CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Sociologists attempt to understand human behavior by examining the culture in which people live. They define culture in terms of social structure, or the patterned ways in which individuals and groups relate to one another and society. The three main components of social structure are role, group, and status. Role relates to the behavior and rights associated with a social position. Group is defined as a collection of people who interact with one another based on the roles and statuses to which they feel they belong. The final aspect of social structure, status, relates to any position that determines where a person fits into society (Carruth, 1988).

People occupy numerous statuses. For example, a person can be Black, a female, a Roman Catholic, a teacher, and a mother. These are all statuses that define a person and affect how others view that individual (Carruth, 1988). Other classifications of status have also been described in the literature.

One such classification of status is ascribed status, or types of statuses over which people have no control. These statuses are assigned at birth or as one grows older. Examples of ascribed statuses include race, gender, and age (Carruth, 1988). Another example of an ascribed status is membership in a generation.

Researchers have identified different segments of the American population as distinct generations. There are two ways to define generations. The first relies on birth rates and fertility rates. Birth rates deal with the number of births among women age 15 to 44, and fertility rates deal with the number of children women age 15 to 44 have (Morgan, 1998). Generations are then defined in terms of the trends in the number of

births and the fertility rate. For example, the period 1946 to 1964 was defined as a generation in large part due to the sharp increase in the number of births and fertility rates of women age 15 to 44. When both the number of births and the fertility rates declined, that generation ended. It was replaced with a new generation marked by fewer children (lower birth rate) and smaller families (lower fertility rate) (Morgan, 1998).

The second way generations are defined involves the social events through which people during a certain period live. This is commonly referred to as a generational identity. Generational identity is based on the assumption that historical events have a formative influence on people's views and behavior. Collective experiences shape generations and provide members with a sense of cohesion (Hornblower, 1997; Levine; 1993; Smith & Clurman, 1997; Vesperi, 1998). For example, pop culture, the economy, politics, and world events link members of a generation (Smith & Clurman, 1997). These events leave their mark on the generation and create a common history and a collective memory (Hornblower, 1997; Levine, 1993).

The idea of a common history suggests that as times change, so do generations. Cohort effects can explain the idea of generational changes. Cohort effects refer to the differences in the formative experiences that shape different generations for life. It acknowledges that generations have experienced different significant events and have been affected by events differently (Edmondson, 1995).

Of course, no generation is homogeneous in its beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Individuals make up generations, and categorizing individuals by a single definition is not feasible. However, understanding generations' demographics and common history can offer insight into their lives and actions (Losyk, 1997).

Four generations have marked the twentieth century: the Swing Generation, the Baby Boom, Generation X, and the Baby Boomlet. The Swing generation includes those individuals born between 1909 and 1945. They are also referred to as "matures", or the World War II generation (Hornblower, 1997; Mitchell, 1996a). This generation's common history includes the Great Depression of the 1930s, World War II, and the GI Bill (Carruth, 1988; Hornblower, 1997; Smith & Clurman, 1997).

The Great Depression of the 1930s had a tremendous effect on American life. On October 29, 1929, the Stock Market crashed and the livelihood of the nation took a tremendous blow. Between 1929 and 1932, farm income fell 50%, industry operated at half its former capacity, and nearly 1,500 banks failed, wiping out the life savings of millions of Americans (Carruth, 1988).

This economic state devastated people's lives. Americans lost their savings, homes, and jobs. More than 12 million Americans, or one-quarter of the work force were unemployed. Members of the Swing Generation knew what it meant to live without, and they never forgot it (Carruth, 1988).

World War II also had a tremendous effect on the Swing Generation. In 1941, America entered a two-front war that would last until 1945 and result in 16 million Americans serving in military units (Carruth, 1988). Images of the GI soldier leaving for war, Kilroy, and Rosie the Riveter represent their lives (Golway, 1995).

Industry and agriculture mobilized to create the American war machine. America's wartime economy provided millions of new jobs, higher wages, and factory jobs for women. The economy finally began to turn around. After the war, America became the world's leading industrial and military power (Carruth, 1988).

Another important event in the lives of members of the Swing Generation was the prominence that entertainment gained. Movies played a significant role in the lives of the Swing Generation. When "The Jazz Singer", the first full-length movie with sound aired, it changed the face of American motion pictures. Popular films from 1927 to 1945 included "Gone With The Wind", "All Quiet on the Western Front", "Casablanca", and "Grand Hotel". Popular post-war movies (1945-1960) included "From Here to Eternity", "Around the World in 80 Days", "The Best Years of Our Lives", and "All About Eve" (Calkins, 1975; Carruth, 1988).

The Swing Generation also was the first generation for whom television became a part of daily life. The first 10 years of active broadcasting, 1948 until 1958, set patterns for television that still exist today. Popular shows such as, "I Love Lucy", "The Ed Sullivan Show", and "The $64,000 Question" aired during this time (Carruth, 1988).

The GI Bill of Rights, enacted shortly after World War II, also played a significant role in the lives of this generation. Millions of American veterans took advantage of the opportunities the GI Bill offered. One such opportunity dealt with education (Carruth, 1998).

The GI Bill offered money for tuition and living expenses for veterans who wanted to attend college or a training school. GIs went to college in unprecedented numbers, helping raise the national educational level. With their education, many veterans were able to enter profitable occupations (Carruth, 1988).

The GI Bill also offered low-cost loans to veterans who wanted to buy homes or start families. Large numbers of the Swing Generation began to start families. The number of births and fertility rates among the Swing Generation increased dramatically

after World War II (Carruth, 1988). Members of the Swing Generation are the parents of the next generation identified by sociologists, the Baby Boom.

The Baby Boom Generation includes those born between 1946 and 1964. This period produced 77 million Americans who comprise 30% of the current US population (Edmondson, 1995; Losyk, 1997). The Baby Boom reflected a sharp increase in the birth rate among women age 15 through 44. This increase was especially noticeable when compared to the low birth rates from 1930 to 1945 due to the Great Depression and World War II (Morgan, 1998).

The Baby Boom's common history revolves around reaching adulthood from the mid-1960s through the late 1970s. Their common history includes events such as the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, Watergate, and the feminist movement (Alwin, 1998). These events shaped the way Boomers viewed their world. Boomers began to question things, including their government. These movements called for social action by America's youth. Boomers believed they were the ones who could solve the country's problems.

Boomers also grew up during a time of affluence. America was in a period of unparalleled economic progress during the Boomers' formative years. This progress allowed Boomers to focus on idealism and personal growth (Hornblower, 1997).

A growth in television and a decline in motion pictures also occurred during the time of the Baby Boomer's formative years. The huge popularity of movies began to wane in the 1950s. While movies such as, "Lawrence of Arabia", "The Sound of Music", "The Godfather", and the "French Connection" achieved success, the medium never reached the heights it once commanded. The main reason for this decline was television.

Most people owned television sets and no longer had to leave their homes to watch their favorite actors (Calkins, 1975; Carruth, 1988).

The 1960s and 1970s saw a change in television programming. Television helped elect President John F. Kennedy when his debate with Richard Nixon aired on television. When President Kennedy was assassinated, television brought the nation together. Coverage of his death lasted three days and was watched by most Americans. During this crisis, television showed the immense power it had in uniting people and shaping events (Carruth, 1988).

Television continued to exert influence over this time. Americans were able to sit in their homes and watch the first man land on the moon. They also watched another Kennedy assassination, heard the daily death tolls from Vietnam broadcast on the evening news, and listened to the Watergate hearings. Famous television programs such as, "All in the Family", "Roots", and "Sesame Street" were all created during this era (Carruth, 1988).

Another common bond among Boomers was a change in family life. One change involved the birth rates among Boomers. They had fewer children then their parents. Boomers also waited longer than their parents did to have those children. Many female Boomers did not have children until they were in their 30s (Morgan, 1998). Boomers also have a different view on marriage and divorce than their parents have.

American divorce rates increased as Boomers began to marry. The divorce rate increased approximately 250% between 1960 and 1980. Of course, divorce does not solely affect adults. In the 1960s, 50% of Americans felt that parents (the Swing Generation) in a less than fully satisfying marriage should make an effort to save the

marriage for the sake of the children. That figure fell to about 20 % by 1994. (Galston, 1996). The Baby Boomers are the parents of the next generation identified by sociologists, Generation X.

Members of Generation X include those born between 1965 and 1976. This period produced 44 million American children. (Buck & Rembert, 1997; Losyk, 1997). Generation X is also known as the Baby Bust, reflecting the birth rate which fell to a low of 14.6 births per 1,000 people (Losyk, 1997).

This generation's common history includes many negative events which led to a feeling of pessimism among Xers. Researchers view the Challenger explosion as Generation X's equivalent to President Kennedy's assassination. Many Xers were scheduled to have Christa McAuliffe, a teacher who was on the space shuttle, teach their classes from space. Subsequently, many watched the broadcast in their classrooms as the Challenger exploded. Xers report that the explosion made them realize that America was not perfect. They lost their innocence (Chinni, 1997; Levine, 1993; Levine & Cureton, 1998; Losyk, 1997).

Researchers cite AIDS as another significant event in the lives of Generation X. They learned about AIDS in school, through the media, and from parents. It is a part of everyday life for this generation (Chinni, 1997; Levine, 1993; Levine & Cureton, 1998; Losyk, 1997). One undergraduate described the situation as, "When the Baby Boomers had sex, they got laid. When we have sex, we get AIDS." (Levine & Cureton, 1998 p. 27). Unfortunately, this knowledge has not translated into safe sexual practices for Xers. In 1993, AIDS was the leading cause of death of young adults in 64 cities. Worldwide,

the number of people with AIDS is expected to increase from 14 million to 30 million by the year 2000 (Losyk, 1997).

Even events that initially appeared positive took on a negative light for members of Generation X. The end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War are two examples of such events. Initially, Xers were optimistic about the lasting effects that these two events would have. However, they now cite instability in the former Soviet Union and the fact that Sadam Hussein is still in power in Iraq as negative outcomes associated with these events (Chinni, 1997; Levine, 1993; Levine & Cureton, 1998).

The economic climate in which Xers grew up also shaped their lives. The economic growth that shaped the Boomers' experience did not exist for Generation X. Xers grew up during the recession of the early 1980s, the stock market crash of 1987, and the recession of 1990 to 1991 (Hornblower, 1997). They also saw wage rates decline as they began to reach young adulthood. Between 1983 and 1992, the median earnings for men aged 16 to 24 and working full-time dropped 9%, from $314 to $285 per week. The earnings of women in the same category dropped from $277 to $267 (Hornblower, 1997; Zill & Robinson, 1995). Consequently, Xers do not assume financial success will be theirs. (Hornblower, 1997).

Another event that took place during Xers' youth was a shift in the public attitude towards children. From the late 1960s until the early 1980s, America experienced its most anti-child period in modern history. During Xers' childhood, school funding declined and the Zero Population Growth movement stated that additional children in families were draining world resources. It was also during Xers' youth that negative

phrases such as "latchkey children" and "throwaway children" entered the nation's vocabulary (Howe & Strauss, 1997).

Family life also affected Generation X. The Boomers changed American family life. Their children, Generation X, have experienced the effects of those changes. Divorce played a significant role in the lives of Generation X. Forty percent of Xers are children of divorce. This caused emotional conflict that influenced their views on interpersonal relationships, marriage, and their self-worth (Losyk, 1997).

Members of Generation X also spent a considerable amount of time alone. Many Xers were latchkey children who returned to an empty house after school. In addition, they were the first generation to spend a large amount of time in daycare. Both of these events contributed to Xers becoming very independent, individualistic, freedom-minded, and self-absorbed (Losyk, 1997). Like their parents, the Boomers, who delayed child rearing, Xers also have delayed many life events.

As a whole, Xers have graduated from college later, and have lived at home longer. After college, many returned home and stayed there. Thirty percent of men and women in their 20s live with their parents. The high cost of living and student loan debts are cited as two reasons for this trend (Hornblower, 1997).

However, some researchers wonder if members of Generation X have delayed being on their own due to all the time they spent alone as children (Losyk, 1997). Many did not have close family relationships as children. Out of necessity, they became independent and self-reliant from a very young age. That could have left them with a void that they are now trying to fill by creating close family relationships later in life.

Members of Generation X have not only delayed moving out of their parents' homes, but also they have delayed marriage. Xers are marrying much later in life than their parents did. The average age for marriage among men increased from 23 in 1970 to 27 in 1997. For women, it has increased from 21 to 25 (Hornblower, 1997).

Some researchers believe this delay in marriage might have a positive effect. Generation X resents the amount of time their parents spent working. Xers want to be more involved in the lives of their children and provide a more stable home life than they experienced as children. Some researchers believe the fact that they are marrying when they are older and more mature will cause the divorce rate to drop over time (Losyk, 1997).

Another important event in the lives of Generation X was the exponential growth of television and technology. Xers have watched more television than any previous generation (Losyk, 1997). Popular television shows from Xers' youth included "Saturday Night Live", "The Muppet Show", "Happy Days", "Dallas", and "Miami Vice". It was also during this time that MTV was created, leading to Xers' title as the "MTV Generation" (Komives, 1993). As television gained prominence, other forms of entertainment declined in popularity (Zill & Robinson, 1995).

In 1982, 60% of 18 to 24 year olds had read a novel, short story, poetry, or play 12 months prior to the study. That number fell to 53% in 1992. Similarly, 41% of young adults did not read a single book that was not required for school or work 12 months prior to the study in 1992 (Zill & Robinson, 1995). However, not all areas of art have suffered.

The number of Xers visiting art museums or galleries has increased since 1982. Some believe that this increase reflects the generations' interest in visual arts, as opposed to other forms of entertainment (Zill & Robinson, 1995).

Another positive event for this generation is their use of technology. Generation X is the first truly computer-literate generation in America. Computers were part of the classrooms in which Xers were educated. Many had personal computers and video games at home. They are able to master new computer programs and do not fear computers the way many older Americans do (Losyk, 1997). Their computer literacy has helped them in the workplace. They are starting their own businesses and leading the development of the World Wide Web (Hornblower, 1997).

Sociologists have identified a last distinctive generation during the twentieth century, the Baby Boomlet. Members of the Baby Boomlet include those born between 1977 and 1994. This period produced 72 million Americans who comprise 28% of the total US population (Edmondson, 1995). The birth rate rose during this time because of Baby Boomers having children (Morgan, 1998). The Baby Boomlet is also referred to as the Echo Boom, Generation Y, and the Millennial Generation (Edmondson, 1995).

As the Baby Boomlet ages, the events of their lifetime will shape their common history. A defining image will be the Oklahoma City Bombing (Edmondson, 1995). The Oklahoma City Bombing was the deadliest terrorist act in American history with a death toll of 168 men, women, and children that left a permanent scar on the American psyche (Clark, 1995; Dyer, 1995). The nation realized that a terrorist act could occur on American soil. It eroded the feeling of safety that many Americans previously enjoyed. A

new reality emerged: if such a horrible event could happen in America's "heartland", no American was safe from the threat of terrorism (Clark, 1995; Dyer, 1995).

