

AN ILLUSION OF CONNECTEDNESS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN
SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUNG ADULTS' CURRENT EVENT KNOWLEDGE

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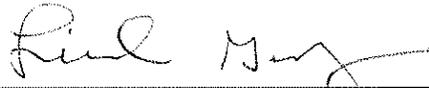
Approval Page

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AN ILLUSION OF CONNECTEDNESS: AN EXAMINATION OF THE LINK BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUNG ADULTS' CURRENT EVENT KNOWLEDGE

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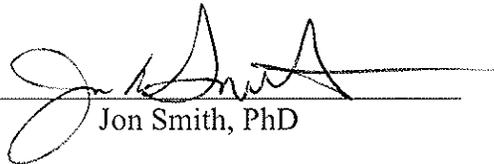
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Abstract

Current research clearly indicates the traditional sources of media use, such as newspaper and television, are declining rapidly among young adults (ages 18-24). As a result, worries over the political and social consequences of a disengaged generation have ensued. A lot of effort has been put forth in understanding why young adults don't tune in to the news and what the potential effects of disengagement are. While the understanding of what drives media habits has been the basis of numerous studies over the past 60 years, the present study seeks to discover a correlation between whether young adults think they are connected to the world around them via social media and whether they actually are connected. Young adults today have moved away from the trend of reading and watching the news, and have adopted their own ways of getting news that differs from those of past generations. New social media technologies have become a primary way of communicating for many young adults. Results of this study indicate that there is a correlation between the use of social media for news surveillance, and self-reported current-event knowledge and actual current-event knowledge. Individuals who report high levels of current event knowledge also report that they use social media for news surveillance. However, the results of this study show the levels of actual current-event knowledge do not match self-reported levels of current-event knowledge, indicating that young adults have an illusion of connectedness through the use of social media for news-gathering purposes.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Sharing news is a fundamental part of the human experience. Throughout a typical day, it is common for an individual to talk to others about what is going on in the world. News is shared in work, school and social settings with people sharing news about the weather, sports scores, entertainment, politics, and much more. Sharing news is unavoidable. As such, one would assume that all individuals would then have a need to rely heavily on a source to supply that news. This being said, the issue of media effects and reliance has been the object of research for the past several decades (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004; Ruggiero, 2000; Morris & Forgette, 2007; Jakob, 2010; Cantril, 1942; Wapples, Berelson, and Bradshaw, 1940; Suchman; 1942); Herzog, 1940, 1944; Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1942, 1944, 1949; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper, 1963; Mendelsohn, 1964; Gerson, 1966; Greenberg & Dominich, 1969; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper; 1963; McQuail, Blumer and Brown, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973; Johnstone, 1974; Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer, 1976; McQuail, 1994; Rubin, 1984; Windhal, 1981). Media scholars have focused heavily on how the consumption of news affects both the individual and society as a whole.

News is something that is discussed on a daily basis; however, few people other than communication gurus take care to define news and its effects on individuals. In fact, the definition of news itself means something different to each person. Itule and Anderson (2003) suggest that news is in the eye of the beholder. What is news to one person is not necessarily news to another person. News of a store closing may get mentioned in one geographic region while no mention in another. The simplest definition of news is a report of recent events or unknown information (Webster Dictionary, 2011). Anyone could then be a purveyor of news as

long as he/she is passing along a report of information; however, few scholars would accept the mere passing of information from one person to the next as a valid news source. What then can be considered news? For the purposes of this study, news can be defined as any piece of new information that emanates from both traditional and nontraditional media.

The history of the American public relying on news dates back as far as the pilgrims. Colonial Americans often hurried to meet the arriving ships to pick up letters and newspapers to hear the latest news from Europe. In 1690, Benjamin Harris tried to establish a colonial newspaper. The paper was published as *Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick* with the aim to furnish colonists “with and account of such considerable things as have arrived unto our notice” (Itule & Anderson, 2003, p. 11). The paper only ran one issue before it was shut down by Massachusetts Bay officials. Having a source of news of their own would not happen for colonists until 1704 when the first newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, made its appearance in the U.S (Archiving Early America, 2010). As was custom for the times, men would gather to discuss the happenings of the town and what was happening abroad. People would discuss what the paper printed about the news of business and politics in England and what was happening locally. Discussing current events was not only considered essential to decision-making, but it was also a form of entertainment. The hallmark of being a good citizen was being informed about current events and issues. Individuals felt that knowledge of current events was a valuable tool to making life decision (Shaw, 1991).

News still occurs today with decisions still having to be made on a daily basis. The only difference is now there are more ways for people to get their news. The emergence of radio, television, Internet, and mobile technologies makes the news instantly accessible. Many could not even imagine living a day without the ability to access information instantly. The reliance on

media technology has created a symbiotic relationship between people and media that has become the focus of several studies over the past five decades. Most past empirical research has been focused on what drives individual media choice and dependency (Ruggerio, 2000). From past research, the most notable theories to develop are Uses and Gratifications theory and Media-Systems Dependency theory.

For more than three decades, Media-Systems Dependency theory has provided an explanation to why individuals are dependent of certain media at both the macro and micro levels (Riffe, Lacy & Varouhakis, 2008). Digital media have become an integral and often indispensable part of everyday life for most individuals. Ball-Rokeach (1998) posited that "the Internet intrudes on traditional relations by being integrated into an expanded media system that may expand the reach of understanding, orientation, and play goals that individuals, groups, and organizations may attain through media dependency relations" (p. 32). The Internet has moved past just being a portal for information since the time Ball-Rokeach wrote those words. Now, the Internet has also become a social medium.

Despite the continued need for understanding of what drives media choice and dependency, the field of communication studies is saturated with studies examining the trends in the decline of news consumption and the effects that it will have on individuals and society as a whole (Cantril, 1942; Wapples, Berelson, and Bradshaw, 1940; Suchman; 1942); Herzog, 1940, 1944; Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1942, 1944, 1949; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper, 1963; Mendelsohn, 1964; Gerson, 1966; Greenberg & Dominich, 1969; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper; 1963; McQuail, Blumer and Brown, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973; Johnstone, 1974; Ball-Rokeach and DeFluer, 1976; McQuail, 1994; Rubin, 1984; Windhal, 1981). One of the most supported theories is that the pattern of news media use is on the decline. The biannual

survey on news consumption conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press shows that Americans are spending more time following the news than in the past because of new digital platforms available for consumer use. The Pew Center reported that “digital platforms are playing a larger role in news consumption, and they seem to be more than making up for modest declines in the audience for traditional platforms,” but the report also points out that 17% of Americans go “newsless” (Pew, 2010b). That is to say some people “avoid getting news despite the wide variety of options offered by new media technologies” (Campbell, 2010). News is widely accessible, yet several scholars have suggested that certain sectors of the population, particularly young adults, have fallen away from the ideal of being active consumers of news (Jarvis et al., 2009, LaRose, 2010; Moy et al., 2005).

Millennials today have moved away from the trend of reading and watching the news, and have adopted their own ways of getting news that differs from those of past generations. The decline in people accessing the news is not a new phenomenon. Several studies over the past five decades have attempted to measure news consumption patterns, and to quell fears that news media are going to become a relic of the past. A look at the history of mass media shows a pattern of the rise and fall of various media. All American mass media have gone through a steady rise to the top as the leader in the industry only to lose their readership, listenership or viewership to new, emergent media. Starting with newspapers in the early 1700s, the pattern of the “going up” and “coming down” of traditional mass media has become the norm rather than the exception (Shaw, 1991, p. 13).

The decline in newspaper readership can be traced back to research beginning in the 1960s (Shaw, 1991). A study conducted by the Simmons Market Research Bureau shows that from 1967 to 1987, “adults who reported reading a newspaper ‘yesterday’ declined from 76% to 65%

(Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009, p. 3). In 1998, The Newspaper Association of America indicated that readership dropped from 59% to 48% between 1998 to 2007. In 2008, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 34% of people reported they read a newspaper yesterday, with 29% reporting they read news online (Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009, p. 3). The Pew's annual report on the state of the news media confirms the pattern of the decline in newspaper readership. In 2010, the report showed readership had dropped down to 27% (Pew, 2010a).

Radio news is also seeing a decline in listeners. The national trend is the abandonment of news "in favor of music simply because the majority of every group, except for the oldest, prefer music" (Mindich, 2005, p. 31). National Public Radio found that the median age for their listeners was 49, with only 4 percent of their listeners in the 18-24 year-old age group. From 1993 to 2000, regular viewership of TV network news fell from 60 percent to 30 percent. (Mindich, 2005, p. 31). From 1980 to 2010, the rate of viewership has been on a steady decline (Pew, 2010a).

