

1968

## An Analysis of the Attitudes of College Students Concerning the War in Vietnam

Lyle K. Henry  
*Morning Side College*

Charles Moore  
*Morning Side College*

Nancy Moore  
*Morning Side College*

Sheryl Kessler  
*Morning Side College*

Mildred Stone  
*Morningside College*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1968 Iowa Academy of Science, Inc.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias>

---

### Recommended Citation

Henry, Lyle K.; Moore, Charles; Moore, Nancy; Kessler, Sheryl; and Stone, Mildred (1968) "An Analysis of the Attitudes of College Students Concerning the War in Vietnam," *Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science*, 75(1), 312-317.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/pias/vol75/iss1/43>

This Research is brought to you for free and open access by the IAS Journals & Newsletters at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Proceedings of the Iowa Academy of Science by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

## An Analysis of the Attitudes of College Students Concerning the War in Vietnam

LYLE K. HENRY, CHARLES MOORE, NANCY MOORE,  
SHERYL KESSLER and MILDRED STONER<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract.* Attitudes of a sampling of students at Morningside College was compared with results from a poll conducted by church magazines. A locally developed Hawk-Dove scale was designed and administered to the college sample and the results compared with certain personal and personality attributes. It was found that college seniors were much more critical of the war than college freshmen. The former were similar to attitudes of clergy while the latter were more similar to the attitudes of laymen. However, aggression scores on the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS) were almost identical for freshmen and seniors. For dominance on the EPPS, seniors and veterans had almost identical scores. Veterans were more optimistic about the war than non-veterans. Students majoring in the humanities were less favorable to war than those majoring in the natural sciences. These are preliminary observations of small portions of a large mass of data.

Violence is considered the number one problem by Americans today. The war in Vietnam and riots at home illustrate this situation.

Morningside College has launched a study of the problem: "What is the role of the Christian College in the quest for peace?" President Palmer, in addressing the opening student convocation in the fall of 1967, stated, "Since war begins in the minds of men it is in the minds of men that peace must be found."

The present study is a small preliminary investigation of attitudes concerning the Vietnam war. Other studies will deal with attitudes concerning war in general and the basic nature of man.

### PROBLEM AND PROCEDURE

This spring the church journals of nine denominations cooperated in publishing a questionnaire concerning the Vietnam war. (See Figure 1.)

This same questionnaire was administered to samples of students at Morningside College and compared with laymen and clergy responses from the *Together* magazine and the *United Church Herald*.

A locally developed attitude scale was prepared to attempt measurement of "Hawk-Dove" status regarding the Vietnam war. (See Figure 2.)

The results of this scale were compared with certain personal characteristics of the Morningside sample (See Figure 3) and with selected attributes on the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, particularly autonomy, dominance, and aggression.

<sup>1</sup>Departments of Psychology and Sociology, Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa.

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Johnson is handling the situation in Vietnam?	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
2. Some people say that the war in Vietnam may prevent World War III. Others say it may start World War III. With which group are you more inclined to agree?	Prevent No opinion	Start
3. At this time do you think the U. S. should begin to let South Vietnam take on more responsibility for the fighting of the war in Vietnam?	Yes, should No opinion	No, shouldn't
4. If a situation like Vietnam were to develop in another part of the world, do you think the U. S. should or should not send troops?	Yes, send No opinion	No, do not
5. "The U. S. should immediately and unconditionally stop the bombing of North Vietnam."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
6. "The U. S. should use all the military strength necessary (short of nuclear weapons) to achieve victory in the war."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
7. "There is a good chance that either China or the Soviet Union will become belligerent."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
8. "Other types of active service for conscientious objectors should be provided to young men who object to the war in Vietnam."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
9. "Canadian churchmen are justified in extending support to refugees from the U. S. Selective Service."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
10. "Conscientious protest against the war in Vietnam should be defended by the churches whatever the consequences of such action."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove
11. "The churches should provide information, aid, and guidance to those who refuse induction on the ground of religious conviction."	Approve No opinion	Disapprove

Figure 1. Vietnam Opinion Poll (church).

