

Trends & TudesSM

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Contents

Young People Dealing With a Real-Life Series of Unfortunate Events.....1-4

Editorial: Our Take On It2-5

Ask A Question5

YouthPulse 2005 Released5

Get Smart!5

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault5

Contact Us5

Young People Dealing With a Real-Life Series of Unfortunate Events

By Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.; Research Manager, Youth and Education Research

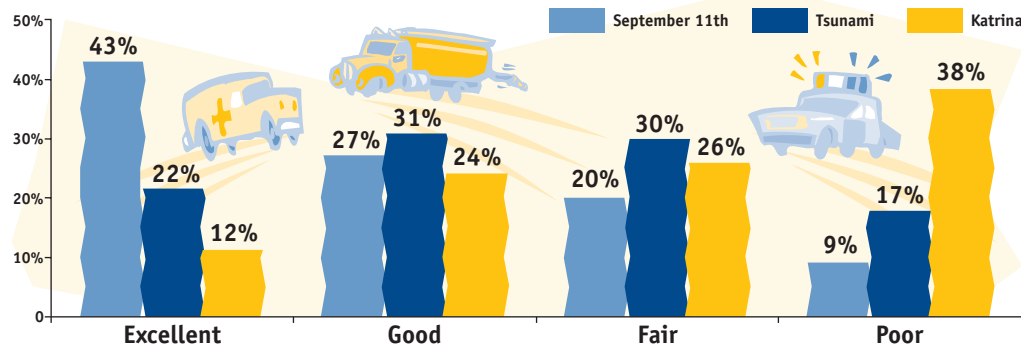
Today's kids and teens have lived through and been witnesses to three major disasters in a relatively short period of time. Following the largest terrorist attack in the U.S. on 9/11, two large-scale natural disasters, the Asian tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, occurred in a short time frame. These catastrophes, and the unprecedented media coverage thereof, have had considerable impact on today's youth. This month's issue of *Trends & Tudes* examines the perceptions of youth following these three tragedies, through three surveys conducted within weeks of the events.

9/11 Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, n=640 (U.S. youth ages 13-18), September 19-24, 2001
 Tsunami Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,251 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), January 19-24, 2005
 Hurricane Katrina Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,556 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), September 14-20, 2005

Government/President Bush

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the U.S. government as a whole, and specifically, President Bush, did not fare well in the eyes of young people. Almost half of American youth (48%) feel that Hurricane Katrina will have a great impact on the U.S. economy. Additionally, more than half of young people (58%) feel the U.S. government should be doing more to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. Not only did they feel the government was not helping enough, only 11% think that the federal government was prepared for a disaster in the area where Hurricane Katrina hit. President Bush's ratings of excellent/good dropped significantly from 9/11 (70%), to the tsunami (53%), and to Hurricane Katrina

How well has President Bush done in handling...?



Note: it is possible that youth may have had more difficulty gauging Bush' response to the tsunami as indicated by the relative lack of differences in the percentage of youth who selected each rating (excellent, good, fair, poor).

Source: 9/11 Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, n=640 (U.S. youth ages 13-18), September 19-24, 2001. Tsunami Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,251 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), January 19-24, 2005. Hurricane Katrina Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,556 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), September 14-20, 2005.

Continued on Page 2

EDITORS

Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.

Research Manager
 Youth and Education Research

Dana Markow, Ph.D.

Senior Director
 Youth and Education Research

Todd Butler

Marketing Manager
 Youth and Education Research



Continued from Page 1

Editorial: Our Take On It

Dana Markow, Ph.D.

