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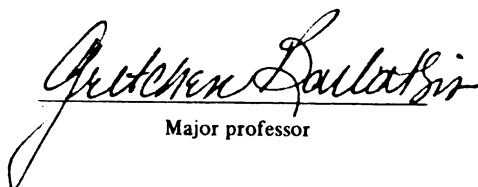
Uses, Gratifications and Avoidances
 Of Political Information In The Media
 By Young, First-Time, Potential Voters
 In A Presidential Election.

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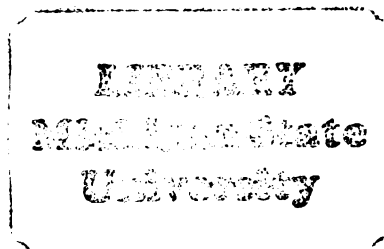
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USES, GRATIFICATIONS AND AVOIDANCES OF
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IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By
Thomas E. Taylor

A THESIS

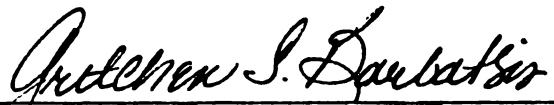
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ABSTRACT

USES, GRATIFICATIONS AND AVOIDANCES OF POLITICAL INFORMATION IN THE MEDIA BY YOUNG, FIRST-TIME, POTENTIAL VOTERS IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By

Thomas E. Taylor

The percentage of citizens in the United States who exercise their right to vote in general elections is among the lowest for any country in the world. As a recent addition to the electoral family in this country, the young, first-time, potential voter has shown the poorest turn-out at the polls among all groups in the electoral family.

In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, media use habits and family communication patterns were examined for possible relationships to voting behavior.

It was found that neither media use characteristics nor family communication pattern was predictive of voting behavior. Family communication pattern did predict the level of alienation toward political information received from the media, however, although it did not predict the gratifications received from such information. In addition, the level of avoidance of political information which the individual reported increased for all respondents at the conclusion of the campaign.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have helped contribute to the completion of this thesis. Foremost among them is Dr. Gretchen Barbatsis who guided me throughout the entire process with more patience than I had a right to expect, and who remained a good friend in spite of it all. Lonni Moffett, fellow masters student (and outstanding friend) helped keep my sanity when things looked bleak, and is extended a grateful thank you. Dr. John Able and Rick Ducey (PhD Candidate) of Michigan State U. must be thanked for their invaluable help in assisting in the writing of the computer program to analyze the data. As usual, my family provided me with the moral and financial support so vital to an undertaking of this magnitude. And finally, a special thanks to my special friends for being there.

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CHAPTER I

"One question has tantalized me for years,
Is television implicated in this voter apathy?

It is a fact that these two decades of increasingly turned-off voters have been two decades of increasingly turned-on television. Just as election turn-out was declining, television was becoming the dominant cultural force in American life and the principal medium of news and political communication. It must be more than a coincidence."

—Robert MacNeil¹

"Anyone who says 25 million (first time) votes isn't a force to be reckoned with is an idiot."

—Ben Wattenberg²

INTRODUCTION

Few people in the United States exercise their right to vote. As recently as the 1980 presidential election, less than one-half of all the eligible voters turned out at the polls to participate in the general election.³ While political philosophers can debate whether or not such an occurrence is good or bad, social scientists must contend with the 'why?' and the 'so what?' of the problem. What causes some individuals to vote and others not to vote? What are the results of such behavior for society and the individual? Or, as Robert MacNeil has intimated, is there any causal link between the increase in the use of

television in our culture and the decrease in voter turn-out?

As a politically aware and active member of society, this researcher set out to seek an answer to the 'why's?' of electoral behavior. Being one who does exercise his right to vote, my bias needs to be stated at the onset. Unlike one who may see non-voting as a positive, constructive means of expression, I view such behavior as deviant from what I perceive should be the norm in a democratic society. While every effort was made to be objective in reviewing the literature, devising a questionnaire and analyzing the collected data, this researcher was more interested in exploring the variables affecting those who don't vote than in exploring those associated with those who do.

The young, first-time, potential voter—that individual being an American citizen between the ages of 18 and 21—is a relatively new member of the electoral family. By the adoption of the 26th amendment to the constitution in 1971, these individuals received the right of franchise, effective with the general election in 1972. To date, the young, first-time, potential voter has been exposed to three general elections. In line with the overall national electorate, less than half of these eligible young, first-time, potential voters have used their right to vote.⁴ The lowest incidence of participation in the presidential elections by young, first-time, potential voters occurred in 1976, when only 38 per cent cast ballots.⁵

As children of the electronic media, this group may

have developed its electoral behavior with influence from the electronic media: radio and television. Certainly, given the vast amount of attention paid to the electronic media by young people, this looms as a possibility.⁶ The question which immediately comes to mind, then, is whether young, first-time, potential voters (i.e., both those who will vote and those who won't) differ in terms of why and how they use the media for political information during the course of a general election. This was the central question raised in this research endeavor.

In light of the low incidence of turn-out at the voting booths by the young, first-time, potential voter, results from this study can be useful in three ways. First, social scientists can gain valuable insights into the electoral behavior of an age group which has been, heretofore, analyzed only superficially. Secondly, journalists and others who present political information to the public can get first-hand, self-reported reasons from the public on the avoidance and gratifications derived from the political information presented to them. This, in turn, may help news disseminators do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Finally, candidates and their 'image makers' can gain insights into what issues are important to the young, first-time, potential voter, and how to attend to these issues via the media. Effective communication must result from the most efficient transmission of information from the candidate to each member of the electorate. The results of this study

can help candidates communicate in an efficient manner with at least one segment of the electorate: the young, first-time, potential voter.

Summary

The young, first-time, potential voter is a recent addition to the electoral family. While little has been done to research the behavior of this voting block, it is evident that less than half of all eligible young, first-time, potential voters exercise their right to vote. Does the presence of the electronic media in the lives of this demographic group have any correlation with this voting statistic? It is the opinion of this researcher that there is at least the suspicion of such a link, and as such, the subject merits serious consideration as a research topic. Further, non-voting is considered by this researcher as the deviant form of behavior in a democratic nation. It is hoped that the results of this study can help social scientists, journalists and politicians understand—and rectify—this problem.

CHAPTER I

NOTES

¹Robert MacNeil, "TV and the Voter," TV Quarterly. (Winter 1980-81) Vol. 17, No. 4, p. 27. MacNeil is a popular television commentator on PBS and one of the few media professionals who has critically discussed the role members of his profession play in the electoral process.

²Ben Wattenberg, in John J. Patrick, The Young Voter. (Washington: National Council for The Social Sciences, 1972), p. 88. Wattenberg is currently a PBS commentator and a former staff member for Sen. Henry Jackson.

³Steven V. Roberts, "Non-voters played a key role," The New York Times, 5 Nov. 1980, p. A-1.

⁴"Lagging at the Polls," Parade, 26 October 1980, p. 12.

⁵George Comstock, Steven Chaffee, Natan Katzman, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Roberts, Television and Human Behavior. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). See: especially Chapter 3, "The Audience," for a detailed analysis of viewership demographics.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Finding a Theory

Many studies dealing with the media and politics have been in evidence as of late. From local newspapers or TV Guide to the most serious academic journals, the question of the present moment seems to be "What effect does the media have upon political behavior?" However well intentioned such a question may be, from an intuitive sense, it presents only one perspective to media effects. By basing a study on such a premise, one pre-supposes that the media directly effect the individual. That is, the media are deemed as omni-potent, while the individual is basically without defenses to counteract any messages. Such a line of thinking has been the rationale used in many studies; and while the name may vary, that rationale has been called the 'direct effects' theory, or the 'hypodermic theory' to communication effect. McLeod and Becker very succinctly noted that the hypodermic theory "at its worse...(makes) media content equal media effects."¹

Conversely, by focusing more attention on the individual through the analysis of selective perception and

retention, the 'limited effects' theory works in reverse: the individual pulls from the content that which would induce some subsequent behavior. McLeod and Becker likewise find fault with this model for its myopic perspective: "any effect can be obtained from any message."² If one were to visualize these theories, one would notice that with the hypodermic model, the media works directly on the individual, while with the limited effects model, the individual draws from the media in a selective fashion. To solve such a dilemma, it would be appropriate to analyze both the media and the individual: how does a particular individual use the media, and for what specific reason? In addition, the factors bearing upon the individual are also considered. Such is the basis for the theory popularly known as Uses and Gratifications.

FIGURE 2-1:

AN ILLUSTRATION OF COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Direct Effects Model

media \longrightarrow individual

Limited Effects Model

media \longleftarrow individual

Uses and Gratifications Model

media \longleftrightarrow individual \longleftarrow outside influence

Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications approach to mass media has, like a phoenix, arisen out of the ashes of the aforementioned theories. The failure of both the Direct Effects Theory and the Limited Effects Theory to produce any evidence of effects on those exposed to the media provided the impetus for the growth and development of Uses and Gratifications Theory. Uses and Gratifications Theory was most popular during the late 1960's and early 1970's. At this point, a flood of research studies attempted to utilize the theory.

Uses and Gratifications Theory is seen as a better approach to analyzing media effects because, as Katz noted, it "takes the media consumer rather than the media message as its starting point."³ Katz further stated that Uses and Gratifications Theory was an approach which put "less attention on what media do to people, but rather on what people do with the media."⁴ He elucidated further that "the uses approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations and their social roles are pre-potent, and that people selectively fashion what they see and hear to those interests."⁵

Blumler, Katz and Gurevitch assert that the Uses and Gratifications approach is concerned with "(1) the social and psychological origin of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differentiated patterns of media exposure... resulting in (6) need gratification."⁶ Specifically, in

applying Uses and Gratifications Theory, five key elements must be kept in mind:

1. The audience is conceived of as active and goal directed.
2. In the mass communication process, much initiative in linking need gratification and media choice lies with the audience member.
3. The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction.
4. Methodologically speaking, many of the goals of mass media use can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves.
5. Value judgements about the cultural significance of mass communication should be suspended while audience orientations are explored on their own terms.⁷

Uses and Gratifications Theory, then, presents itself as the most logical choice as an approach in which to study the topic of young, first-time, potential voters and the media. It should be clear that the individual must be analyzed as to what orientation(s) s/he bring to the communication setting and how s/he uses the media, and for what gratifications.