Please mark answers using the following numbers:

- 1—strongly agree; 2—agree; 3—no opinion; 4—disagree; 5—strongly disagree.
- \_\_\_1. The U. S. should continue fighting in Vietnam and not consider withdrawal.
  - \_\_\_2. The U. S. has no legal basis for the further commitment of troops in Vietnam without the consent of Congress.
  - \_\_\_3. The Vietnam conflict can be settled around the peace table with a neutral country as a mediator.
  - \_\_\_4. The present involvement and commitment in Vietnam should be escalated with the commitment of additional troops.
  - \_\_\_5. The U. S. objective in Vietnam should be a military victory.
  - \_\_\_6. It is necessary for us to remain in Vietnam because our national security is being threatened.
  - \_\_\_7. Nuclear weapons will ultimately be the only means of stopping the Vietnamese war.
  - \_\_\_8. The U. S. should use its influence to involve the United Nations in peace negotiations.
  - \_\_\_9. A complete and immediate withdrawal from Vietnam by the U. S. would result in a communist takeover of all Southeast Asia.

Figure 2. Vietnam Opinion Poll (college).

Please check appropriate boxes:

Sex: Male.... Female.... Year in College: Fr.... So.... Jr.... Sr....  
 Major area: Human.... Nat Sci.... Soc Sci.... Church affiliation.....  
 Draft status: Student deferment.... Medical deferment.... 1A.... Other....  
 Cum G.P.: 3.25 & up.... 3.24 to 2.25.... 2.24 to 2.00.... below 2.00....  
 Marital status: Single.... Married.... Other.... Any Children: Yes... No...  
 Any immediate family member: in military service.... in Vietnam....  
 of draft age.... killed in Vietnam....  
 Are you a: Veteran.... Combat Veteran.... Veteran of Vietnam....  
 I rate myself as: strongly hawk ....  
 mildly hawk ....  
 strongly dove ....  
 mildly dove ....  
 neutral ....

Figure 3. Personal Data.

Answers to the following questions were sought concerning attitudes regarding the Vietnam war:

1. Do Morningside College students differ among themselves and from laymen and clergy?
  - a. What effect do four years of college have on these attitudes?
  - b. Do attitudes of veteran students differ from others?
2. Can "Hawk" or "Dove" status be related to personal or personality characteristics?

RESULTS

Data were available from the populations presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Populations Studied

Populations	N
<i>Together Magazine</i>	
Laymen .....	3518
Clergy .....	494
Unclassified .....	286
Total .....	4298
<i>United Church Herald</i>	
Laymen .....	1453
Clergy .....	468
Total .....	1921
<i>Morningside College</i>	
	Random Sample
Freshmen .....	59
Seniors .....	52
Veterans .....	43
Total .....	154

Summaries of the church populations were reported by two age groups—over 35 and under 35 and whether laymen or clergy. While time and space do not permit a complete report, two generalizations can be made: the younger group was much more critical of the war than the older group; and second, the clergymen were much more critical of the war than laymen.

Chi Square computations were made on the Morningside sample and significant differences were obtained at the 1 or 2 percent level on questions 1, 2, 4, 6, 10 and 11. (See Figure 1.) Table 2 presents these percentages and also reports data from the two church populations.

**Table 2**  
Percentages of First Choice Responses (usually approval)

Question	Under 35			Morningside		
	UCC* Leaders	Meth. Clergy	Meth. Lay	Fr.	Sr.	Vets
1 .....	5.4	10.3	24.0	16.9	00.0	17.0
2 .....	16.2	16.8	34.1	27.1	13.2	38.2
3 .....	81.9	91.3	72.3	72.8	84.9	89.3
4 .....	8.1	14.7	37.2	40.6	5.6	21.2
5 .....	75.6	69.0	20.9	23.7	33.9	12.7
6 .....	14.4	20.1	59.4	67.7	28.3	48.9
7 .....	63.0	68.0	51.1	45.7	54.7	42.5
8 .....	98.1	93.0	72.1	79.6	69.8	57.4
9 .....	70.2	65.2	32.4	32.2	47.1	23.4
10 .....	90.0	81.0	32.1	23.7	35.8	12.7
11 .....	99.0	87.5	56.1	52.5	58.4	23.4

\*Mainly ministers, age not specified.