Senior Director

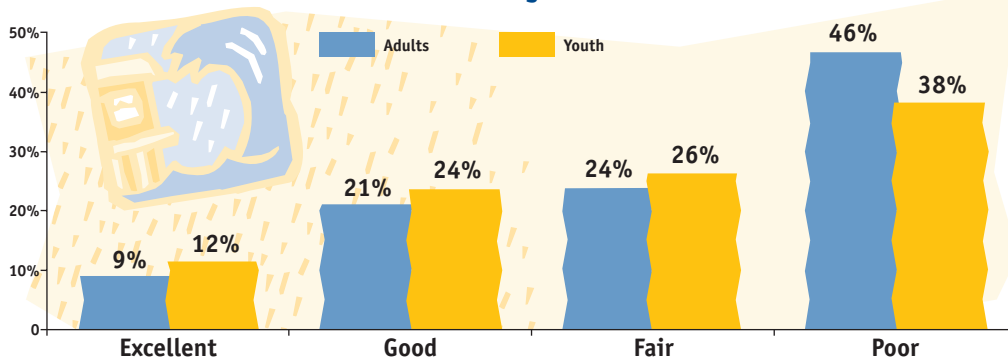
Youth and Education Research

Teachers and schools play an important role when students are confronted with tragedies in the world and in their own community. At such times, teachers and other school staff provide information and help children understand the situation. They also help children through difficult emotional times and alert parents and specialists when a child may need some additional assistance. Perhaps most importantly, schools and teachers are sources of stability for children facing the uncertainties caused by natural and man-made disasters. However, Hurricane Katrina directly affected the stability usually offered by schools. The storm and its aftermath involved unprecedented numbers of students (and teachers) right at the beginning of the school year.

Over 370,000 K-12 students were displaced from schools damaged by Katrina. In addition to these students, even more students from across the country had a direct connection to the storm when Gulf Coast students were placed in their schools. The Department of Education has posted recommendations to teachers, coaches and other school staff, as well as students and parents on how to help students during the crisis (<http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/index.html>). The Department of Health and Human Services also has posted guidelines (<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN-01-0093/default.asp>). Both sites remind teachers and parents to

(36%). Adults¹ were harsher on Bush than the youth were concerning Katrina with 70% giving him a fair/poor rating vs. 64% of youth.

How well has President Bush done in handling Hurricane Katrina?



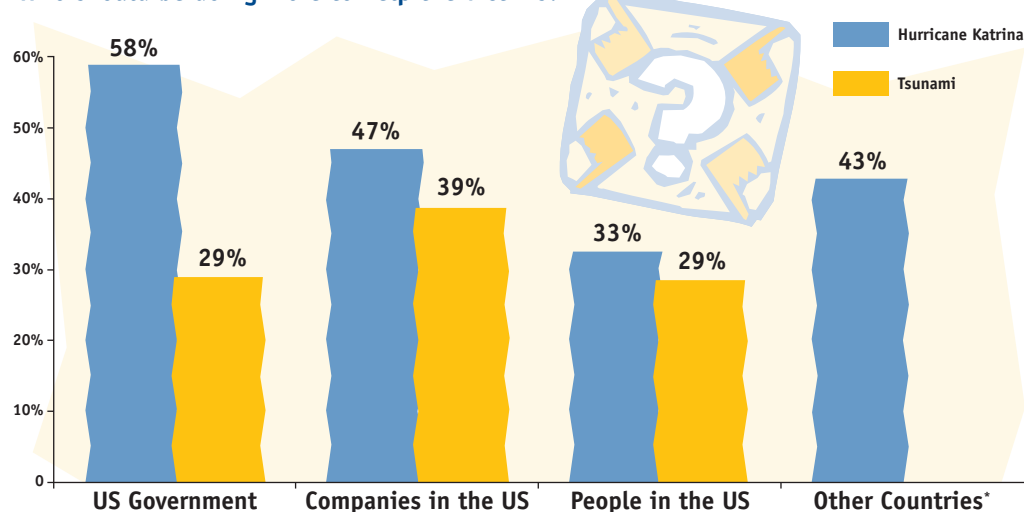
Source: **Adults** The Harris Poll[®], n=2,242, September 6-12, 2005. **Youth** YouthQuerySM, n=1,556 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), September 14-20, 2005

Timeliness and Race

Only about one in every six young people feel that the residents in the area affected by Hurricane Katrina and the resulting flooding received help in a timely manner. A little more than half of young people (54%) agree/strongly agree that rescuers treated the people in the hurricane and flood affected areas equally and the race of the victims did not matter. However, youth perceived racial differences in the timeliness of assistance, with 21% reporting white residents received help sooner than black residents and only 7% believing black residents received help sooner than white residents.

