to prepare them for college level work (51% African American, 48% Hispanic, 44% Asian American and 39% white). One young white man from Texas, who dropped out of a 4-year school and is now going full time to a community college, described his first foray into college life: “I went for a half a semester, and it kicked my butt....High school did not prepare you for what you need to do, mainly studying. You don’t learn to study in high school. You learn to get by.”

FINDING FOUR: No Degree, No Problem?

While the overwhelming majority of young adults recognize the value and importance of higher education, most also believe that college is not for everyone. Young men are especially likely to see merit in choosing a non-college path. But the experiences of those either who don't go to college or who drop out suggest that the alternative path is hardly clear and purposeful. Most young workers who don't complete degrees say they are in their current jobs by chance, and relatively few see their current work as the path to a real career. This group is also more likely to report that they could have worked harder in high school.

The vast majority of young Americans accept the idea that some people just aren't cut out for college. Almost 9 in 10 (89%) agree, "college is not for everyone – some people just don't like school." And more than 8 in 10 (81%) hold the opinion that many people do succeed without a college education.

Regardless of their own decisions and circumstances, most of the 18 through 25-year-olds surveyed acknowledge that there can be benefits to skipping the college route. A solid majority (57%) agree that the prospect of "earning money instead of sitting in a classroom" is a possible advantage. More than 3 in 4 (77%) agree that getting out into the workforce gives a person a chance to "get hands-on experience and job skills that you don't get in college."

Differences between the Girls and the Boys

Statistics show that young men are less likely to pursue higher education, and the findings here suggest several contributing factors. Young men are more likely to admit that they don't enjoy school, and they are more likely to find getting out and earning money now appealing. They are also more likely to view education as providing a "credential" rather than seeing its value for its own sake.

For example, among young men who have never attended college or dropped out, 32% say that they had "had enough of school and didn't want to go anymore," compared to 22% of young women in the same circumstances. In the same vein, among young women who do go on to college, 69% say it is because they "really enjoy being in school" compared to 58% of young men who go on.

More than 4 in 10 young men (41% vs. 29% of young women) believe that a "high school diploma is only important because you need it to get into college." In contrast, 71% of young women (compared to 59% of young men) say "a high school diploma is an important accomplishment in and of itself." Reflecting this belief perhaps, young women also seem to make better grades: 45% of young women vs. 32% of young men report making "A"s in high school.

Less likely to enjoy school and accept its intrinsic importance, young men are also more likely to focus on the upside of getting a job and earning money right away. More than half of young men (56%) who never went to college or dropped out say they did so because they preferred to "work and make money" (compared to 42% of young women).



These differences in attitudes between young men and young women are not dramatic, and they do not fully explain the growing disparity in college attendance based on gender. However, they do shed some additional light on the mindset of many young men who do not go on to college.

Operating in Survival Mode?

In theory, young people who don't get a 2-year or 4-year college degree could be pursuing interests and career paths that do not require higher education – paths that they may have chosen and actually prefer. There certainly are interesting and potentially rewarding opportunities in business, the military, the arts and industrial vocations, such as construction and other trades. But the research here strongly suggests that most young adults without degrees are not following a chosen, deliberate or purposeful plan. Most, in fact, seem to be operating in survival or “fall back” mode.

Compared to young people who complete either a 4-year or a 2-year degree and then enter the work force, these less-educated young workers are not as happy in their jobs and not as likely to see their current job as the path to a future career. Somewhat poignantly, most are optimistic about their personal financial future, despite economic data suggesting that it could well be a challenging one.

Among young workers without degrees, 7 in 10 (70%) say that they are in their current job more by chance than by design, compared with more than half (56%) of young workers with college degrees. Just 1 in 5 (18%) say they “love” the job they have, compared with 31% of those with degrees. They are only half as

likely to say they think of their current job as a career (15% vs. 32%). And while 48% say their current position is “just a job to get you by,” only 1 in 7 (26%) of their more educated working peers feel this way.

So Why Not Get More Education?

Given their less than stirring enthusiasm for their current jobs, it is reasonable to ask why so many of these young adults stay in the work force rather than moving onto the college track. Most agree that college confers important advantages, albeit by slightly smaller margins than their degree-holding counterparts do. Six in 10 (60%), for example, agree that “college helps prepare you for the real world” (compared with 75% of those with degrees). Seven in 10 (70%) say that “people respect you more when they know you've graduated from college” (compared with 83% of those with degrees).

Employed young adults without a college degree are essentially split as to whether “there are many ways to get a good job and a comfortable lifestyle without getting a college degree” (49%) versus “the best way” to get these things is to go the college route (50%). Their peers with degrees are more likely (66%) to feel that college is the right path.

I Could Have Done Better

Like their peers with degrees, large majorities also recall having a teacher during high school who really took a personal interest in them and encouraged them to pursue college (62% vs. 67% of those with degrees) and that there was a coach or teacher who really inspired and motivated them (65% vs. 77% of those with degrees). Even so, this group is more likely

to report a mixed academic experience. They are more likely than those with degrees to report that their teachers and classes in high school “should have done a lot more” to prepare them for the workplace (48% vs. 38%). They are also more likely to say that it was “easy to do just enough to get by” (54% vs. 47%).

Interestingly, the vast majority acknowledge their own lack of motivation and effort in high school. By a 16-percentage-point margin, young workers without degrees are more likely to say “they could have paid a lot more attention and worked harder” compared to their peers who got degrees (78% vs. 62%). They also are far less likely to report being “A” students (15% vs. 45%).

Parents Who Didn't Push?

But the more profound differences concern not what happened at school, but what was happening at home and with friends. Young workers without degrees, by a 35-percentage-point margin, are less likely to say that, when they were growing up, their parents strongly expected them to go to college (32% vs. 67%). By a 22-percentage-point margin, they are less likely to point to a parent as their number one source for guidance on decisions like choosing school or work (47% vs. 69%). They are also substantially less likely to say that “virtually all” their friends go to or have gone to college – by a 33-percentage point margin (9% vs. 42%).

Is Money the Problem?

There is some evidence that young workers without degrees are more daunted by affordability issues, although the numbers are not as large as might be expected. More than 1 in 3 of these young workers (37%) say that when people their age don't go to college, it's because they can't afford it, compared with 28% of those with degrees. A majority believe that lack of funds keeps many qualified people from pursuing college (53%) compared with just 40% of their more educated counterparts.

