A Study of the Relationship Between Current Event Knowledge and the Ability to Construct a Mental Map of the World

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis studied the relationship between current event knowledge and the ability to construct a mental map of the world. It was hypothesized that participates with more current event knowledge would demonstrate better mental mapping abilities. The study was designed using two activities recommended for 12th graders by *Geography for Life, National Geography Standards 1994*, and the theory of spatial familiarity (Kitchen, 1994b; Gale et al., 1990, Golledge & Spector, 1978). One hundred and twenty-eight students drawn from two courses offered at Virginia Tech completed a participant profile questionnaire, a current event quiz, drew a map of the world outlining the seven continents, and located and labeled 27 cities on a world map. Using ATLAS GIS the sketch maps and place locations were digitally transformed and scored for accuracy. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze current event knowledge, place location ability, and sketch mapping ability. Using Spearman rank correlation, the relationship between current event knowledge and mental mapping abilities was assessed at a number of levels. Results indicate that participants with a stronger understanding of current events tended to create a more accurate mental map of the world. That is, place location accuracy and drawing accuracy correlated with current event knowledge. However, similar to previous research (Cross, 1987; Helgren, 1983; Muller, 1985) place location knowledge outside of North America and Western Europe was poor. The results of this thesis offer baseline data that can be used for future research to study the effectiveness of the national standards set forth in *Geography for Life.*

To

My Mother

&

Mr. Jones
(1933-1998)

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