

LIFE TRANSITIONS STUDY NEWSLETTER 1998

University of Michigan



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

As Project Director, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing participation in this study of life transitions. As you know, you have been helping us out for a long time—since you were in sixth grade—and believe us, all of your time has been worth it! This is one of the only studies in the world that has been able to obtain information from growing adolescents and young adults for so many years. This kind of research is one of the few ways to understand how humans develop through time and through life transitions. Social scientists and policymakers around the world use information from this study, and many of our findings can be found in scientific and popular publications already.

Results from this study were important in convincing the U.S. Department of Education to place a high priority on facilitating parent involvement as one of the educational goals for the year 2000. Also, some of our findings were highlighted on a documentary show put together by the BBC and shown throughout Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. In addition, the results were featured in a four hour documentary series on sex differences put on by public television in Greece, Australia, and the U.S.A. I also presented our work in a series of workshops in Japan and in conferences in Germany and Australia.

The information you have provided us is also very important to policy makers concerned with the transition from school to work. Your generation is the first to face severe job opportunity limitations, particularly for non-college graduates. We have used the information from this study to help policy makers think about better job training programs for your generation.

While we have reported some specific findings, the primary goal of this study is to increase our understanding of human development through the transitions of adolescence and young adulthood. More than 1,000 of you filled out surveys at our last collection. We are hoping to find out what you have been up to in the last few years—what kinds of jobs you have, what kinds of relationships you are involved in, whether you have children, what you do in your free time, and what has helped you and held you back in the pursuit of your goals.

We are very grateful to you for giving us so much important information about human development already, and we hope that you know how important your continued participation is. With your help, we will be able to provide researchers, educators, policymakers, and parents with more information to help guide their decisions about programs and policies, and to help them make effective decisions. As in the past, we are now sharing the information with you as well, in order that you can see what kinds of things people your age are doing and thinking about.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, and thanks again!

Sincerely,

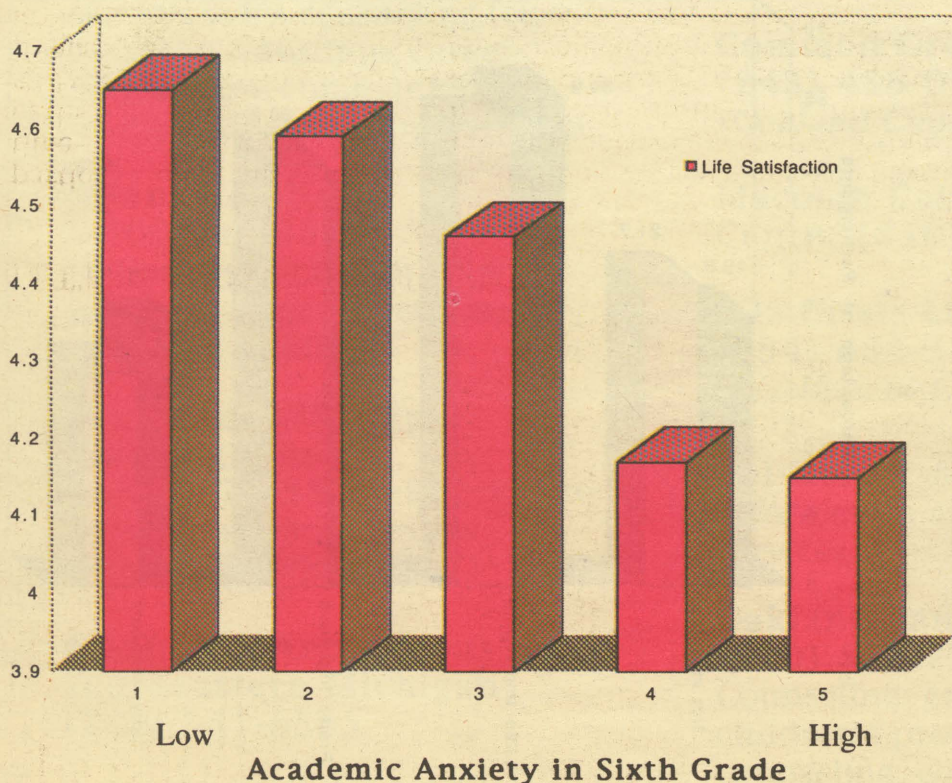
Jacquelynne Eccles

Do childhood worries fade away?