In today's U.S. economy, there is indeed a payoff to completing college, especially to obtaining a 4-year college degree. These graduates enjoy lower unemployment rates, higher earnings and better promotion opportunities.¹³ But despite these facts, many less-educated 18-through-25 year-olds express a surprising degree of optimism – some might say naïveté – about their prospects. Approximately 2 out of 3 (66%) think their own financial situation will be much better by age 30. Two out of three also expect to be better off than their own parents when they reach their parents' age (67%). And despite their lukewarm feelings about their current jobs, a plurality (42%) say that they do at least offer “plenty of room” to grow and move up; just 21% believe that more education would open things up for them, while 36% judge that there's really not much room to move up no matter what.

¹³ In 2000, the unemployment rate for workers aged 25 and over with a high school diploma was 4%; for those with a bachelor's degree, it was 2% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2002). Similarly, the median earnings for full-time workers with a high school diploma were \$28,000; for those with a bachelor's degree, the figure was \$46,300 (Education Pays, *Occupational Outlook Quarterly* 2002).

FINDING FIVE: On the Road

Young Americans who do go on to college – whether a 4-year or 2-year institution – are convinced that their efforts will give them a leg up on a good career. The vast majority say their parents instilled the importance of college in them, and large numbers say that they enjoy being in school. Most African American, Hispanic and Asian American young people expect to surpass their parents' standard of living. Their white peers, however, are more divided on whether they will be better off financially compared with their parents.

Life after High School suggests that most young people who go on to college were encouraged to do so by family, teachers and others. As one young Asian American man commented about his own parents, "I don't know if I have been brainwashed or what, but it is just that I can't see myself not going to college." Still, most young adults also have very specific, career-oriented reasons for pursuing a college degree.

Aspiring Accountants, Doctors, Entrepreneurs

Approximately 3 in 4 young adults who chose to go to college say that they went because the job they wanted specifically required it (74% African American, 77% Hispanic, 77% Asian American and 78% white); half or more of each group say that this is "very close" to how they feel. The focus groups were chock full of aspiring accountants, doctors, entrepreneurs, communications specialists, computer programmers and the like. One young man in San Jose, who is on his way to engineering school in the fall, said he sees college as "just the next step" if he wants to succeed in his chosen field. A young African American college student in New Jersey talked about her 10-year plan: "If I'm not on a podium in front of thousands of people speaking, then I want to have an impact on somebody's life in some way." Relatively few report that they went to college "because I really didn't know

what I wanted to do after high school," with Asian American (43%) and white (36%) young Americans reporting to feel this way more often than their African American (27%) and Hispanic (26%) peers.

But even though their rationales are mainly functional and characterized by a vision of a career that requires more education, healthy majorities (57% African American, 67% Hispanic, 71% Asian American and 64% white) also say that they went on to college because they "really enjoy being in school."

For most, it seems, going on to college is the realization of a long-sought goal. Public Agenda research on K-12 education shows that vast majorities of public middle and high school students have their eyes on college attendance.¹⁴ In fact, overwhelming majorities of the 18-through-25 year-olds in this survey who chose to go on to college say that they "always" knew that they would do so (86% African American, 81% Hispanic, 91% Asian American and 87% white).

And most young Americans are clearly convinced that their investment of time, money and energy will pay off. Majorities expect to be better off than their

¹⁴ In a nationwide telephone survey of public school students in 6th to 12th grade, 76% said they are "definitely planning to go to college." (*Reality Check*, Public Agenda 2002.)

parents are when they reach their parents' age, and African American (74%), Hispanic (72%) and Asian American (75%) young people considerably more likely to feel this way compared to their white peers (57%). One young man in Texas summed it up like this: "A lot of our mentality is that we want to be better than our parents. That's what has driven us to a better society – each generation. Our parents thought about their parents."

In this survey, African American, Hispanic and Asian American young adults are substantially more likely

than their white counterparts to report that their parents' annual income in 2003 was less than \$25,000 annually (17% of African Americans, 17% of Hispanics and 16% of Asian Americans vs. just 4% of whites). And for these young adults, the goal of doing "better than my parents" is a visible goal, one that has had meaning for generations of Americans before them. Most young whites too (57%) expect to outpace their parents in terms of financial comfort and security, but for many, starting out in relatively affluent circumstances may be upping the ante.

Short Profiles

As a whole, *Life after High School* shows that young Americans across racial and ethnic groups share many similar beliefs about the value of education and what steps will help them get off to a good start in their careers. Still, as we can see from the previous findings, there are definite differences between the groups. In these short profiles, we will elaborate on some of the distinctive elements in the perspectives of each of the four young adult groups surveyed – African American, Hispanic, Asian American and white.

We highlight some of the chief differences among the groups, although we are not able to address all of the intriguing data points in these brief write-ups.¹⁵ We

also encourage interested readers to examine the complete survey results that follow.

Here, we will highlight the unique responses of each of the four racial/ethnic groups. Because sample size for each one is relatively small (n=200), it is impossible to report with confidence any demographic differences within each groups. Needless to say, within each racial/ethnic category, there are people from a variety of backgrounds – differing nationalities, cultural heritage, socioeconomic status and personal experience – all factors that could lead to perspectives that are different from the overall attitudes discussed here.

¹⁵ For instance, there are significant differences within these racial and ethnic groups: only 7% of young people from the poorest one-quarter of American families earn a bachelor's degree by age 26, while 60% of young people from the top quartile of family income do so (*Current Population Survey*, U.S. Census 2002).

African American Young Adults

Like others their age, the vast majority of young African Americans believe in the power of education to help them achieve their goals. Like others, they are optimistic that they can build rewarding careers over time. And, though many young African Americans come from families of very modest means, they expect that they themselves will be more prosperous and secure than their parents (74% say they intend to be “financially better off” than their parents are now).

Statistics show that African American children are more likely to be raised by single mothers, so it is not surprising that in this study they are considerably more likely than others to say that their mother has been the most important influence on their decisions about college and work (44% of African Americans vs. 24% of young adults generally).¹⁶ But, like young people overall, about 6 in 10 young African Americans (61%) say that their parents strongly expected them to go to college.

African Americans on the whole are statistically less likely than whites to attend or complete college and are much less likely to enter professional schools or pursue graduate education. Still, it is worth noting that this gap in educational attainment is more pronounced among young African American men. African American women are substantially more likely to complete college than they are.¹⁷

¹⁶ 49,903,000 children who are 18 years old or younger live with both parents, and 16,770,000 children live only with their mother. In contrast, 4,094,000 African American children live with both parents, and 5,762,000 live only with their mother (*Household Relationships*, US Census 2003).

