

AUGUST, 2010

13754 – Empathy: College Students Don't Have as Much as They Used To

Associated Press, Today's college students are not as empathetic as college students of the 1980s and '90s, a University of Michigan study shows. The study, presented in Boston at the annual meeting of the Association for Psychological Science, analyzes data on empathy among almost 14,000 college students over the last 30 years.

"We found the biggest drop in empathy after the year 2000," said Sara Konrath, a researcher at the U-M Institute for Social Research. "College kids today are about 40 percent lower in empathy than their counterparts of 20 or 30 years ago, as measured by standard tests of this personality trait." Konrath conducted the meta-analysis, combining the results of 72 different studies of American college students conducted between 1979 and 2009, with U-M graduate student Edward O'Brien and undergraduate student Courtney Hsing.

Compared to college students of the late 1970s, the study found, college students today are less likely to agree with statements such as "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective" and "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me."

In a related but separate analysis, Konrath found that nationally representative samples of Americans see changes in other people's kindness and helpfulness over a similar time period. "Many people see the current group of college students—sometimes called 'Generation Me'—as one of the most self-centered, narcissistic, competitive, confident and individualistic in recent history," said Konrath, who is also affiliated with the University of Rochester Department of Psychiatry. "It's not surprising that this growing emphasis on the self is accompanied by a corresponding devaluation of others," O'Brien said.

Why is empathy declining among young adults? Konrath and O'Brien suggest there could be several reasons, which they hope to explore in future research. "The increase in exposure to media during this time period could be one factor," Konrath said. "Compared to 30 years ago, the average American now is exposed to three times as much 'non-work-related' information. In terms of media content, this generation of college students grew up with video games, and a growing body of research, including work done by my colleagues at Michigan, is establishing that exposure to violent media numbs people to the pain of others."

The recent rise of social media may also play a role in the drop in empathy, suggests O'Brien. "The ease of having 'friends' online might make people more likely to just tune out when they don't feel like responding to others' problems, a behavior that could carry over offline," he said.

Add in the hypercompetitive atmosphere and inflated expectations of success, borne of celebrity "reality shows," and you have a social environment that works against slowing down and listening to someone who needs a bit of sympathy, he says. "College students today may be so busy worrying about themselves and their own issues that they don't have time to spend empathizing with others, or at least perceive such time to be limited," O'Brien said.

13755 – America's Best Colleges

Forbes, The best public and private colleges and universities, from the student's point of view isn't in Cambridge or Princeton, West Point or Annapolis. It's nestled in the Berkshire Mountains. Williams College, a 217-year-old private liberal arts school, tops our third annual ranking of America's Best Colleges. Our list of more than 600 undergraduate institutions is based on the quality of the education they provide, the experiences of the students and how much they achieve.

Williams rose to the top spot in the rankings, which are compiled with research from the Center for College Affordability & Productivity, after placing fourth last year and fifth in 2008. It's a small school (just over 2,000 undergrads) with a 7-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio, affording students the chance to really get to know their teachers and have a unique college experience. "One of the things that we really embrace is that we are tiny and very aware of where we are in the world. This fosters an incredible sense of community," says Amanda Esteves-Kraus, a double-major in art history and biology in the class of 2012. "It takes a very specific type of student to go to Williams, and there is a quirkiness here that you can't find anywhere else. This all makes the fact that we are in the middle of nowhere totally irrelevant because you don't actually want to be anywhere else."

Top Ten:

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|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Williams College | 6. Stanford University |
| 2. Princeton University | 7. Swarthmore College |
| 3. Amherst College | 8. Harvard University |
| 4. United States Military Academy | 9. Claremont McKenna College |
| 5. M.I.T. | 10. Yale University |

13756 – College Student Hacks Watch into Gesture Interface Mouse

TechNewsDaily, Spurred on by the best inspiration of all, laziness, Texas Instruments intern and college sophomore Jack Toole has hacked the TI eZ430-Chronos watch to create a hands-free mouse. Whereas many gesture interface devices cost hundreds of dollars and require advanced technology, Toole's "Flying Mouse" allows web surfing from across the room at only the cost of the watch itself.

