

***Who You Are and Where You've Been:
Factors Influencing Student Online International News Reading***

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, young adults are not known for a high level of interest in news, and Americans, in general, are not known for a high level of interest in international news. Societal forces such as 9-11 and the War on Terror coupled with advances in technology have increased individual use of and access to the Internet. Interestingly, international travel is also on the rise. Employing a uses and gratifications approach, this study suggests that identity (young reader or student gender and citizenship) and international familiarity (international travel experience) influence online “international news” – an illusory term, as this study states - reading. Almost 1,000 students randomly selected from a large southwestern university participate in a pilot study, Web-based survey. Significant relationships were found between gender and international experience, or the number of countries one has visited, and online international news reading. Limitations to the study are noted, and suggestions for further research, including future analyses of citizenship, race and class, are proffered.

Traditionally, young adults are not known for a high level of interest in news, and Americans, in general, are not known for a high level of interest in international news. Several studies substantiate this claim. For example, a recent Pew report states that one of its "...latest news media habits survey[s] has some familiar results about newspaper reading. Once again, fewer people are reading newspapers, and the declines in readership are greatest among young adults and the younger segment of the baby boom generation"¹. Other reports indicate that Americans are most interested in topics such as health and education news² and that when seeking news online, the top ten most requested Web site categories relate to entertainment, humor or shopping³.

Over the last few years, editors have taken several measures, including content and medium enhancements⁴, to coax audiences, including young adults, online to news sites. The most successful bait for young adults to online news sites has been an increase in international news coverage⁵.

Two initial reasons for interest in international news stand out. One is related to societal issues; the other concerns access to technology. Regarding societal issues, the events surrounding Sept. 11 and the resulting War on Terror cannot be understated. Although international news reading had "eroded steadily since the end of the Vietnam War," the Sept. 11 World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks⁶ reversed that. "The demand for news and information on September 11 also spilled over to the Internet. For the first time, the Internet was viewed as an alternative channel for obtaining in-depth news and information", and this trend has not ended⁷. As an example, Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services experienced a 30 percent increase in Web site purchases and signed

on 16 college newspapers for its campus news service within one month of the attacks⁸. Further, a variety of Web sites were consulted during last year's war in Iraq; "the web sites that people gravitated to most were those of established institutions – first TV news sites, then newspaper sites, followed by the U.S. government site and then foreign news sites"⁹.

Concerning technological advances, accessibility enables the desire for information, particularly online international news, to be realized. As of "Sept. 2003, over half of the people in the United States – 150 million – went online. Various surveys indicate that half to two-thirds of those who go online use the Internet at least some of the time to get news"¹⁰.

The question rises: *Considering these events, why has an increase in international news coverage attracted a basically non-reader audience to the net for information not typically sought? In other words, what additional factors influence young adults to read international news online?* The purpose of this study is to investigate this research area, employing the uses and gratifications approach as the theoretical basis.

Context and Theoretical Link

In preparing to address the research question, two sub-questions must be analyzed. First, *what is meant by "news?"* And second, *which group of young adults is turning to the Web for such information, and why?*

Concerning the definition of "news", industry analysts question this, claiming that news has transformed at least since the turn of the millennium. "As we at MSNBC.com

enter our fifth year as an Internet news organization, it is clearer than ever that the Internet is not only redefining news, it's changing viewing patterns, creating new methods of storytelling and, most importantly, re-engaging people in the world of public affairs"¹¹. Further, academics have stretched this idea to also inquire what the meaning of "international news" is. Although the definition remains blurred, researchers have found that stories about ordinary people with foreign datelines are the most interesting to American audiences paying attention to international news¹².

Regarding who is reading and why, academics have also learned that with the changes in online news, segments of the population have reacted differently; gender plays a significant role not only in technology adoption¹³, but also in online news searching. Although the gender gap between males and females using the Internet is lessening, and this as a function of experience and/or familiarity with the medium¹⁴, differences among gender preferences for online news topics persist¹⁵ as does time spent daily with the medium (studies indicate that males spend almost twice as much time online reading news than do females)¹⁶. Age also plays a large role; those 18-34 spend a significantly larger amount of time (74 minutes a day) online than those 35 and older (47 minutes a day)¹⁷.