Technology represents another significant event for the Baby Boomlet. Boomleters grew up during a technological revolution that changed communication in part due to computers, fiber optics, CDs, fax machines, and much more (Edmondson, 1995; Levine & Cureton, 1998). Their outlook on the world has broadened thanks to the technological advances made in the World Wide Web during their lifetime. Their computer knowledge and skills will continue to grow in the future as well (Edmondson, 1995).

The Baby Boomlet also experienced a change in America's view towards children. The anti-children sentiment that Xers felt growing up does not exist for Boomleters. Throughout the Baby Boomlet's childhood, America has had a positive attitude towards the country's children. Bipartisan proposals to increase Headstart and Medicaid funding for toddlers, the crack-down on deadbeat dads, and a national consensus that childhood must be repaired are examples of a refocus on children. These Boomleters receive family protection and support more than Xers did while growing up (Howe & Strauss, 1997).

Researchers have also cited increases in divorce, substance use, violence, and volunteerism as significant events in the lives of America's youth (Buck & Rembert, 1997; Galston, 1996; Wechsler, 1996). Divorce is a reality in the lives of many Boomleters. America has the highest divorce rate in the industrialized world. Forty percent of all American first marriages and 60% of all American remarriages end in

divorce. Three-fifths of American divorces involve minor children, totaling more than one million children in 1996 (Galston, 1996).

Research indicates that racial differences in the prevalence of single parent households exist. In 1994, a single parent or an unmarried couple headed more than 18% of white households with children under 18 years of age. Among black households, the number was 59.5%, and for Hispanic households it was 29.1% (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1996). This leads one to assume that the effects of divorce and being raised in a single-parent household are more prevalent in the lives of minority students.

Substance abuse is another important event for members of the Baby Boomlet. Alcohol and drug use among American adolescents have gained national attention in recent years. Research reveals that the use of marijuana and other drugs and alcohol among middle and senior high school students is on the rise. There has also been a decline in the number of students who report a personal disapproval of marijuana use (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], June 1997b).

One study reported that 50.1% of students in the high school Class of 1994 had used alcohol 30 days prior to data collection. In terms of illicit drugs, nearly 22% had used marijuana 30 days prior to data collection and 8.8 % had used illicit drugs other than marijuana in the 30 days prior to data collection. (NCES, 1996).

Accessibility of alcohol and drugs is one aspect of the problem. High school students are more likely than middle school students are to report accessibility to such substances. For example, 80% of high school seniors in 1995 reported that marijuana, cocaine, crack, uppers, and downers are available at school, up from 75.6 % who reported

such availability in 1989 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1998).

However, accessibility of drugs and alcohol is not the only problem linked to the rise of

drug and alcohol use among American adolescents. Peer approval of alcohol and drug use

is also problematic.

Students in the upper grades exhibit more of a problem in terms of peer approval

of substance use than students in middle school exhibit. The peer approval levels for

alcohol use among students in grades 11 and 12 are three times greater than levels of peer

approval in grades six through eight. Marijuana and other illicit drugs are also more

likely to be approved of by older students (NCES, 1998). However, alcohol and drug use

is not the only threat to students' well being.

Violence inside and outside the classroom has also gained national attention in

recent years. The outbreak of school shootings and reports of other forms of violence

have prompted the nation to look at the scope of the problem.

In 1995, roughly 14.6% of students age 12 to 19 reported being victims of one or

more crimes at school. Victimization was reported in two categories: violent

victimization, which included physical attacks or the taking of property by direct force,

weapons, or threats; and property victimization, which included theft of property from a

desk, locker, or other location. In 1995, the level of victimization was similar to 1989's

14.5%, though there was an increase in violent victimization from 3.4% in 1989 to 4.2%

in 1995 (NCES, 1998). In both years, males were more likely to be victims of violence at

school. However, the percentage of women who were victims of violence at school grew

from 2% in 1989 to 3.3% in 1995 (NCES, 1998). The presence of gangs in schools is

often associated with the issue of violence in schools.

Teen gangs have generated a great deal of media attention and public concern. Research shows that attention is warranted. One study found that the number of students reporting the presence of street gangs in their schools increased from 15.3% in 1989 to 28.4% in 1995 (NCES, 1998). This increase in gang presence occurred while the Boomleters were matriculating through high school, and has likely affected their lives. Research on gangs also points out racial differences.

In both years, Hispanic students were more likely than White and Black students to report the presence of street gangs in their schools. Nearly 50% of Hispanic students reported the presence of street gangs in their schools. However, only 34.7% of Black students and 23% of White students reported such a presence (NCES, 1998).

Another aspect of violence relates to the ownership of guns by the country's youth. In 1994, the age group most likely to own a gun was young adults age 18 to 20. Forty-eight percent of people in this age group owned a firearm. In 1974, only 34 % of that age group owned firearms (Mitchell, 1996b). One study reported that in 1995, 5.3% of students age 12 to 19 years old had seen another student with a gun at school. In addition, 12.7% reported knowing another student who brought a gun to school (NCES, 1998). Again, these statistics suggest the high school experiences of members of the Baby Boomlet have included greater exposure to violence.

An important part of violence involves mortality rates among youth. Research shows that suicide rates are on the rise. In 1980, the suicide rate among 5 to 14 year olds in the number of deaths per 100,000 persons was 0.4. By 1992, it increased to 0.9 (NCES, 1996). This increase in suicide rates occurred as members of the Baby Boomlet were growing up and has likely influenced their generation.

Gender and racial differences in suicide rates exist. In 1992, white males were the most likely to commit suicide, followed by Black males, White females, and Black females. Similar trends were found in suicide rates among 15 to 24 year olds. In 1980, the number was 12.3 deaths per 100,000. By 1992, it increased to 13. The gender and racial make-up of suicides among this age group was the same as that of the 5 to 14 year old age group (NCES, 1996).

Homicide rates also exhibited differences by race and gender. In 1980, the homicide rate was 1.2 deaths per 100,000 persons age 5 to 14. By 1992, homicide rates increased to 1.6 per 100,000. Black males were the most likely to be victims of homicide, followed by Black females, White males, and White females. The homicide rate for 15 to 24 year olds was 15.6 deaths per 100,00 in 1980. It increased to 22.2 deaths per 100,000 in 1992. Differences by race and gender were consistent. Again, Black males (154.4) were most likely to be victims of homicide, followed by Black females (19.4), White males (18.5), and White females (4.1) (NCES, 1996).

A final significant event in the lives of the Baby Boomlet is volunteerism. There has been a significant increase in volunteerism and philanthropy among young adults. The figures on community service among high school and college students have been steadily increasing since 1988. In 1992, nearly half of 18 to 24 year olds (Generation X) had volunteered. Another study found that half of college students had participated in some form of community service while in high school. Experts believe that this trend towards volunteerism started by Generation X will continue and grow as the Baby Boomlet ages (Buck & Rembert, 1997; Levine, 1993).

One could assume that this trend of volunteerism has affected the Baby Boomlet. They were in high school during a time of resurgence in civic involvement. This refocus on involvement and the local community existed throughout the their entire high school experience (Buck & Rembert, 1997; Levine, 1993).

These sociological trends with respect to technology, childhood policies, divorce, drugs, alcohol, violence, and gangs have been reported in the literature as issues that might influence members of the Baby Boomlet. However, no research has examined how members of this generation feel that such trends have shaped their lives. This is probably due to the age of the Boomleters. The first age cohort of the Boomlet, born in 1977, entered college in 1995. In the fall of 1998, the Class of 2002 entered college. Born in 1980, they are one of the first Boomlet age cohorts to matriculate to college. These students are just reaching an age where they can reflect on the events that have occurred in their lifetimes. This provides an opportunity for scholars to study how the major events of the last 20 years have affected the lives of the Baby Boomlet generation.

The present study was designed to address this gap in the existing literature on generational studies. It explores the personal and world events that have shaped the lives of one age cohort of the Baby Boomlet, the Class of 2002. For purposes of this study, the Class of 2002 was defined as first year college students between the ages of 17 and 19 who graduated from high school in the spring of 1998, are American citizens, and enrolled in the institution where the study was conducted in the fall of 1998.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the Personal and World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002. For purposes of this study, Personal Events were defined as events that students experienced personally, or through their families, peer groups, or local communities. World Events were defined as events that occurred on a state, national, or international level to which students were exposed while growing up.

Data were collected through a survey. The survey asked respondents to list the Personal and World events that shaped their lives, to assign an effect (positive, negative, neutral) to each event, and to talk about how each event affected their life.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study explored six research questions:

1.   What were the Personal Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002?

2.   How did those Personal Events affect the lives of the Class of 2002?

3.   What were the World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002?

4.   How did those World Events affect the lives of the Class of 2002?

5.   Do the Personal and World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002 differ by race?

6.   Do the Personal and World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002 differ by gender?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant for future practice within higher education. The results of the present study might benefit faculty. Knowing the events that shaped students' lives

may enable faculty to incorporate these events into their curricula and use them as points of reference in class lectures.

The results might also inform student affairs administrators. Student affairs professionals could use the findings to alter present services or implement new services to better meet the needs of their students. For example, if the results showed that divorce negatively affected students, student affairs practitioners might increase counseling to help students cope with the effects of divorce. They could also create programs that address the effects divorce has on children.

Another segment of the population who could benefit from the present study is parents of members of the Class of 2002. Parents could use the results from this study to better understand the events that shaped their children's lives. Understanding these events and their effects could help parents understand what motivates their children. This knowledge could help bridge the generational gap between members of the Baby Boomlet and their Baby Boomer or Generation X parents.

There were also implications from the present study for future research. This study was conducted using students from only one institution. It could be replicated at other institutions to see if students on other campuses report similar results.

Other scholars may wish to conduct a similar study at different institutional types (e.g., liberal arts colleges, religious institutions, and community colleges). The present study was conducted at a large, public research university. It might be interesting to explore possible differences in results among institutional types.

Future studies could also examine regional differences among personal and world events. The present study was conducted in a mid-Atlantic state. Other scholars may wish

to conduct a similar study in different regions in the United States (e.g., Northeast, Midwest, and Southwest). It might be interesting to explore possible differences in results by geographic regions.

Finally, this study might be conducted every five years to generate longitudinal data on the Baby Boomlet generation. Such a study might reveal differences in the significant events that shaped the lives of future incoming generations of college students.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

As in all research studies, there were some limitations in this investigation. First, this study was conducted with students from one institution. The results can only be generalized to the members of the Class of 2002 who met the criteria for the study at that institution.

In qualitative research, the researcher brings into the study certain biases and preconceptions. This could affect the themes identified in the study. Such a bias might influence the results of the study and their interpretation.

The format of the survey employed in the study might also have been a limitation. It was possible that certain events might not have fit neatly into either the "Personal Event" or "World Event" categories for participants. An event that was applicable to either category or neither category might have influenced the results. For example, a student who had a drug problem might consider that a significant Personal Event. That person could also view the increase in drug use among adolescents as a significant World Event, but might not have felt that the event could be used twice. If participants had difficulty in responding to the survey, the results might have been influenced.

A final limitation relates to the nature of the sample. Participants in this study were all volunteers. These volunteers may have differed in some important way from nonvolunteers, which might have influenced the findings (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Despite these limitations, the present study provided initial insights into the events members of the Class of 2002 thought to be important in their lives. Such data could be used to guide future practice and research.

<div align="center">Organization of the Study</div>

This study was organized around five chapters. Chapter One introduced the topic to be explored and the purpose of the study. Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature, focusing on the effects events have on peoples' lives and prior generational studies. Chapter Three presents the methodology of the study, including sampling techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data. Chapter Four presents the results of the study, while the final chapter discusses those results and their implications for future practice and research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

To understand the Personal and World Events that affected the Class of 2002, it was necessary to understand the Personal and World Events that occurred during the lives of members of the Baby Boomlet. It was also important to understand the effects those events had on the people who experienced them. First, this literature review examined the sociological trends that may have influenced Personal Events in the Class of 2002's lives. Second, World Events that have occurred in the Class of 2002's lifetime are examined. Third, trends in students' awareness of current events are examined to ascertain whether students are aware of World Events. Finally, an example of a generational study conducted in 1979 and replicated in 1993 is described.

Personal Events

There are sociological trends that are likely to have influenced the personal lives of members of the Boomlet. These trends include divorce and alcohol use. The possible effects that these trends could have on Boomleters' lives need to be examined.

Divorce

One social trend that has been examined in the literature is divorce. Divorce can have several negative effects on children. Researchers offer several reasons for problems children encounter due to divorce. One reason is economic and relates to the loss of income after divorce. After divorce, there is about a 30% drop in income for children and the custodial parent (Galston, 1996).

One of the major financial problems associated with divorce relates to child support. In 1991, more than 90% of fathers who had joint custody of their children were current with their child support payments. That number fell to 79% for fathers who had visitation rights, and only 44.5% for fathers who had neither joint custody nor visitation rights (Galston, 1996).

A second cause of problems for children of divorce is intrafamily conflicts that occur before the divorce. About half of the observed post-divorce difficulties in boys stem from pre-divorce conflict. The percentage drops slightly to under half for girls (Galston, 1996).

Another negative effect of divorce is the decreased level of parental involvement in children's lives after divorce. Children of divorce are more likely to have poor relationships with their parents (especially their fathers) than children whose parents remain married (Galston, 1996; Zill & Robinson, 1995). The non-custodial parent (usually the father) often becomes detached from children's lives after divorce. The custodial parent (usually the mother) often must work outside the home as well as inside the home, diminishing the time spent with children (Galston, 1996).

In recent years, the number of households headed by divorced women or women who have never married has increased. This rise has occurred during the Class of 2002's lifetime. Nearly 40% of children in single parent households have not seen their fathers in the past year. Only one out of six children in these households sees his/her father more than once a week (Galston, 1996). These numbers are consistent with the findings of another study, which reported that 66% of young adults of divorce have poor relationships with their fathers and 33% report poor relationships with their mothers.

Only 29% of young adults whose parents remained married reported poor relationships with their fathers, and only 13% reported poor relationships with their mothers (Zill & Robinson, 1995).

Divorce also negatively affects school performance and college attendance. (Galston, 1996; Powers, 1997). Grades often suffer as a result of divorce. Children of divorce are also less likely to participate in extracurricular activities during school (Powers, 1997).

Research indicates that children of divorce are less likely to attend college, particularly a selective college, than children whose parents remain married. One study found that 3.9% of children from a two-parent household applied to selective colleges, while only 2.6% of participants from a divorced household applied to such colleges. The acceptance rates also differed. While 3.7% of students from two-parent households were accepted by selective colleges, only 2.3% of students from divorced households were accepted (Powers, 1997).

Many of the students attending one elite university come from families where the mother did not work, or did not work when the children were young. Students at this elite university also report divorce rates among their parents that are lower than the national average. The best students, emotionally and academically, tend to come from traditional families, defined as non-divorced families where the mother stayed home with the children at least until they were in school. One explanation for these findings could be the emotional stress involved in going through a divorce. The emotional stress could interfere with children's ability to achieve at the level necessary to gain admission to a top university and could affect their likelihood of attending college in general (Keil, 1998).

