

News for A New Generation: Can it Be Fun and Functional?

Susan Sherr

Eagleton Institute of Politics
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
ssherr@rci.rutgers.edu

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INTRODUCTION

Considerable time and financial resources have been dedicated to increasing the numbers of young people who vote in the United States. Voting is certainly a vital component of political and civic engagement. However, there are other important political behaviors in which young people have been participating in decreasing numbers and at rates lower than older people. One example is news consumption. Even if 18-24 year olds begin voting at consistently higher rates, their relative inattention to political information may prevent them from casting informed votes.

Many recent studies and practitioner reports indicate that young citizens are turning away from traditional sources of news (Mindich, 2004). In addition, those between the ages of 18 and 24 are not going on-line for news to an extent that would serve to compensate for their inattention to newspapers and television news sources (Keeter et. al. 2002).

It is true that news consumption, particularly of newspapers and network television news, has been declining for all age groups. A 2002 study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press demonstrated that the percent of people who report regular reading of a daily newspaper is down 8% since 1994. Although up very slightly from 2000, the percent of people who reported regular network news viewing was down 21% from 1987. However, young people are less likely to be regular news consumers than their elders. The same 2002 Pew study showed that 19 percent of those under 30 watch the nightly network news regularly compared with 53 percent of senior citizens.

Certainly, there are many problems with the way traditional news sources present information. Active consumption of news is not a panacea for becoming an informed and engaged citizen. Young people do report getting news about politics and current affairs from other sources, such as comedy

programs (Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2004). However, it is far too pessimistic to assume that the only options available to young people for information gathering must be flawed news sources that do not appeal to them or comedy shows that have no mandate to inform.

News media organizations have an obvious interest in increasing the youth audience but not necessarily in providing young people with high quality information about politics and public affairs. Efforts to increase youth audiences by news organizations generally include providing more entertainment coverage, shortening the length of news stories and adjusting formal visual features to be more consistent with "MTV Style" editing (Sherr, CIRCLE Working Paper 16, 2004). Although it is possible that these changes will increase the youth audience, they run counter to the democratic ideal of an informed citizenry.

There is no hard and fast rule stating how much information citizens need in order to vote effectively. Many scholars have argued that citizens need to learn very few political facts in order to make informed voting decisions because they can rely on cues such as party affiliation to determine which candidate will best serve their interests (Popkin, 1991; Schaffner and Streb, 2002). However, it is increasingly likely that young people are lacking sufficient understanding of national politics to rely even on these cognitive shortcuts. This may leave people with only less reliable demographic stereotypes to rely upon when making voting decisions (McDermott, 1998 and 2005).

According to Dahl (1998) one of the criteria for establishing a democratic process of government is that all voting members of the democracy have "equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences" upon which they will be asked to vote (37). Even if they do not take advantage of these opportunities, the system requires that all citizens should be able to learn enough to allow them to vote in their interests. The paucity of political information

aimed specifically at young adults puts them at a comparative disadvantage.

In an effort to address these issues, the News for a New Generation Project has been investigating why young people are increasingly less likely to be active news consumers, what kinds of news is available for younger audiences, and whether there are formats for news that would be more engaging and informative for young adults than current media offerings.

The first News for a New Generation working paper described the results of analyses conducted using three qualitative methodologies: textual analysis, interviews, and focus groups. The results indicated that both youth news producers and young people themselves had clear ideas about what news aimed at younger audiences should look like.

This informed the final stage of the project; a controlled experiment designed to determine whether systematically altering the design and content of a news Web site would cause people between the ages of 18 and 24 to evaluate the Web site more positively and to learn more from the news content. Both the design features of the sites and the stories presented were aimed at eliciting positive reactions from younger audiences and presenting information in a way that would facilitate learning and information retention for the novice news consumer.

METHOD

We developed four Web sites to serve as the stimuli in this experiment. The experiment consisted of a control group and three experimental conditions.

Subjects were randomized to each of the four conditions using a block randomization method that ensures nearly equal groups. When subjects logged on to their computers, they were immediately taken to one of the four Web sites. A total of 266 18-24 year-olds participated in the experiment. Most were college students at

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, where we conducted the study. One hundred sixteen were male, 147 were female, and three did not report their gender. The group of participants consisted of 91 white subjects, 100 Asians, 39 African-Americans, 21 Hispanics and 20 who said they were some other race.

