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The uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas

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THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF THE WORLD WIDE WEB AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA-LAS VEGAS

by

Peter P. Testa

Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2001

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies
Hank Greenspun Department of Communication
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs**

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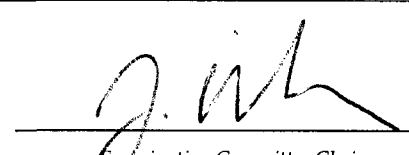
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The Uses and Gratifications of the World Wide Web

at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of


Master of Arts in Communication Studies


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ABSTRACT

The Uses and Gratifications of the World Wide Web at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas

by

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This study extends the uses and gratifications theory to the World Wide Web. Studies like these examine what the Web is used for, and what needs are gratified by using the Web. One hundred thirty college students at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas were surveyed on media and Web usage and gratifications. This study introduces the factors of self-perception of residency and of traditional vs. non-traditional student as influences on Web usage and gratifications for college students.

Loneliness was deemed a significant factor for students who did not consider themselves Las Vegas residents. Students who do not consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents used the Web more for surveillance than those who did consider themselves Las Vegas residents. This study is a starting point of two variables of self-perception of residency and self-perception of traditional vs. non-traditional students in studying their Web usage and gratifications.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A brief introduction is presented in the following chapter. In the chapter, there is a rationale for why the World Wide Web is chosen as the medium of study, an explanation of why the uses and gratifications theory is utilized, and a discussion of the factors that are unique to this study. Those factors are the self-perception of residency and the self-perception of traditional vs. non. traditional student.

Researching the World Wide Web

The World Wide Web is “a system by which information on many computers can be rapidly and conveniently accessed by many other computers. Currently, the Web uses the metaphor of the *page*, and users can move from one page to a different page by merely clicking a mouse on a highlighted word or spot on a page” (Severin and Tankard Jr, p. 7, 2001). The Web is used by many people every day of their lives. When doing a search on the search engine google.com for key words “web sites”, 6,8200,000 sites were returned as hits (google.com, 2003). Attention to web sites is usually measured in terms of hits, or the number of times the site is accessed by a user (Severin and Tankard Jr., 2001). Since there are nearly seven million hits, it is a safe assumption that many people are on the World Wide Web. Since so many people use the World Wide Web and there is such a large volume of web sites, the Web is a telecommunication medium that needs

to be studied and explored in great detail. Before studying and exploring the World Wide Web in great detail, three questions must be asked. Firstly, a researcher must ask what the users are using the World Wide Web for. The Web exists as a medium for social communication as an information source, and as an entertainment outlet. Obviously each user may see the Web as a different medium based on their own individual needs. For one person, the Web might be a way to e-mail family that the person is far away from. For another person, the Web might be going into a chatroom to talk about last night's baseball game. Defining the different uses of the medium is a basic tenet in studying telecommunication because in defining the different uses of the medium, researchers can learn more about people's communication tendencies and habits.

Secondly, the researcher must ask what the users are getting out of using the World Wide Web. Obviously, there are reasons why the people use the medium and there is some feeling that the users are getting from that medium. These feelings or gratifications are the reasons that users keep coming back to the medium. Without these feelings, there would be no reason for the user to keep coming back to the medium. Exploring the boundaries of these feelings is also a basic tenet in studying telecommunication because researchers can then learn what people are getting out of using the medium. By learning what people are getting out of using the medium, researchers can predict why users use the medium.

Thirdly, the researcher must ask if there are meaningful subdivisions from within the population of users that will cause differences in the Web usage and gratifications. There are many differences from within our society that cause people to act differently than one another. Perspective and perception differ between individuals. Discovering these

differences in individuals is yet another basic tenet in studying communication, and these tenets are why the Web is now a viable telecommunication medium to be studied.

Selection of Uses and Gratifications as Theory

Uses and gratifications theory works well across media because it asks what purpose and why the users use the media. The history of the uses and gratifications theory dates back to the early 1940s when Herzog (1944) studied the gratifications received from romantic radio soap operas. Rayburn (1996) shows the wide scope of uses and gratifications research from children's use of home VCRs by Cohen, Levy, and Golden (1998) to Jamaican radio call-in shows by Surlin (1986). This wide scope has recently extended to include studies on the Internet (Charney, 1996, Angleman, 2000; Atkins, Jeffres, and Neuendorf, 1998) and the World Wide Web (Ebersole, 2000; Hunter, 2001).

In addition to the wide scope of uses and gratifications research, there was also a great deal of personal interest in finding out what UNLV students use the Web for and what they get out of it. Uses and gratifications theory was directly applicable to studying my own personal interest. It was directly applicable to my topic of exploring how and why students used the World Wide Web. It was logical to explore uses and gratifications theory as the theory that would be applied during this research.

Researching this topic is an extension of older research done by uses and gratifications researchers. This is key because without previous research providing the building blocks for new research, new research could not be undertaken. Therefore, it is necessary to do good and responsible research on this topic to find out what the Web is used for and what people get out of it to provide even more building blocks for future research.

Having stated that, there are several different extensions that are made during this paper. Firstly, there is the extension the uses and gratifications theory from traditional media sources to the World Wide Web. Secondly, there is the extension of the theory to studying the divisions from within the student population of non-traditional vs. traditional students and also longtime Las Vegas native vs. new Las Vegas resident.

The Culture Factor

It is important to study the uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web from within the culture of Las Vegas because it links intercultural communication to mass communication. There is a separate culture of Las Vegas residents between those who consider themselves Las Vegas residents and those who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents (Martinez, 1999). Self-perception of residency is critical to this study because a resident may consider himself or herself a resident after 6 months in the city, or a resident may never consider himself or herself a resident of this city. In clarification, while a person may live in Las Vegas, they may not necessarily consider themselves a member of the community. These people must adjust to living in Las Vegas fairly quickly. Since the World Wide Web is regarded as a viable telecommunication medium, this new segment of the population may use the medium more than those who have established community roots from living here for a longer period of time. Since these people who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents may use the World Wide Web in an effort to assimilate themselves into the new culture of Las Vegas, it is intriguing to explore and possibly understand how these members of the population are using this new medium of the Web. For example, how much are these new residents using the Web to communicate with members of their family that may be in another city?

This thesis is an attempt to extend a traditional mass communication theory to explain how users use a mass medium to cope with life in a new culture.

Continuing forward, if these new Las Vegas residents are going to be using the World Wide Web as a way to assimilate themselves into the Las Vegas culture, perhaps, these new residents are receiving different types of gratifications from using the Web. These new residents may use the Web as a way to maintain social contacts at their native home. Perhaps, these new residents use the Web for entertainment purposes. These gratifications may be entirely different than those people who have lived in Las Vegas for a long time.

In other words, is self-perception of residency a factor in determining how people use the Web and what they get out of it? While the Web usage and gratifications may differ for the two different segments of the population in Las Vegas, it does not necessarily mean that it would be the same for every city. Since every city is unique in its own way, this study may not be the case in every city. Perhaps, these results will not be generalizable to every city and every university. But, this study will provide a perspective on whether residency is a factor in the uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web.

Since the study will be conducted in Las Vegas, it will provide a look at what types of web sites UNLV students are clicking on in their quest for information. This study then can help UNLV professors to shape their syllabi in a way that includes the World Wide Web as a constructive learning tool to enhance their traditional curriculum. Thus, the World Wide Web would provide an alternative learning source that is different from the usual options of books, papers, and magazines. Also, UNLV students will be able to come together on the World Wide Web to form study groups via e-mail, post on message

boards, and develop social networks. Finally, UNLV administrators will be able to get a glimpse of what kind of students are attending the university and what kinds of activities they partake in when surfing the Web.

The Non-Traditional Factor

The uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web may differ for traditional and non-traditional students. There are many studies done on non-traditional students (Bowl, 2001; Ntiri, 2001), but there were no studies that used this theory with a focus on the traditional vs. non-traditional factor and this topic. Typically, non-traditional students are older students with children or full-time jobs. These students may be using the Web differently than traditional students who would be younger with no children, a part-time job or no job. The non-traditional students may and probably will have different priorities than the traditional student when it comes to using the World Wide Web. The question would be how their own life situation affects their Web usage and gratifications.

In order to give the respondents their own voice in answering the survey, the students were asked if they considered themselves traditional or non-traditional. Therefore, self-perception of traditional or non-traditional status played a role in this survey. For this study's purposes, the important factor was whether the student considered himself or herself to be a non-traditional student, not whether they actually fit the description of traditional vs. non-traditional status as one or the other.

According to the UNLV web site, 25% of all students can be considered non-traditional (UNLV, Unpaginated, 2003). Since there is little or no work done in this area of traditional versus non-traditional students and the World Wide Web, a sizable segment

of the population may be overlooked when thinking about the uses and gratifications of students that use the World Wide Web. Focusing on this factor may give these students a voice that was previously overlooked regarding this topic.

Since I will be examining both traditional and non-traditional students, this study may be useful for education majors looking to gain a better understanding for the more unique students that they may face as they become educators. Also, this study may be useful for current educators who want to see the contrast in these two divisions of students when it comes to using the World Wide Web. This study may also be useful for education administrators looking to provide a more inclusive curriculum for non-traditional students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History and Key Points of Uses and Gratifications Theory

The uses and gratifications approach was first introduced by Elihu Katz when he first twisted the question of "What did the media do to the people?" into "What do people do with the media?" Katz (1959) hypothesized that the communication field could only advance itself if it shifted its focus from the media's effects on people to the people's usage of the media. Before Katz's hypothesis was proposed, many studies assumed that the message was just like a bullet and the effects of media consumption would be the same for each media user. Katz's hypothesis questioned this "magic bullet" assumption and urged communication researchers to study the individual needs, uses, and gratifications of each media consumer. Individual differences can be a constraint on studying media effects (Rosengreen, 1974), however, overlooking individual differences would be a symptom of poor research.

Media users get different types of gratifications from using different types of media. In support of the above statement, Berelson (1959) write of the different gratifications that people get from using media when he surveyed newspaper readers who were deprived of this activity due to a newspaper delivery strike. The readers were forced alternate news sources during this strike and missed the gratifications that they received from reading the newspaper (Berelson, p. I, 1959). However, the different gratifications

were not studied until much later.

In addition to the uses and gratifications approach enabling researchers to study the individual needs, uses, and gratifications of each media consumer, the approach urges researchers to consider consumers as active participants rather than passive bodies. Rubin (1994) writes, "Uses and gratifications approach sees a medium or message as a source of influence within the context of other possible influence. It sees media audiences as variably active communicators, rather than passive recipients of a message" (pp. 525-526). According to Rubin (1994), the active nature of the audience is a concept that cannot be stressed strongly enough. Rubin (1994) also noted that the approach is individualistic rather than mechanistic.