In short, a gender component, particularly among what can be classified as young adults, influences who is reading online international "news". In addition, that the Internet has emerged as a unique news provider, especially for various audience segments, is obvious. Part of the reason why relates to the medium itself and its user-ability; users can tailor information searches to meet their specific objectives and enjoy

the medium's immediacy as well as its flexibility¹⁸. Another relates to an additional component of technology and "internationalness": international travel. While international travel decreased initially after 9-11¹⁹, it is on the increase again²⁰, primarily among young adults²¹.

Theoretically speaking, the uses and gratifications approach to media studies proposes a rationale to explain why young adults could be reading online international news. It specifies that media audiences are proactive in their media content and medium selection, and they hope to derive specific gratifications from their media involvement.

The uses and gratifications approach, to offer a brief overview, has progressed through at least three stages of development²², and it dates back as early as the 1940s and 1950s. At that time, researchers turned from a more passive audience understanding, with questions such as what the media do to people, to a more active audience interpretation, with studies concerning what people do with their media²³. Scholarship focusing on the more active role of the audience became apparent through, for example, Berelson's late 1940s study of newspaper reading motivations²⁴. He surmised that newspaper audiences used their medium for such gratifications as "information and interpretation of public affairs, a tool for daily living, respite/escape, social prestige and social contact"²⁵.

International research applying this approach has been based on a common set of assumptions. Linked with Berelson's study, those include:

- Media use is goal directed; mass media are used to satisfy specific needs, drawn from one's social environment;
- Receivers select the types of media and media contents to fulfill their needs;

- The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction, such as friends, family, etc.; and
- Audience members are aware of their needs and reasons for using media.²⁶

McQuail reports further that “the process of media selection as described by Katz et al. [those given credit for the approach’s origin] (1974: 20)... [is] concerned with: (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 exposure (or engaging in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratification and (7) other consequences”²⁷. Melding these perspectives, the uses and gratifications approach argues that media audience members are proactive in their media choices and media content consumption, as per varying sets of experiences, desires and motivations. These sets can be collapsed into four general categories, namely surveillance, or the cognitive ordering of the environment; curiosity, or the need to know about particular events or phenomena; diversion, or escape; and personal identity, or sense of self-meaning”²⁸.

Critics of the uses and gratifications paradigm argue that it cannot be used to justify audience behavior for a number of reasons. They claim, for example, that the perspective is non-theoretical, is vague in defining key concepts such as “needs,” is methodologically handicapped in that it is “basically nothing more than a data-collecting strategy,” focuses too narrowly on the individual, and neglects the problem of media hegemony²⁹. Despite these criticisms, the uses and gratifications approach offers a unique and plausible perspective for explaining audience power, or, in this instance, the ability to choose not only a medium of choice, but also the kind of information one wants from that medium.

Many applications of the uses and gratifications model exist³⁰, but few apply directly to the study of online/Internet news, and even fewer relate particularly to online international news. By examining factors of user identity (gender) and experience (defined here as international travel), it is hoped that this study will contribute not only to the “theoretical” development of the uses and gratifications approach, but also to the general understanding of needs influencing a younger audience’s online international news preference. Particular to this study, the uses and gratifications model offers a way to explain factors influencing audience medium and content choice; students’ identity – defined for this study as their gender - and experiences – based upon their degree of international travel, as previously indicated, coupled with their desires and motivations to learn more, influence their medium of choice, the Internet, and its contents, international news.

These ideas can be stated in brief as:

based on the information regarding gender and the Internet, and applying it to this study,

H1: *Men will read online international news more than women will.*

Also,

RQ#1: *What is the relationship between international experience and online international news reading?*

International experience, for the purpose of this paper, is defined by one’s physical travels to locations outside the United States.

Methodology

A graduate research methods class surveyed 10,248 randomly selected college students at a large southwestern university. Students were randomly selected using a three-part procedure. First, email addresses of all students were collected from the university's records office; second, a systematic random sample with a random start point was employed once the sampling frame and sample size were known and the skip interval calculated³¹; third, a listserv with the sample entries was created.

Students in the listserv were emailed a request to complete a 56-item Web-based survey. Questions concerned their media usage and/or habits, lifestyles, demographics, opinions on public affairs, etc. For example, to understand how often students read various kinds of information online, they were asked if they often, sometimes or never searched for information such as health and fitness news, sports, pornography, weather, etc., as well as local, hometown, national and international news. They were also asked how often (never, 1-2 days, 3-4 days, 5-6 days, everyday per week) they watched local news, network news, cable news, and read Internet news. Students were promised confidentiality and directed to click on a link to the questionnaire, which would be available from Nov. 4 through Nov. 10, 2003. A reminder email was sent on the third day. The survey results were automatically sent to a database.

