

A NEW COLLEGE GENERATION  
PERSONAL AND WORLD EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF THE CLASS OF 2002

by

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## PERSONAL AND WORLD EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF THE CLASS OF 2002

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(ABSTRACT)

Sociologists have identified different segments of the American population as distinct generations. These generations are identified by the events they share as they grow up which create a common history for them. Four such generations have been delineated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Swing Generation, the Baby Boom, Generation X, and the Baby Boomlet. The latest of these, the Baby Boomlet, includes all those born between 1977 and 1994.

Members of the Baby Boomlet are just reaching the age of maturity. The first age cohort (those born in 1977) of the Baby Boomlet matriculated to college in 1995. The purpose of this study was to examine the personal and world events that influenced the lives of the Class of 2002.

Data were collected through a survey. The survey asked participants to list five Personal Events and five World Events that have shaped their lives. Participants were also asked to assign an effect (positive, negative, or neutral) to each event and to describe how each event influenced their lives.

The findings provided insights into the experiences of the Class of 2002. . First, there was more commonality among World Events than among Personal Events. This suggests that students have experienced many of the same World Events.

Second, members of the Class of 2002 are more optimistic about their personal lives than they are about the World Events. Respondents were more likely to assign a positive effect to Personal Events than they were to World Events. In addition, respondents were more likely to assign a negative effect to World Events than they were to Personal Events.

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.

Finally, the pattern of greater optimism about Personal Events holds true for all subgroups. While there were may be slight differences between the subgroups, overall females, males, majority, and non-majority respondents were more optimistic about their personal lives than they were about world events.

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I thank my family for their love, support, and countless stories with which to amuse my friends. I would especially like to thank my father who instilled in me my work ethic and the belief that I could accomplish anything to which I set my mind and my mother whose ability for compassion and understanding has been my foundation and a gift I hope to bring to my students.

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Finally, I would like to thank all of the teachers I have had. They have taught me that knowledge is a treasure. They themselves are one of this country's greatest treasures.

Dedication

To my Nana

Rose McCauley

May 30, 1909 and still ticking...

My Nana is one of the most incredible women I know. She has survived so much and has never lost her sense of humor, or her love for life. The gifts of her love, time, and support are ones I will always carry with me. Though she never had the opportunity to receive the type of education that I have, she has taught me the true definition of knowledge and success. I love you Nana Banana!

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