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Identity as a compass for understanding media choice

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IDENTITY AS A COMPASS FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA CHOICE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by

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Charlie, this is and has always been for you.

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ABSTRACT

The changes to our socio-technological media environment over the past 30 years have heightened the interest in identity across the social sciences. The spread of networked digital communication technologies and mobile media have increased the urgency for media scholars to better understand how and why individuals consume media as they do. Several media choice scholars have recently started considering how individuals' identity and self-concept relate to media choice, but have not yet systematically addressed how identity might be related. This dissertation takes the first steps toward advancing an identity-based approach to understanding individual media choice in the 21st century by: 1) Providing a thorough theoretical and conceptual review of identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) and the identity process; 2) By discussing media research in the context of identity theory and applying identity theory directly to media research, and; 3) By empirically testing multiple elements of identity theory in two original experimental designs. Results indicate that identity not only affects media choice, it also affects how individuals ascribe meaning to media content.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990's, changes to our media environment have increased the urgency for media scholars to understand how and why individuals consume media as they do. Empirical research has recently started considering how individuals' identity and self-concept relate to media choice (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012). Given the central role identities play in human behavior and social interaction at multiple levels of society, identity might be able to explain media choice more generally. These studies draw on a variety of psychology-based theories to connect identity to selective exposure, however, there is reason to believe that identity theory may be more appropriate and advantageous for media research.

Given the realities of media choice today, we do not know yet the degree to which identity and media choice might be related. Since media research is only beginning to empirically examine identity, it is essential to understand how identity and the self-concept function day-to-day in people's lives. This dissertation takes the first steps toward advancing an identity-based approach to understanding individual media choice in the 21st century by: 1) Providing a thorough theoretical and conceptual review of identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) and the identity process; 2) By discussing media research in the context of identity theory and applying identity theory directly to media research, and; 3) By empirically testing multiple elements of identity theory in two original experimental designs.

Media Choice

"Media choice" is an umbrella term to describe all of the various factors that explain how and why individuals use media as they do. A substantial majority of media choice research concentrates on factors at the micro-level, which include the various psychological and social-psychological motivations for individuals' media choice. Factors at the macro-level are primarily external to individuals and pertain to socio-cultural aspects in the environment, as well as media systems and structures (see e.g., Webster, 2009). While the micro and macro levels of media choice are dynamically related, scholars rarely, if ever, incorporate elements of both into their research designs (Webster, 2009). Individuals' media selection and use always occurs within the context of a complex social structural environment.

Emphasizing Difference

Since the 1950s, there have been three dominant approaches to understanding individual media choice: cognitive dissonance via selective exposure (Festinger, 1957), uses-and-gratifications (Katz, 1959), and mood-management theory (Zillman, 1988). Despite having a common focus on micro-level factors, and similar theoretic origins, there has been remarkably little cross-fertilization between the three approaches. Each approach assumes a different “implicit model of man,” which consequently has a pronounced effect on how media choice is conceptualized (Hartmann, 2009, p. 3). The uses-and-gratifications approach, for example, is based on an action-theoretical model that conceptualizes the individual as being primarily autonomous and fairly “self-determined” in their behavior (Hartmann, 2009, p. 4). In contrast, mood-management theory is based on a “neo-behaviorist” model that attributes some human behavior to operant conditioning rather than personal autonomy. Meanwhile, selective exposure rests on the “human beings as computers” or information-processor model (Hartmann, 2009, p.4). More recent work in psychology examining other choice-related behavior assumes an “integrated model of man” that combines behaviorism with elements of the action-theoretical model to explain human behavior (Hartmann, 2009, p.4). Two examples of theories based on this kind of integrated model are the theory of reasoned action (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the theory of planned behavior (e.g., Ajzen, 1991). These have not yet been thoroughly tested in empirical research, however, since media choice may not always be planned, motivated, or consciously selected, applying such a model seems unlikely to resolve the inherent fissures in media choice research.

The lack of a common media choice framework explains why new and emerging media choice perspectives are largely disconnected from the parent literature and intellectual origins (e.g., the fast and frugal heuristics approach). Even when new perspectives are somewhat connected, they tend to be rather narrow in application (e.g., avoidance motivations during television use), somewhat redundant (e.g., theory of subjective quality assessments), or otherwise difficult to integrate (e.g., the informational utility model). As it stands, our established approaches appear so far gone from each other that integration at this point seems impossible: Selective exposure retains certain assumptions (e.g., need for consistency) that are fundamentally incompatible with mood-management theory, which rests on the “hedonistic premise” that people are driven by a desire for pleasant affective states (Zillman, 1988). This impasse is astonishing considering that mood management theory developed as an offshoot of selective exposure (see Zillman & Bryant, 1985). Today,

selective exposure is primarily applied to news and political media. Mood-management theory is applied to entertainment. And neither approach suffers from a lack of scholarly attention in these designated areas.

The uses-and-gratifications approach is difficult to assimilate, not necessarily because of any significant disagreements, but because of the cumulative totality of the body of work itself. Uses-and-gratifications research has focused on exploring many different predictors of and explanations for individual motivations and uses across mediums, genres, content, and situations, rather than for media use more generally (e.g., uses-and-gratifications of commercial websites or uses-and-gratifications of reality television). This is problematic because there has been a substantial lack of systematic integration with two other dominant media choice approaches. Moreover, the active user assumption (which the other perspectives share in varying degrees) is also not necessarily valid since media choice can be habitual (e.g., LaRose, 2010) or addictive (e.g., LaRose, et al., 2003). This reality has led some in the field to call for a reconceptualization of the uses-and-gratifications approach while emphasizing the need for a more general “exhaustive model” of media choice (Krcmar & Strizhakova, 2009, p. 64; see also e.g., Ruggerio, 2000). This is especially important considering the reality of media choice today.

In the 21st century media environment, electronic media have expanded to include mobile media like smart phones, tablet computers, and e-readers. These technologies are associated with developments like web-based applications that provide new gateways to media content, but more than that, these technologies enable people to remain connected to seemingly infinite media content and more interconnected with each other. Furthermore, devices with multi-task capabilities present media researchers with unique challenges for modeling choice and exposure based on media attributes. Individuals consume, create, and share media online while also chatting with people, listening to music, while also working on things for work or school. These media choices represent a complex blend of motivations, needs, desires, compulsions, etc. that are all being managed (for better or worse) at the same time. Media multitasking alone presents a threat to the relevance of single-focus media choice research in the digital age.

Due (in large part) to the circumstances outlined above, these realities have yet to be fully incorporated into our media choice approaches and research designs. Similar statements have been made about the direction of media research, more generally (see e.g., Lang, 2013, Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011; and in political communication, Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Media research does not have a common framework based on shared assumptions from which our theories and approaches are derived. If we share any

assumptions at all, it would be that media effects on individuals are ordinarily limited, because individuals have differences that prevent mass media from having powerful and universal effects across individuals in society. Media choice research is difficult to summarize beyond the expectations of individual differences since there are many valid answers to the questions of how and why people consume the media they do. The emphasis on difference overshadows the fact that individuals also have many similarities that give rise to patterns of behavior observed at higher levels in the socio-cultural environment.

The Case for an Identity-Based Approach

Media choice research is in need of a general approach and a common framework to study individual behavior. Ideally, such an approach would be able to account for macro-level and micro-level factors. Contemporary identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) is the product of about 30 years of theory integration and systematic empirical research in sociology and social psychology. In a single framework, identity theory connects the individual to society via structural symbolic interaction, making theory-based analysis possible at multiple levels. As individuals interact with one another within the environment, this amounts to fairly stable patterns of behavior at the societal level, which establishes a common meaning for identities. Individuals learn who they are through interacting in the social environment. Identity theory incorporates a variety of cognitive and affective processes and works these elements into a testable model of human behavior, holding great deal of potential for media research.

Identity theory assumes that individual agency is enabled and/or constrained by the social structure, which sets limits and freedoms on behavior. As a general term, “identity” refers to everything that makes an individual a unique person, relative to others. Identity encompasses the personal characteristics or qualities individuals claim, the roles they assume, and the social groups to which they belong that make them similar to or different from others. Identity also refers to “the self.” The self, central to all identities, is assumed to be a key motivator of behavior (Stets & Biga, 2003; Stets & Burke, 2002). The potential for any given identity to guide a person’s behavior depends on any number of interacting factors within and between the individual, the ongoing situation, and the environment.

In the theoretical context, “identity” generally refers to whichever identity (aspect of a person) is activated in a situation. As a situation unfolds, multiple identities may be activated but typically only one identity can truly guide a person’s behavior at a time. This is a fluid process, but it is dependent on the context of the situation. Individuals generally do not consciously “activate” or manage identities (this occurs

automatically). As such, they do not expend conscious energy to “control” their behavior in a situation; their behavior is a function of the ongoing identity process. Similar to the selective processes at play in media choice research, identity theory posits that individuals are motivated to control their incoming perceptions, which is generally not a conscious motivation. Individuals’ observations of their behavior need to be consistent with their self-meanings (identity standard). Because identities operate at both the conscious and unconscious levels, they may consciously become aware of identity in the event of a discrepancy.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of identity theory, which forms the theory and conceptual framework for the experimental designs presented in this dissertation. This chapter explains how identity theory is capable of explaining and predicting behavior, regardless of the particulars surrounding any given individual identity, situation, or context. Identity theory incorporates a variety of cognitive and affective processes and works these elements into a testable model of human behavior, holding great deal of potential for media research. Recent media research that has considered identity is also discussed in the context of identity theory and hypotheses about the relationship are advanced. Chapter 3 presents the methods and experimental designs for the two experiments, each one testing different sets of hypotheses based on different elements of identity theory.

Chapter 4 reports the results for Study 1 (Individuals and Media Selection), which examines the effects of multiple identities (political identity, sports fan identity, and gender identity) on individual media choice in a two-step selection process. This two-part study is set up so that all measures of identity are controlled in advance of the procedure. These measures are all obtained from their responses in the pretest, which individuals submitted at least two weeks before coming into the lab. The experimental manipulation is a priming task that is designed to increase the salience of political identity in one of the groups. Identity theory states that individuals behave in ways consistent with the identity activated in the specific situation. There are only two outcomes of interest: choice, which consists of three main categories (politics & news, sports, and entertainment), and the selection of a specific web video within that category they choose. Knowing that each of the three identities measured in the pretest may be activated, this study tests two important concepts regarding the hierarchical organization identities (prominence and salience) and the degree to which they predict media choice in a relatively high-choice situation.

Chapter 5 presents the results for Study 2 (Individuals and “Self-Media” Interactions). This experiment tests the non-linear elements of the identity process (discussed in Chapter 2) online. Using a computer as a

proxy for social interaction, individuals tell the computer about themselves and their identities in order to receive personalized website recommendations. The experimental manipulation is on the type of recommendations individuals receive. Specifically, this study examines the impact of identity verifying or non-verifying feedback on subsequent outcomes as predicted by the identity control model. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of results and limitations, as well as the implications for media research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In social psychology, there are two primary perspectives on identity: the sociology-based identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009) and psychology based social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). There have been a number of critical comparisons that outline how the two theories are similar to, and different from, each other (e.g., Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995, Stets & Burke, 2000; Deaux & Burke, 2010). Earlier comparisons determined that the theories are so different as to “occupy parallel but separate universes, with virtually no cross-referencing” (Hogg, et al., 1995, p. 255). Taking into consideration identity theory’s significant growth over the past 15 years, more recent comparisons conclude that the two theories have more in common than previously thought (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 234; Deaux & Burke, 2010; for a related discussion on theory integration, see also Deaux & Martin, 2003).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was originally designated as a theory of intergroup relations to explain how individuals evaluate their own “in-group” in relation to others or “out-groups”(Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1982). It soon incorporated the sub-theory self-categorization theory to explain how individuals classify the self and others (Turner, et al., 1987). Social identity theory suggests that individuals develop part of their self-concept from social categorization and the recognition of social categories as “prototypes” (a combination of attitudes and behavior) that set one group apart from others. Classifying the social environment in this way “depersonalizes” the individual’s perceptions of others, making it easier to categorize people based on stereotypical traits (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10). Depersonalization is the essential mechanism behind such things as collective action, stereotyping, and ethnocentrism (Turner, et al., 1987; Stets & Burke, 2000).

Given these elements, social identity theory “assumes a self-enhancement motive” (Owens, Robinson, & Smith-Lovin, 2010, p. 478). In effort to achieve positive social identity, individuals are motivated to see others in terms of “better” or “worse” than their own social groups so that they can maintain positive in-group identification. In this way, self-categorization creates a feeling of in-group belonging (relative to out-groups) that enhances an individuals’ sense of self. Thus, a person’s social identity reflects that aspect of the self-concept that stems from their social group belonging (Turner & Oaks, 1986).

Identity Theory

In contrast, identity theory aims to explain the “specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities that they claim; how these identities relate to one another; how their identities influence behavior, thoughts, and feelings or emotions; and how their identities tie them to society at large” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 3). Identity theory predominantly reflects Stryker’s work (1980/2002) on identity, which focuses on the nature and organization of the social structure (see also, e.g., Serpe & Stryker, 1987; Serpe, 1987; Stryker & Serpe, 1982), as well as Burke’s (1980) work on the internal processes that connect identity to behavior (Burke & Stets, 2009; see also e.g., Burke & Stets, 1999; Stets & Burke, 2000).

The basic premise of structural symbolic interactionism is: “society shapes self shapes social interaction” (Stryker, 2008, p.19). Individuals are enabled and constrained by the social structure, which affects “the likelihood that persons will or will not develop particular kinds of selves, learn particular kinds of motivations, and have particular symbolic resources for defining the situations they enter” (Stryker & Vryan, 2003, p. 22). Identity theory accepts Mead’s (1934) views of the social self, which “arises in the process of social experience and activity” (p. 135). The self-concept reflects how individuals define his or her self, as well as how they think others see them.

In a structural symbolic interactionism framework, behavior takes on a similar pattern at different levels of society. These patterns are observed in human behavior. This explains how behaviors and qualities associated with certain kinds of identities (e.g., preacher, cab driver, football fan) are observed and replicated throughout society. (For a thorough discussion of identity theory’s structural symbolic interactionism framework, see e.g., Serpe & Stryker, 2011). People come to learn who they are (relative to others) through social interaction in the environment, which is influenced by macro-level systems and structures.

Identities

The identities individuals develop fall into three categories (role, person, and social). Role identities are those that represent who they are when holding social positions (e.g., professor, parent, bartender). Social identities are associated with being a member of a group (e.g., political group, gender). Person identities are based on the characteristics (e.g., witty, intelligent, strange) people claim. Together, they make up “the set of meanings that are tied to and sustain the self as an individual” (Stets & Cast, 2007, p. 525). The set of meanings individuals have for any given identity are personal standards.

Because people have many different identities, there is a natural order to the likelihood of a particular identity being relevant and activated in any given situation. Identities are hierarchically organized according to their prominence (McCall & Simmons, 1978) and salience (Stryker, 1980). Prominent identities are basically those identities that have greater importance to the individual whereas salience refers to an individual's "readiness" to act out an identity, or take a "line of action" consistent with the identity in the situation (Stets & Biga, 2003, p. 404). How committed a person is to a certain identity matters as well. Commitment may be conceptualized as quantitative (i.e., the number of personal ties) or qualitative (i.e., the strength or significance of those ties). Empirical work has demonstrated a connection between identity salience, commitment, and prominence and identity-consistent behavior (Stets & Biga, 2003; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Serpe and Stryker (1987) found that new college students joined organizations or entered activities related to their salient identities from high school. McCall and Simmons (1978) suggest that prominence hierarchies offer more stability in predicting behavior than salience alone, primarily because it reflects a level of central importance. This especially holds in situations where more than one identity becomes activated in a situation (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.133).

Identities become activated in a situation when they are "triggered and subsequently controlled" by an individual (Carter, 2013, p. 4). How exactly specific identities are triggered in a situation depends on a number of factors, like the context and meanings in the situation, the type of identity category and where it falls in the individual's hierarchies, the self-meanings for the identity, among other factors. Consistency of meanings is the key. Keeping in mind more than one identity can be activated for an individual at a time, role and person identities tend to be activated in a situation by their salience, whereas social identities are typically activated by fit and accessibility. Fit and accessibility are two different processes. Accessibility refers to the social categories (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) that are "chronically accessible in memory or are easily accessible in situations" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.120). In order for these to apply to a situation, they must "fit" the situation in terms of accounting for similarities and differences, or help to explain people's behavior.

In terms of understanding the general effects of "identity" on individual behavior, it is not useful to conceptualize the identity categories as compartmentalized and mutually exclusive of each other. All identities are subject to the individual's self-meanings and all of a person's identities are connected through the self, therefore there is no valid way to completely separate a person's role, social, and person identities in any empirical context. Rather, these distinctions are primarily analytic to help understand and organize the various

ways “in which different identities operate within and across situations” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 124). In order to understand how different identities operate within individuals and the likelihood of any given identity becoming activated in a situation, it is essential to understand the identity process.

The Identity Process

Individuals are motivated to behave consistently with the self-meanings of their identities. Compared to social identity theory where a person is motivated primarily by self-enhancement, identity theory explains that individuals are motivated by self-verification (or identity verification). Once an identity becomes activated in a situation, individual behavior becomes a function of a complex internal perceptual control system interaction between the person and the environment (Burke, 1980). Verification happens when the individual perceives their actions as being consistent with their own personal standard.

The perceptual control emphasis in identity theory is based on Powers’ (1973) work on control systems in the field of cybernetics. Founded by Norbert Weiner (1948/1965), cybernetics is the scientific study of self-regulating systems in closed feedback loops. The premise of a cybernetic system rests on the capacity of the self to alter the output in response to the input. An example of negative feedback system would be the thermostat of a home that is set to maintain a certain temperature. As temperature increases outside, it also raises the temperature inside. If the temperature gets so warm inside that it reaches the limit set on the thermostat, the air conditioner kicks on automatically to cool the home back to the set temperature, and does so as needed to ensure that the set temperature in the home is maintained.

The automatic control system is key to understanding how identity functions day-to-day, across individuals and society. Each time an identity is activated, the individual strives to “maintain situational meanings consistent with the identity meanings of the standard in spite of disturbances to those situational meanings created by the interactions of others in the situation” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p.31). When meanings are maintained through this process, without any disturbance, the individual’s identity is “verified.”

Basic Identity Model

The control system depicted in the basic identity model (Figure 1, below, reprinted from Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 62) functions as an ongoing interaction between the person and the environment. Identities have four primary components that are automatically engaged whenever an identity is activated: *input*, *the identity standard*, *comparator*, and *output*. This process is fairly simultaneous. At all times, the individual, or person, is both an actor and a reactor to meanings within the situational environment.

