THE NEXT LEADERS?

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1. Changes in Higher Education

The activity and experience of attending university or college as a student has changed dramatically in the space of the last twenty years in Great Britain. In the late 1970s, just before the first Thatcher government was elected, roughly one in nine of the age group went through higher education. Even this small proportion had itself doubled during the previous twenty years from an élite five percent of the eligible population. The proportion of the age group which goes on through university or college is now over one in three, and after a brief pause which coincided with the introduction of a directly-paid element of university fees, may be rising again.

Obviously, an experience designed for one in twenty, or even one in nine, will be very different from that enjoyed by more than one in three. Study at university or college used to be an experience for the select few, and predominantly for men; now it is rapidly becoming part of the normal experience of growing up, especially for the children of the middle classes, of both sexes.

When universities and colleges catered for such a small élite, the educational experience they offered, and the value it represented, were of exceptional quality. Most students received a completely free ride. That is, their fees were paid on their behalf by taxpayers, and they received in addition a full maintenance grant, usually via a local authority. Thus not only was higher education totally free in most cases to its recipients, but their living expenses were paid while they received it. They competed for the scarce places, but it was very much a winner-take-all scenario. The lucky few were given an extraordinary product completely free of charge by a society which felt itself able to afford to do so.

There were arguments about both the morality and the affordability of this largesse. Those in universities, both staff and students, argued that society was the main beneficiary of higher education, deriving considerable economic benefit from the graduates' skills. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the individual graduate generally secured huge and direct personal benefit in terms of access to much higher income. Some argued that it was difficult to defend a system which required the less intellectually endowed who left school at 16 to pay higher taxes so that their more fortunate fellows should receive not only a free ticket to a lifetime's higher salary, but should be paid their living expenses while doing so.

The argument that the graduates would end up paying higher taxes out of their higher salaries was always a thin one. In the first place, it did not apply to those who went abroad after finishing their university education and returned nothing to the public purse. It also remained true for those who stayed that even with those higher taxes, graduates still ended up in with a

far better standard of living, for the most part, than those who never received the chance.

With downward pressure on public spending from the seventies onwards, this position could not continue. The first erosion was in the maintenance grant. It seemed unfair that rich parents should have their offspring given their living expenses for several years at the expense of a public who were poorer than they were, and whose own children would certainly be poorer than their own. A parental contribution towards living expenses was incorporated into the maintenance grant, based upon the income and circumstances of the parent.

It was paid for the most part, albeit initially with some grumbling from those who thought it was the state's job to pay for the upkeep of their children after the age of eighteen. There were a few high profile cases in which rich parents legally disowned their offspring in order to ensure that the state paid them the maintenance grant in full, but these were exceptions.

This small retreat of state responsibility was reversed in part by resourceful students who chose to register as unemployed during their long vacation, drawing state support in the process. The welfare system was clearly not designed to provide outdoor relief for vacationing students, nor were unemployment pay or social security designed to fund students through their holidays. Students argued that they needed the money in order to be able to continue their studies during their long vacation, but few were ever thought to be doing so. In any event, the loophole was largely closed by changes to the rules.

As more and more people were able to undertake higher education, the total cost increased and affordability by society became more of an issue. To begin with, the expansion in numbers was brought about without a correspondingly large increase in governmental funding, reducing the cost per head by forcing the universities to educate more students for a given price or to meet the shortfall from their own, mostly limited, resources.

The next step, and the greatest change to the student experience in recent years, was the introduction of directly-paid university fees, and the phasing out of the maintenance grant altogether. The Dearing report recommended the former, but the newly elected Labour government somehow managed to imply that the second measure was also part of its proposal: it was not. The maintenance grant had been eroded over many years by a failure to upgrade it in line with inflation and increased costs. Student loans had eventually been introduced to take up the slack. With a maintenance grant no longer adequate to meet full living expenses, students resorted to the new loans, or to bank overdrafts, to make up the difference.

It became commonplace for students to leave university not only with a degree, but with a debt. That debt remained modest for most students because maintenance grants did continue to pay most of their living expenses. The ending of maintenance grants, however, will boost that debt to very much higher levels in the future. Students without independent means, which covers most of them, will have to negotiate loans sufficient to pay for several years of living expenses.

The introduction of student-paid fees adds to the burden. The requirement is for the student to pay £1,000 per year towards the cost of the education itself, quite apart from living expenses. This is a small part of the actual cost, but to the typical student will add at least £3,000, and in some cases more, to the overall cost. Given the extra burden of these two measures, the surprise was perhaps the relatively low level of student protest which accompanied their introduction. Most students seem to have settled into the new regime, and taken it in the stride. A university education is now something they have to think about in terms of its costs, as well as of its quality.

The steady expansion of higher education has been achieved without major changes to the institutions which delivered it. The polytechnics were allowed to call themselves universities, and to confer degrees. This ended at a stroke the division between the two types of college. The largely academic universities were seen as superior to the more technically oriented polytechnics. In truth, standards varied quite widely within the groups of both universities and polytechnics. Lip service was paid to a fiction that a university education meant something specific which was different from that which was available at polytechnics, but the reality was that of an unofficial league table with (most would have agreed) Oxford and Cambridge, or vice-versa, at its head, but far less consensus on where the other universities and polytechnics ranked.

The polytechnics used their new-found freedom to imitate, for the most part, what universities were already doing. Polytechnics which had previously been highly specialised, offering a narrow range of technical and vocational degree courses, now widened their ambitions to embrace a full curriculum. For every critic who applauded the increase in liberal arts places that this brought about, there was at least one on the other side to deplore the dilution in standards that this seemed to imply and the diversion of students from vocational courses which would be more useful to them and to the national economy. This debate which continues.

The change could be regarded as largely cosmetic, however, in one important respect. Although it resulted in a proliferation of degrees, which some termed a devaluation of the product, it delivered them in a very traditional way. The past thirty years has seen a total transformation of the business scene. Companies have been remade and restructured several times over. Tides of innovation and idea have ebbed and flowed across the business world, leaving new practices and techniques in their wake. Companies have formed strategic alliances, out-sourced, and demerged. Many have globalised. They have switched to on-time supply of components, become lean and efficient. They have adapted to the information age and pioneered new methods of finance. New companies have made themselves dominant and old ones have fallen by the wayside.

In all of this time our colleges and universities have hardly changed. Most of them continue to operate in familiar ways. The tides which have surged across the business world have scarcely touched their shores. The universities are largely unreformed. The ones which newly bear the name of "university" operate, in large measure, like the older ones. University staff, and even students, complain about conditions from time to time, pointing to

excessive workloads, overcrowded classes and overloaded institutions. What they are complaining about is that a system designed for much smaller numbers is now having to cope with hundreds of thousands more persons than it was intended for. We have expanded the universities without modernising the system under which they operate.

We have also done it without increasing the available funds in line with the expansion in numbers. Universities have had to cope with the increase by absorbing some of the costs themselves. They have had to learn to teach ten students with the money intended for five. Obviously, with less money to spend on each student, universities have been forced to lower the value of what they offer. Each student, compared to his or her predecessor two decades ago, has less time available from the teaching staff, less library facilities, less classroom space and, in many cases, less living space and less social space.