The difficulty of recruiting non-college young people to participate in the study proved prohibitive. So, although the study was designed to focus on 18-24 year-olds, the fact that the participants were almost all college students does limit the ability to generalize to the members of this age group who are not in college and who have not attended college.

A check of the randomization produced no discernable patterns in the demographic makeup of the four groups indicating that subjects were appropriately randomized to condition.

Before logging on to the Web sites, participants were instructed to take as much time as they needed to read through the content of the site and be able to evaluate it. We told them that their opinions were very important to us, so we hoped they would review the site thoroughly. We decided to allow subjects the freedom to decide how much of each story they wanted to read and whether they would read every story because this would be more representative of real-world experience. We also told participants that some of the links on the site were inactive, and some of the news stories were not current, but that they should not focus on these issues when evaluating the site.

Subjects then had the opportunity to read through the five top stories featured on the site as well as either four news briefs or four short satire articles. The main story topics were the gay marriage amendment, implementation of tolls on federal roads, Medicare prescription drug cards, gas prices, and outcomes of the Supreme Court affirmative action decision on college campuses.

We told participants that, when they were

finished reading through the site, they should click on a link at the bottom of the site that would allow them to access the post-test questionnaire. The link became active after ten minutes, ensuring that participants spent at least some time reviewing the site. The questionnaire asked a series of questions evaluating subjects' literacy level, political knowledge, political engagement, opinions of the site, and how much they learned from reading the articles on the site. See Appendix One for a complete list of questions.

WEB SITES

We designed four Web sites for the experiment, one to serve as a control and three experimental sites. See Appendix Two for screen shots of these sites. Subjects assigned to the control group (n=68) were presented with a Web site modeled after the type of site that might be hosted by a traditional, mainstream newspaper. The colors are predominantly blue, white and gray, the advertisements are for products that older, wealthier people might purchase, and the title of the site is the generic, *Daily Herald*. In addition to these lackluster design elements, the texts of the stories were taken from traditional news sources. The quotes in the stories represent people in positions of authority or who are experts in their fields. The site has five main news stories and four news briefs. The subjects of the photographs are older people.

The first experimental condition (n=68) also features the standard design, but we rewrote the stories in order to put the information in a youth-oriented context. We simplified the language, added quotes from young people, indicated the relevance of the issues discussed in the story for young people, and created photographs featuring young, racially diverse subjects. We changed the title of the site to, *The Word*. In addition, the news briefs were replaced with short news satire pieces borrowed from the satiric Web site, *The Onion*. In order to ensure that the length of the articles would not affect learning, we kept all revised stories within 200 words of the originals.

The purpose of this manipulation was to increase positive evaluations among participants by presenting stories in a context they would find familiar and providing cues that the content was created for their age group. We also hypothesized that learning would be facilitated through the use of language that young people understand and situations that they find familiar.

The second experimental condition (n=64) presented the same text as the control group but surrounded it with a youthful design. The heading of the site depicts the top of a young man's head with his eyes staring provocatively at the viewer. The site is multi-colored and has moving ads as well as a ticker with brief headlines scrolling across the top of the site.

Here, we assumed positive evaluations of the site would be triggered by the type of design young people are accustomed to encountering in entertainment media. This positive feeling about the source would increase the amount of time participants spent reading the articles, and, as a result increase learning.

The third experimental condition (n=66) combined the youth design and the youth text. The purpose of this manipulation was to maximize the effects of the design on positive affect and the text on affect and learning to create a source of information that would both attract young people and increase their level of knowledge about politics and current affairs.

One question included on the post-test questionnaire served as a check of the manipulation. We asked subjects whether they felt the Web site they saw was aimed at people their age or people who were older or younger. Eighteen percent of control group participants felt that the site was aimed at their age group. Conversely, 56% of those assigned to the youth text condition, 53% of the those in the youth design condition, and 70% of participants in the youth text and design condition thought the site was aimed at

their age group. This indicates that attempts to construct media that would be perceived as having a younger target audience were successful.

HYPOTHESES

Two main hypotheses motivated this experiment.

Hypothesis One: A youthful web site design with stories that explain issues in a youth-oriented context will receive more positive evaluations from 18-24 year-olds than a site that utilizes a more traditional format.