The following observations may be made from these data:

1. Not one of the Morningside seniors approved of the way President Johnson was handling the war. Morningside freshmen and veterans approved to the extent of 17 percent, as compared with 24 percent of the Methodist laymen. The Gallup Poll for the same period gave a national figure of 26 percent approval and 23 percent approval among college students.

2. The Morningside seniors were the most pessimistic about the Vietnam war preventing World War III. Veterans were much like the Methodist laymen on this question.

3. On question 4 the Morningside seniors again markedly deviated from other groups, only 5.6 percent stating that the United States should send troops to another Vietnam-type situation. Freshmen and Methodist laymen were in close agreement.

4. On question 6 it will be noted that the Morningside seniors and freshmen disagree markedly, the latter being similar to Methodist laymen.

5. On question 10 and question 11 it will be noted that the veterans disapprove of scientific objectors to a significant degree.

6. On all the questions just discussed Morningside seniors had attitudes that were similar to the clergy while the freshmen were in general agreement with laymen.

*Analysis of "Hawk-Dove" Scale* (See Figure 2.)

This scale was administered to the Morningside sample. Items 2, 3, and 9 were removed because of a high number of "no opinion" answers. The remaining items were scored on a 1-5 scale—the high scores indicating "Hawk."

This scoring provided a possible range of scores from 6 to 30. The actual range was 6 to 27. Table 3 reveals that veterans ranked highest in Hawkishness and seniors lowest.

**Table 3**  
Hawk-Dove Scores by Categories of Students

	<i>Am</i>	<i>SD</i>
Freshmen .....	15.0	5.1
Seniors .....	12.6	5.2
Veterans .....	15.3	5.3

The difference between seniors and both other groups is significant at the 1 percent level. Freshmen and veterans are very much alike.

A study of major field of interest was tabulated as reported in Table 4. It will be noted that natural science majors rank highest on Hawkishness and Humanities lowest, the latter division being significantly lower at the 5 percent level for all three groups of students. Natural Science veterans differ significantly, being more Hawkish than all the categories. However, freshmen in the Natural Science and Social Science divisions were about equal as were seniors.

**Table 4**  
Hawk-Dove Scores of All Students by Major Interest

	Humanities	Social Science	Natural Science
Freshmen .....	13.8	15.4	15.9
Seniors .....	11.3	13.1	13.4
Veterans .....	12.8	14.7	18.4

A study was made of the relation between Hawk-Dove scores and certain subtests of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. Scattergrams were prepared for the attitudes of aggression, dominance, and autonomy. No consistent relationship was discovered between Hawk-Dove scores and these personality traits. (See Table 5.)

While the group means were similar for the Edwards attributes, it was true that veterans exceeded others in all three characteristics and

Table 5

Edwards Personal Preference Schedule Means of the Three Student Groups for Three Attributes

	Freshmen	Seniors	Veterans
Aggression .....	12.4	12.7	13.6
Autonomy .....	14.4	13.6	15.3
Dominance .....	15.2	15.5	15.9

were significantly higher in autonomy (99 percent level) and aggression at the 95 percent level. Dominance was significantly higher at the 75 percent level.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Students entering Morningside College tend to have attitudes similar to laymen concerning the war in Vietnam. Senior students have attitudes much more like the clergy. Veteran students take a more optimistic attitude concerning war than other groups studied. Hawk or Dove attitudes seem to be related to major field of study, but not to some personality attributes as measured by the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule. Attitudes concerning the war seem to be fairly independent of the personality traits studied, except for the higher score of veterans on the traits of aggression, dominance, and autonomy. Many other variables are still being investigated.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Mr. Richard C. Underwood, editor of *Together* magazine, gave approval of the use of the opinion poll with college students and furnished results of the church poll in advance of publication.

The classes of Social Psychology and Experimental Psychology at Morningside College assisted in administering the poll and tabulating the results. Thanks are due all Morningside students who voluntarily participated in the poll.

Literature Cited

1. *Together*, 1968, May, pp. 16-17.
2. *United Church Herald*, 1968, April, pp. 22-23.