The data previously mentioned confirm the idea that fewer people are getting their news from traditional media. Mass media research has since tried to answer the question of why the decline in newspaper readership. The answer most commonly offered is that individuals are turning to other — perhaps more convenient — media to fulfill their need for information. The appearance of new technology such as the Internet, social media sites, and smart phones has changed the way consumers view print newspapers (Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009). No longer are individuals tied to an actual physical copy of a newspaper to gather information. Individuals can go to a countless number of web sites, on both their computers and their cell phones to pick and choose news. If the Internet and mobile technologies have made it easier for people to access

news content, does that mean that the rate of news consumption has gone up? The Pew Research Center reports that 61% of Americans are getting some sort of news from the Internet (Pew, 2010a)

In a world where news is widely available, the concern then becomes that young adults are quickly becoming a generation disengaged from current events. Now in the 21st century, knowledge of current events is still considered paramount to most sectors of the population and is considered the keystone of civic engagement. Previous research indicates a relationship between the decline of media consumption and democratic participation (Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009; Barnhurst & Wartella, 1991; Mindich, 2005). The belief is that an individual who doesn't follow the news — and by extension, lack knowledge of current local, national, and international events — will not have the understanding or the drive to participate in the democratic process. There is debate in both academic and popular writing about the varying degrees of both engagement and disengagement among young adults (Vidali, 2010; Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009; Barnhurst & Wartella, 1991; Mindich, 2005). Empirical evidence shows that young adults are turning to the news for information less and less (Mindich, 2005, p. 19). The concern among researchers of news habits is that the data show young adults are becoming a generation who are tuned out and do not care about the world around them.

Of particular interest in the study of the decline of media use is the nature of media exposure in the “rising generation,” or rather the Millennials. Millennials are classified as people born between 1980 and 2000 (Pew, 2010a, p. 11). There have been several studies aimed at discovering the level of engagement or rather the level of disengagement among young adults. The rate of the decline of Millennials' reliance on news and lack of knowledge about current events has brought many media researchers to question if this generation is headed on a

downward spiral toward disengagement (Kushin, 2009, p. 26). Now with the emergence of nontraditional media —such as social networks and blogs — people may have more choices in how they become informed, yet are still uninformed about current events (Hoplamazian & Feaster, 2009).

News consumption theories posit that without news, “there is no reliable information of any kind” (Mindich, 2005, p. 5). The evidence of a drop in media consumption time fails to address the problem of whether young adults have an illusion of connectedness based on their news grazing habits through social media. Social media is embedded into the daily life of young adults, more than any other previous dominant media (Pew, 2010b). Young adults are drawn to social media because of the interactivity and social interaction features (Lee, 2008). This study seeks to discover if there is a correlation between young adults’ self-reported level of current event knowledge and actual current event knowledge. This study will also examine if social media plays in young adult’s illusion of connectedness. This will be achieved through the use of Media-Systems Dependency (MSD) theory to examine how social media has changed young adults’ news gathering behaviors.

The next chapter of this thesis provides a more detailed literature review regarding Millennials and a brief overview of the historical development of MSD. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur’s core theory is also discussed in greater detail. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to conduct the survey and analyze the data from the surveys. Chapter 4 reports the results and the findings of the survey. Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of the survey results, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Most studies in the past have focused on reasons why individuals are attracted to specific media. The exploration of how the emergence of social media have influenced current event knowledge is a new avenue of research that is just beginning to be explored. The key purpose in the review of the current and past literature is to identify the potential framework that will be used as the basis of this study. The first step in understanding the shift on news knowledge is to understand what drives media reliance in the first place. The following literature review will then move from broad to narrow in order to build a firm foundation for the thesis study. First, Millennials' will be defined by the attributes and habits of their generation. Second, the historical development of Media-Systems Dependency theory will also be presented. The understanding of the history behind the development of a theory can provide valuable insight into the parsimony of said theory. Lastly, MSD will be discussed in detail with specific examples of research relevant to the current study.

Millennials Defined

Generations can be identified by their personalities, and the Millennials — people born roughly between 1980 and 1995 — are identified as being “confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change” (Pew, 2010b, p. 8). They are more ethnically and racially diverse than past generations. Millennials have achieved higher levels of education, with more than half (54%) of Millennials having received at least some college education. Compare that to previous generations where 49% of Gen Xers (ages 30-45), 36% of Baby Boomers (ages 46-64) and 24% of the Silent generation (ages 65 and older) received some college education when they were between the ages 18 to 28 (Pew, 2010b, p. 17). Although Millennials have been slated to become

the most educated generation in the history of America in terms of degrees earned, research shows they have shown a pattern of not knowing about what really is going on in the world around them (Mindich, 2005).

Millennials have grown up in an era where technology is at the forefront of every aspect of society and is changing faster than it ever has. Advances in media technology have given young adults constant access to news, music, games, weather, social network sites and friends. Young adults now may be connected to media with the tap of a screen or a click of a mouse around the clock. In fact, the Millennials' connectedness to technology is their "badge of generational identity" (Pew, 2010b, p. 32). Millennials believe technology use is what sets them apart from previous generations (Pew, 2010b, p. 20). They are history's first "always connected" generation, and are steeped in digital technology and social media. Millennials "treat their multi-tasking hand-held gadgets almost like a body part — for better or worse" (Pew, 2010b, p. 8).

Multiple media use is another trademark of the Millennials. Atkin (2004) suggests that the "measurement of media use is complicated by the use of two or more media at the same time" (p. 2). Millennials are often found to be texting, surfing the web, checking their social network websites, all while watching television (Pew, 2010b). In fact, three-fourths of Millennials have created a social networking profile (Pew, 2010b, p. 28) and spend substantial time on the Internet. In a 24-hour time period, 32% of Millennials spent time watching videos online, 32% posting a message to an online profile, 28% playing video games, and 56% sending or receiving an email (Pew, 2010b, p. 36). Compare that to older Americans who, in the same 24-hour period, are more likely to engage in different types of activities. Fifty-seven percent of older Americans are more likely to have watched more than an hour of TV, and 43% have read a daily newspaper (Pew, 2010b, p. 36). Understanding Millennials' basic demographics can help in understanding

their news consumption patterns.

Historical Development of MSD

Paramount to the understanding of Media-Systems Dependency theory — the key theory in this study — is a succinct view of its historical development. Motivational theories in psychology, sociology and communications have introduced a number of different perspectives to understand the reasons behind media use (Yang-Hwan, 2008). Yang-Hwan (2008) explains that in these perspectives, individual need comes before motivation, and “motivations affect individual’s activities” (p. 6). The motivation to fulfill needs can be traced back to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943). Maslow (1943) posited that everyone has needs in the areas of physiological, safety, love, and esteem. Once these needs are satisfied, people will often feel discontent and restlessness that can be quenched by the realization of self-actualization. Self-actualization needs can motivate individuals to fulfill their cognitive and affective needs.

People tend to rely on various types of media based on the desire to gratify the need for self-actualization. Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory has been used to explain the reasoning behind individual media choice. Stafford, Stafford & Schkade (2004) suggest that the uses and gratifications model takes a user-level in understanding mass media habits, although it is often applied to the study of new mass media innovations (p. 6). Uses and Gratifications is generally recognized to have its origins in media effects research. Several media scholars cite the Payne Fund Studies as the “progenitor” of uses and gratifications (Ruggerio, 2000). In 1928, the Payne Fund Studies — carried out by leading sociologists and psychologists Blumer, Hauser, and Thurstone — were initiated in response to the growing public concern about the effects of movies on children (p. 4). The studies looked at the basic content of movies and used a primitive form of content analysis to categorize what was typically seen. Edgar Dale identified ten

categories seen in the movies made between 1920 and 1930: children, comedy, crime, history, love, mystery, sex, travel, social propaganda, and war. His results showed that over 75% of the films used crime, love, and sex. The next step in the studies was to measure the emotional impact of the movies. The Payne Fund studies helped set the foundation for research on how media viewing affected individuals. The results of research to this point in media history helped to establish a legacy of fear, which refers to the widespread fear that the media was dangerous and corrupting society. This fear was furthered by CBS's broadcast of the "War of the Worlds" and the resulting panic of the public believing they were truly under attack by Martians. The mass panic spurred further research as to why so many listeners found the broadcast believable despite the disclaimer about it being a dramatic adaptation at the beginning of the show. Research gave way to the magic bullet model, which posits that once a message reaches the audience, it will have a uniform effect on all individuals (Sparks, 2006).

Cantril (1942) developed an approach to study the gratifications that attract and hold audiences to radio (as cited in Ruggiero, 2000). The research on what types of gratification lead to media use was repeated with Wapples, Berelson, and Bradshaw (1940) with reading; Herzog (1940, 1944) with quiz programs and radio daytime serials; Suchman (1942) with music; Wolfe and Fiske (1949) with children's comics; Berelson (1949) with newspaper reading; Lazarsfeld and Stanton (1942, 1944, 1949) with various media. Research from the 1950s on sought to recognize that media affect each individual in different ways, and that the study of media effects is more complicated than the blanket assumption the magic bullet model held (Ruggiero, 2000).

During the 1950s and 1960s, researchers sought to identify both the social and psychological variables that were thought to be the precursors of the patterns of gratification consumption (Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper, 1963; Mendelsohn, 1964; Gerson, 1966,

Greenberg & Dominich, 1969). Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1963) concluded “that children’s use of television was influenced by individual mental ability and relationships with parents and peers (as cited in Ruggiero, 2000, p. 5). Other researchers, such as Katz and Foulkes (1962), argued mass media was used as an escape from the stresses of everyday life. Mendelsohn (1964) identified the gratifications radio listening fulfilled: companionship, bracketing the day, changing mood, counteracting loneliness or boredom, providing useful news and information, allowing vicarious participation in events, and aiding social interaction. Klapper (1963) cautioned mass media researchers to pay attention to not only the reasons behind use, but also the consequences of use.

Research during the early 1970s sought to further identify reasons that drive media use. McQuail, Blumer and Brown (1972) suggest that individuals use media for: diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) posited that the reasons driving media choice are for connection with others or separation from others. Research up to this point in time showed that audience gratifications can be derived from media content, exposure to the media, and the social context of the media encounter (Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973).