The findings in *Life after High School* suggest that while the vast majority of young African Americans believe in the benefits of higher education, they are less confident that qualified applicants can always find the money to pursue it. For example, young African Americans are more likely than young adults generally to say that lack of money keeps many people who should be in college from going (54% vs. 43%).

Even among those who have made it through the college door, many say they have had to compromise in their choice of school because of money. Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) young African Americans (compared with 44% of young adults generally) say that they would have chosen a different college if money were not a problem. Lack of financial security may also underlie young African Americans’ judgment that it’s not reasonable for high school graduates to take “a year or more off” before starting college or work; just 43% of African Americans say this compared to 60% of young adults generally.

For most African American young adults, education is not something to be taken for granted. While young adults in general (63%) consider graduating from college “something expected and routine,” less than half of young African Americans (46%) say this. Young African Americans are also more likely to

¹⁷ African American women of low socioeconomic status (SES) are 19 percent more likely than low SES, African American men to enter postsecondary education. The gap is less pronounced in higher socioeconomic categories, but more well off African American women are still 9 percent more likely to attend college than high SES African American men (*National Education Longitudinal Study*, U.S. Department of Education 2002).

consider a high school diploma to be “an important accomplishment in and of itself” (72% vs. 65% for young adults overall) rather than something needed only to get into college.

As we noted in the main text, there are experts within and outside the African American community who have voiced concerns that some minority youngsters – trapped in poor schools and perhaps lacking hope that they themselves could succeed academically – tend to ridicule those who do better in school. The good news, based on these survey findings, is that very few young African Americans have fallen into that mindset. Just 7% say that graduating from college is something that people in their circle of friends “look down at.” In fact, 46% say it is something that their friends are “really impressed by.” Another 46% say that going to college is “just something routine and expected.”

It may be disturbing to many educators that employed, young African Americans are more likely to believe that their high schools did not do as much as they should have to prepare them adequately for work (58% vs. 49% of all young adults overall), and those who have attended college are more likely to believe that their high schools should have done more to prepare them for “college level work” (51% vs. 42%).

On the other hand, they are more satisfied with their specific high school teachers. Nearly 3 in 4 African American young adults (74%) say that they had a teacher who really took a personal interest in them and encouraged them to go to college, compared with 36% of young adults overall. They are also more likely than young adults in general are to say that their high school teachers encouraged them to work hard (63% vs. 51%).

Hispanic Young Adults

Young Hispanics, like the other young adults surveyed, are optimistic and believe in the benefit of seeking a college degree. But despite their belief in the payoff from higher education, young Hispanics are less likely to attend and complete a college program than other groups of young people their age. According to the *Current Population Study* published by the U.S. Census (2001), 53% enroll in college or technical school after high school compared with 63% of all high school graduates. And, according to the U.S. Department of Education's 2002 *National Education Longitudinal Study*, less than half (47%) graduate in 6 years, compared with 63% of college students overall. These statistics are supported by the finding in *Life after High School* that just 20% of young Hispanics report that "virtually all" of their friends have gone on to college, compared with 35% of young adults surveyed.

Many findings suggest that money is a strong contributor to the problem. Like young African Americans, young Hispanics appear to have their doubts about how accessible college really is for people who can't afford it. Less than half (45%) believe that "the vast majority of people who want to go to college and are qualified can find a way to pay for it," compared with 56% of young adults overall. And even Hispanics who make it to college suggest that lack of money has already affected their hopes and dreams for the future. Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) say

they would have chosen a different school if it weren't for financial considerations (vs. 44% of young adults overall).

Young Hispanics are about equally as likely as young adults overall to say that money is the key factor when they personally decided not to go on to college or to discontinue it (42% of Hispanics vs. 46% of young adults overall). However, they are slightly more likely than their counterparts to say it's because they had too many other responsibilities (55% versus 46% of all those interviewed).

Most young Hispanics give reasonably good marks to their high schools and teachers for preparing them for higher education, and according to this survey, they are as likely as African Americans and whites to have taken the SAT in high school (67% African American, 64% Hispanic, 75% Asian American and 63% white). However, there is some evidence that they might not be as well prepared for the college admissions process. Young Hispanics are less likely than other groups to say that counselors gave them advice about what courses to take (46% vs. 53% of young adults overall).

But even though Hispanics of this generation may be struggling to follow the college path, strong majorities (71%) say that they plan to teach their children that college is not an option but a requirement.

Asian American Young Adults

Young Asian Americans share many experiences and attitudes with young adults in other racial and ethnic groups – a belief in the power of education and high hopes for themselves as they enter the adult world. Their responses show the strong emphasis their families have placed on going to college. Most believe that going to college is an indispensable step in starting out in life.

Eighty-six percent of young Asian Americans say that their parents “strongly expected” them to go to college, compared with 63% of young adults overall. In line with this finding, they are also less likely than any other group to say that their parents left the decision about going to college up to them – just 14% of Asian Americans say this, compared with 38% of African American, 40% of Hispanic and 36% of white young adults.

This emphasis on college extends to their peers as well: 81% of young Asian Americans say that most or virtually all of their friends are going to college, compared with 56% of African Americans, 49% of Hispanics and 68% of whites. And *Life after High School* suggests that this tradition is likely to continue. A large majority of the young Asian Americans surveyed say they will follow their parents’ example and teach their own children that college is a requirement (69% vs. 55% for young adults generally).

Given the emphasis Asian American families seem to place on going to college, it’s perhaps natural that these young adults discount the value of a high school diploma and tend to view it as simply a stepping-stone to college. About half (48%) of Asian Americans say that a high school diploma is an important accomplishment in and of itself, compared to 65% of young adults overall. Young Asian Americans are also less likely to believe that there are many ways to get a good job other than going to college (23% vs. 35% of the sample overall).

According to these findings, young Asian Americans are somewhat more likely to focus on the near-term goal of getting into college instead of envisioning a longer-term career goal. More than 4 in 10 (43%) say that they went to college because they “really didn’t know what I wanted to do after high school” (compared to 33% of young adults overall). About 4 in 10 Asian Americans (39% vs. 28% of young adults overall) also say they went to college because most of their friends were going.