Hypothesis Two: More positive evaluations of the site will encourage more learning of the site content.

If young people enjoy using a news source, they are more likely to spend time with it and possibly retain more of the information presented. In addition, if the information is targeted at their age group, they may take a greater interest

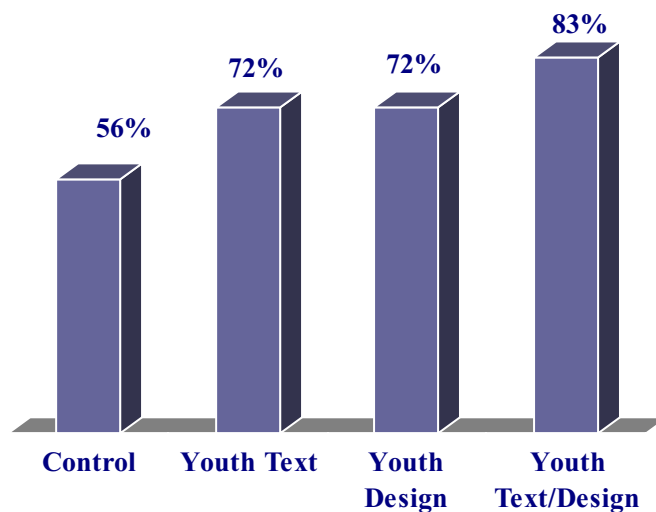
in carefully consuming that information, again increasing learning and memory for the news content. Finally, if the new information fits more easily with previously acquired knowledge or experience than traditional news stories, it will be easier for young audiences to learn and remember that information. Equally valid, though outside of our ability to test in this experiment, is the possibility that a more enjoyable web site will create more learning in the long term simply because young audiences will turn to it more frequently than other sources.

RESULTS

The first hypothesis predicted that participants would give the most positive evaluations to the site that had both a youth oriented design and context (experimental condition 3).

The measure of positive evaluation consisted of a four question scale that indicated the extent to which participants thought the site was

Figure One: Positive Evaluation of Site on at Least Three of Four Measures



¹ This method allowed us to retain subjects who did not respond to one of the four questions. In other words, if a subject agreed or strongly agreed that the site was fun and easy to use and that he would like to visit the site in the future, but did not say whether he thought the site was interesting, then that person could still be included in this analysis.

interesting, fun to use and easy to use and whether they wanted to visit the site again in the future. The scale was reliable with a Chronbach’s alpha of .7.

We determined the degree of positive affect for the site by calculating whether a particular subject chose either agree somewhat or strongly agree on at least three of four measures.¹ Figure

one demonstrates that both manipulations of the traditional format increased the percent of respondents who evaluated the site positively. However, the Web site with both a youthful design and context clearly produced the most positive affect. Only the difference between the control group and the group with both youth-oriented design and text is statistically significant.

Figure Two: Responded Correctly to 12 or More Knowledge Questions

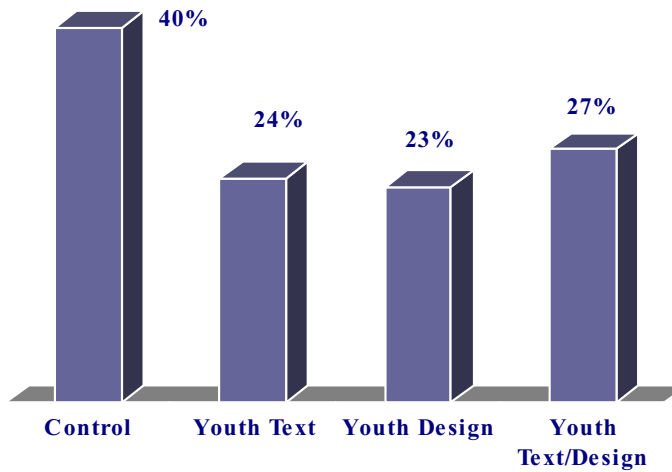
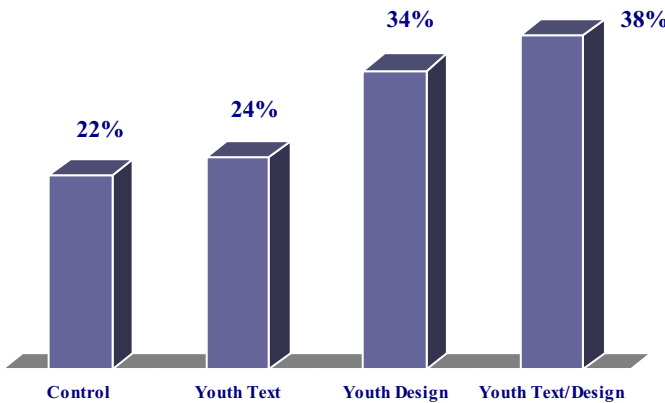