Identities become activated by the meanings in the situation as they unfold in the environment. The *input* to the system arrives in the form of the individuals' own reflected observation of the self in the situation. Perceptions are the "meanings in the situation that are relevant to the identity" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 65). These incoming perceptions enter the *comparator* where they are checked against the self-meanings contained in the *identity standard*. If they do not meet the standard for the active identity, then error is "signaled" as the size of the discrepancy is assessed. This may often arouse an emotional response relative to the size of the discrepancy. High discrepancy usually results in more intense, negative emotion.

The output of the control system is the person's behavior. When an individual experiences error, they want to act in such a manner to reduce the discrepancy and bring perceptions back into line with their identity standard. The actual behavior the individual exhibits in response does not really matter, since the meaning of the behavior is symbolic. This works the same for all identities. Effective behavior is any action that restores homeostasis to the identity by controlling input so that they see themselves as acting in-line with "who they are supposed to be." Anything less than effective behavior results in continued distress for failure to bring the identity system under conscious control. When this happens, the identity is not verified.

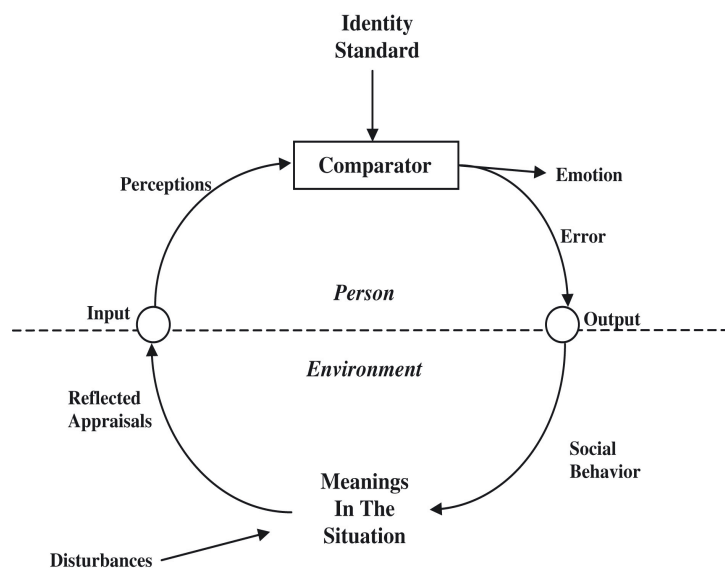


Figure 1. Basic Identity Model
Reprinted from Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 62

Motivation & Outcomes

The motivation behind the identity process is self-verification. It is not to enhance the self, even though self-verification is associated with positive outcomes, like affirming the self-concept and raising self-

esteem. The individual's primary goal is one of identity stability and consistency. This holds even when a person has a negative self-view about oneself. If they perceive they are being treated in a way that is not consistent with those meanings, then their identity is not verified. Non-verification causes unpleasant emotions and distress (Burke & Stets, 2009). Emotions are experienced as a direct result of situation outcomes. Identity theory tends to conceptualize emotions by valence, measured along a continuum. The specific emotion matters less than the degree to which it is a good or bad feeling that the individual experiences because that is what is going to matter in terms of predicting behavior.

High self-esteem protects the individual in a state of identity non-verification, even altering the meaning of the situation to discredit a source of negative feedback (Burke & Stets, 2009). Cast and Burke (2002) equate self-esteem to an "energy reservoir" that depletes in response to chronic non-verification. The energy is both conceptual and practical. With higher self-esteem, individuals may rebound quicker from non-verification. When self-esteem is low and remains low, additional energy and resources are needed to work towards verification. It is easy to understand how this might take a great deal of effort in a particularly challenging situation. Because individuals prefer to verify identities that they claim, the inability to control their perceptions of self so that they match the standard may eventually result in an actual change to that standard in an effort to bring these into agreement. Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance outlined a similar fate for the inability to resolve conflicting cognitions.

Testing the Identity Process

An experiment where a disturbance is introduced to the identity control system is highly regarded as one of the primary ways in which the identity process may be systematically studied (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 72). Research has shown that when individuals are supplied "negative" identity feedback (i.e., does not conform to perceptions of self or the identity standard) they behaved by *overcompensating* in the direction of the identity standard in a situation to reduce the discrepancy (Swann & Hill, 1982). Stets (2005) tested the effect of non-verifying feedback on emotional response following a task where a person's "worker" identity was given more or less credit than they deserved. Stets and Carter (2011) tested the identity model by examining the moral self in a two-part study. The first part used survey research to establish a relationship between the moral identity and past behavior. In the second part, individuals were placed into a morality predicament while the researchers observed their emotional response, behavior, and incoming perceptions about the self. Their

findings were generally consistent with identity theory predictions of behavior, perceived discrepancy, and emotional response when given feedback incongruent with self-conceptions.

Stets and Biga (2003) examine the identity process in the context of environmentally responsive behavior. Specifically, they wanted to understand the nature of the relationship between identity, attitudes, and behavior. They determined that individual's environmental identity salience, prominence, and commitment better accounted for behavior than environmental attitudes. They also find that even though the "value dimension" of the attitude plays a significant role in environmental protection behavior, but that this "relationship between attitudes and behavior is, in part, spurious due to the influence of the pro-environment identity" (Stets & Biga, 2003, p.418).

Identity & Media Choice

Identity theory does not address the role of media in the identity process, social interaction, or society, in any detail. However, identity theory does discuss the role of resources, which are defined as "anything that supports individuals and the interaction of individuals" (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 99, cf. Freese, 1988). By moving to a higher level of abstraction, identity theory conceptualizes resources by what they *do* for individuals, rather than what they, in fact, are (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 100). Resources take on meaning when they become relevant in a situation and are immediately available to individuals. For a full discussion on resources in identity theory, see Burke & Stets, 2009; also, e.g., Stets & Cast, 2007.

Uses-and-gratifications research has identified a number of motivations for media use that support aspects about the self and identity. For example, using the Internet for communication reasons fulfills individuals' gratifications regarding "social identity, interpersonal communication, parasocial interaction, and companionship" (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 28). The new media environment has made identity a crucial factor in how individuals present themselves and connect with others online. In *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*, Baym (2010) addresses various ways that people experience social interaction online. From dating sites, to social networking sites, to gaming communities, we engage in much of our social interaction online. A recent study on college students and their social media use found that favorite music, movies, books, etc. were considered very important means of expressing identity to others online (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). This suggests that the actual content may not be as important as what it communicates about a *type of person*. People infer characteristics or form impressions about other people based on what they know of their media choices.

Empirical work examining the relationship between identity and media choice is actually quite limited. One of the first studies looked at young adults' age identification and social identity gratifications from exposure to television shows featuring young characters and found that after viewing the program, individual's age identification increased (Harwood, 1999). The most recent work takes a selective exposure approach to understanding a number of identity-related concepts (Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastall, 2010; Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012).

Knobloch-Westerwick and Meng (2011) found some support that selective exposure is related to reinforcement of the self. Participants tended to prefer attitude-consistent over counter-attitudinal messages, which increased accessibility of the political self-concept, but exposure to attitude-inconsistent messages did not have that effect. Evidence for the reinforcement of the attitudes was "inconsistent" (p.364). The scholars suggest that reinforcement of the self, though hard to study, may be the kind of effect individuals most frequently seek out from media. They conclude that "if individuals strive for self-consistency and stability, even though their selves are dynamic and subject to continuous fluctuation and adaptation, media use may offer great tools for 'consistency maintenance'" (p. 365).

In another relevant study, Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian (2012) examined whether or not sex and gender conformity (i.e., femininity and masculinity) predicted "selective exposure" to gender-typed magazines. They were also interested in observing any reinforcing effects the material would have on gender. They found that both sex and gender predicted exposure to gender-typed magazines. Women with higher femininity spent more time reading female-typed magazines and men with greater masculinity spent more time reading the male-typed magazines. They conclude that biological sex influenced selective exposure directly and indirectly through gender, and that the act of selective exposure increased "conformity" of gender according to the Bem sex role inventory.

Hypotheses & Research Questions

Study 1: Individuals & Media Selection

Study 1 examines the organization (i.e., prominence and salience) of multiple identities and tests hypotheses regarding how and when identities may predict media choice. Media choice is observed before and after a priming task designed to increase the salience of political identity in one of two randomly assigned groups. Specifically, this study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Identity affects media choice.

H2: Identity prominence has a mediating effect on interest in predicting media choice.

Study 2: Individuals & “Self-Media” Interactions

This experiment tests the non-linear elements of the identity process before and after browsing the web. A feedback loop is established using the computer as a proxy for social interaction. Individuals answer questions about their identities expecting to receive personalized website recommendations. One of the groups receives identity incongruent recommendations. Specifically, this study examines the impact of identity verifying or non-verifying feedback on subsequent outcomes as predicted by the identity control model.

Identity theory scholars have tested the identity process in a variety of contexts that do not involve media. In today's digital communication environment, a great deal of social interaction is mediated. When the self interacts with another entity online, they are engaged in a form of dynamic social interaction that determines the parameters of the situation through the system of inputs and outputs (i.e., feedback loop) between the person and the environment. It is assumed that media may just as well serve that purpose.

In accordance with identity theory, this study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Immediately following a situation of identity non-verification online, individuals will perceive error.

H2: Higher perception of error is positively related to the importance of the identities to the individual.

H3: When error is present, individuals will rate the media recommendations as being less self-relevant than they might otherwise.

H4: Perception of error is associated with negative emotional response.

These concepts (e.g., emotional response, perceptions of self-relevance) are operationalized in the Methods chapter, which details the identity process and the identity control model. Because media use and perceptions of media are also examined in this study, I also present the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the impact of non-verification on subsequent media behavior?

RQ2: What role does self-esteem play in response to identity non-verification?

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

This dissertation presents two original experimental designs examining individuals, identity, and media, each one testing different elements of identity theory. Study 1 tests the effects of multiple identities on media choice in a two-step media selection task. Using the computer as a proxy for social interaction to initiate the identity process, Study 2 tests the effects of identity incongruent feedback on individuals' reactions and subsequent behavior in an ongoing feedback loop. This chapter outlines the specific methods used for each study.

Study 1: Individuals & Media Selection

Study Overview

This study looks at how individuals select web videos in a two-step selection process before and after being primed to think about their identity. The web video study is a modified pre-test—post-test random assignment experimental design with a control group to test the hypotheses regarding the relationship of identity to media selection. The modification to the experiment is on the pre-test. Individuals completed a questionnaire at least two weeks before the experimental procedure so that media preferences and baseline measures of several key identities' salience and prominence to avoid any uncontrolled salience-priming the day of the procedure. The experimental manipulation is a prime intended to increase the salience of one identity, i.e., individuals' political identity, to observe its impact on subsequent behavior (i.e., media choice) when other identities are also potentially active.

Media choice in this study is less controlled than we usually see in media experiments. Individuals have more autonomy in deciding what they want to watch. First, media options included an array of politics & news, sports, and entertainment content. Second, the videos used in this study are “real” online web videos accessed through hyperlinks that have not been altered in any way. This is unusual in media choice experiments where media messages are often manipulated to test specific media selection phenomena. The less controlled design is ideal here, for two reasons: 1) the experimental manipulation is on identity salience and not content; and 2) a “high choice” less controlled media environment is consistent with today's media choice reality.

Subjects for this study were students enrolled in mass communication courses that allowed them to earn course credit in exchange for participation. This study has two parts—an online pretest and an in-lab

procedure with the experimental condition. Only individuals who completed both parts of the study were analyzed (N=76). The online pretest was administered via Qualtrics online data collection software and the in-lab procedure employed the use of MediaLab and DirectRT, as well as current online web video content on cable news websites and other video hosting websites (i.e., YouTube). Prior to the experimental procedure, the videos were downloaded and converted to mp4 files using iSkysoft iTube Studio software. The entire lab-based procedure took participants approximately 25 minutes.

Part I: Pre-test

The pre-test in this study was made available online approximately four weeks before the in-lab procedure, beginning on February 19, 2013 and ending on March 7, 2013. The purpose of the pre-test was to obtain information about individual's political, sports fan, and gender identities, as well as their media preferences and usage habits. It was important to measure these factors well in advance of the experimental procedure to avoid priming these identities specifically, which could potentially confound results and mitigate the overall effectiveness of the experimental design. Additionally, it was important to measure the identities of interest in advance, so that identity salience and prominence were not affected by any other factors of the procedure itself. Identity and interest measures obtained in the pre-test are explained below, following the description of the experimental procedure.

Part II: Procedure Overview

The in-lab procedure began two-weeks after the pre-test closed and all data were collected between March 21, 2013 and March 29, 2013. Upon signing informed consent forms, participants were randomly assigned a computer terminal that was pre-set to run one of the two conditions. The screen displayed only the MediaLab background and a small window to enter the participant's 5-digit numeric ID. They were verbally instructed that they were going to be watching web videos and answering questions about themselves and their preferences. Upon reviewing an electronic version of the consent form, the study began with the video selection Task 1, which contained short videos that were approximately 2-3 minutes in length. Subjects were instructed that on the next page they would see a menu consisting of three content categories and after choosing one of three content categories, they would be selecting a single video from that category to watch in its entirety. They were told that they should choose quickly and carefully and pick the category that most appealed to them.

After the instructions, individuals were then taken to a specially created .html menu file that displayed only three links: “SPORTS,” “POLITICS & NEWS,” and “ENTERTAINMENT.” The former two categories contained three videos, the latter, four. The menu, submenus, and video descriptions are attached as Appendix 1. All of the videos were publicly available online at the time of the study and were not altered in any way. With the exception of a few of the entertainment videos, the videos contained fairly new or recent content. This was especially important for the news and sports videos, since these content categories are event driven.

Because the experimental manipulation was a prime to increase the salience of political identity, the videos in the politics and news category required additional attention to detail because of the potential for selective exposure. This is true for both tasks. Of the three video options, two contained political content (from Fox News and MSNBC) with identical subject matter and strikingly similar headlines, and the third video (from CNN) was totally irrelevant to politics. Since the “forced choice” component required the subject to select one of the videos in the category they chose, the difference came down to 1) political content, or not, and 2) source of political content. Fox News is associated with conservative or Republican opinions, and MSNBC is associated with liberal or Democrat opinions.

Upon completing Task 1, individuals answered several questions about the video they just watched (e.g., enjoyment, attention, etc.) and then completed the Twenty Statements Test (TST) which asks the participant to provide twenty answers to the question “Who am I?” off the “top of the head” (see Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). The purpose of the TST was to subjectively “prime” the individual to think actively about their identity and to minimize any unintentional “priming” from the video content they just watched. It also provided an additional potential measure of identity salience for the identities of interest just prior to the experimental treatment.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the control or the treatment designed to manipulate identity salience. This study employed a prime quite similar to those used measure accessibility of the identity-based self-concept in recent media choice research (Knobloch-Westerwick & Meng, 2011; Knobloch-Westerwick & Hoplamazian, 2012). The experimental group received the “political self” prime where they were asked to tell whether they support or oppose political policy issues and answer “Me” or “Not me” to a set of adjective characteristics (e.g., creative, serious, etc.) with political words embedded (i.e., Democrat, Republican, conservative, liberal, patriot, environmentalist, capitalist, pro-choice). This part of the study was completed

using DirectRT psychology software that records dichotomous key presses and reaction times. The full description of the primes, see Appendix 2.

The control group completed an irrelevant word sorting task followed by the same “Me”/ “Not Me” control group also was primed to think of the “self” in terms of the adjectives presented, sans embedded political words. In place of political words, there are several words that have to do with gender (masculine, feminine; soft, hard) and social conformity (conformist, nonconformist; conventional, unconventional). This is not expected to increase gender salience per se, since gender salience is already assumed. The nature of self-related adjectives and categories (e.g., assertive, sympathetic) are sufficient in and of themselves to activate gender-based or sex-based beliefs about self, given the presumed importance of gender to the self, more generally. Though the control group received a “slight” gender prime, this condition is not equivalent in design to the experimental manipulation, which was longer in duration and had multiple rounds of political self-categorization. The control group thinks of their “self” or person identities once and when they do, the number of explicitly gendered words (2) is significantly less than the explicitly political words (8) embedded in the experimental treatment.

Immediately following the treatment, subjects were then prompted to complete video selection Task 2. The second web-video task contained longer videos (ranging between 4-8 minutes) but used the exact same procedure as Task 1. The videos available in each category were carefully chosen to provide a range of content that would appeal to the identities of interest (see Appendix 3). The same exact follow up questions asked following Task 1 were asked again following the Task 2. This marked the end of the study.

Study 1 Measurement

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study are the video selections, measured in terms of 1) category and 2) content. Category (sports, politics & news, entertainment) and content (i.e., the specific video selected) are all measured dichotomous (“1” if selected, “0” if not).

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study primarily come from the pre-test where baseline measures of individual identity (relevant to assessing prominence and salience) and relative content preferences (interest) were recorded at least two full weeks prior to the in-lab procedure. Identities of interest are political identity,

sport fandom identity, and gender identity. Each individual possesses some degree of identity salience and prominence for each of these identities, even if that degree is very minimal. Because of this, it is not expected that the political salience prime will be sufficiently strong to override the effects of sports fan or gender identities if they are more prominent than an individual's political identity.

Condition. The experimental manipulation to increase salience of the political self is measured “1” if in the political prime group and “0” if not.

Sports Fan identity. Sports fan identity was measured using Wann's (2002) five-item Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ), which is regarded as being both a reliable and valid means of assessing sport fandom. The SFQ consists of five statements with response options on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “1” for strongly disagree” to “5” for “strongly agree.” Items were added together and then re-scaled by dividing by five to create a five-point continuous ordinal measure.

Political identity. Political identity was measured using a modified form of the SFQ, where the references in the statements to “sports” were changed to “politics” and references to “sports fan” to were changed to “politically engaged.” Only four of the statements in the SFQ were used (see Appendix 4 for details), making the scale out of four statements instead of the five used to measure the sports fan identity. Response options range along the same five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Just like the sport fan identity, the four items were added together, divided by four to re-scale the variable to a continuous ordinal measure ($R=1-5$).

Identity Salience. Identity Salience refers to the likelihood of an identity being activated across situations. Individuals possess varying degrees of identity salience. Sports fan and political identity salience were captured using the 5-item SFQ and the 4-item adapted SFQ political identity measure, respectively. Given the individual items making up the scale, as individuals' scores increase, the salience of that identity increases as well. This is a continuous measure of identity.