The Flying Mouse grew out of a competition to find the best eZ430 application that Texas Instruments held for its interns. The watch comes with the ability to connect to Windows computers via a USB radio receiver, but leaves the software, and the capabilities of the watch, up to the user. Toole had plugged his computer into his TV to watch some videos, when the perfect contest entry hit him. "I was watching TV on Hulu, and I thought it's nice to watch TV on your computer, and but I had to get up every time I wanted to pause, or rewind," Toole said. "I realized you can use [the eZ430] for video games, browsing the web, anything else you might do when you're not sitting at your keyboard."

After quickly checking the internet to make sure no one had beat him to the punch, Toole started writing the software to transform a watch into a mouse. The watch contains an accelerometer, like the Nintendo Wii controller, that allows it to track motion. To left click the mouse, Toole rigged the computer to recognize the motion signature of high frequency movement, so a shake of the wrist or a snap of the fingers can open any application. To right click or scroll, Toole remapped the buttons on the right side of the watch. Additionally, the Flying Mouse has a joystick mode that converts the watch into a dedicated gaming device.

The Flying Mouse eventually won second prize in the competition, but it did show enough promise that TI engineers quizzed Toole afterwards in the hope of integrating the technology into the watch's basic software bundle. So far, responses have been positive, but since Toole released the software as open source, there's no money to be made.

13757 – In Hunt for Prestige, Colleges May Undermine Their Public Mission

Associated Press, The Internal Revenue Service's 79-page report on colleges' tax compliance was a thorough reminder of just how big and complex higher education has become. That complexity affirms the concerns of some higher-education experts that many large research universities are placing too much priority on activities that raise the profile and prestige of their institutions but do little to improve undergraduate education. Such activities include contracts for private research and public-private partnerships to market new patents.

"In some of these places, undergraduate education has never been a top priority," says Jane V. Wellman, executive director of the Delta Project on Postsecondary Education Costs, Productivity, and Accountability. The issue is whether the increasing amount of support coming from sources outside state tax dollars "is causing these institutions ... to move away from their public mission. The answer in too many cases is, unfortunately, yes."

The scope of money-making activities on college campuses has been widening for decades, especially at the nation's largest universities, some of which operate dozens of side businesses and nonprofit organizations. In a questionnaire sent out to 400 public and private colleges in late 2008, the IRS asked institutions to list whether they engaged in any of 47 different activities that might be taxable, including catalog and Internet sales, mailing-list rentals, travel tours, credit-card promotions, hotel and conference-center operations—even electric-power generation. Colleges report that about half of those ventures lose money every year, the IRS has noted.

That list is just part of the picture: 63 percent of large universities that responded to the IRS survey said they were engaged in some "other" activity that generated more than \$50,000 in gross revenue per year. Like many institutions, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor has placed a growing emphasis on improving its research profile with money from grants, contracts, and private donors, even as its state support has dwindled.

But that change in emphasis has come at a cost. While its grants and gifts have gone up, the percentage of money it spends on core teaching and student services has gone down. Many students, of course, benefit from the private support and research dollars, as the university has built better facilities and attracted world-class faculty members.

But the research aspirations of many large universities are in conflict with their founding principles, Ms. Wellman says, especially as undergraduate admissions has become more selective. "When you look at the whole pattern ... the institutional goals are being defined in language that is very much about enhancing the institution's prestige and pecking order," she says.

Kent J. Chabotar, president of Guilford College, in North Carolina, agrees. He says that another result of the chase for research dollars is that measures for faculty assessment and promotion rely too heavily on the research output and publication and too little on the quality of classroom teaching. Mr. Chabotar said that across the country there's been some incremental movement toward making research universities more interested in undergraduate education, but not as much as there should be. "I'm not pushing for banning research," he says, but there should be more flexibility and balance in the criteria."