Key findings in previous research

Having established the theoretical foundation for this study, it is necessary to turn the attention of the reader to previous research in the field. The landmark study

relating Uses and Gratifications Theory to political information was conducted by McQuail and Blumler during the British general election held in 1964.⁸ While the study dealt with persuasion (not a variable under consideration in this study), a few key results are applicable here. For example, the authors found that "attitudinal effects depended both on the type of motive for use and the overall level of motivation characterizing the viewer."⁹ Further, the strength of the motivation (defined as number of reasons for seeking political information) was positively associated with the amount of time spent seeking that information, despite the fact that it was negatively associated with regular television viewing. Two major outcomes of the study serve to keep the Uses and Gratifications Theory alive. First, the study validated the method of obtaining information on media use and behavior from self-reported measures. Such validation is evidenced in the reports of shifts in party attitudes during the campaign. Secondly, the study provided a useful and meaningful set of factors which serve to outline media functions, which lead the individual to gratifications, or avoidance, from the media's content. These factors have an intuitive logic and have formed the basis for subsequent research into media and politics applying Uses and Gratifications Theory. (It should be noted that these factors are, by and large, the result of the work of Charles Wright on media functions for the individual).¹⁰

Major factors found by McQuail and Blumler in their path setting study included gratifications derived by the individual, as well as avoidances toward political information presented by television. Gratifications identified included: (1) re-inforcement of pre-existing attitudes, (2) excitement about the election and the campaign, (3) anticipated communication with peers about the campaign, and (4) vote guidance and surveillance of the candidates.¹¹ In terms of the avoidances toward political information presented by television, the researchers found three major factors: (1) partisanship already existing, (2) the preference to relax with a particular medium and (3) alienation from the political system.¹²

The authors further found that level of exposure and knowledge of campaign information were positively correlated.¹³ Because of television's ubiquity in England, the researchers concluded that the consideration of what the viewer brought with him or her to the program content was of paramount importance in determining motivations.¹⁴

The first attempt to replicate McQuail and Blumler's landmark study in the United States found similar results. McLeod and Becker attempted to compare young, first-time, potential voters to seasoned voters according to the uses of television for political information.¹⁵ While theirs is a study more concerned with the validation of the method (i.e., self-reported scales), several of their findings are relevant for this study. Foremost, the authors found no

significant differences between young, first-time, potential voters and seasoned voters in terms of the reasons each had for seeking and avoiding political information from the media.¹⁶ Secondly, surveillance of political information was the predominant reason given for using media for political information. In addition, avoidance items (as well as the general factor) were rarely endorsed by the respondent, and the mean score for each was significantly lower than that for the gratifications items factor.¹⁷ This pattern held for both the new and the seasoned voter. Finally, gratification and avoidance responses were found to be particularly powerful predictors of probable electoral behavior. Most surprising, and contradictory to prior research, scores for the gratifications and avoidance items were found to be better predictors of voting behavior than ordinary levels of exposure to television.¹⁸ The authors found, however, many of the gratification items to be inter-related and in need of clarification. Although less significant than gratification and avoidance measures, specific content measures of media use also proved to be a good predictor of voting behavior.¹⁹ The authors examined specific content measures along the following classifications: crime and adventure shows, movies, and situation comedies.²⁰

Semlak and Williams continued the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory to political information from the media during the 1976 general election.²¹ These researchers

were primarily interested in testing the validity of factor analyzed campaign data over time and did not segregate respondents as to seasoned or young, first-time, potential voters. Nonetheless, several results are noteworthy. As with prior research, Sendlak and Williams found avoidance and gratifications factors to exist (using the same self-reported measures employed by McLeod and Becker).²² (In terms of method, these researchers departed from prior research by administering the survey over the phone rather than through in-depth, personal interviews. Also, data collection was done twice during the course of the campaign: immediately after the nominations of Ford and Carter, and just prior to the general election in November. While the level of gratification increased slightly from point one to point two, no significant change was observed in the avoidance factor between these two observation points. As was true in previous research, Sendlak and Williams found the gratifications and avoidance dimensions to be extremely powerful predictors of voting intention (well over 76 percent.)²³

Faults in prior research

The primary fault with prior research in Uses and Gratifications Theory centers around its lack of attention to the individual. As McCombs has noted:

"Consideration of personal characteristics and interpersonal communication behaviors has often been relegated to a concern with simple demographic

location variables...we must consider what factors bring each individual to the mass media."²⁴

Keeping in mind Blumler, Katz and Gurevitch's concern for the socio-psychological origins of the needs for the individual, one has to be dismayed with prior studies which fail to address this crucial variable. Semlak and Williams fail completely to identify the individual as anything other than the 'voter'. Likewise, McQuail and Blumler do not suggest any demographic breakdowns applicable to the United States. McLeod and Becker fall back on the individuals' "simple demographic location variables" (e.g., education) as a probable variable to address the question of socio-psychological origins of needs. Even here, however, the researchers admit that it (education) fails to be of any great predictive value.²⁵ The lack of such a predictive variable may well be the weakest part of Uses and Gratifications Theory.

In an attempt to address the weakness found in previous research, this study employed a means to relate the origin of needs to the communication pattern used by the family in which the individual developed. Intuitively this made sense on a priori grounds: how a family (the primary agent of political socialization into the culture for the individual) controls conversation between members (i.e., who can speak, when, and on what subject(s)), should influence the individual's communication pattern concerning politics as an adult.

This is precisely what Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin assert in their study of adolescent media use.²⁶ The researchers examine the role of 'modeling' by parents on their offspring. They note that:

"The developing child in modern society is typically introduced to the mass media in the home...it is plausible to assume that his patterns of media use have been shaped by social influences in the home, particularly his parents."²⁷

Further, "the patterns of interest and motivations toward communication that the youth carries into adulthood are... those that he has learned socially."²⁸

Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin devised a scale which measures just such a variable. While used originally to determine family communication patterns as they relate to overall media use, these self-administered questions served this study as well (i.e., the variable remains the same, only the context of its use changed.)

Two dimensions form the family communication pattern. The first is the 'socio-orientation' which examines whether or not the family encourages the individual members to avoid upsetting peaceful and harmonious relations in a group. The second dimension is the 'concept-orientation'. Here, the individual within the family is examined to see if he or she is exposed to controversy and encouraged to discuss his or her ideas on a variety of subjects. The two orientations

yield a four category typology:

1. Laissez-faire families: Neither type of orientation is stressed. While the individual is not prohibited from challenging parental views, neither is s/he exposed to the world of competing ideas. The individual is seen as being 'weak' on both dimensions.
2. Protective families: The individual is encouraged to get along with others. He or she is prohibited from expressing dissent and given little chance to encounter information on which s/he might base his or her own views. The individual is seen as being 'strong' on the socio-orientation and 'weak' on the concept-orientation.
3. Pluralistic families: The individual is encouraged to explore new ideas and s/he can make up his or her own mind without incurring parental wrath. The individual is seen as being 'strong' on both the concept-orientation, and the socio-orientation.
4. Consensual families: The individual is exposed to controversy and encouraged to enter into it, and yet, paradoxically, constrained to adopt parental values and ideas. The individual is seen as being 'strong' on the concept-orientation and 'weak' on the socio-orientation.²⁹

Figure 2-2 presents the family communication pattern visually.

FIGURE 2-2

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERN BREAKDOWN

		<u>Socio-Orientation</u>	
		High	Low
<u>Concept-Orientation</u>	High	Pluralistic	Consensual
	Low	Protective	Laissez-faire

Another key problem with prior research, as it concerns this study, was the relative in-attention paid to the young, first-time, potential voter. Only McLeod and Becker made any attempt to ascertain responses from this specific demographic group. Even here, however, three problems presented themselves. First, while addressing this group, the researchers did so with questions which had been applied only to seasoned voters. By the very nature of being young and potential first-time voters, this group is different and may look upon politics and the media differently. By forcing this group to respond to questionnaires geared toward older voters, valuable information was overlooked and, more importantly, misleading responses must be considered probable. Pre-testing and focus group interviews were not applied to solicit information from the young, first-time, potential voter. Secondly, the researchers surveyed youth from the University of Wisconsin's environs. One might expect a sample bias of a more affluent, better educated and—given that University's history—more

politically active and aware group. This makes generalization difficult at best. Finally, (and while seemingly a minor point) first-time voters in 1972 encompassed all individuals between the ages of 18 and 24. In 1980, that group included only those between 18 and 21. Those additional respondents (i.e., those between 22 and 24) were conceivably more in tune with the more seasoned voter than their younger peers, thereby skewing the results.

By their own admissions, all three previously cited studies dealing with Uses and Gratifications Theory failed to give proper attention to the avoidance dimension. Considering that the first-time voter, as a block, has the lowest incidence of turn-out at the polls, this particular fault becomes of paramount importance. Through refinement of the survey instrument and the definition of the sample, this study attempted to address this weakness.

The questionnaire used in this study was pre-tested and finalized based on interviews with young, first-time, potential voters, and was better tailored for this sample than those used previously. The focus group interviews gleaned from the interviewees more insight into how to survey the avoidance dimension than the mere repetition of the McQuail and Blumler questionnaire.

Another problem with McLeod and Becker's study was the sampling frame used. Rather than relying on college students (as those two had done), the sampling frame in this study included all 18 to 21 year olds in a specific

geographic location. Two significant factors emerged from the act. First, those sampled were more representative of society's young, first-time, potential voter in that workers, the unemployed, and housewives, as well as students, were included. Secondly, registered, as well as non-registered, voters were included in the sample. In prior research, a voter registration list served as the sampling frame. In and of itself, those registered to vote show a predisposition to use their franchise. This predisposition, in turn, could be expected to influence subsequent behavior and motivations to seek political information from the media. Such registered voters are also a minority. As this study concerned itself with non-voters, as well as voters, it was apparent that a voter registration list would be unacceptable. To sample a minority and then try to generalize to an entire age group would be misleading.

Summary

The hypodermic theory and the limited effects theory have heretofore provided unsatisfactory results to media effects on human behavior. Uses and Gratifications Theory tries to correct deficiencies in prior research by analyzing media use from the consumer's self-reported responses. Uses and Gratifications Theory is concerned with the socio-psychological origins of needs which motivate the individual to seek or avoid the content of the media. McQuail and Blumler have noted that reinforcement, excitement over a campaign, anticipation of expected communication with peers,

and surveillance form the nucleus of media gratifications. Also, they found that partisanship, alienation and relaxation with the media form the nucleus of the avoidance dimension.

McLeod and Becker found similar results here in the United States in 1972. Further, they reported that young, first-time, potential voters and seasoned voters had similar gratifications and avoidance responses during the general election. Gratifications were stronger than avoidance items as reasons for media use, and both were extremely powerful predictors of electoral behavior. In addition, they found preference for certain media content to predict voting behavior.

Semlak and Williams found the avoidance and gratification factors to hold at two different points in the 1976 presidential election campaign.

Previous research has failed, however, to give serious consideration to the socio-psychological origin of an individual's need for gratification from the media. Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin have devised a scale to measure a family's communication pattern. These patterns may help explain an individual's socio-psychological origin of needs for gratification from the media.

No study to date has examined both the registered and the non-registered voter. This research project attempted to correct that oversight.

CHAPTER II

NOTES

¹Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures through Political Effects Analysis," The Uses of Mass Communications. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 1974) p. 137.

²Ibid.

³Dennis McQuail, Towards a Sociology of Mass Communication. (London: Random House, 1959) p. 18. Katz's criticisms are contained in here.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 71.

⁶Jay G. Blumler, Eliker Katz and Michael Gurevitch, "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual," The Uses of Mass Communication. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974) p. 20.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Dennis McQuail and Jay G. Blumler, Television in Politics. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Charles R. Wright, Mass Communications. (New York: Random House, 1959). McQuail and Blumler themselves give reference to this path setting work.

¹¹McQuail and Blumler, op. cit., p. 27 ff.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

CHAPTER II

NOTES

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 138.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 151 ff.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 147.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 151.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 160.

²⁰Ibid., p. 143.

²¹William Semlak and Wenmouth Williams, Jr., "Uses, Gratifications and Avoidances and Voting Decisions in the 1976 Presidential Campaign." Paper presented to the I.C.A., April 1978.

²²Ibid., p. 3.

²³Ibid., p. 10.

²⁴Maxwell McCombs, "Mass Communication in Political Campaigns: Information, Gratification and Persuasion," in The Effects of Mass Communication, ed., Charles Atkin (Michigan State University Department of Communication, 1978), p. 24.

²⁵McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 158ff.

²⁶Steven H. Chaffee, Jack M. McLeod and Charles K. Atkin, "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 14 (1971), p. 323.

CHAPTER II

NOTES

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 333.

CHAPTER III

HYPOTHESES

Previous research has found both avoidances and gratifications to exist in media use during the presidential campaign by the general voting public. McLeod and Becker found this same pattern in the 1972 general election to hold for a specific sub-group of voters, namely the 18-24 year old.¹ This study anticipated similar findings among the young, first-time, potential voter (here 18-21 years of age) in the 1980 general election. As such, the first general hypothesis of this study posited that:

H 1.0 Mass Media use in the 1980 Presidential Campaign by young, first-time, potential voters will be characterized by gratifications and avoidances.