Teachers report dealing with more students who have severe emotional problems such as depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, sexual confusion, and difficulties with family and relationships. There has also been a significant increase in cases of depression among students (Keil, 1998; Zill & Robinson, 1995).

While depression has increased among students as a whole, it is more prevalent among students whose parents divorced. One recent study found that 30% of the participants exhibit significant symptoms of depression. However, children of divorce are twice as likely to show symptoms of depression than are students whose parents remain married (Keil, 1998).

Further research shows that more than 25% of Xers have received psychological treatment for emotional, learning, or behavior problems by the time they reach adulthood. Again, young adults whose parents divorced are twice as likely to receive therapy than are young adults whose parents remained married (Zill & Robinson, 1995). Researchers believe that the increase in depression and psychological treatment among America's youth substantiates their belief that divorce negatively affects children (Keil, 1998; Zill & Robinson, 1995).

Divorce can also affect children's ability to form meaningful relationships in later life. Overall, divorce lessens children's trust and negatively affects children's ability to form stable relationships as adults (Galston, 1996; Keil, 1998). Children of divorce often exhibit mistrust towards others. This is most noticeable in women who feel let down by their fathers. The sense of betrayal caused by the father's absence impedes the daughter in forming a trusting stable relationship with a partner as an adult (Keil, 1998).

However, it is not only children of divorce who experience problems in forming relationships. Children who experienced neglect by their parents also have problems. In America's consumer society, some parents worked to provide their children with material things and, in turn, did not give their children enough emotional attention. This emotional neglect resulted in children who never developed any real intimacy in their relationships. As these children age, they find it hard to develop meaningful relationships. They are often afraid to expect anything from others due to the disappointment they felt as children (Keil, 1998).

Researchers have found gender differences in the negative effects of divorce. Boys tend to turn outward and act out their anger and feelings of abandonment, while girls tend to turn inward and become depressed. These effects arise earlier in boys. It is often not until adulthood that the effects are seen in girls (Galston, 1996).

Alcohol Use

A second sociological trend that might affect members of the Class of 2002 is alcohol. The effects of alcohol trouble many. American college presidents rank alcohol abuse as the biggest problem on their campuses (Wechsler, 1996). College students report that the most popular recreational activity for them is drinking (Levine & Cureton, 1998). Subsequently, college students spend $5.5 billion annually on alcohol. On average, each student drinks 34 gallons of alcohol every year (Monroe, 1996).

One study found that 84% of college students report drinking during the school year. Almost half are binge drinkers. For males, five or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period constitutes binge drinking. For females, four or more drinks in a row one or more times during a two-week period constitutes binge drinking.

Nineteen percent of students are frequent binge drinkers, defined as binge drinking three or more times in the two weeks prior to the time of data collection. This finding is important because binge drinkers place themselves at a high risk for many alcohol-related problems (Wechsler, 1996).

Alcohol-related problems deal with the health, social, and academic aspects of students' lives. Examples of alcohol-related problems include having a hangover, missing a class, having unprotected sex, damage to property, and getting in trouble with the police. Approximately half of the frequent binge drinkers experience five or more of these problems because of their drinking. However, only 14% of binge drinkers and 3% of non-drinkers experience five or more different drinking problems (Wechsler, 1996).

Alcohol use is also associated with secondhand binge effects. Non-binge drinkers encounter problems due to the behavior of binge drinkers. At schools where more than half of the students binge drink, 87% of students who live on-campus report experiencing one or more problems as a result of another person's binge drinking. This trend also is reported at schools where binge drinking is relatively low. For example, at schools where binge drinkers comprise less than 35% of the student population, 62% of students who live on-campus report experiencing secondhand binge effects (Wechsler, 1996).

Women are especially at risk of secondhand binge effects. Twenty-six percent of women at high-binge schools report an unwanted sexual advance due to someone's alcohol use. However, only 15% of women at low-binge schools report such an unwanted sexual advance (Wechsler, 1996).

Another problem associated with alcohol use is motor vehicle accidents. Alcohol plays a role in almost half of all motor vehicle accidents. The number one killer of

Americans 15 to 24 years old is alcohol-related auto crashes (Monroe, 1996; Wechsler, 1996). Wechsler's (1996) study illustrated how this problem relates to college students. Nearly 40% of male frequent binge drinkers report having driven a car after consuming five or more drinks.

Alcohol use also affects students' academic performance. Many college administrators have voiced their concern over the effect that alcohol plays in students' ability to succeed in college. One study found that alcohol use during freshmen year is predictive of academic problems over the course of the college career (Wood, Sher, Erickson, & DeBord, 1997).

Sociological trends like divorce and alcohol are issues that may have affected the personal lives of the Baby Boomlet. However, personal events are not the only events that affect lives. World events also affect people's lives. The world events people experience leave a mark on them and shape their lives.

<div align="center">World Events</div>

There are numerous World Events that have occurred during the formative years of the Baby Boomlet generation, or those born between 1977 and 1994. These events are likely to have influenced the Boomlet and include the Oklahoma City Bombing, the outbreak of school shootings, and technology. The possible effects that these World Events have had on Boomleter's lives needs to be examined.

Oklahoma City Bombing

One such world event that the Class of 2002 lived through was the Oklahoma City Bombing. On April 19, 1995, America experienced the deadliest act of terrorism in US history. At 9:02 am, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was

bombed. An explosive devise placed in a Ryder truck in front of the building destroyed the entire front side of the nine-story building and caused the floors to collapse, burying victims under the rubble. In the end, 168 men, women, and children were killed and more than 800 were wounded (Clark, 1995; Dyer, 1995; Harman, 1996).

The entire nation entered a time of mourning (Clark, 1995). Images of rescue workers searching through the wreckage for bodies, grieving family members, and bloodied babies being carried from the wreckage entered the American conscience. These images, especially of the daycare facility that was located in the building, still remain with many Americans (Clark, 1995; Dyer, 1995).

One college student commented that Oklahoma lost its innocence that day. She described Oklahoma as a place in which people always felt safe. The bomb destroyed the feeling of safety the people of Oklahoma held. Researchers believe that the bombing destroyed the feeling of safety many Americans previously had held (Harman, 1996).

The country suffered a permanent scar from the bombing with the realization that such a deadly act of terrorism could take place on American soil. Before the bombing, many Americans were not concerned about terrorism on American soil. When the federal building was destroyed, so were many Americans' feelings of safety in their land (Middle-Eastern..., 1995).

While researchers state that the incident left permanent scars on the country as a whole, they add that the incident was particularly difficult for children. When traumas occur, children often have difficulty coping. While adults can separate themselves from the event, children often internalize the event. Researchers believe that an event such as the Oklahoma City Bombing could cause a child to become scared, feeling that it could

happen to them. Children think about what would happen if the event occurred in their town and begin to think it will happen to them next. These feelings could cause anxiety and fear in children (Peterson, 1995).

In addition, researchers state that children are more likely to experience problems such as anxiety on the anniversary of traumas like the Oklahoma City Bombing. Children tend to have more difficulty coping with the stress caused by the reminders of the incident. This is most noticeable in children who were personally affected by the bombing, but could also be experienced in other children as well (American Psychological Association, 1996).

The effects of the Oklahoma City Bombing are especially important because of the age of members of the Class of 2002 when the Bombing occurred. In 1995, they were between the ages of 14 and 15. While they were old enough to be cognizant of the event and its repercussions, they were still relatively young and might not have been able to separate themselves from the event the way an adult could have.

School Shootings

Researchers have also cited school violence as an important event that has affected the Baby Boomlet. One aspect of school violence involves the recent outbreak of school shootings. In the past two years, there have been several cases of students opening fire on classmates and teachers in schools in Mississippi, Kentucky, and Arkansas. In Arkansas, two young boys are alleged to have opened fire on classmates and teachers after staging a fire alarm. Using rifles and hand guns, 13 students and two teachers were shot. In the end, four students and one teacher were killed (Abercrombie, 1998; Coatney, 1998; Walliser, 1998).

Another recent example of school violence occurred in Oregon, where a 15-year-old boy opened fire on a crowded cafeteria killing two students and injuring others. This took place after he allegedly shot and killed his parents in their home (Walliser, 1998).

What stands out in these shootings is the areas in which they occurred. The shootings did not occur in urban areas. Instead, they were in rural or suburban areas. The children charged with the shootings represent America's idea of middle-class children (Hurt, 1998).

These shootings have caused many to question what is happening in the lives of America's youth that leads to such violent acts. Many blame easy accessibility to guns (Walliser, 1998). Others point to a society that glamorizes violence. Children today grow up inundated by violence through the media. Violent video games and movies and television shows that feature violence (e.g. the Jerry Springer show) have fallen under attack (Hurt, 1998; Walliser, 1998). Arkansas' governor spoke out saying that shootings such as the one in Jonesboro should not be a surprise considering that students live in a culture where they are exposed to thousands of murders in the media (McLaughlin & Thurman, 1998).

Experts say that parents need to reassure children about their personal safety and acknowledge that children in inner city and urban schools have a valid fear about being a victim of school violence. While experts report that the possibility of a student in a rural or suburban school being a victim of a school shooting is very remote, students who see reports of school shootings on television might not be able to separate themselves from the shootings (Sperbeck, 1998).

The outbreak of high school shootings is significant to the Class of 2002 because of the time frame in which they occurred. The Class of 2002 was in high school while these school shootings occurred. The children alleged to have committed murder and the children killed in these incidents are the contemporaries of members of the Class of 2002. This might have caused students to fear for their own personal safety and might have caused students anxiety.

Technology

Technological breakthroughs such as the growth of the Internet and electronic mail have also been cited as defining events in the lives of the Baby Boomlet (Generation Y, 1997). The Baby Boomlet has grown up with computers as part of their lives. They will never know a world without computers (Beck, 1997). Researchers explain that the Boomlet views computers as a basic need much like a pencil and paper, or that first cup of coffee in the morning (Beck, 1997; Gagne, 1998). As a result, Boomleters are unfazed by innovations in technology. They are comfortable with their skills and adapt to changes easily (Tapscott, 1997).

Some researchers believe that the Baby Boomlet will grow to be more tolerant, accepting of diversity, and global minded due to the growth of the Internet. The World Wide Web has expanded students' worlds and introduced them to different ideas and people. In turn, they are more accepting of others (Generation Y, 1997; Tapscott, 1997).

Computer technology also allows students to learn at an incredibly fast pace. Through software, the Internet, and e-mail, students have access to information that was

inaccessible to previous generations. This technology has the potential to improve the education of students inside and outside the classroom (Computers: The new electronic..., 1996)

However, not all the effects of computer technology are viewed positively. Some use computers as a means to escape and procrastinate. Researchers cite chat rooms, games, e-mail, and Web browsing as the programs most likely to cause problems. Too much time spent on-line may result in a clinically diagnosable addiction, Cyberaddiction. Cyberaddiction negatively affects social, occupational, family and financial functioning (Valenza, 1997).

The most vulnerable group for this problem is children, especially those who spend a great deal of time alone or have little family contact. Children who have problems in social situations or making relationships also are more likely to develop a problem (Valenza, 1997).

College students are also very vulnerable to Cyberaddiction. College students find themselves away from their families, in new surroundings, under no curfews, and with no-cost connections to the Net. This can lead to students spending too much time on-line and allowing their grades and personal lives to suffer (Valenza, 1997).

With the breakthroughs in technology, communication has helped produce what is known as the "information age." This increase in information influences students' awareness of current national and world events.

Current Events Awareness

People are affected by the World Events which occur during their lifetimes. However, for people to realize the effects an event has on their lives, they must be aware of the event. Therefore, it is necessary to examine Boomleter's awareness of current events.

Many schools attempt to incorporate current events into the classroom. One study found that 55% of students in high school and middle school report studying current events in school as part of a class (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1997a).

An important finding of that study dealt with students' interest in and awareness of current events outside the classroom. Sixty-five percent of students who took a class that incorporated current events into the classroom during the two years before the study report an increase in their interest in politics and national issues because of taking the course. Students whose interest in national issues increases report other positive effects as well. They are more likely to find news through other sources such as, the radio, television, or discussions with their parents (NCES, 1997a). This study also examined differences in interest in national issues by gender and race.

Seventy-two percent of female students had participated in at least one class that incorporated current events into the classroom during the two years before the study. Only 68% of boys had participated in such a class. However, some research contradicts the idea that female students are more interested in current events than male students. Research has shown that high school males are more likely to read or watch news outside school than are females (NCES, 1997a). These results are similar to those revealed in a

study of college students which reported that male students watched more television and read more newspapers than did female students (Vincent & Basil, 1997).

In terms of race, more Black students participated in at least one class that incorporated current events into the classroom during the two years before the study. White students participated in such classes less frequently, and Hispanic students participated in such classes least frequently (NCES, 1997a).

As with personal events, it is likely that world events have influenced the lives of the Class of 2002. However, research on the Baby Boomlet is limited. This study was designed to explore events that influenced Boomleters. Since it was modeled after two previous generational studies, it was important to review those studies.

Generational Studies

Research has examined generational differences among American college students. One such study was conducted in 1979 at 26 American college campuses to illustrate the changes in student culture and the effects that events had had on their experiences (Levine, 1980).

Students reported Vietnam, Watergate, the assassinations of their heroes (including the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King Jr.), and the shootings at Kent State University as events that had a great impact on their lives (Levine, 1980). Vietnam and Watergate were the two most common responses among participants. Twenty-eight percent mentioned the draft or the Vietnam War and 24% mentioned Watergate as an event that shaped their world views. For 52% of the participants, these events had a negative impact (Levine, 1980).

A major effect of these events on the students who lived through them was the disillusion students reported towards the social institutions of the country. Students reported turning away from politics and government, losing trust in the country's social institutions, and no longer having any heroes. The number of freshmen who considered it essential or important to keep up with political affairs illustrated this disillusion. That number dropped from 51% in 1969 to 38% in 1979 (Levine, 1980; Levine, 1993).

Students also reported a feeling of being on a sinking ship. They were pessimistic about the country's future. They thought America had fallen considerably from its early prominence and they did not see the country turning around soon. Some believe this feeling of helplessness contributed to the suicide rate becoming a leading cause of death among students in the 1970s, second only to accidents (Levine, 1980).

This disillusion with the country helped create the "me" generation mentality. Students did not believe in their government or society. Consequently, they turned inward, searching for career and financial success (Levine, 1980).

Consumerism was found to be on the rise. Sixty-three percent of freshmen in 1979 said that being well off financially was an essential or very important objective. Also, between seven and eight out of every 10 college freshmen said that having the latest fashions, records, sporting goods, and books was very important or pretty important to them (Levine, 1980).

Students' disillusion also affected they way in which they sought out news and information. As other American social institutions lost power and influence, television grew in power and influence. In the 1960s, television depicted the ideal American family. Programs such as "Father Knows Best", "Leave it to Beaver", "The Adventures of Ozzie

and Harriet", and "The Donna Reed Show" all symbolized the typical American family and American family values (Levine, 1980).

The 1970s marked a change in the way television portrayed family life. In 1971, "All in the Family" first aired. It dealt with working class life, racism, and the realities of the day. This drastic change brought about other shows such as "Maude", "The Jeffersons", "One Day at a Time", "Good Times", and "Chico and the Man". These shows depicted a real and seamier side of life. Characters represented different races, social classes, and ethnic groups (Levine, 1980).