Philip J. Hanlon, Michigan's vice provost for academic and budgetary affairs, says that concern over whether the university's research mission is displacing its priority on undergraduate education is a "real issue" and comes up fairly often, even among faculty members. "It's hard to dispel the myth," he says. "A lot of people in universities believe that."

13758 –Drinking Games Go Legit

Burlington, NJ Courier-Post Staff, Ryan Smith remembers when drinking and hand-eye coordination didn't mix. Vaguely. But Smith says the line between alcohol and athletics has blurred since the days when pinball machines and dart boards were cool. These days, the refreshments and the game are one and the same.

Drinking games with names such as beer pong and flip cup – and others whose names are unprintable for a newspaper – have become ubiquitous, never more so than during holidays. They have gained legitimacy in bars, cash tournaments and family parties. “It comes from the drinking games,” said Smith, director of marketing at Cherry Hill's Top Dog, of the bar's biweekly beer-pong tournaments. “It was a side game for us and has grown into a tournament.”

Lucky to have drawn a dozen people as recently as January, Top Dog now averages about 125 every Tuesday and Friday, some of whom come from two hours away to play for the \$250 jackpot. “These kids are so skilled,” he said.

But drinking games are no longer child's play. More and more families have welcomed drinking games into their households; with players of both genders participating and multiple generations placing games like beer pong and flip cup at the head of the table. Smith sees such equal opportunity at Top Dog. “The girls are getting involved just as much as the guys,” said Smith, adding the cups are filled with water, not beer, to discourage binge drinking. “When the games are out there, everybody is playing, the full range of ages.”

There's a science to the drinking. In a June study, researchers at the Rutgers Center of Alcohol Studies in New Brunswick explored the drinking patterns of rodents and found males and females each drink more alcohol in the presence of the opposite sex. The same is true with women; they tend to booze more in the company of men, said Arthur Tomie, researcher and psychology professor at Rutgers. Males, on the other hand, are prone to drink most heavily with the same sex, a phenomenon known as the fraternity effect. “In humans, when you have a male with another male, they seem to push each other and encourage each other to drink,” Tomie noted.

The study looks into how social pressures trigger alcohol use and abuse, including binge drinking. It may also explain why Tommy Kuzob's favorite drinking game is whichever one the ladies are playing. “First, we play anything the girls are interested in,” said the 23-year-old Burlington Township resident. And for added motivation, drinking games can make people more than drunk. It can make them rich, as evidenced by the \$25,000 prize awarded to the winner of last June's Second Annual Atlantic City Beer Pong Championship.

But lost in the blurry merriment is the danger. Alcohol is a toxin, and an addictive one at that. In 2008, the U.S. Surgeon General estimated alcohol abuse leads to annual deaths of 5,000 Americans under age 21, making it the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death for Americans each year. In a fraternity, Tomie said, it's all about keeping up with the Bacardis and the brotherhood. “There's an air of competition in fraternities -- who can drink more, who can hold their liquor,” Tomie said. “They start doing shots and that's a contest.”

In a single round of “beer die” – a table game played with one partner, one die and a more than six-foot-high net – players can unwittingly imbibe up to five beers. “Our reputation would be on the line,” recalled Kozub, who attended Rowan University in Glassboro. “It starts out fun but it ends up pretty competitive.” Though the common perception is that college students make up the majority of binge drinkers, 70 percent of reported binge-drinking episodes involve adults over the age of 25.

There are some games that require no props or even stimulation. Some have taken to eye shots, or vodka eyeballing, pouring straight vodka directly into one's eye socket with the hope of getting it into the bloodstream quicker. As seen in various YouTube videos, the trend is not only disturbing but dangerous, leading to impaired vision and scarring.

13759 – Values Statements to Live By

Bauer Ethics Seminars, A frightening number companies say that they really don't need a values statement because, after all, everything is covered in their mission statement. That's usually a sure sign that either the mission statement or its application needs some serious work. Both are frequently the case.