The gratifications and avoidances resulting from exposure to political information in the media must be examined individually as they relate to the young, first-time, potential voter. Semlak and Williams found that the level of gratification reported by the respondents in their study increased from the first sampling point to the second.² While their study encompassed the entire general electorate, there is no reason to expect any deviancy from

that result even in this sub-group of the general electorate. Given the level of excitement that naturally unfolds over a campaign's duration, along with the natural excitement many young, first-time, potential voters experience in their first election, this makes intuitive sense. As such, the first sub-hypothesis to the general hypothesis was proposed:

H 1.1 The level of gratification experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential voters will be higher at the second data collection point than at the first.

It may be wise to remind the reader that point one of data collection occurred just after the Labor Day holiday, traditionally viewed as the start of the campaign. The second data collection point occurred within a week after the election.

Semlak and Williams also found, however, that the level of avoidance of political information from the media remained relatively fixed at both data collection points during the campaign.³ These mixed results were interpreted by the researchers as due to the increased attention focused on the election process by the media. In the first case, those interested in the campaign (the gratified) sought to have their fill of political information from the media, and their appetites for such fill increased over the course of the campaign. The very nature of the gratifications indicated this (i.e., surveillance, vote-guidance, etc.). On the other hand, those who had little interest in the campaign

from the outset (the avoiders) were disinterested at the start, as well as the conclusion, of the campaign. This, too, can be seen from the avoidance factors themselves (i.e., no desire to vote, candidates already selected, etc.).

Given the strength of their reasoning, and having little evidence to suggest that the young, first-time, potential voter would be different from the general electorate, the second sub-hypothesis was offered:

H 1.2 The level of avoidance experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential voters will remain constant, both at the first data collection point, and at the second.

In the study conducted by McLeod and Becker, it was found that the media use variable was an adequate predictor of voting behavior.⁴ While they found that this variable explained less of the variance than both the avoidance and the gratification measures, their results are valuable and statistically significant. Based on these findings, the second general hypothesis was stated:

H 2.0 Media use will serve as a predictor of the voting behavior of young, first-time, potential voters.

Again, there is no reason to believe that this specific sub-group of voters would differ significantly from the general electorate or any other sub-group in this regard.

McLeod and Becker found that the media use variable

could conveniently be classified along two dimensions.⁵ First, there was the measure of simple exposure to the media (that is, cumulative time spent watching television, listening to the radio, and/or reading newspapers and magazines.) This classification of media use yielded the least significant result in terms of predictive power.⁶

Secondly, there was the measure of media use along the specific content found in a particular exposure, (e.g., the general nature of the television program viewed: a movie, the news, situation comedy, etc.). The authors found, for example, that those respondents who were heavy viewers of news and public affairs programming were more likely to vote than those who either did not view such programming or viewed it lightly.⁷ This same pattern held true for those who viewed entertainment programming: heavy users of such content were more likely to vote than light viewers of such content.⁸ This general selective exposure classification approach to media use yielded the most significant results in terms of predictive power.⁹ These results were true for both seasoned and first time voters. Since nothing presented itself as offering contradictory evidence, the following sub-hypotheses were advanced:

H 2.1 Heavy consumers of the media will be more likely to vote than light consumers of the media.

H 2.2 Heavy consumers of news and public affairs content will be more likely to vote than

light users of news and public affairs content.

- H 2.3 Heavy consumers of entertainment content will be more likely to vote than light users of entertainment content.

Since Katz, as well as McCombs and others, have stressed the need to examine the socio-psychological origins of the needs for gratifications and avoidances from the media, this study attempted to address the issue.¹⁰ Using the model of family communication patterns offered through the research of Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin, it was hoped to explain away part of the variance in media use.¹¹ It was reasoned a convenient starting point in addressing this need.

In the electoral process, one deals heavily with issues and concepts. Given this perspective, one could expect to separate the members from pluralistic and consensual type families (i.e., those who stress the concept-orientation in the family communication model) from the members of protective and laissez-faire type families. With the former two family communication models, the individual is encouraged to explore different ideas and concepts. Such is not the case with the latter two family communication models. Indeed, laissez-faire and protective type families are more concerned with avoiding concepts and different ideas. The individual is usually not allowed to challenge parental views.

Given the nature of these families, then, one can

foresee differences in terms of discussion of, and participation in, the electoral process. While no prior research has been done on the topic of family communication patterns and voting behavior, it can be reasoned that those who come from families stressing concept-orientation in the family communication pattern will differ from those who do not in terms of their media use habits, their voting behavior and the degree of avoidance and gratification received from the media. Thus, the following general hypothesis is proposed:

H 3.0 Family communication patterns, along the concept-orientation, will predict the voting behavior, the media use habits, and the degree of gratification and avoidance received from the media by the young, first-time, potential voter.

It makes intuitive sense that those who are more likely to vote are those who come from families which stress and encourage participation in the world of competing ideas and concepts. Likewise, those individuals from families stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication habits will be more likely to use the media for seeking concepts and ideas (i.e., news and public affairs). In so seeking these ideas and concepts, the individual from the concept-oriented family will achieve more gratification in his or her media use. As such, the following sub-hypotheses were offered:

H 3.1 Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized as stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will:

- (a) Use the media for news and public affairs more than individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.
- (b) Score higher on the level of gratification received from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.
- (c) Be more likely to vote than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.

Conversely, the members of families which do not stress the concept-orientation in family communication patterns will have characteristics of their own. In avoiding ideas and concepts or, in placing less emphasis on concepts, these individuals will be less likely to seek out news and public affairs programming. And, as McLeod and Becker found, those who use less news and public affairs content can be expected also to use less of the media for gratification.¹² Here, too, it can be reasoned that with less exposure to news and public affairs content, these individuals will avoid political information from the media, rather than seek

gratification from it. As such, the following sub-hypotheses were advanced:

- H 3.2 Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation will:
- (a) Use the media less than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation.
 - (b) Score higher on the level of avoidance from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation.

Summary

Media use for political information has been characterized in the past by gratifications and avoidances among the general electorate. Similar findings were expected in this study among young, first-time, potential voters. In addition, it was suggested by prior research that the level of gratification received from the media for political information during the campaign rose from the first data collection point to the second data collection point. Also, the level of avoidance of political information from the media remained fixed over the course of the campaign.

Exposure to the media has been found to be a powerful predictor of voting behavior. The specific content of the media used, as well as the amount of time spent with the

media, served as two separate media use variables to predict voting behavior in the general electorate. Again similar results were anticipated in this study.

The communication pattern which exists in a family was presented as a possible, logical explanation for the origin of needs which motivate the individual to use the media. As such, this variable was expected to predict media use habits, the level of gratification and avoidance received from the media for political information, and, finally, the voting behavior of the individual.

CHAPTER III

NOTES

¹Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures through Political Effects Analysis," The Uses of Mass Communication. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974) p. 147.

²William Semlak and Wenmouth Williams, Jr., "The Uses, Gratifications and Avoidances and Voting Decisions in the 1976 Presidential Campaign", Paper presented in the I.C.A., April 1978, p. 17.

³Ibid.

⁴McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 159.

⁵Ibid., p. 143.

⁶Ibid. The reader should be aware that these authors found the link between selective exposure and political effects in general to be weak, regardless of content.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The reader may refer to either—or both—Dennis McQuail, Toward a Sociology of Mass Communication. (London: Random House, 1959) or, Maxwell McCombs, "Mass Communication in Political Campaigns: Information, Gratification and Persuasion," The Effects of Mass Communication, (ed., Charles Atkin, Michigan State University, 1978), for a clear elucidation of the problem.

CHAPTER III

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¹¹Steven H. Chaffee, Jack M. McLeod and Charles K. Atkin, "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 14, 1971.

¹²McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 149.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

The Universe

The sample for this study was drawn from the population of Skaneateles, New York. Skaneateles is a small, rural community in Upstate New York, located about thirty miles southwest of the city of Syracuse. There are five thousand residents of the town, and though more affluent than most, the town and its residents can be considered fairly representative of middle class America. Although agriculture is a vital industry, the vast majority of the population is employed in white collar and professional occupations. White descendants of European immigrants comprise well over ninety per cent of the populace, with few minorities represented. The town is overwhelmingly Christian, being split equally between Protestant and Catholic.¹ In previous elections (1968, 1972, 1976), Skaneateles residents voted Republican by a margin of nearly three to two.²

While Skaneateles may not be the most ideal location in which to do a study of American voting behavior, neither is it so unfeasible as to make the results of the study meaningless. The turnout at the polls by the voting populace of Skaneateles parallels the national statistic of

approximately fifty per cent. So while the demographics may not be totally representative of the national average, Skaneateles can be seen as a microcosm of the nation's electorate, and surely representative of the nation's biggest demographic block—the middle class, suburban white voter.

Skaneateles was chosen as the site from which to sample for two reasons. First, it was the home town of the researcher. The researcher attended high school there, and was a life-long resident. He knows the area well. Secondly, due to recent privacy laws protecting the individual, compiling a list of first-time voters (along with the address and phone number of each) proved to be extremely difficult. One viable solution to the problem was to use past high school yearbooks and the town's only newspaper for a list of high school graduates. Using individuals familiar with the population, addresses and phone numbers of the sampling frame were ascertained.

The Sample

The members from the classes of 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1980 were selected for sampling. Those graduates were between the ages of 18 and 21, and, thus, met the criterion for status as a young, first-time, potential voter. Some members of the class of 1980 may not have been 18 years old by November 7, 1980 (election day) and thus not eligible to vote in New York State. A few respondents duly noted this on the item in the questionnaire asking the respondent's

voting intention. These responses were not included in the analysis.

From this sampling frame, a proportionate stratified random sample was drawn. Since there was an unequal number of individuals from each class, and as those who graduated in the class of 1977 were more scarce than any other, it was reasoned that to assure proper representation, a proportionate stratified random sample would yield the best and most equitable results.

TABLE 4-1

PROPORTIONATE STRATIFIED SAMPLE

	<u>1977</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>
Number per strata	125	150	129	150
Weight	.226	.271	.233	.271
Number selected	68	82	70	82

The Instrument

Content. Based on prior research with Uses and Gratifications Theory related to media use for political information, questionnaires were developed to serve as the instruments used to collect the data for this research. Four general variables were relevant to the piece of research. Foremost among the variables to be studied were the dimensions of avoidance and gratification from media use during the presidential campaign. Specifically, the instrument sought to measure gratification in terms of surveillance, campaign excitement, and voter guidance.³ Similarly, the instrument attempted to measure avoidances in terms of political

alienation, political impotence, and partisanship.⁴ An open ended question was provided for the respondent to supply his or her own comments pertaining to his or her gratification and avoidance of political information from the media.⁵ The work of McQuail and Blumler was used as a basis for these questions.⁶

Also based on previous research, the study surveyed the communication pattern which existed in the family setting. Both the concept-orientation (which measured the degree to which ideas were encouraged and expressed) and the socio-orientation (which measured the degree to which harmonious relations were maintained by the individual toward others) were ascertained. These items were used verbatim from the study done by Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin.⁷

Media use was measured in two ways. First, the instrument contained items designed to discover how much time was spent with both the electronic and the print media. Secondly, media content to which the individual attended was analyzed. The idea for these questions was derived from the work of McLeod and Becker, but re-worded for simplicity and clarity.⁸

Finally, a question gauging the voting intention was included in the instrument. All four variables were queried during the first point of data collection. Only the voting intention of the respondent and his or her gratification and avoidance of political information from the media were asked at the second data collection point.⁹

Development. The majority of the items on the instrument used in this study were a replication of questionnaires reported in prior research. Only the avoidance and gratification dimension measures were altered significantly.