Levine replicated his study in 1993. A diverse selection of 28 American colleges and universities were visited. Students were asked what were the social and political events that had most influenced their generation. There were five common answers: The Challenger explosion, the end of the Cold War, the Persian Gulf War, AIDS, and the Rodney King beating (Levine, 1993).

Three of these events were described in wholly negative terms; the Challenger explosion, AIDS, and Rodney King. The initial optimism associated with the end of the Cold War and the Persian Gulf War quickly faded and was replaced by the cynicism for which this generation is known (Levine, 1993).

One of the most frequently cited events that shaped the lives of respondents in the 1993 survey was the Challenger explosion. Students remembered where they were when they heard the news. In fact, many watched the take-off in school and saw the explosion as it happened. For many of the students, the Challenger explosion, and especially the death of teacher/astronaut Christa McAuliffe was their first experience with death (Levine, 1993).

Researchers view the Challenger explosion as the first shared national tragedy for Generation X. While Xers agree with that statement, the explosion had an even deeper meaning and lasting effect on their lives. Students added that the Challenger explosion shattered their idealism and sense of safety. Many no longer thought America was the best in everything it attempted. One student described this feeling by noting, "I thought we were the best; we're really only second class," (Levine, 1993 p. 12).

The end of the Cold War was another frequently cited event. Xers initially viewed this event positively. Xers are America's last Cold War generation. They grew up believing that Russia was the evil empire, as this was the message conveyed through their schools, political leaders, and the media. The threat of a nuclear war was always in the backdrop of their lives (Levine, 1993).

When the Cold War ended, symbolized by the destruction of the Berlin Wall, Xers felt hope that the world would grow closer and the threat of nuclear war would diminish. However, that hope quickly faded in the minds of these students. They viewed the former Soviet Union as a place of instability. Adding the former Soviet nuclear arsenal to that instability made Xers worry about lasting peace. They also worried that America was becoming involved in another Vietnam-like war in Bosnia (Levine, 1993).

There was a difference in responses by race in the 1993 Levine study. Minorities, defined as African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asian-Americans, were more likely to list the Rodney King trial as a defining event, although majority students also mentioned the King trial.

Students focused on different aspects of the event. Some students directed their anger towards the King verdict. Others focused their anger on the riots that followed the

King verdict. The one commonality was that both groups viewed the King event in a negative light. One student commented, "I used to believe that the civil rights movement made a difference," (Levine, 1993 p. 13). Another student focused on the aftermath of the King verdict commenting that the "rioting (was) inexcusable," (Levine, 1993 p. 13).

Like the students of 1979, students in 1993 expressed many concerns about their futures. The media told them that they would be the first generation in American history not to do better economically than their parents. This caused students to worry about their ability to find jobs after graduation (Levine, 1993).

One of the main dilemmas voiced by students was whether to choose a career for financial reasons or to perform good deeds. While six out of eight students said it was important to be very well off financially, five out of eight said it was essential or very important to have a career that makes a meaningful social contribution (Levine, 1993).

Students were more optimistic about their personal future than the country's future. However, there was an increase in the percentage of students optimistic about the country's collective future. In 1979, 41% of students were optimistic about the country's collective future. That number grew to 55% in 1993. The reason for this increase was attributed to students' increased involvement and belief in the local community (Levine, 1993).

Overall, students in the 1993 study felt they were living in a troubled nation. One student commented that, "Our experience is of flaws, problems, decline. We're not #1 in anything. Our generation grew up with that," (Levine, 1993 p. 14). However, they did hold out hope for themselves and their local communities

In summary, recent research shows that events that influence students have changed over time. Existing research has traced the prevalence of Personal Events such as divorce, alcohol and drug use, and violence. Results have suggested that these events can affect students in a variety of different ways. Differences by race and gender have been reported in terms of the impact certain Personal Events have had on the lives of students.

World Events also play an influential role in people's lives. Whether it be the Great Depression, the Vietnam War, or the rise in technology, research has shown that World Events have affected peoples' lives and influenced generations.

Other studies have looked at a specific college age cohort and investigated the significant events that affected the selected generation. However, the Baby Boomlet has not been studied extensively, due in most part to the relatively young age of its members. The first cohort of the Baby Boomleters was born in 1977 and matriculated in college in 1995. The Class of 2002 represents the fourth age cohort of Boomleters to enroll in college. They have just reached an age where they can reflect thoughtfully on the events that have shaped their lives.

The present research sought to fill a gap in the existing body of knowledge by blending all of these aspects into the study. First, it examined both the Personal and the World Events that have shaped the lives of current college students, something lacking in previous studies. Second, it offered insight into a new population, the Class of 2002. Finally, instead of looking only at the frequency with which students report certain events as affecting their lives, the present study investigated the significance these events had in the lives of students, and analyzed results by both race and gender.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the significant Personal and World

Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002. For purposes of this study, Personal

Events were defined as events that students experienced personally, or through their

families, peer groups, or local communities. World Events were defined as events that

occurred on a state, national, or international level to which students were exposed while

growing up.

Specifically, this study explored six research questions:

1.   What were the Personal Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002?

2.   How did those Personal Events affect the lives of the Class of 2002?

3.   What were the World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002?

4.   How did those World Events affect the lives of the Class of 2002?

5.   Do the Personal and World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002

        differ by race?

6.   Do the Personal and World events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002 differ

        by gender?

Sample Selection

This study employed a stratified purposeful sample of 300 participants. Stratified

purposeful sampling involves selecting several targeted subgroups in a sample. By

ensuring that a significant number of participants belonged to subgroups, the researcher

was able to develop insights into the subgroups, and investigate differences among

subgroups (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

In this case, the researcher wanted to explore differences by race and gender, so purposefully selecting a sample stratified by race and gender was an important design consideration. Fifty percent (50%) of the sample selected was majority (white) students, and 50% was non-majority (non-white) students. The researcher also purposefully sampled in terms of gender. Fifty percent (50%) of the sample was female and 50% of the sample was male.

The researcher wanted to examine the events that affected the lives of traditional college freshmen. It was possible that the freshmen class included students who had spent time in a community college, at another institution, or who had been in the military before entering the institution where the study was conducted. The study was also designed to look at the experiences of American college students. International students might have experienced different personal and world events. Therefore, it was necessary to establish four criteria (in addition to race and gender considerations) that participants had to meet to be included in the sample. First, they had to be first semester freshmen in the fall of 1998. Second, they had to have graduated from high school in the spring of 1998. Third, participants had to be between the ages of 17 and 19, so they had to be born between 1979 and 1981. Finally, they had to be American citizens.

In order to select a sample that met these criteria, the researcher sought assistance from the Office of Institutional Research at the institution where the study was conducted. The Office of Institutional Research selected a purposeful sample of 300 members of the Class of 2002 who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Of the 300, 150 were male and 150 were female. In addition, 150 were majority students and 150 were non-majority students.

Instrumentation

The researcher designed a survey to elicit data about the research questions posed in the study. A pilot study was conducted to examine the clarity and effectiveness of the survey. Sixteen potential respondents received the survey and were asked to respond and provide feedback about clarity and effectiveness of the instruments' directions and items. The researcher then revised the survey to incorporate the comments offered by participants in the pilot study.

Additionally, a panel of experts reviewed the survey used in the pilot study and offered comments. The panel consisted of three researchers at the institution where the study was conducted who hold terminal degrees in fields relevant to the study. Each panel member reviewed the survey and made suggestions to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of the survey's directions and items. The researcher then revised the survey to incorporate the panelists' comments.

The final version of the electronic survey consisted of two sections: an introductory e-mail message and the survey. The introductory message began by describing the purpose of the study. It informed potential respondents that approval to conduct the study had been obtained from the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects. Finally, the message described the potential risks of participating in the study and discussed the incentives for completing the survey. The introduction also advised participants that if they responded, they were providing informed consent to participate in the study.

The second section consisted of the survey itself. The survey consisted of three sections. The first section focused on the Personal Events that shaped the participants'

lives. Respondents were asked to identify five such events. Next, they were asked to assign an effect (positive, negative, and neutral) to each event. Respondents were also asked to explain how each event had affected their lives. The second section focused on the World Events that shaped the respondents' lives. Respondents were asked to identify five such events and to assign an effect (positive, negative, and neutral) to each event. Again, they were asked to explain how each event had affected their lives.

The final section of the survey elicited demographic information from respondents. It has been suggested that demographic questions be placed at the end of a survey. Some researchers believe putting demographic questions at the beginning of a survey minimizes response rates (Suskie, 1996). For this reason, the researcher decided to put the demographic section last. In the demographic section, respondents were asked their race, gender, age, and citizenship status. The researcher included these items for two reasons. First, the study investigated possible racial and gender differences. Including race and gender on the survey allowed data analysis based on these two classifications. Age and citizenship status were asked to ensure participants met the age and citizenship criteria defined in sample selection procedures. A complete copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix A of the report.

<div align="center">Data Collection Procedures</div>

The institution where the study took place is considered technologically advanced and has received national attention in the area of technology. E-mail is a common mode of communication for students, faculty, and administrators. The institution offers classes taught electronically. In addition, effective fall 1998, all freshmen were required to own a

personal computer upon matriculation. Due to the prevalence of technology on campus, the researcher selected an electronic survey as the method of data collection.

Before collecting any data, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at the institution where the study was conducted. Once approval was granted, data collection began.

After the Office of Institutional Research had identified potential participants, it was necessary to compile the e-mail addresses of potential participants. Potential participants' e-mail accounts were located through the institution's search engine. Those who had an active e-mail account through the institution received the electronic survey. Those who did not have an active e-mail account through the institution were removed from the list of potential participants. After the sample was established, the researcher created a master list which included the names and e-mail addresses of all potential participants.

The sample received the survey via e-mail on October 23, 1998. The researcher selected this time frame for two reasons. First, it allowed participants enough time to familiarize themselves with institution and obtain e-mail accounts. Second, this study was designed to investigate past events that shaped the lives of freshmen college students. It was not designed to investigate collegiate experiences. Therefore, the researcher wanted to ask respondents about events in their lives fairly soon after they matriculated so that pre-college events were identified. Conducting the survey later in the academic year may have resulted in a greater focus on college life.

Participants were asked to respond to the survey by November 8, 1998. As surveys were returned, respondents' names were checked off the master list as having

returned the survey. The researcher then wrote the participant's name on a slip of paper and placed it in an envelope. This was done to facilitate selecting the winners of the study's incentive for participation.

On October 30, 1998, one week after the initial e-mail message was disseminated, a second e-mail, which included another copy of the survey, was sent to those who had not responded to the initial e-mail message. This was done to promote additional responses and maximize the response rate.

An incentive was offered to participants who returned the survey by November 8, 1998. Participants who completed the survey by the requested deadline were entered into a drawing to win one of 12 $25 cash prizes. After the November 8, 1998 deadline, the researcher picked 12 names out of the envelope that contained the names of all participants who had responded to the survey. The 12 winners were contacted to make arrangements to collect their prize. Participants who responded after November 8, 1998 were not entered into the drawing, but their responses were included in data analysis.

<div align="center">Authenticity and Trustworthiness</div>

Efforts were taken to assure authenticity and trustworthiness in this study. Authenticity deals with the consistency with which data relate to a study's research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two steps were taken to assure authenticity. The first involved peer review. A panel of experts reviewed the survey to determine if the design would yield data that could answer the study's research questions. The phrasing of the introduction, directions, and questions were reviewed and changes were made accordingly. This form of peer review is a standard technique employed in qualitative studies to enhance authenticity.

The second step taken to assure authenticity was a pilot study. In qualitative research, it is beneficial to pilot a study with people who are familiar with the setting of the study (e.g. college students at the institution where the study is being conducted) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The pilot study tested whether the design of the survey would yield information related to the topic the researcher was investigating. It also offered feedback in terms of clarity of the instrument.

A step was also taken to assure trustworthiness. Trustworthiness relates to whether the data collected provide an accurate description of the issues raised in the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Before in-depth analysis took place, the researcher and a second party who was experienced in analyzing qualitative data independently reviewed a sample of survey responses.

The researcher and the second party both identified events from the responses. Next, both parties assigned events to themes. Mutual identification of themes ensured that the researcher was using reasonable judgment in categorizing responses. This process, known as intercoder reliability, helps enhance the trustworthiness of the data in qualitative research projects (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

The unit of analysis in this study was the event. The researcher designed the survey so that each event was clearly defined as a Personal or World Event. In addition, the survey was designed so that each event was clearly differentiated from the next event. An event was defined as a series of phrases or sentences provided by the respondent that related to the same topic. As soon as the respondent's comments reflected a new topic, a new event was identified.

Before beginning data analysis, the researcher transcribed each event onto a separate note card. The race and gender of the respondent were noted on the note card and the researcher noted whether the card reflected a Personal or World Event. These steps were taken to facilitate data analysis.

The researcher then began data analysis by sorting the note cards into two groups: Personal Events and World Events. Personal Events were analyzed first. The researcher analyzed the events for emerging themes. Each event was assigned to a theme. The researcher then created a list of all Personal Events reported by respondents. The frequency with which each type of event (e.g. divorce, death of a family member) was reported was calculated. Additionally, the percentage of events assigned to each theme was calculated.

Next, the researcher analyzed the effects that Personal Events had on the lives of the respondents. All events were assigned by respondents to one of three positions: positive, negative, or neutral. The researcher created a list of all events and the effects they were assigned. The frequency with which events were assigned to a position was calculated. In addition, the percentage of events assigned to each effect was calculated.

The same event could have had a positive, negative, or neutral effect for different respondents. For example, divorce might be listed by three different respondents as a personal event that affected their lives. But they may have described the effect of divorce differently. One comment might have read, "My parents got divorced when I was 10. It was the best thing that could have happened. They were both unhappy and my brothers and I were miserable. All we ever heard was them fighting. Both of them are much happier now and actually manage to get along." This comment relates to the Personal Event of divorce. The respondent may have assigned this event a "positive" rating because the divorce appears to have improved family relations and lessened tension.

Another respondent might have written, "When I was 10 my parents got divorced.

It was hard because my mom really had to struggle to make ends meet. I don't really talk to my dad much." This event also relates to divorce. However, this event might have been assigned to a "negative" position, as it speaks to the strain the divorce laced on familial relationships.

Yet another respondent might have written, "My parents divorced when I was really little. Having two separate houses is all I've ever known. While it's probably not the ideal way to grow up, I don't think it's really hurt me either." Again, the comment relates to the event divorce. In this case, the comment might have been assigned to a "neutral" position. The comment does not reflect either happiness or distress about the divorce. Instead, it suggests a neutral effect related to the event.

The same process used to analyze Personal Events and their effects was used to analyze World Events and their effects. First, the researcher analyzed the events for emerging themes. Next, each event was assigned to a theme. The researcher then created a list of all World Events reported by respondents. The researcher calculated the frequency with which each event (e.g. the Challenger explosion, Desert Storm) was reported and the percentage of events assigned to each theme.