Half of young people (50%), agree/strongly agree that their local communities are doing enough to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. They also believe that the U. S. government (58%), companies in the United States (47%), other countries (43%) and people in the United States (33%) could do more to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

Who should be doing more to help the victims?



*Question not asked in Tsunami Study.

Source: **9/11** Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, n=640 (U.S. youth ages 13-18), September 19-24, 2001. **Tsunami** Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,251 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), January 19-24, 2005. **Hurricane Katrina** Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,556 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), September 14-20, 2005.

¹ The Harris Poll[®] #71, September 15, 2005, http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=601

Continued from Page 2

consider the age of the child. Younger and older children are likely to react in different ways to the disaster and will need different types of support. Children may experience stress or trauma based on their personal experiences or merely from seeing the events on television. The potential reactions cover a wide range, closely-tied to the age of the child. Younger children may withdraw from school or play, or even become aggressive. Older children may show signs of difficulty concentrating, have physical complaints or experiment with high-risk behaviors such as drinking or drug abuse. Although older students may want and request more details about the situation, too much exposure to news reports can be harmful for younger students and thus adults should limit students' television exposure to disaster-related events.

Several suggestions are offered to help students deal with the crisis. Teachers are encouraged to look for ways in which students can help others. Those in need will benefit, as well as those providing assistance. Students can help via volunteer work or fundraising. Such group activities can foster a feeling of connectedness. For those displaced by Katrina, this can also include helping their parents with chores, since students may feel better by helping others. Displaced students are also encouraged to join youth groups in their new neighborhoods (such as the Boy Scouts®, Girl Scouts® or 4-H). Our YouthQuerySM survey results indicate that many students donated money or materials or collected money from others to support relief efforts for Katrina and the Asian tsunami. Many of these efforts may build upon students' previous connections with

Continued on Page 4

Continued from Page 2

The Future of New Orleans

Less than half of youth (48%) agree/strongly agree that New Orleans should be rebuilt as a major city; however, 70% think New Orleans will eventually recover from the effects of the hurricane and flood. Personal relevance plays a role when responses are looked at regionally – those living in the South strongly agree that New Orleans should be rebuilt 50% more frequently than those living in the West (21% vs. 14%).

Disaster Media Coverage Youth were more likely to follow Hurricane Katrina news very/somewhat closely (73%) than coverage of the tsunami (67%). Television (76%) and the Internet (6%) were the prime media of choice for information after Katrina. For Katrina, youth relied almost 10 percentage points more on information from the television than they did for the tsunami (76% vs. 67%). Post-disaster use of the Internet for information gathering also differed. After Katrina, only six percent relied on the internet most for information while after the tsunami twice that, 12%, relied on the internet most for information. The capacity of television to humanize information may have made Katrina feel more personally relevant than information found on the internet about the tsunami.



Family Discussions and Youth Reactions

Tragedies within the US spur different levels of understanding, discussions and behaviors. Youth are more likely to evaluate parents, teachers, and clergy as good/excellent help for understanding and dealing with the tragedy if the tragedy was on U.S. soil (9/11 and Hurricane Katrina) than if it was in another country. Additionally, more discussion of the tragedy occurs in the home with parents: 69% discussed the tsunami with parents compared to 81% after Hurricane Katrina. This could, in part, be due to how concerned youth are with the possibility that such a tragedy could take place again. After both 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, 12% of youth were extremely worried another event like this would take place while only seven percent were extremely worried after the tsunami.