Studies in the latter 1970s concentrated more on gratifications sought and obtained in order to refine the divisions and conflicts of gratification studies (McQuail, 1994). Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) suggested that using the point of view of U&G “simply represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communications, among other recourses in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals, and to do so simply by asking them” (p. 21). They argued that past uses and gratifications research had not yet evolved from a charting and profiling activity, and should future research should then focus

on the explanation of specific media choices. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch found that a combination of psychological disposition, sociological factors, and environmental factors determine what leads people to specific media to satisfy certain needs (p. 27).

Research in the 1980s and 1990s focused on advancing uses and gratifications from an approach to a theory. Rubin's (1981) research shows that the reasons for media use are: passing time, companionship, excitement, escape, enjoyment, social interaction, relaxation, obtaining information, and learning about a specific content. Jeffres (1997) describes exposure to news media as "the amount of time spent with the media or frequency with which one turns to one or more media or particular contents" (p. 27). The audience was now seen as being active and selective in their media choice (Rubin, 1984; Windhal, 1981).

The current view of U&G focuses on what people do with media rather than what media does to people. Uses and Gratifications acknowledge that people actively seek out media in order to gratify a specific need. Social and social- psychological factors in addition to determining uses can help explain what prompts media exposure in the first place (Johnstone, 1974, p. 35). Yang-Hwan (2008) suggests the research trends based on uses and gratification "have suggested a fundamental framework for scrutinizing relationships among individual's need, motivations, and activities," but that the theory is limited in terms of the level of analysis (p. 6). Uses and gratifications fails to address how information needs, individual personality, and stages of development could influence media dependency.

The Theory of Media-Systems Dependency

The foundational theoretical components of U&G set the framework for future studies that sought to explicate how individuals, rather than society as whole, use the media to meet a goal. Media-Systems Dependency theory was first introduced by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) in

their seminal research on how previous research on uses and gratification could be evolved to explain dependency on an individual level. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur posited that media-system dependency should be defined as “a relationship in which the capacity of individuals to attain their goals is contingent upon the information resources of the media system” (p. 6). According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, people must have a place to turn in order to make sense of the complex events that are happening around them. The media often steps in to help individuals reduce ambiguity about the world.

The search for the theories behind the effects and use of media has been focused primarily on stimulus-response probabilities of individuals in a situational field. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur’s research was in response to a call to overhaul U&G to come up with a more cohesive explanation for media dependency (Elliot, 1974). Elliot (1974) argues that one problem with U&G is that it treats mass communication in isolation from other social factors by focusing on individual process that cannot be generalized to societal structures (as cited in Rubin & Windhal, 1986, p. 184). In order to help account for the changes in the cognitive, affective, or behavioral aspects of people’s social realities, more than desires need to be looked at. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur argue that it is not sufficient to attempt to account for media use simply in terms of psychological characteristics, prior socialization, on-going group associations, or social characteristics. Instead, Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) suggest that “people’s social realities are regarded as not only a product of their social histories and current systems of symbolic interaction, but also as being fundamentally connected to the structural conditions of the society in which they live” (p. 4). In other words, mass communication involves complex relationships between the individual, media and society that must be weighed in the equation of media dependency (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1976).

At the basic level of Media-Systems Dependency Theory is the idea that there are two levels of application for uses and gratification: macro and micro. Grant, Guthrie and Ball-Rokeach (1991) suggest that the macro-level application of media system dependency explicates the interdependencies among audience, media, and society. The micro-level application of media system dependency further explicates the relationship individuals develop with mass media (Westgate, 2008). The micro-level has become more commonly referred to as individual media dependency, and focus more on both the psychological and sociological perspectives for understanding individual media choice (Yang-Hwan, 2008).

The understanding of what drives individual media dependency focuses on the extent to which individuals use media to achieve their goals. Ball-Rokeach (1998) points out that it is important to remember, “individuals rarely control resources that motivate media to open access to their knowledge resources” (p. 17). Individuals have little control over what is presented in the media, yet there still is a need to turn to the media to reduce ambiguity. MSD assumes that individuals are at a disadvantage when considered part of the three-way relationship between the audience, media and society. Yet, in order to function individuals require the information media provides about their social environment. MSD assumes that individuals are motivated to access news to achieve three primary goals: play, understanding, and orientation (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984). It is because media are in the position to supply the information individuals need to reduce ambiguity that individuals become dependent on media.

Media dependency follows the triad of media, audience, and society and meets three types of needs across each of these relationships: understanding, orientation, and play (Westgate, 2008). Skumanich and Kintsfather (1998) suggest that it is from these relation needs that dependency is formed. The more an individual has a need to understand an issue the greater the

dependency on media becomes to reduce the ambiguity or uncertainty felt. Media dependency also depends on the events taking place in an individual's life (Westgate, 2008; Merskin, 1999; de Certeau, 1984). Individuals will depend more on the news media to resolve ambiguity during times of crisis (Merskin, 1999). For this reason, media dependency research tends to be more focused on patterns of individuals during times of heightened ambiguity or crises (Ball-Rokeach, 1998; Cohen et al., 2002; Grant et al., 1999; Hirschburg et al., 1986; Kellow & Steeves, 1998; Kim et al., 2004; Lowrey, 2004; Skumanich & Kintsfather, 1998; Tai & Sun, 2005). Hindman (2004) suggests that it is during times of political crises, natural disasters, and other times of change or conflict that individuals become highly dependent on media for information (p. 29). The question then becomes how does media dependency work in everyday conditions. Individual dependency on media in everyday life is more about seeking to legitimize one's existence (De Certeau, 1984). Media dependency in times where change or conflict is perceived as being low fulfills a new need for clarifying personal and social ambiguity. Jakob (2010) suggests that for individuals, "the intensity of the dependency relation grows with the perceived helpfulness of the media in attaining personal goals" (p. 591).

The relationship between individuals and the media is what differentiates MSD from the other media effect theories examined in the previous section. Media-Systems Dependency is a theory of media power that examines which conditions will give rise to media power, and how that will in turn effect individuals (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) suggest that the individual is not only affected by media content, but also by the social environment in which they consume it.

The Role of Society in MSD

In Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's seminal research on media dependency, they posited that

there are numerous ways in which people are dependent on various media to help fulfill the need to obtain information in order to maintain a sense of connectedness and familiarity with the social world. The types of dependency range from the need to understand one's social world; the need to act meaningfully and effectively in that world; the need for fantasy-escape from daily problems and tensions (p. 6). From these types of dependency, the idea formed that as media technology evolves it will take on "more and more unique information functions" in society ranging from socially centered functions to providing information pertinent to the political decision making process (p. 6). This viewpoint shows that individuals and media can achieve their goals through interdependence on each other (Ball-Rokeach & Grant, 1990). Yet, Ball-Rokeach (1998) argued that although the media depends on individuals, individuals rarely control the resources that motivate media to open access to their knowledge resources. As such, the role of society must not be ignored when examining the effects of media dependency.

Central to the premise of MSD is the idea that individuals' dependency depends on both the micro and macro levels. Individual dependency relations with the media on the micro-level depend on the availability to access the media for information. The micro level concept can be summed up as:

The extent to which attainment of an individual's goal is contingent upon access to the information resources of the media system, relative to the extent to which the attainment of media system goals is contingent upon the resources controlled by individuals (Ball-Rokeach, Power, Guthrie & Waring, 1990, p. 250).

When looking at the macro level, then, individual dependency relations are dependent more on changes in the media and social systems rather than individual character and psychological traits

BallRokeach, 1985).

Rubin and Windahl (1986) posited that there are three relationships that must be looked at when examining media dependency. The first relationship is between society and media. Media depend on political systems for judicial, executive and legislative protection. Media also depend on society to provide employees who will further the economy of media. The second relationship is between the media and the audience. Media depend on society for readers, viewers and listeners. This relationship is the key variable in the model because of how this affects the use of a mass medium by individuals. Individuals depend on media to deliver information. Rubin and Windahl suggest “the more salient the information needs, the stronger the motivation to seek mediated information to meet these needs, the stronger the dependency on the medium, and the greater the likelihood for the media to affect cognitions, feelings, and behavior” (p. 185). The third relationship is between the society and the audience. Societies have the potential to influence the audience’s needs and motives for media use, and provide the norms, values, and laws governing media use.

Humans are naturally social, and as a result, individuals are drawn to people who think like they do or have had similar experiences. People naturally organize themselves into tribes; or rather they seek out those who are socially similar to themselves (Moran and Gossieaux, 2010). People are hyper-social, which refers to “humans’ unique inclination and ability to cooperate and interact widely outside of familial and small group contexts” (p. 233). There is no doubt in this century that social media has changed the face of media, given the natural draw people have to be part of a larger social network. New to the equation of individual media dependency is social media. Social media can be described as “an online place where a user can create a profile and build a personal network that connects him or her to other users” (Pew Internet & American Life

Project, 2007, p. 1). Social media have become source for goal satisfaction among individuals. Yang-Hwan (2008) suggests that social media is quickly becoming the medium of choice for individuals seeking to gratify the need to reduce ambiguity. Mass media use in social contexts satisfies the individual need to understand what is going on with friends and peers. Friends within the same social circle will tend to have similar gratifications that need to be fulfilled and thereby similar media choices. Social media can then be seen as an influence on media dependency in order to fulfill the need for information (Frimel, 2008).