Two points can be made about this erosion in the value of a university education. Firstly, it is possible to argue that the increased access more than compensates for the decline in quality. One could point out that the product is only slightly less good, and that in return huge numbers now have opportunities which were simply not available to them before. We have taken what used to be a luxury for a tiny and privileged élite, and made it generally available to society with only a marginal drop in quality. In a calculus of gain, the slight drop in value to the few is outweighed by the life-enriching opportunities which higher education can now offer to the many.

A second and different point could be made. It is that Britain has managed to gain very good value for money from its higher education system. Treasury officials might take pleasure in pointing out that the expansion in numbers has been achieved without demanding huge additional sums from the public purse. This certainly means that Britain is getting better value than it used to, in that costs have not risen in proportion with numbers. This is very similar to Treasury claims about the NHS. They suggest that it gives extraordinary value for money, in that we cater for public health in Britain by spending about 50 percent less per head than do the French or Germans, and less than half they spend in the United States. Our approximately 7 percent of GDP on health is among the lowest for an advanced economy.

While both of these arguments have force, they could both be used to justify a complacency not warranted by circumstances. It could be argued that the quality of British higher education is in decline, and that in terms of our output we are no longer able to compete with the best which other countries can offer. The United States, in particular, seems to have taken a world lead with several of its most prestigious institutions, and is in a position to cream off talent which British universities would have been able to attract and retain in a previous generation.

Nor is foreign competition in the education market the only consideration. It can be argued that the increased supply of graduates devalues a first degree in the eyes of many employers, encouraging many to regard post-graduate degrees as indispensable for their top appointments, which in turn puts increased and unnecessary pressure on post-graduate courses. Further, some have suggested that the combination of lower entrance requirements to

undergraduate courses and financial pressure on students forcing them to combine their learning with part-time jobs will lead increasingly to three-year courses being converted to four-year courses or even longer, at greater eventual cost to society than ever.

It could be argued, and many in the universities *do* argue, that we have reached the limit of muddling through, and cramming ever more numbers into institutions which are creaking and groaning at the joints. The call from within the universities is for more resources, but there might be a stronger case for rethinking the whole structure and status of the institutions themselves. Perhaps changes similar in scale to those which have transformed our business corporations are needed to bring improvements to the quality of our higher education.

2. Careers and choices

The spread of academic qualifications through society has been a remarkable, though little noted, development over the past two decades. The numbers gaining high grades in GCSEs and A-levels seems to rise each year, prompting comments each year as the results come out that the standards must be being degraded to permit so many to pass well. Schools and teachers tell us with equal conviction that students are working harder, and that standards are rising.

Leaving aside the question of whether pass requirements remain constant, there is certainly evidence that the numbers with qualifications are rising. A MORI People's Panel survey for the Cabinet Office (based on 5,064 persons sampled between 20 June and 30 September 1998 at 714 UK sampling points, and weighted to the known profile of the population) showed the following levels of highest qualification received:

	%
GCSE / O-level / CSE	21
Vocational qualifications (NVQ1+2)	8
A-level or equivalent (NVQ3)	12
Bachelor degree or equivalent (NVQ4)	12
Masters / PhD or equivalent	3
Other	13
No formal qualifications	30
Still studying	4

While it is impressive that 21 percent now have GCSE or equivalent, and 12 percent have A-levels or equivalent, it will disappoint educators and government alike that there are still 30 percent totally unqualified. They will see this as reason for concern and a prompting for more effort. Some commentators will doubtless raise concerns as to whether people *need* to be qualified to do menial jobs, and will ask if we are educating people beyond reach of the available jobs. Part of the answer is that in a global economy, Britain has little economic future as a supplier of low skilled labour. Such jobs as are available in that league will increasingly move to lower cost developing countries. Britain's economic well-being in the future might well depend on its ability to provide a skilled and flexible labour force rather than a cheap one.

The figure which leaps out from the above table, however, is the 12 percent who hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Add to that the 3 percent who hold a higher degree, and we reach 15 percent for the proportion of graduates. This is more than one in seven of the population holding a university degree. Bearing in mind that many of the population will have passed through the normal university age band before most of the recent

expansion took place, and we can see that a degree is ceasing to be a rare and unusual qualification.

Another MORI poll, commissioned by Edexcel, a leading awarding body, on *Young People and Careers*, conducted by face-to-face interviews with 504 students between 22 June and 3 July 1999 (unweighted), showed the following breakdown of course selection:

	%
Arts & humanities	31
Social sciences	17
Science	23
Business & administration	21
Medical / Health / Care	6
Engineering & technology	23

Source: MORI / Edexcel
Base: 504 students
22 June-3 July 1999

(The total exceeds 100 percent because some students are taking more than one course.)

The "media studies" of which so much is heard are included under "arts & humanities", but amount to only 3 percent of the total. There is a rough parity between arts and social sciences on the one side, and science and technology on the other.

Interestingly enough, when the same poll asked its students to name two or three of the jobs which they respected most, the answers did not correspond to the courses the students themselves had chosen, or the career choices they had personally made.

Q. **Which 2 or 3 of the following jobs do you most respect?**

	%
Doctor	75
Teacher	49
Lawyer	34
Police Chief Constable	29
Counsellor	12
Dentist	10
Accountant	10
Bank manager	9
Civil engineer	8
Occupational psychologist	6
Fashion designer	5
IT consultant	4
Advertising agency director	4
Chef	3
TV producer	3

Source: MORI / Edexcel
Base: 504 students
22 June-3 July 1999

These figures are broadly similar to the MORI / Adam Smith Institute survey of the *Millennial Generation* of 16-21 year-olds conducted in September 1998, which asked young people which career they themselves would most like to follow. They show the same estimation for the traditional vocational jobs, and the relatively low rating given to the allegedly glamour jobs in the media, fashion or IT.

The 75 percent who included doctors in their "most respected" list should be compared with the mere 6 percent studying medical / health / care (of which 1 percent was medicine itself and 1 percent allied medicine). They may respect doctors, but they are not training to become doctors.

They do, however, rate highly their chances of attaining the career which they *have* chosen. MORI's *Young People and Careers* poll revealed that some 90 percent were very confident or fairly confident they would get the type of job they want (30 percent very, 60 percent fairly). Again, this corresponds with the MORI / ASI *Millennial Generation* survey, which also showed a remarkable degree of self-confidence. What applies to the 16-21 age group in general, it seems, also applies to the student part of that group. Most of the students also said that they knew what career they wanted before they embarked upon their courses (60 percent did, but 39 percent said they did not).

