

# Student Subcultures

It's obvious that there is a diversity of manners, styles, and social structures on a large university campus, or at least it is to anyone who looks into the matter. Two people who have looked into it are Burton R. Clark and Martin Trow, two University of California sociologists who have written a study of the sociological structures of colleges and universities. Clark and Trow's "Determinants of College Student Subcultures," in examining the forces which account for the specific forms of student groups and their cultures, have defined four student subcultures: the collegiate, the academic, the vocational, and the nonconformist.

Two broad sets of factors shape the nature of students' orientations and relationships in college, say Clark and Trow. The first set flow from the character of the larger society: "Students come to college with certain resources—material, moral, intellectual, emotional, cultural. These resources are largely determined by the life experiences the students have had, and these in turn are shaped by the statuses they and their parents have held in the larger society. . . . The second set of determinants derive from the nature of the colleges themselves: their historical development, their value climates, their structural features, and the shaping environment thus provided for student life."

The definitions of the four subcultures include the following:

1. Collegiate Culture. The most widely held stereotype pictures a world of football, fraternities and sororities, dates, cars and drinking, and campus fun. Much of campus life revolves around this culture. Teachers and courses and grades are in the picture, but somewhat dimly, in the background. This system of values and activities is not hostile to the college, to which, in fact, it generates strong loyalties and attachments. It is, however, indifferent and resistant to *serious* demands emanating from the faculty, for an involvement with ideas and issues over and above that required to gain the diploma. This culture is predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class—it takes money and leisure to pursue the busy round of social activities—and flourishes on, though is by no means confined to, the resident campuses of big state universities.

2. Academic Culture. Present on every campus is the subculture of serious academic effort. The essence of this system of values is its identification with the intellectual concerns of the serious faculty members. The students involved work hard, get the best grades, talk about their course work outside of class, and let the world of ideas and knowledge reach them in ways that neither the students in the vocational nor collegiate subcultures do. Their symbols are the library and the laboratory and the seminar. For these students, their attachment to the

college, which may be as strong as among the collegiate crowd, is to the institution which supports intellectual values and opportunities for learning; the emotional tie is through the faculty and through campus friends of similar mind and temper. They are typically aiming at graduate and professional schools.

3. Vocational Culture. These students are most visible in the urban colleges which recruit the ambitious, mobility oriented sons and daughters of working and lower-middle-class homes. To these students, many of them married, most of them working from twenty to forty hours a week, college is largely off-the-job training, an organization of courses and credits leading to diploma and a better job than they could otherwise command. These students have little attachment to the college where they buy their education somewhat as one buys groceries.

4. Nonconformist Culture. It is in identification with the college that "nonconformists," "intellectuals," "radicals," "alienated," "bohemian" students differ from their serious academic classmates. These students are often deeply involved with ideas but to a much greater degree they use off-campus groups and currents of thought as points of reference over against the official college culture in their strategy of independence and criticism. Their symbol is often a distinctive *style*—of dress, speech, attitude—that itself represents the identity they seek. This form, this style of aggressive nonconformism varies from campus to campus, but where it exists it has a visibility and influence far beyond its usually tiny and fluid membership. Its chief significance is that it offers a genuine alternative to the rebellious student seeking a distinctive identity; it provides content and meaning to the idealism and rebelliousness generated in adolescence in some parts of the American society.

Clark and Trow stress that these are "types of subcultures and not types of students." Secondly, they say, these types of subcultures may well combine elements of more than one of these types. Thirdly, the analytical types simply break dimensions in half and hence oversimplify. These dimensions could be divided into a greater number of more homogeneous categories and could be combined in other blends not here defined. Finally, they discourage the game of naming subcultures and pigeonholing individuals, groups of students, or colleges.

