



SUSAN GRADY

*Times have changed.
Have America's college students?*

THE COLLEGE STUDENT,

they say, is a young person who will . . .

... use a car to get to a library two blocks away, knowing full well that the parking lot is three blocks on the other side.

... move heaven, earth, and the dean's office to enroll in a class already filled; then drop the course.

... complain bitterly about the quality of food served in the college dining halls—while putting down a third portion.

... declaim for four solid years that the girls at his institution or at the nearby college for women are unquestionably the least attractive females on the face of the earth; then marry one of them.

BUT there is a serious side. Today's students, many professors say, are more accomplished than the average of their predecessors. Perhaps this is because there is greater competition for college entrance, nowadays, and fewer doubtful candidates get in. Whatever the reason, the trend is important.

For civilization depends upon the transmission of knowledge to wave upon wave of young people—and on the way in which they receive it, master it, employ it, add to it. If the transmission process fails, we go back to the beginning and start over again. We are never more than a generation away from total ignorance.

Because for a time it provides the world's leaders, each generation has the power to change the course of history. The current wave is thus exactly as important as the one before it and the one that will come after it. Each is crucial in its own time.

WHAT will the present student generation do? What are its hopes, its dreams, its principles? Will it build on our past, or reject it? Is it, as is so often claimed, a generation of timid organization people, born to be commanded? A patient band of revolutionaries, waiting for a breach? Or something in between?

No one—not even the students themselves—can be sure, of course. One can only search for clues, as we do in the fourteen pages that follow. Here we look at, and listen to, college students of 1961—the people whom higher education is all about.



Scott Thompson



Barbara Nolan



Robert Schloreit



Arthur Wortman

*What are
today's students
like?*

*To help
find out, we
invite you to join*

A seminar



Robert Thompson



Roy Muir



Ruth Vars



Galen Unger



Parker Palmer



Patricia Burgamy



Kenneth Weaver



David Gilmour



Martha Freeman



Dean Windgassen

THE fourteen young men and women pictured above come from fourteen colleges and universities, big and little, located in all parts of the United States. Some of their alma maters are private, some are state or city-supported, some are related to a church. The students' studies range widely—from science and social studies to agriculture and engineering. Outside the classroom, their interests are similarly varied. Some are athletes (one is All-American quarterback), some are active in student government, others stick to their books.

To help prepare this report, we invited all fourteen, as articulate representatives of virtually every type of campus in America, to meet for a weekend of searching discussion. The topic: themselves. The objective: to ob-

tain some clues as to how the college student of the Sixties ticks.

The resulting talk—recorded by a stenographer and presented in essence on the following pages—is a revealing portrait of young people. Most revealing—and in a way most heartening—is the lack of unanimity which the students displayed on virtually every topic they discussed.

As the seminar neared its close, someone asked the group what conclusions they would reach about themselves. There was silence. Then one student spoke:

"We're all different," he said.

He was right. That was the only proper conclusion.

Labelers, and perhaps libelers, of this generation might take note.

of students from coast to coast

“Being a



ERICH HARTMANN, MAGNUM

MIKAL GEORGEVIC

student is a wonderful thing.”



STUDENT YEARS are exciting years. They are exciting for the participants, many of whom are on their own for the first time in their lives—and exciting for the onlooking adult.

But for both generations, these are frequently painful years, as well. The students' competence, which is considerable, gets them in dach with their elders as often as do their youthful blunders. That young people ignore the adults' soundest, most heartfelt warnings is bad enough; that they so often get away with it sometimes seems unforgivable.

Being both intelligent and well schooled, as well as unfettered by the inhibitions instilled by experience, they readily identify the errors of their elders—and they are not inclined to be lenient, of course. (The one unforgivable sin is the one you yourself have never committed.) But, lacking experience, they are apt to commit many of the same mistakes. The wise adult understands this: that only in this way will they gain experience and learn tolerance—neither of which can be conferred.

“They say the student is an animal in transition. You have to wait until you get your degree, they say; then you turn the big corner and there you are. But being a student is a vocation, just like being a lawyer or an editor or a business man. This is what we are and where we are.”