When the students in the *Young People and Careers* poll were asked to list the two things they thought would most influence their choice of career, the top scorer by a large margin was "challenging and interesting work". The results were as follows:

	%
Challenging and interesting work	52
Careers prospects	30
A high earning potential	22
A high starting salary	17
Further training opportunities	16
Opportunity to use previous education and training	15
The location	15
Opportunity to help others	14
Flexibility (e.g. work from home / freelance)	7
Parents' influence	5
Opportunity to work for socially responsible organisation	5
Perks of the job (car, pension)	3

Source: MORI / Edexcel
Base: 504 students
22 June-3 July 1999

While these are the factors which lead them to aspire to particular kinds of job, they see (correctly) that completely different factors make them attractive to potential employers. When asked to nominate two factors which they think employers look for, they give the following answers:

	%
Communication skills	49
Ability to work with others	44
Educational qualifications	32
Ability to apply knowledge to workplace	23
Leadership / management skills	16
Problem solving abilities	15
Organisational skills	13
IT skills	8
Time management	6
Ability to be self-critical	4
Office skills	2

These are not necessarily the qualities which employers look for; they are the qualities which students *think* they will be looking for. It is interesting to note that they rate essentially social skills such as communication and working with others far ahead of the personal skills listed. Educational qualifications, which is why they are students in the first place, rank somewhere in between, well below social skills, but well ahead of personal skills.

There is a point of difference between these answers and others given by the same group concerning their own courses and careers. While confident of gaining the job they really want, 71 percent either tended to agree (49 percent) or agreed strongly (30 percent) with the statement "I will have to gain more work-related skills before I can get the job I want". 63 percent tended to agree (39 percent) or agreed strongly (24 percent) that "my course will give me the skills I need to get the job I want".

These answers should be compared with the qualities which they think employers are looking for: less work-related skills and more people-oriented qualities such as communication and working with others. This suggests that perhaps they value the work-related skills they feel they need, as well as the more social skills they think employers are looking for. Either way, only 10 percent thought they would probably end up in a job they were *not* interested in doing.

3. Coping with change

MORI conducted a poll among 599 undergraduates on behalf of the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, between 26 September and 9 October 1998 at 10 sampling locations. Some of the answers to that survey indicate how students have responded to changes in university education and the financial burdens which it now involves. This group includes the first year of students who have to pay a direct contribution themselves towards their university fees.

There is a heavy career undercurrent to their reasons for embarking upon a university course. When asked their main reasons, some six in ten, 63 percent, listed "to improve my job prospects generally". Second equal, just under four in ten, 37 percent, was the response "to enter my chosen career" And "to continue in education/study".

The full answers were as follows:

	%
To improve my job prospects generally	63
To enter my chosen career	37
To continue in education/studying	37
To gain knowledge	36
It is vital to have a degree	24
To experience student life	23
To meet people/make new friends	19
To get away from home/live on my own	13
Never thought about doing anything else	10
It was expected of me	8
All my friends were going	2

Source: MORI/*Times Higher Educational Supplement*
Base: 599 undergraduates
26 September-9 October 1998

These answers should be seen in the context of the new financial considerations. When university education was completely free to the recipient, and carried the assurance of a full maintenance grant, students could afford to take it lightly. Doing it simply because one's peer group did, or because it would be fun to leave home, were perfectly rational reasons for undertaking university study. Now those benefits have to be set against costs, and the student has to evaluate whether or not they are worth the burden of debt which will be involved. There is a hard edge to the priorities which the students listed.

Disraeli's idea of a university might have involved "light, liberty and learning," but to today's undergraduate while it may still mean these things,

it also seems very much a stepping stone to a career. It falls into line with other changes to which university education has been subject. The elevation to university rank of the polytechnics, for example, brought a range of vocational and applied courses into the realm of university study, and inevitably made the experience more career-oriented than it had been.

It is quite possible that the decline in job security has made people more conscious about the hard commercial value of a university education. If good jobs are harder to come by and to keep, and a degree gives access to jobs (a quarter, 24 percent, termed it "vital"), then it is a useful thing to have in reserve. All of these reasons converge on the same point, that a university education has, over the years, been increasingly viewed by applicants in a strong commercial light. To mix metaphors, ivory towers have been falling like ninepins.

The advent of tuition fees does not seem to have had any impact on the actual selection of a university. It may or may not impinge upon the decision a young person makes about whether to go to university at all, but once that decision has been made, it does not appear to influence the choice of location. When the 242 first year students in the survey were asked how much the introduction of tuition fees had affected their choice of university or college, seven in ten, 71 percent, said "not at all," and a further 16 percent said "not very much". Fewer than one student in eight reported that it had influenced their choice by "a great deal" or "a fair amount".

Of the very small number who reported that tuition fees had influenced their choice of university, roughly half had decided either to study nearer home, or to live at home while studying. In effect, they seem to have decided to economise on living expenses in order to cope with the new fees, and to have selected somewhere near home on that basis. Just over a quarter of them claimed to have selected a course with better job prospects as a result of the introduction of fees.

A large number of students reported taking out a student loan. Half of first year students did so, and nearly six in ten, 59 percent, of those above first year. The difference was larger for those who had taken out a bank loan or overdraft, at only four in ten, 39 percent, for first years, but nearly six in ten, 58 percent, for the others. This suggests, quite reasonably, that debt builds up at university, and that students who manage to stay relatively debt-free in their first year are less successful at doing so subsequently.

Of those who took employment to support themselves through university or college, 43 percent of first year students and 37 percent of the others reported taking a part-time job in term-time. The high percentage of first years taking jobs might be explained by their status as the first year to pay a direct fee payment. For a full-time holiday job, the take-up was 29 percent of first years, and 43 percent of the others, and for a part-time holiday job it was 28 percent of first years and 31 percent of the others.

The largest group of those so employed (37 percent) worked between 9 and 15 hours a week, with 16-35 hours as the second largest group (29 percent). The most popular job was as bartender (23 percent), followed by sales assistant (14 percent), then waiter / waitress (11 percent).

The students above first year were asked in which ways they might economise, and whether they had resorted to any of them. They replied:

	Consider %	Done %
Buying no new clothes / shoes	58	42
Walking rather than using public / own transport	53	10
Not going to pubs or clubs	28	20
Eating poorer quality food	25	23
Not having a phone / phone for outgoing calls	25	13
Reducing course books bought	22	23
Cutting back on food / skipping meals	19	16
Giving up alcohol	19	12

Source: MORI / Times Higher Educational Supplement
Base: 599 undergraduates
26 September-9 October 1998

A point of interest is the small number (10 percent) who have actually walked to save money, versus the high number (53 percent) who would consider it. Similarly, although equal numbers (19 percent) would consider cutting down on food and alcohol, the proportion who have actually cut alcohol (12 percent) is less than the 16 percent who have cut down on food.

The same survey reported that regularly watched TV programmes included *The Simpsons* (54 percent) and *Friends* (52 percent), with nothing else scoring above 40 percent.

When asked what advice they would give to today's students just starting, the replies fell into three roughly equal groups. One in five advised hard work, keeping up with studies. One in six, 18 percent, suggested they enjoy themselves and have a good time and nearly as many,17 percent, recommended saving, not spending too much, and planning finances.