But this doesn’t seem to mean that young Asian Americans are mechanically pursuing a prescribed, pre-determined path. Seventy-one percent young Asian Americans – more than any other group surveyed – say that they continued on to college because they “really enjoy being in school” (57% African American, 67% Hispanic and 64% white).

White Young Adults

According to the U.S. Census, white young adults are substantially more likely to attend college and complete degrees than African Americans and Hispanics.¹⁸ In fact, they make up 82% of those who complete 4-year college programs.¹⁹ And, while many individual young whites do face financial and other challenges in their pursuit of higher education, they do start out, as a group, on a more advantageous footing.

In this study, nearly 6 in 10 (58%) white young adults say their families earn more than \$50,000 a year, compared with 35% of African Americans, 35% of Hispanics and 44% of Asian Americans. They are also more likely to say that one or both of their parents hold a college degree (52% African American, 38% Hispanic, 61% Asian American and 62% white).

With better educated and more comfortable families to support them, white 18-through-25 year-olds are considerably more likely than their African American and Hispanic peers to believe that qualified people who want to go to college can find a way to pay for it (59% vs. 46% African Americans, 45% Hispanics, and 54% of Asian Americans). Perhaps because they are more likely to attend schools in middle-class neighborhoods, white young people are also more likely to say their high school teachers and

classes did as much as they should have to prepare them for college (61% of whites vs. 49% of African Americans, 52% of Hispanics and 56% of Asian Americans).

The findings suggest that, compared to their peers from African American or Hispanic backgrounds, whites have more choices about when and where they go to college. There also seems to be a greater element of choice exercised even among those who don't go on to college. For example, whites are less likely than any of the other groups to say that financial considerations affected their choice of college or technical school (40% of whites vs. 59% of African Americans, 58% of Hispanics and 51% of Asian Americans). They are more likely than other groups to say it's okay to take a year off after high school before going on to college or the world of work (64% vs. 43% of African Americans, 46% of Hispanics and 54% of Asian Americans). Among young whites who either didn't go on to higher education or who dropped out, the decision is more likely to have been intentional. Three in 10 whites (30%) who didn't continue their education say it is because their career goals didn't require a college degree. Just 18% of African Americans, 20% of Hispanics and 20% of Asian Americans who didn't continue with higher education give this as a reason for foregoing college.

¹⁸ We have shortened the Census Bureau's "non-Hispanic white Americans" to "whites."

¹⁹ *Current Population Report*, U.S. Census 2003.

Methodology

The findings in *Life after High School: Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects* are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 1000 young adults aged 18 to 25, plus oversamples to ensure 200 African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans were interviewed. Interviews were conducted between August 14 and September 4, 2004. The survey was preceded by five focus groups and in-depth interviews with a variety of experts in the field.

The Telephone Survey

Telephone interviews were conducted between August 14 and September 4, 2004 with young adults aged 18 to 25. Interviews averaged 17 minutes in length.

The 1000 young adults in the national random sample were selected through a standard, random-digit-dialing technology whereby every household in the 48 contiguous states had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. Households were carefully screened to include only those with an 18 to 25 year-old in residence. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage points for this portion of the sample.

This study also reports the views of 200 African American, 200 Hispanic and 200 Asian young adults. These groups were derived in the following way: Respondents matching the demographic criteria were culled from the national random sample and pooled with additional respondents obtained through a targeted sampling method. The targeted samples included only those telephone exchanges in census tracts with at least a 29% density of households meeting the demographic criteria for African American, 30% for Hispanic and 15% for Asian. Households were contacted randomly within these exchanges and only young adults aged 18 to 25 were selected for the survey.

Of the 200 Asians, 22 came from the national sample and 178 from the targeted sample; of the 200 African Americans, 109 came from the national sample and 91 from the targeted sample; of the 200 Hispanics, 108 came from the national sample and 92 from the targeted sample. These three groups contain mutually exclusive sets of respondents; e.g. a young adult in the African American sample would not be included in the Hispanic group, even if he or she is Hispanic. Demographic criteria were defined as follows:

- Asian: Young adults answering "Asian" to the question, "Are you white black or African American, Asian, or something else?" This group also includes those who indicated they are both "Asian" and "Hispanic."
- African American: Young adults answering, "black or African American" to the question, "Are you white black or African American, Asian, or something else?" This group also includes those who indicated they are both "black or African American" and "Hispanic."
- Hispanic: Young adults answering "yes" to the question, "Are you of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino background, or not?"

The margin of error is plus or minus six percentage points for the subgroups of African American (n=200), Hispanic (n=200) and Asian American (n=200) young adults, and plus or minus five percentage points for the subgroup of non-Hispanic, White young people (n=740). Please note that the margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups with smaller sample sizes.

The Questionnaire

The survey instrument was translated into Spanish, and households identified as Spanish-speaking were re-contacted by bilingual interviewers as needed. A total of 13 interviews were conducted in Spanish.

As in all surveys, question-order effects and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including

pre-testing the survey instrument and randomizing the order in which some questions were asked.

The survey instrument was designed by Public Agenda, and Public Agenda is solely responsible for all analysis and interpretation of the data. Survey Sampling, Inc. supplied the sample, and surveys were fielded by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of the dynamics underlying the public's attitudes toward complex issues. Insights from young adults who participated in these focus groups were

important to the survey design, and actual quotes were drawn from the focus groups to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the surveys. All focus groups were moderated by Public Agenda senior staff. Five focus groups were conducted with young adults in June and July 2004, as follows:

- Old Bridge, NJ: mixed group of young adults
- Frisco, TX: mixed group of young adults
- Milwaukee, WI: two small groups of African American young adults
- San Jose, CA: primarily Hispanic and Asian young adults

Complete Survey Results

The findings in *Life after High School: Young People Talk about Their Hopes and Prospects* are based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 1000 young adults aged 18 to 25, plus oversamples to ensure 200 African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans were interviewed. The survey was conducted between August 14 and September 4, 2004; it averaged 17 minutes in length. The margin of error for the overall sample of 1,000 is plus or minus 3 percentage points; for the ethnic subgroups of 200 it is plus or minus 6 percentage points. The margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

