



The College of New Jersey

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Sociology professor's new book offers unique and in-depth viewpoint on college students

EWING, NJ ... After 125 interviews with college students from 1995-2003 and over a year of field research, Tim Clydesdale, associate professor of sociology at The College of New Jersey, has finished his new book, *First Year Out*. Published in mid-May by The University of Chicago Press, Clydesdale's book explores the minds and lives of college students during their first year of college, and the challenges they face the future.

While the public may believe pre-conceived notions that college is full of parties, drinking, and drugs, Clydesdale explains most teenagers' lives are much more complex.

"So many assume an 'animal house' scene, when it's much more varied," he says.

When high school graduates make the transition to college freshmen, they must learn to adjust their lives for self-dependence and personal responsibility. Most teenagers handle this process well, learning to balance personal relationships, assimilating into popular American culture, working to fulfill financial needs and meet post-secondary educational requirements.

Though teenagers are becoming self-reliant, Clydesdale explores the deeper problem teenagers face from becoming too preoccupied with their daily lives. Students have many obligations within their daily lives, and to manage these responsibilities, Clydesdale observed teenagers push aside political, religious, and racial identities in order to mold into American culture.

"The good news is that teens learn to handle daily life fairly well, but the bad news is that they do so by ignoring the bigger picture," Clydesdale says.

In his book, Clydesdale does not condemn teenagers for their lives, but warns about potential problems. With the pressures of the expensive American lifestyle, comes the obligation to complete a post-secondary education in order to procure a job to support this lifestyle. Clydesdale also makes an argument about how teenagers manage their gratifications, as in putting off binge drinking for a night to study hard in order to party

twice as hard the night after. These teenagers often live a double-life, presenting themselves as responsible to parents and professors, but primarily concerned about the next party and not their education.

Without teenagers striving for political and social change, the future is unsure for their generation. Although most teens are preoccupied with their daily lives, Clydesdale recognizes a group of “exceptional teens.” These teenagers embrace their political, religious, and social identities, challenge societal standards, learn for the sake of knowledge and desire to infuse the world with positive change.

“Exceptional teens are critical of popular culture and really want to understand their own lives and the wider world carefully,” he says.

Clydesdale offers an in-depth, well-organized and unique perspective on teenage life. He enlightens the public of the issues and complexities of a teenager’s life for understanding and empathy on the challenges these teenagers face and what can be done to change the obstacles.

About The College of New Jersey

The College of New Jersey, a primarily undergraduate institution, provides academically prepared students with a challenging education and a rewarding residential experience, small classes and a prestigious faculty. TCNJ has been recognized nationally for its excellence including in *U.S. News and World Report*, *The Fiske Guide to Colleges*, *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, and *Peterson's Competitive Colleges*. The College of New Jersey is located on 289 tree-lined acres in suburban Ewing, NJ.

Primary Media Contact

Public Information Director
Matthew Golden
P) 609.771.2368
E) golden@tcnj.edu