Finally, hard though some suggest it is, eight in ten, 82 percent, would take the same course, given their time again. Three quarters, 78 percent, would choose the same college or university; and 85 percent would stay on in education rather than take a job. Clearly, whatever the drawbacks of higher education in the late years of the century, and however it might differ from what it used to entail, it pleases most people enough to make them choose it again if they had to. Some jocularly compare university to a prison camp, but few have so far been spotted attempting to tunnel their way out.

4. Student attitudes and lifestyle

A new poll commissioned by the Adam Smith Institute and carried out by MORI at ten universities between 1 June and 18 June 1999, asked questions about undergraduate lifestyle and attitudes. It covered a total of 905 students at 10 different universities, chosen to represent several different types of institution, including old traditional, big city, campus style, former polytechnic, England, Wales and Scotland. The universities covered were:

University of Cambridge
University of Central England in Birmingham
University of East Anglia
University of Edinburgh
University of Manchester
South Bank University
University of Southampton
University College, London (UCL)
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)
University of Warwick

Roughly equal numbers of men (455) and women (450) were polled, with the vast majority domestic students (775) as opposed to overseas (126). The students were split between first year (259), second year (321), and third year or above (323).

Among friends

The students were asked to pick out the two or three factors most important in influencing their choice of career, and then to list other important factors. The top choice of today's students is to work with sociable and friendly colleagues, with 59 percent selecting it as one of the two or three most important. Second, on 48 percent, is a high salary. This ranking is heavily influenced by the answers of female students. For the men the split between the two choices is only 57-56, but for the women it is a clear 61-40.

Students also say they are influenced by the opportunity for foreign travel (34 percent), rather more for women (37 percent) than for men (30 percent). They also list working for a well-known and respected company (32 percent), with this choice appealing to marginally more men (34 percent) than women (29 percent).

The three in ten who pick out a job which gives a sense of public service are dominated by the women who name it (38 percent), versus only 24 percent of the men. Only 20 percent think it important to have a job which does not impinge upon their domestic or social life, split nearly equally between men and women.

There are noticeable variations between universities, and different answers for different types of university. For example, a high salary outscores working with sociable and friendly colleagues at several institutions. Students at University College London (UCL) score the two choices at 53-45 in favour of the high salary; at Central England the gap is 53-47; while the South Bank values the salary most of all with a gap of 56-41 between the choices.

On the other side, the places which rate sociable and friendly colleagues farthest above a high salary include Cambridge (60-31), Manchester (63-42), Warwick (66-48), and Southampton (81-49).

Students at the University of Central England do not appear to rate foreign travel. Only 14 percent list it, less than half the next lowest, and only a third the number who do so at Warwick (43 percent); UCL and Southampton (both 40 percent) also think it an important consideration.

Among Cambridge students the importance of a sense of public service is ranked second (named by 41 percent), with only Southampton running them close at 39 percent. However, Cambridge also scores a whopping 35 percent who think it important that a job does not interfere with their domestic or social life, pushing both high salary and foreign travel out of the top three. At other universities far fewer express concern about domestic and social life, even Edinburgh which comes a distant second at 23 percent. This suggests that Cambridge undergraduates expect to give more importance to their life away from work than do the others. It is also noteworthy that Central England, which scores lowest for naming foreign travel, also scores lowest on domestic / social life; only 11 percent list it.

Further down the list, there are also substantial differences among the less frequently named priorities. Almost one in five (19 percent) at South Bank mention the importance of starting or running their own business, almost double the 10 percent overall score and four times the 5 percent of students who named it at UCL, the other London institution in the survey.

At Central England, 12 percent said it was important to them to work in the public sector, and 11 percent said the same at the University of Wales Institute, but only 2 percent said so at Edinburgh (although there another 9 percent named it as being important though outside the top two or three factors, the highest of any institution, so it is more that Edinburgh students rate other considerations more highly than that they reject the public sector altogether).

The lure of celebrity seems to affect students in London's universities and at Cambridge more highly than those elsewhere. One in eight (13 percent) at UCL said that to be famous or well-known was one of the two or three most important factors, as did 10 percent at both South Bank and Cambridge. At Southampton they are happier to shrink from the limelight, as only 1 percent (a single respondent) picked out this answer.

There are broad similarities in answer, regardless of the different years of study. And when respondents were asked to list the other important factors,

after their initial choices, the top scores again pick out sociable and friendly colleagues (a further 17 percent on top of the 59 percent selecting it among their top three), and a high salary (15 percent). Combining the two questions, three-quarters think sociable or friendly colleagues will be of some importance, and a high salary will influence more than three in five.

Determined about a career

When it comes to the factors which today's students think will help their career, they very much mirror the Millennial Generation of 16-21 year-olds profiled in a September 1998 survey by MORI and the Adam Smith Institute. Their report, *The Millennial Generation*, showed that today's youngsters believe that education and determination count towards success, but a privileged background does not.

What applies to the age group in general also covers the 35 percent who go through higher education. The students in the new survey were asked to pick from a list the two or three factors they thought most likely to help them have a successful life and career. Top of the list was their own determination and ambition, picked out by 77 percent. As with the Millennial Generation, educational qualifications come a close second, identified by 74 percent. However, men and women differed slightly on this ranking: while women had determination and ambition clearly ahead of educational qualifications (by 81 percent to 74 percent), men were equally likely to name either (both 74 percent).

Both of these are personal factors dependent largely upon the individual, and the same is true of the third factor listed, which is the ability to make useful contacts and friends. This is listed by 49 percent, split between 46 percent of male students and 51 percent of female students.

Nothing else approaches 50 percent. Just under a third, 31 percent, cite the ability to keep up-to-date with changes in information technology, and only 19 percent think that their social background will help. When it comes to external factors, the scores are even lower. A mere 7 percent think that increased European integration will help them in their life and career, and even less, only 5 percent think that help or support from the government will assist them.

Plainly, today's students expect to rely very much on themselves and their on qualities and abilities, rather than on external factors arising from society, government, or changes in world conditions. They reflect the extraordinary picture of self-reliance, confidence and ambition painted of the 16-21 year-olds in the previous MORI / Adam Smith Institute survey.

When asked the follow-up question about what factors other than their main choices might count, top of the second list comes the ability to keep abreast of changes in information technology (23 percent), although it was mentioned in the "most important" group by less than one-third of students.

Again, there are variations to the priorities between the different universities. Warwick, Cambridge and UCL students rate determination and ambition

most highly (with 87, 86 and 86 percent respectively), but it is top or equal top of the list everywhere except Central England and East Anglia. Central England and Edinburgh each give it the lowest score of 63 percent. Educational qualifications count for most at Cambridge (84 percent) and East Anglia (83 percent), but is only mentioned by 61 percent at Edinburgh.

Southampton tops the poll for rating the importance of one's ability to make useful friends and contacts, listed by 63 percent, and followed by East Anglia (56 percent) and Cambridge (55 percent).

The ability to keep up with changes in IT counts highest at the South Bank, on 48 percent, compared with the mere 14 percent of Manchester students who rate its importance.