After survey responses – which totaled 842, a response rate of about 8 percent - were collected from the Web database and appropriately coded by the graduate students, the coded data were input into the computer. Even though the survey response rate appears low, it must be noted that Web surveys are a recent methodology³² and that a data

pool large enough to test for statistical significance was still achieved. Frequencies, crosstabulations and other appropriate statistics for measurements at the nominal and ordinal levels were produced with SPSS, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

In particular, to address the research area, *What factors influence young adults to read international news online?* tests centered around one hypothesis and explored one research question. To reiterate, those are:

H1: *Men will read online international news more than women will.*

RQ#1: *What is the relationship between international experience and online international news reading?*

Once again, international experience has been defined as the number of one's physical travels to locations outside the United States. To measure "international experience", students were asked open-endedly how many countries they have visited. Responses will be discussed in the results section of this paper.

Results

Sample Profile. Age and Student Classification. Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 63 years, with 82 percent being 28 years or younger, the average age being 24 (mean), and the most common age being 20 (mode). Sixty-four percent of students are undergraduates, while 37 percent are graduates.

Gender, Major and Race. More female (56 percent) than male (44 percent) students participated, and students' majors varied; 26 percent of students are liberal arts majors, 16 percent are natural science majors, 13 percent are communications majors, 11 percent are architecture and business majors as well as engineering majors, 9 percent are

fine arts and information and law majors, and 8 percent are either decided or another major. Ethnic diversity lacked; 75 percent said they are white or Caucasian, 9 percent Hispanic or Latino, 5 percent Asian American, 2 percent African American. In other words, 75 percent are Caucasian, while 25 percent are not³³.

Citizenship and Income. The majority of students participating (96 percent) indicated they are American, and many of the students probably consider themselves as dependents, as 30 percent classified themselves in the \$100,000 or more range. Otherwise, twenty percent of students indicated that they are in the under \$20,000 range; 26 percent are grouped in the \$20,000 to \$59,999 category; and 23 percent fall in the \$60,000 to \$99,999 category.

Reading Information Online: Focus on - International News. Of twelve different categories of content, international news was the *second* most frequently read news category. According to Table 1, 50 percent of the respondents read international news often, and 37 percent read it sometimes. In total, 87 percent of respondents are reading online international news.

**Table 1: How Often Students* Read Information Online
Periodicity for Reading Information Online**

Information Categories	<i>Often</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Never</i>
	%	%	%
National News	58	34	8
International News	50	37	13
Weather	38	48	15
Entertainment	28	53	18
Sports	27	32	40
Science & Medicine	25	59	16
Technology	23	53	24
Local News	19	38	33
Business	14	45	41

Hometown News	14	38	48
Health & Fitness	13	58	29
Pornography	6	23	71

*N ranges from 833 to 838.

H1: *Men will read online international news more than women will.*

Support for H1 can be found in Table 2. It shows significant differences between male and female behavior; while 56 percent of males read international news often, only 45 percent of females – still a substantial showing – do. The differences for their “sometimes” and “never” behavior are not so strong; 33 percent of men, compared with 39 percent of women, sometimes read international news, while 10 percent of men and 15 percent of women never do. In short, males (56 percent) were more likely than females (45 percent) to read international news often.

TABLE 2: A Comparison of Male and Female Online International News Reading

	Male (%)	Female (%)
Often	56	45
Sometimes	33	39
Never	10	15
(Valid Cases)	(357)	(464)

$X^2 = 10.7$, d.f. = 2, $p < .01$, Cramer’s $V = .1$

RQ#1: What is the relationship between international experience and reading international news online?

To address this research question, international experience, as stated earlier, has been defined as the number of countries one has visited. Twenty-one percent of students said they have been to no or only one country (classified as “non-travelers”); 30 percent said they’ve been to two or three countries (classified as “low travelers”); 25 percent they’ve been to at least four but no more than seven countries (classified as “moderate

travelers”); and 24 percent said they’ve been to more than seven countries (classified as “high travelers”). In short, almost 80 percent of students have visited two countries or more.

