

Are You Up To Date?

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If an individual is up to date on current events, it makes it easier to carry on or even start a conversation with another individual who is also up to date. The researchers feel that individuals aged 40 and over are more up to date on current events than those ages 18-25. In the current study, 46 participants; 26 participants aged 18-25 years old and 20 participants aged 40 years and older, recruited from the St. Charles area, took a ten question questionnaire on current events. The participants were divided by age and gender, so the study had a representative sample. Results showed $t(44) = 2.888, p = .003$. The researchers had to reject the null hypothesis.

Typically, current events are known more by those who are 40 years and older than those who are in the 18-25 age group. If the hypothesis is supported, further studies can be conducted on why older adults are more up to date on current events than college level students, and how college level students can become more up to date. The hypothesis of this study was, older adults, 40 years and older, are more knowledgeable about current events than college age adults, 18-25 years. Current events were US local political events, along with entertainment 1 to 2 months old.

In study conducted by David Tewksbury (2003) states that Americans rely on the internet more than the newspaper or the news on television. It also stated that individuals found their news on the internet and often visited sites of the traditional media, not Internet outlets (Tewksbury, 696). The sites visited also included websites of national

In 1996 Jennings conducted a study to know if younger individuals, age groups not specified, knew more about politics and the current political issues than older adults, again, age groups not specified in the article. They used three different generations over time. The researchers used three different categories of knowledge; textbook knowledge, surveillance/current event knowledge, and collective memory/historical facts. The researchers found that younger individuals lacked the political knowledge than that of older adults.

Basil and Vincent conducted a study in 1997 that tested the use of news media and the gratification theory, a theory that states immediate satisfaction in order to achieve a reward. Also, the longer an individual is being educated the more knowledgeable the individual is as far as adult news. The study wanted to show the correlation between media use and the year in college, and it was proven that it was consistent with the gratification theory. The objective of this research was to explore patterns of usage of news media by college students and the relationship between traditional news gratification functions. In this study the researchers used a survey that was published in Time Magazine, Summer Events Quiz, 1999, to gather the data for the research. The researchers did find a correlation between the years of college and media use does grow with the years in college.

The general methodology of this study was participants were given a survey, in which the participants remained anonymous to where the data and the Informed Consent

Form were not placed together and were randomly placed in the folder, therefore there was no way to match up the Informed Consent Form and the questionnaire. Each participant filled out a questionnaire on current events to the best of their knowledge. The questions were designed to test the participant's knowledge of current events. There were questions that pertained to current events involving both age levels that were being tested. The experimenters conducted research on current events within the United States and covered on news casts, stories headlined in the newspapers, the St. Louis Post Dispatch and/or on the internet daily, including websites such as: www.msn.com, www.stltoday.com, and www.cnn.com.

The experimenters believe that younger adults, ages 18-25, are not up to date due to the fact they do not have a lot of time on their hands to sit down and watch or read any of the news topics. However, those who are ages 40 years and older do have the time to sit down at night and watch the evening news. If this is true, society should do further research to figure out why the younger adults are not as informed about current events than the middle aged adults are. The general purpose of this experiment was to see if in fact the middle aged adult population, ages 40 and older, are more knowledgeable about current events than college aged individuals, 18-25 years of age.

Method

Participants

The participants that were used in this study were 26 undergraduate students, both male and female participants, between the ages of 18 and 25; and 20 local adults, both male and female participants, that were 40 years or older. The participants were recruited randomly on the campus of Lindenwood University and in the local St. Charles area. The

researchers randomly asked students on Lindenwood University's campus. As far as the individuals ages 40 and older, they were recruited by just randomly asking individuals to fill out the questionnaire.

Materials

The participants took a ten-question questionnaire to test their knowledge of current events (see Appendix A). The survey consisted of ten multiple choice questions on current events such as, The Governor of Missouri is? Who is currently the Attorney General? as well as, What two major cell phone companies just merged? Following each question there were four choices to choose from, and the participant had to choose which response they found the most correct out of the four.

For the individuals at Lindenwood University, there was a table or desk that was used for the participant to take the questionnaire on, and a chair to sit in while the participants completed it. For those participants who were recruited through the Greater St. Charles area, they were placed in a secluded area away from distractions so they could concentrate on the questionnaire. The participant was supplied with one black ballpoint pen to use to complete the consent form and the ten-question questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Procedure

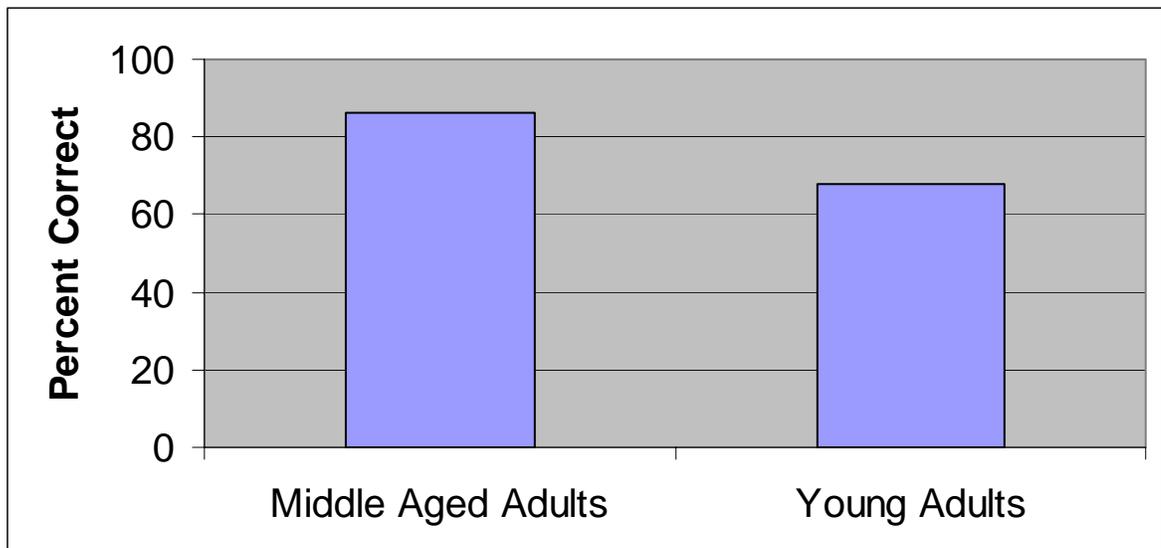
The participants were asked to sit down at the table or desk where there were two copies of the consent form, one for the participant to read and sign, for the researcher's records, and one for the participant to keep. After the participant understood the consent form, and all questions had been addressed, then the researcher handed the participant the current event questionnaire and instructed the participant to answer the questions to the