Uses and gratifications research is a subdivision of media effects research. Thus, in order to explain media effects, "we must first understand the characteristics, motivation, selectivity, and involvement of audience members" (Rubin, pp. 525-526, 1994). Rubin (1994) suggests that understanding the characteristics, motivation, selectivity, and involvement of audience members will give researchers a better perspective of what draws people to telecommunication. It needs to be understood that this type of research focuses on the psychological aspects of individual choices. For instance, why would someone want to watch "Roseanne" at 9 pm rather than listening to the Yankees game on radio? Is it because they find that they get more entertainment out of the comedy show than they would out of a baseball game? It is that individual choice that would be dissected if a researcher were to survey that particular person

Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch (1974) outlined seven categories that uses and gratifications research should focus on. They are "(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5)

differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones” (p. 20). These categories are also known as part of the Process Model. In using the Process model, the importance of considering the social and psychological processes behind communication is stressed (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974).

Based on these seven categories, Rubin (1994) writes of five assumptions that a modern view of uses and gratifications is thereby grounded in. The first assumption is that communication behavior is goal-directed, individualistic, and unique for everyone. By this, he means that people make their own individual choices on what media they will consume. Just because a 30-year old man from Oklahoma watches “Cops” every Monday night does not mean another 30-year old man in the same city in Oklahoma will watch the same program.

The second assumption is that people initiate their own selection of media (Rubin, 1994). Consumers do this by turning on a television and changing the channel or even flicking on the car radio. People select media based on their own needs and desires (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, p. 164, 1973). This point seems psychological in nature, but it is also quite realistic. What person is going to watch or listen to something that does not fulfill either a need or a desire? A person would not view or listen to media that did not fulfill a desire or a need, unless they were under some sort of duress, or were not in charge of the situation, or were unaware of their surroundings.

The third assumption is that “a host of social and psychological factors guide, filter, or mediate communication behavior. Our predispositions, the environment in which we live, and our interpersonal interactions shape our expectations about the media and media

content” (Rubin, p. 528, 1994). This is another vital concept especially for this project because it is here that the point is first stated that the environment people live in (in this case, Las Vegas, and UNLV) will affect how they use media especially the World Wide Web and what they get out of using the Web. There are environmental factors at work that influence how society communicates. Thus, media users live in this society and are influenced by these factors. The intersection between cultural factors and how people use media becomes even more apparent.

The fourth point states that the media compete with other communication forms for an individual’s attention (Rubin, 1994). For instance, the television competes with talking to our parents interpersonally around the kitchen table for our attention as we try to seek out gratifications in everyday life. Theoretically, new media could displace traditional media if it were determined to have a functional advantage over the older media (Atkin, Jeffres, & Neuendorf, 1998). This issue addresses the issue of media adoption. What determines what media is adapted by the mainstream audience? The audience does by shaping the technology and using it to fit its needs.

The fifth assumption is that people are generally more affective in transmitting messages to other people than the media is in transmitting messages to people, but not always (Rubin, 1994). For instance, one is more likely to believe an event that is told to them in person that they can actually see rather than one that is broadcast over television or radio. This assumption provides the foundation for the idea that people will have their own community systems in place that may take the place of mass media. These assumptions guide every uses and gratifications researcher through their research. Following these assumptions will be one of the first steps in maintaining good and responsible research.

Defining The Gratification Categories

Users make media choices in order to gratify a number of needs. Underwood (2000) agrees, “The choices which people make are motivated by the desire to satisfy (or 'gratify') a range of needs. Hence the uses and gratifications approach is concerned to identify how people *use* the media to *gratify* their needs” (CCMS Website, 2000). Therefore, if a researcher is going to be talking about what gratifications a person gets from using media, it makes sense to talk about what kind of gratifications there are. Those categories are the following: Entertainment/Escape, Social Cohesion, Surveillance of their Environment, and Personal Reasons (McQuail, 1974)

This is relevant to my research because it provided a framework for my survey data to be analyzed. Certain parts of the gratifications section of my survey will be coded as either Entertainment/Escape, Social Cohesion, Surveillance of Environment, and Personal Reasons. When the reader reads my Methods chapter, the reader will be able to get a better understanding about my reasoning behind the coding scheme. Please see Figure 1.2 to see how gratifications were coded in this survey.

Entertainment is a key gratification that people seek (McQuail, 1974). People use entertainment to divert them away from the problems that they have in their own lives. Thus, they are using media as their own shield from their problems. Also, people use media because it produces some kind of physiological arousal (McQuail, 1974). For example, a comedy show on the radio makes the viewers laugh. A romance movie might make the viewers cry. A good sporting event on the television makes the viewers stand up and cheer. All are producing some kind of physiological reaction within the viewers that are viewing the program.

Social cohesion is the act of maintaining social networks within our environment (McQuail, 1974). No one man is an island unto himself. There is a societal system in place that requires people to be somewhat social in their lives. There are families, friends, acquaintances, and strangers in the lives of every person. While the quality and quantity of these relationships may differ between individuals, these relationships do affect how we use media. People use media to maintain social networks. They use the telephone to call one another. They read books with the intention of discussing the book with the members of a book club. Relating to my topic, people use the World Wide Web to keep in contact with one another via e-mail. Obviously, social cohesion is a key gratification category.

According to Underwood, surveillance “means the need to find out what's going on in the world around us” (CCMS Website, 2000). This is also known as protecting ourselves against the unknown. It fulfills our need for security in this world since the unknown can be dangerous. If we know a lot of the world around us, we can be valuable to people as information sources and we can be secure in our own personal future. There is a need for surveillance to make our world safer for ourselves as a defense against the unknown when we socialize in our lives. These knowledge needs are obviously satisfied by consuming information from radio, television, newspapers, magazines, the World Wide Web, and books. It is noteworthy to mention that even entertainment programs have surveillance aspects to them. For instance, watching “E.R.” on Thursday nights will give a viewer the schematic framework on how emergency rooms are structured and how they operate in our society. Viewers of “E.R.” on Thursday nights will be sharing a part of their own “worlds” with each other. It allows them to do surveillance on each other’s world, often times subconsciously without actually thinking about those other viewers.

Sometimes, consumers use media to justify personal beliefs (McQuail, 1974). This is known as the Personal Reasons gratification category. For example, if I am for the war in Iraq, I am going to try to find information that supports my position, rather than reading things that will discourage me from my beliefs. Consumers will seek knowledge that will please them or get them closer to a goal. For example, in researching for this paper, it would do me absolutely no good to find online research on gorillas in the West African jungles. That would not be a wise usage of time. It would be a much better idea to keep finding research on uses and gratifications, because that is my topic. Some users might want to visit a particular site or visit a site focused on a certain type of information. Therefore, at certain times, gratifications may be guided by personal reasons that are unique to every user.

Studying Telecommunication & Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory has “always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio and television, and now the Internet” (Ruggiero, p. 3, 2000). It has provided this cutting-edge approach because the theory is versatile and broad. However, the versatility and broadness of the theory is not considered a positive at all times. Because of the versatility and the broadness of the theory, the theory is seen as having a vague conceptual framework (Swanson, 1977). Uses and gratifications researchers have sought to answer this criticism by providing “stability and consistency of responses via test-retest reliability of viewing-motive items and convergent validity of the motive scales” (Rubin, p. 531, 1996). Thus, it is the responsibility of the researcher to test the data continuously while being logical and thoughtful in analyzing the results.

Uses and gratifications theory has been successful in studying emerging telecommunication media because the researcher is allowed to focus on one particular feature or as many of the new features of the new media. For example, uses and gratifications theory had success in studying television because it allowed researchers to ask how the viewer felt when he or she was able to see images while hearing them as well. Prior to television, media users could only hear programs on the radio. Once television became a mainstream mass media, media users had another sense - the sense of sight - that they could use to absorb media. Using this theory to study the World Wide Web is interesting because the Web is interactive media. Users actually have to participate in Web browsing, in order to get the full affect of using the Web as a media source.

Because uses and gratifications theory has such a long history, it would be impossible to delve fully into all of the studies that were done in this literature review. Nonetheless, the idea is to give users a sketch of how the theory has been used to study three popular telecommunication mediums of radio, television, and the Internet.

Radio and the Uses and Gratifications Theory

Several classic studies employ the uses and gratifications approach with regards to radio (Cantril, 1940; Cantril, 1942; Cantril and Allport, 1935; Herzog, 1944; Mendelsohn, 1964). Ever since Marconi invented the radio in 1896, researchers have been interested to find out what draws people to listen to the radio. As “new” media like television began to emerge, one would think that television would displace the radio since television allows for the senses of sight and hearing. However, radio still remained a very popular medium.

Uses and gratifications research started with radio because it was the first mass telecommunication medium. In other words, radio was the first medium that broadcasted to the world (Mendelsohn, 1964). Researchers were interested in studying radio because it was the first medium that gave them the opportunity for a large uniform sample. For example, if a researcher wanted to study AM radio in Detroit, Michigan on Friday May 3rd, the researcher could do surveys of Detroit residents who listened to a particular AM radio station on that date. Since the radio station would be broadcasting the same program in the Detroit area, the researcher would be sure that the survey respondents would have the experience of listening to the same radio program.

The very beginning of uses and gratifications research lies in the medium of radio. Radio soap operas and the female response towards these soap operas were studied by Herta Herzog (1944). Herzog (1944) concluded that the women derived three different gratifications of “experiencing emotional release, engaging in wishful thinking, and obtaining advice” (p. 44) from listening to the soap operas. This was an important event in the subject of uses and gratifications because it was the first time anyone ever tried to define the level of satisfaction derived from the usage of media (Eighmey, 1997). He writes, “Herzog used the term ‘gratifications’ to describe the specific types or dimensions of satisfaction reported by audience members for daytime radio programs” (p. 60, 1997). Clearly, radio has been a very important medium in the development of the uses and gratifications research.

The uses and gratifications model even affects radio programming in a rather direct way. If a radio show is successful, it will draw higher advertising rates because of the opportunity to advertise to many viewers. Often, radio programmers will use this basic premise to determine programming solely based on popularity. I people are deriving a lot

of gratification from the program, it will have a great deal of popularity and thus garner good advertising rates and generate more revenue for the radio station. Wicks argues that:

The uses and gratifications model is useful in explaining the dramatic increase in radio and television talk shows over the years. Many of these programs are informative or entertaining. Some provide reassurance that the personal circumstances of an individual are not as bad as they may appear. Some reinforce attitudes and beliefs (p. 145, 2001).

Uses and gratifications still plays a role in radio programming today.

This relates to my research because it provides a foundation for where uses and gratifications research. A researcher can explore how the theory has changed throughout the many different mediums over time, but he or she would not be able to do that without radio as a starting point. While my research has to do with the World Wide Web and this theory, there is another link because live radio is offered on the World Wide Web. A researcher could attempt studying if Web radio holds the same types of gratifications that listening to a traditional radio would have.

Television & Uses and Gratifications Theory

Television has always been an interesting topic for researchers to examine when using the uses and gratifications theory. Television offered another feature that radio did not offer. It offered the audience a chance to satisfy needs with their eyes while listening to the program as well. The transition from radio to television shows how technologies can build off one another, just like how research projects can build off one another.