Dimensions of Dependency Relations

Ball-Rokeach (1998) describes five conceptual dimensions, or rather scopes, of the individual-media dependency relation: structure, intensity, goal, referent, and resource. Although the goal scope was not mentioned first by Ball-Rokeach, it must be discussed first because of the role it plays in the other scopes. The goal scope refers to an individual's motivation to access to play, orientate, and understand (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach, et al., 1984). That is to say that individuals have certain information goals that need to be obtained, and that the media can provide the information to help achieve those goals. Individuals then become dependent on the media as a means to achieve goals. The goal to play, orientate, and understand each have two subcategories that must be taken into consideration. The goal for play is divided into self and social. This can be seen in individuals who seek media information either alone or with people to reduce stress or for entertainment. The goal to orientate motivates individuals to access media for information on how to properly act within their society. The goal to understand is divided into self-understanding and social-understanding. When individuals access media, it can help explain who they are or help explain uncertainties in their social environment (Ball-Rokeach, 1998).

The structure scope refers to the “degree of asymmetry in control over dependency-engendering resources” (Ball-Rokeach, 1998, p. 19). That means within the structure of the individual –media relation, individuals lack the capacity to control the information resources paramount to the media in order to survive. The media then has control over the information resources needed by an individual to achieve a goal. The intensity scope refers to the “perceived exclusivity of resources for goal attainment” (Ball-Rokeach, 1998, p. 19). On the individual level, intensity can be defined as perceived helpfulness of the selected media sources for the attainment of the goal. A dependency will be formed if the individual perceive the selected media source as being successful in obtaining a goal.

The referent scope refers to the number of media outlets that an individual is dependent upon when achieving their goals. For example, if an individual wants to achieve the goal of play, she might access the Internet, newspaper, and television news to seek information on Spring Break activities. She would then have a larger referent scope than her roommate who relied on only the television to find out about activities to do over the break

The resource scope refers to the range of informational resources available to either the individual, media, or society. Resources include the ability to create, process, and disseminate information. The media have traditionally stepped into the role of being informational resources because of the resources they have. The media has the staff to research and produce the news, and they have the technology to widely disseminate their information. The average individual lacks the resources that media have, and as a result only have the ability to share information within a peer group.

From these scopes, it can be concluded that MSD is more about the power of the relationships in media dependency. Emerging technology has provided individuals with wider

scopes through which they can achieve their goals, and provide them with the potential to have more control over which medium they are dependent upon. Media consumption is then understood to determine what effects will be had upon an individual.

Media Dependency Effects

There are three general categories of media effects that are supported by MSD: cognitive, behavioral, and affective. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) described five types of cognitive alteration effects of individuals' dependency upon media. The first is changes or events in an individual's social environment will result in the creation and resolving of ambiguity. When an event occurs, the individual may lack sufficient information to interpret what the event means. In other words, the individual is uncertain or experiencing ambiguity about the event. They must then find a source of information to resolve the feeling of ambiguity. In times of high uncertainty, such as during a natural disaster or times of political unrest, individuals will seek out more information in an attempt to resolve ambiguity (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). For example, individuals became dependent on all news outlets during the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The event induced ambiguity over whether further attacks would occur or if the country would go to war immediately. The ambiguity over the perceived threat of another terrorist attack or the worry over a war ensuing led to increased media use by individuals (Lowrey, 2004). Individuals were uncertain about the level of threat to themselves and their loved ones. As a result, the media positively influenced the dependent individuals on their attitudes toward the president's actions (Hindman, 2004).

The second type of cognitive effect is attitude formation. The media provide information to individuals about new events, public figures, public health and safety issues, and local concerns, which in turn contribute to the formation of attitudes towards issues and events (Ball-Rokeach

and DeFleur, 1976). For example, in 2009 the negativity about the H1N1 virus influenced people's attitudes toward the flu. Every night on the news, viewers heard stories of cities crippled by the spread of the flu. There were stories of people dying or suffering immensely from the flu. Images of people walking around with masks to protect themselves flashed across the screen during most news stories (Blitzer, 2009). The virus was new and created ambiguity over whether it would morph into a deadly pandemic. Over the following months, the media painted a dire picture of a widespread pandemic comparable to the deadly Spanish flu outbreak in 1918. The general feeling about the H1N1 virus has been one of grave concern or even panic, despite the fact that the common strain of the flu also claims thousands of lives every year and that the attitude toward the regular flu is one of indifference. The public's dependency upon the media to reduce ambiguity resulted in a change of attitude.

The third effect is agenda-setting process, which refers to the idea that the media have the power to influence what the public perceives as important issues (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). The theory of agenda setting posits that the media exerts influence on people's perception of "what are the most salient issues of the day" (McCombs & Reynolds, p. 1). People are bombarded by hundreds of messages and stories every week, and are often influenced by what they encounter through the media. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) suggest that the agenda-setting effect, or the correlation between issues that individuals report as important and media coverage of those issues to the media—society—audience relationship. Individuals are motivated to use the media to reduce concern about their social environment. Individuals in a similar location or social environment should then have similar agendas based on what is presented in the news.

The fourth effect is the expansion of individuals' belief systems. The media have the

ability to broaden or change individuals' beliefs by providing information about relevant topics. Individuals seek out information in order to fulfill a goal, which in turn may lead to changes in a belief. Individuals have a vast array of media to choose from to satisfy the need to research a topic (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976). For example, individuals who hear about the health benefits of a vegan diet may turn to the Internet or broadcasts on nutrition to learn about the pros and cons of such a lifestyle change. The information obtained could influence the individual's belief about avoiding all animal products.

The fifth cognitive effect is the media's potential impact upon values. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) define values "as very basic beliefs that people hold about wither desirable end states of existence (e.g., salvation, equality, freedom) or preferred modes of conduct (e.g., honest, forgiving, capable" (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976. p. 13). The information presented by the media that may result in value conflict within an individual, which in turn results in ambiguity. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) caution that media alone would not likely change such values, but may play an important rule in helping individuals clarify their values.

The effects of dependency are contingent upon the level of media use and the individual. Hendrickson (1989) suggested that media dependency means "getting much of one's information from that medium" (p. 877). For example, an individual who relies strongly on television for entertainment will also get much of his information from television. Television and Internet reliance for news knowledge seems like it would go hand-in-hand with Millennials being so connected to technology, yet the research shows Millennials aren't necessarily relying on technology to seek out news. Instead, Millennials are simply being exposed to news by chance encounters through technology. Just because an individual is exposed to a medium, it does not automatically follow that the individual depends on that medium for information. Media

dependency and media exposure are clearly distinctive in that “exposure accounts for less than the other dimensions of media consumption behavior, reliance, content use, attention, and gratifications” (Moy, Torres, Tanaka & McCluskey, 2005, p. 61). However, Fry and McCain (1983) suggest that media dependency varies “from condition to condition and from audience segment” and that “audience members depend on some sources for certain types of information and other sources for other types of information” (p. 542). The Millennials’ dependency on traditional media, such as newspapers and television, for news has been shown to be less than average (Pew, 2010a).

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) also described affective and behavioral effects of media dependency. Media consumption can have impact on an audience’s feelings and emotional responses. According to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976), media content can trigger emotional responses to situations or they can impact morale. They suggest that fear, anxiety, and trigger happiness are illustration of emotional affective effects. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) give the example of how prolonged exposure to news messages or TV shows portraying violence or calamity in a specific location can increase a person’s fear of traveling to that area. Morale and alienation serve as the final example of affective effects on individuals. From the media, individuals can gain a sense of collective well-being and belonging from which “the sense of collective well-being and ‘we feeling’ that promotes morale and that combats alienation is a fragile product of successful social relations that cannot be developed or maintained without effective communication systems” (p. 15). Individuals who are dependent upon the media as a primary source of information about their social system may experience affective changes.

The resolution of ambiguity can lead to the formation of new attitudes and feelings. There are two types of behavior changes that can result from media dependency: activation and

deactivation. Ball- Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) describe activation as “instances in which audiences members do something that they would not otherwise have done as a consequence of receiving media messages” (p. 16). Deactivation refers to the change in behavior that leads to the audience members to no do something that they would have otherwise done. The relationships formed through media dependency have the potential to change the way individuals react to the world around them.

A review of literature gives support to the idea that young adults use social media to connect to the world around them in order to reduce ambiguity. Scholars have invested time and resources in to developing theories that help to explain media consumptions habits (Cantril, 1942; Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw, 1940; Suchman, 1942); Herzog, 1940, 1944; Lazarsfeld and Stanton, 1942, 1944, 1949; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper, 1963; Mendelsohn, 1964; Gerson, 1966; Greenberg & Dominich, 1969; Katz and Foulkes, 1962; Klapper, 1963; McQuail, Blumer and Brown, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973; Johnstone, 1974; Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976; McQuail, 1994; Rubin, 1984; Windhal, 1981). Uses and Gratifications theory originally offered an explanation as to the various reasons why people were attracted to media (McQuail, Blumer and Brown, 1972; Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas, 1973). Ball- Rokeach and DeFleur’s (1976) took the idea of being attracted to media to fulfill a need a step further by suggesting that individuals depend on media systems in order to attain specific goals. This study will focus on young adults dependency on social media to reduce ambiguity; however, there is value in understanding how individuals of all ages depend on certain media to meet specific goals. From this understanding, researchers can see how individuals can have an illusion of understanding and connectedness to current events.