The researcher used the same process to analyze the effects of World Events on respondents' lives that was used for the effects of Personal Events. All World Events were assigned an effect (positive, negative, or neutral) by respondents. First, the researcher

created a list of events and their effects. Then, the frequency with which events were assigned to each position was calculated, as well as the percentage.

After analyzing the Personal and World Events and their effects overall, the researcher examined the results by race. The note cards denoting events were sorted into two groups: events reported by majority respondents and events reported by non-majority respondents. The note cards were further divided into Personal Events and World Events.

Again, the researcher started with Personal Events. Personal Events were listed by race (majority versus non-majority). The frequency and percentage with which each subgroup reported each Personal Event was calculated.

All Personal Events were assigned an effect (positive, negative, or neutral) by respondents. First, the researcher created a list of events and their effects reported by majority and non-majority respondents. Then, the frequency with which events reported by each subgroup were assigned to each position was calculated, as well as the percentage.

The process used to analyze difference among Personal Events by race was repeated to analyze World Events by race. World events were listed by subgroup and the frequency and percentage with which each group reported each event was calculated.

All World Events were assigned an effect (positive, negative, or neutral) by respondents. First, the researcher created a list of events and their effects reported by majority and non-majority respondents. Then, the frequency with which events reported by each subgroup were assigned to each position was calculated, as well as the percentage.

This process enabled the researcher to examine two issues by race. First, the data revealed whether there were differences in the types of Personal and World Events reported by majority respondents versus non-majority respondents. Second, the analysis revealed whether the effects (positive, negative, or neutral) of these events differed by race.

Next, the researcher analyzed events and their effects by gender. The researcher utilized the same process to analyze events by gender that was utilized to analyze events by race. The note cards denoting events were sorted into two groups: events reported by female respondents and events reported by male respondents. The note cards were further divided into Personal Events and World Events. The researcher began by analyzing

Personal Events. Personal Events were listed by subgroup. The frequency with which each subgroup reported Personal Events was calculated. In addition, the percentage of events assigned to each theme was calculated. Then, the frequency and percentage with which each subgroup assigned events to each position (positive, negative, neutral) was calculated.

This process was repeated to analyze World Events by gender. World Events were listed by subgroup and the frequency with which each group reported each event was calculated. Additionally, the percentage to which events were assigned to a theme was calculated. Then, comments associated with each event were assigned to one of the three positions (positive, negative, or neutral) and frequencies of each position for each event were calculated by group.

This process enabled the researcher to examine two issues by gender. First, the data revealed whether there were differences in the types of Personal and World Event reported by female respondents versus male respondents. Second, the analysis revealed whether the effects (positive, negative, or neutral) of these events differed by gender.

In summary, the present study was designed to examine the significant Personal and World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002. The methodology described in this chapter was deemed sufficient to collect and analyze data relevant to the research questions posed in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

To explore the personal and world events that affected the lives of members of the Class

of 2002, participants completed The College Students' Events Survey. Results from the study are

presented in this chapter. This chapter begins with the modifications to the data collection

procedures. Second, a description of the sample is offered. Next, procedures used to interpret the

data are explained. This section includes a description of the language associated with each

theme and subtheme. Results from the entire sample are then provided. Finally, results in terms

of differences by race and gender are described.

Data Collection Modifications

The researcher followed the data collection procedures outlined in Chapter Three, with

some modifications. The first modification dealt with the date the electronic survey was sent out.

There was a delay in obtaining the list of potential participants from the Institutional Research

Office. This delay caused the survey to be sent on October 25, 1999, rather than October 23,

1999.

Of the 300 names in the sample provided by Institutional Research, 292 had active e-mail

accounts. These 292 comprised the original sample pool. On October 25, 1999, each potential

participant received an e-mail outlining the purpose of the study and an electronic version of the

survey. An e-mail reminder and second copy of the survey was sent out to each person who had

not yet responded on November 1, 1999.

Data collection was scheduled to end on November 8, 1999. At that point, only 39

surveys had been returned. Of those 39, 37 were complete and usable for analysis. Due to

this low response rate, the researcher took some additional steps to increase the response rate. First the researcher changed the incentive for participation in the study. Potential participants were offered $5 for completing the survey.   Those who had not yet responded to the survey received an e-mail on November 11, 1999 explaining the new incentive for participation. In addition, the researcher mailed a hard copy version of the survey via campus mail to all on-campus students in the sample pool who had not yet responded. The deadline for participation was delayed to December 6, 1998.

An additional five responses were received from this effort. Three of the surveys were complete and used in data analysis. However, two of the responses were not used in data analysis. One was incomplete and another was completed by a respondent who did not meet the qualifications for participation in the study. This meant that the sample size as of December 6, 1998 was 40.

A final step was taken to increase the sample size. The researcher contacted 15 student groups at the institution where the study was conducted requesting an opportunity to attend one of their organizational meetings. The researcher explained the purpose of the study, the qualifications to participate, and the incentive involved. Four student groups allowed the researcher to attend a meeting and solicit participants. During this process, 35 additional surveys were completed and collected. Out of those, 34 were usable. One was incomplete and not used in data analysis. This resulted in a total sample size of 74.

<div align="center">Characteristics of the Sample</div>

This study was designed to examine the personal and world events that influenced the lives of members of the Class of 2002. In addition, it was designed to investigate possible differences by race and gender. Therefore, the researcher sought a sample that included participants from both genders and various races.

The sample consisted of 74 participants. There were 32 (43%) majority females, 21 (28%) non-majority females, 11 (15%) majority males, and 10 (14%) non-majority males. In terms of race, this equated to 43 (58%) majority participants and 31 (42%) non-majority participants. In terms of gender, there were 53 (71%) female participants and 21 (29%) male participants. For further information on the sample refer to Table 1.

Interpreting the Data

The present study was designed to accomplish four things. First, the researcher wanted to identify the Personal Events that affected the lives of the Class of 2002 and to examine the effects that those events had on respondents. Second, the study sought to list the World Events that influenced the respondents' lives and the effects of those events. Next, differences in terms of Personal and World Events and their effects by race were explored. Finally, differences in Personal and World Events and their effects by gender were investigated.

To conduct the analysis, the researcher took several steps. First, each event reported by respondents was listed on an individual note card. Then, the cards were sorted into two groups: those reporting Personal Events and those listing World Events. The cards within each group were then sorted so that themes could be identified. This enabled the researcher to calculate the frequency with which different types of Personal and World Events were reported by respondents.

To examine the effects these events had on the lives of participants, the researcher recorded the responses provided by participants about effects by type of event (Personal and World). Respondents had been asked to record whether every event listed had a positive, negative, or neutral effect on their lives. In a few cases, participants either failed

Table 1
Characteristics of the Sample (N=74)

Characteristic	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Majority	11	15	32	43	43	58
Non-Majority	10	14	21	28	31	42
Total	21	29	53	71	74	100

to do this, or actually reported more than one effect for a given event. To accurately record all responses, these types of responses were assigned to a category called "other". This enabled the researcher to calculate the frequency with which events had different types of effects on respondents.

In order to appreciate the richness of the data provided by respondents, it might be helpful for the researcher to review the type of language assigned to each theme within the Personal and World Events categories. It might also be useful to examine comments typical of each effect group (positive, negative, neutral) in each theme. These examples are provided so that the results of the analysis reported later in this chapter are placed in an appropriate context.

<u>Personal Events</u>

The researcher began data analysis with the 338 comments that reflected Personal Events. Six themes were identified among the comments that reflected Personal Events. These themes were: Death/Injury, Academics, Extracurricular Activities, Familial Relationships, Dating, and Miscellaneous.

<u>Death/Injury</u>

The first theme among Personal Events was Death/Injury. The theme Death/Injury consisted of three subthemes: Death, Injury, and Other. The following is an example of a comment that dealt with death and was assigned to the Death/Injury theme:

> My grandmother died when I was 15. She was the first person that I ever knew
> that died. I think seeing my father deal with it was harder than dealing with my
> own loss. Of course, it was painful to lose my grandmother and everyone was sad
> for a long time, but my father took it especially hard. For a long time he was
> withdrawn and depressed... . (Majority Female)

Additionally, comments were assigned an effect of positive, negative, or neutral by respondents. An example of a comment in this theme that was assigned a positive effect dealt with getting into a car accident:

> ...I was driving my jeep with three of my friends in it under the influence of marijuana. I slammed into the back of another car totaling the front of my jeep. Now, I truly understand the dangers of drugs and under no circumstances will I drive or get in a car where the driver is intoxicated by any means. (Majority Female)

One comment in the Death/Injury theme that was assigned a negative effect dealt with the death of a family member:

> My grandfather was a tremendous part of my life. His death was sudden and unexpected. It was the first time I had experienced the death of a family member. It was a very sad time in my life... . (Majority Male)

Finally, an example of a comment in the Death/Injury theme that was assigned a neutral effect dealt with a schoolmate being shot in the head:

> This event had many positive and negative effects. The positive was the gang, drug, and gun problem at my school was recognized and dealt with accordingly (metal detectors, random locker searches, etc.) and we all realized our own mortality. The negative effects include the fact that a classmate almost died and instilled fear for a long time in the student body... . (Majority Female)

Academics

Academics was the second theme used to group Personal Events. It consisted of three subthemes: Entering College, Graduation, and Other. An example of a comment that was assigned to Academics theme focused on going to college:

>Going to college has made me grow up and learn as a person. It has brought new worlds to me and has made me acknowledge all that is out there in the world. Everyday is a new opportunity. If I had not left home, I would not have grown as I had... .(Majority Female)

In terms of Academics, an example of a comment that was rated as having a positive effect related to graduating from high school:

>I am starting a new time in my life that is really a big achievement, and I have never seen my parents so proud. (Majority Male)

An example of a comment that was noted as having a negative effect had to do with receiving a failing grade:

>I felt very bad about it because I felt that I could have done a lot better. I know that it was my first semester, but an F in unacceptable. It's almost saying to others that looked at the grade that I didn't even try... .(Non-majority Male)

Finally, a comment that reflected a neutral effect related to leaving family to go to college:

>This made me very independent and strong. It has also been very hard and very sad, but freedom and adulthood are pluses. It really has made me step back and see how important they really are. (Majority Female)

Extracurricular Activities

The third theme among the Personal Events was Extracurricular Activities. Extracurricular Activities consisted of three subthemes: Athletics, Volunteerism, and Other. An example of one comment that was assigned to Extracurricular Activities theme related to involvement in student government:

It's given me a great focus for my life and some place where my leadership skills

were further developed. I gained leadership, friendships, and great experience.

(Majority Female)

Again, comments about events were assigned to groups that reflected the effect of the

event on the respondent (positive, negative, neutral, and other). An example of an Extracurricular

Activity that was assigned a positive effect related to playing sports for a high school coach:

If you could meet this man you would understand. He taught me a lot of what my

father wasn't there to teach me, how to be a gentleman, to never give up, and to

always do your best... . (Majority Male)

An example of a comment that was rated as having a negative effect focused on not

meeting personal goals:

Although I now see that these goals weren't all there was to gain from swimming,

I was disappointed and almost feel that I still have something to prove. (Majority

Female)

No comments in the Extracurricular Activities theme were assigned a neutral effect.

<u>Familial Relationships</u>

Familial Relationships was the fourth theme among the Personal Events. Four subthemes

made up this theme: Births, Divorce, Marriage, and Other. An example of a comment assigned to

the theme Familial Relationships related to a family reunion:

I was able to meet relatives I had never met before and to learn about my heritage.

Through this I gained knowledge about myself and close relationships with

relatives. (Non-majority Female)

The comments in the Familial Relationships theme offered by respondents were assigned

to effect groups (positive, negative, neutral, and other). An example of a Familial Relationships comment assigned a positive effect focused on parents getting a divorce:

It has made me more conscious of my decisions involving relationships and I believe that when the time comes to get married I will be more responsible in my decisions. (Majority Male)

An example of a comment that was assigned a negative effect related to problems with parents:

I have the tendency to run away from relationships when I get too close because I get afraid of the fact of being cheated on or left. I can't seem to deal with my parents' relationship of not getting along in their marriage in the effect that they don't love each other anymore, but stay together for my brother and I. (Non-majority female)

Finally, a comment that had a neutral effect was reported about a teenage brother who fathered a child:

I still feel bad for what has happened to my brother, including everything that has happened since the pregnancy, but I, like the rest of the family, can't sympathize for him anymore. The truth is he dug his own ditch... . (Majority Male)

Dating

The fifth theme among personal events was Dating. The theme Dating consisted of four subthemes: Break-up, Meeting Partner, Falling in Love, and Other. An example of one comment that was assigned to the Dating theme related to falling in love:

It was a search into my own soul, getting in touch with every aspect of myself. (Non-majority Male)

The Dating events reported by respondents were also assigned to groups by the effects the had (positive, negative, neutral, other). An example of a Dating comment that was assigned a positive effect was related to meeting a soul mate:

> I have realized more about myself than I ever have before. My needs are more evident to me now than previously. I have always been wrapped up in perfection and stress and because of him, I can now sit back and enjoy life... . (Majority Female)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect focused on breaking up with a boyfriend:

> Most hurtful experience of my life. We were together for three years. He was the only one I trusted, then he left. I can't trust people anymore. I think relationships aren't worth it anymore. (Non-majority Female)

Finally, a comment assigned a neutral effect talked about falling in love:

> Was great but all was lost which was depressing for awhile. (Non-majority Male)

<u>Miscellaneous</u>

The final theme identified among the Personal Events was Miscellaneous. Events that did not fit into one of the other five themes were assigned to the theme Miscellaneous. The researcher was able to identify subthemes among the Miscellaneous theme: Moving, Employment, Friendship, Religion, Diversity, and Other.

One example of a comment that was assigned to the theme Miscellaneous related to a father losing his job:

> This event made me realize the harsh realities of being an adult. My father is the hardest working person I know and when it came time for lay-offs, that didn't matter. I realize now that nothing is solid or stable in our world. (Majority Male)

All comments in the Miscellaneous theme were assigned to an effect group (positive, negative, neutral, other). An example of a Miscellaneous comment assigned a positive effect related to moving to a new state:

> Living in California helped me to see that there was so much more things that were out there in the world than what I thought to be. It gave me a chance to meet people of all different kinds of nationalities and races... . (Non-majority Male)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect focused on the issue of child molestation:

> I have strong feelings and hatred for those that commit those acts and I have problems trusting guys and become depressed at times. (Non-majority Female)

Finally, a comment assigned a neutral effect spoke of balancing different cultures:

> Has made me very conscious of what I do. Everything I consider such as moving away from home (something that is rarely done in our culture unless you get married) has to take into consideration my new surroundings and the culture I was brought up in... . (Non-majority Female)

World Events

The researcher used the same process to analyze comments dealing with World Events that was used to analyze comments that with Personal Events. From the 320 comments that reflected World Events, four themes emerged: World Figures, Political Events, Military Actions, and Miscellaneous. Again, subthemes were identified for each theme.

As was done with the Personal Event comments, after identifying themes and subthemes the researcher looked at the effect the comments had on the respondents' lives. Examples of typical entries in each theme and typical comments assigned to the effect groups (positive, negative, and neutral) are described in the following sections of this report.