Identity Prominence. Prominence and salience are conceptually related. Prominent identities are more likely to be salient across situations. As a result, prominent identities are more likely to guide behavior when salient in a situation. Operationally, moving up on the identity scale (a one unit change) parallels moving up in salience. But there is a big difference between e.g., a “2” and a “5” and this is what the prominence measure essentially captures. A salience score somewhere around or below the mean indicates a relative lack of prominence, making it highly unlikely that identities lacking in prominence will become salient enough to

override an identity that *is* to affect media choice, especially in a situation with entertainment media options. Prominence is measured by establishing a cut off point to create a dichotomous variable based on probability. Upon examining the similar score distribution and measures of central tendency for the political and sports fan identities, for an identity to be considered prominent (1), the score had to fall above the mean (about 1 SD away) and within the top 30% of scores and everything below that point, (0). These dichotomous variables were primarily tested in H2a.

Gender identity. Unlike sports fandom and political identity, gender is not “voluntary;” everyone has a gender identity. Gender is assumed to be salient and prominent in individuals. This is due to the role of gender in social interaction and individual expression in society. Unlike the variable biological sex, where someone is male or female, gender is a social construct that is more fluid and flexible. All males and females possess a mixture of characteristics that may be deemed masculine (e.g., assertive) or feminine (e.g., understanding). On the pretest, individuals were asked to indicate their own gender identity on continuous ordinal 11-point spectrum ranging from “masculine /0” and “feminine/ 10” by moving a slider to the point on the scale that best reflects their gender in terms of the degree of masculinity/ femininity they believe they possess ($R=0-10$). For some of the hypothesis testing (H2a, in particular) a dichotomous measure of prominence is used to reflect the higher feminine gender identity (1). Using the same process described to establish the cut-off point for identity prominence, this was determined to be anything above an “8.” Everything below an “8” is coded “0” because relative to those who have very feminine gender identity, being very feminine is not prominent to their gender identity.

Interest. (i.e., relative media preference) was measured by a 5-category ordered ranking of content categories according to the individual’s relative preference of the various choices, which were political/news, sports, entertainment (i.e., television comedy or drama, movies), educational or lifestyle (e.g., Discovery, History, Food Network, Style, etc.), and reality TV. The rankings were recorded as numeric data, according to where the individual placed their top preference. From there, I created the interest variables (dichotomous) based on the relative preference of sports, politics, entertainment (general), and combined the other two entertainment categories. These variables are coded “1” if they were ranked number “1” and “0” if otherwise.

Political Beliefs. Since partisan selective exposure is a potential outcome of interest, partisanship is measured on a 5-point scale, ranging from Strong Democrat (1) to Strong Republican (5) with two additional options: “not sure/ undecided” and “other.”

Study 2: Individuals & “Self—Media” Interactions

Study Overview

Study 2 is a random assignment three group post-test only experimental design testing the impact of computer-generated feedback on the identity process in a self-media interaction situation. After an uncontrolled web-browsing session, individuals were randomly assigned to one of three groups, two of which received the treatment. The treatment groups provided information about their identities to the computer so they could receive personalized website recommendations reflecting their sense of self. One of the groups received the experimental manipulation which came in the form of website recommendations that were not consistent with the answers they provided or their sense of self. The identity-incongruent feedback is intended to create a disturbance to the identity process. The other group received recommendations consistent with the answers they provided about their identities. This study examines the impact of identity-incongruent media feedback on the identity process on several outcomes representing components of the identity model. A second uncontrolled web-browsing session takes place following the self-media interaction to examine the impact of identity incongruent feedback on subsequent media choice behavior.

Participants (N=86) in this study were college students enrolled in mass communication courses that allowed them to earn course credit in exchange for participation. The procedure was conducted in a well-equipped media effects lab with large wide-screen computer monitors at each computer terminal. The entire procedure took most participants between 20-30 minutes.

Procedure Overview

Participants reported to the lab expecting to participate in a study on individuals and web browsing. Upon signing informed consent, they were taken to a computer with a large widescreen monitor displaying two different web browsers adjacent to each other. The browser window to the left displayed the basic white Google search page, and on the right, a window displaying the electronic version of the informed consent form at the beginning of the study in Qualtrics. Participants were verbally instructed to keep the screen displayed the way that it was, and not to close or move the windows, even after getting confirmation from Qualtrics that they have submitted their results successfully. This was to prevent accidental closure of the experiment in between browsing sessions and to save time in re-setting the computer for the next participant. They were told that they will be completing the study in Safari, and when prompted to browse the web, they will do that in Google Chrome only. Participants were told that their web browsing history would be thoroughly cleared upon

completing the study and that no self-identifying information or content other than the websites they visit would be collected. Additional verbal instructions regarding the web browsing portions of the procedure were provided and participants were asked if they had any questions before they began the study.

Web Browsing Tasks

This study had two periods of unrestricted web browsing: once at the beginning of the study and again towards the end. Participants were verbally instructed that when the study prompts them to browse the web, they should do so as naturally as possible, just like they would the first time they get online in the morning, or when casually browsing in a coffee shop. Since the first task began upon electronically signing consent in Qualtrics, individuals first saw a screen with the instructions for Task 1 (for exact instructions, see Appendix #). They were instructed to take the study in Safari and when prompted, to browse the web in Google Chrome. Following the web-browsing portion, participants answered several questions about the first website they visited (e.g., how important to your sense of self is the website you first visited?).

Experimental Portion

Next, individuals were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. This was done through programming Qualtrics display logic to evenly present one of three instruction pages. The control group saw a page of instructions that said only “Now you will be answering some questions about yourself” while the two treatment groups received the applicable version of the following instructions:

For the next portion of the study, you will be supplying answers to questions that will allow the computer to get to know you. The computer will be learning about who you are, what you like, and what’s important to you so that it can provide you with a personalized selection of website recommendations, similar to how Netflix or Amazon do, that best reflect who you are. The computer’s recommendations will be calculated electronically based solely on your answers to the questions on the screen.

Following these instructions, all participants completed the 10-item Rosenberg (1979) self-esteem scale and the Twenty Statements Test (TST), where they answer the question “Who am I?” by providing 20 separate top-of-the-head answers (see Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). For the groups receiving the experimental treatment, the Rosenberg scale and the TST provide a fairly comprehensive battery of questions designed to heighten the salience of the self and identity prior to answering the experimental treatment questions, which were a very basic set of dichotomous yes/no identity questions with follow-up questions as applicable. Individuals did not know how the computer generates its list of recommendations, only that the recommendations were based on

their answers. All control group questions used the same websites that were used as recommendations in the experimental groups.

Individuals received their personalized recommendations from the computer on a single page and were then asked to rate each website thumbs up or thumbs down on how well the computer's recommendation fits their sense of self. This essentially establishes the feedback loop conceptualized as the identity process depicted in the basic identity model. After rating the websites, individuals were asked to rate the computer on a scale of accuracy and tell how much the computer's recommendations made sense to them. They were also asked to tell where they fell on an emotional spectrum between annoyed and pleased. The feedback loop continued with another set of ratings. Individuals were asked to rate each website on a scale (1-10) ranging from "not at all me" to "100% me," how self-relevant it was. After that, individuals reported how satisfied they were with the computer's recommendations and answered a question about their self-esteem. All of the details regarding the experimental treatments, identity manipulation, and variable measurement are explained in the following subsection.

While the experimental groups interacted with the computer, the control group rated websites and answered questions about their preferences. Following this, all three groups are prompted to browse the web once again. They are shown the same instructions and are asked the same questions upon continuing in the questionnaire. Individuals then answer questions about digital media use and preferences, mobile web use, and basic demographics for the conclusion of the study.

As participants finished they were thanked for their time. Computers were promptly cleared and reset. Web browsing history was copied and pasted into a text document and a spreadsheet under their 5-digit numeric ID numbers. These documents were stored securely in Google Drive, file storage and synchronization service provided by Google Inc. (released April 24, 2012). Information was stored and saved immediately. Upon saving the information, participant browser history was deleted using the most thorough settings available and the computer re-set for the next participant.

Experimental Manipulation

Individuals were randomly assigned to the control group or one of two experimental groups where they had to "tell" the computer about their identity for personal website recommendations based on their answers. Because individuals have an expectation to receive recommendations congruent with their answers (i.e., verification) the manipulation in the study is on the type of feedback individuals receive. Individuals will either

experience identity non-verification (receives feedback incongruent with their answers) or identity verification (receives feedback congruent with their answers). It is expected that individuals in the non-verification group will experience higher perceptions of error and negative emotion. They are also expected to rate the websites as less self-relevant.

Computer Feedback Items (Measurement & Manipulation)

All individuals in the experimental conditions answered the following questions about their identity after they complete the TST:

1. Are you a sports fan? (0=no, 1=yes)

1a. If yes: Relative to all of the things that make you who you are, how important are sports to your sense of self? “Not really important” (1) to “Extremely important to who I am” (5)

2. Are you into politics? (0=no, 1=yes)

2a. Whether or not you are into politics, where do you tend to see yourself and your values politically? Move the slider to the place on the line that best reflects that spot *Party ideology*, 0.0-5.0, *very liberal—very conservative* (Note: If placement is ≤ 2.4 , the computer provides recommendations for “liberal”)

2b. If yes: Relative to all of the things that make you who you are, how important are politics to your sense of self? (1=not really important—5=extremely important to who I am)

3. Are you a traveler? (0=no, 1=yes)

3a. If yes: Relative to all of the things that make you who you are, how important are is being a traveler to your sense of self? (1=not really important—5=extremely important to who I am)

4. Are you a female? (0=no, 1=yes)

4a. If yes: Relative to all of the things that make you who you are, how important is being a female to your sense of self? (1=not really important—5=extremely important to who I am)

4b. If no: Relative to all of the things that make you who you are, how important is being a male to your sense of self? (1=not really important—5=extremely important to who I am)

5. Do you think of yourself as a “typical” female [or male]? (1=yes, 0=no)

If an individual answered “Yes” to the dichotomous identity question and then reported that the identity is “neither unimportant nor important,” “pretty important,” or “extremely important” to who they are, then they will received additional follow-up questions to probe the salience of that identity further. The follow-up questions for the sports and political identities, for example, are actually the same that were asked in the web video study pre-test (e.g., sport fandom, etc.). Only the questions listed above were used to determine which website recommendations would appear on the screen.

The main objective of the experiment is to simulate the identity process via self-media interaction by controlling media feedback so that one group experiences a significant disturbance to the identity process and the other experiences minimal disturbance. According to theory, manipulating this feedback should result in measureable differences between the groups on several different outcomes of the identity process. The media feedback in the form of websites requires individuals to engage in self-reflection in their assessment of the feedback. A page of text appeared that read: “With a considerable degree of accuracy, your answers to the questions indicate that you are the kind of person who would enjoy, relate to, or otherwise find personally relevant, the following websites.” Websites were displayed on a single page in blocks of two or three according to the individuals’ answers. Table 1 (below) shows how these are determined using advanced display logic capabilities in Qualtrics. In order to control the manipulation of condition, media feedback is based on their answers to the questions listed above.

Table 1.
Computer Website Recommendations, By Identity Answer and Condition

Identity	If Yes: Congruent	If No: Congruent	If Yes: Incongruent	If No: Incongruent
Sports	ESPN Deadspin Tiger Droppings	Stumble Upon Twitter Daily Reveille	Roll Tide Dr. Phil Lolcats	ESPN Deadspin Tiger Droppings
Politics (conservative)	Fox News Heritage Foundation	Tumblr YouTube	MSNBC NPR	MSNBC NPR
Politics (liberal)	CNN Huffington Post	Tumblr YouTube	Fox News Heritage Foundation	Fox News Heritage Foundation
Traveler	Lonely Planet Student Universe	Yelp LSU	Applebees BR Parents	Lonely Planet Travel & Leisure
Female (gender typical)	Cosmopolitan Pinterest Shopstyle	Reddit Pandora Hulu	Techdirt 4chan Paypal	Cosmopolitan Pinterest Shopstyle
Male (gender typical)	College Humor Men’s Health Hulu	Reddit Pandora Hulu	Shopstyle Cosmopolitan Pinterest	Men’s Health College Humor Cosmopolitan

A description of the websites used in this study can be found in Appendix 6. Websites were selected based on the general demographics of users and assigned to categories, accordingly. When in doubt as to whether or not something would appeal [or not] to the “typical” male or female aged 18-24, I referred to Alexa.com for commercial web traffic statistics on popularity (i.e., rank) age, and gender demographics.

To illustrate how this works in the procedure, a male in the identity congruent condition who is: a sports fan, a liberal/not into politics, not a traveler, and a typical male would receive the following recommendations: *ESPN, Deadspin, Tiger Droppings, Tumblr, YouTube, Yelp, LSU.edu, Reddit, Pandora, and Hulu*. If that same male was actually in the identity incongruent condition, he would, instead, receive: *Roll Tide, Dr. Phil, Lolcats, Fox News, Heritage Foundation, Lonely Planet, Travel & Leisure, Menshealth, College Humor, and Cosmopolitan*.

The main concern in the identity congruent condition was to avoid creating any meaningful disturbance in their perception of the recommendations, in general. Where individuals are not affirmatively one or more of the identities, the website recommendations they received were fairly content-flexible (e.g. *YouTube*) with wide-ranging appeal. For example, someone who is not a sports fan in the congruent condition would receive: *Stumble Upon, Twitter, and Daily Reveille*. So, even if they don't find the content of some of their recommendations terribly relevant to their sense of self, it isn't likely that their would be a significant discrepancy, unless an individual has strong personal feelings regarding a particular website that could not be known. In the identity incongruent condition, the goal was to have the computer recommend individuals websites that would appeal to the polar opposite (e.g., giving non-sports fans sports media). Individuals also received irrelevant, strange, or otherwise random websites (e.g., giving a traveler *BR Parents* and *Applebees*).

After the individuals reviewed their recommendations, they advanced to the next page where they were prompted with the following text:

The computer has determined at least 10 different websites to be representative of you and your sense of identity. Though these websites were based on your own answers to the questions, some may be more important than others, just like some qualities you have as a person may be more important to you than others.

For each website recommendation, please provide some feedback on how relevant the website is to you using the thumbs up/thumbs down rating system.

The next page provided detailed instructions for individuals to rate each of the computer's recommendations according to whether or not they think that the website (or the type of content it represents) "fits" who they really are. In the event that participants were unfamiliar with any of the recommendations, or undecided on how well it fit their sense of self, they were instructed to just rate in the direction of their first reaction.

Participants rated each website on a single page at a time where the website displayed in between a "thumbs up" graphic and a "thumbs down" graphic, as displayed in Figure 2, below.

Using the "Thumbs Up"/"Thumbs Down" rating system, please rate the computer's recommendation according to whether or not the website or the type of content it represents "fits" who you are.

 Thumbs Up	ESPN.com	 Thumbs Down
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>

Figure 2. Display Graphics for Thumbs Rating

Since each individual received only 10 website recommendations in some “personalized” combination, it is not possible for them to rate all of the websites. To test the effect of the manipulation, individuals’ “thumbs up” ratings were summed together to create a “Me’ score” index, which resulted in a continuous variable with discrete scores. The ‘Me’ score measures the degree to which the computer’s recommendations “fit” the individuals’ ideas of self. Lower ‘Me’ scores indicate a greater perception of error and identity non-verification and higher scores associated with a relative lack of error and identity verification. The control group also rated all of the websites used in the experimental treatment.

Conceptualizing the Identity Process

The ongoing identity process is simply a continuous loop of inputs and outputs between the person and the immediate social environment. Whenever social interaction occurs, the identity process is automatically initiated between the person and the situation in the environment. Scholars have tested the identity process in a variety of contexts that do not involve media. Since a great deal of social interaction is mediated through digital communication technology, when the self interacts with another entity online, they are engaged in a form of dynamic social interaction. Multiple identities may be activated in a situation, each one having the same process as outlined in the basic identity model. We assume this is occurring as the individual considers how they think and feel about each website. The exact identity being activated is not of concern in this experiment because we are investigating the process and how it might play out when individuals interact with media online.

Environment & Meanings in Situation. This study initiates the identity process through self-media interaction online, so the “environment” isn’t just the physical laboratory environment; it is the digital media environment that is “governed” by the prevailing socio-technological norms that Internet users are familiar with. Individuals will expect the computer to provide them with “correct” personalized recommendations because

they are already familiar with things like online personality quizzes and personalized content recommendations (e.g., Netflix). Given these conditions, we can assume that individuals will make “accurate” reflected appraisals about the environment and the meanings of the situation because they are controlled in this experiment.

Input/Output. Input refers to the information about the situation that comes in as perceptions of the self and the meanings in the situation. Output, in the form of behavior (or action) follows the comparator, which may be guided by the effort to correct the discrepancy (if present) to bring their perceptions back under control. A greater disturbance to this process is associated with higher perception of error and emotion. This continues as a feedback loop throughout the duration of the experimental portion.

Study 2 Measurement

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study reflect various outcomes of interest. They are generally based on individuals’ perceptions of the computer’s feedback to them.

‘Me’ score. Using the first set of ratings, each “thumbs up” was coded “1” and each “thumbs down” was coded “0.” These dichotomous ratings were added together to create an index ranging from 0-10. The “me,” score reflects the total effect of the recommendations in “fitting” the self. Therefore, anything below the average of the index (i.e., “5”) would indicate increasing incongruence (i.e., non-verification) moving towards “0.” The ‘me’ score is a quantified measure of the comparator component on the identity model. It captures the active comparison process individuals undergo when they compare the meanings of the situation to the identity standard. This variable tests the effect of the experimental manipulation itself.

Perception of error (H1). Immediately after rating the computer’s recommendations, individuals were asked a one-item Likert scale question about their perceptions of computer’s accuracy: Thinking about the computer’s recommendations for you overall, which are based on the information you provided, would you say that the computer’s performance was accurate? Answers are on a seven-point scale, ranging from “not at all accurate” (1) to “extremely accurate” (7).

Importance to Self (H2). This is a composite measure based on the dichotomous identity questions and the follow up question to “yes” answers that asks how important an identity is to them on a scale of 1-5. Each “yes” to the dichotomous identity questions is “1” and each “no” is scored “0.” All of the numbers will be added together to create a sum of importance score and since there are four identities, the highest score

possible is “20” ($R=0-20$). A score of “20” would reflect an individual who claims that political, sports, traveler and their gender are all extremely important to their sense of self. The higher the score, the more important the identities are to the person. H2 predicts that individuals with higher “Importance to Self” scores will experience greater perception of error

Self-Relevance (H3). This outcome is measured as an index, ranging from 10-100. Using a semantic differential scale, individuals will rate each website again, only this time using the criteria of relevance to self: On a scale of 1-10, from “Not at all me” (1) to “100% Me” (10), how relevant was each recommendation to who you are? Because of the range, the self-relevance index provides a more robust measure of their ratings than the ‘Me’ scores. Since everyone receives their own “personalized” set of ten website recommendations, individuals did not all receive the same ten websites, which means that the effects of any one website are not evenly distributed or comparable across individuals. The interest is not on the separate websites but on the total effect of the feedback.