This suggests that adults, like children, are likely to focus more on personally relevant and easily imaginable events.

Youth post-disaster behaviors varied between the tsunami and Katrina. Though all responses generally increased from tsunami to Katrina, the more “personal” behaviors increased the greatest. These included praying (45% vs. 54%) and donating supplies (11% vs. 32%) and money (33% vs. 42%) to the effort.



Continued from Page 3

volunteering or group organizations. A Harris Interactive survey on Civic Engagement conducted on behalf of Do Something in the summer of 2001 indicated that more than half (56%) of seventh to 12th graders in the U.S. had volunteered in the past year. The survey revealed that students viewed volunteering as the best way to make a difference in their community, more so than donating or raising money.

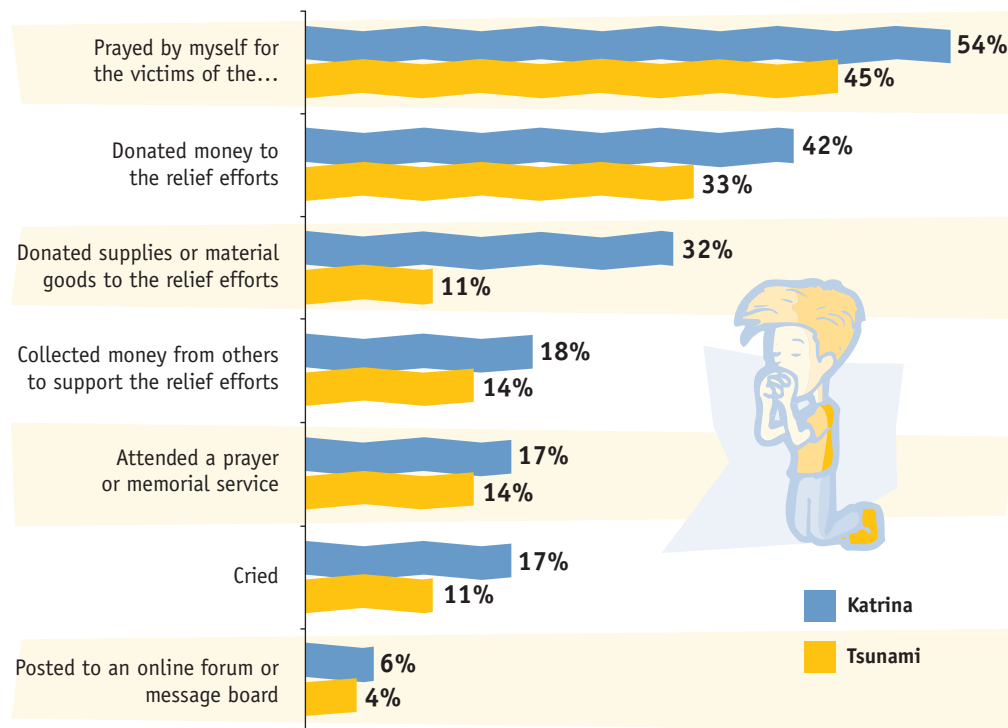
As noted previously, experts recommend volunteering as a way for children to remedy feelings of helplessness during times of crisis. But the benefits of such activities go beyond short-term crisis intervention, particularly if these activities are well-structured. The report, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being (1999)*, cites studies which show that students who regularly participate in volunteer activities have higher levels of civic development and are more confident in their abilities to make a difference. The report also found that participation in volunteer activities among high school students had increased between 1996 and 1999, from 50% to 55%.

Many of these volunteer or service activities are conducted as part of school. Our 2001 survey on behalf of Do Something revealed that 27% of seventh to 12th graders attended schools that required students to volunteer or do community service. An additional 34% of students did not have such a requirement, but supported it for their school. Similar levels of school requirements for community service were found in a survey of college freshmen.² Students who attended private schools were more likely than

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 3

Which of the following have you done as a result of...?