“The college campus is an open market of ideas. I can walk around the campus, say what I please, and be a truly free person. This is our world for now. Let's face it—we'll never live in a more stimulating environment. Being a student is a wonderful and magnificent and free thing.”

“You go to college to learn, of course.”



BUSAN GREENBERG

A STUDENT'S LIFE, contrary to the memories that alumni and alumnae may have of "carefree" days, is often described by its partakers as "the mill." "You just get in the old mill," said one student panelist, "and your head spins, and you're trying to get ready for this test and that test, and you are going along so fast that you don't have time to find yourself."

The mill, for the student, grinds night and day—in classrooms, in libraries, in dining halls, in dormitories, and in scores of enterprises, organized and unorganized, classed vaguely as "extracurricular activities." Which of the activities—or what combination of activities—contributes most to a student's education? Each student must concoct the recipe for himself. "You have to get used to living in the mill and finding yourself," said another panelist. "You'll *always* be in the mill—all through your life."



But learning comes in many ways."



SEAN GREENBERG

"I'd like to bring up something I think is a fault in our colleges: the great emphasis on grades."

"I think grades interfere with the real learning process. I've talked with people who made an A on an exam—but next day they couldn't remember half the material. They just memorized to get a good grade."

"You go to college to learn, of course. But learning comes in many ways—not just from classrooms and books, but from personal relations with people: holding office in student government, and that sort of thing."

"It's a favorite academic cliché, that not all learning comes from books. I think it's dangerous. I believe the greatest part of learning does come from books—just plain books."

ERICH HARTMANN, MAGNUM



"It's important to know you can do a good job at something."

IT'S HARD to conceive of this unless you've been through it . . . but the one thing that's done the most for me in college is baseball. I'd always been the guy with potential who never came through. The coach worked on me; I got my control and really started going places. The confidence I gained carried over into my studies. I say extracurricular activities are worthwhile. It's important to know you can do a good job at something, *whatever* it is."

▶ "No! Maybe I'm too idealistic. But I think college is a place for the pursuit of knowledge. If we're here for knowledge, that's what we should concentrate on."

▶ "In your studies you can goof off for a while and still catch up. But in athletics, the results come right on the spot. There's no catching up, after the play is over. This carries over into your school work. I think almost everyone on our football team improved his grades last fall."

▶ "This is true for girls, too. The more you have to do, the more you seem to get done. You organize your time better."

▶ "I can't see learning for any other purpose than to better yourself and the world. Learning for itself is of no value, except as a hobby—and I don't think we're in school to join book clubs."

▶ "For some people, learning is an end in itself. It can be more than a hobby. I don't think we can afford to be too snobbish about what should and what shouldn't be an end in itself, and what can or what can't be a creative channel for different people."

*"The more you do, the more
you seem to get done.
You organize your time better."*



SUSAN GREENBURG

*"In athletics, the results come
right on the spot. There's
no catching up, after the play."*



"It seems to me you're saying that

COLLEGE is where many students meet the first great test of their personal integrity. There, where one's progress is measured at least partly by examinations and grades, the stress put upon one's sense of honor is heavy. For some, honor gains strength in the process. For others, the temptation to cheat is irresistible, and honor breaks under the strain.

Some institutions proctor all tests and examinations. An instructor, eagle-eyed, sits in the room. Others have honor systems, placing upon the students themselves the responsibility to maintain integrity in the student community and to report all violators.

How well either system works varies greatly. "When you come right down to it," said one member of our student panel, "honor must be inculcated in the years before college—in the home."



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

"Maybe you need a B in a test, or you don't get into medical school. And the guy ahead of you raises the average by cheating. That makes a real problem."



honor works only when it's easy."



ERIC BARTHMAN, MAGNUM

"I'm from a school with an honor system that works. But is the reason it works maybe because of the tremendous penalty that's connected with cheating, stealing, or lying? It's expulsion—and what goes along with that is that you can't get into another good school or even get a good job. It's about as bad a punishment as this country can give out, in my opinion. Does the honor system instill honor—or just fear?"