Emotion (H4). One of the outcomes of the identity process is emotion. Identity theory approaches emotions in terms of whether individuals experience positive or negative feelings, rather than the actual *specific* emotion experienced (Turner & Stets, 2005). Because negative feelings are associated with identity non-verification and positive feelings with identity verification, it matters to a lesser degree the exact emotion experienced as it does the valence of the emotion experienced, which should be consistent nonetheless. Though identifying specific emotions has not been the primary goal of identity theory, recent work has started to explore how the source and nature of the discrepancy might lead to certain degrees of negative and positive emotions (e.g., Stets & Burke, 2005).

In keeping with identity theory and recent hypotheses regarding the nature of the discrepancy in the identity process, this study captures emotion on two different 9-pt semantic differential scales: Annoyed/ Pleased, and Unsatisfied/ Satisfied. These particular items were selected based on theory-driven hypotheses advanced in identity theory (i.e., “annoyance,” see e.g., Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2005) well as prior research (i.e., “satisfaction,” see e.g., Stets & Asencio, 2008, cf. Kemper, 1987). Emotion is operationalized so that scores below the scale mean indicate negative feelings and scores above the scale mean indicate positive feelings.

Self-Esteem (RQ2). The last recommendations-related item is a single item measure of global self-esteem, which has high concurrent validity with the Rosenberg scale. Individuals respond to the statement: I

have high self-esteem on a 1-7 scale ranging from “Not very true of me” to “Very true of me” (7). All individuals also completed the 10-item Rosenberg scale prior to the TST. To answer RQ2, I refer to both of these measures.

Media Choice (RQ1). Media choice in this study is the website individuals first visit upon being prompted to browse the web in both browsing sessions. To answer RQ1, all websites were categorically coded into seven different content-types:

- “0” if Personal business (e.g., paying bills, checking email, MyLSU)
- “1” if News content (e.g., Google, Yahoo, CNN)
- “2” if Sports content (e.g., ESPN, PGA Masters, CBS Sports)
- “3” if Entertainment content (e.g., Perez Hilton, BuzzFeed, YouTube)
- “4” if Facebook or Twitter
- “5” if Pinterest or Tumblr
- “6” if Shopping (e.g., Forever 21, Nordstrom, Reebok)
- “7” if Other content/Special interest (e.g., Catholic.org, Reddit, Deviant Art)

Independent Variables

Condition. The identity incongruent group is coded “0,” the congruent group is coded “1”

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS & DISCUSSION FOR STUDY 1, INDIVIDUALS AND MEDIA SELECTION

Participants

Seventy-six individuals participated in this study. Thirty-seven individuals (49%) were randomly assigned to the experimental condition. Conditions are balanced in terms of basic demographics (i.e., age, sex, race). About 79% are white ($n=60$), nearly 12% are black ($n=9$) and the other 9% includes Hispanic ($n=3$), Asian ($n=1$) or mixed race ($n=3$). Age ranged from 18-26 ($M=20.8$, $SD=1.4$). Women outnumbered men ($n=64/12$) by about 5:1, making up 84% of the sample sex.

Identities

Individuals provided information about their political, sports fan and gender identities in the pretest. Gender identity was measured by individuals' self-placement on the 11-point gender scale with "feminine" being at the high end of the scale ($M=7.16$, $SD=2.84$, $R=0-10$). About 58% of women placed their gender identity along the continuum at "8" or above, "10" ($n=16$) being the mode ($M_{women}=8.14$, $SD=.21$, $R=4-10$). As a result, the gender distribution for women is negative and left-skewed. Of the men, all but one placed their gender identity at "3" or lower ($M_{men}=1.92$, $SD=.51$, $R=0-7$), which also results in a right-skew gender distribution for men. In society, being distinctly very feminine (or very masculine) in gender requires a degree of commitment to socially held standards in order to maintain (and routinely verify) that identity. To establish a measure for gender identity prominence, a dichotomous measure based on high femininity was created. Taking into consideration the mean, mode, and median ($=8$), along with the sample distribution, and ratio of women to men, self-placement at "8" and above ($n=44$) is coded "1" and everything falling below ($n=32$) is coded "0." The new variable, "feminine" does not result in a significant difference of means between the two conditions $t(74) = .65$, ns .

Wann's (2002) five-item ($\alpha = .94$) sport fandom questionnaire (SFQ) formed the basis of the two measures for sports fan identity. The salience scaled measure average ($M=2.76$, $SD=1.10$, $R=1-5$) was the same value as the median and the mode ($=2.7$). About 30% of the participants had a score at "2" or below ($n=23$). In order for individuals' sports fan identity to be classified as prominent, the scaled measure had to fall above the mean and within the top 30% of scores ($R=3.4-5$). These top scores ($n=22$) were coded "1" and the rest ($n=54$), "0."

Political identity was measured with four items ($\alpha = .88$) based on the SFQ. In terms of salience, the average score was “2.7” ($M=2.7$, $SD= .92$, $R=1-5$). Approximately 58% fell below the mean on political identity. For an individual’s political identity to be classified as prominent, they had to have a scale measure above the mean and within the top 30% of scores ($R=3.25-5$). These top scores ($n=23$) were coded “1” and the rest ($n=53$), “0.” When asked to tell where they stood politically, 50% ($n=38$) are “Republican” or “strong Republican,” about 21% “Democrat” or “strong Democrat” ($n=16$) and 29% are independent, or something else.

Interest

On the pretest, individuals were asked to rank-order five media content categories in the order of their relative preference. Five people ranked sports as their top preference (6.58%), 11 ranked politics & news as their top preference (14.47%). Not surprisingly, the vast majority selected entertainment with 43 individuals placed entertainment (general) as their number one preference (56.58%). The remaining 17 (22.37%) individuals preferred one of the other “reality-based” entertainment categories.

Media Selection Task 1

Table 2 (next page) displays the frequencies and percentages for the first category choice/video selection task. Clearly, entertainment was a popular choice. Eight individuals chose politics & news, Incidentally, all of them have prominent political identities, $X^2(1, N=76) = 20.6$, $p = .00$. Only one person, a Republican, selected the Fox News clip and 6 people selected the MSNBC clip. Of those, three are Democrat, two are independent and one is Republican. Having a prominent sports fan identity was associated with selecting sports content, $X^2(1, N=76) = 15.06$, $p = .00$. Individuals with very feminine gender identities tended to select the entertainment, $X^2(1, N=76) = 8.64$, $p = .003$.

After watching the first video, individuals answered the Twenty Statements Test (TST). The TST served two purposes: 1) it offered a secondary measure of identity salience prior to the experimental manipulation, and 2) it also “primed” individuals to really think about their identities. Responses for each of the twenty possible answers were coded “1” for each gender or sex-based identity reference, then again for each political self-reference, and lastly, for each sports fan self-reference. These were added them up across cases so that each individual had a number ($R=0-20$) for each identity type reflecting the number of self-references made. Upon coding the responses to the TST, it was clear that there were not enough political or sports self references to run any meaningful tests. The data reported are count data. Gender identities were the most

mentioned of the three identity types, by far ($n=181$, $M=2.38$, $R=0-10$). Political identities were the least referenced ($n=12$, $R=0-5$), but sports fan identities were not particularly high either ($n=17$, $R=0-4$). Even though further analysis of TST responses is not possible, these results provide insight into the individuals' salient "selves" prior to the experimental treatment.

Table 2.
Frequencies of Web Video Selection Task 1 (Category and Content)

	Count	Percent
Politics & News	8	10.53%
MSNBC "Obama skeet shooting photo"	6	75%
FNC "Obama really a skeet shooter?"	1	12.5%
CNN "Monopoly fans vote out piece"	1	12.5%
Sports	14	18.42%
Emotional Les Miles – Classic Press Conference	13	92.1%
75 Best Players in NCAA Tournament History	1	7.1%
Four Alabama Freshman Facing Charges	0	0%
Entertainment	54	71.05%
Glee: Full Performance of "Call Me Maybe"	25	46.3%
HBO's Game of Thrones' Season 3 trailer	6	11.1%
It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia	16	29.6%
Kate Upton on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon	7	13.0%
	76	100%

Treatment + Media Selection Task 2

Individuals were randomly assigned to two groups as they began the in-lab portion of the study. About 49% ($n=37$) received the experimental treatment and 51% ($n=39$) the control. Groups were evenly balanced across all variables of interest and basic demographics. There were slightly fewer individuals having prominent sports fan identities in the experimental condition ($n=8$) than the control condition ($n=14$), but this difference was not statistically significant $X^2(1, N=76) = 1.88, p = .17, ns$.

Task 2 was set up exactly like Task 1, except the video options were longer (approximately 5-7 minutes on average). Table 2 (below) displays the frequencies and percentages for Task 2. Individuals selecting politics & news did increase in number, however, a chi-square test for significance did not indicate that the increase was necessarily due to the political prime, $X^2(1, N=76) = 1.15, p = .28, ns$. The condition resulted in no significant differences in category selection of entertainment (by condition), $X^2(1, N=76) = 1.96, p = .16, ns$ or sports choice, $X^2(1, N=76) = .53, p = .46, ns$. Additionally, those who chose politics & news did not appear to engage in partisan selective exposure. In fact, there is no discernible pattern regarding

political partisanship and video choice. Republicans (1) and independents (3) selected MSNBC and a fairly balanced mix of Democrats (2), independents (2), and Republicans (3) chose Fox.

Table 3.
Frequencies of Web Video Selection, Task 2 (Category and Content)

	Count	Percent
Politics & News	12	14.47%
FNC "President Obama: Manipulator-in-Chief"	7	63.6%
MSNBC "Is the White House manipulating the media?"	4	36.4%
CNN "Dr. Sanjay Gupta: How to Heart Attack-Proof yourself"	0	0%
Sports	12	15.79%
ESPN's OTL story Tyrann Mathieu	7	58.3%
Is LeBron Scared to Be in the Dunk Contest?	4	33.3%
Corners at the Combine	1	8.3%
Entertainment	53	69.74%
PSY "Gangnam Style"	9	17.0%
BBC "Sound of 2012 - Skrillex Interview"	5	9.4%
Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations	11	20.8%
Gossip Girl	28	52.8%
	76	100%

Identity Effects on Media Choice (H1)

H1 predicts that identity affects media choice. It is tested by a series of logistic regressions predicting media choice by identity for Task 1 and Task 2. Since individuals possess "degrees" of identity salience for each of the three identities, and because identities are organized hierarchically, all three are included in each media model. The models testing H1 in Task 2 also include the experimental treatment

Task 1. Table 4 displays all three logistic regression models for Task 1 and for Task 2. The coefficients in Task 1 reflect individuals' likelihood of selecting that particular media category without any experimental manipulation or inadvertent priming. In the first model predicting "Politics & News" in Task 1, a one-unit change in political identity salience results in a 3.22 change in the log odds ratio that they chose politics & news ($B=3.22$, $SE=1.16$, $p \leq 0.01$). Likewise, a one-unit change in sports fan identity salience results in a -1.28 change in the log odds ratio of choosing politics & news ($B= -1.28$, $SE= .63$, $p \leq 0.05$). In the sports media model, a one-unit change in sports fan salience increases the log odds ratio of choosing sports media by 2.38 ($B=2.38$, $SE=.69$, $p \leq 0.001$) and a one unit increase in gender identity (moving towards feminine) results in a -.40 decrease in the log odds ratio ($B= -.40$, $SE=.15$, $p \leq 0.01$). Interestingly, the likelihood of choosing entertainment media increases with a one-unit increase in gender ($B=.24$, $SE=.11$, $p \leq 0.05$) and decreases

for every one unit increase in sports fan salience ($B = -.78$, $SE = .31$, $p \leq 0.05$) and the same can be said for every one-unit increase in political identity salience ($B = -1.20$, $SE = .40$, $p \leq 0.01$).

Table 4.
Logistic Regressions Predicting Media Choice by Identity, Task 1, Task 2 (H1)

	Politics & News		Sports		Entertainment	
Task 1	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B
Identity						
Political (scale)	3.22(1.16)**	24.97	-.40(.54)	.68	-1.20(.40)**	.30
Sports fan (scale)	-1.28(.63)*	.28	2.38(.69)***	10.79	-.78(.31)*	.46
Gender (scale)	.10(.19)	1.10	-.40(.15)**	.67	.24(.11)*	1.27
constant	-10.53(4.61)*	.00	-5.82(2.42)*	.00	4.98(1.76)**	145.74
R ²	.57		.51		.28	
N	76		76		76	
X ²	29.12***		36.77***		25.60***	
Task 2 (post-treatment)						
Identity						
Political (scale)	1.19(.44)**	3.29	-.42(.58)	.66	-.83(.35)*	.44
Sports fan (scale)	-.60(.38)	.55	1.94(.57)***	6.93	-.65(.29)*	.52
Gender (scale)	-.30(.32)	.74	-.43(.32)	.65	.55(.26)*	1.73
Condition	.76(.77)	2.15	1.32(.88)	3.74	-.99(.59)*	.37
constant	-2.50(2.31)	.08	-5.10(2.47)*	.01	2.36(1.73)	10.59
R ²	.22		.38		.18	
N	76		76		76	
X ²	13.84**		24.98***		16.74**	

[^] $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Condition = "1" indicates political salience prime.

Task 2. Following the experimental treatment, which is noted as "Condition" in the models, the probability of choosing politics & news does not increase. A one-unit change in political identity salience results in a 1.19 change in the log odds ratio of choosing political media ($B = 1.19$, $SE = .44$, $p \leq 0.01$). The strongest relationship is observed in the sports media model, where a one unit change in sports fan identity results in a 1.94 increase in the log odds ratio ($B = 1.94$, $SE = .57$, $p \leq 0.001$). The effect of the political identity salience prime is not statistically significant. In other words, simply receiving the experimental prime is not enough to "cause" political media choice. It is not enough to statistically increase the odds of an individual selecting political media.

Most people chose entertainment media in both Task 1 and Task 2. In Task 2, all of the variables in the model reached statistical significance. Here though, a one unit change in political identity salience results in decrease in the log odds ratio for entertainment media choice ($B = -.83$, $SE = .35$, $p \leq 0.05$) and the same

can be said for a one-unit increase in sports identity salience ($B = -.65$ $SE = .29$, $p \leq 0.05$). Being in the experimental condition results in a $-.99$ change in the log odds ratio ($B = -.99$ $SE = .59$, $p \leq 0.05$), which suggests, at least, the prime didn't increase the likelihood of entertainment choice. A one-unit increase in gender (towards femininity) results in a $.55$ increase in the log odds of choosing entertainment ($B = .55$ $SE = .26$, $p \leq 0.05$).

These coefficients make sense when taken together and clearly lend support to H1. It isn't clear exactly how gender effects entertainment media choice, though. Interest, the relative preference for a particular media category, is also an important predictor of media choice. To be sure that it is identity—and not interest—that is actually affecting choice, 6 additional logistic regression models are needed. Table 5 displays the three media models in Task 2, along with content interests. Table 6 includes interaction terms to understand how the salience prime actually operated in relation to individuals with prominent identities, since it did not result in any change of statistical significance to the probability of choosing political media. When the prime did have a statistically significant effect, it was only in decreasing the likelihood of choosing entertainment.

Prior to running the models displayed in Table 5, interest variables were tested by logistic regressions and were each found to increase the log odds ratio for their corresponding media choice at statistically significant levels (see Appendix 7). But as Table 5 shows, the inclusion of interests along with the identities fail to result in any statistically significant probabilities for media choice. The identity variables appear to be much stronger predictors than interest, which do not change the likelihood of choice in any statistically significant ways. In predicting political media choice, having a very feminine gender results in a -1.93 decrease in the log odds ratio ($B = -1.93$, $SE = .95$, $p \leq 0.05$). Neither political identity nor being in the experimental condition have statistically significant effects on choice. In the sports media model, there are particularly strong sports fan identity effects: a one-unit increase in sports fan salience increases the log odds ratio of choosing sports by 2.46 ($B = 2.46$, $SE = .87$, $p \leq 0.01$). Interestingly, the effect of being in the experimental condition appears to increase the likelihood of sports media choice as well, at a level that is approaching statistical significance ($B = 1.85$, $SE = 1.10$, $p \leq 0.10$). Turning attention to the entertainment media choice model, being in the experimental condition results in a -2.15 decrease in the log odds ratio at a level that is clearly statistically significant ($B = -2.15$, $SE = .91$, $p \leq 0.01$). For better precision on the effects of having a distinct feminine gender identity the gender scale is replaced with a dichotomous measure (where 1 = very feminine gender

identity). Having a very feminine gender identity makes one about four times as likely to choose entertainment (B=1.34, SE=.62, $p \leq 0.05$).

Table 5.
Logistic Regressions Predicting Media Choice Task 2, Interest models (H1)

	Politics & News		Sports		Entertainment	
	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B
Interest						
Politics & News (1)	1.66(1.39)	5.27	-1.49(1.86)	.23	-1.30(1.13)	.27
Sports (1)	<i>Omitted</i>		-.96(1.59)	.38	-.47(1.24)	.63
Entertainment (1)	-.02(1.05)	.98	.24(1.02)	1.28	.17(.74)	1.19
Identity						
Political	.61(.54)	1.85	-.47(.61)	.62	-.22(.41)	.80
Sports fan	-.59(.42)	.55	2.46(.87)**	11.68	-.55(.35)	.58
Feminine (1)	-1.93(.95)*	.14	-.88(.89)	.42	1.34(.62)*	3.83
Condition	.30(.84)	1.34	1.85(1.10)^	6.34	-2.15(.91)**	.12
constant	-1.66(2.09)	1.34	-8.9(3.56)**	.00	2.81(1.66)^	16.68
R2	.29		.38		.20	
N	76		76		76	
X ²	17.57**		25.44***		18.74**	

^ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Political and Sports fan identity variables are scale (salience), the gender scale is replaced by a dichotomous measure of high femininity gender identity.

Identity prominence may be a better indicator of media choice (McCall & Simmons, 1978). All scaled salience measures were replaced with the dichotomous identity prominence measures (Table 6, below). Each of the models also tests for identity-condition interactions to clarify the effects of the experimental condition on choice as well as on identity. Table 6 displays these results in three media models. In the model predicting political media choice, a number of variables are omitted. The interaction term, sports fan identity, and interest in sports media were dropped because there were no observations for either of these factors. Of note, neither political identity (B=1.59, SE=1.10, *ns*) nor political media interest (B=2.12, SE=1.81, *ns*) increase the odds of selecting politics media following the prime, but these coefficients are in the hypothesized direction nonetheless. Same for receiving the experimental prime (B=.42, SE=.95, *ns*). Most interesting here is that having a very feminine gender identity decreases the likelihood of selecting politics and news (B=-2.59, SE=1.15, $p \leq 0.05$) at a statistically significant level.