Chapter Three

Hypotheses and Research Questions

An examination of past research shows that the rate of news consumption decline and the reasons behind it have already been investigated. The question of why young adults do not follow the news is beyond the scope of this study. An analysis of the literature has already shown that young adults are more disconnected from current events than any other generation has been at the same age (Hoplamazian and Feaster, 2009, p. 2). The reliance on new media technology has created a symbiotic relationship between individuals and new media that has become the focus of several studies over the five decades. Despite the understanding of what drives media choice and dependency, little research has been done to understand how social media can influence individual choice on using media to fulfill the need to reduce uncertainty or ambiguity in social settings. Past research does not attempt to explain how social media can correlate to current event knowledge.

The question then becomes: Why study the media habits of young adults anymore if we already know that they are not following the news, and are not informed about current events? The shift in media-consumption habits among young adults brings up an interesting and pertinent question: Does the evidence of the decline in young adults' use of news sources as their primary source of information indicate a true problem? Jarvis, Jarvis, Stroud and Gilliland (2009) suggest that "an informed engaged electorate is central to the legitimacy and sustenance of any democratic state." (p. 30). Mindich (2005) argues that we should continue to investigate young adults' news patterns because they will be the future leaders in both business and politics. Understanding how various factors such as social media affects young adults knowledge of news is paramount in the movement to help young adults become informed about the world.

Along with the patterns of the rise and fall of different media, evidence of the change in media consumption habits among certain age groups has become evident. Current research shows that Millennials have different news habits than any other generation (Kushin, 2009). Hoplamazian and Feaster (2009) explain “while newspaper readership has been steadily declining for several decades, the young adult group (18-24) had maintained the lowest readership levels of any group and experience the greatest decline in readership since 1967” (p. 2). More recently, there have been several studies regarding media use patterns, and the reasons why young adults choose to not be tuned in to the news. Mindich (2005) looked specifically at why Americans under 40 don’t follow the news and found that most young adults don’t follow the news because of complacency and disinterest in following the news. Mindich found that median view age of CNN and network-TV news has risen in the past 60 years, while only 11 percent of 18-24-year-olds go online to seek news. The question that naturally follows after gathering the statistics is why young adults are not consuming news, which is the question that Mindich set out to answer in his book *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 don’t Follow the News*.

Mindich interviewed young adults and found that young people are not picking up the habit of paying attention to the news. In addition, only 25.2% of young adults feel like they need to get the news every day. Mindich’s study examined just exactly how tuned out young adults were. He made the comparison of young adult’s political awareness to a hear monitor where “most of the respondents (but certainly not all) would be flatliners” (p. 35). The answer to why young adults are “flatlining” on current events lies with the fact that they are growing up in a different media world than their parents did. Mindich offers several reasons as to why young adults are tuned out: complacency, trust and the decline of social capital.

The decline of social capital is a concept taken from Putnam's 2000 book, *Bowling Alone*, where he explained how society has become disconnected from each other. Social capital refers to the benefits received from interacting in social groups. The basis for Putnam's book is the example of bowling. He suggests that although the number of people who bowl has increased over time, the number of people who bowl in leagues has decreased. Putnam suggests that people who bowl alone as opposed to those who used to bowl in leagues lack the social interaction needed to talk about current events, which in turn leads to a decrease in civic discussion. His metaphor of people bowling alone is meant to be a reflection on the decline of people becoming civically engaged through social groups (Putnam, 2000). However, Song (2009), argues that bowling leagues and civic groups have been replaced by online virtual communities where individuals have just as much of a chance to engage in civic dialog.

Several other studies have sought to explain why younger generations are avoiding the news. Meijer (2007) found that young adults are not necessarily seeking out news, but rather using news to aid in conversing about popular topics. LaRose (2010) found that repeated media consumption behavior in young adults is a matter of habit rather than continuing and active self-instruction. Patterson (2007) found evidence that shows young Americans find a bit of news here and there, but do not make it a routine part of their day.

Perhaps young adults identify traditional news sources as passé and have found new ways to be informed through social media. The definition of news itself may have evolved to give young adults the illusion of being connected. Further research should be done on how social media have changed the way young adults are informed. Presently there are no studies that would indicate how social media have changed the way young adults get their news. Media-Systems Dependency theory shows that individuals have a relationship with the media and

society to receive information needed to achieve the goals of play, understanding, and orientation. Social media are new platforms to help young adults achieve their goals. Social media sites — such as Facebook and MySpace — are known for their news feeds, their informal style and the unwritten rule that any update, no matter how mundane, can be posted on a user's wall. The distinctive characteristics of social media give young adults an outlet to share information with their friends. Since research has already demonstrated a problem with young adult news consumption habits, it seems reasonable to suggest that social media has changed the way young adults view what it means to be informed.

With this in mind, this study will combine past research to form an investigation to indicate whether social media can be linked with an illusion of connectedness among Millennials. Identifying a relationship between social media and current event knowledge may potentially provide an understanding of how young adults use the news to bolster their knowledge of the world around them. Furthermore, identifying Millennials use of social media for knowledge gain would allow for news to be filtered through an individual's preferred news source. Scholars have already dedicated numerous studies to identify how young adults process and form news habits. The results from this study will lead to the identification of how social media could aid to an increase in current event knowledge.

The following research questions are posed to discover if there is a link between young adults' definition of being informed and their use of social media.

RQ 1: Which motivational dimension of individual media dependency can predict young adults' attitude towards using social media to stay informed about current events?

RQ 2: How has social media use affected the way young adults seek to gratify the need to reduce uncertainty or ambiguity in their social world?

RQ 3: Has the use of social media caused young adults to have the illusion that they are informed about current events?

In addition to the proposed research questions, an analysis of Millennials' dependency on social media compared with their actual level of current event knowledge leads to a prediction of an illusion of connectedness. More formally stated:

H1: The dominant motivation of individual media dependency will not correlate with the attitude toward using social media for purely social reasons.

H2: Young adults use social media as a means to seek out information through posts and links to news stories.

H3: Attitude toward current event knowledge will not correlate to actual current event knowledge.

H4: There is a high correlation between using social media for news and self-reported current event knowledge.

We hypothesize that the research previously discussed will be supported in its claim that Millennials are not connected to the news. We also hypothesize that social media has created an environment conducive to information exchange; however, news gathered from social media will result in an illusion of current event knowledge. Young adults will put a high value on being informed about current events and even claim knowledge of current events, but the results will show their levels of current event knowledge are low.

Chapter Four

Method

The purpose of this research paper was to see what role social media plays in young adult's illusion of connectedness. A cross-sectional survey design was employed in order to reach a large amount of the student population, and to reach the goals of this study.

A pilot study for the administration of the survey was conducted prior to the complete study being carried out in its entirety. The pilot study consisted of 30 participants. Non-parametric tests were then run to test the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. The results of the pilot study will not be combined with the results of the complete study as several changes were made to the survey. Changes were made to make the questions more clear.

Research Design

Approval for the administration of the survey was given by the IRB because of university requirements for polling students. The survey consisted of 36 questions, and was divided into two main sections: profile information and the main survey. The profile contained socio-demographic characteristics of the participants such as age, gender, class status, and major. The main survey explored news habits to set a basis of comparison to past research, and contained questions that identify young adults' actual level of connectedness in comparison to their use of social media to gather news. The questionnaire was structured using the Likert format, which means five choices were provided for every question or statement.

Instruments

Each student in the selected classes was given three instruments to complete. These instruments were combined into one document to facilitate the ease of taking the survey. The first instrument was patterned after the Self-Report Index of Habit Strength (Verplanken, 2003).

The second instrument was the Individual Media Dependency scale (Grant, 2001). The third instrument was a combination of two different questionnaires in regard to cohesion in self-reported current event knowledge and actual current event knowledge. The two instruments combine the Pew Research News IQ Quiz (2010) and parts of Mindich's (2005) current event knowledge survey. The combination of the two instruments result in a 39-question instrument appropriately adapted for young adults.

The Self-Report Index of Habit Strength (SRHI) is a 12-item instrument that asks participants to report the frequency of a habit. Responses are made using a Likert scale. The internal structure and reliability of the SRHI were investigated by factor analyses and coefficient alphas by Verplanken (2003). The index "was developed as a direct measure of habit strength that did not rely on estimates of behavioral frequency" (Verplanken, 2003, p. 18-19). Verplanken (2003) suggests that the SRHI is a reliable and valid instrument as "it measures habit strength by breaking it down to a number of features, i.e., a history of repetition, automaticity (lack of control, lack of awareness, efficiency), and expression of one's identity" (p. 19). The SRHI has been used multiple times since its conception. Individual Media Dependency (IMD) is an 18-item scale designed to measure IMD in regards to social networks (Grant, 2001). The scale was developed to measure the six dimensions of IMD using a five-point Likert scale.