Figure Three: Responded Correctly to Eight or Fewer Knowledge Questions



The second hypothesis predicted that young people would learn more from the sites that they preferred and that were targeted to their age group.

We measured learning with a scale consisting of 18 recall questions reflecting the information contained in the Web sites' five main news articles. The questions queried respondents only about information that appeared in all versions of the site. The scale was reliable with a Chronbach's Alpha of .6.

In order to clearly illustrate the relationship between learning and experimental condition, we calculated the percent of people who responded correctly to 12 or more knowledge questions and the percent who responded to eight or fewer knowledge questions. Figures two and three show the results.

The graphs clearly demonstrate that the participants who were assigned to the control group provided higher numbers of correct answers than those in any other group. Instead of encouraging learning, the youth formats seem to have created a negative environment for information retention. Even though participants demonstrated clear preferences for the more youthful and dynamic Web sites, they learned less from them than from the standard site. In the first graph, the differences between the control group and conditions one and two are statistically significant. In the second graph, only the difference between the control group and condition three is significant.

These somewhat surprising results necessitated further exploration of the relationships among the variables of interest. The next step was to examine the correlations between positive affect and the number of recall questions to which participants responded correctly in each of the conditions. As we can see in Table One, a relationship between these two variables does emerge, but only in the control group and the condition where only Web site design was manipulated. In the conditions where the text was altered, there is no significant relationship between feeling positively about the site and learning the information found there.

There are several possibilities that might explain this outcome. First, it is possible that only the highly literate prefer the standard text, and they are also the most likely to answer the questions correctly. So, there is a correlation between liking the standard text and learning from the articles. It is also possible that there is something about the youth oriented text that discourages learning. Although the text was specifically designed to create a more comfortable learning environment for young people who had limited political knowledge and possibly even less interest in current affairs, perhaps there is something about the presentation of the information that is detrimental to learning and memory.

In order to test whether characteristics such as literacy level of the participants were

Table One: Correlations: Positive Evaluations and Learning

| | Control | Youth Text | Youth Design | Youth Design/ Text |
|----------|---------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| R | .31* | -.09 | .44** | .03 |

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

contributing to these results, we examined these relationships in OLS regression analyses where it was possible to control for the contribution of political knowledge, literacy, political participation, media use, and the gender of the participant. The dependent variable in the regressions was the scale calculating a total of how many of the 18 knowledge questions a participant answered correctly.

It is important to consider these results with the understanding that regression analysis is generally employed in conditions with larger n sizes and normal data distributions. In this case, despite these methodological concerns,

employing this method allows a more nuanced understanding of the effects of each Web site. Table Two demonstrates that even holding variables representing knowledge, literacy, news media use, and political participation constant, affect significantly predicts learning only in the control condition and youth design only conditions.

According to these results, it is not reading competency or political knowledge among the participants that is producing a lack of correlation between affect and information recall. Instead, it must be something about this type of textual presentation that restricts the potential for learning and information retention.

Table Two: OLS Regression Predicting Learning

| | Control | Youth Text | Youth Design | Youth Text/Design |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Affect | 1.0** | -.15 | .99*** | .13 |
| Literacy | .38 | .17 | .23 | .57* |
| Political Knowledge | .77* | .32 | .24* | .50 |
| Gender | -.03 | -.43 | .69 | -.67 |
| Adj. R2 | .20 n=60 | -.01 n=61 | .39 n=60 | .10 n=62 |

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

CONCLUSIONS

The question of what type of news would best enable younger citizens to participate in the political process is a complicated one. People often are not attracted to those things that would make them the most educated or best able to function in a democratic society. Instead they seek out those stimuli that are more likely to produce less lofty satisfactions. Those of us who would like to achieve the idealistic goal of creating an informed citizenry must acknowledge this reality.