There have been countless studies of television usage and gratifications resulting from that television usage (Lull, 1995; Gans, 1962; Lonetti and Addington, 1992; Greenberg, 1974; Goodhardt, Ehrenberg, and Collins, 1987; Barwise, Ehrenberg, and Goodhardt, 1982). Since the 1950s, people have always used the television as a means to gratify their needs. Families used television to entertain friends and other relatives as a form of group entertainment (Lull, 1995, p. 91). The people would sit around the television and be entertained by quiz shows, westerns, and news programs in the early 1950s and 1960s.

The differences and trends in television uses and gratifications research are that early in the research, the researchers focused on the content. For example, television programs reinforce gender roles and solve social problems with their programming (Gans, 1962). Little boys in the early years of television were taught that real men were like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. Little girls in those same years were taught to be nurturing and maternal like June Cleaver in the television show “Leave It to Beaver”. These shows also provided answers to problems that plagued society such as when Beaver got into mischief at school for cheating. However, once the content on the television was being studied, researchers were more interested in predicting patterns of television viewing (Goodhardt, Ehrenberg, and Collins, 1987) and the effects of television on certain groups like children (Greenberg, 1974).

The television provides knowledge for the viewer to face the world. News stations like CNN allow viewers a view of the world without leaving their comfortable living rooms. How else could one get pictures and commentary about a rebel uprising in the faraway county of Bolivia? CNN broadcasts allow viewers to surveillance their world around them without being in danger.

The studies of television viewers have given credence to the active nature of the uses

and gratification theories. Severin and Tankard Jr. (2001) state:

Lonetti and Addington (1992) tested two competing views of the television audience. One was the uses and gratifications perspective, which suggests that an active audience seeks out programs to satisfy psychological and social needs. The other was the passive audience perspective, which contends that people first decide to watch television and then find a program from what is available. Their results from a national probability survey found little support for the passive audience perspective, with only 9 percent of program decisions involving people watching whatever comes on next (p. 299, 2001).

This study raises the issue that people might tune to specific channels knowing what is offered on that channel will satisfy a particular need. For example, if I enjoy watching sports programming, I would turn on ESPN because that is where the sports programming usually is. I may not know specifically what is on ESPN at that time, but I know watching sports would entertain me. Therefore, the channel selection process should be studied as a standard rather than the specific program that a viewer may want to watch. This may also be used as a relation to my research. One gratification variable is “When there’s a specific Web site I want to access”. Many people develop a favorite type of web site or search engine, and that becomes their start-up page that loads on your web browser. If channel selection is going to be set as a standard, Web site selection should also be made a standard for exploration.

The Internet

Many people use the terms the Internet and the World Wide Web as if they were the same. However, they are separate but related things (Webopedia, 2003, Unpaginated). The World Wide Web is the information-sharing model that uses HTTP language protocol which is used in common web browsers like Internet Explorer and Netscape. The Web is built upon the Internet which allows computers to network with each other via different protocols. In my study, there was a concern with just the students' usage of the Web. However, in this literature review of the Internet, there is some literature that uses the Internet and some literature that focuses on just the World Wide Web.

Several researchers have asserted that the Internet may provide the same type of gratifications as the more traditional media. Wicks writes, "People use the Internet to receive the same type of gratifications they receive from older media such as newspapers and television" (p. 165, 2001). This statement makes sense if one considers that the Internet is a source of information and knowledge just like a newspaper, television, or a magazine. Wicks writes that Michael Silberman, executive editor of MSNBC.com, reported that MSNBC's site attracts a bigger audience than CNN television (p. 166, 2001). Therefore, some sites may even surpass television as a media outlet. Once again, the topic of media adoption is seen at work here. The audience will determine the uses of each media type, and will decide how each media type can fulfill their own individual needs and desires.

However, there is one key fundamental difference between the Web and more traditional media sources. The Web requires a much more active role to be played by the consumer. For example, users must click on textual links to continue onto certain stories or they must search for their information materials using search engines like google.com

or lycos.com. According to Fredin and David (1998), there are three related differences between hypermedia like the Web and more traditional media like radio and television. Firstly, the Web demands frequent audience participation because the Web will not work without a user telling it where to go and radio which will continuously give output unless you turn it off, the Web needs a user to click on links and search for information. Secondly, with the Web, there are an infinite number of options for a user to go to. With television or radio, this is clearly not the case as there is a limited amount of television channels or radio stations that a consumer can view and listen to. Thirdly, an individual's choices on the Web depend highly on previous choices. Surfing the Web depends on what was chosen previously. For instance, if a news story is clicked on at MSN.com, there will be a link to related stories (MSN.com, 2003).

On many (but not all) sites, there are no editorial standards on the Internet like there are for magazines, books, and newspapers. Anyone can post anything that they want on the Internet if they have the inclination to do so. Therefore, Internet users must have the ability to determine what is good quality information on a particular website. The Digital Divide Network states that a solution for bridging the divide between the haves and the have nots is "effective use of communication technology" (Digital Divide Network Website, 2000). Simply put, a user can have all the access he or she wants but if they do not know how to comprehend what they are seeing on their screen, it is almost like having no access at all. It is critical for a user to comprehend and understand what he or she is seeing on their screen, in addition to having the access to the information. It is not just about the access after all, as Andy Carvin (2001) notes:

But giving people access doesn't instantly solve the manifold woes of our communities and schools. If it did, every kid with Internet access

would be getting straight A's and every adult with access would be gainfully employed and prosperous. It's just not that simple.

Technology access is only one small piece of a much larger puzzle, a puzzle that if solved might help raise the quality of life for millions of people (Unpaginated).

It is also about understanding what is on the screen and what is available to each and every user. If a user cannot understand what is on the screen and what is available to each and every one of them, then, it is almost impossible to get the most gratification out of using the Web. If users are skilled at using the Web, they will not get frustrated as they search the Web to accomplish a goal.

Esther Hargittai (2002) supports this thought when she writes about the skills people need to have in order to find information on the Web:

As the medium spreads to a majority of the population (NTIA, 2002) it is increasingly important to look at not only who uses the Internet, but also to distinguish varying levels of online skills among individuals.

Skill, in this context, is defined as *the ability to efficiently and effectively find information on the Web.*" (First Monday Website).

Therefore, a user must not only be able to comprehend the information. A user must also be able to find it in the first place. If a user does not know how to search, the user is not going to get the quality of access that an experienced user will get. Then, it is about being able to read what is on the screen. Therefore, there must be some sort of information literacy variable that needs to be possessed. A 1993 literacy survey in which one out of four Americans were found to be functionally illiterate (Carvin, 2001). If these people cannot process written information correctly, how can anyone expect them

to be able to process information on the Internet which requires different terms and procedures altogether? One cannot expect these people to function effectively without this technological literacy. What will happen to these people? The Committee for Technological Literacy (2000) writes, "If overall technological literacy is not improved, particularly among the technological have-nots, we can expect to see the growth of a 'technological divide' more pervasive than today's digital divide. Interesting, well-paying jobs that require a technological understanding and skills will go mostly to well-educated upper and middle-class Americans and foreign nationals" (43). These people will not be able to get good jobs and they will be even further divided from the mainstream. Also, there is an implicit responsibility for everyone to be an informed citizen and an informed consumer, but if these people cannot interpret the Internet content, they will be abandoning that responsibility.

This digital divide information is useful because it underlies two key points to uses and gratifications research on the World Wide Web. One key point is simply that the Web requires a user to be knowledgeable and active. The user must be able to find the right uses for the right kinds of web sites at the right time in order to be successful in life. If the user does not use the right Web sites, he or she stands the risk of being deemed not credible. Users need to have the right skills on the Internet to survive the technological world that we live in. If a person is not proactive about learning these things, they will be left behind by the divide and they will be among the have nots in our society. Also, they will not be able to gain as many gratifications as someone who is highly skilled in reading Web sites.

Another key point is the intersection between this Digital Divide work and the Uses and Gratifications theory. The intersection is this: until the advent of the Internet, most

mediums were considered easy to use by the public. With the exception of early radio, radio and television were easily turned on and the stations were quickly navigated. Radio and television have had the chance to be adopted by the mainstream public. At this time, the World Wide Web is still being adopted by the rest of the world as a viable media alternative and complement. At this time, it is much more difficult to use the Internet and get certain gratifications out of it than it was to use the radio and the television. It is easy to see how the two ideas can quickly merge together. Since the advent of Internet technology and the World Wide Web, there can no longer exist the assumption that anyone can operate the new technology with a minimum of learning and effort.

Recent research suggests that assumption can still exist. Semi-literate poor children are learning to use the Internet with minimal guidance with some degree of success (NIIT website, 2003). Therefore, there is this contrast between those who believe that education is needed to bridge a “quality of access” gap like Hargittai and Carvin. There are the NIIT researchers who believe that anyone can learn how to use a computer with minimal guidance. Meanwhile, the uses and gratifications theory must extend itself to meet this new technological medium of the Internet because uses and gratifications theory has always been a cutting edge approach that can be used to explore any medium.

Research Context

There were 1,321,317 Las Vegas metropolitan residents in 1999, 1,428,690 in 2000, and 1,498,274 in 2001 (Nevada Development Authority, 2001). But, Las Vegas welcomes 35,000,000 people per year (Nevada Chamber of Commerce, 2003). Tourists see Las Vegas as an adult Disneyland while locals have to live here coexisting with these tourists. This large ratio of tourist to resident is what makes the city of Las Vegas and

UNLV into a unique place for uses and gratifications research. There is the popular image of Las Vegas that new residents must reconcile with the reality, the always changing and diverse nature of Las Vegas, and the different experience of attending a diverse commuter campus like UNLV that students must deal with in order to live in this city and go to school here. This is relevant to my study because a student is likely to have different uses and different gratifications in a unique city like Las Vegas than the student would have in Topeka, Kansas. Hypothetically, Las Vegas residents would use the Web for entertainment gratifications because of the constant theme of 24 hour entertainment that is drilled into their heads from the moment they can use media.

The image of Las Vegas is key to understand as a premise for this study because it gives a look at how tourists view Las Vegas. The image of Las Vegas is obviously very different than the image for a small town in New Jersey or a large city in Florida. Also known as Sin City, it is a place where businessmen can come and unwind after their meetings are over. It is a place where dreams of riches are shattered just as quickly as they came. It is a place where desperate people go to feed their vices of all night drinking and gambling. It is a place that is 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Andres Martinez (1999) writes:

Las Vegas is our mirror out in the desert, all shiny like a mirage should be, reflecting our basest urges. What type of city did we build in the middle of the desert, a metropolis with no reason, beyond our willpower and playful imagination, to exist? And what does it say about us that this monument to American optimism and technological arrogance in the Mojave Desert has become the

largest American city born in the twentieth century and its fastest-growing one going into the twenty-first? (p. 16-17).