Results of less than 0.5 are signified by an asterisk (*). Results of zero are signified by a dash (-). Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
2 Are you currently working for pay full-time, working for pay part-time, or are you unemployed at the moment?					
Full-time	37	30	38	26	38
Part-time	32	25	23	28	35
Unemployed at the moment	30	45	38	47	27
[Vol.] Homemaker	*	1	1	-	*
Don't know	*	-	1	-	*
3 Please stop me when I read the highest level of school you have COMPLETED.					
Less than high school	4	6	9	4	5
High school degree or G.E.D.	31	35	32	28	31
Certificate from a trade school or vocational school	3	6	5	1	3
Some college but no degree	37	38	40	37	36
Associate's degree or a degree from a 2-year college	8	7	5	4	8
Bachelor's degree or 4-year college degree	14	8	8	25	16
Graduate degree	2	2	2	3	2
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-
4 Are you currently a full-time student, a part-time student, taking a course here and there, or are you not a student at this time?					
Full-time student	44	42	39	53	45
Part-time student	9	9	10	10	9
Taking a course here and there	4	4	4	3	4
Not a student	43	45	48	35	43
[Vol.] Taking courses online/correspondence student	*	-	-	-	*
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*
6 If you had to name the one person who has been the most important influence on your decisions about things like work or college, who would it be? [open-ended responses]					
Mom	24	44	30	18	21
Dad	22	10	16	16	25
Parents (General, not specific)	19	10	10	27	21
Me/Myself	11	12	13	14	10
Someone else in family, like an aunt or uncle or sibling	12	15	19	12	11
Someone from school, like a teacher, coach or counselor	3	3	4	3	3
A friend	3	2	3	7	3
A famous athlete, entertainer or celebrity	1	1	1	1	1
Religious Figure	1	1	-	-	2
Other	1	1	1	1	1
Don't know	4	3	6	4	3
7 Many things affect people's success in their jobs or careers. Which of these four things do you think is most important?					
Being persistent and having inner drive	41	34	36	39	42
Knowing how to deal with people well	24	21	24	21	25
Getting a college degree	21	27	32	24	19
Having connections with the right people	14	18	9	16	13
Don't know	1	-	-	1	1



	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
8	Being as realistic as you can, what do you think is going to happen to your financial situation by the time you're 30? Do you think things are going to get much better, a little better, get worse, or stay about the same?				
	<i>NET Better</i>				
	88	86	88	88	88
	Get much better				
	68	71	68	65	66
	A little better				
	21	15	20	24	22
	Get worse				
	3	7	3	5	3
	Stay about the same				
	8	6	9	6	9
	Don't know				
	1	2	1	1	1
9	When you are your parents' age, do you think you will be financially better off, worse off, or about the same as your parents are now?				
	61	74	72	75	57
	Better off				
	4	2	3	2	4
	Worse off				
	34	24	24	23	38
	About the same				
	1	2	2	2	1
	Don't know				
10	Would you say that you ended up choosing your current job more by chance, or was it something you had been hoping to do for quite some time?				
	<i>Base: Currently employed full time or part time (n=684)</i>				
	63	64	72	69	61
	Chose current job more by chance				
	36	36	28	29	37
	Hoping to do for quite some time				
	1	1	-	3	2
	Don't know				
11	Which of the following best describes how you feel about your current job? Would you say you love it, like it, you neither like nor dislike it, you dislike it, or you hate it?				
	<i>Base: Currently employed full time or part time (n=689)</i>				
	<i>NET Love/Like</i>				
	75	68	75	71	76
	Love it				
	27	25	22	14	29
	Like it				
	48	44	54	58	47
	Neither like nor dislike it				
	15	17	13	20	14
	<i>NET Dislike/Hate</i>				
	10	14	12	9	9
	Dislike it				
	6	10	8	7	5
	Hate it				
	4	4	3	2	4
	Don't know				
	*	1	-	-	1
12	Do you think of your current job as a career, a stepping stone to a career, or do you think of it as just a job to get you by?				
	<i>Base: Currently employed full time or part time (n=689)</i>				
	18	13	22	14	18
	A career				
	36	35	39	39	36
	A stepping stone to a career				
	46	53	39	47	46
	Just a job to get you by				
	*	-	-	-	*
	Don't know				
13	Would you say that in your current job situation:				
	<i>Base: Currently employed full time or part time (n=688)</i>				
	45	45	46	45	45
	There's plenty of room for you to grow and move up				
	19	23	23	28	18
	There's room to move up, but only if you get more education				
	36	33	31	27	37
	There's not much room to move up				
	*	-	1	-	1
	Don't know				
14	For the most part, when you chose the school you [went to/are going to] after high school, did you carefully choose it because it had a specific academic program you were interested in, or was it mostly for other reasons?				
	<i>Base: Have attended any higher education or just starting (n=786)</i>				
	42	45	40	39	42
	Specific academic program				
	58	55	60	60	58
	Mostly for other reasons				
	*	-	-	1	*
	Don't know				

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
15 Leaving financial concerns aside, do you think that it would be hard for a person to go back to school if they didn't go right after high school, or would it be pretty easy to do if that's what they really wanted?					
Hard for a person to go back to school	45	38	48	45	45
Pretty easy to do if that's what they really wanted	54	62	51	53	54
Don't know	1	1	1	3	1
16 Leaving financial concerns aside, at this time in your life, would it be hard for you to go back to school if you really wanted to, or would it be pretty easy to do if that's what you really wanted? <i>Base: Currently not a student (n=467)</i>					
Hard to go back	26	32	31	31	26
Pretty easy to do	74	67	66	68	74
Don't know	*	1	3	1	-
17 If financial concerns were not an issue, would you have chosen a different school to go to after high school—yes or no? <i>Base: Have attended any higher education or just starting (n=787)</i>					
Yes	44	59	58	51	40
No	55	40	40	48	60
Don't know	1	1	2	2	1
18 Which comes closer to your own view?					
A high school diploma is an important accomplishment in and of itself	65	72	65	48	64
A high school diploma is only important because you need it to get into college	34	28	34	52	35
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1
19 Thinking over your high school years, would you say that you worked hard to learn as much as you should have, or do you think you could have paid a lot more attention and worked harder?					
Worked hard to learn	32	31	24	30	34
Could have paid a lot more attention and worked harder	67	69	75	70	65
Don't know	1	1	2	-	1
20 Did your high school teachers make it clear that you had to work hard at your studies, or was it easy to do just enough to get by?					
Teachers made it clear that you had to work hard	51	63	56	51	49
Easy to do just enough to get by	48	37	43	49	50
Don't know	1	1	1	-	1
21 In high school, was there a teacher who really took an interest in you personally and encouraged you to go to college—yes or no?					
Yes	67	74	69	63	66
No	33	26	30	37	34
Don't know	*	1	1	-	*
22 In high school, was there a teacher or coach who really inspired you and motivated you to do your best—yes or no?					
Yes	75	79	70	69	76
No	24	22	29	31	23
Don't know	*	-	1	-	*
23 Who do you think got more attention from the teachers in your high school—the kids who were headed for college, the kids who were not, or was it about the same?					
Kids who were headed for college	35	32	34	30	35
Kids who were not	4	5	7	4	4
About the same	60	63	57	63	59
Don't know	1	1	3	4	1