Mission statements are intended to be a summary statement of why your organization exists and concisely let the world know what your purpose is. That is, after all, what a mission is. A values statement, on the other hand, should equally concisely tell your employees and the rest of the world, the essential values on which your organization runs. Among your values statement's most critical functions are to:

- Make clear to employees and constituents the values that are to inform your decision-making all day, every day. In other words, when there isn't a rule for something, or when there are multiple possible ways to make a decision, your values statement should effectively guide all employees' choices regarding what to do.
- Allow employees to unambiguously judge the appropriateness of every action in their workday by discerning whether or not those actions are aligned with your values. If they cannot clearly discern whether or not an action is aligned with your values that is a sign that your values statement needs further work.
- Accurately tell the public what values they can expect to see brought actively to life in the course of dealing with every member of your organization.

To achieve the above, a values statement must be both written and implemented appropriately. Once that is done, the value of a well-written values statement is truly enormous. It not only creates an easily-applied guide and gauge for the appropriateness of employees' behavior, but simultaneously becomes the foundation for driving highly effective and efficient management, leadership, constituent-service, and branding initiatives. That's a powerful combination!

If you have a values statement that is both written and implemented properly, here are just a few of the ways in which that values statement will provide *huge* value to your organization:

- Everyone from the front lines up through senior management will truly be on the same page with priorities and goals. Can you really afford not to make that happen?
- Constituent service will improve - not automatically but remarkably easily. Once your employees and constituents both know precisely how decisions are to be made and your values statement should address this in some way - then constituents' minds are set at ease and their experience with you improves. Is there anyone left out there who's willing to argue that a positive constituent experience is not at the core of constituent satisfaction.
- As many of you have heard from me before, your values are also significant in helping you develop and support your brand. Of course, merely saying what your values are does nothing to help brand you. However, assuring that your values are reliably and tangibly built into every action of every employee means that your values become a positive part of your customers' experience as well as the experience of everyone else dealing with and within your company. When your values are that linked that completely to your way of doing business, your brand becomes inescapably associated with those values and, I promise you, the world around you notices. (Remember, they're already noticing whether or not they can discern what you stand for. You might as well take control and be sure that *you* know what you stand for!)

These are just three of many ways in which a great values statement will bring huge value to your company.

13760 – Wear Wristwatch? Use E-Mail? Not for Class of '14

Associated Press, For students entering college this fall, e-mail is too slow, phones have never had cords and the computers they played with as kids are now in museums. The Class of 2014 thinks of Clint Eastwood more as a sensitive director than as Dirty Harry urging punks to “go ahead, make my day.” Few incoming freshmen know how to write in cursive or have ever worn a wristwatch.

These are among the 75 items on this year's Beloit College Mindset List. The compilation is assembled each year by two officials at this private school of about 1,400 students in Beloit, Wis. The list is meant to remind teachers that cultural references familiar to them might draw blank stares from college freshmen born mostly in 1992. Of course, it can also have the unintended consequence of making people feel old. Remember when Dr. Jack Kevorkian, Dan Quayle or Rodney King were in the news? These kids don't. Ever worry about a Russian missile strike on the U.S.? During these students' lives, Russians and Americans have always been living together in outer space.

Being aware of the generation gap helps professors craft lesson plans that are more meaningful, said Ron Nief, a former public affairs director at Beloit College and one of the list's creators. Nief and English professor Tom McBride have assembled the Mindset List for 13 years. They say it's given them an unusual perspective on cultural shifts.

For example, as item No. 13 on the list says, “Parents and teachers feared that Beavis and Butt-head might be the voice of a lost generation.” With far edgier content available today, such as “South Park” or online videos that push the envelope, there's something quaint about recalling the hand-wringing that the MTV cartoon prompted, Nief said. “I think we do that with every generation — we look back and say, what were we getting so upset about?” he said. “A, kids outgrow it and B, in retrospect we realize it really wasn't that bad.”