Participants

In order to be a true reflection of the general young adult population, a representative sample needs to be taken. College campuses are one area where young adults can be found in mass. Respondents were included in the sample based on two requirements: 1) between the ages of 18 and 24 and 2) currently enrolled student. All undergraduate and graduate students who met the age requirements were included in the sample frame. The population in question includes all

young adults students, regardless of sex, economic status, race or marriage status. Full-time students, part-time students, and nontraditional students at a southern Utah university were all included in the sample

The sample should be considered a convenience sample since neither the individuals nor were not randomly selected. The participants (n=186) involved in this study were drawn from all on-campus summer courses in which professors granted permission for the survey to be administered. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24. Among the participants, 52.2% were males and 47.3% were females with majors including nursing, engineering, general education, physical science, communication, political science, criminal justice and education. In the terms of race, 80.1% were white, 2.2% were black, 7.0% were Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% were Asian, 2.7% were Pacific Islander, 0.5% were Native American, and other were 3.2%. Of the participants, 11.3% were freshman, 15.1% were sophomores, 24.7% were juniors, 34.4% were seniors, 11.3% were graduate students, and 2.7% were other.

Procedure

The nature of this study warranted careful control over the administration of the survey. One concern in the study was access to the Internet to search for the answers to the current event questions. The survey was given in the classrooms to control for using the Internet to search for the answers to the current event questions.

Students in the participating classes were asked to complete a 39-question survey. Surveys were administered at either the beginning or end of class according to each professor's preference. Participants were read the informed-consent statement, and were told that participation in the survey had nothing to do with the class. They were also instructed that participation in the survey was voluntary, and that all results would be kept confidential.

Directions on how to complete the survey were then given. Participants took an average of 10 minutes to complete the survey. All questions regarding the survey were directed towards the researchers. After completion of the survey, participants were thanked and then told the nature of the study.

Data Analysis

Data was collected and then recorded by entering in the information in the PASW statistical program. The reliability and validity was measured by correlating individual questions against other questions, and by calculating the appropriate statistical test for each correlation tested. Chi square and Cramer's v were chosen to test hypothesis 1 as these two tests compare the question of one variable to a hypothetical value. Pearson's r was chosen in testing hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 in order to quantify association between two variables. A non-parametric test (Kendall's τ) was also run because the participants constituted a convenience sample and therefore were not normally distributed in the population.

Chapter Five

Results

This study investigated whether there was a correlation between social media use and the level of current event knowledge. Additionally, this study sought to determine whether Millennials reported high levels of current event knowledge and connectedness through the sharing of news on social media sites. The results confirmed that Millennials do not access news on a regular basis with 33.8% of participants not in the habit of checking the news daily. Table 1 represents the reported use (in percentages) of various news outlets as a baseline to confirm previous research on news consumption patterns. The results indicate that the Internet is the preferred source of news among those surveyed. Television was second as a preferred source and social media was third. Almost all (82.2%) of the participants had a social media page, and accessed it on a daily basis. They spent an average of 1 hour or less logged onto social media sites. The participants identified Facebook (66.8%) as the top social networking site.

The first hypothesis stated that the dominant motivation of individual media dependency will not correlate with the attitude of toward using social media for purely social reasons. This hypothesis was based on previous research that the need to reduce ambiguity is the prominent motivation behind individual media dependency. The results indicate that 98.9% of participants reported a preference for using social media for entertainment goals regardless of the use of news use; therefore, the results support the conclusion drawn in hypothesis 1, that the desire to reduce ambiguity is not the dominant motivation to use social networks ($p < .01$). The results indicating significance were generated by conducting a Chi Square test, as well as calculating the value of Cramer's V.

The second hypothesis stated that young adults use social media as a means to seek out

information through posts and links to news stories. A majority of the participants (80.4%) say their friends use social media for the intended purpose of posting news and updates about themselves. A majority of the participants (81.5%) post news about themselves. The results show a trend of using social media for the sharing of current event information with 41.7% reporting their friends post news about current events. Although not in the majority, 26.9% of participants reported the post news about current events while 26.9% say they are fans of news media sites. Another trend that has emerged is that 20.4% participants have posted links to news stories with 50.0% of participants reporting that their friends have posted links to news stories. A Pearson's r test was run which showed significance for several points investigated in hypothesis 2.

The results indicate that the participants have similar habits in using social media for news surveillance as their friends. Significance was found in the correlation between participants and their friends posting news about current events, $r = +.430$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and participants liking news fan pages, $r = +.251$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.362$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and participants posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.196$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current events and their friends posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.406$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants liking news fan pages and their friends posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.460$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting links to news stories pages and their friends posting news about current events, $r = +.196$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation

between participants posting links to news stories pages and their friends posting links to news stories pages, $r = +.458$ ($p < .01$).

The results also indicate that the participants use social media as a means of surveying news. Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current events and liking news stories on their pages, $r = +.460$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current events and posting links to news stories, $r = +.537$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting links to news stories pages and liking news fan pages, $r = +.465$ ($p < .01$).

A non-parametric test (Kendall's tau) was also run because the participants constituted a convenience sample and therefore were not normally distributed in the population. Significance was found in the correlation between participants and their friends posting news about current events, $r = +.366$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and participants liking news fan pages, $r = +.218$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.313$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants' friends posting news about current events and participants posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.167$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current events and their friends posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.355$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants liking news fan pages and their friends posting links to news stories on their pages, $r = +.381$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants and their friends posting links to news stories, $r = +.378$ ($p < .01$).

Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current

events and liking news stories on their pages, $r = +.391$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting news about current events and posting links to news stories, $r = +.459$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants posting links to news stories pages and liking news fan pages, $r = +.393$ ($p < .01$). The results support Hypothesis 2 that social media use social media as a means to seek out information through posts and links to news stories

Table 1
Preference for News Media

Preference	Source					
	Radio	TV	Newspaper	Internet	Friends	Social Media
Strongly disagree	29.6	22.0	19.6	7.0	4.8	7.7
Disagree	30.1	17.7	25.6	6.5	22.6	30.1
Neither agree or disagree	21.0	22.0	41.2	18.3	32.8	26.9
Agree	15.1	26.9	11.1	44.6	33.3	21.0
Strongly agree	3.5	11.3	1.0	23.7	6.5	4.3

The third hypothesis stated that the attitude toward current event knowledge does not correlate with actual current event knowledge. Participants had a greater knowledge of entertainment news than of political and local news. A majority of respondents (96.2%) were able to correctly identify the president of the United States while only 52.2% being able to correctly identify the vice president of the United States. In contrast, 84.4% correctly identified Justin Beiber. The percentage of those who correctly identified Justin Beiber may have been higher, but some responses were marked incorrect because of derogatory comments about his

identity. One world leader who was prominently in the news was more easily identifiable than the vice president of the United States. Less than half of the participants (42.5%) were able to identify Moammar Gadhafi correctly. A majority (90.3%) of participants were able to correctly explain the fate of Osama bin Laden. The question about naming the characters from the popular sitcom *Glee* revealed 24.7% of participants could name at least one character. In contrast, 10.8 % of participants could correctly name at least one member of the Supreme Court. Only 51.1% of participants were able to correctly identify the threat of local flooding.

The results of the current event section showed that participants did not have high knowledge of political, world, or local news. In contrast, 64.6% of participants said that it was important to them to keep up with current events. A majority of participants (82.2%) claimed that they believed it was important to be informed about current events while 65.1% thought it was important to be able to make informed decisions based on what is presented in the news. Talking to peers about current events was an activity cited by 64.5%. About half (46.8%) of the participants said they considered themselves informed about current events.

A Pearson's r test was run to test the correlation between actual current event knowledge, and with self-reported levels of or attitudes toward current event knowledge. Significance was found in the correlation between the attitude that it is important to keep up with current events, and the question of who is the vice president of the United States, $r = -.173$ ($p < .05$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants considering themselves informed about current events and the question about what event is of major concern in Utah with the temperatures warming up, $r = -.171$ ($p < .05$). No significance was found in the correlation between the attitude that it is important to be informed about current events, and the question of who what is happening in 2012, $r = -.117$ ($p < .05$). Significance was found in the correlation between the

attitude that it is important to be able to make informed decisions based on what is presented in the news, and the question of what is happening in 2012, $r = -.149$ ($p < .05$). Significance was found in participants considering themselves informed about current events and the question to name as many current U.S. Supreme Court Justices as you can, $r = -.229$ ($p < .01$).

A non-parametric test (Kendall's tau) was also run because the participants constituted a convenience sample and therefore were not normally distributed in the population. Significance was found in the correlation between the attitude that it is important to keep up with current events, and the question of who is the vice president of the United States, $r = -.176$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between participants considering themselves informed about current events and the question about what event is of major concern in Utah with the temperatures warming up, $r = -.154$ ($p < .05$). Significance was found in the correlation between self-reported current event knowledge, and the question of who Moammar Ghadafi is, $r = -.145$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between the attitude that it is important to be informed about current events, and the question of who what is happening in 2012, $r = -.136$ ($p < .01$). No significance was found in the correlation between the attitude that it is important to be able to make informed decisions based on what is presented in the news, and the question of what is happening in 2012, $r = -.121$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in participants considering themselves informed about current events and the question to name as many current U.S. Supreme Court Justices as you can, $r = -.215$ ($p < .01$). The results indicate that actual current event knowledge does not correlate positively with self-reported levels of or attitudes toward current event knowledge; therefore, the results support Hypothesis 3, that attitude towards current event knowledge would not correlate with actual current event knowledge.

The fourth hypothesis states that there is a high correlation between social media use and

self-reported current event knowledge. A Pearson's r test was run which showed significance for several points. Significance was found in the correlation between posting news about current events and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.223$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between liking news fan pages and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.312$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between posting links about news stories and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.221$ ($p < .01$). No significance was found in the correlation between the primary news source being social media and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = -.072$ ($p > .01$).