There was no interaction effect of statistical significance predicting sports media choice. The other coefficients in the model remain in the same directions as we see in Table 5, but sports fan identity decreases

just below $p < .05$ in statistical significance ($B = 2.47$, $SE = 1.33$, $p = 0.06$). In entertainment media model, which was the media category most-selected overall in Task 2. The effect of having a very feminine gender identity is reduced to non-statistical significance ($B = -.06$, $SE = .84$, ns). This indicates that there is something else going on with gender, makes sense considering there is no theory-driven reason expect that being very feminine should necessarily increase the likelihood of entertainment media choice. The effect of the experimental condition only slightly decreases the odds of entertainment media selection at a statistically significant level ($B = -2.04$, $SE = .96$, $p \leq 0.01$). There is a clear interaction effect in the entertainment model between the experimental condition and very feminine gender identity ($B = 3.50$, $SE = 1.38$, $p \leq 0.01$). Individuals with very feminine gender identities in the experimental condition were 33 times more likely to choose entertainment media.

Table 6.
Logistic Regressions Predicting Media Choice Task 2, Interaction Models (H1)

	Politics & News		Sports		Entertainment	
	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B
Interest						
Politics & News	2.12(1.81)	8.33	-.53(1.87)	.58	-2.04(1.25)^	.13
Sports	Omitted		1.20(1.44)	3.31	-.91(1.28)	.40
Entertainment	-.28(1.15)	.77	.38(1.09)	1.46	-.27(.81)	.76
Identity						
Political	1.59(1.10)	4.89	-2.03(1.37)	.14	.66(.82)	1.96
Sports fan	Omitted		2.47(1.33)^	11.86	-.83(.73)	.43
Feminine	-2.59(1.15)*	.07	-.84(.90)	.43	-.06(.84)	.94
Condition	.42(.95)	1.52	.80(1.31)	2.22	-2.35(.96)**	.09
Identity X Condition						
Political	Omitted					
Sports fan			1.88(1.93)	6.55		
Feminine					3.50(1.38)**	33.05
constant	-1.19(1.19)	.30	-2.85(1.35)*	.06	1.88(.97)*	16.68
R ²	.38		.33		.24	
N	53		76		76	
X ²	20.35***		22.03**		22.78**	

^ $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Within the entertainment media category, there are two video options that were expected to have gendered appeal: the clip from the CW's *Gossip Girl*, which appeals to people with more feminine gender, and the clip from *Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations*, which is more likely to appeal to people with less feminine gender identities. Only women ($n=28$) selected *Gossip Girl* and of those, 25 have very feminine gender

identities ($X^2(1, 53) = 12.43, p = .00$). There are a number of men ($n=6$) who selected entertainment media in Task 2 and all but 1 of them selected *Anthony Bourdain* ($X^2(1, 53) = 16.11, p = .00$). The effects of the three scaled identity measures and experimental condition are tested in two logistic regression models, one predicting *Gossip Girl* and the other predicting *Anthony Bourdain*. As expected, there are significant gender effects on entertainment video choice. A one-unit increase in gender (from very masculine to very feminine) identity increases the log odds ratio of choosing *Gossip Girl* by .66 ($B=.66, SE=.24, p \leq 0.01$) and a one-unit decrease in gender results in a -.62 change in the log odds ratio of selecting *Anthony Bourdain* ($B=-.62, SE=.19, p \leq 0.001$). In both models, condition is in the positive direction, indicating that these results are not due to the “slight prime” to gender.

Mediation Effects on Interest (H2)

It is a commonly held assumption in media research that people’s media general content preferences are relatively stable. If placed in a media choice situation, a person who is most interested in consuming sports content relative to politics and news or entertainment content two weeks prior to measurement, it is expected that they will probably choose sports. Therefore, interest, measured in the pretest by the individuals’ top content preference relative to the other categories (i.e., the rank-ordering item) should also predict media choice. In general, there should be a relationship between interest and media choice. Without accounting for identity, logistic regressions indicated that interest positively predicted probabilities media choice in both Task 1 and Task 2, with the relationships being much stronger in Task 1 before any manipulation to identity salience occurred (see Appendix 7). Upon including identities in the interest regression models, however, media interest variables dropped out of statistical significance. The degree to which identity mediates interest in predicting choice is the reason for H2. Because prominent identities are more likely to be activated across situations, H2 predicts that identity prominence has a mediating effect on interest in predicting media choice. The degree to which identity has an influence on the interest–media choice relationship (in Task 2) is observed by running the Sobel-Goodman test for mediation, which determines whether the indirect effect of interest (independent variable) on media choice (dependent variable) via identity prominence (mediator) differs significantly from zero.

According to the results, preferring politics and news predicts political video choice ($B=.36, SE=.11, p \leq 0.001$) as does having a prominent political identity ($B=.70, SE=.13, p \leq 0.001$). But when the dependent variable is regressed on both of them, only content preference is statistically significant ($B=.28, SE=.13, p \leq$

0.05). The overall mediation of identity on interest for political video choice does not reach statistical significance ($B=.07$, $SE=.07$, ns) and the proportion of the total effect that is mediated is .22. With sports choice, 48% of the total effect is mediated by the identity variable ($B=.23$, $SE=.09$, $p \leq 0.05$). And with entertainment selection, interest, i.e., preference for entertainment operates independently from the feminine gender identity in selecting entertainment content. Both are strong predictors for entertainment content selection, however, not because of a mediating effect. The proportion of the total effect that is mediated is .02%. Therefore, H2 is only partially supported.

Discussion

The results reported here support H1: identity affects media choice. Exactly *how* identity operated in this study requires additional interpretation in line with identity theory. In general, identities influence behavior when meanings in the identity standard are consistent with the meaning of the behavior (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). Individuals behave in ways consistent with the identity activated by the specific situation and if multiple identities are salient, the individual “goes” with the identity that best fits the meanings of the situation. So, based on theory we can assume that actual media choice will be consistent with the corresponding relevant identity. This is essentially what H1 predicts.

Identity salience appears to predict media choice in both Task 1 and Task 2 (Table 4). This is especially the case for the political and sports fan identities. As salience increases, so do the odds of choosing identity-relevant media, however, if multiple identities are activated then behavior must follow the identity that best fits the situation. I assumed that an absence of sports or political identities would likely lead people to choose entertainment. Looking at the entertainment models in Table 4, this appears to be what happened. Despite gender having statistical significance ($p < .05$) in the model, it would not be valid to conclude that increasingly feminine gender identity predicts entertainment choice. All of the identity variables are statistically significant in the entertainment models. The negative direction of the coefficients for everything *other* than gender might indicate that entertainment choice was more or less the default for people with less salient/less developed political and sports fan identities. The directions of all of the coefficients in each of the models in the table support this kind of interpretation.

Along the same lines, the political salience manipulation did not operate “rationally” as it might in a tightly controlled selective exposure study. The experimental design included entertainment and sports in addition to news. Most selective exposure research examines political media choice and typically restricts

choice to options that have been specifically operationalized and manipulated (for a review on partisan selective exposure research, see e.g., Stroud, 2011). Recent work examining selective exposure found that including entertainment options in the experimental design reduces selection of political media (Arceneaux, et al., 2012). By including an entertainment category and a sports category, there were technically two entertainment options and one political option.

In order for identity to affect choice, the individuals' behavior needs to match up with the meanings in the situation and the meanings of their identities. On average, the individuals in this sample are not particularly involved in politics or invested in sports. This sample does, however, have a large number of individuals who have very feminine gender identities. Moreover, the results from the TST indicate that gender was more substantially more salient than political and sports fan self-references. Individuals were instructed to select the media category that most appealed to them. Individuals were able to control the meanings of the choice situation by choosing the category of media themselves. For these reasons, the effect of the political salience manipulation should be limited and contingent on the individual's other identities. There is no reason to expect the prime to *override* individuals' already salient identities with meanings that best fit the situation for them. This essentially provides the explanation for the results in Table 6, which displays the media models along with interests and interaction terms. The political prime had a moderating effect on individuals with "very feminine" gender identities. To be sure, I ran the same regressions with sex as a control in each model. Sex had no significant effect, nor did it change the statistical significance of other variables in the model. Other scholars have found gender identity to have significantly more predictive power than sex in interpersonal communication (see e.g., Drass, 1986).

These results are mixed in support for H2. Both interest and identity predict media choice, but the degree to which interest is mediated by identity appears to depend on the "match" in meanings of media content and identity. For example, having a preference for politics & news content and political identity prominence both predict political media choice, but identity is only mediating .22 of interest (non-statistical significance). Of course, having a prominent political identity is not a necessary condition for having a preference for politics and news over sports and entertainment. Because the measure for interest was based on relative preference, individuals who do not consume much entertainment or sports media might have other preferences not included in the measure (e.g., music).

Having a very feminine gender identity has no mediating effect on entertainment preference, which isn't surprising. H2 is partially supported because sports fan identity prominence mediates 48% of the preference for sports media content ($p < .05$). This makes sense because sports encourage a high level of involvement. People do not ordinarily prefer watching sports over the world of entertainment options and news without being invested in sports in some meaningful way. Being involved is key for this identity.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS & DISCUSSION FOR STUDY 2, INDIVIDUALS AND “SELF—MEDIA” INTERACTIONS

Participants

Eighty-six individuals participated in this study. All three randomly assigned conditions are balanced in terms of basic demographics (i.e., age, sex, race) and mostly equivalent in number. There were 29 individuals in the control group, 29 in the identity incongruent group and 28 in the identity congruent group. About 74% of participants are female ($n=64$) and the majority of the participants are white ($n=66$, 76.7%). For almost all of the participants, the average age is about 20 years old, however one person who is 37 years old, also participated ($M=19.96$, $SD=2.2$, $R=18-37$).

Participants are highly connected to the Internet. All but four individuals own smart phones (95%) and nearly 50% ($n=41$) own some other kind of additional mobile Internet device besides (e.g., iPad, Kindle Fire). Eighty-four percent estimate that they spend more than two hours a day online in their spare time, which does not include time spent online for work, school, or paying bills. Only two participants say they spend less than one hour online each day. When asked to tell the primary reasons why they go online in their spare time, most go online to connect with people (85%), to listen to music (81%), to stay informed with news of the day (78%) and to watch videos (72%). Interestingly, 85% admit to going online to procrastinate from work or school. Sixty-four percent shop online. Thirty percent say they go online to express themselves to others (e.g., blogging). Nearly two thirds (66%) report that they go online to discover new ideas and things but only 16% report going online to figure out who they are or who they want to be. Participants are involved on a variety of social media websites like Facebook (96%), Twitter (77%), Instagram (77%) and Pinterest (57%). About 30% are active on LinkedIn ($n=26$) and Tumblr ($n=25$).

Web Browsing Task 1

Individuals browsed the web for about six minutes, the median being five minutes and 30 seconds ($M=6:01$, $SD=1:32$, $R=5:03-10:08$). Individuals visited a variety of sites, however, nearly one third of the individuals logged into their Facebook or Twitter accounts ($n=23$, 27%) and about 20% ($n=17$) checked their email or websites pertaining to school (e.g., MyLSU). The least visited content category ($n=4$) in Task 1 was pure entertainment websites (e.g., wetpaint.com, a celebrity gossip site, or YouTube). The rest of the individuals were mostly evenly divided into the remaining five content categories. Details are presented in Table 10, which

is displayed in the discussion for RQ1 (along with the results of Web Browsing Task 2). For a table of the websites individuals visited in Task 1, see Appendix 8

About 87% said the website they first visited is one of their favorites. Eighty percent reported visiting this website often ($n=22$) or all of the time ($n=47$). When asked if the website is relevant to their sense of self, only 14% reported that it was not very relevant ($n=10$) or not at all relevant ($n=2$). Twenty-six individuals (30%) said that the website was somewhat relevant to their sense of self but the majority (56%) reported that the website was relevant ($n=32$) or very relevant ($n=16$) to their sense of self.

Experimental Manipulation & Identity Process

The standardized 'Me' score index reflects the number of websites that the computer "got right" in order to determine the effect of the treatment. As depicted in Figure 3 (below), the 'Me' score index has a fairly normal distribution with individual scores regressing towards the mean ($M=4.81$, $SD=.31$, $R=0-10$). 'Me' scores below "4" are indicative of a disturbance which should also correlate highly with the perception of error (i.e., accuracy).

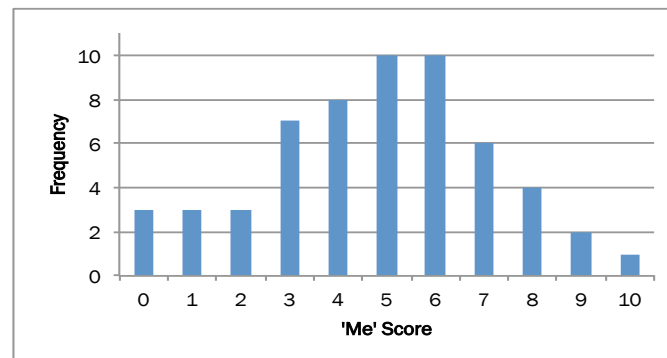


Figure 3. 'Me' Score Distribution ($n=57$)

Additionally, the effect of the manipulation should be large. Cohen (1992) specifies that in order to detect large differences between two group means ($d= .80$) at $\alpha=.05$, a sample size of at least $N=26$ is necessary. A post-hoc power analysis using G*Power software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) determined the sample achieved statistical power of .99 ($d=1.51$), which exceeds the minimum standard for detecting large effects.

Figure 4 (below) displays the 'Me' score distribution for both conditions. 'Me' scores for the two groups differed significantly according to Welch's t -test, $t(55.85) = -5.68$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-3.84, -1.84]$. Individuals who received incongruent feedback only gave about 3-4 "thumbs up" ratings on average ($M=3.14$, $SD=2.04$,

R=0-7). By comparison, the congruent feedback group averaged about 6 “thumbs up” ratings (M=6.25, SD=1.71, R=3-10). See Appendix 8 for Tables 10-12.

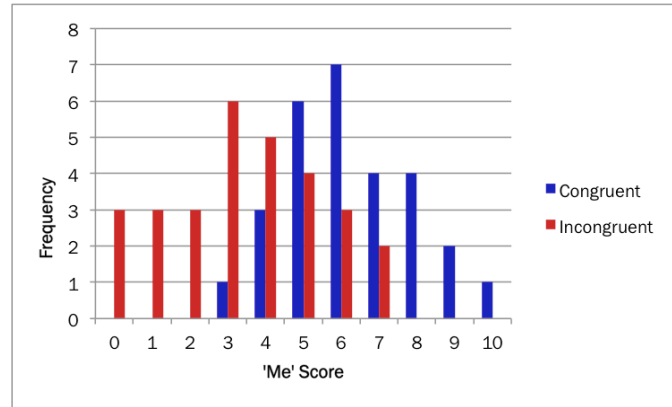


Figure 4. 'Me' Score Distribution, by Condition

Perceptions of Error (H1)

'Me' scores are related to perception of error. In terms of the elements of the identity model, the 'Me' score would be the result of the comparator component, where individuals “compare” their incoming perceptions of self in the online situation and the computer’s feedback (inputs) with the self-meanings stored in the identity standards. Each “thumb’s up” rating, then, essentially passes through comparator as being sufficient in meeting the self-standard. There is no discrepancy. In other words, some aspect about identity is “verified” by the website and whatever it means to that individual. If the number of “thumb’s down” ratings is greater than the number of “thumb’s up,” that individual should perceive error. This perception of error should be greater for those experiencing repeated identity non-verification, which is basically what H1 predicts.

H1 is tested using the “accuracy” scale measure that individuals in both conditions reported immediately after rating their recommendations (M=3.68, SD=1.71, R=1-7). The low-end of the scale, meaning the computer’s recommendations were “not at all accurate,” translates to the individual having *higher* perception of error. Accuracy is highly correlated with the 'Me' score variable $r(55) = .81$ $p < .01$ and as expected, there are statistically significant differences between groups’ perceptions of error (Welch's, $t(53.24) = -6.52$ $p < .001$, 95% [-2.92, -1.54]). While individuals in the congruent feedback group reported the recommendations as being fairly accurate (M=4.82, SD=1.09, R=2-7), individuals who received incongruent recommendations reported the opposite (M=2.59, SD=1.48, R=1-6), thus affirming H1.

Importance of Identities to Self (H2)

H2 predicts that a higher perception of error is positively related to the importance of the identities to the self. Importance to self is measured by the individuals' actual answers to the identity questions. The range of possible scores for this variable is 1-20, but the highest score observed is 15 ($n=1$) and the mode is "7." This indicates that generally, the specific identities that were used to determine the website recommendations were not necessarily high in importance to them across the board, rather some of them tend to be more important than others. The identity congruent group has a marginally higher average ($M=7.61$, $SD= 3.49$, $R=1-15$) compared to the incongruent condition ($M=7.34$, $SD= 2.836$, $R=2-14$), however, Welch's t -test confirms there is no significant difference in means, $t(54.01) = -0.31$, ns , 95%, CI [-1.96, 1.43] between the groups.

To test H2, "importance to self" and experimental condition were regressed on the accuracy measure. The linear regression model was statistically significant ($R^2 = .45$, $F(2, 54) = 21.93$, $p=.000$) but this was clearly driven by the effect of experimental condition ($\beta = 2.22$, $SE= .34$, $p=.000$, 95% CI [1.53, 2.91]) and not the importance of the identities to the self. There is no statistical relationship between importance to self and perception of error ($\beta=.07$, $SE=.06$, ns), which is hardly surprising, given the weak correlation between them, ($r(55) = .15$). As a result, H2 is rejected.

Self-Relevance (H3)

The perception of error exists primarily because the computer's website recommendations that did not fit the individual's sense of self or the self-meanings they hold for their identities. Individuals rated how self-relevant each website recommendation is to "who they are" on a scale of 1-10 (*not at all me – 100% Me*). The potential range of scores runs from 10 to 100 (maximum). The score distributions for both conditions should be at opposite ends of the index. Based on this, H3 states that when error is present (lower accuracy), individuals will rate the media recommendations as being less self-relevant (lower ratings) than they might otherwise. The perception of error, lack thereof, or identity/self verification should be linearly related to higher self-relevance ratings.