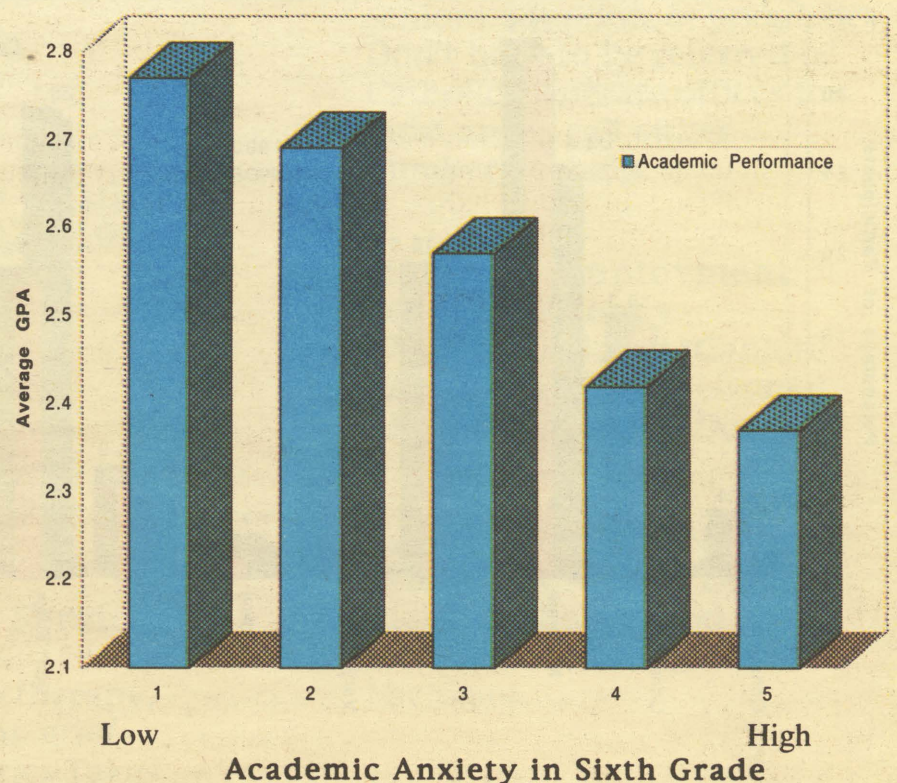
Your willingness to continue to participate in "Michigan Life Transition Study" has given us an exceptional opportunity to study the long-term effects of some of the information you have provided us in previous years. In 1983-1984 (6th grade) we asked you about your level of anxieties and worries concerning test taking, academic performance, and family financial situation in the future. In 1990 and 1992 (12th grade and 2 years after finishing high school), we asked you about your academic performance in 12th grade and your physical and psychological health 2 years after high school. Our findings indicate that those who reported higher levels of anxieties and worries in 6th grade also reported lower levels of academic achievement and lower levels of physical and mental health 6 to 8 years later. For example, individuals with a high level of anxiety in 6th grade achieved lower GPA in 12th grade. Furthermore, in their report two years after high school, they were more depressed and angry. They were also less physically healthy and less satisfied with their life than those with lower levels of anxieties and worries in 6th grade.

These results help us to understand the complex and long-term effects of different types of anxieties on individuals' lives that was made possible only because of your cooperation through the years.