<u>World Figures</u>

The first theme among the World Events reported by respondents identified was World Figures. The World Figures theme consisted of three subthemes: Presidents, Deaths, and Other. One example of a comment assigned to the World Figures theme spoke of President Clinton:

> After hearing of this event, I have lost faith in people. Here we have someone that is supposed to represent us and look at the poor example that he is setting. At first, I thought that it didn't matter, what he did with his personal life was his business, but the more I thought about it the more I saw that this is instilling poor morals throughout the entire country. (Majority Female)

An example of a World Figures comment assigned a positive effect related to Princess Diana:

> I saw this beautiful princess give her heart and soul to less fortunate children, poor countries, and sick and dying people. She loved people because she was good at it. And I hope that I will have money one day to give myself up to less fortunate. (Majority Female)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect talked about the death of Mother Teresa:

> I admired Mother Teresa. She was my role model in that she helped the poor and the less fortunate. She had guts and I just wanted to be like her. When I heard of her death, I was shocked and I did mourn. (Non-majority Female)

Finally, a comment that had a neutral effect reflected on the President Clinton/Lewinsky scandal:

> It proved to me that everyone is human and that people of the U.S. are obsessed with gossip and finding fault in other peoples' lives. It also showed that people

forget everything that's good about someone when they find one bad thing about

that person and that people love to see other people fall. (Majority Male)

Political Events

The second theme among the World Events reported by respondents was Political Events.

This theme consisted of three subthemes: Terrorism, Berlin Wall, and Other. An example of a

comment that was assigned to the Political Events theme related to the Oklahoma City Bombing:

This scared me in the sense that something like this could happen at any moment

and there is nothing we can do about it. Also it showed me again the selfishness

of the human race. I distinctly remember a photo of a fireman carrying a baby

from the rubble, I think everyone knows that picture. (Majority Male)

An example of a Political Events comment that was assigned a positive effect related to

the fall of the Berlin Wall:

The fall of communism gave me a sense of reassurance and hope. The weight

lifted from the shoulders of all those people was a wonderful experience to

witness. (Non-majority Female)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect talked about the Oklahoma City

Bombing:

This was a horrific event that opened my eyes to the madness and evil that corrupt

some people. My heart poured out to the families of the victims. I couldn't believe

that this could happen, for awhile it was hard to feel

safe... . (Non-majority Female)

Finally, a comment that had a neutral effect spoke of the ATF raid on Waco Texas:

The barn fire which killed the cult in Waco made me realize what kind of people

are really out there and how organized their insane beliefs are. It makes me

wonder how easily people's minds can be manipulated, especially in cults.

(Majority Male)

Military Actions

The third theme identified among the World Events reported by respondents was Military Actions. This theme consisted of two subthemes: War and Other. Typical of comments in the Military Actions theme was the following note about Desert Storm:

The Iraq War made me realize how much I hate fighting. I don't understand why people are so violent, and why they destroy so much just to prove points. I don't trust the government and the Gulf War Syndrome backed up my feelings... .

(Majority Male)

An example of a Military Action comment assigned a positive effect also focused on Desert Storm:

It was a learning experience for me. Since it was the first war during my lifetime it changed my outlook on war. In grade school you are taught how glorious the American Revolution was, while in Desert Storm I realized how devastating a war can be... . (Majority Male)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect also related to the Persian Gulf War:

It made me more aware that war was something that was real. I mean I see old movies and films about war as well as read about war, but it seemed a lot more real at this time. (Non-majority Male)

Finally, a comment assigned a neutral effect talked about the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan:

I was happy they actually left and we had defeated such a huge superpower. But I was unhappy at the fact that my parents were actually thinking about moving back...I knew it would be impossible to get used to the harsh rules against women in Afghanistan. (Non-majority Female)

<u>Miscellaneous</u>

The final World Events theme identified was the Miscellaneous category. Again, the researcher placed comments that did not fit into one of the other themes into the Miscellaneous theme. The Miscellaneous theme consisted of five subthemes: Technology, Trials, Diversity, Natural Disasters, and Other. An example of a comment assigned to the Miscellaneous theme talked about the Challenger Explosion:

This event was a real national tragedy. It was painful to watch. I never thought that I could feel so much for people that I didn't know... . (Non-majority Female)

An example of a Miscellaneous comment assigned a positive effect related to hunger in Somalia:

This made me see that there are even less fortunate people in the world then I imagined. I realized how grateful I am... . (Non-majority Female)

An example of a comment assigned a negative effect spoke of the O.J. Simpson trial:

I grew up admiring O.J. and had lots of mixed emotions about this trial...I still cannot decide if he is guilty or not. It also made me wake up and look at the division between the races in this country... . (Majority Male)

Finally, a comment that had a neutral effect related to the advancement of the Internet:

While this new invention makes information easily available, I think that too many things are out there and may get into the wrong hands. I am also concerned for future generations and what will become of old traditions. Already e-mail had

Results of Analysis

The respondents provided a total of 658 events on the surveys. Of these, 338 comments dealt with Personal Events. The remaining 320 comments dealt with World Events. Not all respondents listed five events for the Personal and World sections of the survey. However, the researcher decided that surveys that did not have a total of 10 comments would still be used in data analysis.

Personal Events for All Respondents

Of the 338 comments reported by respondents that reflected Personal Events, 22% related to Death/Injury, 22% related to Academics, 12% were assigned to the Extracurricular Activities theme, 11% fell into the Familial Relationships theme, and 9% related to the Dating theme. The remaining 25% of Personal Events reported by respondents were assigned to the Miscellaneous theme. Frequencies and percentages were also calculated for each subtheme. For example, 74 comments were assigned to the theme Death/Injury. These 74 responses represent 22% of the overall Personal Events. Thirteen percent of comments were assigned to the subtheme Death, 8% were assigned to the subtheme Injury, and 1% was assigned to the subtheme Other. These results are summarized on Table 2.

Effects of Personal Events for All Respondents

The researcher then calculated the number and frequency of each effect (positive, negative, neutral, other) for each theme and subtheme. These results are reported in Table 3. In total, 209 (61%) of the 338 Personal Events were rated as having a positive effect. This is compared to 69 (20%) events that were rated as having a negative effect, and 51 (15%) that were reported as having a neutral effect. There were nine (3%) that were assigned to the other category. For example, for the theme Academics, 60 of the comments were assigned a positive rating, 5 were assigned a negative rating, and 7 were assigned a neutral rating. In addition, two

Table 2
Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme and Subtheme (N=338)

Theme/Subtheme	N	%N
Death/Injury	74	22
Death	45	13
Injury	27	8
Other	2	1
Academics	74	22
Entering College	35	10
Graduation	13	4
Other	26	8
Extracurricular Activities	40	12
Athletics	19	6
Volunteerism	7	2
Other	14	4
Familial Relationships	36	11
Births	7	2
Divorce	6	2
Marriage	5	2
Other	18	5
Dating	30	9
Break-up	9	3
Meeting Partner	7	2
Falling in Love	5	1
Other	9	3
Miscellaneous	84	25
Moving	14	4
Employment	11	3
Friendship	11	3
Religion	10	3
Diversity	9	3
Other	29	9
Total	338	101*

* May not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 3
Effects of Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme and Subtheme (N=338)

Theme/Subtheme	Effect Positive		Effect Negative		Neutral		Other		Total	
	n	%n	n	%n	n	%n	n	%n	N	%N
Death/Injury	24	7	27	8	20	6	3	1	74	
Death	9	3	15	5	18	5	3	1	45	
Injury	14	4	11	3	2	1	0	0	27	
Other	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Academics	60	18	5	1	7	2	2	1	74	
Entering College	29	9	0	0	4	1	2	1	35	
Graduation	11	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	13	
Other	20	6	4	1	2	1	0	0	26	
Extracurricular Activities	37	11	2	1	0	0	1	0	40	
Athletics	17	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	19	
Volunteerism	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	
Other	13	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	14	
Familial Relationships	18	5	10	3	6	2	2	1	36	
Births	4	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	7	
Divorce	1	0	3	1	1	0	1	0	6	
Marriage	4	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	5	
Other	9	3	5	1	3	1	1	1	18	
Dating	21	6	5	1	4	1	0	0	30	
Break-up	3	1	4	1	2	1	0	0	9	
Meeting Partner	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	
Falling in Love	4	1	0	0	1	20	0	0	5	
Other	7	2	1	11	1	11	0	0	9	
Miscellaneous	49	14	20	6	14	4	1	0	84	
Moving	7	2	1	0	5	1	1	0	14	
Employment	6	2	4	1	1	0	0	0	11	
Friendship	5	1	5	1	1	0	0	0	11	
Religion	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Diversity	6	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	9	
Other	15	4	9	4	5	2	0	0	29	
Total	209	61	69	20	51	15	9	3	338	99*

World Events for All Respondents

Of the 320 comments reported by respondents that reflected World Events, 24% related to World Figures, 22% related to Political events, and 21% were assigned to the Military Actions theme. The remaining 33% of World Events reported by respondents were assigned to the Miscellaneous theme. Frequencies and percentages were also calculated for each subtheme. For example, the World Figures theme consisted of three subthemes, which represent 77 of all World Events. Of this 77, 48 of comments were assigned to the subtheme Presidents, 24 were assigned to the subtheme Deaths, and five were part of to the subtheme Other. These results are summarized on Table 4.

Effects of World Events for All Respondents

The researcher then calculated the number and frequency of each effect (positive, negative, neutral, and other) for each theme and subtheme. These results are reported in Table 5. In total, 89 (27%) of the 320 World Events were rated as having a positive effect. This compares to 148 (46%) events that were rated as having a negative effect, and 79 (24%) that were reported as having a neutral effect. There were four (2%) that were assigned to the other category. For example, for the theme Political Events 28 of the comments were assigned a positive rating, 23 were assigned a negative rating, and 16 were assigned a neutral rating. In addition, two were placed in the other category.

Personal Events by Race

After analyzing the Personal and World Event comments from all respondents, the researcher analyzed the comments by race. Again, the researcher began with comments that reflected Personal Events. The number of comments in each theme and subtheme made by majority and non-majority respondents was calculated. Overall, majority

Table 4

World Events by Respondents by Theme and Subtheme (N=320)

_____

Theme/Subtheme	n	%N
World Figures	77	24
Presidents	48	15
Deaths	24	8
Other	5	1
Political Events	69	22
Terrorism	21	7
Berlin Wall	15	5
Other	33	10
Military Actions	68	21
War	60	19
Other	8	2
Miscellaneous	106	33
Technology	22	7
Trials	18	6
Diversity	16	5
Natural Disasters	14	4
Other	36	11
Total	320	100

_____

Table 5
Effects of World Events Reported by Respondents by Theme and Subtheme (N=320)

Theme/Subtheme	Effect								Total	
	Positive		Negative		Neutral		Other			
	n	%n	n	%n	n	%n	n	%n	N	%N
World Figures	14	4	36	11	26	8	1	0	77	
Presidents	6	2	27	8	15	5	0	0	48	
Deaths	5	1	8	3	10	3	1	0	24	
Other	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	
Political Events	28	9	23	7	16	5	2	1	69	
Terrorism	3	1	14	4	3	1	1	0	21	
Berlin Wall	14	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	15	
Other	11	3	9	3	12	4	1	0	33	
Military Actions	17	5	34	11	17	5	0	0	68	
War	16	5	30	10	14	4	0	0	60	
Other	1	0	4	1	3	1	0	0	8	
Miscellaneous	30	9	55	17	20	6	1	0	106	
Technology	7	2	10	3	4	1	1	0	22	
Trials	1	0	12	4	5	2	0	0	18	
Diversity	4	1	11	3	1	0	0	0	16	
Natural Disasters	1	0	9	3	4	1	0	0	14	
Other	17	6	13	4	6	2	0	0	36	
Total	89	27	148	46	79	24	4	2	320	99*

* May not total 100 due to rounding.

respondents identified 200 of the 338 Personal Events, while non-majority respondents reported the remaining 138 of the Personal Events. The number and frequency of Personal Events reported by theme, subtheme, and race are reported in Table 6. For example, majority respondents offered a total of 35 comments about Extracurricular Activities. This compares to five comments about Extracurricular Activities reported by non-majority respondents.

Effects of Personal Events by Race

After calculating the frequency of comments by majority and non-majority respondents, attention was turned to the effects of those comments. The researcher calculated the number and frequency of comments by each subgroup assigned to each effect. The results are reported in Table 7. For example, majority respondents offered a total of 45 comments about Death/Injury. Of these, 40% were positive in tone, 29% were negative, 27% were neutral, and 4% were assigned to the other category. This compares to 29 comments about Death/Injury reported by non-majority respondents (28% positive, 45% negative, 24% neutral, and 3% other).

Finally, the researcher compared the total effects by race. These results are summarized on Table 8. Overall, 62% of the comments were assigned to the positive group. Among the majority respondents, 66% of comments were positive, 17% were negative, 14% were neutral, and 3% were assigned to the other category. This compares to the 138 comments made by non-majority respondents, which reflected 57% positive comments, 25% negative comments, 16% neutral comments, and 2% assigned to the other category.

Table 6
Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Race. (N=338)

Theme/Subtheme	Race			
	Majority (n=200)		Non-majority (n=138)	
	n	%n	n	%n
Death/Injury	45	23	29	21
Death	27	14	18	13
Injury	17	9	10	7
Other	1	0	1	1
Academics	38	19	36	26
Entering College	19	10	16	12
Graduation	6	3	7	5
Other	13	6	13	9
Extracurricular Activities	35	18	5	4
Athletics	16	8	3	2
Volunteerism	7	3	0	0
Other	12	5	2	2
Familial Relationships	24	12	12	9
Births	5	2	2	1
Divorce	6	3	0	0
Marriage	4	2	1	1
Other	9	5	9	7
Dating	19	10	11	8
Break-up	4	2	5	4
Meeting Partner	7	4	0	0
Falling in Love	2	1	3	2
Other	6	3	3	2
Miscellaneous	39	20	45	33
Moving	5	3	9	7
Employment/Money	3	2	8	6
Friendship	7	3	4	3
Religion	7	3	3	2
Diversity	3	2	6	4
Other	14	7	15	11
Total	200	102*	138	101*

Table 7
Effects of Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Race (N=338)

Theme/Subtheme	Race			
	Majority (n=200)		Non-Majority (n=138)	
	n	%n	n	%n
Death/Injury	45	23	29	21
Pos.	18	40	8	28
Neg.	13	29	13	45
Neu.	12	27	7	24
Oth.	2	4	1	3
Academics	38	19	36	26
Pos.	30	79	29	80
Neg.	2	5	4	11
Neu.	5	13	2	6
Oth.	1	3	1	3
Extracurricular Activities	35	18	5	4
Pos.	32	91	5	100
Neg.	2	6	0	0
Neu.	0	0	0	0
Oth.	1	3	0	0
Familial Relationships	24	12	12	9
Pos.	11	46	7	59
Neg.	6	25	4	33
Neu.	5	21	1	8
Oth.	2	8	0	0
Dating	19	10	11	8
Pos.	16	84	5	46
Neg.	2	11	3	27
Neu.	1	5	3	27
Oth.	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	39	20	45	33
Pos.	25	64	24	53
Neg.	9	23	11	25
Neu.	5	13	9	20
Oth.	0	0	1	2
Total	200	102*	138	101*

Table 8

Comparison of Total Effects of Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Race (N=338)

_____

Effect	Race				Total	
	Majority (n=200)		Non-Majority (n=138)			
	n	%n	n	%n	N	%N
Positive	132	66	78	57	210	62
Negative	34	17	35	25	69	20
Neutral	28	14	22	16	50	15
Other	6	3	3	2	9	3
Total	200	100	138	100	338	100

_____

World Events by Race

       The researcher used the same process to analyze comments that reflected World Events by race. Again, the number and frequency of comments in each theme and subtheme made by majority and non-majority respondents was calculated. The results are summarized in Table 9. Overall, majority respondents identified 192 of the World Events, while non-majority respondents reported the remaining 128 events.