Self-relevance scores ($N= 57$) ranged from 11–88 ($M=49.16$, $SD=19.70$) with about a 30-point difference in means between both groups. The average self-relevance score for individuals in the experimental condition is about "34" ($M=34.37$, $SD=14.43$, $R=11-63$) where in the congruent condition, the average score is about 64 ($M=64.56$, $SD=10.55$, $R=48-88$). Welch's t -test confirms clear group differences in self-relevance scores, $t(52.99) = -9.01$, $p < .001$, 95%, CI [-36.78, -23.38].

Self-relevance and accuracy are highly correlated ($r(55) = .78, p < .01$). If individuals perceive the computer's recommendations as accurate (no error) they will be more likely to find the recommendations self-relevant. Regressing experimental condition and accuracy on self-relevance results in a model that accounts for 73% of the variance ($R^2 = .73, F(2, 54) = 72.86, p = .000$). The nature of this relationship in the model is positive, which is in line with H3. A 1 unit increase in accuracy (i.e., identity verification) results in 5.64 increase in self-relevance ratings ($\beta = 5.64, SE = 1.08, p = .000, 95\% CI [3.47, 7.80]$). The effect *not* being in the experimental condition results in a 17.49 unit increase in self-relevance ($\beta = 17.49, SE = 3.67, p = .000, 95\% CI [10.13, 24.85]$). H3 is supported by these findings.

Emotional Response (H4)

Without a meaningful disturbance to the identity process, individuals maintain perceptions at a level of evenhanded stability. This is akin to having a conversation with another person without the presence of a misunderstanding. Depending on the situation, and a countless number of other factors, a misunderstanding in a conversation is detectable and observable in how people react and respond. Misunderstandings are often accompanied by emotions of varying degrees and intensity and likewise, interruptions to the automatic self-media process would result in some effect on emotions.

H4 states that perception of error is associated with negative emotional response. Emotion is captured in two 9-point semantic differential scales: annoyed—pleased and unsatisfied—satisfied. Both emotion items are highly correlated with each other ($r(55) = .78, p < .01$) and both are also highly correlated with accuracy, with the strongest correlation being between accuracy and the stronger emotional measure, annoyed—pleased ($r(55) = .85, p < .01$) but the correlation with the satisfaction measure is also statistically significant ($r(55) = .74, p < .01$). These items together have a strong reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .88$) with an average inter-item covariance of 3.43, and have very similar means and standard deviations for both groups as a whole ($M_{pleased} = 5.39, SD = 2.22, R = 2-9$); ($M_{satisfied} = 5.89, SD = 1.98, R = 1-9$).

Annoyed—Pleased. There is about a 3-point difference in means in the two groups on the annoyed—pleased semantic differential. The experimental condition is more on the annoyed side. The median score is about a “4” with nearly a 2-point standard deviation ($M = 3.97, SD = 1.76, R = 1-8$). The identity congruent group is more on the pleased side, with a median of “7” ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.60, R = 2-9$). As expected these differences are statistically significant (Welch's, $t(56.79) = -6.48, p < .001, CI 95\% [-3.30, -2.00]$).

Unsatisfied—Satisfied. Also as expected, the level of satisfaction with the computer's recommendations is higher in the identity congruent condition ($M = 7.14$, $SD = 1.35$, $R = 3-9$) than in the experimental condition ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.76$, $R = 2-7$) and this difference is statistically significant (Welch's, $t(54.51) = -5.97$, $p < .001$, $CI\ 95\% [-3.27, -1.62]$).

Strength of Relationship. The dependent variable in H4 is emotion, which is tested in two separate linear regressions. In each model, accuracy and identity condition are regressed on the semantic differential measure. Beginning with annoyed—pleased, there is a statistically significant relationship between accuracy and emotion: a 1 unit increase in accuracy is associated with a .95 unit increase moving from annoyed to pleased ($\beta = .95$, $SE = .12$, $p = .000$, $95\% CI [.71, 1.19]$). Even though the model itself is also statistically significant ($R^2 = .74$, $F(2, 54) = 76.9$, $p = .000$) the effects of the experimental condition are no longer strongly driving the relationship ($\beta = .76$, $SE = .40$, $p = .07$, *ns*, $95\% CI [-.05, 1.57]$).

Regressing accuracy and condition on the other emotion semantic differential results in a statistically significant model, explaining about 58% of the variance ($R^2 = .58$, $F(2, 54) = 37.12$, $p = .000$). Even though the beta coefficient for condition is statistically significant in this emotion model ($\beta = .97$, $SE = .46$, $p = .04$, $95\% CI [.04, 1.88]$), this is a relatively weak relationship. Accuracy remains statistically significant ($\beta = .67$, $SE = .14$, $p = .000$, $95\% CI [.39, .93]$). These findings regarding emotion are consistent with identity theory and provide support for H4.

Web Browsing Task 2 (RQ2)

Following the experimental portion, individuals were reunited with the control group and all were presented with a second 5-minute web browsing session. Participants browsed the web on average for 5:43, with the median time being 5:20 ($SD_{seconds} = 41$, $R = 5:02-9:01$).

The instructions were exactly the same as in Task 1 and participants were able to go to any website they desired. About 20% of individuals ($n = 17$) went to either Tumblr or Pinterest, both of which are visually-driven social media websites, or they went to Facebook or Twitter ($n = 17$). There is a general increase in entertainment websites ($n = 12$), shopping ($n = 11$) and special interest content ($n = 12$). Together, these make up about 41% of content visited. News dropped most significantly ($n = 1$), sports stayed about the same, at 8% ($n = 7$) and about 10% took care of personal business or checked their email ($n = 9$).

RQ1 asks: What is the impact of non-verification on subsequent media behavior? Table 7 (below) displays this information, side-by-side. Compared to the observations in Task 1, there appears to be a distinct shift towards more personal interests, “visually-driven” social media (i.e. Pinterest), entertainment, and shopping in general.

Table 7.
Websites Visited in Task 1, Task 2

Website Categories	Task 1		Task 2	
	Obs.	Percent	Obs.	Percent
Personal Business/ e-mail	17	19.77%	9	10.47%
News	9	10.47%	1	1.16%
Sports	8	9.30%	7	8.14%
Entertainment	4	4.65%	12	13.95%
Facebook/ Twitter	23	26.74%	17	19.77%
Tumblr/ Pinterest	8	9.30%	17	19.77%
Shopping	7	8.14%	11	12.79%
Special interest/ Hobby	10	11.63%	12	13.95%
	86	100.00%	86	100.00%

The changes from Task 1 to Task 2 appear to be following similar trends across groups. Table 8 shows (below) there was very little systematic variation in media choice between the three groups. If the non-verification of the self and identity has an impact on subsequent behavior, it is not immediately apparent. With the exception of one category, i.e., email and personal business, there were generally no statistically significant differences between groups in Task 2. To the extent that that the differences in media behavior can be attributed to non-verification in Task 2, individuals in the identity incongruent condition were more likely to check their email and take care of personal business—things like paying their Entergy bill, researching study abroad opportunities, or signing up for a LinkedIn account (Welch's, $t(33.65) = 2.44$, $p = .01$, 95%, CI [.03, .38]).

Welch's t -tests comparing incongruent condition (1) to the control and identity congruent conditions (0) did not indicate any statistically significant differences in media choice in Task 1 that might explain differences in media choice in Task 2. Individuals answered questions about their website choice after each web browsing task. Specifically, they were asked if they visit the website they chose often (R, 1-5); if the website they chose is a favorite (R, 1-2); if the website they chose is relevant to their sense of self (R, 1-5); and if the website they chose is important to their sense of self (R, 1-5).

Table 8.
Observations Websites Visited by Condition: Task 1, Task 2

Website Categories	Identity Incongruent (n=29)		Identity Congruent (n=28)		Control (n=29)	
	T1	T2	T1	T2	T1	T2
Personal Business/ e-mail	6	7*	4	2	7	0
News	3	0	1	0	5	1
Sports	3	4	2	1	3	2
Entertainment	1	3	1	5	2	4
Facebook/ Twitter	10	5	7	3	6	9
Tumblr/ Pinterest	2	5	3	7	3	5
Shopping	1	2	4	4	2	5
Special interest/ Hobby	3	3	6	6	1	3

* $p < 0.01$, between groups

Table 9 (below) displays this information. There were no statistical differences between the incongruent condition and the rest of the sample in Task 1. Following Task 2, individuals in the identity incongruent condition chose websites they visit less frequently (Welch's, $t(53.56) = -2.15$, $p = .05$, 95%, CI [-1.09, -.04]). Yet, more than the rest of the sample, they generally identified the website they chose a favorite (Welch's, $t(28.76) = 2.44$, $p = .05$, 95%, CI [.01, .46]). For an unknown reason, a number of individuals did not answer that particular question. The number of observations missing for the incongruent group was "7" ($n=22$) and for the rest of the sample, "10" observations were missing ($n=47$). There were no other statistically significant differences in individuals' reflections of their website choice.

Table 9.
Reflections on Website Choice, By Condition

	Identity Incongruent		Identity Congruent		Control	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Web Task 1						
Visits often	4.45	0.83	3.89	1.26	4.45	0.74
A favorite (yes=1)	1.11	0.32	1.20	0.41	1.08	0.27
Relevant to self	3.83	1.04	3.39	0.99	3.52	0.95
Web Task 2						
Visits often	3.59*	1.18	4.12	1.03	4.19	1.08
A favorite (yes=2)	1.32*	0.48	1.12	0.34	1.04	0.21
Relevant to self	3.24	1.12	3.54	0.92	3.69	1.20

* $p < 0.05$, between groups

All things considered, it is not totally clear how self/identity non-verification impacts subsequent media behavior in individuals. It is possible that there are qualitative differences in individuals across conditions that are not captured by the post-browsing questions. Individuals were not asked to tell why they went to the website that they did. The quantitative differences between conditions indicate future research is needed.

Self-Esteem (RQ2)

Finally, the ability to rebound more quickly from disturbances is often attributed to self-esteem. RQ2 asks: What role does self-esteem play in response to identity non-verification? Individuals completed the 10-item Rosenberg self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .88$) prior to the experimental portion and immediately before moving on to Task 2, they were asked to respond to the statement “I have high self-esteem” on a scale of 1-7, higher responses indicating higher agreement. The “global self-esteem” measure typically has high concurrent validity with the Rosenberg scale. In this study, they were moderately correlated ($r(55) = .49$ $p = .01$). The identity congruent group scored slightly higher on both measures ($M_{\text{Rosenberg}} = 24.30$, $SD = 4.39$, $R = 14-30$); ($M_{\text{global}} = 5.82$, $SD = 1.42$, $R = 2-7$) than the incongruent group ($M_{\text{Rosenberg}} = 22.96$, $SD = 4.17$, $R = 13-30$); ($M_{\text{global}} = 5.34$, $SD = 1.20$, $R = 2-7$) however, in neither case were these differences statistically significant, nor were significant differences necessarily expected.

Discussion

As of this writing, this study is the first to apply identity theory directly to empirical media research. Individual's online media choice is complex due to the fact that the online environment combines significant social interaction with countless other media choice options, as well as the reality of these different uses being combined simultaneously. This kind of constant connectivity, interaction, and access to media (e.g., identity resources) would seem likely to instigate the identity process. The purpose of this study was to apply and test components of the identity model to a self-media interaction online where identity-related feedback is provided in the form of media recommendations. Given the strength of the findings, this study presents empirical support for identity theory. The findings are consistent with prior research testing aspects of the identity process model (e.g., Stets & Biga, 2003; Stets & Carter, 2011; Stets, 2005) and three of the stated hypotheses were supported.

H2 was not supported. There was no statistically significant relationship between higher perception of error and the importance of the identities to the self. This could be due to the fact that individuals in the identity incongruent condition were provided with website recommendations that didn't quite pertain to the “type” of identity in question, or it could be that the four identities on which the feedback was based are not as important as perhaps other identities that they claim. Since there were no differences between conditions regarding identity importance, it is probably both. For those in the incongruent condition, the random or irrelevant websites (e.g., Dr. Phil, Applebees, etc.) were sufficient to create a greater perception of error without

reflecting any identity in particular. This indicates that the content of a specific media source (i.e., what recommendations actually are) does not necessarily matter, only that individuals perceive them to be incongruent to their sense of self. That's not to suggest that identity importance does not matter or would not matter under a different research design, only that in this study, identity importance did not effect perceptions of error.

In regards to RQ1, it is not clear exactly how media choice was affected by non-verification, except for the finding that individuals in the incongruent condition took care of “personal business” more than the rest of the sample. For example, one individual paid an Entergy bill. Another individual signed up for a LinkedIn account. The purpose of the open web browsing was to attempt to create a more realistic web-browsing situation within the confines of the experiment environment. Individuals felt free to visit whatever websites they wished, which generally resulted in a diverse and colorful range of content. Even though individuals' full browsing patterns were not analyzed in this study, this kind of open-approach to measuring media choice could potentially provide the foundation for rich qualitative analysis under an identity-based approach.

Finally, there are interesting differences in individuals' initial “thumbs up/ thumbs down” ratings (see Appendix 9). These differences established the effect of the manipulation. Looking across the conditions in the three tables, the percent approval for the websites is pretty variable. The control groups' ratings anchor website recommendations overall and provide a “gauge” for examining the differences in ratings between the two experimental groups. For example, *Lolcats*, a decidedly silly website devoted to “funny cat pictures with hilarious captions,” had a 59% self-approval rating in the incongruent condition, where the control group had only a 14% approval rating. The control group was not instructed to evaluate the websites in self-representative way, so this is an odd observation for the incongruent condition.

Additionally, some of the responses to the political recommendations are puzzling. There is no rational explanation for the way the incongruent condition rated some of these political websites, e.g., The Heritage Foundation. The control group rating (n=29) for the Heritage Foundation was 0%. Because the Heritage Foundation is a conservative political think tank, it is not reasonable for a person who is neither conservative nor into politics to rate the Heritage Foundation “thumbs up,” yet, 4 out of 13 individuals in the incongruent condition did. Not only are their ratings higher on some of these items than the control group, occasionally they are higher than congruent group's ratings of the same website. Based on pure speculation, it is possible that

individuals in both identity conditions could have somehow “wanted” the recommendations to “fit” them since they were told they would receive personalized media recommendations. This would be an important avenue for future research to examine in greater detail.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation examined the relationship between identity and individual media choice by testing elements of identity theory in two very different empirical studies. In the process, this dissertation makes the case for an identity-based approach to understanding media choice in the 21st century. Identity theory, with its structural symbolic interactionism framework, provides an ideal framework and a common set of assumptions that are not only compatible with existing media choice approaches, but will also allow for theory advancement and integration. This concluding chapter discusses the results and from Chapters 4 and 5 and relates these findings to prior research, followed by a discussion on limitations, implications, and suggestions for future empirical research.

Study 1: Individuals & Media Selection

Study 1 examined how identity guides media selection behavior among individuals. More specifically, this study tested the effects of multiple identities on two multi-category media selection tasks. Two key concepts from identity theory were tested: salience and prominence. Identities with higher salience are more likely to be activated in a situation. Behavior is indicative of which identity was activated in that situation and identity salience is measured on a continuum. We can assume that individuals' media choice in Task 1 reflects some degree of their identity salience. The regressions predicting choice by identity (Table 4) indicate this, especially looking at the negative coefficients for the identities that are *not* associated with that category of media choice. In the same table testing salience in Task 2, we can see that identity salience is still predicting category selection, but the effect of the prime and the TST that preceded the treatment portion may have altered the salience organization of the three identities. We assume that multiple identities were activated heading into Task 2, therefore prominence is a better indicator of choice for Task 2 (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 133) and this is consistent with other studies examining prominence (McCall & Simmons, 1978).

Though the conditions of the study likely altered the salience order of the identities, they did not create a “challenge” to identities by forcing them to watch political videos, for example. Individuals ultimately “defined” the meanings in the situation with their choice, therefore identity was verified. The discussion in Chapter 4 provided detailed analysis of the findings in sequential order to systematically explain how identity affects media choice. The effect of the political salience prime made individuals less likely to choose

entertainment, except for those individuals who have very feminine gender identities. This is confirmed by the statistically significant interaction term in the model.

Study 1 has some basis for comparison in media research on identity and media choice, specifically Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian's (2012) study on magazine choice and the "gendered self-concept." There are several important differences in methods and analysis between this study and theirs that should be noted. First, they weren't necessarily looking at gender identity, per se. They conceptualized the gendered self-concept as an attitude, which they measured using reaction-timed responses to embedded words from the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a measure of gender role conformity. Contrastingly, in this study gender is conceptualized as a social construction and captured using a one-item scaled measure from the pretest where individuals essentially defined their own gender identity along the masculine-feminine continuum.

Because identity theory states that individuals will behave in a manner consistent with their self-meanings, it was more imperative that the measure captured how people actually define themselves (and want others to see them) in terms of conforming or not conforming to what they understand the social norms for their sex to be, rather than the other way around. To the best of my knowledge, there is no precedent for this type of measure in empirical research. Nevertheless, it specifically taps into the identity standard component of identity theory and is ideal for a study on individual media choice. The results are consistent with their self-placement. Where Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian (2012) conclude that biological sex influenced selective exposure to sex-typed magazines directly, as well as indirectly through the gendered self-concept. I did not find sex to have significant effect on predicting individuals' media choice. This was true when sex was regressed on choice alone (for Task 1 and Task 2) as well as included in the models presented in Chapter 4.

Second, to test hypotheses, this study used a non-specific media content category, where Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian (2012) used actual magazines (female-typed, male-typed, and gender-neutral), which they selected based on readership statistics. They assumed gender would guide their choice so they did not control for relative interests. At any given newsstand, magazines are typically organized by gender, whereas the content categories used in this study did not cue gender in any way. Since relative content preferences just as easily could have affected choice, I controlled for interests by obtaining a ranking of content preferences in the pretest before the procedure. Interest was not a significant predictor for choice when identities were also included in the model. There was no support for gender mediation on interest in predicting entertainment media choice.

Finally, where they were interested in measuring subsequent selective exposure effects on gender conformity, this study examined the effects of multiple identities in a “high” choice situation when conditions were altered in an effort to increase the salience of one identity. Because of this, despite the “very feminine” gender identity measure having reached statistical significance in predicting entertainment choice, the data do not logically support the conclusion that gender “causes” entertainment choice. The data suggest that a relative lack of sports fan and political identities likely increased the probability of entertainment choice. Gender identity clearly influenced the video selection within the entertainment category. i.e., *Gossip Girl* and *Anthony Bourdain*, however it had no effect on selection of the videos that did not have any particular gender appeal, which included Korean pop star PSY’s wildly popular 2012 music video, “Gangnam Style,” and a BBC interview with Grammy Award-winning electronic musician Skrillex.