Life Satisfaction Two Years After High School



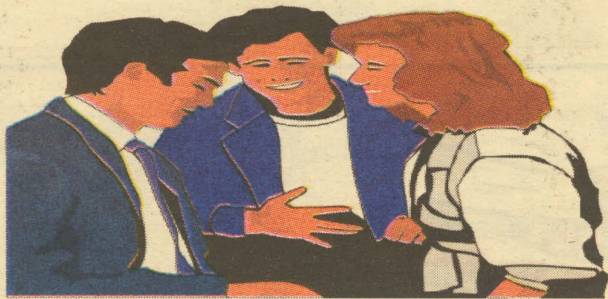
Academic Performance in Twelfth Grade



Tell Us How it Was and Is! The Young Adult Intensive Interview Study

We were interested in interviewing a small number of you one-on-one in order to find out your thoughts and feelings about the people and events that have influenced who you are as adults. Forty of you participated in the interviews, along with a family member, friend, or significant other. You gave us a great deal of information about your past experiences, your present situation, and your hopes and worries for the future. Those of us who conducted the interviews, as well as others who are beginning to use the information provided in the interviews, greatly appreciate the willingness and openness of all who participated in the interview study. We wanted to share with all of you some of the thoughts and perspectives of those who participated, as they recalled their early life experiences and talked about what it was like to be a young adult in the 1990's.

Some of you talked about conditions at work. "It's an unhealthy kind of place with argon gas, and the welders. So you're breathing argon gas and there's smoke and the hi-los are running around off propane. You got



all that exhaust and the ventilation system isn't worth a damn. So, that's the kinda job...the reason a job like that pays good money is because they realize, you know, it sucks. This job's real hard. And if we don't pay 'em at least this much, we'll never keep anybody."

A number of you talked about the need and desire to become financially secure. For example, one young man stated: "In order to have children...in order for me to get married, I need to have a stable house. I need to have a stable income. I need to have a reliable car. I need to have all bases covered, you know. It would just put such a strain on getting married if you didn't have a house