A non-parametric test (Kendall's tau) was also run because the participants constituted a convenience sample and therefore were not normally distributed in the population. Significance was found in the correlation between posting news about current events and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.194$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation liking news fan pages and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.251$ ($p < .01$). Significance was found in the correlation between posting links about news stories and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = +.186$ ($p < .01$). No significance was found in the correlation between the primary news source being social media and self-reported current event knowledge, $r = -.062$ ($p > .01$). The values of r and ρ indicate a strong positive correlation between social media use and self-reported current event knowledge.

Chapter Six

Discussion

As hypothesized, a correlation between the use of social media for news surveillance, and self-reported current event knowledge and actual current-event knowledge were indicated. These results also confirm that Millennials report the use of social media for news surveillance. Further analysis of the results will provide insight into the relevant implications this study offers to the field of media effects. In this section, the results previously reported will be interpreted to include support for the purpose of this study, and help lay the groundwork for future studies on the role social media plays in news consumption.

The results of this study indicate that social media is emerging as a new medium for disseminating news. Social media hold the potential to become a popular platform for young adults to get news and to share with friends about current events. Previous research has already confirmed that Internet-based news is emerging as a leader in the news media. Althus and Tewksbury (2000) explored the idea that the popularity of Web-based news and the increasing number of online news outlets leads to the possibility that young adults might abandon newspapers and television all together (p. 22). Online news is seen as being in many ways more convenient, timely, and information rich than traditional print and broadcast news. This idea can be transferred to social media; however, social media is still used primarily to “hang out” and connect with peers (Schwalbe, 2009, p. 63). Participants in this study also used social media primarily to connect with friends rather than using it as a primary source of news. This idea coincides with Althus and Tewksbury’s findings that while students perceived the Internet and social media as being useful for keeping up with current issues and events, and to fulfill the purpose of surveillance, they were considered first for entertainment purposes, and second for

news gathering (p. 32-33). The participants identified what could be the start of a new trend in using social media as a source of news.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, previous research showed that young adults are not actively engaged in consuming news which has led to worries over a drop in civic engagement and a lapse in decision making skills. The results of this study confirm that Millennials are not actively engaged in consuming traditional news. However, they do report a high level of current event knowledge; yet fall short on current event knowledge when asked about the news. The implications of this correlation is that young adults do not see a problem with their levels of news use because they feel they are informed through the use of social media. Therefore, knowing that Millennials' self-reported levels of current event knowledge does not correlate with their actual levels can help in the understanding of why they don't use news on a regular basis to reduce ambiguity.

One explanation for this might be that young adults have an illusion of connectedness because they feel current event knowledge is the mark of a good citizen, or rather that saying they have current event knowledge is the correct answer. Another theory that can explain young adults' illusion of connectedness is the Narcotizing Dysfunction theory. The Narcotizing Dysfunction theory was first identified by Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948), who suggested research into social role of the "machinery of mass media" should focus on much more than just media time statistics. The use of media has three social consequences of mass media: the media confer status on public issues, persons, organizations and social movements; the media enforce social norms through exposing conditions which are against current public moralities; and the media narcotizes people rather than energize through a flood of information (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1948, p. 20-22). The last social consequence of sets the stage for the idea of narcotizing

dysfunction. Lazarsfeld and Merton explained that the “vast supply of communication may elicit only a superficial concern with the problems of society, and this superficiality often cloaks mass apathy” (p. 22). Under this theory, people who engage in news may construct their reality on what they see and “come to mistake knowing about problems of the day for doing something about them” (p. 22). The use of media and knowledge about an issue does not replace actually being engaged in some sort of action. Narcotizing Dysfunction could explain why young adults, who have unlimited access to news, may choose to not engage in consuming news. Limited research has been done using narcotizing dysfunction to explain why young adults do not feel the need to consume news.

The results of the study confirmed that Millennials tend to be uninterested in maintaining consistent newsgathering habits. In regard to newsgathering, “today’s young adults are less likely than their parents were [at the ages of 18-28] to read the newspaper, to be interested in public affairs, or to have political discussions” (Jarvis, Stroud & Gilliland, 2009, p. 30). As a result, researchers have long been interested in young adults media use patterns (Pardun & Scott, 2004). Past studies on news consumption patterns show that young adults who avoid news consumption in their teen years are likely to continue the behavior well into their adult years (Pardun & Scott, 2004, p. 77). Current studies continue to confirm this idea over disengagement, but what does it take to change that? One theory is to not force people to consume news from a news source they already feel an aversion towards.

In line with Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur’s Media-Systems Dependency theory, this study showed that young adults will come to depend on specific media as the needs to reduce ambiguity arise. In theory, young adults will turn more to the news during times of uncertainty and unrest. The question then becomes what type of media will young adults turn to reduce

feelings of ambiguity. Barnhurst and Wartella (1998) found that it takes more effort to become a habitual newspaper reader than to become a television viewer (p. 290). Their research suggests that news habits are usually formed early in life and are greatly influenced by the family's habit of engaging in news. Individuals who come from families who place value on being informed are more likely to pick up the habit of consuming news on a daily or weekly basis (p. 297). Diddi and LaRose (2006) suggest that "getting hooked on news" can be linked back to the uses and gratification theory. Each person has their own reasons for what media they choose to consume, and with so many choices now, they have to constantly be active in the selection of news sources. However, Diddi and LaRose proposed a new theory of media attendance that suggests the opposite effect: "when confronted by a myriad of media choices, the consumer lapses into habitual patterns of media consumption in order to conserve mental resources, rather than repeatedly engaging in active selection" (Diddi & LaRose, 2006, p. 194-195).

Media habits can be as simple as watching the news for five minutes everyday to watching CNN for hours on end. News watching can be placed on a spectrum with occasional viewers on one end ranging to the "news junky" at the other end. For the purpose of this study, news junkies can be classified as "people who are seemingly obsessed with the news" (Diddi & LaRose, 2006, p. 196). Diddi and LaRose suggest that news consumption patterns from around the time young people leave for college, when students are susceptible to depression, which makes them more likely to form escapist media habits (Diddi & LaRose, 2006, p. 196). Even if the environment is right to develop news habits, young adults have their reasons for not consuming news, which include the change in emotion (negative, too graphic, too depressing) (Barnhurst & Wartella, 1998, p. 302). Media consumption behaviors can also lead to a reliance on a specific medium for information.

The results also show that the dominant motivation for individual media dependency does not correlate with the attitude towards using social networks to reduce ambiguity about current events. Social networks are first used for entertainment value and to connect with ones own social network; however, a trend of using social media as a source of news to reduce ambiguity is beginning to emerge. The key to getting young adults interested in keeping up with current events is to meet them on a platform they already are comfortable using instead of forcing individuals to use traditional media to support the formation of news seeking habits. Millenials have already started to seek out information by creating habits were news is consumed through posts on social network walls. These habits include posting reactions to local, national and world news on pages.

Social media has now become a source for goal satisfaction among individuals. Consistent with MSD, social media is quickly becoming the medium of choice for individuals seeking to gratify the need to reduce ambiguity. Many traditional and new media outlets have caught on to this emerging trend among young adults and have allowed people the opportunity to link news to their pages. Internet news outlets have begun the process of merging news sites with social media. For example, on CNN's Web site there is an option to use a Facebook account to log in to CNN. Doing so then creates a link between the news and social media. Individuals can share news stories and see what news stories friends are looking at. Millenials are a highly social demographic, and by allowing them to share news with their social circles allow them to learn about current events in an environment where they already spend a majority of their time.

Millenials who have high levels of self-reported levels of current event knowledge also claim to use social media as a way to stay connected to what is happening in the world around them, and to fit into their social groups. This need to reduce ambiguity falls in line with Ball-

Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) suggestion that the resolution of ambiguity can lead to the formation of new attitudes and feelings. According to MSD, the need to reduce uncertainty is the biggest reason why individuals become dependent on media. In the case of young adults, the need for control also can be a predictor of news exposure (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000, p. 39). Individuals are seen as being active in choosing and using particular media to satisfy specific needs. Where they choose to get their news from is based on personal preference. Hornik and Schlinger (1981) posited that “as with other leisure activities, consumers allocate their time to viewing, listening, and reading in order to receive certain gratifications” (p. 343). Individuals are attracted to certain media to fulfill different gratifications. In the case of young adults, that attraction is to social media to fulfill their various needs for play, understanding, and orientation.

Trust in a particular news medium has been offered as a theory to explain media choices. Jarvis, Stroud and Gilliland (2009) conducted a survey among college-aged students to see where students got their news, which mediums students trusted the most, and to see if there was a relationship between news use and trust. Jarvis et al. found students were most likely to get their news from the web and comedy television programming. Students were less likely to get their news from news radio and television news magazines. Newspapers fell in the middle of students’ preference for news outlets. Yet, those same students found newspapers the most trustworthy source for news (p. 37). Interestingly, Jarvis et al. found that the students reported “turning to specific news outlets that they do not particularly trust” (p. 37). It can be surmised from Jarvis, Stroud and Gilliland’s study that trust does not correlate specifically with choice in news media. There are specific effects on the individual whatever the motivation behind media reliance happens to be. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) description of the effects of media dependency allows that media content can trigger emotional responses to situations or they can impact

morale. If young adults perceive social media to be helpful in satisfying goals, they will then continue to expose themselves to news and information through that medium, which in turn will have effects on personal beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.