Effects of World Events by Race

       Again, after calculating the frequency of comments by majority and non-majority respondents, attention was turned to the effects of those comments. The researcher calculated the number and frequency of comments in each theme made by each subgroup and attributed to each effect. For example, majority respondents offered a total of 43 comments about World Figures. Of these, 23% were positive, 49% were negative, and 28% were neutral. This compares to 34 World Figure events reported by non-majority respondents, of which 12% had a positive effect, 44% had a negative effect, 41% had a neutral effect, and 3% were placed in the other category. The results of the analysis of World Events' effects by theme, subtheme, and race are reported in Table 10.

       Finally, the researcher summarized the effects of all World Events by race. These results are summarized on Table 11. Overall, 28% of comments were assigned to the positive group, 46% were assigned to the negative group, 25% were assigned to the neutral group, and 1% was assigned to other group. Among majority respondents, 30% were assigned to the positive group, 45% were assigned to the negative group, 24% were assigned to the neutral group, and 1% was

assigned to the other group. This is compared to non-majority respondents' comments of which

Table 9
World Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Race (N=320).

_____

Theme/Subtheme	Race			
	Majority (n=192)		Non-majority (n=128)	
	n	%n	n	%n

_____

Theme/Subtheme	n	%n	n	%n
World Figures	43	22	34	27
Presidents	29	15	19	16
Deaths	12	6	12	9
Other	2	1	3	2
Political Events	47	24	22	17
Terrorism	15	8	6	5
Berlin Wall	11	6	4	3
Other	21	10	12	9
Military Actions	37	19	31	24
War	36	19	24	19
Other	1	0	7	5
Miscellaneous	65	34	41	32
Technology	17	9	5	4
Trials	12	6	6	5
Diversity	7	4	9	7
Natural Disasters	7	4	7	5
Other	22	11	14	11
Total	192	99*	128	100

_____

* May not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 10

Effects of World Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Race (N=320)

| Theme/Subtheme | Race | | | |
| | Majority (n=192) | | Non-majority (n=128) | |
	n	%n	n	%n
World Figures	43	22	34	27
Pos.	10	23	4	12
Neg.	21	49	15	44
Neu.	12	28	14	41
Oth.	0	0	1	3
Political Events	47	24	22	17
Pos.	20	43	8	36
Neg.	16	34	7	32
Neu.	9	19	7	32
Oth.	2	4	0	0
Military Actions	37	19	31	24
Pos.	11	30	6	19
Neg.	15	40	19	62
Neu.	11	30	6	19
Oth.	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	65	34	41	32
Pos.	16	24	14	34
Neg.	35	54	20	49
Neu.	14	22	6	15
Oth.	0	0	1	2
Total	192	99*	128	100

_____

* May not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 11
Comparison of Total Effects of World Events Reported by Respondents by Race (N=320)

_____

Effect	Race				Total	
	Majority (n=200)		Non-Majority (n=138)			
	n	%n	n	%n	N	%N
Positive	57	30	32	25	89	28
Negative	87	45	61	48	148	46
Neutral	46	24	33	26	79	25
Other	2	1	2	2	4	1
Total	192	100	128	101*	320	100

* May not total 100% due to rounding.

25% were assigned to the positive group, 48% were assigned to the negative group, 26% to the neutral group, and 2% to the other category.

Personal Events by Gender

After analyzing the Personal and World Events by race, the researcher analyzed the events by gender. Again, the researcher began with comments that reflected Personal Events. The number and frequency of comments in each theme and subtheme made by female and male respondents was calculated. Overall, females offered 235 of the 338 Personal Events listed, while males offered the remaining 103 of the Personal Events. The number and frequency of Personal Events reported by theme, subtheme, and gender are reported in Table 12. For example, female respondents offered a total of 29 comments about Extracurricular Activities. Of these 29, 12 dealt with Athletics, 6 dealt with Volunteerism, and 11 dealt with Other. This compares to 11 comments about Extracurricular Activities reported by male respondents, of which 7 dealt with Athletics, 1 dealt with Volunteerism, and 3 dealt with Other.

Effects of Personal Events by Gender

After calculating the frequency of comments by female and male respondents, attention was turned to the effects of those comments. The researcher calculated the number of comments made by each subgroup and assigned to each effect. The results are summarized in Table 13. For example, females reported a total of 51 comments about Death/Injury. Of these 39% were positive in tone, 35% were negative in tone, 22% were neutral, and 4% were assigned to the other category. This compares to 23 comments about Death/Injury reported by males (26%

positive, 35% negative, 35% neutral, and 4% other).

Table 12
Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Gender (N=338).

Theme/Subtheme	Gender			
	Female (n=235)		Male (n=103)	
	n	%	n	%
Death/Injury	51	22	23	22
Death	29	57	16	70
Injury	22	43	5	21
Other	0	0	2	9
Academics	49	21	25	24
Entering College	24	49	11	44
Graduation	9	18	4	16
Other	16	33	10	40
Extracurricular Activities	29	12	11	11
Athletics	12	41	7	64
Volunteerism	6	21	1	9
Other	11	38	3	27
Familial Relationships	29	12	7	7
Births	5	17	2	29
Divorce	4	14	2	29
Marriage	5	17	0	0
Other	15	52	3	42
Dating	20	9	10	10
Break-up	7	35	2	20
Meeting Partner	3	15	4	40
Falling in Love	2	10	3	30
Other	8	40	1	10
Miscellaneous	57	24	27	26
Moving	13	22	1	4
Employment	6	11	5	18
Friendship	9	16	2	7
Religion	9	16	1	4
Diversity	6	11	3	11
Other	14	24	15	56
Total	235	100	103	100

Table 13
Effects of Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Gender (N=338)

Theme/Subtheme	Gender			
	Female (n=235)		Male (n=103)	
	n	%	n	%
Death/Injury	51	39	23	22
Pos.	20	39	6	26
Neg.	18	35	8	35
Neu.	11	22	8	35
Oth.	2	4	1	4
Academics	49	21	25	24
Pos.	39	80	20	80
Neg.	3	6	3	12
Neu.	6	12	1	4
Oth.	1	2	1	4
Extracurricular Activities	29	12	11	11
Pos.	26	90	11	100
Neg.	2	7	0	0
Neu.	0	0	0	0
Oth.	1	3	0	0
Familial Relationships	29	12	7	7
Pos.	15	52	3	43
Neg.	7	24	3	43
Neu.	5	17	1	14
Oth.	2	7	0	0
Dating	20	9	10	10
Pos.	13	65	8	80
Neg.	4	20	1	10
Neu.	3	15	1	10
Oth.	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	57	24	27	26
Pos.	31	54	18	67
Neg.	14	25	6	22
Neu.	11	19	3	11
Oth.	1	2	0	0
Total	235	100	103	100

Finally, the researcher compared the total effects by gender. These results are summarized in Table 14. Overall, 62% of the 338 comments were assigned to the positive group. Among the female respondents, 61% of the 235 comments were positive, 20% were negative, 15% were neutral, and 3% were other. This compares to the 103 male comments, of which 64% were positive, 20% were negative, 14% were neutral, and 2% were other.

World Events by Gender

The researcher used the same process to analyze comments that reflected world events by gender. Again, the number and frequency of comments in each theme and subtheme made by female and male respondents was calculated. The results are summarized in Table 15. Overall, female respondents reported 210 of the 320 World Events, while male respondents reported the remaining 110 events.

Effects of World Events by Gender

Again, after calculating the frequency of comments by female and male respondents, attention was turned to the effects of those comments. The researcher calculated the number and frequency of comments in each theme made by each subgroup and attributed to each effect. For example, of the 55 comments about World Figures offered by females, 20% were positive, 49% were negative, 29% were neutral, and 2% were placed in the other category. This compares to 22 comments on World Figures offered by male respondents (14% positive, 41% negative, and 45% neutral). The results of the analysis of effects of World Events by theme, subtheme, and gender are reported in Table 16.

Table 14

Comparison of Total Effects of Personal Events Reported by Respondents by Gender
(N=338).

_____

Effect	Gender				Total	
	Female (n=235)		Male (n=103)			
	n	%n	n	%n	n	%N
Positive	144	61	66	64	210	62
Negative	48	20	21	20	69	20
Neutral	36	15	14	14	50	15
Other	7	3	2	2	9	3
Total	235	99*	103	100	338	100

_____

* May not total 100% due to rounding.

Table 15

World Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Gender (N=320)

Theme/Subtheme	Gender			
	Female (n=210)		Male (n=110)	
	n	%	n	%
World Figures	54	26	23	21
Presidents	30	56	18	79
Deaths	20	37	4	17
Other	4	7	1	4
Political Events	43	20	26	24
Terrorism	14	33	7	27
Berlin Wall	9	20	6	23
Other	20	47	13	50
Military Actions	44	21	24	22
War	39	89	21	87
Other	5	11	3	13
Miscellaneous	74	35	32	29
Technology	12	16	10	31
Trials	10	14	8	25
Diversity	15	20	1	3
Natural Disasters	9	12	5	16
Other	28	38	8	25
Total	210	102*	110	96*

* May not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 16

Effects of World Events Reported by Respondents by Theme, Subtheme, and Gender (N=320)

_____

| Theme/Subtheme | Gender | | | |
| | Female (n=210) | | Male (n=110) | |
	n	%	n	%
World Figures	55	26	22	20
Pos.	11	20	3	14
Neg.	27	49	9	41
Neu.	16	29	10	45
Oth.	1	2	0	0
Political Events	43	20	26	24
Pos.	15	36	13	50
Neg.	15	36	8	31
Neu.	12	28	4	15
Oth.	1	0	1	4
Military Actions	38	18	30	27
Pos.	9	24	8	27
Neg.	18	47	16	53
Neu.	11	29	6	20
Oth.	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	74	35	32	29
Pos.	20	27	10	31
Neg.	38	51	17	53
Neu.	15	20	5	16
Oth.	1	2	0	0
Total	210	99*	110	100

_____

* May not equal 100 due to rounding.

Finally, the researcher summarized the effects of all World Events by gender. These results are summarized in Table 17. Overall, 28% of comments were assigned to the positive group, 46% were assigned to the negative, 25% were assigned to the neutral, and 1% was assigned to the other category. Among female respondents, 26% were assigned to the positive group, 47% were assigned to the negative, 26% were assigned to the neutral, and 1% was assigned to the other. This is compared to male respondents' comments of which 31% were assigned to the positive group, 45% were assigned to the negative, 23% to the neutral, and 1% to the other.

In summary, the results reveal some interesting insights into the events that have shaped the lives of the Class of 2002. The data also reveal some patterns by race and gender. These results and their implications for future practice and research are discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 17

Comparison of Total Effects of World Events Reported by Respondents by Gender (N=320).

_____

Effect	Gender				Total	
	Female (n=210)		Male (n=110)			
	n	%n	n	%n	n	%N
Positive	55	26	34	31	89	28
Negative	98	47	50	45	148	46
Neutral	54	26	25	23	79	25
Other	3	1	1	1	4	1
Total	210	100	110	100	320	100

_____

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and world events that affected the lives of the Class of 2002. The effect (positive, negative, and neutral) that these events had on the lives of respondents was also examined. In addition, it was designed to explore differences by race and gender. Data were collected by having respondents complete The College Student Events Survey.

This chapter is divided into four sections. First, the research questions posed in this study are addressed. Next, the implications of the results for future practice and research are discussed. Third, the limitations of the study are addressed. Finally, overall conclusions about the study are drawn.

Responses to Research Questions

The first research question posed in this study dealt with the Personal Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002. Respondents offered a total of 338 Personal Events. The researcher identified six themes among the Personal Events: Death/Injury, Academics, Extracurricular Activities, Familial Relationships, Dating, and Miscellaneous. These data offer a rich description of the types of Personal Events that have shaped the lives of the Class of 2002.

There are three interesting conclusions that can be drawn from this data. The theme Death/Injury consisted of 74 comments, 22% of all the Personal Events reported by respondents (see Table 2). Specifically, the subtheme Death represented 13% of all these Personal Events. This finding suggests that many members of the Class of 2002 have been affected by death. These students could be at different stages in the grieving

process, and their sense of loss may be affecting their success as college students. At a minimum, it is reasonable to conclude that a considerable number of the members of the Class of 2002 have experienced the loss of a loved one. Further research about the effect that such a loss has on college freshmen may be warranted.

The role of academics is another important finding related to this research question. The theme Academics also represented 74 (22%) of the Personal Events (see Table 2). As college students, respondents recognized the significant role that education has played in their lives. Specifically, entering college was viewed as a major life event. The subtheme Entering College represented 10% of the total Personal Events reported by respondents. This finding may suggest that education is playing an increasingly important role in the lives of American Youth, though future exploration of the meaning of this finding may be appropriate.

Another interesting finding relates to the frequency of specific events as compared to the frequency of themes. While calculating the frequency of themes and subthemes is useful in illustrating the significant events in the lives of the Class of 2002, so to is determining the most common specific events reported. For example, in terms of Personal Events there were 35 comments that dealt with the event Entering College, 30 comments that dealt with the death of a family member, and 27 comments that reflected the event of an Injury. While their respective themes had equal frequencies, Entering College was the most commonly reported event among Personal Events. In addition, the death of a family member made up the majority of the events assigned to the subtheme Death.

The second research question posed in this study dealt with how the Personal Events affected the lives of the Class of 2002. Respondents assigned each event an effect (positive, negative, or neutral). In certain cases, the respondent either listed more than one effect, or no effect. These comments were placed in the other effect category.

Overall, 60% of the Personal Events were assigned a positive rating. This compares to 20% that were assigned a negative rating, 15% that were assigned a neutral rating, and 3% that were placed in the other category (see Table 3). Respondents in this study were more likely to assign a positive effect than a negative or neutral effect to Personal Events. In general, the data suggest that students feel positive about the state of their personal lives. One might also infer that students are more likely to be optimistic rather than pessimistic when it comes to their personal lives and future.

The World Events that shaped the lives of the Class of 2002 formed the focus of the study's third research question. Respondents reported 320 World Events. The researcher identified four themes among the World Events: World Figures, Political Events, Military Actions, and Miscellaneous.