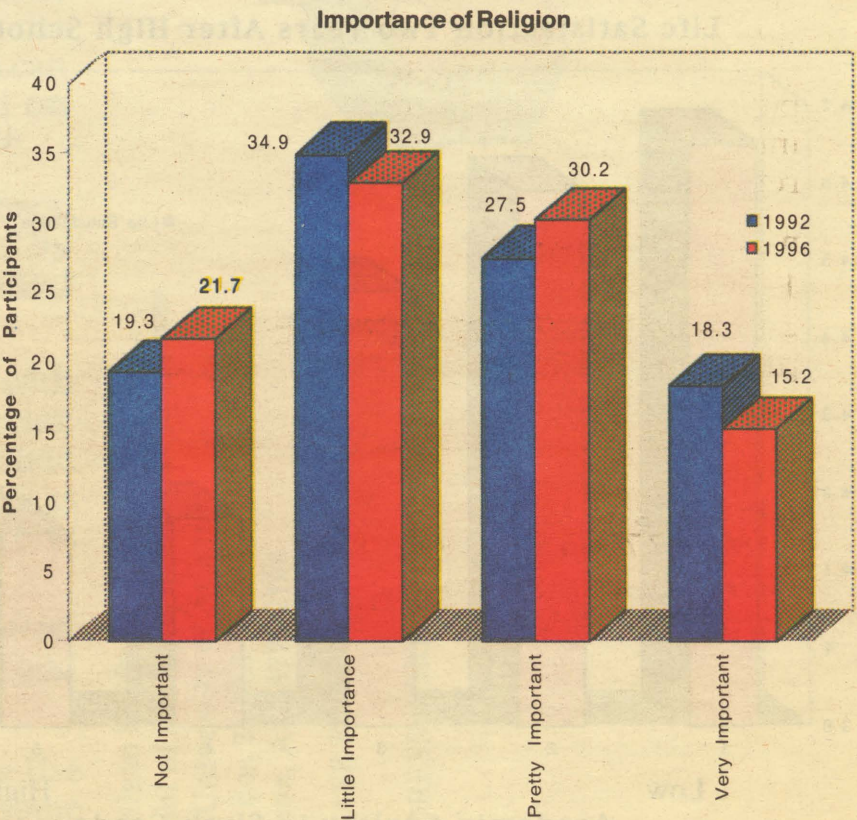
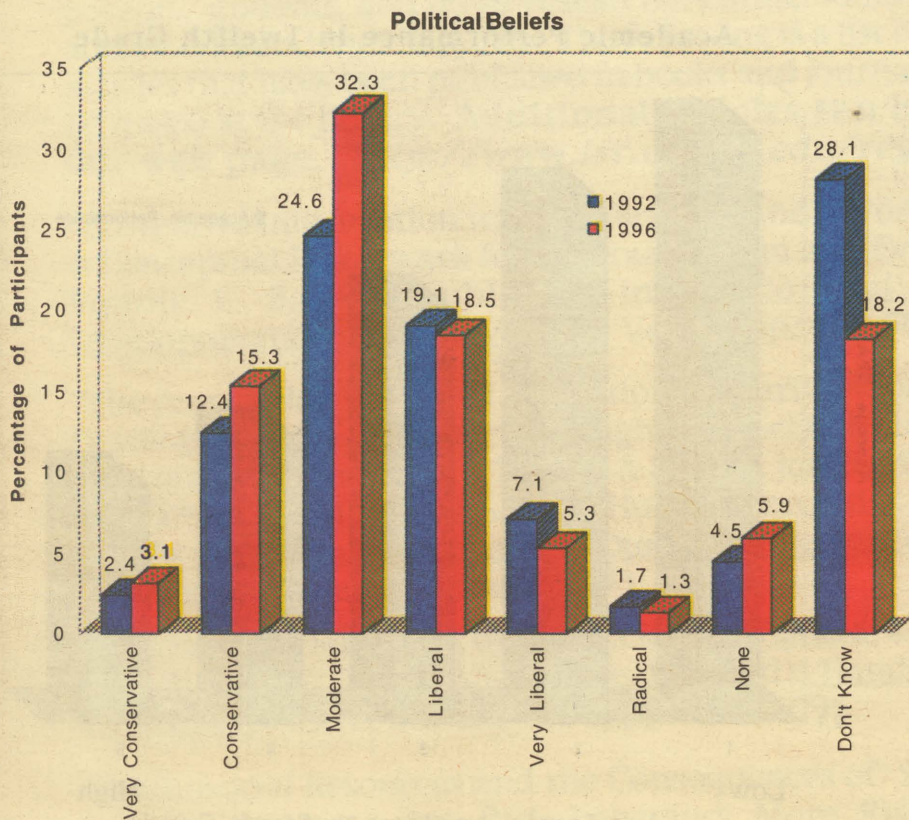
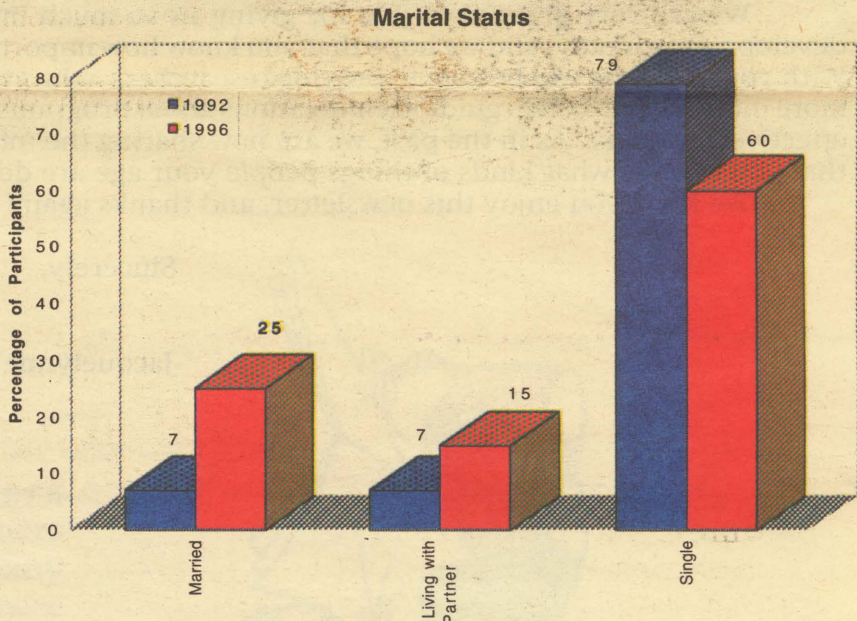
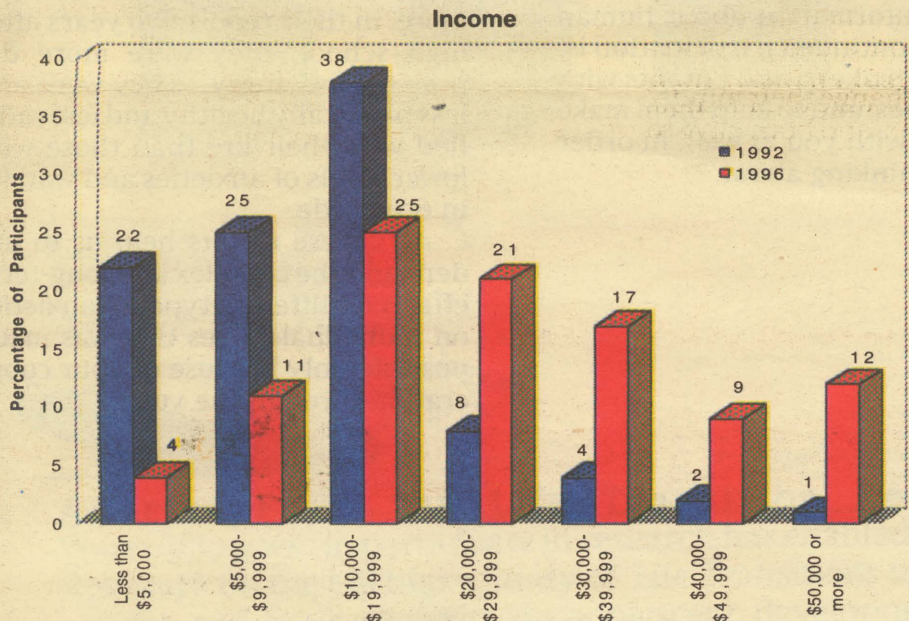
yet...you didn't have a very good income yet...you know I feel a marriage would suffer and possible fall apart...as a result."