To see if a relationship exists between international travel experience and online international news reading, a simple cross-tabulation was run. With a p-value less than .05, a significant (although weak: tau-c=-.2, gamma=-.3) relationship exists. Table 3 shows that the more countries one has traveled to, the more likely he or she is to read international news online; 67 percent of students who are high travelers often read international news online, compared with 50 percent who are moderate travelers, 42 percent who are low travelers, or even 40 percent who are non-travelers. In other words, those students who have less international experience, or who have been to fewer if any countries, are less likely to read international news online.

TABLE 3: A Comparison of International Travel Experience and Online International News Reading

	Non-travelers (%)	Low Travelers (%)	Moderate Travelers (%)	High Travelers (%)
Often	40	42	50	67
Sometimes	40	40	40	28
Never	19	19	10	6
(Valid Cases)	(178)	(248)	(211)	(199)

$\chi^2 = 44.267$, d.f. = 6, $p < .001$, tau-c=-.2, gamma=-.3

Discussion

To return to the main idea of this study, it is suggested that the younger audience, or students’, identity – defined here by gender and their citizenship - and experiences – based upon the level of international travel, coupled with their desires and motivations to

learn more, influence their medium of choice, the Internet, and its contents, international news. This is an application of the uses and gratifications perspective to better understand factors influencing student online international news reading and their need to know international news. It must be noted that although national news ranked first as the news topic most often read by students online, a study of international news, particular post Sept. 11, and particularly because of its position via this survey as the #2 kind of news read online among young readers, a study concerning online international news reading proved more interesting and important. The fact that a lack of research regarding this topic exists also points towards its necessity.

As previously noted, one of the uses and gratifications “tenets” is that of surveillance, or a user’s ability to order his or her environment. It is hoped that the hypothesis tested and the research question addressed in this study satisfy this definition and adds to the body of literature around it; students, male and female, are “surveying,” or ordering their environment, through their selection of online international news. As pointed out, a user’s identity – here defined as gender – should also increase the understanding. Gender influences his/her choice to view international news, with males doing so often significantly more so than females. It is interesting to note, however, that the difference decreases once the “often” and “sometimes” categories are combined; by this new calculation, 89 percent of men compared with 84 percent of women read online international news. The author cites this fact as a possibility, just as research currently shows the gender gap in a neutral medium to be decreasing, that the frequency gap of

often reading online international news between genders may one day disappear. This may occur as the difference in familiarity with the medium between genders disappears.

One other consideration regarding this similarity is that of the difficulty of defining international news. As previously pointed out, it is difficult to pinpoint from an American perspective just what is meant by this term; having non-American citizens included in this study's sample may complicate the issue, although such a small percentage of foreign students participated in this study (roughly 4%) that it is difficult to draw any significant conclusions. It can be noted that once the "often" and "sometimes" categories for reading online international news are collapsed, the difference between U.S. citizen-students and non-U.S. citizen-students reading international online news often virtually disappears; 91 percent of U.S. citizen-students and 93 percent of non-U.S. citizen-students read it. However, again, any definitive conclusions are virtually impossible to draw from this 4% sample. This area definitely requires additional research, not only into American understanding of the term, but international comprehension of it.

One's international experience – here defined by the number of countries a student has visited – also requires further discussion. Various reasons exist for why this age group would travel regardless of the Sept. 11 tragedy, including study abroad trips³⁴, personal exploration, etc. Surveillance, coupled with curiosity, is a reason why student travel would explain online international news reading; *familiarity* with an area breeds personal understanding of it and a desire, or curiosity, to know more³⁵.

This idea suggests at least two topics for future study. Had students not traveled so much before, and hence did not have a personal interest in international news? Does the kind of international experience – positive or negative – affect one’s gratification in reading international news online? Or perhaps, could the concept of familiarity be stretched to encompass not just a physical awareness of a location, but also a virtual through the advancements of current Internet technology? What of the relationship between online international news reading and need for orientation, as in the case of students related to or friends with soldiers overseas, regardless of international travel experience? This area deserves additional research.

As with any study, this one is not free from its limitations. For example, it has a low response rate, even for having been a Web-based survey. It must be noted, however, as pointed out, that literature regarding Internet survey response rates is still new. Some Web studies have received up to a 44 percent response rate³⁶. In a recent study on Internet surveys, it was noted, “Response rates in Internet surveys can be anything... up to 80 % and down to next to nil. The average response rate is just a function of the mix of methods used. The important thing is to make the best use of each method” and ‘method’ can include email invitations, having met participants, incentives and Web form rather than a cumbersome response format³⁷. Even though this study, with the reminder email, used appropriate mixed methods and, therefore, captured what researchers regard as the best response possible at the time, it should probably be called a pilot study at this stage. Future Web-based surveys should expand upon the ideas presented herein as well as offer incentives to increase the response rate.

