Are you a part of a... Lost Generation?

Group Two
I am part of a lost generation
and I refuse to believe that
I can change the world
I realize this may be a shock but
“Happiness comes from within.”
is a lie, and
“Money will make me happy.”
So in 30 years I will tell my children
they are not the most important thing in my life
My employer will know that
I have my priorities straight because
work
is more important than
family
I tell you this
Once upon a time

Families stayed together
but this will not be true in my era
This is a quick fix society
Experts tell me
30 years from now, I will be celebrating the
10th anniversary of my divorce
I do not concede that
I will live in a country of my own making
In the future
Environmental destruction will be the norm
No longer can it be said that
My peers and I care about this earth
It will be evident that
My generation is apathetic and lethargic
It is foolish to presume that
There is hope.

"Lost Generation" by Jonathan Reed
Background

• Author - Jonathan Reed, a recently graduated college student from Georgia State University
• Title - "Lost Generation"
• Synopsis - The poem was written describing Reed's vision of the future when he turned 50. It was done for an AARP's at 50 contest. Read top to bottom the world is seen as a depressive and unpleasant place. Read from bottom to top the world is cast in a more positive light.
• When reading multiple pieces of work or variations of the same text, individuals have a more meaningful response to what they read last.
Hypothesis

The group that reads the poem forward-then-backward (negative, then positive) will react more positively than the group that reads the poem in reverse order (positive, then negative).
Materials

• Poem (Lost Generation)
  ○ Both A and B Forms
• Mood Survey
• Markers
• Big 5 Personality Survey
• Google Spreadsheet
Methods

1. Print copies of poem
   - Forms A (original version) and B (reversed version)

2. Give subjects “Big 5” personality survey
   - (used as a control element in the experiment)

3. Hand subjects poem and mood survey
   - Hand half Form A and half Form B
   - 10 positive moods and 10 negative moods on a 1-to-5 scale
Mood Survey Instrument

Please rate these emotions based on how strongly you are feeling them right now.

Please rate each emotion from 1-5, where 1 = “very slightly or not at all” and 5 = “extremely.”

1. ___ distressed
2. ___ interested
3. ___ upset
4. ___ excited
5. ___ strong
6. ___ hostile
7. ___ proud
8. ___ guilty
9. ___ alert
10. ___ hopeful
11. ___ enthusiastic
12. ___ ashamed
13. ___ afraid
14. ___ inspired
15. ___ irritable
16. ___ doubtful
17. ___ active
18. ___ scared
19. ___ nervous
20. ___ determined
Methods (cont.)

5. Collect mood surveys
6. Input data from mood surveys in Excel
7. Analyze data to observe trends and determine whether or not our hypothesis is correct
# Results (Big 5 Personality Test)

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*In the raw data, the results of subject number 11 were disregarded because of his incorrect completion of the Mood Survey, although it was factored in to the advanced results.*
## Advanced Results (Mood Survey)

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Discussion of Results

Participants were more likely to feel negative emotions when reading the poem in reverse

- However, we are unable to tell whether it was an increase in positive emotions from the original poem or an increase in negative emotions from the reversed version.

“Big 5” survey served as an effective control

- "The reversed poem still led to more negative emotions above and beyond the participants’ narcissism" — GRC comment
Discussion

We can conclude that participants who read the “Lost Generation” poem in a reversed order had a stronger negative response than those who read it in chronological order, proving the inverse of our hypothesis to be true.

From our results, it is clear that the order a reader is presented with information within a piece of literature is important, and that if the order is changed, so is the reader's overall impression.

However, we cannot determine if there is a direct correlation between how you read the poem and how negative a participant's response becomes.
Evaluation: Experimental Limitations

1. Lack of proper sample size \((N<30)\)
2. Response Bias (people taking surveys tend to answer in ways that make them appear "desirable")
3. Not a truly random sample (all respondents were college students)
4. The giving of food and coffee made subjects happy before the survey was taken, possibly influencing responses
5. Subjects may have not taken the survey seriously
6. Subjects may have been overly happy because they weren't technically in class
7. Subjects were previously engaged in a separate survey that may have influenced their responses
8. Survey conducted the day before Thanksgiving Break
9. It's rather challenging to describe your mood in quantitative terms
Conclusion

• From our results negative emotions appear to have a larger impact on an individual and appear to be easier to distinguish.
  
  o This is further supported by most studies conducted in psychology, which tend to focus on negative emotions due to the belief that they are stronger and more impactful. Only recently have psychologists made a move to looking at “positive psychology.”
Further Questions

Our findings led to the following questions:

- Could our results have been amplified if we had only given respondents one form of the poem, rather than both forms in different orders?
- Because participants were more affected by reading the reverse version, do sad pieces of literature, or sad stories in general, affect human mood more powerfully than positive ones?
- Why did the “sadder” reading experience not significantly affect happiness levels as well as negative mood indicators? Do we take some pleasure from experiencing sad stories?
For Further Research

• Decrease the limitations
  o Larger, more random sample, etc.
• Give the groups Text A or Text B only, rather than asking them to read both positive and negative versions
• Give different texts that are more extreme both positively and negatively
• Try the same experiment through different forms of media (film, music, etc.)