One of the limitations in Knobloch-Westerwick and Hoplamazian’s (2012) study (which they mention) is that they chose news-magazines to represent gender-neutral content, yet college students generally do not have an interest in these magazines. In creating the research design for Study 1, it was imperative to select content that would not only appeal to the identities of interest, but also individuals aged 18-24. This made media choice more realistic, which improves the validity of the research. Moreover, we know that simply including an entertainment option in a typical selective exposure study, which almost always involves cable news choices, decreases choice of news (e.g., Arceneaux, et al., 2012). In this study, individuals still chose politics & news. There weren’t many people who did, but the number of people choosing politics & news is about the same as the number of people who chose sports.

The overall conclusion from Study 1 is that identity clearly affects choice. So, what are the implications? The most obvious implication is that our typical methods and research designs to study media choice may not be serving us well any longer. To limit choice to only politics or entertainment in a research design may actually undermine the benefit for conducting an experiment in the first place. This has important implications for validity.

Study 2: Individuals and “Self-Media” Interactions

Study 2 was designed to test the applicability of the identity model to individuals’ self-media interactions in an online environment. Within the structural symbolic interactionism framework, the identity model illustrates the dynamic nonlinear properties of the interaction between the individual and the environment. The identity process itself is a complex adaptive systems approach to understanding how

individuals behave dynamically in situations. It also provides an integrated perspective on how cognitive and affective processes impact human behavior in the course of the ongoing interaction. In individual media choice research these cognitive and affective processes are treated as separate causes-or-effects of media use. In selective exposure research, especially, this has not led to an accumulation of consistent findings. Given the assumption of individual differences, the lack of consistency is not viewed suspiciously.

By accepting the assumptions and framework of identity theory, Study 2 demonstrates how individuals who have many differences react similarly to information that either conforms to their self-views or conflicts with them. That is how media in this study were operationalized. Interestingly, using media as the source of self-conforming or self-conflicting feedback yields similar results as when researchers use actual persons providing verbal feedback to introduce a disturbance to the identity process (Swann & Hill, 1982; Stets, 2005; Stets & Carter, 2011). This study tests the “self” as a representative of many identities. In the online reality, individuals can technically “be” many of their identities all at once (e.g., Facebook) and experience interactions with different identities simultaneously (e.g., iMessaging a significant other while replying to an email from their boss). Though this was not something I tested, I believe this is the same process that takes place when individuals are actually consuming media online—their perceptions of media are ultimately rooted in the activated identity of the individual while they are in the act of consumption. It is very likely that media may activate certain identities in the context of the laboratory or survey. Aspects like over-estimation of news consumption, for example, could potentially be related to the individual wishing to avoid perceiving the self as a “bad citizen.” Because Stets and Biga (2003) found that environmental identities were much better predictors of environmentally responsible behavior than were attitudes, this study has many implications for partisan selective exposure research. Combined with the findings in Study 1, this dissertation suggests that identity plays a complex role in how individuals approach, perceive, and react to media content online and offline. Just like the identity model indicates, this is an ongoing interactive process.

The identity process is tested online using “the computer” as a proxy for social interaction. The computer essentially provides the necessary “structure” for social interaction in the online media environment. There are clearly opportunities for media research to apply identity theory to studies of human-computer interaction, but that’s not what this study did. The interaction is conceptualized as “self-media” because there was nothing about the interface, design, or structure of the computer that was of empirical interest. The computer was not anthropomorphized in any way. The computer’s role is environmental, as it plays the source

of a disturbance for the experimental condition. The communication between the individual and [presumably] the computer initiates the identity process by giving individuals website recommendations inconsistent with their identities. For this to work properly, the individual had to have a reasonable expectation for accurate results. Given the ubiquity of personalized suggestions online (e.g., Netflix, Amazon) there is no reason for them to expect inaccurate recommendations. They expect feedback to be consistent with who they are.

Identity theory does not specifically address the role of media and how media fit into the identity process outside of the assumption that media provide important resources for identities. Since the primary objective for individuals in the identity process is verification, “individuals control the flow of resources and meanings in interaction to verify identities that compose the self” (Stets & Cast, 2007, p. 518). By using resources to obtain self-verifying feedback, individuals simultaneously “maintain the self, the interaction, and the social structure” (Stets & Cast, 2007, p. 520). Not only does this provide an identity-based explanation for why individuals use media “taste lists” to express who they are (e.g., Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009), but it also explains how media sources come to have shared sense of meaning in society. When we see a source of media or a certain kind of music fandom, we automatically base our evaluation on what we know meaning to be, even if its just recognizing difference (e.g., Fox News \neq MSNBC; Kanye West \neq Taylor Swift). Applied to the self, however, the meaning of media must also conform to the self-meanings about who the individual is. This explains how some individuals in the identity groups gave certain websites “thumbs up” ratings while others receiving the same website recommendations gave “thumbs down.”

Using media recommendations for identity feedback appears to be a statistically valid means of creating a disturbance to the identity process. This is an important finding that makes a contribution to both identity theory and media choice research. Because the experimental control to the feedback based on the five dichotomous identity questions was successfully executed, the effects of the feedback were unmistakably due to the perception of error, i.e., incongruence. This resulted in several measurements (self-relevance scores, emotional response, consistent with the initial reaction. One thing that probably contributed to the success of the manipulation was that I purposefully included media that would most likely appeal to individuals aged 18-24. For the incongruent condition, obviously this matters less, but because having a control group that rates the same websites without reflecting on how self-representative they are is important, age applicability needs to be a consideration. Future research examining a more age-diverse sample should account for age or

generation applicability of the media sources in the research design by asking age early on and having additional “branches” of the experimental procedure.

The results in Study 2 were highly consistent with prior research testing the identity process (e.g., Stets & Carter, 2011; Stets, 2005). Individuals receiving identity incongruent feedback perceived error and also experienced negative emotions as a result. These differences between the two identity groups were statistically significant throughout the experimental portion of the study, which suggests good reliability. The expanse of the difference between the groups maintained relatively stable distance, which contributes to the overall validity of the findings. Given the consistent findings, this study presents empirical support for identity theory, empirical support for the applicability of the identity model for testing self-media interactions, and potentially important implications for new areas of media research, such as human-computer interaction and social interaction online. By testing the identity model online, this study suggests that the online environment is both an extension of the physical environment as well as an environment unto itself.

Limitations & Contributions

While the known limitations of conducting empirical research using a sample from an undergraduate student population certainly must be taken into consideration, the primary purpose of experimental designs is to measure internal validity, which reduces the need for results to be totally generalizable to the population. Obviously, the logical next-step would be to conduct either of these studies using a representative sample of the general population. Additionally, both sample sizes were not very large. For Study 2, this was not a concern, due to exceptionally high statistical power. For Study 1, having a larger sample size would have likely introduced more variation of gender, and probably higher numbers of sports fans and politically engaged identities.

To date, there are no other empirical studies that are substantively similar to which results may be evaluated and compared side-by-side. This should not necessarily be viewed as a limitation, but it is important to note in this concluding chapter. These experiments were designed and executed with utmost transparency so that they may be replicated in other contexts and situations. Because the results for both studies are consistently in line with theory, the research designs should be tested under different circumstances, using different populations, and improved upon where needed.

This dissertation makes several contributions to multiple disciplines and provides support for an identity-based approach to understanding individual media choice. For sociology and social psychology, the empirical support for identity theory in the context of individual media choice is very important. Not only do the findings provide empirical support for various aspects of identity theory, they also provide empirical support for better understanding the role of media in the identity process, which warrants further consideration for continuing research. Integrating media research should be done at micro, meso and macro levels of inquiry. Another specific contribution this dissertation makes is in the area of experimental design. In creating two different experiments with substantially less control over the dependent variables, and significantly less emphasis on media messages or content, or individual differences, both studies demonstrate that incorporating greater entropy into our research designs does not impair our ability to make valid predictions testable by empirical means. In fact, it may give researchers more flexibility and range. While these studies still maintain some sense of clinical artificiality (which is impossible to completely erase) there are many points of departure from prior empirical work. The details of the designs improve upon ecological validity and create more realistic conditions for empirical observation. This suggests the trade off between control and external validity of processes is moderately less pronounced. By integrating identity theory and its emphasis on process interaction, analysis takes place at a higher level of abstraction, which presents many implications for future empirical media choice research.

Additionally, the value of common assumptions and framework cannot be overstated. As we move further into the 21st century digital media environment, understanding individual media choice will become increasingly more important for media research at the micro and macro levels. If we continue to emphasize specific media messages and individual differences in media choice research designs, meaningful advancements will be highly unlikely. Taken together, both studies' conclusions emphasize the need to work towards understand the bigger picture surrounding individuals and their relationships with media. Through theory integration, creative research design, and empirical analysis at a higher level of abstraction, this dissertation builds a strong case for an identity-based approach to understanding individual media choice.

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APPENDIX 1

WEB PAGE MENU & SUB-MENUS FOR TASK 1

PLEASE SELECT THE 1 OF THE FOLLOWING CONTENT CATEGORIES.

[SPORTS](#)
[POLITICS & NEWS](#)
[ENTERTAINMENT](#)

Note: for some videos, there may be unavoidable advertisements. Thank you for being patient.

SPORTS

All videos are approximately 2-3 minutes.

1. [“Emotional Les Miles – Classic Press Conference”](#)

Content Description: Fiery LSU head football coach gets extra emotional after victory over Ole Miss on November 17, 2012. Press Conference (Recorded live).

2. [“75 Best Players in NCAA Tournament History”](#)

Content Description: Gene Wojciechowski looks at the 75 best players in NCAA Tournament history. ESPN. February 14, 2013. Analysis.

3. [“Four Alabama Freshman Facing Charges”](#)

Content Description: SEC blogger Chris Low discusses the arrest of and charges against four Alabama freshman football players. ESPN. February 12, 2013. News.

POLITICS & NEWS

All videos are approximately 2-3 minutes.

1. MSNBC [“White House tweets Obama skeet shooting photo”](#)

Content Description: In the interest of quieting skeptics who had challenged President Obama’s claim that he enjoyed skeet shooting, Press Secretary Jay Carney tweeted a photo of the president skeet

2. Fox News Channel [“The Grapevine: Obama really a skeet shooter?”](#)

Content Description: The Grapevine: Obama really a skeet shooter?
Investigating the president’s recent claim. January 31, 2013. Analysis.

3. CNN [“Monopoly fans vote out piece”](#)

Content Description: Erin Burnett Out Front. Added on Monopoly fans have spoken, Iron goes directly to jail permanently and the cat comes on board. Erin Burnett reports. February 6, 2013. Report.

ENTERTAINMENT

All videos are approximately 2-3 minutes.

1. [“Glee: Full Performance of ‘Call Me Maybe’”](#)

Content Description: From the FOX show *Glee*. September 10, 2012.

2. [“Game of Thrones Season 3 In Production”](#)

Content Description: Don't miss the season 3 premiere on March 31st, 2013. HBO. Preview.

3. [“It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia: Charlie Freaks Out in the Mailroom”](#)

Content Description: Charlie uncovers what he believes to be a major conspiracy while working in the mailroom. FX. (Orig. airdate: 2008)

Note: rated TVMA. You will need to enter your date of birth to view.

4. [“Kate Upton on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon”](#)

Content Description: Kate talks about appearing on her second consecutive "Sports Illustrated" swimsuit cover (February 2013).

APPENDIX 2

STUDY 1 DIRECTRT EXPERIMENTAL TREATMENT

Warm-Up/Practice (all)

Instructions: The first task here is designed to help you get the hang of the next two procedures. The task is simple: you will classify 6 adjectives into two groups: positive and negative. It is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many mistakes will result in an uninterpretable score.

Press one of two keys to categorize the displayed word

The “Z” key indicates that a negative adjective

The “/” key indicates a positive adjective

It works best to keep one finger above each key for quick response

Randomized: delightful, joyous, fantastic, dreadful, nasty, horrible

Treatment Group

Attitudes

Instructions: In this next task you will be asked about topics where people can have very different opinions, so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. All you need to do is tell what your personal views or opinions are on them. Keep in mind all collected information is anonymous since no identifying information will be traced back to you.

It is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many mistakes will result in an uninterpretable score.

Press one of two keys to categorize the displayed word

The “Z” key indicates that you OPPOSE a policy

The “/” key indicates that you SUPPORT a policy

Please keep one finger above each key for quick response. Move quickly as possible but do not make errors.

Randomized: affirmative action, death penalty, increase minimum wage, legal abortion; legalize marijuana, school choice, less gun control, tax cuts across the board, cut government spending, increase spending on the poor, universal health care, gay marriage, tougher immigration laws, banning junk foods from public schools.

Level of Agreement:

For the next set of questions, you will be specifying the degree to which you support or oppose a policy using a 5-point scale.

1=strongly oppose

2=oppose

3=neither oppose nor support

4=support

5=strongly support

Press the number key (1-5) that best reflects your opinion.

Just like in the other tasks, it is important that you answer the questions quickly, but accurately and without making errors.

Hit any key to continue.

Randomized: legalize marijuana, school choice, less gun control, tax cuts across the board, cut government spending, increase spending on the poor, universal health care, gay marriage, tougher immigration laws, banning junk foods from public schools.

Political Self

Instructions: In this next task, you will be classifying words again, only this time, you will be deciding whether or not the word on the screen is YOU or NOT YOU. Since only you can tell whether or not a word accurately describes you, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

Just like earlier, it is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible.

It is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many mistakes will result in an uninterpretable score.

Press one of two keys to categorize the displayed word

The "Z" key indicates "NOT ME"

The "/" key indicates that "ME"

Please keep one finger above each key for quick response. Move quickly as possible but do not make errors.

Randomized: intelligent, funny, athletic, serious, creative, sympathetic, ethical, average, immature, ambitious, cautious, shy, interesting, adventurous, moody, sensitive

Randomized Political: democrat, republican, conservative, liberal, patriot, environmentalist, capitalist, pro-choice

Control Group

Instructions: This task is similar, but requires you to read the words on the screen and classify them into two groups, based on whether or not they are associated with the word "Hot" or the word "Cold."

The word will appear in the center of the screen. You will press one of two keys to categorize the displayed word:

The "Z" key indicates that the word is associated with Hot

The "/" key indicates that the word is associated with Cold

It works best to keep one finger above each key for quick response

It is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many mistakes will result in an uninterpretable score.

Randomized: penguin, palm tree, sun, Antarctica, ice, baking, fire, summer, winter, shivering, sweating, fireworks, snow, equator

The Self (Slight Gender Prime)

Instructions: In this next task, you will be classifying words again, only this time, you will be deciding whether or not the word on the screen is YOU or NOT YOU. Since only you can tell whether or not a word accurately describes you, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

Just like earlier, it is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible.

It is important that you do this as quickly as you can, making as few of mistakes as possible. Going too slow or making too many mistakes will result in an uninterpretable score.

Press one of two keys to categorize the displayed word

The “Z” key indicates “NOT ME”

The “/” key indicates that “ME”

Please keep one finger above each key for quick response. Move quickly as possible but do not make errors.

Randomized: intelligent, funny, athletic, serious, creative, sympathetic, ethical, average, immature, ambitious, cautious, shy, interesting, adventurous, moody, sensitive

Randomized Gender: masculine, feminine, soft, hard, conformist, nonconformist, conventional, unconventional

APPENDIX 3

WEB PAGE SUB-MENUS FOR TASK 2

SPORTS

All videos are approximately 5-7 minutes.

1. [“OTL Tyrann Mathieu”](#)

Content Description: Former LSU defensive back Tyrann Mathieu hopes to play in the NFL despite personal troubles including a drug arrest and dismissal from LSU's football program for failing a drug test. ESPN's OTL. January 24, 2013. Interview.

2. [“Is LeBron Scared To Be In The Dunk Contest?”](#)

Content Description: Skip Bayless, Stephen A. Smith and Bruce Bowen discuss whether LeBron James is scared to participate in the dunk contest. ESPN's First Take. February 15, 2013. Commentary.

3. [“Corners at the combine”](#)

Content Description: Pat Kirwan joins Kevin Corke on Eye on Football to take a look at a few outstanding corners that will be on display at the 2013 NFL combine. February 21, 2013. Commentary.

POLITICS & NEWS

All videos are approximately 5-7 minutes.

1. Fox News Channel [“President Obama: Manipulator-in-Chief”](#)

Content Description: President has no problem granting media access for photo-ops with first responders when he wants to blame Republicans for looming sequestration cuts. Greta Van Susteren talks with Steve Hayes of the Weekly Standard. February 19, 2013. FNC's On the Record. Commentary.

2. MSNBC [“Is the White House manipulating the media?”](#)

Content Description: MSNBC's Thomas Roberts talks to a political power panel, including the Washington Post's Nia-Malika Henderson, democratic strategist Doug Thornell, and Republican strategist Chip Saltsman about the Politico report calling President Barack Obama the “puppet master.” MSNBC. February 19, 2013.

3. CNN [“Dr. Sanjay Gupta: How to Heart Attack-Proof yourself”](#)

Content Description: Following the death of the Heart Attack Grill's spokesman, Dr. Sanjay Gupta has tips to heart attack-proof your life. February 18, 2013. Report.

ENTERTAINMENT

All videos are approximately 4-8 minutes.

1. [“PSY - GANGNAM STYLE”](#)

Content Description: 2012. Music video.

2. [“BBC - Sound of 2012 - Skrillex Interview”](#)

Content Description: Skrillex talks a little bit about himself on BBC. Feature Interview.

3. [“Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations – The best sushi in the world”](#)

Content Description: A clip taken from Anthony Bourdain's No Reservations where Anthony goes to Tokyo, Japan and eats at a restaurant that has what many people believe is the very best sushi in the world. Travel Channel. (Orig. airdate: 2010).

4. [“Gossip Girl 6x02 High Fidelity - Nelly Yuki 'That's right Blair I'm the Women's Wear daily reporter.'”](#)

Content Description: Blair finds herself in an awkward position with a former high school classmate who could potentially publish an unfavorable article of her new fashion designs. CW. (Orig. air date: 2012).

APPENDIX 4

ASSESSING IDENTITY

Wann's (2002) five-item Sport Fandom Questionnaire (SFQ) consists of five statements with response options on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5).

1. I consider myself a sports fan.
2. My friends see me as a sports fan.
3. I believe that following sports is the most enjoyable form of entertainment.
4. My life would be less enjoyable if I were not allowed to follow sports.
5. Being a sports fan is very important to me.