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
24 Would you say that your high school teachers and the classes you took did as much as they should have to prepare you for college level work, or should they have done a lot more? <i>Base: Have attended a 2-year or 4-year college (n=675)</i>					
Teachers and classes did as much as they should have	58	49	52	56	61
Should have done a lot more	42	51	48	44	39
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-
25 Would you say that your high school teachers and classes did as much as they should have to prepare you for the workplace, or should they have done a lot more?					
Teachers and classes did as much as they should have	36	37	36	24	38
Should have done a lot more	39	50	41	44	37
Don't know enough to say	24	13	23	32	25
26 When you were in high school, did you typically get As, Bs, Cs or less than that?					
As	39	23	27	49	42
Bs	46	59	54	35	43
Cs	12	15	12	12	12
Less than that	3	3	7	4	3
Don't know	*	1	1	1	*
27 Did your high school expect virtually all students to take the SAT—yes or no?					
Yes	61	70	68	64	60
No	37	29	29	35	38
Don't know	3	1	4	1	2
28 And how about you—did you take the SAT when you were in high school—yes or no?					
Yes	63	67	64	75	63
No	36	33	33	25	37
Don't know	1	-	3	-	*
29 When you were in high school, did you always know you were going to continue on to college—yes or no? <i>Base: Have attended a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
Yes	87	86	81	91	87
No	13	15	19	9	13
Don't Know	*	-	1	-	*
30 After high school graduation, do you feel it's OK for a person to take a year or more off before deciding what to do next, or should a person be ready to either start college or work full-time?					
OK to take a year or more off	60	43	46	54	64
Should be ready to either start college or work full-time	37	55	50	45	33
Don't know	3	2	4	1	3
32 Thinking about the number of students in your high school, would you say that:					
There were too many counselors	5	6	7	5	5
There were too few counselors	53	58	55	47	50
The ratio of counselors to students was about right	41	34	35	44	43
[Vol.] There were no counselors	1	-	2	1	1
Don't know	2	3	2	4	1

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
31 Thinking back, about how many times did you meet with a counselor during a typical high school year? <i>Base: High school had counselors (n=993)</i>					
<i>NET At least once</i>	91	92	92	94	90
<i>NET At least twice</i>	70	79	78	79	66
1	21	13	14	15	23
2	24	21	24	30	23
3	11	10	11	10	12
4 or more	35	49	43	39	32
None/Zero	7	5	7	5	9
Don't know	2	4	1	2	2
<i>MEAN</i>	5	7	6	5	5
33 Which of these comes closer to describing your own experiences with the counselors in your high school? <i>Base: Met with counselor (n=901)</i>					
The counselors usually made an effort to really get to know me and to treat me as an individual	52	60	52	51	53
I usually felt like I was just another face in the crowd	47	40	47	49	46
Don't know	1	-	1	1	1
34 At any point during your high school years, did you get specific advice from a counselor on what courses you needed to take to prepare for college—yes or no? <i>Base: High school had counselors (n=991)</i>					
Yes	53	57	46	51	53
No	47	42	53	48	47
Don't know	1	1	1	1	*
35 How helpful were your counselors when it came to letting students know about jobs and training programs available to kids not going to college—were the counselors very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, not helpful at all, or don't you know enough to say? <i>Base: High school had counselors (n=981)</i>					
<i>NET Helpful</i>	43	55	49	47	41
Very helpful	17	26	22	18	15
Somewhat helpful	26	28	27	29	25
<i>NET Not helpful</i>	30	31	33	25	29
Not too helpful	15	14	16	16	15
Not helpful at all	16	17	18	9	14
Don't know enough to say	27	15	19	28	30
36 How helpful were your counselors when it came to things like giving students information about colleges or keeping them informed of deadlines for scholarships or the SAT—were they very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, not helpful at all, or don't you know enough to say? <i>Base: High school had counselors (n=986)</i>					
<i>NET Helpful</i>	74	72	71	72	74
Very helpful	41	48	37	37	40
Somewhat helpful	33	25	34	34	34
<i>NET Not helpful</i>	19	19	24	22	17
Not too helpful	10	9	13	15	9
Not helpful at all	9	10	10	7	8
Don't know enough to say	8	9	6	6	9

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
37	Thinking back, who do you think the counselors in your high school paid more attention to—the students who were headed for college, the students who were not headed for college, or was it about the same?				
	Base: High school had counselors (n=985)				
	45	47	43	37	43
	5	3	7	4	5
	48	50	49	53	49
	3	1	1	7	3
38	When people your age don't go to college, which of these do you think is the most typical reason? Is it mostly because:				
	29	35	35	26	28
	28	16	20	33	31
	17	20	18	15	16
	24	28	26	23	24
	2	2	1	4	2
Here are some statements that may or may not describe your own reasons for [not going to college/not continuing with college]. Please tell me how close each comes to describing you. [Q39-Q43a]					
39	I didn't [go to/continue with] college because I had enough of school and didn't want to go anymore—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you?				
	Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=342)				
	28	27	24	13	29
	11	16	6	5	12
	17	11	18	8	17
	71	70	76	88	70
	17	9	15	30	21
	54	61	62	58	49
	2	3	-	-	1
40	I didn't [go to/continue with] college because I couldn't afford it—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you?				
	Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=342)				
	46	52	42	48	46
	24	30	21	23	24
	22	22	21	25	22
	53	46	58	53	53
	14	11	22	18	15
	39	35	37	35	39
	1	2	-	-	1
41	I didn't [go to/continue with] college because my grades were too low—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you?				
	Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=342)				
	24	21	24	28	25
	9	8	7	8	9
	16	13	17	20	16
	74	77	76	73	74
	16	16	18	15	17
	59	61	58	58	57
	2	2	-	-	1