It is not clear how to strike a balance between what is informative and what is enjoyable to ensure that people are willing to consume the information they "should" learn. The results of this

experiment provide some clues as to where the boundaries between education and entertainment might lie and what are the real possibilities for creating an informative youth news media.

Of the two hypotheses motivating this study, only the first was supported. Participants did express clear preferences for the Web sites that featured a youth design and/or presented stories in a youth context. The control group site, which resembled a standard news site completely lacking in creativity or innovative design, did not receive the degree of approval given to the three experimental sites.

On the other hand, the results were not consistent with the second hypothesis. The highest level of learning did not occur among subjects in the experimental condition. Instead, members of

the control group did far better on the information recall questions presented on the post-test questionnaire.

In fact, only in the conditions where the text was not manipulated was there a statistically significant correlation between positive evaluations of the sites and learning the information presented. What would account for this finding? The open-ended questions included on the questionnaire suggest possible explanations. The first question asked participants in what ways they found the site better, worse or about the same as other news sources they have used. The second question asked them to provide a general assessment of the Web site. Fifteen of the people who were assigned to one of the two youth text conditions mentioned that the site seemed to lack credibility. Several criticized the inclusion of satire pieces on a news Web site. Another felt that the use of quotes by people without obvious credentials was problematic.

If participants did not believe that the information on these sites was accurate or worth learning, this certainly could have severely limited the degree to which they concentrated on the specifics of the information or tried to remember them for later use. Persuasion research has indicated that source credibility is a significant variable in determining how a person will respond to a particular message (Perloff, 1993). In this case, it also may have had an impact on the degree to which subjects retained the information provided. There is a body of previous research that has explored correlations between credibility and recall (Steinfatt and Roberts, 1983; Ragsdale and Durham, 1987; Groenendyk and Valentino, 2002) with mixed results.

Looking only at the learning outcome across all the conditions, it is clear that the youth design condition with standard text also did not encourage learning. The open-ended responses also provide possible reasons for this result. Four of the people assigned to the youth design conditions pointed out

that they were distracted by the moving ad on the right side of the site. One said it made it difficult to concentrate on the articles. It is very possible that the motion and bright colors found on the youth design sites reduced the number of cognitive resources available for learning the information provided.

These results leave open a number of questions that warrant future exploration. First, we need to learn more about what makes information credible. Was the presence of satire pieces on the front of the Web site to blame for the lack of credibility attributed to the site? Young people say they learn from comedy programs such as *The Daily Show*, but that program never claims to be actual news. Perhaps a news source that tries to be funny is a different matter. It is also interesting that, for at least one participant, the fact that young people who are not in positions of authority are quoted makes the information appear less trustworthy. Do young people believe that their opinions do not count, even when the topic is an issue that affects them directly? The traditional presentation of news that marginalizes not only young people, but all people who are not in positions of power, may be responsible for this perception.

The distracting nature of the design elements is also worthy of consideration. Is movement the only feature that results in cognitive overload? Does a wider range of colors have an impact on a person's ability to retain information? Is it possible that the diverse colors also detract from the credibility of the site? All of these questions are important to consider in planning youth oriented, educational news sources. As is the very important question of whether the findings would apply to young people who will not attend college.

One final issue to contemplate is how choice might affect the usefulness of a news source. In this experiment, subjects were forced to look at a certain Web site. In reality, audiences

have freedom of choice. Although learning was obviously optimized by the least stimulating presentation of content, would more than a very few participants have freely selected that site? Young people have not turned in droves to news programs on PBS, for example, where they could learn a good deal of high quality information.

Although there are many questions still left to explore, this study does provide some important information. These findings do suggest that presenting news using a modern, dynamic design format does make the source more attractive to young audiences. However, these types of features must be employed judiciously. Overloading a TV program or Web sites with too many moving elements or colorful features may not only distract consumers but may also make the information seem trivial or unreliable.

College students also seem to prefer text that is aimed at them to standard news texts. Determining whether it is possible to also make this type of presentation educational will require further innovation. The results of this experiment provide a groundwork from which to begin creating news that young people will willingly turn to for information and will not only enjoy using, but will learn from as well.

APPENDIX ONE

Experiment Post-Test Questionnaire

First we would like to ask you a few questions about the government in Washington. Many people do not know the answers to these questions, but we are interested in seeing what the range of responses is among the participants in this study. If you don't know the answer to a question, please just respond with "don't know."