Another Mindset List item reflects a possible shift in Hollywood attitudes. Item No. 12 notes: “Clint Eastwood is better known as a sensitive director than as Dirty Harry.” A number of incoming freshmen said they partially agreed with the item, noting they were familiar with Eastwood's work as an actor even if they hadn't seen his films. “I know he directed movies but I also know he's supposed to be sort of bad-ass,” said Aaron Ziontz, 18, from Seattle.

Jessica Peck, a 17-year-old from Portland, Ore., disagreed with two items on the list – one that says few students know how to write in cursive, and another that suggests this generation seldom if ever uses snail mail. “Snail mail's kind of fun. When I have time I like writing letters to friends and family,” she said. “It's just a bit more personal. And yes, I write in cursive.” Peck did agree with the item pointing out that most teens have never used telephones with cords. “Yes, I've used them but only at my grandparents' house,” she said.

That's the sort of comment that can make a person feel old. McBride jokes that he's not immune from feeling ancient just because he compiles the items. But the 65-year-old said the lists can also reveal a larger truth about tolerance. The “Beavis and Butt-head” item suggests that maybe parents shouldn't overreact every time a controversy arises, he noted. For example, maybe it's no big deal if college freshmen misspell words when they text, and maybe their attention spans will be just fine even though they grew up in the Internet age, he said.

“There's something about the resilience of human nature that renders these gloom-and-doom prophecies moot after a while,” he said. “I can't say for sure, but it looks like the track record of these very anxious prophets has not been impressive over the years.”

COLONIZATIONS, CHARTERINGS, CLOSINGS

Colonizations

Alpha Gamma Delta – Boise State University, Syracuse University

Phi Gamma Delta – University of Missouri, Colorado College, Oklahoma City University, Coastal Carolina University, Vanderbilt University

Pi Kappa Phi – University of Oklahoma

Theta Phi Alpha – University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Triangle – University of Cincinnati, Oregon State University

Charterings

Phi Gamma Delta – Michigan State University, University of North Texas, California University of Pennsylvania, Appalachian State University, East Carolina University

Closings

Phi Kappa Sigma – Marist College

Sigma Alpha Epsilon – Drexel University

Triangle – University of Nebraska

PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS, NEWS

Alpha Sigma Tau – has hired Allison Bressler, Alumnae & Volunteer Services Coordinator; Holly Morris, Collegiate Services Coordinator, Rachel Presskreischer, New York University, Educational Consultant. AST has moved into its new office at 3334 Founders Road, Indianapolis, 317-613-7575, 317-613-7111 (fax).

Chi Phi – has hired Deanne Walters, Director of Undergraduate Services; Kip Morse, Coordinator of Alumni Services; Trevor Sheffield, Coordinator of Communications; and David Ebner, Field Executive.

Delta Chi – At the recent convention, the “John J. Kuhn Award” for Service to the Fraternity Movement was presented to Richard N. McKaig for 2009 and George Spasyk for 2010. John J. Kuhn was Delta Chi's first NIC Chairman (1923).

Delta Tau Delta –Garth B. Eberhart has left the Fraternity staff and will pursue other career opportunities. Eberhart has served as a member of the Fraternity's Central Office staff since 1992 when he began as a chapter leadership consultant. He has served as assistant executive vice president since 1996. “We are grateful to Garth for his many years of service to the Delt membership and the fraternal movement while on the Fraternity's headquarters staff,” Russell said. “We wish him well in his future endeavors.” Eberhart may be reached via: garth.eberhart@gmail.com

Kappa Alpha Order – has hired a second Expansion Director. Andrew P. Carr has joined the staff of KA as one of two Associate Directors for Chapter Development.

National Panhellenic Conference – is actively seeking a Business Operations Coordinator to assist in carrying out the mission of the NPC by overseeing and actively coordinating office and event activities including, but not limited to invoicing, reporting, exhibitor/sponsor coordination and general office activities. Please contact Nicki Meneley, Executive Director for more information, nicki@npcwomen.org.