A focus group of students at Michigan State University discussed their feelings on uses and gratifications from the media for political information with the author. The author first read items relating to gratification and avoidance used in prior research to the group. Measured by conversation stimulation, several of the items drew either no significant reaction, or a negative reaction from the subjects. Items of this sort were deleted from the questionnaire. In addition, an open ended conversation period was allowed in which members discussed their personal reasons for using the media during a presidential campaign. Many of their comments were incorporated into the design of items for the instrument.

A second focus group of students associated with basic video production classes at Michigan State University discussed possible avoidance factors influencing non-use of the media for political information. Many of their responses were incorporated into the instrument as well.

Cover letters accompanying the questionnaire (one for the first mailing and one for the follow-up mailing for the first data collection point) were drafted by the author and edited by the thesis adviser. The cover letters and questionnaire were pre-tested on selected high school

students on the Michigan State University campus in early July 1980. No problems were discovered with the cover letters, although a few items on the questionnaire were found to be ambiguous. Most of these items were refined for the final questionnaire.

To avoid contaminating the sample, both the focus group, and the pre-test group, consisted of students from the state of Michigan.

Data Collection Procedures

The instruments developed for this study were employed at two different points during the campaign. The first wave was conducted following the nominating conventions of the two major American political parties. Labor Day was considered to be the traditional starting point for the campaign, and for this reason, it was the target date for receipt of the mailed questionnaire. This date was attractive not only because it was the unofficial starting point for the campaign, but also because summer was ending and people were settling into their normal autumn media use habits.

The second data collection point was immediately after the general election in November. It was reasoned that this point in time would best reflect any change in disposition toward political information from the media as compared to the start of the campaign. This study was concerned with who voted and who did not, and how media presentation of political information may have influenced electoral behavior.

It seemed intuitively obvious that post election collection of data would yield the best results. Only those respondents who could be reached within a week after the election were included in the data analysis. In addition, world events at the time (Iranian hostages, etc.) were having an unusual bearing on the campaign, and many were expecting major political developments on election eve. This may have thrown television viewing and reading habits off from the norm. Thus, waiting until after the election seemed the best choice for the timing of the second data collection point.

WAVE I

A pre-campaign questionnaire measuring the individual's family communication pattern, his or her media use habits and his or her use and/or avoidance of political information from the media was mailed to 302 randomly selected individuals. Two weeks later, a second mailing was undertaken to provide a chance for those who had not responded to do so. Accompanying the questionnaire were three enclosures.

First, an introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study outlined the nature of the sampling procedure (random) and the variables being studied (media, politics and family communication patterns). The letter was brief and non-threatening. It stressed the need for a prompt response and enticed the potential respondent to answer all of the questions as quickly as possible. A phone number was provided for any questions regarding the nature of the

questionnaire or the study, and one call was received from a respondent asking how his name had been selected. The thesis adviser responded that his name had been one of many compiled from a high school graduation list.

The second item mailed with the questionnaire was a sharpened pencil with Michigan State University printed on it. Many respondents wrote complimentary notes on the returned questionnaire regarding the pencil: 'nice touch', 'good idea' and 'got me to respond'. Many researchers have written that some sort of 'freebie' will help in increasing the return rate response, and evidently it worked in this study as well.¹⁰

The third item with the questionnaire was a postage paid, return envelope. The researcher opened a business reply permit account with the U.S. Postal Service in East Lansing, Michigan which allowed for postage-free, return envelopes. Despite advice from other scholars, the researcher did not opt to place stamps on envelopes for two reasons. Foremost, the postage free envelopes looked more professional, were easier to code and could be used only for the return of the questionnaire (had a stamp been placed on the envelope, it could be steamed off and used for other purposes. This way, it deprived the respondent one opportunity not to respond). Secondly, the cost differential was not significant between the two. With the business permit, the researcher paid a minimal cost for the permit and a surcharge for each returned questionnaire. Had the option to place stamps on each return

envelope been chosen, the researcher would pay for the stamps whether the questionnaire was returned or not.

Each return envelope was coded so as to identify in which year the respondent graduated. The questionnaire itself had an identifying number. An envelope returned with lines on the right side, for example, identified the respondent as from the class of 1977. The questionnaire itself had a period-point within certain numbered questions for identification (e.g., a period after the number of the question—say number 1—and a period at the end of the sentence—say number 8—would identify the respondent as number 18 from the class of 1977.). It should be emphasized at this point that the confidentiality of all responses was maintained. No name was associated or matched with any questionnaire in WAVE I. When a questionnaire was received and coded, it was checked against the sampling frame code for purposes of response rate and date, and to avoid mailing that respondent a second, follow-up questionnaire. Only for the second Wave was it necessary to identify respondents.

Table two provides a breakdown of responses by date. True to form for mail surveys, the heaviest responses were received shortly after the mailing. By the end, a completion rate of nearly 52 percent was attained, an 'adequate' response rate, according to Earl Babbie.¹¹

WAVE II

To determine if there was a difference in the variables being studied at the close of the campaign, as compared to

TABLE 4-2

RESPONSE RATE TO WAVE I BY DATE AND STRATA

<u>DATE</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>Total</u>
8/26	0	1	0	1	2
8/27	3	2	2	1	8
8/28	16	14	11	9	50
8/29	3	5	6	4	18
9/2	5	2	2	2	11
9/3	2	6	4	0	12
9/4	1	0	0	0	1
9/5	4	1	1	0	6
9/8	3	6	4	0	13
9/9	2	0	2	0	4
9/10	0	1	0	0	1
9/11	2	1	2	0	5
9/12	4	2	0	0	6
9/13	0	0	0	1	1
9/15	1	1	0	1	3
9/16	0	1	0	0	1
9/17	0	0	0	1	1
9/18	2	0	1	0	3
9/19	0	0	1	0	1
9/22	2	1	0	0	3
9/23	1	0	0	0	1
9/25	0	0	1	1	2
9/26	0	0	0	1	1
10/1	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
	51	44	38	24	157

the beginning, a second questionnaire was administered the week immediately following the election. Unlike the first questionnaire, this one was done via the telephone. (It should be remembered that McLeod and Becker validated the method of personal, written response in their work, and that Semlak and Williams validated the method of over-the-phone responses in terms of media use.) One reason for using the telephone was the brevity of the questionnaire. It was much easier to answer than the instrument used in Wave I, and could most efficiently be given personally over-the-phone rather than through the mail. Time was critical at this stage since the researcher did not want the respondents to forget their feelings and attitudes, which could have been a distinct possibility had a mail questionnaire been used.

The researcher and three trained telephone interviewers conducted the second wave of this research between November 8 and November 15, 1980. Ninety-eight (98) respondents completed the second instrument, accounting for over 62 percent of the 157 first wave respondents, and just over 32 percent of the originally sampled individuals.

The cover letters for Wave I, as well as the questionnaires used in both waves are included in the Appendix.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Responses from the questionnaire were professionally keypunched on batch input cards and are available from the author.

Data Reduction. The first step in analyzing the collected data was to develop the family communication pattern typology. First, the five items relating to concept-orientation were summed (see item 9, a, c, e, g, i). The median response for these questions was used to separate the 'high' concept-oriented members from the 'low' concept-oriented members. The same procedure was used for the five questions pertaining to the socio-orientation of the respondents (see Item 9 b, d, f, h and j). Those who scored above the median on both orientations were classified as coming from homes with a consensual communication pattern. Those scoring at or below the median on both orientations were classified as coming from homes with a laissez-faire communication pattern. Those scoring above the median in concept-orientation, but at or below the median in the socio-orientation, were classified as coming from homes with a pluralistic family communication pattern. Finally, those scoring above the median in the socio-orientation, but at or below the median in concept-orientation were classified as coming from homes with a protective communication pattern.

The next step in analyzing the data was to factor analyze the gratification and avoidance dimensions. As each dimension was determined a priori to consist of three factors, the items were analyzed to a terminal solution using the varimax rotation. Items with a loading of at least $\pm .25$ were considered to load on a particular factor (item 7 for gratifications and item 8 for avoidances).

Two measures of media use were ascertained. First, questions dealing with time spent with all of the media were summed (time was given in terms of minutes per day spent with the media). Those scoring above the median were classified as 'heavy' consumers of the media, and those scoring at or below the median were classified as 'light' consumers of the media (items 2 through 5).

Respondents also indicated forms of media content to which they attended. If a respondent attended to a particular form of content s/he was given a point. If not, s/he received a zero. Totals were then added up and summed for a particular content. Again, those who scored above the median were considered 'heavy' users of news or entertainment, and those scoring at or below the median were classified as 'light' users of the content (item 1).

The item concerning voting intention did not require reduction or transformation.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the first hypothesis, a dependent t- test difference of means was utilized. First, the mean for the gratification dimension resulting from Wave I was pitted against the mean obtained for the gratification dimension from Wave II. A dependent t-test was needed since the sample for the second data collection point was the same (i.e., dependent upon) as the first sample. An Alpha level of .05 was used. This same procedure was used to test the second sub-hypothesis.

The second hypothesis was tested by performing a chi-square test of difference between the voter/non-voter and the heavy/light consumer of media. Similarly, a chi-square test was performed to test the significance of differences between the voter/non-voter and the heavy/light user of (1) news and (2) entertainment. Chi-square was the only logical test given the level of data analyzed. Here, too, an Alpha level of .05 was used.

The third hypothesis encompassed different tests. To examine the relationship between an individual's voting intention and his or her family communication pattern, a chi-square test of difference was employed. Similarly, the relationship between content use of the media and the family communication pattern was scrutinized by a chi-square test of difference. Given the level of the data, this was the most appropriate, and the strongest, statistical tool available. Finally, the relationship between the family communication pattern and the avoidance and gratification dimensions was tested for meaningful differences by a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), contrasting the laissez-faire and protective type family members against the pluralistic and consensual type family members. In all three cases, an Alpha level of .05 was used.

Summary

Graduates from a small upstate New York high school served as the sampling frame for this study. A proportionate stratified sample was selected from this population of young, first-time, potential voters.

Respondents were asked at the beginning of the presidential campaign for their voting intention, media use habits, family communication pattern, and reasons for both seeking gratification or avoiding political information from the media. Except for family communication patterns and media use habits, respondents were asked for this information at both data collection points. The first point of data collection was done by mail and a phone interview was used for the second. The instrument used for this research borrowed heavily from previous research in the field, although, through focus group interviews and pre-testing, some modifications were made.

The data underwent two stages of analysis. First, much of the data was reduced to meaningful variables. Many of the raw item data were brought together to form variables such as the family communication pattern typology. Media use items were summed to provide an overall composite of time spent with the media, as well as use of specific content. Factor analysis reduced the numerous items dealing with avoidances and gratifications into meaningful variables.

The second step in data analysis was to test the hypotheses for significant results. For the first set of hypotheses, a t-test difference of means was employed to monitor any change between the two data collection points in terms of avoidances or gratifications received by young, first-time, potential voters from the media. The second set of hypotheses used a chi-square to test for an association between media use (both time and content) and voting

intention. Finally, the third hypothesis used two statistical tests. First, a chi-square test of difference was used to check for the relationship between family communication pattern, voting intention, and use of the media. Secondly, an ANOVA was used to test differences between family communication pattern and the gratification and avoidance dimensions.

CHAPTER IV

NOTES

¹Taken from the 1970 Census Tract for the Syracuse Metropolitan Area. Preliminary data from the 1980 census tract indicate only a decline in the population, but no shift in demographics.

