



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2010 PROJECT SUMMARY

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Project Title Perception vs. Reality: Is Your Teen Driving You Crazy?	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals Teen auto accidents are among the top killers of teenagers today. Teenagers seem unaware of the reasons why their peers and/or they themselves crash frequently. Whether or not they truly know the top reasons for these accidents is debatable and subjective. This research is attempting to determine if teenagers of different age groups and genders know the top reasons for teen auto accidents.</p> <p>Methods/Materials Research the top ten reasons for teenage auto accidents. Develop a questionnaire complete with directions to collect the following information: subject's gender, subject's top five choices before reading the stories/statistics, and the subject's top five choices after reading the stories/statistics. Randomly select subjects from middle schools, high schools and colleges. Comparisons were made to the chosen five before and after subjects read the stories/statistics.</p> <p>Results Before the participants read the stories and statistics; 22.4% of all participants were able to identify the top five major causes of auto-accident involving teen drivers. After the subjects read the stories and statistics, the number of participants who were able to identify the top five major causes went down to 8.2%. 23.5% of middle school students achieved a perfect score before reading the stories and statistics. After reading, none of the middle school participants managed to get all five correct. Meanwhile, 21.2% of high school students attained a five out of five before reading the stories and statistics while only 16.7% were able to after. 24.4% of females were able to identify the top five causes and 32.7% of males could do the same. After, 11% of females and 3.8% of males achieved 100%.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion As a whole, participants were affected by the stories and statistics. Depending on grade level and gender, subjects were affected differently. All subjects, middle school or high school, male or female, did worse after an educational intervention. This happened because participants changed their reasoning from what they knew through common sense, to whatever type of story or statistic spoke most to them, even though the stories and statistics were unbiased. Thus, correct answers were adjusted through the absorption of new facts to different, perhaps incorrect, answers.</p>	
Summary Statement Teenagers' perceptions of the top reasons for teen auto accidents.	
Help Received Thanks to my family for support, my participants for taking the time to complete my questionnaire, and Mrs. Armstrong for giving me valuable class time to conduct my survey.	