Pi Kappa Phi – David Meigs, has succeeded Abbie Schneider as Director of Leadership; Nick Breaux was hired as Push America’s Program Consultant; and Kyle Thomas is returning to Push America’s staff as Director of Special Events.

At its recent convention Pi Kappa Phi, the fraternity honored Richard McKaig, longtime Dean of Students at Indiana University and member of Delta Chi Fraternity, with its Durward W. Owen Interfraternity Award. Earlier during the convention, Push America’s Build America team arrived at Supreme Chapter to a standing ovation, concluding the team’s six weeks of constructing accessible environments at camps for people with disabilities. The team raised nearly \$60,000 over the summer, for people with disabilities. One week later, Push America’s Journey of Hope cycling teams finished their two-month trek across the U.S. on the Capitol lawn in Washington, D.C. More than 400 people were in the nation’s capital to celebrate the conclusion of the Journey of Hope 2010, which raised more than \$500,000 for people with disabilities.

In late July, the fraternity hosted its inaugural Fraternity/Sorority Life Summit. Sixteen fraternity/sorority life professionals from across the Southeast attended the event, which included breakout sessions and roundtable discussions about how headquarters staff members and fraternity/sorority life professional can collaborate to improve student members’ experience.

Sigma Alpha Epsilon – has hired Alex Hand as Coordinator of Extension and John Kovalan as the Cook Regional Director.

Triangle – announces that Chad Girard, a 2009 initiate at Michigan Technological University and 2009 graduate of the Undergraduate Interfraternity Institute, has begun working as the Education & Leadership Consultant. Chad will serve as the primary traveling consultant for Triangle Fraternity and provide assistance with the fall expansion projects. Rhonda Halcomb is celebrating her 18th year as the Director of Operations for Triangle Fraternity, while Lynne Foster was advanced to Director of Membership in her 17th year working on staff.

Triangle Fraternity is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Institute for Shipboard Education and Semester at Sea as they launch its first voyage focusing specifically on engineering. Entitled “Engineering a New Tomorrow”, engineering students and students from all majors will spend 26 days doing course work on the *MV Explorer* and field work in 7 countries, including an exploration of the Panama Canal Expansion Project. With a curriculum designed around the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of improving quality of life in eight key areas, students will build global skills by working in multidisciplinary teams, collaborating with partners in each country, working to understand the context of engineering problems in each place, and applying technology appropriate to cultural context. This voyage is open to all members of Triangle Fraternity – undergraduates and alumni. One scholarship will be awarded to a Triangle undergraduate to attend the voyage tuition-free. The voyage will depart on May 20, 2011 and return on June 15, 2011.

Executive Director, Brian Tenclinger, served as a Fellow for the 2010 Interfraternity Institute held at Indiana University in June 2010. Additionally, Brian has been appointed the Higher Education Liaison for the Children’s Miracle Network Dance Marathon program. An estimated 600,000 college students participate in a Children’s Miracle Network Dance Marathon program at one of 116 campuses nation-wide and that list is growing. Brian has been involved with the Dance Marathon program since 1998 where he started the event at Iowa State University and now nationally for many years. He will work with the Children’s Miracle Network staff to target new markets for the Dance Marathon program at campuses across the country, as well as work to create new partnership with higher education partners and trade associations.

Zeta Beta Tau – welcomes two new staff members: Laura Trusty and Sam Freundlich. Laura is the new Coordinator of Leadership and Assessment for ZBT. A recent graduate from a master’s program in Higher Education at Ball State, Laura is a member of Sigma Delta Tau Sorority (initiated into the chapter at Purdue) and is currently earning an additional graduate degree in Non-Profit Management at IUPUI.

Sam joins the expansion team as the newest Expansion and Leadership Consultant and will be traveling mainly in the Northeast working with existing colonies and interest groups. Sam is a 2010 graduate of the University of Rhode Island.

Stu Gittleman – leaves for Kuwait (staging area for Iraq) tomorrow. Looks like a one year deployment. Say hello to everyone for me and I’ll send along some meatier updates down the road.