²Interview with Kay Benedict, Board of Elections, Onondaga County, State of New York, 12 March 1981.

³See Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures through Political Effects Analysis," The Uses of Mass Communication. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publication, 1974) for a lucid discussion on each of these items.

⁴Ibid.

⁵While such an opportunity was provided to the respondents, very few chose to comment. Of those that did (five), the comments were merely elaborations upon one of the already provided items.

⁶Dennis McQuail and Jay G. Blumler, Television in Politics. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

⁷Steven H. Chaffee, Jack M. McLeod and Charles K. Atkin, "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 14, 1971, pp. 332-333.

⁸McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 143.

⁹The results were identical at the second data collection point as compared to the first. An abnormally high (88%) amount of respondents indicated an intent to vote. The possible issuance of a 'socially responsible' answer to the first instrument may have led to actual behavior for the second.

CHAPTER IV

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¹⁰Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1979). See pages 331-337 for an easy introduction to mail survey questionnaires. In addition to a profound discussion on the pros and cons of the method, Babbie points out many, often times over-looked, details such as the ones applicable here.

¹¹Ibid., p. 335.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Despite confirmation from previous research, relationships among the variables studied were generally not supported by the data. These findings may have been due to the relatively small sample size, the nature of the universe studied, or the nature of the 1980 presidential campaign. In any event, the evidence did not lend support to the predicted relationships.

The relationships among the variables studied were tested by the most powerful statistical tests that could appropriately be applied. In all cases, an Alpha level of .05 was used to test for significance. Responses of "Don't Know" or "Not Sure" were excluded from the analysis, as were any non-responses. The number of such responses was small, and is reported in each specific case.

The first hypothesis tested the assumption that there were strong feelings toward the political campaign. These feelings could best be seen through manifestations in attention paid to the political information presented by the media.

H 1.0 Mass Media use in the 1980 Presidential

Campaign by young, first-time, potential voters will be characterized by gratifications and avoidances.

Specifically, the assumption gleaned from previous research on the general electorate indicated that the level of gratification obtained from political information in the media would increase from the start of the campaign to the campaign's conclusion.¹

H 1.1 The level of gratification experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential voters will be higher at the second data collection point than at the first.

The data did not support the hypothesis generated from these assumptions. A dependent t-test of means was used to measure this difference between data collection points among the respondents. As the respondents from Wave II were dependent upon the respondents of Wave I (i.e., one had to participate in Wave I to be included in Wave II), the dependent t-test of means was the only logical, and powerful, test appropriate.

Table 5-1

DEPENDENT t-TEST FOR HYPOTHESIS 1.1

$$\text{formula} \quad t = \frac{\text{Gratification mean of Wave I minus the Gratification mean of Wave II}}{s_1^2 \text{ plus } s_2^2 / N \text{ minus one}^*}$$

$$t = \frac{8.204 - 8.673}{(2.738)^2 \text{ plus } (2.515)^2 / 97}$$

$$t = 1.2424704$$

*N, here, equals the number of pairs

At the .05 level of significance, there was no appreciable difference between the level of gratification at the beginning of the campaign than at the end of the campaign.

The second sub-hypothesis was generated from research suggesting that those alienated at the beginning of the campaign would be similarly so minded at the end of the campaign, with no significant difference in the level of this alienation over the campaign's duration.² While based on positive findings in the general electorate in past elections, the data here do not confirm this reasoning among the young, first-time, potential voter. Conversely, it was found that by the campaign's conclusion, more of these young, first-time, potential voters were avoiding political information from the media than were at the campaign's commencement.

H 1.2 The level of avoidance experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential voters will remain constant, both at the first data collection point, and at the second.

A dependent t-test of means was employed to test for a difference with a .05 Alpha level. It can be seen that the difference was significant (Table 5-2).

Table 5-2

DEPENDENT t-TEST FOR HYPOTHESIS 1.2

$$t = \frac{5.14286 - 6.77551}{(2.606)^2 \text{ plus } (2.603)^2 / 97}$$

$$t = 4.365555$$

It should be noted that the items used to ascertain the gratifications and avoidances received from the media for political information underwent two separate statistical analyses. The first was to validate that there were two distinct factors among the items given the respondents. While the results of this factor analysis (with a varimax rotation) did identify two separate factors, the loadings were often weak.

Table 5-3

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF MEDIA USES BY RESPONDENTS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>FACTOR I</u>	<u>FACTOR II</u>
1	-.08	.51
2	.03	.50
3	-.10	.25
4	-.07	.44
5	-.18	.47
6	.05	.31
7	.03	.56
8	.60	.07
9	.59	.20
10	.64	-.19
11	.42	.01
12	.66	-.08
13	.25	-.11

This weak loading condition found through the factor

analysis could be due, in part, to the relatively large number of items for so small an N (N=157). From this perspective, a reliability scale check was performed on each of the variables derived from the factor analysis. The results did indicate that the items did measure what each was intended to measure.

Table 5-4

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS (ALPHA) OF GRATIFICATION
AND AVOIDANCE DIMENSION SCALES

<u>SCALE</u>	<u>WAVE I</u>	<u>WAVE II</u>
Gratification	.80342	.66
Avoidance	.82656	.77086

In addition, the items loading on each particular factor were factor analyzed themselves to discern particular gratifications or avoidances (Table 5-5).

Table 5-5

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF AVOIDANCE DIMENSION

<u>Avoidance Items</u>	<u>Factor I</u>	<u>Factor II</u>	<u>Factor III</u>
1	<u>.86699</u>	.10880	-.05513
2	.20730	<u>.79693</u>	-.07707
3	<u>.54945</u>	.22944	.20267
4	.14421	<u>.41519</u>	.20044
5	<u>.52107</u>	.31230	.18861
6	.10068	.06446	<u>.82409</u>

Similarly, the gratification items were subjected to factor analysis to discern particular attitudes among the responses (Table 5-6).

Table 5-6

FACTOR ANALYSIS OF GRATIFICATION DIMENSION

<u>Gratification Items</u>	<u>Factor I</u>	<u>Factor II</u>	<u>Factor III</u>
1	.15716	<u>.42739</u>	.29340
2	.04083	.26885	<u>.73555</u>
3	.20789	.06478	.05336
4	.32282	<u>.57025</u>	.03379
5	.08394	<u>.61389</u>	.20047
6	<u>.69555</u>	.08892	-.08990
7	<u>.46469</u>	.12751	.30421

In factor analyzing both the avoidance and the gratification dimensions of media use, a varimax rotation to a terminal solution identified three distinct factors. The loadings on each were relatively strong, with only item three of the gratification dimension failing to load significantly onto any factor. As with McQuail and Blumler; McLeod and Becker; and Semlak and Williams, both an avoidance and a gratification dimension were found to exist.³ Further, each of these dimensions was found to contain three distinct factors in itself.

Previous research has consistently found media use to be a powerful predictor of voting patterns. The second hypothesis assumed that this pattern would hold even for a specific sub-group of the general electorate, meaning the young, first-time, potential voter.

H.2.0 Media use will serve as a predictor of
the voting behavior of young, first-time
potential voters.

Based on prior research relating media use to voting behavior among the general electorate, three sub-hypotheses were offered for consideration.⁴ While all three have uniformly been found to net significant results, each was rejected in this study by the data (Tables 5-7, 5-8, 5-9).

The first sub-hypothesis predicted a relationship between media use and voting behavior:

H 2.1 Heavy consumers of the media are more likely to vote than are light consumers of the media.

A chi-square test for difference did not indicate a significant difference (Table 5-7).

Table 5-7

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 2.1

<u>CONSUMPTION OF MEDIA</u>		<u>VOTING INTENTION</u>		
		Vote	Don't Vote	
	Heavy	67	9	
	Light	62	9	

N = 147

Frequency Observed	Frequency Expected	FO-FE	(FO-FE) ²	(FO-FE) ² /FE
67	66.693878	.306122	.09371068	.00140509
9	9.306122	-.306122	.09371068	.01006979
62	62.306122	-.306122	.09371068	.00150404
9	8.693878	.306122	.09371068	<u>.01077893</u>

X = .02375785

The second sub-hypothesis stated that:⁵

H. 2.2. Heavy consumers of news and public

affairs content are more likely to vote than light consumers of news and public affairs content.

While similar results were anticipated for the specific age group being studied, the data failed to confirm such logic (Table 5-8).

Table 5-8

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 2.2

NEWS CONSUMPTION

VOTING INTENTION

	Vote	Don't Vote
Heavy	67	6
Light	62	12

N = 147

Frequency Observed	Frequency Expected	FO-FE	(FO-FE) ²	(FO-FE) ² /FE
67	64.061224	2.938776	8.6364044	.13481485
6	8.9387755	-2.938776	8.6364044	.9661731
62	64.938776	-2.938776	8.6364044	.13299303
12	9.061224	2.938776	8.6364044	<u>.9531167</u>
				X = 2.1870977

The third sub-hypothesis predicted a relationship between level of use of specific media content and voting behavior:

H 2.3 Heavy consumers of entertainment content are more likely to vote than are light consumers of entertainment content.

A chi-square test for difference found no significant relationship among the variables (Table 5-9).

Table 5-9

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 2.3

ENTERTAINMENT CONSUMPTIONVOTING INTENTION

	Vote	Don't Vote
Heavy	64	7
Light	65	11

N = 147

Frequency Observed	Frequency Expected	FO-FE	(FO-FE) ²	(FO-FE) ² /FE
64	62.3061224	1.6938776	2.8692212	.04605039
7	8.6938776	-1.6938776	2.8692212	.33002778
65	66.6938776	-1.6938776	2.8692212	.30831543
11	9.3061224	1.6938776	2.8692212	<u>.43032076</u>
X = .72741436				

The third general hypothesis reflected the major thrust of this research. Trying to explain the socio-psychological reasons behind the motivation for gratification from the media has been a major "Achilles Heel" in the practice of prior research with Uses and Gratifications Theory. While addressing this flaw was no easy task, prior research suggested that linking the family communication pattern with Uses and Gratifications Theory might account for such motivations. Based on this suggestion, the third general hypothesis was generated:

H 3.0 Family communication patterns, along the concept-orientation, will predict the voting behavior, the media use habits, and the degree of gratification and avoidance received from the media by the young, first-time, potential voter.

It appeared logical both from an intuitive standpoint, and from the research by Chaffee, et al., that subjects from pluralistic and consensual communication pattern families would be more associated with concepts and, therefore, more associated with politics than their laissez-faire and protective family communication pattern counterparts.⁶ As such, they would be more prone to expose themselves to news content in the media. Thus, sub-hypothesis H 3.1 (a) was generated.

H 3.1 (a) Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will use the media for news and public affairs more than individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.

A chi-square test showed no significant difference (Table 5-10).

Table 5-10

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 3.1 (a)

<u>NEWS CONSUMPTION</u>		<u>FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERN</u>	
		<u>L-F/Prot.</u>	<u>Pl./Cons.</u>
Heavy	40		36
Light	43		38

N = 157

Table 5-10 (Continued)

Frequency Observed	Frequency Expected	FO-FE	(FO-FE) ²	(FO-FE) ² /FE
40	40.178344	-.178344	.0318658	.00079163
36	35.821656	.178344	.0318658	.00088791
43	42.821656	.178344	.0318658	.00074277
38	38.178344	-.178344	.0318658	<u>.00083311</u>
				X = .00325541

The second sub-hypothesis suggested that those from families stressing the concept-orientation in family communication patterns would receive more gratification from political information in the media than their counterparts.

H 3.1 (b) Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will score higher on the level of gratification received from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.

The results, however, failed to confirm the expected relationships. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to measure the difference of raw scores on the gratification measure. As presented in Table 5-11, herein, there was no significant difference between any of the groups, nor was there a significant difference in contrasting the concept-oriented family members with the socio-oriented family members (Contrast 1).