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
42 I didn't [go to/continue with] college because I wanted to work and make money—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you? <i>Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=342)</i>					
<i>NET Close</i>	49	52	52	40	51
Very close	19	27	23	8	19
Somewhat close	30	25	29	33	32
<i>NET Not close</i>	49	46	48	60	48
Not too close	15	12	16	20	15
Not close at all	35	34	32	40	33
Don't know	2	2	-	-	1
43 I didn't [go to/continue with] college because I had too many other responsibilities—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you? <i>Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=342)</i>					
<i>NET Close</i>	46	44	55	48	47
Very close	25	21	30	20	27
Somewhat close	21	23	25	28	20
<i>NET Not close</i>	53	54	45	53	52
Not too close	17	13	16	15	17
Not close at all	36	41	29	38	35
Don't know	1	2	-	-	1
43a I didn't [go to/continue with] college because my career goals didn't require a college degree—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to describing you? <i>Base: Dropped out or never went to a 2-year or 4-year college (n=331)</i>					
<i>NET Close</i>	24	18	20	20	30
Very close	9	11	6	8	11
Somewhat close	15	7	14	13	19
<i>NET Not close</i>	75	80	80	80	69
Not too close	15	14	18	33	14
Not close at all	60	66	62	48	55
Don't know	1	2	-	-	1

Here are some statements that may or may not describe your own reasons for going to college. Please tell me how close each comes to describing you. [Q44-Q48]

44 I went to college because I really enjoy being in school—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to how you feel? <i>Base: Ever went to a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
<i>NET Close</i>	64	57	67	71	64
Very close	23	25	31	28	22
Somewhat close	42	32	37	43	43
<i>NET Not close</i>	36	43	33	29	36
Not too close	17	15	18	16	17
Not close at all	19	28	15	13	19
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
45 I went to college because my parents always instilled in me the importance of college—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to how you feel? <i>Base: Ever went to a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
NET Close	86	84	88	88	86
Very close	56	53	64	68	54
Somewhat close	30	31	23	21	32
NET Not Close	14	16	13	12	14
Not too close	7	4	2	7	8
Not close at all	7	12	11	5	6
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-
46 I went to college because I really didn't know what I wanted to do after high school—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to how you feel? <i>Base: Ever went to a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
NET Close	33	27	26	43	36
Very close	13	12	14	18	14
Somewhat close	20	15	12	26	22
NET Not close	67	73	74	57	64
Not too close	21	16	23	22	21
Not close at all	46	57	52	35	43
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*
47 I went to college because the job I want specifically requires it—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to how you feel? <i>Base: Ever went to a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
NET Close	77	74	77	77	78
Very close	54	52	60	50	54
Somewhat close	23	22	16	27	24
NET Not Close	23	26	23	23	22
Not too close	8	9	13	12	8
Not close at all	15	17	11	11	14
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-
48 I went to college because most of my friends were going—is that very close, somewhat close, not too close, or not close at all to how you feel? <i>Base: Ever went to a 2-year or 4-year college or just starting (n=754)</i>					
NET Close	28	20	28	39	28
Very close	8	4	6	12	8
Somewhat close	20	16	22	26	20
NET Not Close	73	80	72	61	72
Not too close	25	19	26	23	25
Not close at all	48	61	46	38	46
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-

Here is a list of statements that describe what some people say are the benefits of going to college. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each statement. [Q49-Q58]

49 In the long run, you will make more money if you have a college degree—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
NET Agree	88	84	90	92	88
Strongly agree	65	68	72	67	64
Somewhat agree	23	17	18	25	24
NET Disagree	11	16	10	8	11
Somewhat disagree	7	9	7	7	7
Strongly disagree	4	7	3	2	4
Don't know	1	1	-	-	1

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
50 Going to college gives people time to figure out what they really want to do—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	84	76	88	90	85
Strongly agree	42	40	44	47	42
Somewhat agree	42	36	44	43	43
<i>NET Disagree</i>	16	25	12	11	15
Somewhat disagree	11	16	9	7	10
Strongly disagree	5	9	3	4	4
Don't know	*	-	1	-	1
51 College helps prepare you for the real world—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	74	78	76	76	73
Strongly agree	37	44	44	36	36
Somewhat agree	37	34	32	41	37
<i>NET Disagree</i>	26	23	23	24	26
Somewhat disagree	15	12	16	18	15
Strongly disagree	11	11	7	6	11
Don't know	1	-	1	1	1
52 People respect you more when they know you've graduated from college—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	80	77	81	85	81
Strongly agree	47	49	53	57	46
Somewhat agree	33	29	28	29	35
<i>NET Disagree</i>	20	23	19	15	19
Somewhat disagree	13	14	10	12	13
Strongly disagree	7	10	9	3	6
Don't know	1	-	1	1	1
53 It's easier to move up in a company when you have a college degree—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	92	89	94	89	92
Strongly agree	67	68	72	64	66
Somewhat agree	25	21	22	25	25
<i>NET Disagree</i>	8	11	7	11	8
Somewhat disagree	5	6	5	10	5
Strongly disagree	2	6	2	1	2
Don't know	1	-	-	1	1
54 College is not for everyone—some people just don't like school—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	89	92	88	83	89
Strongly agree	51	62	57	38	49
Somewhat agree	39	29	31	45	41
<i>NET Disagree</i>	11	9	12	17	10
Somewhat disagree	8	3	8	12	8
Strongly disagree	3	6	5	5	2
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*
55 Without a concrete plan, college is a waste of time and money—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	38	49	38	38	35
Strongly agree	16	27	16	15	13
Somewhat agree	22	22	22	23	21
<i>NET Disagree</i>	62	51	62	63	65
Somewhat disagree	28	19	24	31	30
Strongly disagree	34	32	38	32	35
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
56 You could be earning money instead of sitting in a classroom—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	57	56	54	60	56
Strongly agree	17	19	13	14	17
Somewhat agree	40	37	41	46	39
<i>NET Disagree</i>	43	45	46	40	43
Somewhat disagree	25	22	27	27	25
Strongly disagree	18	23	19	13	18
Don't know	*	-	-	1	1
57 If you work you can get hands-on experience and job skills that you don't get in college—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	77	73	78	81	77
Strongly agree	32	30	34	30	31
Somewhat agree	46	43	44	51	46
<i>NET Disagree</i>	22	26	22	19	23
Somewhat disagree	15	18	13	14	17
Strongly disagree	7	9	9	5	7
Don't know	1	1	1	1	*
58 Many people succeed without a college education—do you agree or disagree? Is that strongly or somewhat?					
<i>NET Agree</i>	81	81	77	71	81
Strongly agree	36	39	32	21	37
Somewhat agree	44	42	46	50	44
<i>NET Disagree</i>	19	19	23	30	18
Somewhat disagree	12	10	13	20	13
Strongly disagree	7	9	10	10	6
Don't know	*	-	1	-	1
59 Which comes closer to your own view?					
The vast majority of people who want to go to college and are qualified can find a way to pay for it	56	46	45	54	59
Lack of money keeps many people who should be in college from going	43	54	53	45	40
Don't know	1	-	3	2	1
60 Which is closer to your own view?					
There are many ways to get a good job and a comfortable lifestyle without getting a college degree	35	39	28	23	34
The best way to get a good job and a comfortable lifestyle is to get a college degree	64	60	70	76	64
Don't know	1	1	2	1	1
61 Do you think a college degree is important because:					
It's a credential that employers with good jobs look for	49	44	44	41	52
The experience of college helps make you a responsible adult	26	28	27	33	25
You learn real skills at college that will help you succeed at work	23	27	29	25	22
[Vol.] A college degree is not important	*	1	1	-	*
Don't know	1	1	-	-	1
62 When you come across an advertisement for an entry-level job that requires a college degree, which are you more likely to think?					
It's a job that requires skills you can only learn in college	41	44	42	38	41
It's just the employer's way of weeding out people	57	56	55	61	57
Don't know	1	-	4	1	2
63 In your circle of friends, do you think most people are really impressed by someone who graduates from college, is it something they look down at, or is it just something routine and expected?					
Most people are really impressed	32	46	53	29	27
Something they look down at	2	7	3	1	2
Just something routine and expected	63	46	41	70	68
Don't know	3	2	3	1	3