Those who think social background is most likely to help with a successful life and career are not thick on the ground at Cambridge, where only one student in ten lists it, compared with nearly three out of ten (28 percent) at Warwick.

Aiming high

The overall picture which emerges is of students making sensible choices to combine material reward in the shape of high salary, with a pleasant working environment among friendly people. The fringe benefit of foreign travel scores next, listed by over one-third of the students. There must be something about Central England which makes travel less enticing, because only one in seven of the students there picks it out.

Similarly, there must be something very special about domestic or social life for Cambridge students, because seven out of twenty of them think it important to aim at a job which does not impinge upon it, far more than at any other institution.

Determination, ambition, educational qualifications, and the ability to make useful friends and contacts are the factors thought important as ingredients of success. Nearly one in three (31 percent) counted the ability to keep up with changes in IT, except at Manchester, where only one in seven mentioned it.

Cambridge, where one might have expected a high proportion from privileged background, has only ten percent who rate social background as important, though the average overall is only 19 percent. Clearly, who you are matters more than who your family are.

Finally, hardly any students think that increased European integration, help from government, or increased globalisation of the world economy will have a major impact on their chances for a successful life and career. It will depend on themselves, they think, and not on external forces.

5. How fare the universities?

University education may have changed from what it was twenty or thirty years ago. It may be less luxurious, more crowded, and represent less value, but today's students do not tend to blame the universities themselves. Indeed, a large majority express views which are compatible with greater independence for the universities from the hand of government.

Students were asked if they agreed with the contention that "Universities are better qualified than civil servants and politicians to manage themselves". One in ten agree strongly with this assertion, and four in ten, 39 percent, tend to agree. Only 2 percent disagree strongly, with a further 15 percent tending to disagree. Combining the figures, we find 49 percent agree with the statement, versus 17 percent who disagree. The remaining third are composed of 29 percent who neither agree nor disagree, plus 5 percent who say they just don't know.

Clearly, if nearly three times as many students agree as disagree with the view that universities would do better managing themselves than government is doing for them, the universities themselves are not the objects of blame. If anything, it suggests that students would prefer the university administration to be less in the hands of ministerial civil servants and politicians, and more in university hands.

More male students are in agreement with this assertion (53 percent) than are female students (45 percent). Looking at the individual institutions, UCL and Cambridge show most agreement (58 percent and 56 percent), with not a great deal of difference among the others. Only Central England stands out with nearly double the level of disagreement rate of 30 percent to those who agreed (47 percent).

And the money

A further question asked students if they thought "Universities should <u>not</u> have more control over their financial affairs". (This question was asked in the negative to help to balance others which were asked positively.) Those who disagree, and therefore think that universities *should* have more control over their financial affairs, total nearly six in ten, 59 percent, (14 percent strongly, plus 46 percent tending to agree). Those opposed are 21 percent (3 percent strongly, plus 18 percent tending to disagree).

Thus, there is a margin among students favouring more financial independence for universities of 60 percent to 21 percent, a convincing majority. This could be influenced by government's introduction of direct fee charges and phasing out of maintenance grants, or it could be that students simply admire universities more than they do government. Either way, it

suggests that moves to give universities greater financial freedom would find students in support, just as would moves to increase universities' control over their own affairs.

There are no noticeable differences on this issue between male and female students, but some differences between universities emerge. Again, Central England has the lowest balance of support for financial independence, with 44 percent backing it and 32 percent opposed. The biggest support for it is found at Manchester (68 percent for, 9 percent against), and Southampton (68 percent for, 13 percent against).

Is it worth it?

Given the changes which have overtaken university education as it has expanded from serving a 5 percent élite to educating 35 percent of the age-group, and from being totally free including maintenance to the present state where it requires increasing financial input from the students, the question arises as to whether the students still think it worthwhile.

Overwhelmingly they do. Asked if they agreed that, given the higher salaries usually enjoyed by graduates, a university education is one of the best investments a person can make,. 43 percent say they strongly agree, and a further 43 percent tend to agree, making a total in agreement of 86 percent. On the other side were 1 percent who disagree strongly, plus another 5 percent who tend to disagree. This gives a balance of 86 percent to 6 percent, a more than convincing margin by any standards.

There are no noticeable differences between male and female students in this response, or between the different years of study. The highest margin of agreement over disagreement is at Warwick, where 92 percent agree and 2 percent disagree. They are followed closely by Southampton, with 92 percent to 3 percent, and then by Edinburgh and Cambridge. Alternatively, there may be something about it which attracts a more left-leaning student population, from which the sample is drawn.

As before, students at Central England seem less satisfied, with 69 percent in agreement, and 10 percent preferring to disagree, easily the smallest margin of agreement. This suggests there is something about the University of Central England which leads the students there to be less keen on the university administration than students elsewhere, less keen on university independence, and less convinced that a university education is one of the best investments. A very high 9%, 8 of the 90 interviewed at Central England, said they didn't know, compared with a total of only 3 others of the 815 interviewed at the other nine universities.

Overall, though, the responses suggest that, despite recent changes, students are emphatically convinced that they have made a sound choice. This ties in with their previous answers that, given their time again, they would choose the same course, the same university, and the same choice to postpone work in order to undertake higher education.

Clearly, even though they now have to pay to achieve it, and in most cases take on substantial debts, students still think they are gaining greatly from their decision, and that university education represents a huge value.

Taken together, these responses amount in some degree to a vote of confidence in what universities are doing, and a large preference for what they do, as opposed to the way in which the government runs things. The attitudes expressed by students suggest that moves towards greater autonomy for universities would find broad support among their students. Talk of universities moving to achieve their independence from government can be seen in the context of student opinion by no means opposed to such moves, or committed in any way to the current pervasive state control.

Perhaps the answers also reveal that the decision to undergo years of university study is taken these days in a harder and more commercial light than it was when the decision was relatively costless to the student consumer. Whatever else they show, the answers do not indicate a student body which feels short-changed by what it receives.

6. I can tolerate everything except intolerance...

The MORI / Adam Smith Institute poll of *The Millennial Generation* revealed a fairly laid-back attitude among young people toward non-traditional practices. There was scarcely anything they wanted to see banned, including a number of things which the government *has* actually banned. Only fox-hunting with hounds and Ecstasy found majority support for a ban, and even on these there were many dissenters.

They were tolerant of pornography and violence on television and film, of owning handguns in a club, of tobacco advertising, beef on the bone, gay or lesbian sex and abortion.

With the new poll of students, many of whom feature within a sub-set of the 16-21 year-old age group, the aim was to take the question a little further. Instead of simply asking their attitudes to certain activities or viewpoints, they were asked say whether or not they had any friends among those groups. They were asked, in effect, whether a theoretical tolerance extended to a personal level.

Most, 86 percent, of students report they have friends within a black or minority ethnic group, with men and women scoring roughly equal. Plainly, any problems with racism in Britain are not much found in the universities. Furthermore, the high score was fairly generally spread throughout the different types of institution and locality. At the top were the two London institutions included - UCL, where 97 percent have black or minority ethnic friends, followed by the South Bank on 93 percent – perhaps partly a reflection of the capital's higher-than-average young ethnic minority population. But even the lowest, Edinburgh on 73 percent, sees nearly three-quarters of all students with black or ethnic friends. Next lowest is Central England on 78 percent.