As you can see, the stories the interview participants told us about their experiences gives us rich detail about their lives. We have selected only a few quotes from hundreds of pages of interview transcripts we are now analyzing. As a result of these analyses, we have learned a great deal about the lives of young adults today. We have been impressed with the way many of the young adults have coped with a diverse set of challenging life experiences and circumstances. We have also learned about the time and financial barriers young adults face when attempting to live on their own and continue their education, and about the important relationships and social support systems young adults rely upon for both emotional and practical support. This information is being used to offer suggestions to educators and policy-makers about how to improve present practices in the schools, as well as influence important governmental policies relevant to today's young adults.



...Worth Taking A Look At

Individuals regularly go through changes in their normal transition from one stage of life to the next. Here are some of the changes that have taken place over a four year span: changes in how much money you made; how many of you got married; how your political beliefs shifted from uncertainty to moderateness; and the continued importance of religion in your lives. As you can see below, you are making more money in 1996 than you did in 1992. More of you are married or living with your partner than were in 1992. The political beliefs reported in 1996 is an indication that more of you have determined what your political beliefs are and in general these beliefs are more moderate than in 1992. In addition, in 1996 you told us that religion is generally less important to you than it was in 1992.



Do your stereotypes affect your career choice?

Some people think that males are naturally better at math than females (although we don't think so!). We investigated whether the females who believe this stereotype were less likely to choose a career that involves math or physical science than females who don't believe this stereotype. As expected, the less a female believes the stereotype the more likely she is to pick a college major and to choose a career in one of those areas. This is because the less she believes the stereotype the better she thinks she is in math and physical science, and people tend to pick careers they think they think they will be good at.

Some of the math and physical science college majors that females in our study have picked are: aerospace engineering, chemistry, and computer science. Some of the math and physical science related careers that females in our study hope to have someday are: accountants, engineers, computer systems analysts, financial managers, and physicists.

By the way, it turns out that males believe in stereotypes more than females. Males were more likely than females to think that males are naturally better at math than females. But males are also more likely to think that females are naturally better at verbal skills!