Also, while this paper is citing the uses and gratifications approach, it focuses more on the uses elements of the paradigm than the gratifications sought. More research addressing this latter aspect of the theory is needed, particularly the “why” behind students reading online international news.

Conclusion

These findings are significant in a number of ways. First, they add, hopefully, to the small body of existing studies applying the uses and gratifications approach, particularly those focusing on the uses aspect, or surveillance, curiosity and personal identity as reasons for media content choice, to Internet research. It is also hoped, to restate, that these findings will add to projects concerning age and gender and online news reading and online international news reading³⁸, particularly since the Internet is an international medium.

Second, this study intends to suggest the concept of familiarity as an underlying concept in the uses and gratifications paradigm. This is particularly important as the Internet takes on more interactive and realistic virtual capabilities. It is anticipated that through the power of technology visiting a location physically as compared to virtually may one day blend through computer technology’s ability to combine sight, sound, smell, touch, etc. Until that time, the physicality of international travel deserves greater attention.

Third, although race and class or income were not within the scope of this paper, further studies into race and Internet studies, particularly those with a uses and gratifications perspective, is highly encouraged. Also, class, especially with 30 percent

of the sample indicating a household income of \$100,000 or more, is particularly important; with recent literature indicating that the digital divide continues to widen, it is noted that this particular student body sample may be a unique subset of the population, and, perhaps, not as representative of the younger online news reading audience as trusted.

Fourth, a unique relationship exists between what the students study and what they search for online. It is not unfathomable that what students, or the younger online audience, search for online directly relates to their summative experience, including what they are studying in school. More research into this connection, the individual sociological factors influencing medium choice, following the uses and gratifications approach, is also called for.

Lastly, it is hoped that this research inquiry will add further insight into why and how online international news readership trends are increasing in the industry. Also, as a pilot study, it suggests an area for further inquiry into not only what international news is, from both an American and a non-American perspective, but which countries students are monitoring, and why.

¹ Kohut, A. (2002, July 1). Young people are reading – everything but newspapers. *Pew Research Center for The People & The Press*; <http://www.people-press.org>, retrieved March 2004.

²Johnson, M. (Dec, 2000). How well do editors know their readers? *Quill*, 88 (10), pp. 56-58.

³ See, for example, Facts & figures. (Mar/Apr 1999). *Online*, 23 (2), p. 16.

⁴ Lowrey, W. (Fall, 1999). From map to machine: Conceptualizing and designing news on the Internet. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 20 (4), pp. 14-28.

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- ⁵ See Smillie, D. (1997, Feb. 13). Foreign news finds niche on the Net. *Christian Science Monitor*, 89 (55), p. 12; & Pohlig, C. (Winter 2003). How a newspaper becomes 'H.I.P.' *Nieman Reports*, 57 (4), pp. 24-27.
- ⁶ Will TV news-or its audience-finally grow up? (Sept. 24, 2001). *Electronic Media*, 20 (39), p.9.
- ⁷ Rappoport, P. N. (2002). The Internet and the demand for news. *Prometheus*, 20 (3), p. 255.
- ⁸ Strupp, J. (2001, Oct. 8). Wires hum with activity as locals think globally. *Editor & Publisher*, 124 (39), p. 5.
- ⁹ The State of the News Media. (2004). Journalism.org. Retrieved from <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/index.html> on March 31, 2004, p.12.
- ¹⁰ The State of the News Media. (2004). Journalism.org. Retrieved from <http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/index.html> on March 31, 2004, p.11.
- ¹¹ Brown, M. (2000, Oct. 2). Bringing people closer to the news. *Brandweek*, 41 (38), p.1Q26.
- ¹² Hargrove, T., & Stempell III, G. H. (Fall, 2002). Exploring reader interest in international news. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 23 (4), pp. 46-51.
- ¹³ Ono, H. (March, 2003). Gender and the Internet. *Social Science Quarterly*, 84 (1), pp. 111-121.
- ¹⁴ Schmitz Weiss, A., Meraz, S., Figur, N., & Poindexter, P. M. (July, 2003). Experience and Internet news: The *real* reason for the online news reading gender gap. Presented at the 2003 AEJMC Annual Convention in Kansas City, MO, Newspaper Division.
- ¹⁵ Hargrove, T., & Stempell III, G. H. (Fall, 2002). Exploring reader interest in international news. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 23 (4), pp. 46-51.
- ¹⁶ Papper, R. A., Holmes, M. E., & Popovich, M. N. (Spring, 2004). Middletown media studies: Media multi-tasking... and how much people really use the media. *The International Digital Media & Arts Association Journal*, 1 (1), p. 34.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p. 36.
- ¹⁸ See: Rappoport, P. N. (2002). The Internet and the demand for news. *Prometheus*, 20 (3), p. 261; & Notess, G. R. (Feb/Mar 1996). News resources on the World Wide Web. *Database Magazine*, 19 (1), pp. 12-20.
- ¹⁹ Woodyard, C. (2003, March 25). War, terrorism scare off business travelers. *USA Today*, p. 01b.
- ²⁰ DeLisser, E. (2004, Feb. 26). Travel rebound? Passport applications jump. *Wall Street Journal – Eastern Edition*, p. D1, and Reina, P. (2003, Dec. 15). After a slump similar to America's, global aviation takes off. *ENR: Engineering News-Record*, 251 (24), pp. 43-46.
- ²¹ Gaines, A. (2001, Sep/Oct). Passport to knowledge. *Crisis (The New)*, 108 (5), pp. 38-41.
- ²² These include some descriptive studies in from the 1940s, variables linked to media consumption in the 1950s and 1960s, and alternatives to this limited-media effects paradigm in the late 1960s and early 1970s. See Perry, D. K. (1996). Theory and