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
64 Growing up, what was your parents' attitude toward going to college? Did your parents strongly expect you to go, did they discourage you from going, or did they just leave it up to you?					
Parents strongly expected you to go	63	61	59	86	63
Discouraged you from going	1	1	1	1	1
Left it up to you	36	38	40	14	36
Don't know	*	-	1	-	*
65 If you have children, do you think you will teach them that going to college is a requirement, that they can get along without it, or will you leave it up to them?					
Teach them that going to college is a requirement	55	53	71	69	53
They can get along without it	1	1	1	1	2
Leave it up to them	43	47	29	31	45
Don't know	1	-	-	-	1
66 In your circle of friends, how many would you say are going to college or have gone to college—virtually all, most, some, or only a few?					
Virtually all	35	30	20	54	37
Most	29	26	29	27	31
Some	17	17	19	12	16
Only a few	18	25	30	7	15
[Vol.] None	1	3	3	-	1
Don't know	*	1	1	-	*
67 Have you left your hometown and lived elsewhere since you finished high school, or have you pretty much stayed in the area? Base: All respondents except those currently enrolled in high school or a GED program (n=978)					
Left hometown and lived elsewhere since finishing high school	46	38	33	36	50
Have pretty much stayed in the area	53	62	66	64	50
Don't know	1	1	1	-	1
68 In your area, do the local community colleges have a very good reputation, do people have a tendency to look down at them, or is it somewhere in between?					
Local community colleges have a very good reputation	46	40	46	35	47
People have a tendency to look down at them	12	12	8	11	14
Somewhere in between	40	47	43	53	38
[Vol.] There are no local community colleges	*	-	1	-	*
Don't know	2	2	2	2	1

Demographics

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
Gender					
Male	48	44	41	47	50
Female	52	57	59	54	50
1 How old are you?					
18	14	20	17	16	14
19	13	9	12	13	14
20	15	13	14	15	15
21	13	17	11	13	13
22	11	7	11	13	12
23	12	15	10	11	12
24	14	13	14	12	14
25	8	9	12	9	8
MEAN	21	21	21	21	21

	General (n=1,000) %	African American (n=200) %	Hispanic (n=200) %	Asian (n=200) %	White, Non-Hisp (n=740) %
69 Which of these best describes you:					
I live at home with my parents	51	53	58	58	48
I live at a dorm or other college housing	12	6	3	12	14
I have my own place	29	28	29	23	30
I have another kind of living arrangement	8	13	11	8	8
Don't know	*	-	-	-	*
70 Are both your parents college graduates, one, neither, or are you not sure?					
Both are college graduates	31	20	13	35	35
One is a college graduate	27	32	25	26	27
Neither	39	43	59	35	36
Not sure	2	6	4	5	2
71 Are you the parent of any children who currently live with you—yes or no?					
Yes	17	25	28	10	15
No	83	75	73	91	85
72 Are you of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino background, or not?					
Yes	11	5	100	4	-
No	89	95	-	96	100
73 Are you white, black or African-American, Asian or something else?					
White	79	-	29	-	100
Black or African-American	10	97	-	-	-
Asian	2	-	-	100	-
Something else [specified]	1	-	10	-	-
Native American	1	-	-	-	-
Hispanic, race unspecified	5	-	54	-	-
Black/African-American, multiracial, non-Hispanic	1	4	-	-	-
Don't know	*	-	7	-	-
74 I'm going to read some income ranges. Please stop me when I read the one that best describes how much money YOU PERSONALLY earned from working in 2003. If you did not work, please say so.					
Under \$15,000	52	46	44	42	53
\$15,000 to less than \$25,000	19	20	21	11	18
\$25,000 to less than \$35,000	9	10	8	9	11
\$35,000 to less than \$50,000	5	5	6	4	5
\$50,000 or more	2	2	3	3	2
Did not work	11	15	14	28	10
Don't know	2	2	4	3	2
75 To the best of your knowledge, could you please tell me which one of these best describes your PARENTS' total income in 2003? Please stop me when I read the one that you think best describes your parents' total income in 2003.					
Under \$25,000	8	17	17	16	4
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	21	25	26	18	18
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	21	16	15	23	24
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	15	10	11	8	17
\$100,000 or more	16	9	9	14	18
Don't know	20	23	22	22	20
Urbanicity					
Rural	19	8	9	4	21
Suburban	50	32	43	58	54
Urban	31	61	48	39	25
Region					
Northeast	18	19	12	19	18
Midwest	24	13	4	11	28
South	36	55	29	15	31
West	23	14	55	56	22

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