Lost Talent: Young Women Leaving Non-Traditional Fields

As you have gotten older, we have become interested in what kinds of occupational fields young men and women choose to go into. Women in our society have recently been making progress in gaining entry into fields traditionally dominated by men, but there are still many more men than women in these jobs. We are interested in finding out what happens to young women who would like to go into non-traditional fields.

We looked at what the young women among you said you wanted to do as an occupation when you were in your senior year of high school. We focused on those who said they wanted to go into male-typed fields, such as owning a business, or being a doctor or a lawyer. 241 of you fit this description.

Then, we looked at the same question on the surveys you filled out two years after you left high school. To our surprise, 60% of the young women who had originally wanted to go into medicine, law, business, or other male-typed occupations had changed their minds! Why did so many change their minds? There are two main reasons, and both have to

do with women also wanting to be moms. Many of the young women who changed their minds decided they would rather go into more traditionally "female-typed" jobs, such as being teachers, because they wanted more flexibility. Second, they believed that having a male-typed job would create conflicts with raising a family. Thus, there were many issues that the young women needed to take into account as they were deciding on their future work and family plans. These choices are tough for young people these days, especially as more women are moving into traditionally male jobs. One way for more women to pursue their career interests if for more men to share in childcare and housework.

Are you wondering why the other young women didn't change their minds too? It didn't necessarily have to do with them *not* wanting to be mothers. It had more to do with the fact that they were more focused on their skills and ambitions. These young women were more certain about their career choice; they knew what they wanted to do and they were going to go do it! Furthermore, many of them thought they were good at "male-typed" subjects, like math and science, and thought that these skills would be useful in the jobs they would like to have in their future.

While we think its great when people get to follow their dreams, we also know this is not always realistic. We think a lot of young people (including men, and young women interested in other kinds of occupations) change their minds about "what they want to do when they grow up" many times before they find a good fit. How many times have you changed your mind? How much have family concerns influenced your career choices?

We will report what happened to these people in the next newsletter!



Some Helpful Numbers.....



Women's Resource Center-Schoolcraft College

(734)462-4443

Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker and Non-Traditional Job Trainees Grants available. Also provides counseling for people in transition, career information, community referrals, divorce support group.

Parent Helpline

1-800-942-4357

24-Hour Hotline with help for parenting issues/questions regarding a child.

Michigan Self Help Clearinghouse

1-800-777-5556 Referrals to self-help support groups throughout Michigan.

Alcoholics Anonymous of Southeastern Michigan

(248) 541-6565

Crisis Intervention and Referrals:

Neighborhood Service Organization (313) 224-7000 (Wayne County)

Common Ground (248) 456-0909 (Oakland County)

Macomb County Crisis Center (810) 307-9100

SOS Crisis Line (734) 485-3222 (Washtenaw County)

Tel-Help 1-800-552-1183 Information and referral services.

Oakland Family Services (810) 858-7776 Counseling, group therapy, children's program, grief counseling, geriatrics.Takes referrals from court, walk-ins.

Catholic Social Services

(810) 548-4044 or

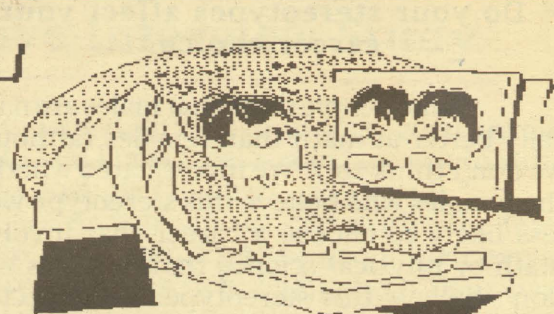
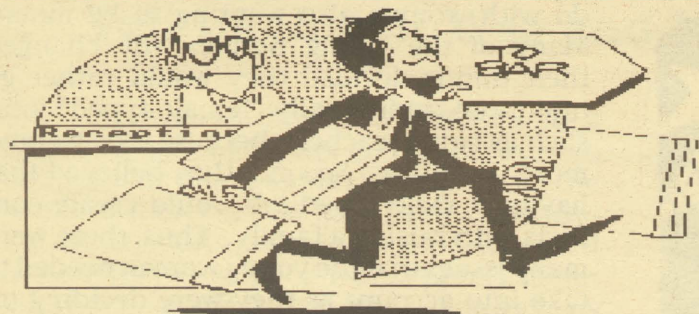
(313) 421-3730 Counseling programs for: Family, drug abuse, teens, foster children, seniors, adoption, or pregnancy. Don't have to be referred or Catholic. Seperate offices for most areas, call either number for help.