Las Vegas is looked upon by this author as a mirage. It is looked upon as something imagined and fake, yet it has come to exist. The key relation to my study is that there are environmental and cultural factors that are at work for everyone who lives in this city. A user's web usage and gratifications might be different in this city based of the differences in how long a person has been here and how they view this city.

Las Vegas is viewed on the World Wide Web as a catchphrase for any online gaming site. Typing "Vegas" into Google.com nets you two different online gaming sites on the first page of hits (google.com, 2003). The word "Vegas" means gambling and fast action on the World Wide Web as the search engine also shows the homepages of five or six different casinos. It is difficult to find any in-depth information on the culture of Las Vegas beyond what the casinos want their customers to think and see. Experienced web servers may be able to avoid this kind of noise by putting in better search terms.

Moreover, UNLV students have the privilege of going to college in this city that has that image of "Sin City". There was the following relevant demographic information about UNLV students on the UNLV website (<http://www.unlv.edu>)

- Over 24,000 students are currently enrolled at UNLV (UNLV Overview, 2003).
- Of these 24,000 students, 5,000 of them are considered non-traditional students. On the UNLV Nontraditional Students Website, "At UNLV, we have about 5,000 nontraditional students each year - that is about one-third of the undergraduate population. If you are a nontraditional student

- coming back to school, you are not alone!” (Nontraditional Students Association, 2003).
- Also, since there are only about 1,200 students living on campus (Campus Housing, 2003), UNLV must mainly be considered a commuter campus.
- Internet usage is provided for all enrolled students for free (Student Computing Services, 2003).

From these demographics, one can clearly see that UNLV has a large non-traditional student population since over one third of the undergraduate population are indeed non-traditional students. UNLV is considered a commuter campus since only 5% of all students live on campus. Internet usage is offered to all enrolled students. Therefore, none of these students that are being surveyed are totally deprived of World Wide Web access.

UNLV and Las Vegas present a unique situation for this type of research. If the World Wide Web presents a quick way to share information about a person's environment and setting and Las Vegas is always moving so quickly, the World Wide Web would be the best medium for a person in Las Vegas to use to get information about Las Vegas quickly. Moreover, if there is not much of a constant on-campus student community at UNLV with the lack of students staying in campus housing and the lack of on-campus Greek housing, the World Wide Web would once again be the best place to communicate information about UNLV to a large audience.

Process Model

An intriguing way to look at uses and gratifications is through the Process Model that was introduced by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974. The Process Model states that social and psychological origins of needs lead to motivations which lead to the expectation of rewards which causes the individual to select sources which will give satisfaction (Katz, Blumler, Gurevitch, 1974). Katz, Blumler, and Haas (1973) write that essentially, all media users have the same five categories of needs. Also, users may have the same kinds of motivations which lead to an expectation of rewards. Because of this expectation of rewards, media users will select media sources based on what gives them satisfaction.

Firstly, there are the five categories of needs, the motivations, and the expectation of rewards, and media source selection. According to the Process Model, the needs lead to motivations which lead to the expectation of rewards which causes the selection of sources which will give the most satisfaction.

Categories Of Needs

Lull (1981) writes that there is no concise definition of a need. However, he writes that most psychologists believe human beings are prone to not only biological needs but also higher level needs like thought, emotion, and social cohesion. Specifically, Lull writes, “Most psychologists believe that human beings are also driven to discover, grow, transcend, and share” (p. 99, 1981). The categories of needs that came forth in the literature were:

1. *Cognitive Needs* - Needs related to the augmentation of knowledge and the surveillance of the environment around us. (Bunz, 2001) Examples:

- Using CNN.com to check out world and national news.
- Using LVRJ.com and LasVegasSun.com to check out local news.

2. *Affective Needs* - Needs related to entertainment and pleasure. (Bunz, 2001)

Examples:

- Playing Pac-Man and Snake on neave.com.
- Downloading George Carlin comedy clips off Kazaa.com.

3. *Personal Integrative Needs* - Needs related to justification of personal views and personal beliefs. (Bunz, 2001) Examples:

- Using google.com to find articles that support the war on Iraq because you support the war on Iraq.
- Downloading Christian literature because you are a Christian and you want to affirm your faith..

4. *Social Integrative Needs* - Needs related to the ability to be socially cohesive with loved ones.

- Using the web to e-mail your sister in Wisconsin.
- Logging on to a chat room site on Las Vegas clubs to find out what to do this weekend.

5. *Escapist Needs* - Needs related to escape and diversion. (Katz, Blumler, Haas, 1973; Tan, 235-236, 1985; Hunter, Website, 2001)

- Reading satirical news off the onion.com to avoid doing research.
- Listening to a live web cast of new techno music to escape after work.

Motivations

Lull defines motivation as “an impulse or drive that energizes human action along the cognitive/behavioral trajectory toward need gratification” (p. 101, 1981).

If needs can be gratified by using the Web, there must be an effort to determine what the motivations for using the Web actually are (Hunter, 2001). Firstly, the obvious motivation would be that the user expects to find information that will satisfy his need.

Hunter supports when he wrote,

“In order to find out why a person chooses a particular medium we need to look at the broader social situation that created the notion that one medium would be more satisfactory than another. In the case of Web use, there is ample evidence that other mass media like television, newspapers, and magazines have created a generally favorable atmosphere towards the Internet” (Web Site, 2001).

Since the other media frequently promote the viability of the Internet and World Wide Web as an acceptable mass media source, one can conclude that a good informational web site will get traffic solely based on reports from other media. For example, television commercials are always flashing web sites at you to go for more information. The television is the guiding medium in the relationship between the user and the Web. Since a television ad can only run for a maximum of 45 seconds to one minute, the Web provides a forum where an interested consumer can research the product, find out what other people thought about the product, and see what kind of sales that they are for the product. These two mediums have a symbiotic relationship. The television ad attracts the web users to go to the web and find out more about the product.

The web site will give the more in-depth information that the television did not have the time to do. MSN.com encourages users to view television as they have a “What’s On TV tonight” right on their front page. Therefore, there would seem to be a good symbiotic relationship between a traditional media source and an electronic media source.

Expectation of Rewards

A reward is the fulfillment of a particular need. Hunter writes, “Many recent broadcasts and articles have focused on the fact that the Web is like a modern day gold rush. The stories have focused on computer programmers like Bill Gates who are designing software to capitalize on this quickly expanding new online market” (Unpaginated, 2001). Hunter’s analogy is that surfing the Web is like a gold rush. Gold would certainly be a good physical reward, but the reward for surfing the Web is being able to communicate with others, look at information, or be entertained (Hunter, 2001).

Since the media has created the buzz about the Web, people are also going to expect rewards from using the Web as the media have instructed them. For instance, if the media hypes the new arena football league in town, a user would think he or she is going to get rewarded with good information and knowledge if he or she went to an arena football league web site. For example, if NBC put up a promo saying that arenafootball.com was the site to go to if you wanted to learn all about arena football, a viewer of that promo would take NBC’s word for it and would have certain expectations of the web site. If those expectations were not met, the viewer might blame NBC for wasting his or her time. Therefore, if users put in the time, and they are not rewarded, they are simply not happy campers because they wasted their time for no reason. If the media does not create the buzz that the web site needs, likely, the web site will not

be very successful. There are nearly seven million web sites out there (google.com) and because of the enormity of the Web, it can be hard for a web site to stand out above the crowd. A budding web site needs to garner the attention of a more traditional media source in order to build a bigger fan base and get more hits on the website. For example, some web sites have taken to sponsoring sporting events and concerts. For example, there is a college football bowl game every year called the Insight.com bowl. Because of this sporting event, many people know about Insight.com. Would Insight.com be popular if it did not sponsor this football game? It probably would merit some degree of popularity but it probably would not be as popular as it is with the sponsoring of the football game.

Media Source Selection

The selection of the source that leads to the most satisfaction is the final stage in the process. With the Web, there is a few problems with selecting it as a source. Using the Web is slow if a person uses a slow modem. Therefore, you might not get very much gratification from waiting for a web page to pop up. Also, computers are still expensive for average to lower income families. According to a study done by the U.S. Department of Commerce in October 2000, 41.5% of all U.S. homes had Internet access (U.S. Department of Commerce, Unpaginated, 2000). More than half of all U.S. homes did not have Internet access as of two years ago. Therefore, it may not be possible for a person to choose the Web as a media source if they do not even have a personal computer.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature that was studied and subsequently reviewed, the following questions and hypotheses were drawn. The first research question and hypothesis was taken from Herzog's (1944) study of gender and radio usage. Is gender a key factor in how students use the technology? The second question and hypothesis was formulated from King's (1997) television survey conducted on the Web. King asked what the most common gratifications were for using the Web. The third, fourth, and fifth research questions and hypotheses were drawn based on studying the uses and gratifications literature (Rubin, 1995; McQuail, 1994) and relating it to the factors of self-perception of residency and self-perception of non-traditional students.

The research questions and hypotheses were the following:

RQ 1 - How do UNLV students use the Web and traditional media? Is gender a differentiating factor in how the students use media?

H 1 - Male students will use the Web and traditional media for leisure activities like checking sports news sites and playing video games while females will use the media sources for goal-driven activities like academic research and online registration.

In this research question and hypothesis, the key question of how UNLV students use the Web and traditional media is asked. In uses and gratifications literature, gender has been a factor that has been considered for research since Herzog (1944) analyzed the gratifications of females who listened to daytime radio programming. Gender will be

used as distinguishing factor when analyzing traditional usage and Web usage. The stereotype is that the male gender uses media more for leisure, while the female gender uses media more for goal-driven activities. If the hypothesis is supported, the stereotype is given support. If the hypothesis is false, the stereotype is not given support.

RQ 2 - What will be the gratification most commonly given by the traditional and non-traditional students for using the World Wide Web and which category will the gratification belong to? (Entertainment/Escape, Social Cohesion, Surveillance, Personal Reasons).

H 2 - "Because it's exciting" (Entertainment/Escape, See Appendix II) will be the highest gratification given by students who consider themselves Las Vegas natives, and "Because it allows me to keep in touch with family and friends" (Surveillance, See Appendix II) will be the highest gratification given by students who do not consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents.

The hypothesis is that "Because it's exciting" will be the highest gratification given by students. McQuail (1974) wrote that entertainment/escape was one of the most popular gratification types. My hypothesis asserts that McQuail's contention will be supported and that this particular gratification will be chosen the most by students who do not have a deep academic background in communication.

RQ 3 – How will non-traditional students use the Web compared to traditional students?

H 3 – Since non-traditional students are older with more life commitments (ex. marriage, children, work), they will use the Web more for finding specific information or searching for a specific website.

Because non-traditional students have less free time due to having a child or having a full time job or being married, non-traditional students will use the Web less than

traditional students (Compton & Schock, 2001). However, because of the overall focus and maturity of non-traditional students, the non-traditional students will use the Web more for specific information or specific web sites when the need arises.