best of their knowledge. When the questionnaire was completed, the participant then received a feed back form, and the researcher then answered any questions that the participant had at that time. Also, the researcher informed the participant that if at any time they had any questions they could call either one of the researchers, or the researcher's supervisor of the project.

Results

Using SPSS, a one tailed independent t-test was conducted on the responses that the participants gave on their surveys. The results of the independent t-test showed that there was statistical significance at the .003 level stating that the individuals ages 40 years and older did in fact know more about current events than those in the 18-25 age group did. The results showed: $t(44)=2.888, p=.003$. This is not surprising due to the fact that it is generally thought that individuals 40 and older do stay up to date with current events than those in the 18-25 age group. As results showed the younger adults received 68% of the questions correct, and the middle aged adults received 86% of the questions correct (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Mean percent of questions answered correctly.



The general purpose of this experiment was to see if in fact the middle aged adult population, ages 40 and older, were more knowledgeable about current events than college aged individuals, 18-25 years of age. The experimenters developed the questions from issues that were big in the news, as well as current event topics that were on the headlines of the newspaper, on the internet, and on the morning and evening news broadcasts.

Some problems that were encountered in our study were that one of the questions had two possible answers due to the fact that President Bush had changed his view on one of the choices that was randomly included in there after the questionnaire was made up and the researchers had started running participants. On that same question one of the answers was foreign to the participants and they all needed clarification. The answer key had to be changed to where the answer was the one that was most current with the news. However, the researchers accepted both answers as correct. One of the questions had dealt with the conference on steroids and which member of Congress had attended the conference, and out of the 46 participants only 18 got the question correct.

Ways that this study could be improved are to gather more participants from each age group in order to get a representative sample of each age. Also, another thing that could be improved would be to possibly have more than ten questions and make sure that the questions are easily understandable for all participating in the study.

The next step in continuing on this research would be to find out why exactly the younger population is not as up to date with the middle aged population, whether it is due to the fact of school, evening employment, or several other possibilities. Society should then see what they can do in order to help the younger generations become more up to

date. Whether it be offering classes in college to help the individuals become up to date on what is currently happening in their world, or just encouraging the younger generation to become more up to date on what is going on in the world around them.

References

- Basil, M., & Vincent R. (1997). College students' news gratifications, media use, and current events knowledge. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 3 380-393.
- Jennings, K.M. (1996). Political knowledge over time and across generations. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60, 2 228-253.
- Tewksbury, David. (2003). What do Americans really want to know? Tracking the behavior of news readers on the internet. *Journal of Communication*. 53, 694-710.

Appendix A

ARE YOU UP TO DATE?

Directions: Please circle the answer to the following questions to the best of your ability.
If you do not know the answer, circle your best guess.

AGE: _____

GENDER: MALE: _____

FEMALE: _____

1. The Missouri Governor is:
 - a. Matthew Dunn
 - b. Matt Blunt
 - c. Sarah Steelman
 - d. Jay Nixon

2. Who is currently the Attorney General?
 - a. Colin L. Powell
 - b. Dick Chaney
 - c. John Kerry
 - d. Alberto Gonzalez

3. What was the date of the worst tsunami in history?
 - a. December 26, 2004
 - b. February 31, 1945
 - c. September 16, 1978
 - d. May 25, 1981

4. What two major cell phone companies just merged?
 - a. Verizon Wireless and T-mobile
 - b. Cingular and A T & T
 - c. Centurytel and Sprint
 - d. Sprint and Verizon

5. Where was the most current school shooting that was said to be almost as bad as Columbine?
 - a. Missouri
 - b. Minnesota
 - c. Mississippi
 - d. Michigan

6. President Bush has currently changed his views on:
 - a. The war on terrorism
 - b. Gas prices
 - c. Ethicists
 - d. Social Security

7. The boy who is testifying in the Michael Jackson case is how old?
 - a. 15
 - b. 8
 - c. 10
 - d. 13

8. What case did Congress get involved in?
 - a. Nancy Cruzan
 - b. Terri Schiavo
 - c. Karen Ann Quinlan
 - d. Allison Burke

9. Which local member of Congress took part in the hearing on steroids?
 - a. Jerry Costello
 - b. Russ Carnahan
 - c. Todd Akin
 - d. William Lacy Clay

10. Which St. Louis star got a second chance on American Idol?
 - a. Nikko Smith
 - b. Bo Bice
 - c. Aloha Mischeaux
 - d. Mario Vazquez