Michigan Employment Security Agency

(734) 453-3520 (Canton)
(248) 476-5980 (Livonia)
(313) 837-2960 (Detroit)

Family Violence Helpline

1-800-996-6228 Domestic Violence Shelters and Information throughout Michigan.



Entering Adulthood: Does Risk-taking Behavior Change?

Adolescent risk-taking behavior is a major concern of parents, politicians, teachers, and community members in general. Often risk-taking behavior is considered to be "just a phase" or something the person will "grow out of". Studies have found that young adulthood is associated with change in risk-taking behavior. This change was also found to be true for the Life Transition participants. In this case, changes in alcohol and marijuana use, antisocial behavior and thrill-seeking were examined.

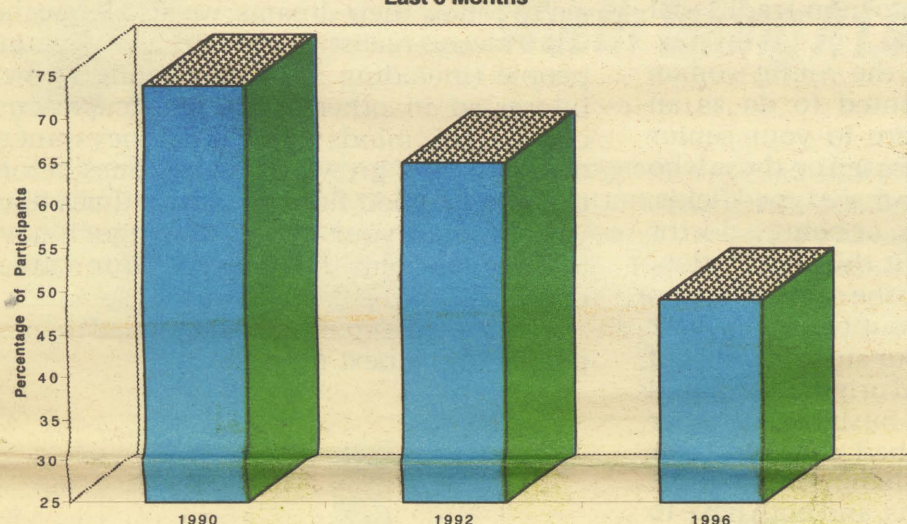
In general, we found that both alcohol and marijuana use increased for the young men and women after high school. Although the number of times alcohol was consumed

increased, the amount of consumption that is associated with getting drunk was decreased. This change which suggests more social drinking, is an indication of individuals having more control of their behavior as the result of their maturity and responsibility. At the same time, levels of antisocial behavior and thrill-seeking activities decreased. Changes in these behaviors were similar for both males and females, although males reported a greater increase in alcohol use and a greater decrease in antisocial behavior than the females in the study. People who attended college full-time after high school also reported a greater increase in alcohol use than the non-college group. However, the non-