RQ 4 - What is the relation between web usage and students who consider themselves to be or not to be Las Vegas residents?

H 4 - Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web for surveillance of their environment more than students who do consider themselves Las Vegas residents.

H 5 – Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web at least more than occasionally to keep up with what is going on in their home town, city, or country.

These two hypotheses will be key to my results. Firstly, H4 is stating that students who consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web less than students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents for surveillance issues. Students who do consider themselves residents will likely have a built-in communication system set up by which they get their information, however, students who do not consider themselves residents are more likely to not have this built-in system. Therefore as Berelson (1949) reported, the users will have to find an alternative source to getting their information. It is my contention that the World Wide Web will serve as this alternative source.

Secondly, H5 is stating that students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web to keep up with what is going on back in their home town, city, or country. This hypothesis is an extension of the surveillance of the environment that will allow for measurement of how much these non-Las Vegas residents will keep in touch with what they call home. After all, not everyone will attempt to adapt to the Las

Vegas culture. Some people may try to hold on to their original roots for as long as they are at UNLV and in Las Vegas.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Using a quantitative approach, this study employed two pilot studies, and one final survey. The data for the pilot studies were collected in person and online, while the data for the final survey were collected in person over a period of one week. The research goals were to collect the data in a fair and objective manner while also respecting every respondent's right to privacy. Furthermore, my goal is to advance the existing research with new and innovative ideas. Finally, I aim to present an overall perspective of the results while also keeping an open mind for any other results that may be intriguing and relevant to my research.

The population for the first pilot study was comprised of 23 UNLV graduate students in a graduate Research Methods class. This survey was given in person to these students after a final examination. My goal for this first pilot was to find out what kind of adjustments these graduate students would suggest to my first survey. Because these students have a background in communication as a field of study, their comments would guide me towards shaping and constructing a better survey. Based on their comments, I decided on changes such as better spacing between questions and responses, additional items added to the survey, and larger font settings for increased readability.

The population for the second pilot study was distributed to 32 UNLV graduate students, 10 UNLV undergraduate students, and 2 graduate students from another university. This survey was given online. The goal was to explore what sorts of

suggestions these students had in order to better my survey. For this pilot study, I wanted to get a mix of graduate students and undergraduate students because I knew that the survey would eventually be in the hands of undergraduate students, and I did not want the finished product to be only seen by the more experienced graduate students. Once again, along with my advisor's guidance, their comments led to even better spacing between questions and responses, additional prompts for better readability, boldfaced typing for needed response, and changes to certain questions that would allow for better focus on certain results.

The population for the final study was comprised of UNLV students in 2 separate Communication 101: Public Speaking classes and 4 separate Communication 102: Interpersonal Communication classes. The classes were selected randomly from a list of graduate teaching assistants. The assistants were contacted and then asked when the best time would be for me to come in and administer the survey to their classes. The random selection process was undertaken because I wanted to eliminate any possible biases that I might have as a researcher by selecting a class that I know would respond positively to my survey. The survey was given to COM 101 and 102 classes because these classes are the very first classes a UNLV student can take in the Hank Greenspun School of Communication. Therefore, while the students would have some basic knowledge of surveying techniques, they would not have so much knowledge that they could not benefit from seeing what such a quantitative survey would actually look like.

Please see Appendix I for a copy of the survey. The first question of the survey asked the students how much time on average per week they had spend on the World Wide Web. To see the exact format and wording of the question, please report to Appendix I,

Question 1. There is an assumption here that the students know what the World Wide Web actually is, and there is also an assumption that students have access to the Web. Because UNLV students have ready access to the Web in many computer labs all over campus, this is a safe assumption. Plus, there was also a space for “I do not use the Web.” While I did not think this would originally be necessary, after my first pilot study, based on comments, I decided to include the space for that answer. I used time on average per week because time per day seemed a bit too personal and invasive as an option. A student might be reluctant to admit that he or she spends 8 hours a day on the Web because it sounds like they have nothing else to do, but might be more willing to state that he or she spends 50 or 60 hours a week on the Web, on average. Average time spent on the Web has been used in many studies about the Internet, especially those focusing on Internet addiction or Internet dependency (Young, 1996; Scherer, 1997; Nash, 1997). However, in this study, I used it to determine to what extent people use the Web when fulfilling certain gratifications.

The second question had many different parts to it, and asked students what types of Web sites that they typically visit. To see the different types of Web sites that were asked on the survey, refer to Appendix I, Question 2. Then, there was a Likert scale of 1-9 with three prompts across the top of the survey (Never by the 1, Sometimes by the 4, 5, 6, and Always by the 9). These types were determined to be suitable after the two separate pilot studies.

The third question also had many different parts to it, and asked students what types of traditional media they consumed. To see the types of traditional media that were asked on the survey, please refer to Appendix I, Question 3. The students were asked to

fill in the amount of hours per week that they felt they used each type of traditional media, and they were asked to place 0 in the box if they did not use that particular type of media.

The fourth question dealt with what types of gratifications the students felt they got from using the Web. To see the types of gratifications that were asked on the survey, please refer to Appendix I, Question 4. There was another Likert scale numbered 1-5 with Don't Agree At All as the 1 and Agree totally as the 5. I chose these gratifications from numerous web surveys that are designed to find out which kinds of gratifications each respondent gets from each type of web site that they visit (Hunter, 2001; Ebersole, 2000; Nordstrom, 1999; King, 1997).

I included a demographics section of questions. Demographics have been used as a separating characteristic since the emergence of the first type of survey (Severin and Tankard, 2000). I chose to only include age, education level, and gender as the demographic information because I did not want to deal with race or income level as variable factors. While it would certainly be interesting to use race and income level as factors, I did not particularly want to include both because race and financial status may be a sensitive subject for some people. Rather than risk offending and alienating my respondents, I chose to leave the questions on race and income level out. After all, there is no access issue in this situation since all UNLV students are given free access to the World Wide Web. The pilot studies demonstrated that every respondent knew that there was some sort of access that they could get from somewhere.

I included only World Wide Web usage in the study because I did not want to get into all the different protocols and languages that the Internet has to offer, the instant

messaging features that are available on the Internet and not the Web, and newsgroups not on the Web.

The reason for this dependence on perception was that I wanted the respondents to define for me what they thought residency meant. While a student might be here for six months and consider himself or herself to be a Las Vegas resident, a student who has been here for six years might not think of themselves to be a Las Vegas resident. Duration of time may not be the only defining factor of residency. It is the self-perception of residency that may be the key factor.

Furthermore, it was highly interesting to note what students thought non-traditional meant. Therefore, I included a question that asked “Would you consider yourself to be a non-traditional student?”. I discuss the results in Chapter VI.

However, what do these terms actually mean when used in other studies and surveys? Rosenthal et al. (2000) write that a non-traditional student would be over 25, and/or married, and/or with children. Non-traditional students also report different concerns and priorities than traditional students, therefore, their responses might differ from traditional students. But, in my study, one must remember that my survey asked for the perception of the student as either being traditional or non-traditional. Therefore, since gratifications obtained and gratifications sought are based on perception (Rubin 1995), using self-perception of residency and self-perception of traditional versus non-traditional students is what I chose to do instead of using the definitions that the literature or state law mandates. I suspect that their perception of traditional vis-à-vis non-traditional may be different than what the literature and law mandates.

Delving further into the literature, Compton and Schock (2000) write of the subdivision between the non-traditional students. They write, “But there is no one description that fits all those returning to school. It may have been five years or several decades since you last stepped foot on a college campus” (pp. 15-16). Clearly, there are other subdivisions from within the non-traditional status that may be unique to each other. For instance, a married 26-year old sophomore woman may use the Web more to look up children’s book reviews for children’s books for her children, while a single full time 29-year old senior man may not have the time to surf the Web but for more than an hour a week. While I did not choose to divide the non-traditional students into even further subdivisions, it was important to note the breadth of the term. It is important to note again that I was looking at self-perception of traditional vs. non-traditional status, not whether the student actually fit into the literature definition.

According to the state of Nevada web site, it takes only 6 weeks for one to establish residency by law in the state. A person must “take action to show physical presence in the state of Nevada” (State of Nevada, Unpaginated, 2003). By that, the state means that a person must have a physical address, and/or a job in the state, and/or register to vote, and/or get a Nevada driver’s license. However, while the law determines that you can be a resident in only 6 weeks, residency is a subjective concept that may be different for each and every respondent. As I mentioned before, there are cases where students may claim residency after only 6 months or they may never claim they are indeed residents of Las Vegas. Therefore, because there may be differences in whether or not people perceive themselves as residents, I chose not to adhere to the state’s definition that a person is a resident after only 6 weeks in the state. In my survey, I was more interested

in knowing whether people perceived themselves as residents, rather than what the state law said. But, it must be noted what the state of Nevada actually mandated.

Since the application of this theory of uses and gratifications with the World Wide Web is a new field of research, there is not much research with this theory and the variables of either self-perception of residency or self-perception of traditional vs. non-traditional student. Much of the research focuses on access and opportunity provided to non-traditional students (Bowl, 2001; Compton and Schock, 2000) and the reaction of non-traditional students attending a traditional college (Ntiri, 2001). Therefore, much of this research was based on logical speculation drawn from an exhaustive reading of the literature on the subject. However, because of the rare opportunity for a student researcher to do research at a diverse school like UNLV in a unique city like Las Vegas, the variables of self-perception of residency and self-perception of traditional vs. non-traditional student emerged through the course of the project.

Other definitions

Web Activity Variables – Any variable in question 2 i.e. e-mail, online game playing, etc.

Traditional Media Variable – Any variable in question 3 i.e. reading books, reading newspapers, etc.

Gratifications Obtained Variable – Any variable in question 4 i.e. “Because it’s exciting”, “When I want to find specific information”.

Notes: See Appendix I for copy of survey and questions. See Appendix II for explanation on how I categorized the gratifications variables.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Respondents to the survey ($n = 130$) ranged in age from 19-70 years of age ($M = 22.31$) and self-reported their college status as Freshman ($n = 27, 20.8\%$), Sophomore ($n = 34, 26.2\%$), Junior ($47, 36.2\%$), Senior ($20, 15.4\%$), Graduate Student ($1, 0.8\%$), and one respondent did not report status. The respondents were 57 (43.8%) male and 73 (56.2%) females. The following demographic tables give information on the college status of the respondents, the respondents' age range and mean, the respondents' residency range and mean, and the self-perception of the respondents on the factors of residency and non-traditional vs. traditional students.