Table 5-11

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TEST FOR THE DATA OF HYPOTHESIS 3.1 (b)

Source	D.F.	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.	F-ratio	Prob.
Between group	3	20.9366	6.9789	.930	.4280
Within group	153	1148.5411	7.5068		
TOTAL	156	1169.4777			

Contrast 1: probability = .10

Whether alienated or gratified by political information in the media, the practical question remained: will the individual translate such feelings and attitudes into action? Chaffee et al., indicated that members from a pluralistic and consensual family communication pattern were more likely to be exposed to the marketplace of ideas and concepts.⁷ Given this characteristic, it was reasoned that these individuals would be more likely to vote than would their counterparts who avoided controversy, ideas and concepts. Thus sub-hypothesis H 3.1 (c) was generated.

H 3.1 (c) Young, first-time, potential, voters from families characterized by stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will be more likely to vote than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.

Using a Chi-square test for significance of differences, this predicted relationship was not supported (Table 5-12).

Table 5-12

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 3.1 (c)

<u>VOTING INTENTION</u>		<u>FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERN</u>		
		Pl./Cons.	L-F/Prot.	
	Vote	67	62	
	Don't Vote	5	13	
N = 147				
Frequency Observed	Frequency Expected	FO-FE	(FO-FE) ²	(FO-FE) ² /FE
67	63.183673	3.8163265	14.564348	.2305081
62	65.816327	-3.8163265	14.564348	.22128777
5	8.816327	-3.8163265	14.564348	1.6519747
13	9.183673	3.8163265	14.564348	<u>1.5858957</u>
X = 3.6896663				

For members from families which did not stress the concept dimension and behaviors, the following sub-hypotheses were proposed:

H 3.2 Young, first-time, potential, voters from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation will:

- (a) Use the media less than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation.
- (b) Score higher on the level of avoidance from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation.

In the case of H 3.2 (a), the data failed to support the expected relationship (Table 5-13).

Table 5-13

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS OF DATA FOR HYPOTHESIS 3.2 (a)

MEDIA CONSUMPTION

FAMILY COMMUNICATION PATTERN

	<u>Pl./Cons.</u>	<u>L-F/Prot.</u>
Heavy	41	43
Light	33	40

N = 157

<u>Frequency Observed</u>	<u>Frequency Expected</u>	<u>FO-FE</u>	<u>(FO-FE)²</u>	<u>(FO-FE)²/FE</u>
41	39.592357	1.4076433	1.9814597	.05004652
43	44.407643	-1.4076433	1.9814597	.04461979
33	34.407643	-1.4076433	1.9814597	.05758778
40	38.592357	1.4076433	1.9814597	<u>.05134332</u>
				.20359741

The predicted relationship proposed in H 3.2 (b) was supported by the data. Those from families which do not stress the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern scored higher on the avoidance dimension than their counterparts. A One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed a significant difference between concept-oriented and non concept-oriented. (Contrast 1) family communication patterns (Table 5-14).

Table 5-14

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE TEST FOR THE DATA OF HYPOTHESIS 3.2 (b)

Source	D.F.	Sum of Sq.	Mean Sq.	F-ratio	Prob.
Between groups	3	36.3638	12.1213	1.813	.1471
Within groups	153	1022.7572	6.6847		
TOTAL	156	1059.1210			

Contrast 1, t-probability = .023

Summary

The majority of hypotheses presented for study were not confirmed by the data. While the predicted patterns have been found to exist in the general electorate, they did not apply to a specific sub-group: the young, first-time, potential voter.

It was found that the level of gratification received from the media for political information did not differ greatly between the first data collection point and the second. However, the level of avoidance among all the respondents did differ significantly between the two points. The respondents were avoiding political information in the media more at the campaign's conclusion than they were at the beginning. Both the gratification and the avoidance dimension were found to contain three distinct factors.

Although media use habits have been quite powerful in predicting voting behavior in previous research, the young, first-time, potential voter in this study did not fall in line with that pattern. The amount of time spent with the media failed to give any clue to voting intention, as did the amount of time spent with news and public affairs

content in the media. Finally, the amount of time spent with entertainment in the media failed to be of any predictive value toward voting behavior.

In an attempt to shed light on the motivation for seeking gratification from the media, this study tried to link family communication pattern to Uses and Gratifications Theory. It was found that the concept-orientation of family communication pattern did not predict either the voting intentions or the media use habits of an individual. Interestingly enough, however, it did predict the level of avoidance from political information in the media. It did not predict the level of gratification from such information.

In all cases, the most powerful statistical tools available were employed to test the data.

CHAPTER V

NOTES

¹William Semlak and Wenmouth Williams, Jr., "The Uses, Gratifications and Avoidances and Voting Decisions in the 1976 Presidential Campaign," Paper presented to the I.C.A., April 1978, p. 17.

²Ibid.

³The reader is encouraged to read, Semlak and Williams, op. cit., Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures through Political Effects Analysis," The Uses of Mass Communication. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974) and Dennis McQuail and Jay G. Blumler, Television in Politics. (London: Random House, 1959).

⁴See McLeod and Becker, op. cit., p. 143., for a discussion of media use variables and their possible uses in determining relationships to various political effects.

⁵Ibid., p. 149. It was reasoned that news viewing—co-related to gratification—would similarly predict political effects.

⁶Steven H. Chaffee, Jack M. McLeod and Charles K. Atkin, "Parental Influences on Adolescent Media Use," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 14, 1971, p. 332.

⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study incorporated family communication pattern with Uses and Gratifications Theory of Communication to explain the voting behavior and media use habits of young, first-time, potential voters in a general election. The study postulated family communication pattern as a variable related to the socio-psychological origin of the motivation (gratification and avoidance dimension) for receiving political information from the media.

While this study failed in its attempt to identify family communication pattern as a variable related to motivation, it can not be dismissed entirely. In fact, it did prove to be of utility in discerning levels of alienation from political information in the media. A number of factors may have caused this pattern, including the limitations of the sample universe, the sample size and statistical imprecision. Each hypothesis will be examined in the context of these limitations. In addition, implications of the results for politicians, journalists and social scientists will be discussed.

Design Limitations

From a technical standpoint, there were many shortcomings to the study. Prime among the flaws was the relatively small sample size. Statistically, the sample size (N = 157) may have caused a lack of precision in that the results obtained in analysis leave too much room for error. This imprecision can best be detailed with the following example. If the respondents had given an average answer to a hypothetical question of, say, '50' along a 0 to 100 point parameter, it would only be safe to say that, with 95 percent certainty, the true response of the universe could actually range between '38' and '62'. Viewed in this light, the results must be used cautiously.¹

A second point for consideration involves the sampling frame. The results would have been more generalizable had a broader sampling universe been employed. As it stood, the frame represented a white, middle class, suburban, young, first-time, potential voter. This demographic represents the majority of young, first-time, potential voters who do vote. Ironically, however, more knowledge would have been generated from a group at the other end of the spectrum: those who do not vote. It is this population whose behavior may be viewed as deviant.

The most positive result of the method used was its success in finding respondents, obtaining results and obtaining validity. First, while prior research has used the in-depth, personal interview to gain responses, this

study combined the self-report (through the mail) and the telephone solicitation mode of response to gain data. Nonetheless, there was an excellent response rate in both Wave I and Wave II. Secondly, the response mechanism was validated in terms of its ability to discern variables which, until now, were discovered only through other methods. As an example, the dimensions of avoidance and gratification were found to exist after statistical analysis. Although using a different method, this confirmed the findings of prior research.

Hypothesis Examination

Hypothesis 1.1 suggested that:

The level of gratification experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential voters will be higher at the second data collection point than at the first.

How can the rejection of this hypothesis by the data be explained? Of course, the design limitations discussed above may pertain here. Subjectively, however, it is plausible to assume that, given the high level of voting participation experienced in this sample group (an abnormally high 88%), along with the high mean on the degree of gratification, there was a reciprocal high level of interest throughout the campaign. In other words, with so much at stake in the election for this demographic group (e.g., the military draft reintroduction, a potential decrease in college aid to students, and a possible cut in job training programs),

interest ran high. Perhaps this level of interest did not subside over the course of the campaign because of the day-to-day intensity of the campaign. While the final voting tally indicated otherwise, the election was promoted as a horse race. The young, first-time, potential voter, with so much at stake, refused to miss out on the chance to be gratified from the media from day one of the campaign to the end. That is, there was a strong impetus to bring the young, first-time, potential voter to the media and to keep him or her there. It is important to remember that these results do not mean the individual was gratified—only that s/he sought gratification from the media. The answer to that paradox may, in part, be explained, below.

Hypothesis 1.2 suggested that:

The level of avoidance experienced from the media by young, first-time, potential, voters will remain constant, both at the first data collection point, and at the second.

This hypothesis was supported by the data. How can this result be explained in light of the finding in H 1.1? That is, given the constant, and high, level of gratification reported by the respondents, what explains the increased level of avoidance? One must always be careful in research to realize the limitations of any variable. Here, avoidance is a variable measuring the reasons for feeling alienated—or turned-off—by political information in the

media. It is not an either/or proposition between gratification and avoidances. In other words, due to the saliency of the issues for the young, first-time, potential voter in the campaign, the respondents went to the media to be gratified, as is confirmed by the results in H 1.1. However, some variable caused the individuals concerned to become alienated by that information, as is witnessed by the results here. Although the data convincingly indicate widespread dissatisfaction, the reason for this dissatisfaction remains unclear: Is it the manner in which the political information is presented by the media? Is it the politicians and what each has to say and offer? Is it a combination of the two? Further research in this area clearly is warranted.

The data likewise rejected the supposition that heavy consumers of the media are more likely to vote than are light consumers of the media (H 2.1). Certainly, because the chi-square performed on the sample size ($N = 157$) was powerful enough to detect significance, the interpretation must be obtained by observing the sample group itself. While less than fifty per cent of the young, first-time, potential voters cast ballots nationwide, more than eighty per cent did so in this sample. This difference is, in itself, significant. In spite of anonymous questionnaires, the possibility of "socially responsible" answers given by the sample may have skewed the results higher than was actually the case.

Another possible explanation is the intensity of the

1980 campaign among these particular respondents. While significantly fewer young, first-time, potential voters actually turned out at the polls than in this sample, these respondents, by the mere fact of being exposed to a questionnaire ascertaining their feelings, may have felt some 'stake' in the election. Similar findings in different research are instructive. Festinger and Carlsmith found that, when paid one dollar to espouse a particular opinion, the experimental group actually adopted the view so as to rationalize their enumeration.² Still, public opinion polls have consistently proven to be remarkably accurate, and these results must be viewed cautiously.

No result further perplexed the researcher than the failure of the data to confirm the relationship between heavy users of news and public affairs and voting behavior (H 2.2). Prior research has again and again supported this supposition. Trying to explain this deviation among a subgroup of the general electorate is particularly hard here when it defies both common sense (i.e., it stands to reason that those more informed are more likely to vote than those who are not) and statistical precision (i.e., the test performed—a chi-square—was powerful enough for the data provided). Again, as in H 2.1, only (1) the attempt by the respondents to give 'socially responsible' feedback and/or (2) the conditioning by the instrument itself to create an interest in the campaign and voting where none had existed before can be given as possible explanations for the skewed

responses obtained here.