Do you happen to know what job or political office is now held by Dick Cheney?

Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not... is it the president, Congress or the Supreme Court?

How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto?

Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the House of Representatives currently?

Would you say that one of the parties is more conservative than the other at the national level? Which party is more conservative, the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

Please answer the following questions so that we can learn a little more about you.

What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?

- 1 None, or grade 1-8
- 2 High School Incomplete (grades 9-11)
- 3 High School Graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)
- 4 Business, technical or vocational school AFTER high school
- 5 Some college, no 4-year degree
- 6 College graduate (B.S., B.A., or other 4-year degree)
- 7 Some post-graduate training or professional schooling after college
- 8 Post-graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D., Law, Medical or Other)
- 9 Don't know

What is the last grade or class that your father completed?

- 1 None, or grade 1-8
- 2 High School Incomplete (grades 9-11)
- 3 High School Graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)
- 4 Business, technical or vocational school AFTER high school
- 5 Some college, no 4-year degree
- 6 College graduate (B.S., B.A., or other 4-year degree)
- 7 Some post-graduate training or professional schooling after college
- 8 Post-graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D., Law, Medical or Other)
- 9 Don't know

What is the last grade or class that your mother completed?

- 1 None, or grade 1-8
- 2 High School Incomplete (grades 9-11)
- 3 High School Graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)
- 4 Business, technical or vocational school AFTER high school
- 5 Some college, no 4-year degree
- 6 College graduate (B.S., B.A., or other 4-year degree)
- 7 Some post-graduate training or professional schooling after college
- 8 Post-graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D., Law, Medical or Other)
- 9 Don't know

Do you ever plan to return to school to finish a degree or seek another degree?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

How much further in school do you plan to go?

- 1 Some high school
- 2 High School
- 3 Some college
- 4 College graduate
- 5 Graduate or professional school or degree
- 6 Don't know

In talking to people, we find that many are not registered to vote because they are too busy or move around often. Would official state records show that you are now registered to vote in your election district, or not?

- 1 Registered
- 2 Not registered
- 3 Don't know/not sure

We know that most people don't vote in all elections. Usually between one-quarter to one-half of those eligible actually come out to vote. Can you tell me how often you vote in local and national elections? Always, sometimes, rarely, or never?

- 1 Always
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never
- 5 Don't know

When there is an election taking place, do you generally talk to any other people and try to show them why they should vote for or against one of the parties or candidates?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Do you wear a campaign button, put a sticker on your car, or place a sign in front of your house?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election or not. Others aren't that interested. Do you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, rarely, or never?

- 1 Most of the time
- 2 Some of the time
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never
- 5 Don't know/depends

We would like to know something about how people go about guessing words they do not know. On this card are listed some words. You may know some of them, and you may not know quite a few of them.

On each line, the first word is in capital letters--- like BEAST. Then there are five other words. Please circle the number of the word that comes closest to the meaning of the word in capital letters. For example, if the word in capital letters is BEAST, you would circle "4" since "animal" comes closer to BEAST than any of the other words.

Circle only one number for each item below.

EXAMPLE

BEAST 1. afraid 2. words 3. large 4. animal 5. separate 6. don't know

A. SPACE 1. school 2. noon 3. captain 4. room 5. board 6. don't know

B. BROADEN 1. efface 2. make level 3. elapse 4. embroider 5. widen 6. don't know

C. EMANATE 1. populate 2. free 3. prominent 4. rival 5. come 6. don't know

D. EDIBLE 1. auspicious 2. eligible 3. fit to eat 4. sagacious 5. able to speak 6. don't know

E. ANIMOSITY 1. hatred 2. animation 3. disobedience 4. diversity 5. friendship 6. don't know

F. PACT 1. puissance 2. remonstrance 3. agreement 4. skillet 5. pressure 6. don't know

G. CLOISTERED 1. miniature 2. bunched 3. arched 4. malady 5. secluded 6. don't know

- H. CAPRICE 1. value 2. a star 3. grimace 4. whim 5. inducement 6. don't know
I. ACCUSTOM 1. disappoint 2. customary 3. encounter 4. get used to 5. business 6. don't know
J. ALLUSION 1. reference 2. dream 3. eulogy 4. illusion 5. aria 6. don't know

The next several questions deal with some ways people get news and information. Thinking about the past week, please tell us how many days you have done each activity in the past seven days.