Table 1 Respondents' Grade Levels

# of Respondents	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Grad Student
129	27 (20.8%)	34 (26.8%)	47 (36.2%)	20 (15.34%)	1 (0.8%)

Table 2 Respondents' Age Range and Mean

# of Respondents	Low Range	High Range	Mean # of Age
130	18 years old	70 years old	22.31 years old

Table 3 Respondents' Residency Range and Mean

# of Respondents	Low Range	High Range	Mean # of Years Spent in Las Vegas
130	2 months	34 years	9.21 years

Table 4 Self-Report of Whether Respondents Considered Self Las Vegas Resident

# of Respondents	# of Respondents who Self-Reported Being a Las Vegas Resident	# of Respondents who Self-Reported Not Being a Las Vegas Resident
129	85 (65.8%)	44 (33.8%)

Table 5 Self-Report of Whether Respondents Considered Self a Non-Traditional Student

# of Respondents	# of Respondents who Self-Reported Being a Traditional Student	# of Respondents who Self-Reported Not Being a Traditional Student
130	92 (70.8%)	28 (29.2%)

Research Questions/Hypotheses

RQ 1 - How do UNLV students use the Web and traditional media? Is gender a differentiating factor in how the students use media?

H 1- Male students will use the Web and traditional media for leisure activities like checking sports news sites and playing video games while females will use the media sources for academic activities like academic research and online registration.

The respondents self-reported that their usage of the Web ranged from 0-70 hours per week with a mean of 10.22 hours per week, 1.46 hours per day.

Males spend more time online with a mean of 12.66 hours per week, while females spend 8.34 hours per week. Freshmen spend 8.52 hours a week on the Web, sophomores spend 12.00 hours a week on the Web, juniors spend 8.11 hours, and seniors report at 13.60 hours per week.

Table 6 Hours Spent on the World Wide Web for Respondents

Low Range of Time Spent on the Web	High Range of Time Spent on the Web	Mean of Hours on the Web (per week)	Mean of Hours on the Web (per day)
0 hours per week	70 hours per week	10.22 hours	1.46 hours

Table 7 Hours Spent on the World Wide Web for Males and Female

Mean Time Spent on Web for Males	Mean Time Spent on Web for Females
12.66 hours per week	8.34 hours per week

Table 8 Hours Spent on Web for Different Grade Statuses

Mean Time Spent on Web for Freshmen	Mean Time Spent on Web for Sophomores	Mean Time Spent on Web for Juniors	Mean Time Spent on Web for Seniors
8.52 hours per week	12.00 hours per week	8.11 hours per week	13.60 hours per week

Males spend more time playing video games and checking sports web sites than their female classmates.

Table 9 Gender and Video Game Playing Means *

Gender	Mean of Video Game Playing	Significance Value	P value	Standard Deviation
Male	4.91	0.00	0.02	11.48
Female	0.58			1.82

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-9 with 1 being Never and 9 being Always

Table 10 Gender and Checking Sports Web Sites Means *

Gender	Mean of Checking Sports Web Sites	Significance Value	P value	Standard Deviation
Male	5.56	0.00	0.00	3.12
Female	1.85			1.73

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-9 with 1 being Never and 9 being Always

Females spend more time doing academic-based activities like academic research and online registration than their male counterparts.

Table 11 Gender and Academic Research on the Web Means *

Gender	Mean of Academic Research on the Web	Significance Value	P value	Standard Deviation
Male	6.65	0.323	0.048	1.923
Female	7.29			1.723

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-9 with 1 being Never and 9 being Always

Table 12 Gender and Online Registration Means *

Gender	Mean of Online Registration	Significance Value	P value	Standard Deviation
Male	6.42	0.017	0.013	2.330
Female	7.36			1.901

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-9 with 1 being Never and 9 being Always

H1 is supported then, because there is a significant difference in the ways that males and females use the Web. Males use the Web and traditional media more for leisure activities like playing video games and checking sports sites, while females use the Web and traditional media more for academic activities like academic research and online research.

RQ 2 - What will be the gratification most commonly given by the traditional and non-traditional students for using the World Wide Web and which category will the gratification belong to? (Entertainment/Escape, Social Cohesion, Surveillance, Personal Reasons).

H2 - "Because it's exciting" (Entertainment/Escape, See Appendix II) will be the highest gratification given by students who consider themselves Las Vegas residents, and "Because it allows me to keep in touch with family and friends" (Social Cohesion, See Appendix II) will be the highest gratification given by students who do not consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents.

Below is a chart that examines the gratifications answered by students who consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents and non-Las Vegas residents. Please see next page for the complete table of the means for the gratification variables and the self-perception of Las Vegas residency.

Table 13 Means of Gratification Variables and Self-Perception of Residency *

Gratification Variables	Las Vegas Residents	Non-Las Vegas Residents
Because it's exciting	2.99	3.09
When I want to find specific information	4.56	4.51
So I can forget about work and other things	2.41	2.51
When there's a specific site I want to access	4.40	4.26
Because it's enjoyable	3.41	3.79
So I can get away from the rest of the family or others	1.73	1.91
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who like to access the Web together	2.28	2.77
When I'm bored	3.35	3.63
Because it relaxes me	2.22	2.37
Because it amuses me	2.94	3.16
So I can learn about what can happen to me	2.48	2.70
Because it's a habit	1.92	2.23
Because it's thrilling	2.86	3.05
Because it passes the time	2.18	2.42
Because it allows me to unwind	1.98	2.40
Because it lets me feel less lonely	1.49	2.14
Because I can keep in touch with family and friends	3.59	3.98
Because I just like to access it	3.34	3.42

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-9 with 1 being Never and 9 being Always

Thus, H2 is not supported because the strongest gratification appears to be “When I want to find specific information” for both segments of the population. More comments on this portion of results is in Chapter 6 of the discussion section.

However, when an analysis of variance analysis (ANOVA) is run, there are a few gratification variables that are significant with the self-perception of Las Vegas residency factor. Because this is a comparison between two groups, the p value is cut into half and the adjusted p value is also noted on the table. More comments on these results are to come in Chapter 6.

Table 14 Significant Gratification Variables with Residency *

Gratification Variable	Significance (2-tailed) Eq. Var. Assumed.	Adjusted p-value (1-tailed)
Because it's enjoyable	0.053	0.0265
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who like to access the Web together	0.056	0.0280
So I can learn about what can happen to me	0.037	0.0185
Because it lets me feel less lonely	0.002	0.0010

* These are the ANOVA significance values and the adjusted p-values for residency and these gratifications.

RQ 3 – How will non-traditional students use the Web compared to traditional students?

H 3 – Since non-traditional students have more priorities and less time to surf the Web, they will use the Web more for finding specific information or searching for a specific website.

Below, there is a table of the means for the specific information and specific web site variables with the factors of traditional student versus non-traditional student.

Table 15 Traditional and Non-Traditional Students and Specific Information on the Web *

Student Type	# of Respondents	Mean for “When I want to find specific information” on the Web	Mean for “When there is a particular site I want to access” on the Web
Non-Traditional	92	4.70	4.57
Traditional	37	4.49	4.27

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-5 with 1 being Don’t Agree at All and 5 being Agree Totally

Clearly, there is a difference in the means between the two groups. But, is the difference statistically significant? The results of an independent samples t-test are listed below.

Table 16 Significance of Self-Perception of Traditional Vs. Traditional and Specific Information

Student Type	Significance (2-tailed) Eq. Var. Assumed	Adjusted p-value (1-tailed)
Non-traditional	0.138	0.069
Traditional	0.116	0.058

Based on this t-test, despite a difference in the means, the difference is not statistically significant. H3 is not supported.

RQ 4 - What is the relation between web usage and students who consider themselves to be or not to be Las Vegas residents?

H 4 - Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web for surveillance of their environment more than students who do consider themselves Las Vegas residents.

By doing an independent sample t-test with residency as the grouping variable and the surveillance of the environment variable of “So I can learn about what can happen to me”, the following occurred.

Table 17 Residency and the Surveillance Variable

Consider yourself a Las Vegas resident?	Mean of “So I can learn about what can happen to me”
Yes	1.98
No	2.40

* Results based on Likert Scale of 1-5 with 1 being Don’t Agree at All and 5 being Agree Totally

Table 18 Significance of the Surveillance Variable

Surveillance Gratification Variable	Significant value	P value
“So I can learn about what can happen to me”	0.442	0.037

The difference between Yes and No is significant with a value of 0.442 ($p = 0.037$).

Therefore, H4 is supported. Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents do use the Web more for surveillance than students who do consider themselves Las Vegas residents.

H 5 – Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web at least more than occasionally to keep up with what is going on in their home town, city, or country.

Of the students who do not consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents, these were the results of the question specifically geared towards them.

Table 19 Respondents Self-Perception of Residency as Negative and How Often They Keep in Touch with their Old Home Town, City, or Country *

Students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents	Mean of “How often do you use the Web to keep up with what is going on in your own home town, city, or country?”
43	3.11

* 1 was coded as Not at All, 2 was Rarely, 3 was occasionally, 4 was Frequently, and 5 was All the Time

H5 is supported since 3 would be coded as occasionally and 3.11 is more than occasionally.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

After tabulating the results, the following points must be raised in this discussion section. Tabulating the data is not the end of the survey process. The data must be analyzed and discussed.

Different groups of UNLV students use the World Wide Web and these groups receive different gratifications from using the World Wide Web. The following discussion section discusses the research questions and hypotheses at length, but it is important not to overlook the overall issue of how students use and gratify their needs by using media.

Gender has always been an interesting variable factor to determine whether or not men or women use technology in the same ways. In some ways, the study can determine if certain gender roles are upheld. Women do seem to be the more responsible gender, in terms of academics and budgeting their time to that extent. The female respondents reported a significantly higher mean than the male respondents did in academic research and online registration. On the other hand, the male respondents reported a significantly higher mean in leisure activities like visiting sports web sites and playing video games. With that said, H1 is supported.

H2 stated that students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web for keeping in touch with family and friends the most and students who do consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web for excitement gratifications. These hypotheses were not supported. However, it was reported that students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents use the Web because it makes them feel less lonely ($p = .0010$), because it's enjoyable ($p = .0265$), because they can learn about what can happen to them ($p = .0185$), and because they can be with family members and friends who like to access the Web also ($p = .0280$). Students who not consider themselves Las Vegas residents are apparently using the Web as a way to socialize with people so they can feel less lonely and they are also using the Web to keep in contact with their social networks. These students likely feel lost in the fast and quick culture of Las Vegas and are turning to the World Wide Web as a way to remain socially connected with people that they may feel more comfortable with.

H3 stated that non-traditional students would use the World Wide Web as a way to find specific information and go to specific web sites. The hypothesis was based on the conjecture that non-traditional students would have less time to spend on the Web, therefore, they would have to know what they were looking for when they got a chance to get on the Web. While there was a difference in the amount of Web usage, this was not supported since there was no statistical significance between the means.

H4 stated that students who do not consider themselves to be Las Vegas residents will use the Web for the surveillance variable of "Because I want to find out what can happen to me". This hypothesis was supported because there was a statistical significance in the difference of the means ($p = 0.037$). This means that students who do not consider

themselves Las Vegas residents are going to the Web for information on their surroundings.