The only positive light that can be shed on the rejection of the hypothesis predicting a relationship between use of entertainment content and voting behavior (H 2.3) is that it is consistent with the findings of the other two hypotheses dealing with media use habits and voting behavior. Unfortunately, however, it does not conform to prior research in the field with the general electorate.³ Again, socially responsible answers by the respondents (truthful or not), conditioning by the instrument, and/or the nature of this particular campaign may explain the results obtained here. Further research should explore whether the findings reported here relating media use habits to the voting behavior of the young, first-time, potential voter are duplicated or prove this research to be deviant. While it is true that this particular age group has traditionally had less time to attend to the media (due to jobs, college or a more active social life), the degree of deviancy from prior research reported here should not be excused lightly.⁴

Hypothesis 3.1 (a) suggested that:

Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will use the media for news and public affairs more than individuals from families which do not

stress the concept-orientation.

The results fail to verify the hypothesis. To explain this outcome is, indeed, difficult given the nature of the family communication pattern split (i.e., the concept-orientation). Research findings by Chaffee, et al., that those members from families which stress the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern were more likely to be exposed to the world of competing ideas and concepts gave rise to this hypothesis. It seemed intuitively obvious that subjects of this type would naturally seek ideas from the news and public affairs content within the media. Results of this study, however, reject this notion. Given the high level of alienation which was found to exist among the respondents, it is, perhaps in retrospect, logical to expect this result. After all, to score high on the level of alienation, the individual needed a source: and this demonstrates one such source. That is, even those respondents from families which did not stress the concept-orientation went to the news and public affairs content within the media. Whether or not they felt comfortable with the different ideas presented, or even noticed them, is an entirely different question.

Hypothesis 3.1 (b) suggested that:

Young, first-time, potential voters
from families characterized by stressing
the concept-orientation in their family
communication pattern will score higher

on the level of gratification received from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation.

The data fails to confirm the reasoning in this hypothesis. To reiterate a point made earlier, the small sample size may have hindered the statistical precision of the results. However, the one way Analysis of Variance test (ANOVA) used was particularly powerful. Even with a small sample size, it should have indicated a direction toward the logic of the hypothesis. That is, the results are not off slightly from what might have been expected, but rather the results are largely off from what might have been expected. In statistical analysis, the former case can often be of use in that when the data fails to be proven significant by a slight margin, slight manipulations in the statistic can shed light on a particular variable (e.g., extreme cases can be made to prove the point). Here, however, the data fails to give any reason for manipulations—the data convincingly show no significance. In any event, the findings point out that the level of gratification—that is, reasons for seeking political information in the media—was not dependent upon family communication patterns. This is in line with the findings of H 1.1, which demonstrated an unusually high level of gratification among all respondents. The explanation for this can possibly be that, with all the issues salient to this particular demographic discussed in the campaign,

gratification seeking was the natural outcome.

Whether alienated or gratified by political information in the media, the practical question remains: did the individual translate such feelings and attitudes into overt behavioral acts?

The results, once more, failed to support the prediction that young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by stressing the concept-orientation in their family communication pattern will be more likely to vote than those individuals from families which do not stress the concept-orientation (H 3.1 (c)). Again, there is always the chance that the individual responded in a manner to appear 'socially responsible'. More likely, however, is the chance that the individual did, indeed, cast his or her ballot. Perhaps that would be a result of exposure to the instrument. The respondents were made aware that they were being questioned because they were 'first-time' voters, and may have been more sensitive and aware than usual of their civic opportunity.

Another possible explanation is the nature of the campaign itself. By most accounts, the presidential campaign of 1980 was indeed salient to the young. Unlike many elections of the past, the choices were not 'twiddle-dum' against 'twiddle-dee', but solid choices between issues salient to this demographic group.

It was found, however, that there was an alienated group in those members from families which did not stress

the concept-orientation. One might expect this alienation to manifest itself in voting behavior, through non-voting. This, unexpectedly, was not the case. This mixed result points to a potential problem which calls for further investigation. In this sample, the degree of alienation was not high enough to predict behavior; however, alienated those from families not stressing the concept-orientation were, it was not strong enough to keep them from voting.

There is no immediate explanation for the finding that young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation used the media more than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation based on prior research (H 3.2 (a)). By conjecture, however, it can be seen as the effects of the first generation to be brought up in the unparalleled ubiquity of the electronic media. Unlike those older than themselves, this age group has grown up with, and has accepted as ordinary, the explosion of specialized magazines as well as superfluous amounts of television and radio. Still, even accepting this possible explanation, one would expect the more concept-oriented individuals to fall in line with the pattern established by their older peers, namely, to be heavier users of the media.

Hypothesis 3.2 (b) suggested that:

Young, first-time, potential voters from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation will score higher

on the level of avoidance from the media for political information than those individuals from families which do stress the concept-orientation.

Unlike the previous hypothesis, the results did support the predicted relationships between family communication pattern and levels of avoidance from political information in the media. It was shown earlier that the level of avoidance among all the respondents was higher at the second data collection point than at the first. Here, the family communication pattern aides in predicting the level of avoidance with political information in the media.

The primary fault with Uses and Gratifications Theory of Communication application in the past has been the 'missing link' between any socio-psychological orgin of a need variable and media use. In this one instance, the communication pattern (representative of family socialization) as one possible socio-psychological variable predicted media use—or at least one aspect of it. As was shown above, however, it did not predict the level of gratification or voting behavior.

Increasing the turn-out at the polls of the young, first-time, potential voter depends, in part, on reducing the alienation received from political information in the media. These results can be enlightening in that regard. However, while it has been shown that the roots of alienation

run deeper among those from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation, it has not been shown that there is any behavioral difference between the two.

Ramifications for Politicians, Journalists and Social Scientists

In any piece of research, the author tries to find a relationship with some relevance and meaning. Underlying the research reported here is a conviction that voting in an election is an important civic responsibility. To fail to vote—as most young, first-time, potential voters do—should be a cause for concern. The motivation for the research, then, was an attempt to explain the lack of enthusiasm and the low incidence of franchise among the young, first-time, potential voter. It was hoped that media professionals and politicians running for office could benefit from these results. Increasing the voter turn-out ought to be a priority based on the very concept of democracy. Certainly it is to the benefit of politicians to increase the pool of voters, and thus the chance for victory; as well, the media can by attracting a larger audience, and thus more revenue. This issue seems especially salient in light of the fact that the United States has the worst voting turnout of any democracy in the world.⁵ A number of patterns revealed by the data suggest insights that might be useful to politicians, media professionals charged with carrying out information dissemination, and social scientists concerned with the problem.

If one were a politician going after the young, first-time, potential voter, several results are of interest. First, it is to be noted that there is a great interest among this demographic group in the campaign and its outcome. The results point positively and unquestionably in this direction. For instance, it was shown that the young, first-time, potential voter came to the media seeking gratification from the political information presented. The degree of this seeking was high—both at the start of the campaign and at the conclusion. Unfortunately, however, it was also shown that the young, first-time, potential voter was increasingly alienated by what s/he saw and heard. This was evidenced by the data as reported in H 1.2. Clearly, the new voters in our country, while seeking gratification, were disappointed and frustrated with their search.

The manifestation of this alienation was found to consist of three factors. Factor analysis of the alienation scale shows one of the three factors to be particularly relevant. Identified was a feeling by the young, first-time, potential voter that candidates were less concerned with addressing issues salient to them than with achieving their own personal success (i.e., election). Ironically, if this was the case, one would anticipate a candidate striving to obtain office to court the young, first-time, potential voter to increase his or her chance of election. Realistically, however, the candidate may write off this voting block after discovering the traditionally low voting turn-out which characterizes the block. In turn, he or she will focus his

or her limited resources to garnering the more numerically rich, middle class, middle age voting block. It certainly presents a 'catch-22', in that, to get the attention they want, the young, first-time, potential voter must exercise the franchise to be deemed worthy of attention. Before doing so, however, this population appears to want to be addressed directly by the candidate. It appears incumbent on the person running for office to attempt to rectify this situation. Given the problems of limited time and resources in a campaign, one must concede that this is not to be realized soon. Nonetheless, it is disadvantageous for two reasons: (1) it flies in the face of the democratic process by alienating electoral blocks such as the young, first-time, potential voter, and (2) in an age of close elections, every vote counts; even the vote of the young, first-time, potential voter.

This first factor, a feeling by the young, first-time, potential voter that candidates are striving for personal success over the discussion of issues, may have given rise to the second factor—the feeling of 'impotence' in an election. The items which formed this factor indicate that the young, first-time, potential voter felt no control over the outcome of the election. That is, without being addressed by the candidate, the individual felt meaningless in the system. This factor is of note to media people as well, for it goes beyond pointing the finger at the politicians—the media have an obligation to make the new

voter aware. The third factor indicated a pre-campaign decision. The direction of this decision, however, was not identified. That is, the individual may have either decided not to vote, or already have made up his or her mind for whom to vote.

Factor analysis of the gratification scale identified three factors. The first of these factors indicated that the young, first-time voter came to the media seeking gratification in the form of experiencing the 'excitement' of the campaign. Being new to the electoral family, the individual wanted to be wrapped up in all the 'hoopla' surrounding the campaign. The second factor was less theatrical and more practical. The individual, here, came to the media seeking information on the issues involved in the campaign: "who stands where, on what, and why?" The third factor, weak as it was, indicates that the individual wanted to inspect the candidate, according to personal traits and characteristics.

While the data does indicate that the young, first-time, potential voter is alienated with the way in which the campaign and the candidates conduct the process, the presence and power of the media in modern life must assume some responsibility. That is, given the brief amount of time candidates usually get (less than five minutes on the nightly news per night), the candidate may, indeed, overlook the needs and issues of those on the fringe while concentrating on the largest single block attending to the media—the middle age, middle class. In discussing the issues, the

media naturally must edit out some material. Could it be they fail to present the issues salient to the young? After all, from a business stand point, media professionals know that the young consume less of the media—and spend less money—than their middle age counterparts.

In any event, both politicians and media professionals should be concerned over the results reported herein. The young, first-time, potential voter sought gratification, but was "turned-off" by what s/he saw and heard to the point of becoming alienated. While this alienation was widespread, however, it was not strong enough along family communication patterns to predict voting behavior. Further research is definitely merited into exploring the alienation levels among the young, first-time, potential voters.

Suggestions

It would be irresponsible not to suggest how to improve upon one's own work. It would be irresistible not to redesign the original research in an effort to do so.

Foremost among the considerations is design limitations. A broader sampling frame and a larger sampling size were needed. To generalize to all young, first-time, potential voters requires the former; the ability to generalize with some degree of accuracy requires the latter.

Finding an explanation for the socio-psychological origin for the motivation behind seeking gratification from the media has haunted prior research using Uses and Gratifications Theory of Communication. Despite the failure

to help explain that oversight with the family communication pattern variable, it remains the opinion of the researcher that the theory is sound; after all, it did predict levels of alienation among young, first-time, potential voters. More attention needs to be paid to possible origins of the need for gratification. It was disheartening in reviewing the literature to see a lack of communication research linked with psychological and social research in this area. It is certainly an area deserving attention by researchers in the future.

Pinner has shown how feelings of power and influence can effect behavior in the political realm.⁶ Linked with levels of education and family communication pattern, this may help explain origins of motivation for seeking gratification. Certainly it makes intuitive sense.

While this study revealed general areas of gratification and avoidances, more attention needs to be focused on these dimensions. In particular, why did avoidance increase over the campaign's duration? Is the 'blame' for this to rest on the media professionals, or the politicians, or on both? Or, is it a function of the 'newness' of the campaign wearing off? A cross analysis with another fringe electoral block with a low voter turn-out rate (senior citizens come immediately to mind) might prove enlightening. Also, as those from families characterized by not stressing the concept-orientation in communication patterns were more alienated, does the newness of the first election wear off

leaving these individuals forever disgruntled with the electoral process? How much alienation requires electoral behavior to differ from their counterparts?