Be that as it may, SOONER MAGAZINE with unscientific presumptuousness has taken it upon itself to attempt to depict some subcultures of its own. We have accepted three of Clark and Trow's subcultures which are evident at OU, discarding the vocational grouping, and have added three others—the athlete, the marrieds, and the technocrat. Randy Staley and his wife Barbara Stegeman Staley, a talented actor and actress who major in drama, were asked to portray our student types, and Robert E. Fields Jr. consented to photograph the proceedings. The results fill the next three pages. With intent to humor, not antagonize, we offer them.



### The Academic

*A brainy bunch, though occasionally infiltrated by pseudo-intellectuals. Academic gowns are definitely in the picture, as are grants, fellowships, and a future on a college campus. See you at the library. Get those grades.*



### The Collegiate

*Typified by the Greeks, this is a proving ground for the Junior League, country club, and C of C. The accouterments are test files, booze, trophies, good clothes, sleek cars, stereos—all the things America holds dear.*



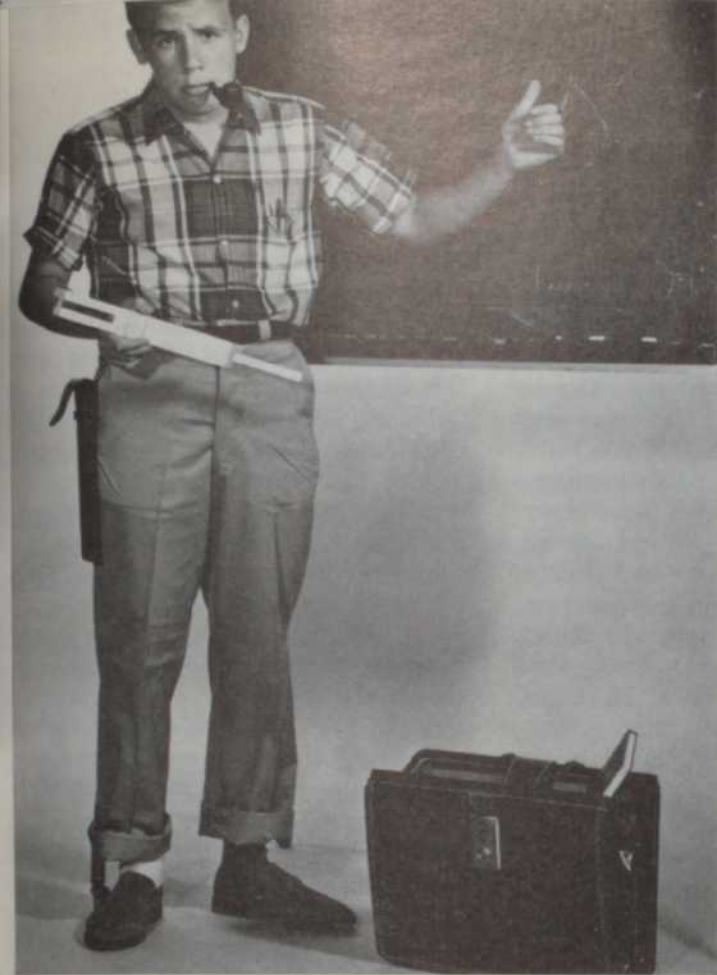
### The Nonconformist

*One who is balding had better forget it. Hair is essential. And there are special heroes—Cke is one—and authors—try Marcusse. Pot is preferred, the dress is imaginative, the jargon esoteric. Dirt is not frowned upon. If you want to join, be prepared for undue harrassment and uptightness from the "straight" world.*



### The Athlete

*White athletic department T-shirts, white socks, letter jacket. Who could it be? Living in Washington House and Jefferson House, these fellows eat well and work hard. Look around. You may occasionally meet one in a class. If you're a good-looking girl, you may already have met.*



### The Technocrat

*Math, physics, chemistry, engineering. The dropout from Sputnik is producing scientists and technicians who talk to slide rules and computers and wear Hush Puppies and winger shirts and khakis and will make lots of money.*

### The Marrieds

*She works hard—cooking, washing, ironing, working in an office—while he studies hard so that one day he can be as good a provider as she is now. And she will never, never let him forget her sacrifice.*