H5 stated that students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents will use the Web for surveillance of their old home town, city, or country at least more than occasionally. This was proven to be significant because the mean of this question was reported as 3.11 which is more than occasionally since 3 was regarded as occasionally. The students who did not state that they were Las Vegas residents were extracted from the data set and then the mean of that question was analyzed. See Appendix 1.1 for the text of the question.

At this point, some correlations were done using age, college status, and time spent in Las Vegas. Since none of these questions were yes/no type questions, it may be intriguing to find out what the correlations came up with.

Age is used as a variable factor, but is just recently being used in studying the uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web (Angleman, 2000; Ebersole, 2001; Charney, 2001). However, in this study, there was no significant correlation between age and hours spent on the Web per week ($r = 0.340$). However, there is a significant correlation between age and visiting local TV web sites of ($r = 0.022$). This means that as age increases, people are more inclined to visit local TV web sites. Also, another interesting significant correlation was between age and visiting government sites ($r < 0.01$). Therefore, as age increases, people are inclined to visit local TV web sites and government sites. This makes sense because one would think older people are more concerned with community issues than an 18 year old freshman, therefore, they would want to visit local web sites and government sites to keep track of the community.

With traditional media, it appears that as age increases, the propensity for reading books and printed newspapers does not falter. Both are significant correlations with age with reading books as a stronger correlation ($r < 0.01$) than printed newspapers ($r = 0.008$). This also seems to be logical since the older generation still may not be as comfortable with the World Wide Web as their younger classmates.

With respect to the different gratifications obtained from using the Web, the significant correlations for age and gratifications obtained were “So I can forget about work and other things” ($r = 0.024$), “So I can get away from the family and others” ($r = 0.016$), “When I’m bored” ($r < 0.01$), “Because it passes time” ($r = 0.002$), “Because I like to access it” ($-0.187, r = 0.033$). Since all of these correlations were negative with respect to age, when age increases, these gratifications obtained seem to decrease. If you look at the data, it seems that younger people want to use the Web to entertain/escape at a greater level than the older people who may be more focused when they are on the Web.

College grade level is another variable that can be used as a varying factor. While this one may be tricky since there might be a 32-year old freshman and a 22-year old senior in the data set, academic status can be a good indicator of maturity and experience in the academic world. In this study, there is no significant correlation between college level and hours spent on the Web per week. Although, it is worth noting that it just missed the significance mark by 3 thousandths of a point with a ($r = 0.053$). Nevertheless, there are strong positive correlations between college status and visiting local TV sites ($r = 0.002$), and also government sites ($r = 0.008$). Perhaps, as a student advances in their academic career, they become more interested in local civic issues, thus the strong correlations for local TV sites and government issues. The data seem to suggest that is the case.

Regarding traditional media and college status, the only significant correlation is reading printed newspapers, not online ($r = 0.005$). This seems to correlate with the previous data regarding age and printed newspapers. Since it is likely that older students will have a higher academic level than younger students, one can understand the correlation between the two factors.

With respect to gratifications obtained and college status, there were three significant negative correlations. They are as followed: “When there is a specific site I want to access” ($r = 0.015$), “When I’m bored” ($r = 0.018$), and “Because I like to access it” ($r = 0.047$). If I continue with the younger people are out for entertainment/escape gratifications, only the latter two correlations make sense. However, I do have to take into account that the specific site variable was a very popular variable with all groups. Therefore, that may be why the correlation is so high.

Time spent in Las Vegas is a variable that arose from the literature. It is purely speculation to form a critical framework to analyze the data. Regarding time spent in Las Vegas with types of web sites visited, there are no correlations. The only close one is e-mail ($r = 0.081$). However, the correlation is not significant. If it was significant, this would seem to suggest that the less time a person has lived here, the more likely they are to use the Web for e-mail. Perhaps, they are e-mailing people that they just left at their previous location. Indeed, this is a form of surveillance.

Correlating traditional media uses with time spent in Las Vegas, there are two significant positive correlations. They are going to the movie theatre ($r = 0.011$) and reading books ($r = 0.045$). This is logical because as people get used to the uniqueness of Las Vegas, they will return to more conventional types of traditional media such as movies and books.

With time spent in Las Vegas and gratifications obtained, there are four significant negative correlations that make sense. They are “Because it’s exciting” ($r = 0.030$), “Because it’s enjoyable” ($r = 0.045$), “Because I want to be with family and friends who like to access the Web together” ($r = 0.028$), “Because it makes me feel less lonely” ($r = 0.021$). This data states that the less time these people have been in Las Vegas, the more they will feel these gratifications. Clearly, loneliness and wanting to be with loved ones on the Web might be a sign of homesickness. Also, the correlations between excitement/enjoyment to these new Las Vegas natives might mean they are becoming dependent on the Internet for all of their entertainment needs rather than going out and meeting new people.

There are several other points that need to be addressed in this discussion section of this survey. One respondent did not fill in some questions, but he was a bit of an outlier at 70 years old and he used the World Wide Web 30 hours in one week. While some literature did say that you have to throw out anyone with a majority of missing answers, I did not want to lose this very rare response. Therefore, I coded the missing answers as “NA for No Answer or Not Applicable”. The rare aspect of this response was such that the man checked N/A for grade level. In upholding the ethics of data collection, I decided to mention this subject in this discussion section of the project. Possibly, the man attends college classes to learn the material and is not pursuing a degree.

Some students also did not know what a non-traditional student was since they checked Yes despite being over the age limit of 25 years old. I coded these respondents as they checked because I wanted to maintain the self-perception aspect of this survey. The self-perception aspect is important because the respondents may think of themselves in different terms than I would have. Therefore, instead of forcing the respondents into

one category based on my criteria, I suggested the respondents define themselves on their own terms.

Many may wonder why the Other categories were not mentioned in the survey. After having leafed through the surveys a few times, I made the decision that many of the Others written down were already questions in the survey. For instance, many students wrote “E-mailing professors - 3”. Also, there were a few good answers for Other such as paying bills or checking stocks, but they were so few that I deemed them negligible and I did not want to get into the financial aspects of the Web too much after having left Income Level out after the first pilot study due to sensitivity issues. Rather than add another category for these respondents and after testing the data both ways, I determined to leave these Other responses out because I did not think they would affect the results.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that H2 and H3 were not supported, it is noteworthy to recognize that when testing the data with an ANOVA, students who do not consider themselves Las Vegas residents used the Web because it made them feel less lonely. This had a very high significance level and likely should be studied in future research. Most of the correlations done with age, college status, and time spent in Las Vegas were quite logical. For example, older people might be more comfortable reading books than spending time on the new technology of the World Wide Web.

It is also interesting to note that an old theory like uses and gratifications theory can still be applicable in our field today. Despite the fact that uses and gratifications theory originated in the late 1940s and became an official theory in 1959, it is still one of the more popular theories in the field. When searching for literature on the topic, I found

everything from the uses and gratifications of children's programming to the uses and gratifications on cellular telephones.

Clearly, this is a very new area of research with lots of untapped potential for researchers to work on. There are many different permutations of variables that can be used to create new studies from within this topic. Certainly, the World Wide Web is not going away anytime soon. Therefore, it is our best option to learn as much as we can about the medium while the medium is still new. However, it is necessary for researchers to create schematic frameworks so that uses and gratifications can become a viable theory with respect to the World Wide Web, as it did for radio and television.

In conclusion, I hoped to provide an overview of what uses and gratifications theory was all about while introducing some new factors such as non-traditional students and non-Las Vegas natives. While those hypotheses did not turn out as I had hoped regarding H2 and H3, I think it was much more useful towards the end of the project when I was able to correlate some demographic information with each variable. Also, it was useful when I was able to run some deeper tests showing the significance of UNLV students who do not consider themselves residents with loneliness and social cohesion.

Limitations

A clear limitation to this survey was my inexperience in conducting a survey of this attitude. Often times, while excited to be working on a project that I truly have an interest in, I felt overwhelmed by the different definitions that come from each part of the literature. One author would state that there are four types of gratifications, and another would state that there were eight, yet another would give me 12 separate types. For instance, Ebersole (2000) used 12 separate types of gratifications and McQuail (1974).

only used 4 separate types. While a few of them were similar such as entertainment/escape and social cohesion, Ebersole was also testing affinity towards the Web. Therefore, Ebersole's study was a bit more complicated and a lot more modern which makes sense since it was published 26 years after McQuail's article. Finally, at my wit's end, I just forged ahead shaping my own methods in this new field of the uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web. If there was a bit more history to this specific topic, perhaps I would not have felt as overwhelmed as I did, at times. But, that is what helping to build a theory is about.

Another obvious limitation was that I was giving this survey to people who were just getting ready to go on spring break. It was an unforeseen circumstance that could not be helped and while I thank the professors and students for their help, this clearly was a distraction for everyone involved. Next time I have to give a survey, it would not be a bad idea to consider the environment in which the students would be taking the survey. Perhaps, the survey could be mailed to students so that they could fill them out at their own leisure, but I'm sure that I would not have gotten the same response rate that I did.

I wanted to get a broad range of students from all over the 101 and 102 classes and I feel that I did that, however, there was definitely a gap in what I wanted to question the respondents on and what their responses actually were. There was a difference in the level of experience that I have with surveys and the level of experience that the respondents had with surveys. Therefore, a few more pilot studies involving even more undergraduate students may have been an even better idea.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research should include the actual websites that respondents went to. Clearly, this would take plenty of time, but it would be a step forward building off both my own and others' research into this field. Angleman (2000) writes, "Additional research should include more detail analysis of actual Internet use in terms of programs and time spent on the Internet" (Website, Unpaginated). I agree with Angleman here because she states that future researchers should not only track the time spent on the Internet, but also, the specific programs and/or web sites these respondents actually went to. It would take plenty of time to do a survey of this nature, since all the answers would be coded as string variables. Therefore, it might be necessary to do a content analysis of the gratifications sought and obtained from different web sites. Studies like this have been done by Thomas and Marla Royne Stafford (2001) and Daniela V. Dimitrova (2000), however, focusing on the content of a single web site or a group of web sites could be done very well.

Also, further research could include more demographic information such as race, income status, and grade point average. All of these demographics were, at one point, considered for my final survey, but eventually, I had to eliminate some of the information in order to tighten up my own study. However, someone else could do a study on how race affects gratifications sought and obtained on the Web. It would be very interesting, not only to communication researchers, but also to education administrators, sociologists, and ethnographers.

Extending the sample to beyond the academic world can only provide a clearer picture of the theory in the "real world" (Angleman, 2000). dealing with specific groups"

(Unpaginated, Web Site). A organizational communication student could do a study on how the World Wide Web affects organizational communication from either a content analysis or a survey research point of view.

Instead of only asking a few questions about non-traditional students, it might be prudent to do a study just on how non-traditional students use the Web. It would be easy to focus on, and the researcher would have to work in tandem with the Nontraditional Student Association or Group at his or her own campus. I would hope that someone else would see this, and continue forth in pursuit of a truer understanding on how non-traditional students use the Web.