Media use habits exhibited by the young, first-time, potential voter differed radically from that found in previous research of the general electorate. Is this a fluke due to the design limitations discussed earlier, or is it indicative of the fact that this age group spends less time with the media, and spends what time it does on the new technologies present in society?

If voting is the ultimate behavioral act in a democracy, it seems imperative that the role of the media in affecting such behavior be studied. In light of the fact that the United States of America has the worst turn-out at the polls of any democracy today, this type of study seems especially crucial. This study found deep rooted alienation in one segment of the electorate. What remains for future research is to discover what socio-psychological origins of need prompt this behavior, and then, how to rectify it.

Summary

Several design limitations may have hampered this study. The sampling frame was found to be too narrow and the sampling size too small. In turn, this may have caused imprecision in the statistics used. However, the method used to obtain the data was found to be successful in its mission and valid in terms of its conformity with prior research results.

The majority of the hypotheses were rejected by the data. Several patterns were detected which may have influenced many—if not all—of the results. First, the sampling problems and the associated statistical problems may have led to weak results. Secondly, the nature of the campaign of 1980 may have caused abnormal behavior among this age group. While previous campaigns may have dealt with traditional issues, many of the issues in the 1980 campaign were of direct saliency to the young, first-time, potential voter. Finally, the issuance of 'socially responsible' answers by those surveyed, along with a possible conditioning by the instrument, may have skewed the results.

Several implications for media professionals and candidates are seen. While interest in the campaign was shown to be high, the level of alienation with the whole process rose during the duration of the campaign. After factor analyzing the data, it was argued that politicians need to spend more time addressing the needs of this age group and that media professionals need to be more sensitive to the information needs of the young.

Several suggestions were presented for further research. In addition to improving upon the design, the results suggest the need to study if, in fact, the patterns hold over time. More attention needs to be focused on finding the socio-psychological origin of the motivation for seeking gratification in the media by this age group. Also, more detailed analysis as to exactly what the alienations and gratifications

are merits attention. Specifically, the question of "what alienations produce what behavior" needs to be addressed. In addition, which, if any, gratifications or avoidances produce different voting behavior among the young, first-time, potential voter, remains unanswered.

CHAPTER VI

NOTES

¹Earl Babbie, The Practice of Social Research.
(Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1979), p. 172.

²Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.
(Stanford: University of Stanford Press, 1959).

³See Jack M. McLeod and Lee B. Becker, "Testing the Validity of Gratification Measures through Political Effects Analysis," The Uses of Mass Communication. (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974), for a complete look at media use variables as they relate to political effects.

⁴George Comstock, et al., Television and Human Behavior. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974). See Chapter 3, "The Audience" for a complete discussion of time spent with the media—and reasons for it—by all demographic blocks.

⁵"Lagging at the Polls," Parade Magazine, October 26, 1980, p. 12.

⁶See Pinner, "The Individual's Social and Political World," (Mimeograph, Michigan State University, Department of Psychology) for a discussion of this possible variable.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

WAVE I

SURVEY INSTRUMENT WAVE I

It's quite simple! Just read each question and check or circle the appropriate answer!

1. Are the following statements true about you?

When I turn on the radio, I like to listen to:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
the commercials	()	()	()
the weather	()	()	()
the news	()	()	()
the music	()	()	()

When I turn on the television, I like to watch:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
the commercials	()	()	()
soap operas	()	()	()
sports	()	()	()
movies	()	()	()
news/documentaries	()	()	()
comedy shows	()	()	()
police/detective	()	()	()

When I pick up a magazine, I like to read:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
personality profiles	()	()	()
sports information	()	()	()
news articles	()	()	()
beauty/fashion	()	()	()

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
hobby interests	()	()	()
advertisements	()	()	()

When I pick up a newspaper, I like to read:

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>NO OPINION</u>
business section	()	()	()
local news	()	()	()
national news	()	()	()
comics	()	()	()
sports	()	()	()
features	()	()	()
advertisements	()	()	()

2. How many hours, on the average, do you listen to the radio each day?

(0) (0 to 1 hour) (1 to 2 hours) (2 to 3 hours)
(3 or more hours)

3. How many hours, on the average, do you watch television each day?

(0) (0 to 1 hour) (1 to 2 hours) (2 to 3 hours)
(3 or more hours)

4. How much time, on the average, do you spend reading a newspaper each day?

(0) (0 to 15 minutes) (15 to 30 minutes)
(30 to 60 minutes) (1 hour or more)

5. How much time, on the average, do you spend reading a magazine each day?

(0) (0 to 15 minutes) (15 to 30 minutes)
(30 to 60 minutes) (1 hour or more)

6. When you want information on a candidate or issue in an election, to which source do you first turn?

(TV) (Radio) (Magazines) (Newspapers) (Friends)
(Family) (other _____)

7. Here are some reasons people have given for getting news on candidates from the media. Please tell us how each of these statements pertains to you: a lot, a little, or not at all.

	<u>A LOT</u>	<u>A LITTLE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>
a. to judge what a candidate is like	()	()	()
b. to see what a candidate would do if elected	()	()	()
c. to see who is likely to win	()	()	()
d. to remind me of my candidate's position . . .	()	()	()
e. to help me make up my mind how to vote	()	()	()
f. to enjoy the excitement of the campaign	()	()	()
g. to see what candidates have to say to young people like myself	()	()	()
h. other _____			

8. Now, here are some reasons people have given for not getting information on candidates from the media. Again, please tell us if each of these applies to you:
a lot, a little, or not at all.

	<u>A LOT</u>	<u>A LITTLE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>
a. my vote won't really affect the outcome of the election	()	()	()
b. candidates are interested only in special interest groups	()	()	()
c. how young people feel doesn't matter in a presidential election . .	()	()	()
d. candidates will say anything to get elected .	()	()	()
e. it doesn't matter what I think, life will go on anyway	()	()	()
f. I've already made up my mind	()	()	()
g. other _____			

9. Finally, please read the following and tell us if the statement applies to your family: all the time, most of the time, sometimes, not always, or never.

	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Not Always</u>	<u>Never</u>
a. my parents encourage me to challenge their ideals and beliefs	()	()	()	()	()
b. my parents urge me to give in on arguments rather than risk antagonizing others . .	()	()	()	()	()

- | | <u>All</u>
<u>the</u>
<u>time</u> | <u>Most</u>
<u>of the</u>
<u>time</u> | <u>Sometimes</u> | <u>Not</u>
<u>Always</u> | <u>Never</u> |
|--|---|---|------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| c. my parents ask my opinion
when the family is discussing
something | () | () | () | () | () |
| d. my parents answer my
arguments with statements
like, "You'll know better
when you're older." | () | () | () | () | () |
| e. my parents and I have talks
on things like politics where
we may chose different sides. | () | () | () | () | () |
| f. my parents tell me I should
not show anger in a group | () | () | () | () | () |
| g. my parents think I should
always look at both sides of
an argument before making a
choice | () | () | () | () | () |
| h. my parents stress that there
are some things in life that
are right and wrong | () | () | () | () | () |
| i. my parents discuss things
like politics when visiting
friends, even when I'm
present | () | () | () | () | () |
| j. my parents feel the best way
to stay out of trouble is to
avoid it | () | () | () | () | () |

It may be too early to tell for sure yet, but right now, how likely is it that you will vote in the upcoming presidential election? I will:

() definitely vote () probably vote () not sure
() definitely not vote () probably not vote

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION! YOU MAY MAIL THE QUESTIONNAIRE BACK TO US IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE—NO POSTAGE NECESSARY! HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY!

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

WAVE II

SURVEY INSTRUMENT WAVE III.D.# _____ COLS

PHONE # _____ 1-3

COMPLETED _____

REFUSED _____

CALLBACK # 1 2 3 4 5

Hello, I'm calling for Michigan State University, may I
speak to _____?

IF NOT AT HOME: When would be a good time to call back
please? _____

IF NOT LIVING AT HOME: Do you have a number where s/he can
be reached? S/he completed a questionnaire for us earlier,
and we have just a few more questions to ask to complete this
interview. Phone # (____) _____

Refused _____

UPON REACHING RESPONDENT: Hello, as you may recall, we mailed
you a questionnaire earlier this summer. Now, to complete our
study we need just a little more information.

1. First, did you vote on Tuesday in the general Presidential
election?

Yes No No Comment

4

2. Finally, we've asked you these questions before, but we'd
like your opinion again. I'm going to list some reasons
people give for getting information on candidates from the
media. Please tell me if each statement applies to you
a lot, a little, or not at all.

	<u>A LOT</u>	<u>A LITTLE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>	
1. to judge what a candidate is like	()	()	()	5
2. to see what a candidate would do if elected	()	()	()	6
3. to see who is likely to win . .	()	()	()	7
4. to remind me of my candidate's position	()	()	()	8
5. to help me make up my mind how to vote	()	()	()	9
6. to enjoy the excitement of the campaign	()	()	()	10
7. to see what candidates have to say to young people	()	()	()	11
8. Are there any reasons you'd like to give? _____				12

3. Some people prefer not to get news on candidates. I will read some reasons people give for not getting news on candidates. Please tell me if each statement applies to you a lot, a little, or not at all.

	<u>A LOT</u>	<u>A LITTLE</u>	<u>NOT AT ALL</u>	
1. my vote won't really affect the outcome of the election . .	()	()	()	13
2. candidates are interested only in special interest groups . . .	()	()	()	14
3. how young people feel doesn't matter in a presidential election	()	()	()	15
4. candidates will say anything to get elected	()	()	()	16

- | | <u>A LOT</u> | <u>A LITTLE</u> | <u>NOT AT ALL</u> | |
|---|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|----|
| 5. it doesn't matter what I think, life will go on anyway . . | () | () | () | 17 |
| 6. I've already made up my mind . . | () | () | () | 18 |
| 7. Are there any other reasons why <u>you</u> don't get information on candidates from media? | | | | |

19

-
-
-
4. SEX: MALE FEMALE 20

Thank you very much for your help! Good bye!

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTERS

COVER LETTER I

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Telecommunication - Union Building
East Lansing - Michigan 48824

Why, you may be saying to yourself, is there a pencil enclosed with this letter? Simple—we don't want you to waste any time in answering the questionnaire that's also in the envelope!

No, this letter isn't an appeal for money or an appeal by a candidate for help. This is simply an appeal for you to help with some research we are doing at Michigan State University. We're interested in learning how young people, like yourself, use TV, radio, newspapers and magazines in a presidential campaign. You've no doubt heard of the Neilsen Ratings and the Gallup Poll—well, we're doing what they do—asking certain people certain questions. Lucky you! You've been chosen at random to help us!

It is very important that we hear from you. To be successful, we desperately need your response. Your answers, of course, will be completely confidential. If you have any questions, please call us at (517) 355-6558.

Sincerely,

Gretchen Barbatsis, Ph.D.
Research Adviser
Michigan State University
E. Lansing, MI 48824

COVER LETTER II

Michigan State University

Department of Telecommunication - Union Building
East Lansing - Michigan - 48824

A short while ago, we sent you a questionnaire. Well, we haven't heard from you yet and we're worried!

In case you didn't receive our first letter, we've enclosed a questionnaire for you to complete along with an envelope — no postage necessary!

We're interested in learning how young people use TV, radio, newspapers and magazines. And like the Neilsen ratings and the Gallop poll, we've selected your name at random to help us figure it out.

We really do need to hear from you, so please take 2 or 3 minutes to fill out the questionnaire and return it to us — we will even pay the postage!

Of course, if you have sent us the questionnaire already, disregard this message — and thank you!

Have a nice day, and we hope you've had an enjoyable summer!

Sincerely,

Gretchen Barbatsis, Ph.D.
Research Adviser
MSU
(517) 355-6558

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