Students were asked if they have any friends who they know are gay or lesbian. Over half, 57 percent, say they do, made up of over half, 51 percent, men and nearly two thirds, 64 percent, of women. This is the only one of the six categories where there was a significant difference between male and female students. Whether it argues greater tolerance on sexual matters among women, or simply that women are more likely to discuss such matters among themselves and therefore to have knowledge of their friends' sexual preferences, is not clear.

On this question there were also dramatic differences between universities. Cambridge tops the league, with 84 percent of its students saying they have gay or lesbian friends, a noticeably higher proportion than anywhere else.

East Anglia is second, but some way behind, on 71 percent, followed by UCL on 70 percent.

At the other end of the scale, of South Bank students only 36 percent know they have gay or lesbian friends, slightly behind Central England's score of 37 percent. Again, the overall answers indicate a fairly broad spread of tolerance, and the fact that most students at most universities have gay or lesbian friends seems to indicate a fairly relaxed attitude towards sexual orientation.

Asked if they have friends who regularly take illegal drugs, over half, 52 percent, of students say yes. There are slightly more men (55 percent) than women (49 percent), but the overall figure is that most students do. Most universities answer in a broadly similar range, but the anomalies are Manchester and UCL, both of which score at 71 percent.

These high scores contrast with those at the South Bank, where only 38 percent include regular users of illegal drugs among their friends, East Anglia, where the figure is 41 percent, and Warwick, where it is 42 percent.

The high scores at Manchester and UCL could well be related to the clubbing scene, very big in both Manchester and London, and reputedly associated with regular use of recreational drugs. If this is the case, though, it is not clear why South Bank, also based in London, should find the lowest scores.
Students might count as friends those who are from a black of ethnic minority group, gays and lesbians, and illegal drug users, but they emphatically do not tend to include religious fundamentalists, racists, or members of extreme political groups.

Only 18 percent of students have religious fundamentalists among their friends, highest of all at the University of Central England, where it is 27 percent, and lowest at Edinburgh and the University of Wales Institute, where it is 11 percent.

A similar 18 percent say they have friends who they believe to be racists, with Central England's 22 percent beaten into second place by UCL's 25 percent. At the bottom end is the South Bank, where only 9 percent say they have racist friends.

Members of an extreme political group are even less likely to feature among friends of students, with 10 percent reporting yes. Again, UCL scores top with 18 percent. Bottom come Edinburgh (2 percent), University of Wales Institute (4 percent), and Southampton (also 4 percent). It might be pertinent that both Edinburgh and UWIC students are both less likely to have black or ethnic minority friends. Perhaps they are simply less numerous, and therefore inspire neither the friendships nor any political extremism. (But perhaps it should also be borne in mind that defining what is an "extreme" political group can be a very subjective decision.)

These answers point to a high degree of easy-going tolerance among students. They are not a theoretical position, but answers about their own friendships, and indicate that students are overwhelmingly free from this kind of prejudice. The thing they do not tolerate is intolerance itself. Few

seem prepared to include among their friends those whose affiliations involve them in lack of tolerance themselves. Those who profess hatred or bigotry as part of their credo are unlikely to be included as friends by a huge majority of today's students.

7. Spend, spend, spend

Undergraduates and the organisations which claim to represent them sometimes talk of student poverty. As seen from earlier studies, students today have to take economic factors into account when deciding upon a course or a university. The new survey attempts to ascertain the degree to which these factors might impinge upon the student lifestyle.

Students were asked about their spending patterns on drink, entertainment, clothes, books, and personal convenience goods such as CDs, mobile phones and Walkmans.

Mr Booze

They were asked how much they spend on alcoholic drinks in the average week, with the answers grouped into bands. (Below £5, £5-£10, £10-£25, £25-£50, and over £50, with a separate "nothing" for non-drinkers)

The largest group (39 percent) reports spending between £10 and £25 per week on drink. This is highest at Cambridge, where it is over half, 56 percent, and lowest at Central England, where it is under a quarter, 23 percent.

The next largest group (one in five) was that which reported spending between £25 and £50 per week on drink. This was the biggest group at UWIC, where double the average, 41 percent, reported they spent this much and another 7 percent even more. By contrast with this 48 percent spending at least £25 a week at UWIC, and 39 percent at Manchester (the second highest), just 7 percent were spending £25 or more at the South Bank, which had the second highest proportion of non-drinkers, 38 percent, behind Central England, 40 percent. (The average proportion of non-drinking students is 16 percent.) But even if we exclude those students who do not drink at all, South Bank is still much the most abstemious, with only 13 percent of those who drink spending over £25 a week (Cambridge, 19 percent, and East Anglia, 27 percent, had the next lowest scores), while 18 percent of South Bank's drinkers satisfied themselves on under £5 a week. This suggests that South Bank's low alcohol spending is not simply a reflection of an unusually high number of teetotallers (whether for religious or other reasons).

If we combine some of the answers to include all those whose weekly spending on drink comes to over £10, the average overall is 66 percent of students, or two out of three. This figure is made up of 73 percent for male students and 59 percent for females. The top three in the league table are Manchester, UWIC and Southampton, all of which have 80 percent of their

students spending at that level. Bottom are the South Bank on 38 percent, and Central England on 44 percent.

In fact the approximate mean spend per week, achieved by combining all the figures, has the average student spending £20.32 per week (£22.12 for men, £18.35 for women). The biggest spending is at Manchester (£25.39 per week), followed by UWIC (£24.54 per week), and Southampton (£21.81 per week). Lowest are the South Bank (£13.20 per week) and Warwick (£16.05). One reason is probably that the South Bank sample included a much higher proportion of overseas students (32%) than the other universities: overseas students spend considerably less on drink than domestic students, £13.07 compared to £21.28, and twice as many say they don't drink at all.

There is one caveat. Although Cambridge appears to come somewhat below the leaders, with 74 percent of its students reporting that they spend over £10 per week, and an average spend of £18.02 per week, it could be well ahead of them in the amount drunk. The reason is that students at other places report having limited facilities and do most of their drinking off campus premises, paying higher prices in bars and clubs. Cambridge students report that drinking there is overwhelmingly done within college at greatly subsidised prices, typically half of what might be paid outside. They thus can buy far more drink with the money they spend.

Going out

Entertainment, in the form of such activities as going to clubs, gigs and the cinema is an important part of student life. Again, students were asked how much they spend in the average week, with the same spending groups as for alcohol. The norm is to spend between £10 and £25 per week on entertainment, with 57 percent putting themselves in this group. This is the same for men as for women.

Within this group the leader is Edinburgh on 72 percent, with UWIC second on 62 percent, and Manchester and Southampton third equal on 61 percent. Only at East Anglia and the South Bank did less than half fall within this spending bracket (44 percent in each case, still easily the single most frequent category).