1) Read a newspaper

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

2) Read magazines like Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

3) Watched the national news on television

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

4) Listened to news on the radio

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

5) Read news on the Internet

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

In politics today, do you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, or something else?

- 1 Democrat
- 2 Republican
- 3 Independent
- 4 Something else
- 5 Don't know

How strongly do you feel about your previous answer?

- 1 Very strongly
- 2 Somewhat strongly
- 3 Not very strongly
- 4 Not strongly at all
- 5 Don't know

Are you?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female

Are you of Hispanic or Latino origin such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some other Spanish background?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Are you of White, African-American, or Asian origin?

- 1 White
- 2 African-American

- 3 Asian
- 4 Other
- 5 Not determined/don't know

What is your date of birth? _____

So that we can group all answers, is your total family income before taxes

- 1 Under \$20,000
- 2 \$20,000 to just under \$30,000
- 3 \$30,000 to just under \$40,000
- 4 \$40,000 to just under \$50,000
- 5 \$50,000 to just under \$64,000
- 6 \$65,000 to just under \$80,000
- 7 \$80,000 to just under \$100,000
- 8 Over \$100,000
- 9 Don't know

We would now like to ask you some questions about the Web site.
Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following:

How do you feel about this web site?

The articles were interesting

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 5 Don't know

The site was fun to use.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 5 Don't know

It was funny

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 5 Don't know

The site was easy to use

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 5 Don't know

I feel I learned something from using this web site

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree somewhat
- 4 Strongly disagree
- 5 Don't know

I would like to visit this web site again in the future

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree somewhat
- 3 Disagree Somewhat
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 5 Don't know

Who do you think this site is aimed at?

- 1 People who are my age
- 2 People who are younger than I am
- 3 People who are older than I am
- 4 No specific age

Do you think your friends would enjoy using this web site?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

Please think about other sources you may have gone to for news in the past. How does this site compare, overall, to those sources.

- 1 Better
- 2 Worse
- 3 About the same
- 4 Don't know

In what ways?

The following questions are based on the articles found on the Web site. They will help us see whether you found the stories interesting and informative. If you did not read the article, please respond to the questions anyway.

Gay Marriage

What is President Bush's opinion of the proposed federal amendment to define marriage as the union between a man and a woman?

- 1 He opposes it
- 2 He supports it
- 3 He is undecided
- 4 Don't know

Which state's Supreme Court ordered the state legislature to allow gays to marry?

- 1 New York
- 2 Massachusetts
- 3 California
- 4 Don't know

How could a marriage amendment affect the rights of state legislatures?

- 1 They will be prohibited from legalizing same-sex partner benefits
- 2 They will be able to legalize gay marriage
- 3 They will be able to pass laws allowing civil unions
- 4 Don't know

According to the article, why did the sponsors of the amendment make the changes described?

- 1 To increase the chances that the bill would be passed
- 2 To give the federal government more power
- 3 To make gay rights groups happy
- 4 Don't know

Affirmative Action

How much money have the University of Michigan and Ohio State spent on admissions this year?

- 1 More than last year
- 2 Less than last year
- 3 About the same as last year
- 4 Don't know

Has there been any significant difference in the racial and ethnic diversity of schools as a result of the 2003 Supreme Court ruling on Affirmative Action?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Don't know

What did the Supreme Court say about the use of point systems that favor minorities in college admissions in their recent Affirmative Action decision?

- 1 They can be used
- 2 They can not be used
- 3 They can be used under certain conditions
- 4 Don't know

What did critics of Affirmative Action say about the results of this year's college admissions?

- 1 It appeared that the process was conducted fairly
- 2 The schools manipulated the system to get the results they wanted
- 3 Admissions officers took bribes
- 4 Don't know

New Tolls

According to the article, what would be the benefit of paying new tolls on federal roadways?

- 1 The US will conserve more gasoline
- 2 Drivers will receive coupons for local restaurants
- 3 Drivers who pay can ride in the express lane
- 4 Don't know

According to the article, when would tolls most likely be the highest?

- 1 Rush hour
- 2 Mid-day
- 3 On weekends
- 4 Don't know

Why are automobile associations and bus companies now in favor of tolls on new roads?