Limitations

All studies are subject to limitations, but it is paramount to acknowledge such limitations. The limitations of this study are the sample size, which in turn affects the generalizability of the results. Past and current research investigating news consumption behavior provides ample proof that young adults are not connected with the news through either traditional or new media. New research is now more focused on how to get young adults more interested in having knowledge of current events. The administration of the survey was limited in being able to be a true representation of the whole young adult population. Participants represented only part of the demographic of the population of interest. As such, the results from the study cannot be generalized to the whole young adult population. In the future, a larger sample size would be able to strengthen the research by being able to pull a sample, which is more representative of the young adult population. The participants were college students, which is a population that tends to be more interested in current events. Using young adults who are not enrolled in college would provide a truer sample than just using college students.

Another limitation was the difficulty to measure current event knowledge. Surveys that are too long or too time consuming to complete will lose the interest of the respondent. The instrument to measure actual current event knowledge only contained a few questions so the interest of the participants was not lost. Another limitation was in getting people to take some of the questions seriously. The question about who Justin Bieber was lead to a lot of control issues. A few participants read that question and wanted to start discussions with neighbors about how

they felt about the teenaged pop star. Using a more relatable entertainment star for young adults may have relieved some of the annoyance participants felt about the question.

Future Research

The results of this study warrants future research on how social media can influence the attainment of current event knowledge through social media. The research obtained from this study can be taken to the next level by expanding the study to include a sample that will be a true representation of the young adult population. The population of interest must be able to include young adults from all education levels. Doing so will allow the results to be more generalizable to all young adults. Other future research considerations could be to track individual use of social media over a long period of time. Pretest and post-tests would be administered to participants in order to determine actual levels of current event knowledge to see if the use of social media for the attainment of news would have any influence on those levels. Tracking the use of social media use would provide valuable information on how young adults view their levels of attainment of current event knowledge.

Final Thoughts□

The purpose of this study was to further the understanding the role that social media could play in young adults' current event knowledge. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) core concepts of how individuals become dependent on different media to accomplish the goals of play, understanding, and orientation lends to an understanding of how a preferred medium can become a way to engage young adults in current events. The results of this study showed that young adults have come to depend on social media to meet the goals of play, understanding, and orientation. It is through this dependency on social media that Millenials have come to believe they have an understanding of what is happening in the world around them even though they

don't. As previous research has suggested, most everyone will have a need sometime to reduce ambiguity, and as such will turn to the media to accomplish that. In the case of Millennials, the dependency on social media has created an illusion of connectedness to the events happening in the world around them.

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Appendix A

Social Media and Current Events Knowledge Survey

This study is conducted by a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Lionel Grady in the Master's of Professional Communication program at Southern Utah University. The study focuses on subjects' attitudes about news, current events knowledge and use of social media. This questionnaire should take less than 10 minutes to complete.

Please read each of the questions on the survey questionnaire and check the box that best answers the question. Participation is voluntary. You may discontinue the study at any time for any reason without penalty. You may ask questions at any time. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Participation in the survey is anonymous. No one, not even the researcher, will be able to determine how you answered the survey questions.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. What is your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female | 1. _____ |
| 2. What is your age (in years)? <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 19 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23
<input type="checkbox"/> 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 + | 2. _____ |
| 3. What is your major? _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. What is your year in school? <input type="checkbox"/> Freshman <input type="checkbox"/> Sophomore
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior <input type="checkbox"/> Senior <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate <input type="checkbox"/> Other | 4. _____ |
| 5. Which group best describes your ethnicity? <input type="checkbox"/> White <input type="checkbox"/> Black
<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino <input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Native American
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ | 5. _____ |
| 6. Which of the following social networking sites do you subscribe to? <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook <input type="checkbox"/> MySpace <input type="checkbox"/> LinkedIn <input type="checkbox"/> Xanga
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> None | 6. _____ |
| 7. As accurately as you can, how long have you had a subscription to the previous social networking sites?
<input type="checkbox"/> Less than a year <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 years <input type="checkbox"/> 3-4 years <input type="checkbox"/> 4-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 5+ years <input type="checkbox"/> Does not apply | 7. _____ |
| 8. I access the news at least once a day.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 8. _____ |
| 9. My primary news source is the radio.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 9. _____ |
| 10. My primary news source is the television.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 10. _____ |

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 11. My primary news source is the newspaper.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 11. ____ |
| 12. My primary news source is the Internet.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 12. ____ |
| 13. My primary news source is talking to friends.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 13. ____ |
| 14. My primary news source is social media.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 14. ____ |
| 15. It is important for me to keep up with current events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 15. ____ |
| 16. I believe it is important to be informed about current events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 16. ____ |
| 17. I think it is important to be able to make informed decisions based on what is presented in the news.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 17. ____ |
| 18. I talk to my peers about current events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 18. ____ |
| 19. In the past 24 hours, about how much time did you spend with any type of news?
<input type="checkbox"/> No time <input type="checkbox"/> less than 20 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 20-39 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 40-59 minutes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 hour or more | 19. ____ |
| 20. In the past 24 hours, about how much time did you spend on any social networking site?
<input type="checkbox"/> No time <input type="checkbox"/> less than 1 hour <input type="checkbox"/> 1-2 hours <input type="checkbox"/> 2-3 hours <input type="checkbox"/> more than 3 hours | 20. ____ |
| 21. In the past 24 hours, how many times did you log onto a social networking site?
<input type="checkbox"/> No times <input type="checkbox"/> 1-5 times <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 times <input type="checkbox"/> 10-15 times <input type="checkbox"/> more than 15 times | 21. ____ |
| 22. I primarily log onto social networking sites to connect with my friends.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 22. ____ |
| 23. My friends post news about themselves.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 23. ____ |
| 24. My friends post news about current events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 24. ____ |
| 25. I post news about myself.
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree or disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree
<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly Agree | 25. ____ |

26. I post news about current events.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. I have liked news fan pages.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. My friends post links to news stories on their pages.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree
- Strongly Agree

29. I post links to news stories on my page.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree
- Strongly Agree

30. I consider myself informed about current events.

- Strongly disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree
- Strongly Agree

31. Who is the president of the United States? _____

32. What event is of major concern in Utah with the temperatures warming up? _____

33. Who is Justin Beiber? _____

34. Who is Moammar Gadhafi? _____

35. Who is the vice president of the United States? _____

36. What recently happened to Osama bin Laden? _____

37. Please name as many characters from Glee as you can.

38. Please name as many current U.S. Supreme Court justices as you can.

39. What is happening in 2012?

26. _____

27. _____

28. _____

29. _____

30. _____

31. _____

32. _____

33. _____

34. _____

35. _____

36. _____

37. _____

38. _____

39. _____

Appendix B

Hypothesis 2

Question	25	27	28	29	30
25					
27	+.430** +.366**				
28	+.251** +.218**	+.460** +.391**			
29	+.362** +.313**	+.406** +.355**	+.460** +.381**		
30	+.196** +.167**	+.537** +.459**	+.465** +.393**	+.458** +.378**	

$N=186$

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Appendix C

Hypothesis 3

Question	15	16	17	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
15													
16	+.581** +.592**												
17	+.347** +.320**	+.461** +.432**											
30	+.455** +.458**	+.299** +.324**	+.180* +.185**										
31	+.041 +.035	+.043 +.068	-.028 +.041	-.017 +-.044									
32	-.056 -.053	-.117 -.068	-.027 -.005	-.171* -.154*	-.086 -.027								
33	-.108 -.092	-.105 -.108	-.231** -.194**	+.014 -.001	-.037 -.008	+.054 +.054							
34	-.080 -.090	-.039 -.096	-.019 -.058	-.141 -.145*	-.082 -.004	+.166* +.166*	+.069 +.166*						
35	-.173* -.176*	-.044 -.092	-.012 -.022	-.126 -.131	-.056 +.034	+.117 +.117	+.063 +.117	+.344** +.344**					

36	-.046**	-.044	-.062	-.108	-.019	-.029	+.160*	-.050	-.095		
	-.015	-.059	-.045	-.103	+.029	-.029	+.160*	-.050	-.095		
37	-.047**	-.017	-.088	-.024	+.056	-.097	+.034	+.121	+.062	+.062**	
	-.030	-.030	-.074	-.030	+.046	-.095	-.036	+.125	+.065	+.057	
38	-.091	+.009	+.016	-.229**	+.045	+.027	+.006	+.299**	+.298**	-.062	+.006
	-.104	-.055	-.007	-.215**	+.068	+.027	+.006	+.299**	+.298**	-.062	+.015
39	-.070	-.171*	-.149*	-.031	-.037	+.145*	+.123	+.085	+.182*	+.196**	+.103
	-.055	-.136*	-.121	-.027	+.000	+.145*	+.123	+.085	+.182**	+.196**	+.106

N=186

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Appendix D

Hypothesis 4

Question	14	26	27	29	30
14					
26	+.204** +.165**				
27	+.031 +.025	+.460** +.391**			
29	+.150* +.126*	+.537** +.459**	+.465** +.393**		
30	-.057 -.602	+.223** +.194**	+.306** +.251**	+.221** +.186**	

$N=186$

* Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level