If we combine responses to include those who spend more than £10 per week on entertainment, the average for students generally is 74 percent, roughly three-quarters of them. This breaks down into 79 percent for men, 71 percent for women.

On this measure Manchester has 86 percent of its students spending at that level. Edinburgh and Central England come second with 82 percent. Easily the lowest is East Anglia on 54 percent.

In terms of the average spend per week, the figure for students in general is £17.90, (£19.78 for men, £15.99 for women). The universities which spend most per week on entertainment are led by the South Bank on £24.54, followed by UCL on £23.87. This perhaps confirms the fact that London is known as an expensive place. The lowest weekly spending on entertainment

is at Cambridge (£13.22), and Warwick (£13.87). Again, these are largely campus-based universities, where much entertainment takes place relatively cheaply on university premises.

Overseas students (£18.11) spend fractionally more than domestic students (£17.88).

Given the norm of student life, a surprising 18 percent at Central England and 16 percent at the South Bank report spending nothing at all on entertainment.

Well dressed

Clothes form a significant part of a student's budget. The prevalence of expensive designer labels and the importance of keeping up in appearance with one's peer group both involve the outlay of reasonably large sums of money. Students were asked how much they spend per month, rather than per week.

The largest single group (32 percent) report spending between £10 and £25 per month, followed by the group (23 percent) which spends between £25 and £45 per month. If we combine the two, we find that a majority of students (55 percent) spend between £10 and £45. While this is roughly equal for men and women, more women (18 percent) spend in the upper bracket of that group than men (13 percent). The university which has most students spending in this range is Southampton, but their figure is heavily skewed by the very large 46 percent who spend between £10 and £25 per month.

The mean monthly spend probably provides a more accurate guide. For UK students it averages £46.63 per month (women £49.65, men £43.44), but there are wide variations between institutions. Students at Central England spend most on clothes, with a monthly average of £77.87. This is more than twice what students spend at Edinburgh (£36.11), or at Cambridge (£38.58), and roughly twice what they spend at East Anglia (£39.15) and Manchester (£40.62). It is strikingly above the second highest, which is UCL with an average spend of £60.20 per month. In fact the Central England figure is skewed by the very high proportion (30 percent) who spend more than £65 on clothes each month.

Clearly, even though students at Central England do not rate foreign travel very highly, they like to look their best at home.

As we saw from the MORI / *THES* survey reported above, avoiding buying new clothes is easily the most frequent way in which students economise when short of money. More than one in ten (11 percent) said they spend nothing on clothes, but this varied from only 6 percent at Southampton to a substantial 16 percent buying no clothing at Warwick.

Sound experience

Anecdotal observation suggests that many students regard CDs, mobile phones, personal stereos, and similar personal convenience goods as part of

their everyday experience. The new poll asked them to estimate how much they spend each month on such items.

Once again, the largest group (40 percent) report a figure of between £10 and £25 per week, slightly higher for women than for men. Highest in this group were Southampton (52 percent) and Edinburgh (50 percent). The second highest figure (21 percent) was for those who spend nothing at all on such items. 27 percent at the South Bank, and 26 percent at Manchester reported zero spending on these personal convenience goods. It may be that these items form ideal birthday and Christmas gifts from parents, rather than indicate they do without altogether.

The average monthly spend on them is £29.72, (made up of £32.28 for men, £26.80 for women). The South Bank students spend well above average, at £45.85 per month, perhaps using the money they do not spend on drink. Second are UCL students, spending £41.33 per month. At the tail end comes Cambridge at £18.71 per month, with Southampton second bottom at £20.70.

What are they reading?

Studying, as well as entertainment in its various forms, forms part of the life of some students. They were asked how much they spend on books in the average month; the question did not specify academic books and the replies presumably include popular books as well as scholarly and study-related works. Nearly half of all students (48 percent) reckoned that they spent between £10 and £25 per month, nearly equal for men and women. Central England had fewest spending at this level (37 percent), with a higher than average number spending more than this.

The mean (average) spending per month averaged £22.55 per month overall (slightly more for women than men), with Central England topping the league at £30.24, and Cambridge second at £26.28. The University of Wales Institute came easily bottom of the book buyers, with a monthly average of £15.71.

Comparative spending

It is interesting to combine some of these figures to gain a snapshot of some of the ways in which undergraduates spend their money. In this comparative table, the figures given represent the mean spending in £ per week on each of the items.

	Drink	**Entert-ainment**	**Clothes**	**Conv. goods**	Books
Edinburgh	19.80	16.43	9.03	6.70	5.25
Cambridge	18.02	13.22	9.65	4.68	6.57
UCL	24.01	23.87	15.05	10.33	6.21
South Bank	13.20	24.54	14.45	11.46	5.93
Manchester	25.39	19.47	10.16	8.40	5.01
Warwick	16.05	13.87	11.88	6.25	5.50
East Anglia	18.71	14.54	9.79	5.95	5.86
UWIC	24.54	16.13	10.04	6.56	3.93
Central England	20.20	22.38	19.47	9.43	7.56
Southampton	21.81	16.24	7.47	5.18	4.57
All students (£/wk)	**20.32**	**17.90**	**11.66**	**7.43**	**5.60**

University (Indexed)	**Drink**	**Enter-tainment**	**Clothes**	**Conv. goods**	**Books**
Manchester	1.25	1.09	0.87	1.13	0.89
UWIC	1.21	0.90	0.86	0.88	0.70
UCL	1.18	1.33	1.29	1.39	1.11
Southampton	1.07	0.91	0.64	0.70	0.82
All students (£/wk)	**1.00**	**1.00**	**1.00**	**1.00**	**1.00**
Central England	0.99	1.25	1.67	1.27	1.35
Edinburgh	0.97	0.92	0.77	0.90	0.94
East Anglia	0.92	0.81	0.84	0.80	1.05
Cambridge	0.89	0.74	0.83	0.63	1.17
Warwick	0.79	0.77	1.02	0.84	0.98
South Bank	0.65	1.37	1.24	1.54	1.06

Across the whole student body, drink accounts for the highest spending of the five categories, but at two universities (Central England and South Bank) average spending on entertainment is higher; indeed, at South Bank drinking is pushed into third place by spending on clothes. Spending on books comes last overall, and in every individual university included in the survey except Cambridge. Overall, students spend nearly seven times as much on drink and entertainment as they do on books.

8. Sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll

Although a majority of students claim to have friends who are regular users of illegal drugs, the survey wished to discover how prevalent their use is, and therefore asked the students (via a confidential card) to supply answers concerning their own use of illegal drugs.

The largest (modal) group, 61 percent of all students, state that they have never used illegal drugs. This is highest at the South Bank (77 percent), then Cambridge (75 percent) and Warwick (73 percent). The university which has the smallest number who say they never use drugs is Manchester, where 31 percent reported non-use, only half of the national student average. UCL is also low, at 37 percent. As before, this could be a reflection of the lively clubbing scene for which both Manchester and London are noted, and for the recreational drugs which are widely reputed to accompany it; but again, this doesn't explain the apparently low drug use at the South Bank, which may be affected by the higher level of foreign students there.