"At our school the honor system works even though the penalties aren't that stiff. It's part of the tradition. Most of the girls feel they're given the responsibility to be honorable, and they accept it."

"On our campus you can leave your books anywhere and they'll be there when you come back. You can even leave a tall, cold milkshake—I've done it—and when you come back two hours later, it will still be there. It won't be cold, but it will be there. You learn a respect for honor, a respect that will carry over into other fields for the rest of your life."

"I'd say the minority who are top students don't cheat, because they're after knowledge. And the great majority in the middle don't cheat, because they're afraid to. But the poor students, who cheat to get by . . . The funny thing is, they're not afraid at all. I guess they figure they've nothing to lose."

"Nobody is just honest or dishonest. I'm sure everyone here has been guilty of some sort of dishonest act in his lifetime. But everyone here would also say he's primarily honest. I know if I were really in the clutch I'd cheat. I admit it—and I don't necessarily consider myself dishonest because I would."

"It seems to me you're saying that honor works only when it's easy."

"Absolute honor is 150,000 miles out, at least. And we're down here, walking this earth with all our faults. You can look up at those clouds of honor up there and say, 'They're pretty, but I can't reach them.' Or you can shoot for the clouds. I think that's the approach I want to take. I don't think I can attain absolute honor, but I can try—and I'd like to leave this world with that on my batting record."

“It’s not how we feel about issues—

“**W**E ARE being criticized by other people all the time, and they’re stamping down on us. ‘You’re not doing anything,’ they say. I’ve noticed an attitude among students: Okay, just keep criticizing. But we’re going to come back and react. In some ways we’re going to be a little rebellious. We’re going to *show* you what we can really do.”

Today’s college students are perhaps the most thoroughly analyzed generation in our history. And they are acutely aware of what is being written about them. The word that rasps their nerves most sorely is “apathy.” This is a generation, say many critics, that plays it cool. It may be casually interested in many things, but it is excited by none.

Is the criticism deserved? Some college students and their professors think it is. Others blame the times—times without deprivation, times whose burning issues are too colossal, too impersonal, too remote—and say that the apparent student lassitude is simply society’s lassitude in microcosm.

The quotation that heads this column is from one of the members of our student panel. At the right is what some of the others think.

“Our student legislature fought most of the year about taking stands. The majority rationalized, saying it wasn’t our place; what good would it do? They were afraid people would check the college in future years and if they took an unpopular stand they wouldn’t get security clearance or wouldn’t get a job. I thought this was awful. But I see indications of an awakening of interest. It isn’t how we feel about issues, but whether we feel at all.”

“I’m sure it’s practically the same everywhere. We have 5,500 full-time students, but only fifteen or twenty of us went on the sit-downs.”

“I think there is a great deal of student opinion about public issues. It isn’t always rational, and maybe we don’t talk about it, but I think most of us have definite feelings about most things.”

“I’ve felt the apathy at my school. The university is a sort of isolated little world. Students don’t feel the big issues really concern them. The civil rights issue is close to home, but you’d have to chase a student down to get him to give his honest opinion.”

“We’re quick to criticize, slow to act.”

“Do you think that just because students in America don’t cause revolutions and riots and take active stands, this means . . . ?”

“I’m not calling for revolution. I’m calling for interest, and I don’t care what side the student takes, as long as he takes a side.”

“But even when we went down to Woolworth’s carrying a picket sign, what were some of the motives behind it? Was it just to get a day away from classes?”

but whether we feel at all."

"I attended a discussion where Negro students presented their views. I have never seen a group of more dynamic or dedicated or informed students."

"But they had a personal reason."

"That's just it. The only thing I can think of, where students took a stand on our campus, was when it was decided that it wasn't proper to have a brewery sponsor the basketball team on television. This caused a lot of student discussion, but it's the only instance I can remember."

"Why is there this unwillingness to take stands?"