Source: 9/11 Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM, n=640 (U.S. youth ages 13-18), September 19-24, 2001. Tsunami Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,251 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), January 19-24, 2005. Hurricane Katrina Harris Interactive YouthQuery, n=1,556 (U.S. youth ages 8-18), September 14-20, 2005.

The young people of America view the tragedies that occurred in the United States quite differently than the tsunami that occurred abroad. Tragedies on U.S. soil are different in large part because they are far more personal. The U.S. victims looked like us, talked like us, wore clothing like us and in both Katrina and 9/11 we even heard stories about their pets falling victim to the tragedies. Moreover, our media celebrities were shown on TV to be literally standing in the midst of the tragedy. In contrast, the tsunami victims were different than most Americans: they look different, speak other languages, wear “strange” clothing and live in different kinds of homes. The media coverage of the tsunami was distant, less saturating and didn’t include many of the usual “big story” newscasters on the site of the tragedy.

Differences in youth response could also be related to the type of natural disaster, and youths’ understandings of a tsunami vs. a hurricane. Technically, youth can be taught the differences between a tsunami and a hurricane, but it’s far easier for Americans to understand what a big rain storm, strong winds, and flooding look like than a huge highly destructive wave. When it comes to grasping what a tsunami could really mean to someone in the United States, it would be far more difficult to personalize for most Americans. Imagining that a hurricane could “happen to me” is much easier than imagining the same for a tsunami. In other words, the probability of a tsunami occurring in the United States is very slim and limited to small areas. All in all the sheer probability of these disastrous events occurring to people like U.S. youth greatly determines their reactions and behaviors.

Continued from Page 4

public school students to have had such a requirement. Community service programs in schools can vary greatly. Some schools incorporate *service-learning*, curriculum-based community service that integrates classroom instruction with community service. High-quality service-learning programs have been linked to positive outcomes such as intention to vote and school enjoyment.³

What will be the impact of students' experiences with volunteering and fundraising related to Hurricane Katrina? Only time will tell. The cited studies on civic engagement indicate that the quality and the structure of these activities are important. One-time participation is probably not enough to have long term effects. However, for some students, it may spark an interest that they pursue even after the immediate crisis has passed and the news reports have moved on to the next major event.

² Vogelgesan, Lori J. (2005) Bridging from High School to College: Findings from the 2004 CIRP Freshman Survey, Growing to Greatness 2005.

³ Billig, S, Root, S., and Jesse, D. (2005). The Impact of Participation in Service-Learning on High School Students' Civic Engagement. Circle Working Paper 33.

For more information, please contact us at:

877.919.4765

or visit our website at

www.harrisinteractive.com

Media inquiries, contact:

Kelly Gullo 585.214.7172

kgullo@harrisinteractive.com

Nancy Wong 585.214.7316

nwong@harrisinteractive.com

Ask a Question...

And get some answers. Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuerySM youth omnibus. Just send us an email (HI_youth_research@harrisinteractive.net) with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of the newsletter. YouthQuery is your chance to ask one or a series of questions of 1,100 young consumers nationwide, and get accurate, projectable answers within days. To learn more about YouthQuery, contact us.



It's 8 a.m.—do you know what American kids are doing?

YouthPulseSM 2005 Released

You need to know almost as much about the youth market as you would if they were all your own children. How they spend their time, how they spend their money, their hopes, fears and aspirations and which parts of the kid experience are totally different today than they were a decade—or even a year—ago. YouthPulseSM is the only study covering these topics and hundreds of others for kids from age 8 to 21, and the 2005 study has just been released. To learn more about YouthPulse, contact us.

Get Smart!

Did you know that Harris Interactive conducts up to five free webinars a month? Spanning a variety of business issues facing a handful of industries, these one-hour interactive sessions allow you to catch up on the latest research advancement, proprietary industry findings, and best practices. Register for one or more sessions at <http://harrisinteractive.webex.com>. Visit often as our schedule changes weekly.

Trends & Tudes Poll Vault

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