More women (two in three, 66 percent of them) than men (over half, 56 percent) say they never used drugs at all.

Manchester has the highest proportion who use them about every day (4 percent), and of those who use them at least once a week (16 percent). It is highest (equal with UCL) among those who use them about once a month or less (23 percent), and highest (at 29 percent) among those admitted used is "only once or twice.". Thus Manchester tops every bracket of illegal drug use and has the lowest number saying "never".

At the other end of the scale, Cambridge (3 percent), Southampton (3 percent), the South Bank (4 percent) and Warwick (4 percent) had the lowest numbers who admitted use at least once a week.

And other recreations

Students taking part in the survey were also asked on a confidential card to indicate the approximate frequency with which they had sex. The largest group across all universities was composed of those who said they had sex "at least once a week" but not "about every day". This is 31 percent, or almost one in three. A further 26 percent do it "sometimes – about once a month or less". The third group (20 percent) replied "never". There were variations within these group answers, however, as one would expect.

The one in five, 20 percent, who replied "never" included 15 percent of men and 24 percent of women (nearly a quarter of them). The near third, 31 percent, who replied "at least once a week" include a low of a quarter, 23 percent, at Southampton and a high of four in ten, 40 percent, at Manchester.

In fact Manchester sets a lead on sex as it does on drugs. Of those who have sex “about every day”, Manchester students (along with Cambridge) top the table at 9 percent. Of those who do it “at least once a week”, Manchester students are top with 40 percent. They are also top of the category of those who do it “sometimes – once a month or less”, with 33 percent. Not surprisingly, they are near the bottom the table of those who do it “only once or twice” (8 percent), and have the lowest score for those who say they have never done it within the last year, on 9 percent, compared with a student average of 20 percent. In fact, if we combine “every day”, “once a week” and “about once a month”, there is a broad consistency of about 64 percent average for students in general, with Manchester as the only really anomalous figure on 82 percent. Of the others, only Cambridge and the University of Wales Institute score as high as seven in ten..

Among the most abstemious are the South Bank, lowest (with Central England) for “every day”, at 3 percent. They are also second lowest for “once a week” (27 percent) after Southampton. Meanwhile Central England scores easily highest for “never” (32 percent).

9. Conclusion

The data obtained in this study of the attitudes and behaviour of university students give a broad snapshot of undergraduate lifestyle and attitudes. The answers show students to be reasonably serious about their career choices, but quite ready to enjoy the lifestyle which accompanies a university education. They are convinced that success will depend on things within their personal control, and not on external circumstances determined by society, government, or the world economy.

They are quite sympathetic to university administrations, and would prefer to see universities more independent from government. They think that universities should have more control of their finances. By an overwhelming margin they think that a university education is a superbly worthwhile investment for them.

On a personal level they are neither racist nor homophobic, and tolerate regular drug users. Their tolerance does not, however, extend to intolerant people, and they tend not to befriend religious zealots, racists or members of extremist groups.

They spend freely on drink, entertainment, clothes and personal convenience goods, but rather less on books.

More than half of them say they have used illegal drugs within the last year, though this varies from university to university, with Manchester topping the table of regular users.

Nearly a third of them report they have sex once a week, although a fifth of them have not had it at all in the last 12 months. Again, Manchester easily tops the table for sex, as it does for drugs.

- Asked what influences their career choice, three in five (59 percent) list working with sociable and friendly colleagues; about half (48 percent) list a high salary; and a third (34 percent) mention opportunities for foreign travel. This counts for less at Central England (14 percent), whereas work which does not interfere with domestic or social life is valued more highly at Cambridge (35 percent) than elsewhere.

- Students at the South Bank, Central England and UCL all value a high salary ahead of working with sociable and friendly colleagues.

- Undergraduates think the top ingredient for success is determination and ambition. 77 percent of them pick it out, and it is even higher among women (81 percent). Warwick, Cambridge and UCL think this most, but Central England and Edinburgh mention it least.

- They think educational qualifications also matter, with 74 percent saying so. Cambridge students think it most, Edinburgh students least.

- Ability to make friends and contacts is named by 49 percent as a factor making for success, but only 19 percent think that social background helps, and this figure is just 10 percent at Cambridge.

- Students do not think increased European integration will help them; only 7 percent named it. Even fewer (5 percent) think that help and support from government will do anything, and only 4 percent expected increased globalisation of the economy to do anything.

- The ability to keep up-to-date with changes in information technology was thought important by a high of 48 percent at the South Bank, and a low of 14 percent at Manchester.

- They agree, by nearly three to one, that universities are better qualified to run themselves than civil servants and politicians. UCL and Cambridge agree most strongly, but the margin at Central England is only 47-30.

- Three-fifths of them think that universities should have more control of their financial affairs, and only a quarter disagree. Manchester agrees most strongly with this, and Central England least.

- By a margin of 86 percent to 6 percent, they think a university education is one of the best investments a person can make.

- Nearly nine in ten, 86 percent, of undergraduates have friends from black or ethnic minorities (highest is UCL on 97 percent, lowest is Edinburgh on 73 percent).

- Over half, 57 percent, know one or more of their friends is gay or lesbian (highest is Cambridge on 84 percent, lowest is South Bank on 36 percent).

- Just over half, 52 percent, say they have friends who regularly use illegal drugs (highest are Manchester and UCL on 71 percent, lowest is South Bank on 38 percent).

- Only one in six, 18 percent, have friends who are religious fundamentalists (highest is Central England on just over a quarter, 27 percent, lowest are Edinburgh and the University of Wales Institute on 11 percent).

- Only 18 percent include racists among their friends (highest is UCL on 25 percent, lowest is South Bank on 9 percent).

- Only one in ten say they have friends who are members of extremist political parties (highest is UCL with 18 percent, lowest is Edinburgh with 2 percent), but they might not regard extremist groups as such.

- Two-thirds of students report they spend over £10 each week on drink. The average is £20.32 (highest in Manchester at £25.39, lowest in South Bank at £13.20. But the £18.02 at Cambridge buys more drink because most of it is drunk at subsidised college prices, unlike elsewhere).

- Three quarters of students spend over £10 per week on entertainment. The average is £17.90 (highest is South Bank on £24.54, lowest is Cambridge on £13.22). 18 percent of students at Central England spend nothing at all on entertainment.

- The average student spends £46.63 a month on clothes (highest at Central England on £77.87, lowest at Edinburgh on £36.11)

- Personal convenience goods such as CDs, mobile phones and walkmans account for £29.72 per month of student spending (highest at South Bank on £45.85, lowest at Cambridge on £18.71).

- The average student spends £22.55 per month on books (highest Central England on £30.24, lowest is the University of Wales Institute on £15.71).

- Average student spending per week is drink: £20.32, nearly four times what the average student spends on books: (£5.65). Average weekly spending on entertainment: £17.90, three times as much as on books. On clothes it is £11.66, twice as much as on books. On personal convenience goods they spend £7.43, half as much again as they do on books.