research in mass communication: Contexts and consequences. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Mahwah, NJ, p. 50.

²³ Severin, W. J., & Tankard, J. W., Jr. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media*, 5th ed. Addison, Wesley Longman, Inc.: NY.

²⁴ Berelson, B. (1949). What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means, in P. Lazarsfeld and F. Stanton (eds.), *Communication Research 1948-1949*. Harper: NY.

²⁵ Poindexter, P. M., & Conway, M. (Winter, 2003). Local, network TV news shows significant gains. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 24 (1), p. 115.

²⁶ Adapted from Tan, A. S. (1981). *Mass communication theories and research*. Gird Publishing, Inc.: Columbus, OH, p. 298.

²⁷ McQuail, D. (2000). McQuail's mass communication theory, 4th ed. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, p. 388.

²⁸ Severin, W. J., & Tankard, J. W., Jr. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media*, 5th ed. Addison, Wesley Longman, Inc.: NY, pp. 297-298.

²⁹ Severin, W. J., & Tankard, J. W., Jr. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media*, 5th ed. Addison, Wesley Longman, Inc.: NY, pp. 297-298.

³⁰ The classic and one of the first examples is the anthology put together by: Blumler, J.G., & Katz, E. (eds.). (1974). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Sage: Beverly Hills, CA.

³¹ See Poindexter, P. M., & McCombs, M. E. (2000.) Research in mass communication: A practical guide. Bedford/St. Martin's: Boston, p. 89.

³² Baxter, L. A., & Babbie, E. (2004). *The basics of communication research*. Wadsworth/Thompson Learning. Belmont, CA: 196-198.

³³ Additional information regarding how these figures compare with university statistics can be obtained by contacting the author. They are intentionally left out of this study here to maintain confidentiality.

³⁴ Gaines, A. A. (Sep/Oct, 2001). Passport to Knowledge. *Crisis (the New)*, 108 (5), pp. 38-41.

³⁵ There is a lot to be said about *unfamiliarity* with an area, too, and dependency on the media for information because of that lack of acute awareness. (Please see, for example, Shoemaker and Reese's comments on molding social reality (Shoemaker, P.J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content*, 5th ed. Longman Publishers USA: White Plains, NY, p. 59.) That discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, however.

³⁶ see, for example, the recent 2003 UW-Madison Student Computing Survey found at <http://www.doit.wisc.edu/about/research/2003/student.asp> on December 9, 2003

³⁷ Marcussen, C. H. (2001). Response rates in Internet surveys – Experiences from an online expert survey into WAP for business travelers. *Innovations of Online Market Research*, IIRConferences.nl, Research Centre of Bornholm, Amsterdam, pp. 23, 20.

³⁸ As a side note, the author also personally contacted Poynter, Gallup and the LA Times to learn that no polling has been done to date regarding gender and reading International News Online.