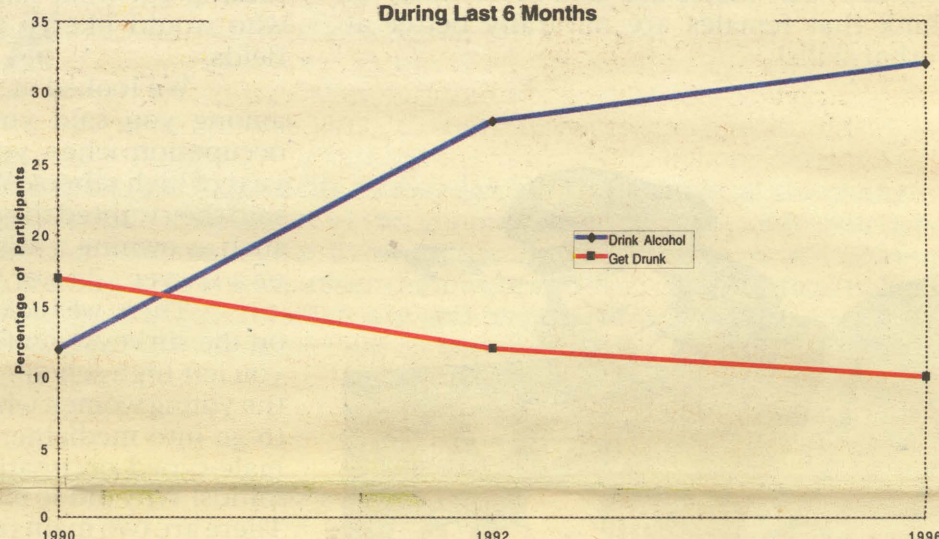
college group reported a greater decrease in antisocial behavior than the college persons.

People committed to the Life Transitions Study continue to invest time and energy in providing answers to numerous surveys. This information will allow us to further examine changes in risk-taking and help figure out what events or personal characteristics promote decreasing or maintaining low levels of risk-taking behavior. For example, romantic relationships have been found to be associated with a significant decrease in risk-taking especially for males. Information such as this should help in developing effective policies and programs to promote positive decision-making about risk-taking behaviors.

Participation in Dangerous Activities Just for the Thrill During Last 6 Months



Drink Alcohol or Got Drunk at Least 21 or More Times During Last 6 Months



TAKE A
PEEK
AT THIS..



Articles From the Life Transition Researchers

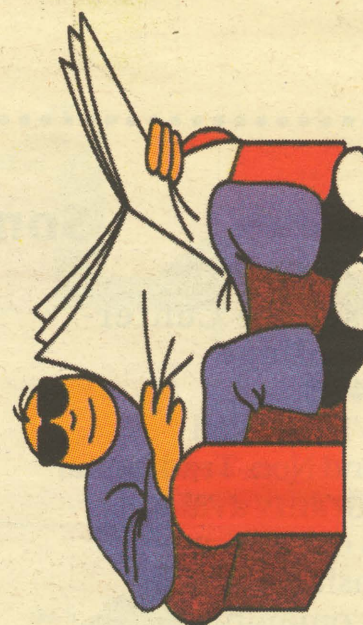
Your willingness to participate in research has enabled researchers that work on the Michigan Study of Life Transitions to write many articles and book chapters on adolescent development. These articles provide information that will help teachers, counselors, parents, students, and other researchers understand the needs of adolescents and their families. The following is a list of some of the articles that have been published in books and journals, which can be found at the library. **Additional articles can be found on our web page.** <http://www.isr.umich.edu/rcgd/msalt>

"Preventive Intervention with Adolescents and Divorced Mothers: A Conceptual Framework for Program Design and Evaluation," by Bonnie L. Barber. Published in the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology. 1995, Vol 16, pp. 481-503.

"The Association of School Transitions in Early Adolescence with Developmental Trajectories through High School," by J. S. Eccles; S. E. Lord; R. W. Roeser; B. L. Barber; & D. M. H. Jozefowicz. Published in J. Schulenberg, J. Maggs, & K. Hurrelmann (Eds.), Health Risks and Developmental Transitions During Adolescence. New York: Cambridge University Press (1997).

"Motivation to Succeed," by J. S. Eccles; A. Wigfield; & U. Schiefele. Published in W. Damon and N. Eisenberg (Ed), Handbook of Child Psychology. 1997, 5th ed., Vol 3, pp.1017-1095.

"Psychosocial Resources and the Consequences of Substance Use and Delinquency: Are Risk behaviors More Risky for Some Adolescents than Others?," by J. L. Maggs; P. Frome; J. S. Eccles; & B. L. Barber. Published in the Journal of Adolescence. 1997, Vol 20, pp. 103-119.



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PLEASE FORWARD

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