Also, the residency and loneliness factor should also be worked on together with relation to uses and gratifications theory on the World Wide Web. This is an idea that could be honed in upon and worked on exclusively. It would be necessary to survey only the new residents to a city or new students at a university to determine what they use the World Wide Web for and what they get out of using the World Wide Web. There would be fewer complications than sampling an entire section of the population like I attempted to do. However, if the future researcher would want a basis for comparison, he or she would have to survey a wider portion of the student body like I attempted to do.

It may also be intriguing to develop a critical framework that will allow a researcher to study both the access problems of the Digital Divide and the uses and gratifications theory. As I mentioned before, it was assumed that people knew how to use a radio and a television when they first came out as a product to be bought by the public. However, that assumption is not inherently true when dealing with the Internet and more specifically, the World Wide Web. Many people still do not know how to use the World

Wide Web properly. They still do not know how to use a search engine to search for information. However, because the Web is so pervasive in our society, some people may be ashamed to come forward and admit that they really do not know what they are doing on the World Wide Web. Based on my findings, I conclude that there likely is a second-level digital divide just based on the types of answers that I was getting in some of the Other questions that were already mentioned within the survey. Perhaps, the students did not know what certain web sites that they visit would fit under.

There are certainly different permutations available for the future researchers of this topic. Uses and gratifications of the World Wide Web has only been studied for the last 5 years because the World Wide Web just developed as a viable mass medium 7-10 years ago. While that is exciting to break into a new field, the researcher must always be careful to do good and responsible research that will lead to another building block in the shaping and molding of this theory.

Another limitation was the lack of one framework for what category gratifications go into. I ended up adapting McQuail's (1974) framework but it simply placed too much emphasis on Entertainment/Escape. If I could do it over again, I'd create my own framework, based on what I have read in the literature and the factor analyses that I ran. That would help me form my own framework with questions specifically designed to track what I wanted to track.

APPENDIX I

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Survey Length – 20 minutes

Why do this survey? – Grad Student (in Hank Greenspun School of Communication) project

What will your responses be used for? – Thesis data

The purpose of this survey is to find out what you use the World Wide Web for and what feelings you from using the Web.

First, I'd like to know a little about your Web use and the use of electronic media because it will help me to understand what you use the Web for as a student at UNLV.

1. How many hours, on average, do you spend using the World Wide Web per week?

_____ hours _____ I don't use the Web.

2. When you go online, how often do you use the Web for these activities?

	Never			Sometimes				Always	
Visiting local TV station sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Visiting local newspaper sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
National newspaper sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
National magazine sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
TV network sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sports news sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Entertainment news sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Government sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Academic research	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

E-Mail	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Online Registration for School	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Online game playing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Chat room sites	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Listening to radio, live or online	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Other (please specify what activity and how often in lines below)

Next I'd like to know about your use of more traditional media, because it will help me compare your use of traditional media with the more modern types of electronic media.

3. How many hours per week do you spend at these other media activities? (Place the number in the box next to the activity. Please put 0 in the box if you do not do that activity)

Traditional Media Activity	How many hours per week?
Watching local TV news.	
Watching TV news on main channels. (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, UPN, WB, PBS)	
Watching entertainment programs on the main channels.	
Watching entertainment programs on cable. (Any channel other than main channels listed above)	
Watching rented or purchased movies or other video entertainment.	
Reading a printed newspaper, not online	

Reading a printed magazine, not online	
Listening to the radio.	
Listening to CD's or cassettes.	
Going to the movie theatre.	
Reading books.	
Playing video games.	

Other media (Please specify in lines below and
how many hours):

Please help me understand why you use the World Wide Web, because it will help me
understand what you get out of using the Web as a student at UNLV.

4. I use the World Wide Web because

	Don't Agree at All					Agree totally
Because it's exciting.	1	2	3	4	5	
When I want to find specific information.	1	2	3	4	5	
So I can forget about work and other things.	1	2	3	4	5	
When there's a specific site I want to access.	1	2	3	4	5	
Because it's enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5	
So I can get away from the rest of the family others.	1	2	3	4	5	
So I can be with other members of the family or friends who like to access the Web together.	1	2	3	4	5	
When I'm bored.	1	2	3	4	5	
Because it relaxes me.	1	2	3	4	5	
Because it amuses me.	1	2	3	4	5	
So I can learn about what can happen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	

Because it's a habit.	1	2	3	4	5
Because it's thrilling.	1	2	3	4	5
Because it passes the time.	1	2	3	4	5
Because it allows me to unwind.	1	2	3	4	5
Because it lets me feel less lonely.	1	2	3	4	5
Because I can keep in touch with family & friends.	1	2	3	4	5
Because I just like to access it.	1	2	3	4	5

Other (Please specify in lines below.)

DEMOGRAPHIC INFO (Finally, in order for me to understand patterns in your media usage, I'd like to know a little demographic information so that it will give me even more to compare to the other data you have given me.)

5. What is your age? _____

6. Are you **Male** or **Female**?

7. You are currently a: (Please check the one that applies)

- ☐ Freshman.
☐ Sophomore.
☐ Junior.
☐ Senior.
☐ Graduate student.
☐ Not currently attending UNLV.

8. How long have you lived in the Las Vegas area? _____

9. Do you consider yourself a Las Vegas resident? **Yes** **No**

10. If you do not consider yourself a Las Vegas resident, how often do you use the

Web to keep track of what is going on in your home town, city, or country?

- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ Rarely.
- ☐ Occasionally.
- ☐ Frequently.
- ☐ All the time.

11. Do you consider yourself a non-traditional student? **Yes No.**

If Yes, please explain why in lines below.

My contact person in the Hank Greenspun School of Communication is Dr. Julian Kilker (895-3729).

Notes: This survey was given single-spaced in a smaller font to fit every question onto a separate page so that the students would not be confused by the survey, but due to thesis guidelines, the appendix must be double-spaced.

APPENDIX II

GRATIFICATION VARIABLES CODED

Because it's exciting – Entertainment/Escape

When I want to find specific information – Personal Reasons

So I can forget about work and other things – Entertainment/Escape

When there's a specific site I want to access – Personal Reasons

Because it's enjoyable – Entertainment/Escape

So I can get away from the rest of the family or others – Entertainment/Escape

So I can be with other members of the family or friends who like to access the Web
together – Social Cohesion

When I'm bored – Entertainment/Escape

Because it relaxes me – Entertainment/Escape

Because it amuses me – Entertainment/Escape

So I can learn about what can happen to me – Surveillance

Because it's a habit – Personal Reasons

Because it's thrilling – Entertainment/Escape

Because it passes the time – Entertainment/Escape

Because it allows me to unwind – Entertainment/Escape

Because it lets me feel less lonely – Social Cohesion

Because I can keep in touch with family and friends – Social Cohesion

Because I just like to access it – Entertainment/Escape

APPENDIX III

OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS APPLICATION AND APPROVAL FORMS

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Name: Peter Testa, Master's Student in Hank Greenspun School of Communication

Department: Communication

Title of Study: "The Uses and Gratifications of the World Wide Web at UNLV"

1. *Subjects:* This survey will be handed out to undergraduate students in communication classes during their COM 101 or COM 102 classes. Because of the large and diverse population in these classes, equitable selection of male and female subjects will be obtained by passing out the survey in these classes to a fair number of both men and women.

2. *Purpose, Methods, Procedures:* The purpose of the study is to determine the uses and gratifications of using the World Wide Web for UNLV students. Because of the unique diversity that exists in Las Vegas, a different population exists at UNLV in an ever-changing city like Las Vegas. As a conscientious researcher, I plan to use the opportunity of surveying a unique population in a very different city than most cities. The research methods will be to give out the survey and informed consent forms in COM 101 and COM 102 classes to a fair amount of men and women. The procedures involved will be that I will go to these classes on dates where I've scheduled this survey to be given with the instructor of the class, and I will hand out the printed surveys and consent forms to a fair amount of both male and female subjects.

3. *Risks:* There is a very minimal amount of psychological risk at hand here. All I am asking of the subjects is their degree of media usage and some demographic information about themselves. In order to protect their anonymity, their names will not be asked for in the survey and there will be no identifying information from within the questions. I will encourage subjects to ask me how I can make them more comfortable about certain questions.

4. *Benefits:* Subjects will get to see how a survey works, firsthand. Also, in case subjects may plan to go to graduate school, they will see what it takes to do a survey in order to finish a graduate thesis and acquire a Master's of Arts degree in Communication. It is my opinion that this survey could potentially be useful to both students and professors at UNLV because they will see what types of students visit what types of web sites. For example, one question asks if a person is a non-traditional student. If the UNLV administration sees data on non-traditional students and the types of web sites that they typically visit, they could make non-traditional students even more comfortable than they already have.

5. *Risk-Benefit Ratio:* Since there is very little risk to participating in this study, subjects can only gain by seeing how a survey works in case they have to do one themselves someday.

6. *Costs to Subjects:* There is very little cost to subject except answering the survey during their class time. There is no risk of hospitalization, extra lab tests, travel, or time missed from work.

7. *Informed Consent:* Along with passing out the surveys, I will also pass out the informed consent forms. Then after the survey is completed, I will collect the surveys and the informed consent forms in two separate piles so that there is no way that anyone

could ever match up the subject's signature/name with their responses on the surveys. I will be responsible for obtaining informed consent forms, and they will be stored at UNLV in a locked cabinet for a period of at least 3 years. The actual informed consent form is drafted on the subsequent pages of the survey.

8. *Child/Youth Assent:* Since all respondents will be college students attending a class and all will be 18 years of age or older, a child/youth assent form is not needed.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Department of Communication

Informed Consent

General Information:

I am Peter Testa from the UNLV Department of Communication. I am the researcher on this project. I am a graduate student in the Hank Greenspun School of Communication here at UNLV. You are invited to participate in a research study. The study will provide data that will be analyzed and used in a thesis that will help me acquire my Master's of Arts Degree in Communication. The data is about your media usage and some demographic information.

Procedure:

If you volunteer to participate in the study, you will be asked to do the following: You will be asked to answer all questions as honestly as you possibly can about your media usage and demographic information. This survey will take 15-20 minutes.

Benefits of Participation:

By participating you will be helping a fellow student out in his quest to get data for his thesis project. You will also receive an increased understanding of how a survey actually works from the participant point of view.

Risks of Participation in:

You may experience a bit of discomfort in answering questions about your media usage and your demographics. However, no one will ever be able to match up your name with the responses you will give if you choose to participate in this survey. You may also

be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You are encouraged to discuss this with me. I will explain the questions to you in more detail.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this study or if you believe you may have experienced harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, please contact myself at 338-4761.

For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact *the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects* at 895-2794.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality:

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time, the information gathered will be destroyed.

Participant Consent:

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant _____ **Date** _____

Participant Name (Please Print) _____

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