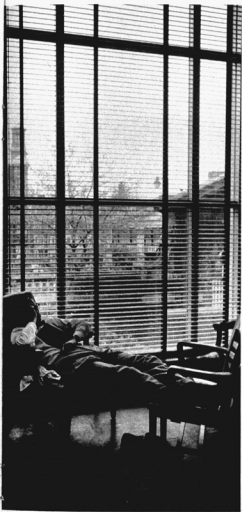
"I think one big reason is that it's easier not to. It's much easier for a person just to go along."

"I've sensed the feeling that unless it really burns within you, unless there is something where you can see just what you have done, you might as well just let the world roll on as it is rolling along. After all, people are going to act in the same old way, no matter what we try to do. Society is going to eventually come out in the same way, no matter what I, as an individual, try to do."

"A lot of us hang back, saying, 'Well, why have an idea now? It'll probably be different when I'm 45.'"

"And you ask yourself, Can I take time away from my studies? You ask yourself, Which is more important? Which is more urgent to me?"

"Another reason is fear of repercussions—fear of offending people. I went on some sit-downs and I didn't sit uneasy just because the manager of the store gave me a dirty scowl—but because my friends, my grandparents, were looking at me with an uneasy scowl."



PHILIP GREENBERG



*“We need a purpose other than
security and an \$18,000 job.”*



BERO WEITMAN

"Perhaps 'waiting' is the attitude of our age—in every generation."

"Then there comes the obvious question, With all this waiting, what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for some disaster that will make us do something? Or are we waiting for some 'national purpose' to come along, so we can jump on its bandwagon? So we are at a train station; what's coming?"

I GUESS one of the things that bother us is that there is no great issue we feel we can personally come to grips with."

The panel was discussing student purposes. "We need a purpose," one member said. "I mean a purpose other than a search for security, or getting that \$18,000-a-year job and being content for the rest of your life."

"Isn't that the typical college student's idea of his purpose?"

"Yes, but that's not a purpose. The generation of

the Thirties—let's say they had a purpose. Perhaps we'll get one, someday."

"They had to have a purpose. They were starving, almost."

"They were dying of starvation and we are dying of overweight. And yet we still should have a purpose—a real purpose, with some point to it other than selfish mediocrity. We do have a burning issue—just plain survival. You'd think that would be enough to make us react. We're not helpless. Let's do something."

Have students changed?

—Some professors' opinions

"OH, YES, indeed," a professor said recently, "I'd say students have changed greatly in the last ten years and—academically, at least—for the better. In fact, there's been such a change lately that we may have to revise our sophomore language course. What was new to students at that level three years ago is now old hat to most of them."

"But I have to say something negative, too," the professor went on. "I find students more neurotic, more insecure, than ever before. Most of them seem to have no goal. They're intellectually stimulated, but they don't know where they're going. I blame the world situation—the insecurity of everything today."

"I can't agree with people who see big changes in students," said another professor, at another school. "It seems to me they run about the same, year after year. We have the bright, hard-working ones, as we have always had, and we have the ones who are just coasting along, who don't know why they're in school—just as we've always had."

"They're certainly an odd mixture at that age—a combination of conservative and romantic," a third professor said. "They want the world to run in their way, without having any idea how the world actually

runs. They don't understand the complexity of things; everything looks black or white to them. They say, 'This is what *ought* to be done. Let's *do* it!'"

"If their parents could listen in on their children's bull sessions, I think they'd make an interesting discovery," said another faculty member. "The kids are talking and worrying about the same things their fathers and mothers used to talk and worry about when *they* were in college. The times have certainly changed, but the basic agony—the bittersweet agony of discovering its own truths, which every generation has to go through—is the same as it's always been."

"Don't worry about it. Don't try to spare the kids these pains, or tell them they'll see things differently when they're older. Let them work it out. This is the way we become educated—and maybe even civilized."

"I'd add only one thing," said a professor emeritus who estimates he has known 12,000 students over the years. "It never occurred to me to worry about students as a group or a class or a generation. I *have* worried about them as individuals. They're all different. By the way: when you learn that, you've made a pretty profound discovery."

"The College Student"

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