An interesting finding among the World Events reported by all respondents relates to the timeframe in which events occurred. Numerous frequently cited World Events happened many years ago. For example, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Persian Gulf War, and the Challenger Explosion all occurred more than five years ago (refer to Table 4). This finding is contrary to Levine's study, in which students were more likely to list events that had occurred relatively close to the time of data collection (Levine, 1993). This finding thus suggests that today's students are more in touch with past events then their predecessors were.

Again, comparing the frequency of themes and subthemes against the frequency of specific events provided interesting insight into the lives of the Class of 2002. In terms of World Events, 53 comments dealt with the Persian Gulf War, 40 comments dealt with President Clinton's scandals while in office, and 17 comments dealt with the Death of Princess Diana. This points out an interesting finding. While the theme World Figures was the largest in terms of frequency (77), the specific event of the Persian Gulf War, which was assigned to the theme Military Actions, had the highest frequency (53).

Again, the researcher analyzed the data to determine the events that were most commonly listed. In terms of World Events, there were 53 comments that dealt the event the Persian Gulf War, 40 comments that reflected President Clinton's scandals while in office, comments that reflected the event the Oklahoma City Bombing, and Death of Princess Diana. This points out an interesting finding. While the theme World Figures was the largest (77), the specific event of the Persian Gulf War was the most common event listed (53).

The fourth research question dealt with the effects those World Events had on the lives of the Class of 2002. Overall, 27% of the comments were assigned a positive effect, 46% were assigned a negative effect, 24% were assigned a neutral effect, and 3% were placed in the other category (see Table 5). When compared to the overall effects of Personal Events, this presents a very interesting finding.

One could infer from this finding that students are more likely to assign a negative effect to a World Event that shaped their lives. This is opposed to Personal Events where students are more likely to assign a positive effect. In fact, the difference is dramatic. While 60% of the Personal Events listed were assigned a positive effect, only 27% of the

World Events were assigned a positive rating (refer to Tables 3 and 5). This equates to a difference of 33 percentage points. Furthermore, while only 20% of the Personal Events were assigned a negative rating, 46% of the World Events were. In addition, World Events were more likely to be viewed as having a neutral effect. While 24% of the World Events were assigned a neutral effect, only 15% of the Personal Events were assigned this same rating by respondents.

These data suggest that students are more likely to view World Events in a negative light. Also, they may be more likely to have concerns over the future of the world. While they remain optimistic about their personal lives, they appear to be troubled by the overall state of the world.

These findings are consistent with those reported by Levine. In his 1979 and 1993 generational studies, Levine found that students were more optimistic about their personal future than they were about the country's collective future. While the number of students optimistic about the country's future increased from 41% in 1979 to 55% in 1993, students in both studies were still more optimistic about their own future.

The fifth research question posed in the present study dealt with differences in the types and effects of Personal and World Events by race. To determine possible differences, the researcher compared the frequency and percentages of events and effects in the various themes and subthemes by race.

In terms of Personal Events, what stands out most about the data are the similarities rather than the differences. While there were some differences in terms of the frequency in which certain themes were reported, the data were fairly consistent among the racial subgroups. For example, while 23% of the Personal Events listed by majority

respondents were assigned to the theme Death/Injury, 21% of the Personal Events listed by non-majority respondents fit this theme (see Table 6).

However, there are two differences that should be noted. First, non-majority respondents offered more comments that reflected academics. While 26% of the total Personal Events listed by non-majority respondents were assigned to the theme Academics, only 19% of those offered by majority respondents were assigned to this theme. Second, majority respondents were more likely to list Personal Events that were assigned to the theme Extracurricular Activities. Nineteen percent of the events listed by majority respondents fit this theme, while only 4% of events listed by non-majority respondents were related to Extracurricular Activities (refer to Table 6).

These two findings could be related. One could infer from this data that non-majority students are more likely to focus on academics and assign it a significant role in their lives. By assigning academics an important role, other areas are rendered less important. Therefore, non-majority students may not allow the same amount of time for extracurricular activities that majority students do.

In some aspects, this finding is consistent with prior research. Flacks & Thomas (1998) found that students who encounter a lot of adversity in attending college concentrate on their roles as students more than students who experience little adversity in attending college. Adversity was defined in terms such as having to work significant hours to afford college, being the first in their families to attend college, and graduating from high schools that did not prepare them well for the challenges of college. The study noted that students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, such as non-majority students, play active roles in the intellectual climate of institutions. For example, African-

American and Latino males were more likely to interact with faculty outside of the classroom than were their White counterparts.

However, there were some differences in the findings of the present study and Flacks & Thomas' (1998). In the Flacks & Thomas' study, majority students were more likely to engage in social activities, such as parties and Greek system functions. However, African-American and Latino students were more likely to participate in community activities. This finding is inconsistent with the present study, which found that majority students were more likely to list events that were assigned to the theme Extracurricular Activities.

For the effects of Personal Events, both subgroups were more likely to assign events positive ratings. However, more of the comments made by majority respondents received a positive rating than comments made by non-majority respondents. Specifically, 66% of the Personal Events listed by majority respondents were assigned a positive effect, 17% were assigned a negative effect, and 14% were assigned a neutral effect (see Table 8). For non-majority respondents, 57% of the Personal Events listed were assigned a positive effect, 25% were assigned a negative effect, and 16% were assigned a neutral effect (see Table 8).

An example of a theme in the Personal Events category that revealed a marked difference was Death/Injury. While 40% of the comments made by majority respondents were assigned a positive effect, only 28% of those by non-majority respondents were assigned a positive effect (see Table 7). This suggests that non-majority students tend to be affected by death differently than majority students. This finding could also be consistent with research that shows that African-American young adults are more likely

to be victims of homicide than are Caucasian young adults (NCES, 1996). Therefore, it is possible that non-majority students might have more experience with family members or friends who were killed.

After analyzing Personal Events and their effects by race, the researcher turned to World Events and their effects by race. Again, there was little difference in the percentages in which comments by each subgroup were assigned to themes. In fact, there was less difference among World Events than there was among Personal Events. For example, 22% of the World Events reported by majority respondents were assigned to the theme World Figures. This is quite close to the 27% of World Events reported by non-majority respondents that were assigned to the theme World Figures (refer to Table 9).

Overall, both subgroups were more likely to assign a World Event a negative effect. However, there were a few differences. The most notable difference is that while 30% of the World Events listed by majority respondents were assigned a positive effect, only 25% of the World Events listed by non-majority respondents were rated as having a positive effect (see Table 11). Similar to the effects of Personal Events, one may infer that non-majority students tend to view World Events in a negative light. Overall, the data suggest that non-majority students are more likely to view events, whether personal or world, more negatively than their majority counterparts.

The most notable difference in terms of the effect among World Events by race was found in the theme Military Actions. In terms of the military events listed by majority respondents, 30% were assigned a positive effect, 40% were assigned a negative effect, and 30% were assigned a neutral effect. This compares to military events reported by non-majority respondents of which 19% were assigned a positive effect, 62% were

assigned a negative effect, and 19% were assigned a neutral effect (see Table 10).

These data imply that non-majority students tend to have more negative opinions of military actions and war than their majority counterparts. One reason for this difference could be the perceived class system in the American Military. In the past, people from high socio-economic backgrounds have been able to avoid military service (e.g. draft deferrals for those in college during Vietnam). Conversely, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more likely to find themselves in dangerous situations. This could have caused a backlash against military actions that continues to be felt by non-majority students.

The last research question in this study dealt with the differences among Personal and World Events and their effects by gender. The researcher analyzed the frequency with which events were listed by gender. In terms of Personal Events by gender, there were few differences. In fact, there were even fewer differences by gender than there were by race. For instance, the largest difference dealt with Familial Relationships. While 12% of the Personal Events listed by female respondents were assigned to this theme, only 7% of the Personal Events listed by male respondents were assigned to the theme Familial Relationships (see Table 12). This reflects a difference of five percentage points, the greatest difference reported among Personal Events by gender.

For the effects of the Personal Events by gender, differences were also limited. Among female respondents', 61% of events were assigned a positive effect, 20% were assigned a negative effect, and 15% were assigned a neutral effect. For Personal Events listed by male respondents, 64% were assigned a positive effect, 20% were assigned a negative effect, and 14% were assigned a neutral effect (see Table 14). These findings

suggest that males tend to perceive Personal Events in a more positive light (64%), but the difference compared to females (61%) is minimal.

However, there were differences in effects of Personal Events among individual themes. For example, while 65% of the comments made by female respondents assigned to the theme Dating received a positive rating, 80% of the comments made by male respondents assigned to the Dating theme were assigned a positive rating (see Table 13). It would seem that males tend to have more positive dating experiences than females have had.

The similarities between males and females were also evident in the World Events category. Again, the percentage point differences in relation to the frequency with which events were reported were relatively small. For example, while 21% of the World Events reported by females were assigned to the theme Military Actions, 22% of the World Events reported by males were assigned to the theme Military Actions (see Table 15). This illustrates the similarities in the frequency with which females and males reported World Events.

In terms of differences in the effects of World Events by gender, again there were similarities. Both genders were consistent and both subgroups were more likely to assign a negative effect to the event. However, females were more likely to report a negative effect (47%) than were males (45%) (see Table 17). For example, 49% of the events listed by females assigned to the theme World Figures were a rated as having had a negative rating. However, only 41% of the events listed by males assigned to the theme World Figures were rated as having had a negative effect (refer to Table 16).

Implications

The results of this study provide a sufficient basis from which implications for future practice and research can be drawn. In terms of practice, there are several areas that could be improved upon based on this study. First, faculty could use this study to update their teaching approaches. When teaching, many professors use examples to illustrate key

points. However, if the examples provided have little or no meaning for students, the point is often lost. Therefore, faculty could use this study to understand the significant Personal and World Events about which current college students are aware.

For example, a professor discussing war might find it natural to use the Vietnam War as an illustration. For the professor, the Vietnam War may have been the war that defined his or her generation. However, a student born in 1980 has no personal knowledge of the Vietnam War. The only war that student has experienced has been the Persian Gulf War. In addition, this study found that the Persian Gulf War was a shaping experience among many respondents. Therefore, it might be beneficial for professors to use the Persian Gulf War to illustrate their points. This practice could be used to incorporate other World Events and Personal Events that have meaning for the Class of 2002, thereby increasing students' understanding of materials being covered in classes.

Another important result in terms of practice deals with differences by race and gender. Prior research has stated that there are differences among the experiences of different racial and gender subgroups (Galston, 1996; Hornblower, 1997; Levine, 1993; NCES 1996; NCES 1998; NCES, 1996; NCES, 1997a). However, the results from this study suggest that experiences are more similar than different among both racial and

gender subgroups. Faculty and student affairs practitioners should make note not to assume differences where none might exist. By relying on racial and gender stereotypes, practitioners might assume students have had different experiences and might have been affected by events differently. The present results suggest that might not be the case.

Student affairs practitioners can also use the results from this study to improve and alter services that they provide. For example, the results of this study revealed that death is a common experience among the members of the Class of 2002. Therefore, student affairs practitioners would be well advised to increase their knowledge of the stages of grieving. They might also consider training student staff, such as resident advisors on how to help students who have experienced a loss. Another possibility would be to promote their counseling programs that deal with death and the sense of loss that accompanies the death of a family member or friend.

In addition, the Class of 2002 itself could benefit from the results of this study. Students often hear about the differences that separate them from one another. The present results highlight the similarities that tie students together. These similarities can be used to bridge gaps between students of different races and genders. By understanding their commonalties, students may find new ways to relate to those who are different from themselves.

A final implication of this study relates to the parents of members of the Class of 2002. This study has traced the changes in American society through the twentieth century. The parents of these students grew up in a different time and had different experiences that shaped their lives. By familiarizing themselves with the results of this study, parents can gain insight into the lives of their children. They can begin to

understand the events that have influenced their children. In addition, they may identify similarities in the events that shaped their children's' lives and their own lives. For example, the results of the present study found that Academics, Familial Relationships, and Dating are common events among the lives of the members of the Class of 2002. Parents who familiarize themselves with the results of the present study might recognize that the same types of events were significant in their lives when they were young adults. That commonality might help parents and children find a better way of communicating with each other.

While there are extensive implications for professional practice, the results from this study also suggest topics for future research. First, this study only examined data by race and gender. Future studies may want to explore data by other characteristics such as socio-economic status and academic major.

The present study is a snapshot of the Class of 2002. Longitudinal research could be conducted on the Class of 2002. Such research might enable scholars to better predict issues that will be important to the Boomleters as they age.

The present study only explored individual responses. Future researchers might ask respondents how events affected themselves and how the think events affected other students. The results of such a gap analysis might provide insights into perceived differences between self and others.

Finally, this study only dealt with the Class of 2002. It could be replicated using members of Generation X and the Baby Boomlet as respondents. This type of study would allow researchers to investigate generational differences.

Limitations

As in all research, the present study did have some limitations. First, due to an initial low response rate, the researcher relied on convenient sampling methods. The convenient sample might not reflect all the students in the Class of 2002 at the institution where the study was conducted. Therefore, the results from this study should be generalized with caution.

A second limitation deals with the number of respondents in the sample. The sample consisted of 74 respondents. If the sample had been larger, the results might have been different.

Another limitation related to sample size deals with the gender composition of the sample. In terms of gender, 71% of respondents were female and 29% of respondents were male. This means that the results could unfairly represent the experiences of female students.

Finally there were limitations related to the timeframe of the data collection period. Due to an initial response rate, the timeline to collect data was extended. Surveys were completed over a four-month period of time (October 25, 1999 to February 26, 1999). Certain World Events (e.g. President Clinton's impeachment, U.N. bombing of Iraq) occurred near the end of the data collection period. These and other events had not yet occurred when earlier respondents completed their surveys. This may have influenced he results.

The second limitation related to the timeframe of the data collection period relates to Personal Events. Personal Events such as Entering College may have been felt more by

respondents who completed the survey in October, as compared to those who completed the survey in February. If this occurred, the results might have been influenced.

In summary, the results of this study present interesting insights into the Personal and World Events that influenced the lives of the Class of 2002. Several conclusions can be drawn from the results. First, there was more commonality among World Events than among Personal Events. Students seem to have a greater breadth of Personal Events. However, they have experienced many of the same World Events. In this sense they are similar to previous generations in that they have a common history that ties them together.

Second, like the generations that preceded them, members of the Class of 2002 are more optimistic about their personal lives than they are about world events. While this may not be a surprising finding, it is interesting that current students are more like their predecessors in this respect than they are different.

Third, contrary to previous research, this study found few differences in the Personal and World Events listed by respondents in terms of race and gender. Both females and males and majority and non-majority students listed Personal and World Events with similar frequency. Despite their demographic differences, students have experienced many similar events.

Finally, the pattern of greater optimism about Personal Events holds true for both females and males and majority and non-majority students. While there were may be slight differences between the subgroups, overall females, males, majority, and non-

majority students are more optimistic about their personal lives than the state of the world.

In conclusion, the world is in a constant state of change. These changes affect not only society as a whole, but also shape the environment in which students are raised. College faculty and student affairs practitioners would be well advised to recognize this fact. By understanding the changes that occur in American society on a personal and world level, they may be better able to understand their students. This increased understanding may result in increased learning and sharing among members of the campus community.