- 1 Trucks will not be required to pay tolls
- 2 Tolls can now be collected electronically from cars moving at fast speeds
- 3 Hybrid cars will make gasoline more expensive
- 4 Don't know

Who was the first president to veto tolls on federal roadways?

- 1 Bill Clinton
- 2 Theodore Roosevelt
- 3 James Monroe
- 4 Don't know

Gas Prices

According to the article, what may be an outcome of rising gas prices?

- 1 People will move to areas where gas is cheaper
- 2 People will buy cars with better gas mileage
- 3 Demand for gas will fall
- 4 Don't know

What is one reason the article gives for the increase in gas prices?

- 1 Fewer people were purchasing gas
- 2 Demand for gas in Europe has gone up
- 3 Refiners shut down plants between March and May to prepare for summer
- 4 Don't know

According to the article, where are the highest gas prices in the country found?

- 1 San Diego
- 2 New York City
- 3 Chicago
- 4 Don't know

What types of fuels must be used in the summer?

- 1 Coal
- 2 Special, clean burning fuels
- 3 Electricity
- 4 Don't know

Medicare

How many people in the Medicare fee-for-service program have signed up for drug discount cards?

- 1 Less than a million
- 2 About 10 million
- 3 About 50 million

4 Don't know

What political group believes the discount cards will save billions of dollars?

- 1 Democrats
- 2 Libertarians
- 3 Conservatives
- 4 Don't know

According to the article, what do older people need in order to make a good choice about their drug discount card?

- 1 Internet Access
- 2 Advice from a doctor
- 3 A guidebook from the government
- 4 Don't know

According to the article, who will benefit from the drug discount card program?

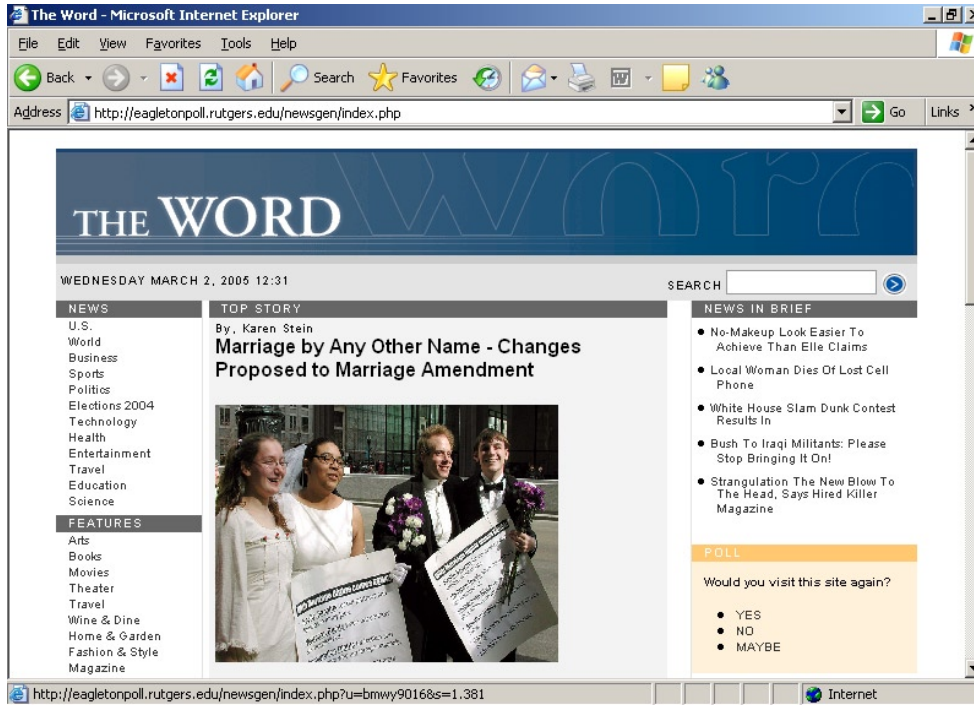
- 1 Doctors
- 2 Wealthy elderly people
- 3 Low-income elderly people
- 4 Don't know

APPENDIX TWO

Control- Standard Text and Design



Condition One- Youth Text, Standard Design



Condition Two- Youth Design, Standard Text



Condition Three- Youth Text and Design



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