Four of these items were adapted to politics for assessing political identity. In each statement, "politically engaged" replaced "sports fan." The third statement regarding entertainment was not used because following politics is not typically associated with entertainment.

APPENDIX 5

WEB BROWSING TASK INSTRUCTIONS

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:

At this time, you are going to be browsing the web for FIVE (5) minutes.

During this time, you should browse the web as naturally as possible, just as you normally do when you go online the first time of the day, or when killing time at a coffee shop.

IMPORTANT: Browse the web using the adjacent Google Chrome window ONLY.

Do not exit, minimize or otherwise leave this page in Safari.

You will know when five minutes are up when a button appears below that will allow you to continue.

You must keep this page visible so you will know when 5 minutes have passed. You will not be able to continue the questionnaire until the button appears.

When the button appears below, you may proceed.

Do not close the Google Chrome window.

{button appears here after 5 minutes have elapsed}

APPENDIX 6

LIST OF WEBSITES, DESCRIPTIONS

All website descriptions were taken directly from Google's search page October 13, 2013.

4chan	www.4chan.org	4chan is a simple image-based bulletin board where anyone can post comments and share image
Applebees	www.applebees.com	Develops, franchises and operates a national chain of casual dining restaurants.
BR Parents	www.brparents.com	Baton Rouge Parents Magazine - 22 Years of Connecting with Families
CNN	www.cnn.com	CNN.com delivers the latest breaking news and information on the latest top stories, weather, business, entertainment, politics, and more.
College Humor	www.collegehumor.com	Features daily original comedy videos and articles
Cosmopolitan	www.cosmopolitan.com	The Online Women's Magazine for Fashion, Sex Advice, Dating Tips, and Celebrity News
Deadspin	www.deadspin.com	Sports news and commentary with a humorous slant.
Dr. Phil	www.drphil.com	Dr. Phil has galvanized millions of people to 'get real.' Find out more about him and his show.
ESPN	espn.go.com	ESPN.com provides comprehensive sports coverage.
Fox News	www.foxnews.com	Breaking News, Latest News and Current News from FOXNews.com. Breaking news and video.
Heritage Foundation	www.heritage.org	Heritage Foundation is a conservative research think tank based in Washington D.C. Read studies and papers on free enterprise, limited government...
Huffington Post	www.huffingtonpost.com	The destination for news, blogs and original content offering coverage of US politics, entertainment, style, world news, technology and comedy.
Hulu	www.hulu.com	Watch TV shows and movies free online. Stream episodes of The Office, Glee, Family Guy, SNL and many more hit shows.
lolcats	www.lolcats.com	Lolcats, funny cat pictures with hilarious captions.
Lonely Planet	www.lonelyplanet.com	Love travel? Plan and book your perfect trip with expert advice, travel tips, destination information and inspiration from Lonely Planet
LSU	www.lsu.edu	LSU is the flagship university for Louisiana, supporting land, sea and space grant research.
LSU Daily Reveille	www.lsureveille.com	Student daily of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge.
Men's Health	www.menshealth.com	The men's guide to fitness, sex, women, workouts, weight loss, health, nutrition and muscle building from the world's largest men's magazine.
MSNBC	www.msnbc.com	The place for in-depth analysis, political commentary and informed perspectives
NPR	www.npr.org	NPR delivers breaking national and world news. Also top stories from business, politics, health, science, technology, music, arts and culture.
Pandora	www.pandora.com	Pandora is free, personalized radio that plays music you'll love. Discover new music and enjoy old favorites.
Paypal	www.paypal.com	PayPal is the faster, safer way to send money, make an online payment, receive money or set up a merchant account.

Pinterest	www.pinterest.com	Pinterest is where you go to discover new things and collect stuff you love.
Reddit	www.reddit.com	User-generated news links. Votes promote stories to the front page.
Roll Tide	www.rolltide.com	The most comprehensive coverage of Alabama Athletics on the web.
Shopstyle	www.shopstyle.com	ShopStyle is where fashion happens. Find the latest couture and fashion designers while shopping for clothes, shoes, jewelry, wedding dresses and more!
Student Universe	www.studentuniverse.com	StudentUniverse provides students with exclusive deals and experiences. Book cheap travel for flights, hotels, tours, rail, study abroad and more!
Stumbleupon	www.stumbleupon.com	StumbleUpon is the easiest way to find cool new websites, videos, photos and images from across the Web. We make the best recommendations just for you.
Techdirt	www.techdirt.com	News, commentary, and discussions on important or interesting high tech news and includes newsletters.
Tiger Droppings	www.tigerdroppings.com	Get the latest LSU Football news from the best LSU Sports site on the web.
Travel & Leisure	www.travelandleisure.com	World Travel Guides, articles, luxury hotels, deals, vacation ideas, blogs, photo contests and more.
Tumblr	www.tumblr.com	Post anything (from anywhere!), customize everything, and find and follow what you love. Create your own Tumblr blog today.
Twitter	www.twitter.com	Instantly connect to what's most important to you. Follow your friends, experts, favorite celebrities, and breaking news.
Yelp	www.yelp.com	User Reviews and Recommendations of Top Restaurants, Shopping, Nightlife, Entertainment, Services and More at Yelp.
Youtube	www.youtube.com	Share your videos with friends, family, and the world.

APPENDIX 7

LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS PREDICTING MEDIA CHOICE, BY INTEREST

Logistic Regressions Predicting Media Choice by Interest, Task 1, Task 2

	Politics & News		Sports		Entertainment	
Task 1	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B	B(SE)	Exp.B
Interest						
Politics & News (n=11)	3.63(.94)***	37.80				
Sports (n=5)			3.19(1.17)**	24.4		
Entertainment (n=43)					1.46(.54)**	4.29
constant	-3.45(.71)***		-1.81(.34)***		.18(.52)	
R ²	.35		.14		.09	
N	76		76		76	
X ²	18.13***		9.89**		7.77**	
Task 2						
Interest						
Politics & News (n=11)	2.04(.75)**	7.66				
Sports (n=5)			2.43(1.00)*	11.45		
Entertainment (n=43)					1.25*	3.5
Condition	.53(.72)	1.71	.62(.69)	1.85	-.63(.53)	.53
constant	-2.56(.59)***	.08	-2.27(.55)***	.10	.53(.46)	1.70
R ²	.13		.10		.08	
N	76		76		76	
X ²	8.22*		6.41*		7.83*	

^p ≤ 0.10, *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Condition = "1" indicates political salience prime.

APPENDIX 8

THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN RATINGS, BY GROUP (TABLES 10-12)

Table 10.

Approval Ratings of Website Recommendations for Identity Congruent Group (N=28)

Identity	Websites	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down	Obs.	% Approval
Sports Fan					
Yes	ESPN	14	7	21	67%
	Tiger Droppings	14	7	21	67%
	Deadspin	3	18	21	7%
No	Stumbleupon	4	3	7	57%
	Twitter	5	2	7	71%
	LSU Daily Reveille	5	2	7	71%
Political (Conservative)					
Yes	Fox News	1	3	4	25%
	Heritage Foundation	1	3	4	25%
No	Tumblr	11	1	12	92%
	Youtube	12	0	12	92%
Political (Liberal)					
Yes	Huffington Post	4	3	7	57%
	CNN	6	1	7	86%
No	Tumblr	2	3	5	40%
	Youtube	5	0	5	100%
Traveler					
Yes	Student Universe	10	10	20	50%
	Lonely Planet	4	16	20	25%
No	Yelp	1	7	8	13%
	LSU	8	0	8	100%
Gender (Typical)					
Female	Cosmopolitan	7	0	7	100%
	Pinterest	7	0	7	100%
	Shopstyle	6	1	7	86%
Male	Men's Health	3	1	4	75%
	College Humor	3	1	4	75%
	Hulu	2	2	4	50%
Gender (Not Typical)					
Female	Reddit	4	9	13	31%
	Pandora	12	1	13	92%
	Hulu	10	3	13	77%
Male	Reddit	3	1	4	75%
	Pandora	4	0	4	100%
	Hulu	4	0	4	100%

Table 11.
Approval Ratings of Website Recommendations for Identity Incongruent Group (N=29)

Identity	Websites	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down	Obs.	% Approval
Sports Fan					
Yes	Roll Tide	2	20	22	10%
	Dr. Phil	2	20	22	10%
	Lolcats	13	9	22	59%
No	ESPN	1	6	7	17%
	Tiger Droppings	4	3	7	57%
	Deadspin	0	7	7	0%
Political (Conservative)					
Yes	MSNBC	1	1	2	50%
	NPR	1	1	2	50%
No	Fox News	2	4	6	33%
	Heritage Foundation	2	4	6	33%
Political (Liberal)					
Yes	MSNBC	4	4	8	50%
	NPR	4	4	8	50%
No	Fox News	6	7	13	46%
	Heritage Foundation	4	9	13	31%
Traveler					
Yes	Applebees	4	16	20	25%
	Baton Rouge Parents	1	19	20	5%
No	Travel & Leisure	4	5	9	44%
	Lonely Planet	1	8	9	11%
Gender (Typical)					
Female	Techdirt	3	9	12	25%
	4chan	1	11	12	.08%
	Paypal	8	4	12	67%
Male	Cosmopolitan	0	4	4	0%
	Pinterest	1	3	4	25%
	Shopstyle	1	3	4	25%
Gender (Not Typical)					
Female	Shopstyle	7	2	9	78%
	Cosmopolitan	5	4	9	56%
	Pinterest	8	1	9	89%
Male	Men's Health	2	2	4	50%
	College Humor	3	1	4	75%
	Cosmopolitan	2	2	4	50%

Table 12.

Control Group Website Ratings, By Referenced Identity (N=29)

Ref. Identity	Website	Thumbs Up	Thumbs Down	% Approval
Sports Fan	*Roll Tide	0	29	0%
	*Dr. Phil	3	26	12%
	*lolcats	4	25	14%
	Deadspin	5	24	17%
	Stumbleupon	15	14	52%
	Tiger Droppings	16	13	55%
	ESPN	23	6	79%
	LSU Daily Reveille	23	6	79%
	Twitter	25	4	85%
Political	Heritage Foundation	0	29	0%
	NPR	4	25	14%
	Huffington Post	14	15	48%
	MSNBC	14	15	48%
	Fox News	15	14	52%
	CNN	19	10	66%
	Tumblr	20	9	69%
	Youtube	28	1	97%
Traveler	*BR Parents	1	28	3%
	Lonely Planet	2	27	7%
	*Applebees	5	24	17%
	Student Universe	5	24	17%
	Yelp	7	22	24%
	Travel & Leisure	8	21	28%
	LSU	28	1	97%
Gender	*Techdirt	2	27	7%
	*4chan	4	25	14%
	Shopstyle	5	24	17%
	Men's Health	10	19	34%
	Reddit	11	18	38%
	Cosmopolitan	15	14	52%
	College Humor	15	14	52%
	*Paypal	16	13	55%
	Hulu	20	9	69%
	Pinterest	23	6	79%
	Pandora	27	2	93%

Note: Control group was instructed to provide their general opinions on popular websites using the "Thumbs Up/ Thumbs Down" endorsement system, selecting "thumbs up" when they affirmatively like the website or the kind of content it represents, "thumbs down" if they don't like the website or the kind of content it represents, or if not familiar enough to rate.

* Denotes website displayed in incongruent condition only

APPENDIX 9
STUDY 2, WEBSITES VISITED IN TASK 2

	Incongruent	Congruent	Control
Anthropologie	0	0	1
Artofmanliness	0	1	0
Autostraddle	1	0	0
Catholic	0	0	1
Cbssports	0	0	1
Clubampersand	1	0	0
Cnn	0	0	1
Collegehumor	2	0	0
Complex	0	0	1
Cosmopolitan	1	0	0
Deviantart	1	0	0
Entergy	1	0	0
Espn	2	0	0
Facebook	4	2	2
Forever21	0	1	0
Freepeople	0	0	1
Gmail	1	1	0
ifunny.mobi	0	0	1
International.lsu.edu	1	0	0
Jcrew	0	0	1
Linkedin	1	0	0
Lolcats	0	0	1
Lsu.edu (email)	1	1	0
Lsureveille	0	0	1
Lulus	0	0	1
Mtv	0	1	0
Nordstrom	1	0	0
Orbitz	0	1	0
Pandora	0	1	0
Peoplemagazine	0	1	1
Perezhilton	0	0	1
Pga/masters	1	1	0
Pinterest	4	6	5
Piperlime.gap	0	1	0
Pitchfork	0	1	0
Reddit	0	1	1
Reebok	0	0	1
Shaggybevo	1	0	0
Shoedazzle	0	1	0
Studentuniverse	0	1	0
Tumblr	1	1	2
TV Guide	1	0	0
Twitter	1	1	5
Vh1	0	1	0
Wanelo	0	1	0
Xkcd	0	1	0
Yahoo	1	0	0
Youtube	0	1	0
Zappos	1	0	0
<i>Total</i>	29	28	29

APPENDIX 10

IRB APPROVAL & CONSENT FORM, STUDY 2

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://research.lsu.edu/CompliancePoliciesProcedures/InstitutionalReviewBoard%28IRB%29/Item24737.html>

A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/Item26774.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Emily Pfetzer

Rank: ph.d. candidate

Dept: MC

Ph: 859 482803

E-mail: epfetz1@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

Kirby Goidel his
Kgoidel@lsu.edu x7588

IRB# E8201 LSU Proposal # _____

☒ Complete Application

☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title:

Individuals & web browsing

Study Exempted By:

Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University

203 B-1 David Boyd Hall

225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb

Exemption Expires: 3/10/2016

4) Proposal? (yes or no) NO

If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, if YES, either

☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant

OR

☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

Mass Communication students

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Emil

Date 3-6-13

(no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes ☒ No _____

Reviewer Meghan S. Sanders

Signature [Signature]

Date 3/11/13

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Performance Site: This study will be conducted on-site at Louisiana State University, Manship School of Mass Communication's Media Effects Lab (MEL), located at the Manship School Research facility on the corner of South Stadium Road & South Campus Drive.

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8 am-5 pm
Emily Pfetzer, 859-468-2803/ epfetz1@lsu.edu
Dr. Kirby Goedel, 225-578-7588/ kgoedel@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to understand individual's web-browsing preferences as well as their preferences regarding their media usage, in general.

Subject Inclusion: Undergraduate students at Louisiana State University

Number of subjects: Unknown, goal is 225 participants.

Study Procedures: All participants must sign up for a timeslot through the MEL system. You are going to be browsing the web, answering questions about your online behavior and preferences, as well as questions about who you are. The entire procedure will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

At the conclusion of data collection, the survey will be "closed" and raw data will be processed solely by the researcher and exported to a statistical analysis software file format. All original data will be destroyed once the researcher is satisfied with the collection process and has converted the raw data into an appropriate format for analysis. The data collected and used for this study will be destroyed after ten years.

Compensation: As you are part of the Manship School research pool and will receive credit as designated by the professor of your enrolled course.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with the web-browsing or the questionnaire used to collect data for this study. You are free to refuse to participate, drop out, or skip questions that you are not comfortable answering. During the web-browsing portion of the procedure, you are free to stay on a page for as long or as little time as you would like, just like you naturally would at home or in class. All participation associated with this study is strictly voluntary.

Right to Refuse: You may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which you might otherwise be entitled and in accordance with the completion schedule for this particular study.

Privacy: Results of this study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be collected or included in the publication. All participant identities will remain anonymous unless disclosure is required by law.

Signature: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. Additionally, I may contact the primary investigator, Emily Pfetzer at (859) 468-2803, epfetz1@lsu.edu.

Sign: _____ Date: __/__/2013

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 3/10/2016

APPENDIX 11

IRB APPROVAL & CONSENT FORM, STUDY 1

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://research.lsu.edu/CompliancePoliciesProcedures/InstitutionalReviewBoard%28IRB%29/Item24737.html>

LSU

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

– A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/Item26774.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: Emily Petter Rank: Doctoral Candidate
Dept: MC Ph: 859.468.2803 E-mail: epfetz1@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

Kirby Goidel Professor, 225.578.7588, kgoidel@lsu.edu
1/24/2013

IRB# E8113 LSU Proposal #
☒ Complete Application
☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title: Individuals and Video Content preferences

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: _____

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, if YES, either
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
OR
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) MC students

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature [Signature] Date 1-22-13 (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 2
Signed Consent Waived? Yes / No
Reviewer [Signature] Signature [Signature] Date 1/25/13

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Performance Site: This study will be conducted on-site at Louisiana State University, Manship School of Mass Communication's Media Effects Lab (MEL), located at the Manship School Research facility on the corner of South Stadium Road & South Campus Drive.

Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,
M-F, 8 am-5 pm
Emily Pfetzer, 859-468-2803/ epfetz1@lsu.edu
Dr. Kirby Goidel, 225-578-7588/ kgoidel@lsu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to understand individual's web-browsing preferences as well as their preferences regarding their media usage, in general.

Subject Inclusion: Undergraduate students at Louisiana State University

Number of subjects: Unknown, goal is 225 participants.

Study Procedures: All participants must sign up for a timeslot through the MEL system. You are going to be browsing the web, answering questions about your online behavior and preferences, as well as questions about who you are. The entire procedure will take approximately 20-30 minutes.

At the conclusion of data collection, the survey will be "closed" and raw data will be processed solely by the researcher and exported to a statistical analysis software file format. All original data will be destroyed once the researcher is satisfied with the collection process and has converted the raw data into an appropriate format for analysis. The data collected and used for this study will be destroyed after ten years.

Compensation: As you are part of the Manship School research pool and will receive credit as designated by the professor of your enrolled course.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with the web-browsing or the questionnaire used to collect data for this study. You are free to refuse to participate, drop out, or skip questions that you are not comfortable answering. During the web-browsing portion of the procedure, you are free to stay on a page for as long or as little time as you would like, just like you naturally would at home or in class. All participation associated with this study is strictly voluntary.

Right to Refuse: You may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which you might otherwise be entitled and in accordance with the completion schedule for this particular study.

Privacy: Results of this study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be collected or included in the publication. All participant identities will remain anonymous unless disclosure is required by law.

Signature: The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. Additionally, I may contact the primary investigator, Emily Pfetzer at (859) 468-2803, epfetz1@lsu.edu.

Sign: _____ Date: __/__/2013

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
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Exemption Expires: 3/10/2016

VITA

Emily Marie Pfetzer is originally from Kentucky. She earned her BA in political science at Eastern Kentucky University and her MA in political science from the University of Cincinnati. Prior to moving to Baton Rouge, LA to continue graduate studies at theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University, she worked as a constituent liaison for a U.S. Representative. Emily maintains multiple areas of expertise in media and public affairs and an ambitious research agenda in media ecology that examines the interrelations among media, the self, and society.