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The Internet Has Changed Many Things, But Not Everything: The Effects of Internet Use on Gendered and Political Views

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THE INTERNET HAS CHANGED MANY THINGS, BUT NOT EVERYTHING: THE
EFFECTS OF INTERNET USE ON GENDERED AND POLITICAL VIEWS

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By

Jessica Ritchie

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THE INTERNET HAS CHANGED MANY THINGS, BUT NOT EVERYTHING: THE
EFFECTS OF INTERNET USE ON GENDERED AND POLITICAL VIEWS

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The Internet has Changed Many Things, but Not Everything: The Effects of Internet Use
on Gendered and Political Views

Jessica Ritchie   May 2006   36 Pages

Directed By: Dr. Douglas Smith, Dr. Stephen Groce, Dr. Joan Krenzin

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Individuals who use the Internet can obtain uncensored information about nearly any subject with ease. The unlimited access and the perceived freedom make the Internet an extremely popular media form. The purpose of this research is to examine the differences in how the types of sites individuals visit affect their gendered views. I specifically examined (1) individuals who go to gender-issue sites are less likely to support traditional, female gender-roles and (2) individuals who go to political sites are more likely to support traditional female, gender-roles. This study, using special questions pertaining to gender-roles within the household and visiting gender and political websites from the 2002 General Social Survey, examines the question as to whether the Internet has an effect on people's gendered views. The relationship among the dependent variable and the independent variables, control variables, and mediating variables were examined in both a bivariate and a multivariate context. First, to test my hypotheses I examined the bivariate correlations between the dependent variables and other variables. Next, I examined the relationships in the multivariate context using a regression model. This analysis creates a model with three separate steps, with the first step being an examination of the relationship between the dependent variable and the

control variables. The second step examined the relationship between the dependent variable, control variables, and the independent variables. The final step in the forward step regression model examined the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables and the effects the control and mediating variables had on the relationship. The only significant finding of the current study is that of sex, age, and income, with sex having a more significant effect than either of the other two variables. Females tended to have a more traditional view of female gender-roles. It does not appear that visiting gender-issues or political sites affects a person's traditional female gender-role. This finding indicates that females tend to toe the gender line much more strongly than do males in that they were more likely to do the traditionally female household tasks and not do traditionally males tasks. Male respondents, however, reported that they engaged in both traditionally male and traditionally female household jobs.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Individuals who use the Internet can obtain uncensored information about nearly

any subject with ease. The unlimited access and the perceived freedom make the Internet

an extremely popular media form. At least one study has found that the Internet has

replaced the television as the most liked media of older children and adolescents

(Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, and Brodie 1999). Moreover, media scholars expect an

increased impact of computers and the Internet on adolescence (Larson 2001). This

impact is occurring just when parents' ability to regulate their children's media use is

declining, especially for older children. Increasing numbers of children and adolescents

now have their own television sets, game systems, and computers in their bedrooms,

putting them further out of their parents' control (Jordan 2001; Roberts 2000).

All this research demonstrating the effect the Internet has had on people leads to

the question, "Does having access to new and diverse sources of information transform

individual worldviews?" One might think that having all this information at one's

fingertips would make individuals more open-minded. However, even with the Internet's

transformatory potential, people may still use the web to seek information that conforms

only to their existing worldview. The current study examines whether Internet use really

changes people's views about traditional gender norms as well as political ideas by

examining questions taken from the General Social Survey data set from 2002. Using the

fundamentals of social learning theory, gender schema theory, and symbolic interactionism the socialization effects of the Internet will be discussed. If using the Internet changes the way individuals think and believe, then we can hope to see a more egalitarian and diverse society.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

To understand the role the Internet plays in gender socialization, one must

understand the multifaceted nature of gender. Gender is a social phenomenon in which

characteristics are enforced upon members of society based on their sex (Falk 1998). A

person's sex refers to the biological attributes indicating whether a person is anatomically

male or female (Calhoun, Light, and Keller 1997). An individual within a society is

taught gender norms about the sexes through socialization—the process of learning

cultural norms, values, and beliefs necessary to be a society member (Durkheim

[1922]1956).

According to Denzin (1977), until a child acquires language and develops a self,

its socialization is governed by receiving rewards or punishments for certain behaviors.

Thus, I will begin the examination of gender socialization there. Then I will examine

symbolic interactionists' views of gender socialization and end with cognitive social

psychology's views on gender schema.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn through operant

conditioning (via rewards and punishments) and observational learning (imitation)

(Albert and Porter 1988; Bussey and Bandura 1999). According to this theory, gender

roles begin to be learned at a very early age through imitation and are reinforced through

rewards for correct gender role behavior and punishments for incorrect gender-role

behavior (Albert and Porter 1988; Bandura and Walters 1963). The gender norms

learned during childhood form the base of an individual's gender roles, which influence

most individuals' behavior into adulthood.

Social learning theorists recognize that there are many cultural, social, and family

factors that affect children's gender-role socialization. Although an exhaustive list of

these factors does not exist, Internet use clearly belongs on such a list (Albert and Porter

1988). Children's gender-role socialization can be conditioned by playing games over

the Internet. They perfect their Internet use and their social skills by figuring out how to

connect with others online to play games, and in the process they are exposed to gender

norms. Individuals play games through trial and error, garnering rewards (succeeding in

completing tasks, gaining new abilities in a game, and advancing levels) or punishments

(failing to meet a desired goal or outcome). Thus, the content counts:

> Whether children are exposed to content through cable, a computer game,
> or over the Internet: Educational content leads to positive outcomes;
> antisocial content leads to antisocial outcomes. The findings confirm that
> children absorb the life world of information, images, emotions, norms,
> and values to which they are exposed through media. (Larson 2001, p.
> 149)

Witt (1997) argues that the gender roles learned at an early age are reinforced

through interaction in schools. Schools also encourage children to use the Internet (if

they have not already been surfing the Internet at home) because most educators view the

Internet to be a very important teaching resource (Cuban 1983). In fact, students are

regularly given as rewards or punishments for their ability to use the Internet. It is clear

that understanding the role of the Internet on gender-role reinforcement is important for social learning theory.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism also sees the socialization process as a primary and necessary process because all meaning is learned (Blumer 1969). The basic precepts of symbolic interactionism include the notion that socialization is dynamic in that individuals are affected by society, aligning their actions and interactions with other group members to fit their needs, as much as individuals affect society (Manis and Meltzer 1978). Thus, while society socializes individuals to expected gendered behavior, those expectations and behaviors change within society with time as individuals choose which gender norms to enact and which they are going to enforce.

Gender concepts' change can be seen when evaluating how gender concepts are formed and transmitted. Because gender is a social construct, individuals are taught gender identity and expectations when they are taught their culture's symbols, beliefs, values, customs, etc. Mothers are often seen as the primary conductors of social teachings with respect to their daughters. Thoughts about children, marriage, and careers among mother and daughter dyads are similar throughout both of their lives. Even though, both the mother's and the daughter's beliefs about these subjects do appear to change over time (Bohannon and Blanton 1999).

The Internet allows any individual to search for any topic he or she wishes. Only those who do not know how to search and gather the information they are seeking are not free to do so. It may be argued that people who are excluded from this "information

highway" can change their eligibility through free Internet access via libraries or cafes. However, people are assuming that these individuals have time to use these resources. Some people cannot afford a personal computer or Internet services. Some people also cannot afford to have the "down time" necessary to visit these libraries or cafes where they may use computers and the Internet free.

Access to the Internet is not cheap, considering that people must also have a phone, cable, or satellite service as well as a computer. The Internet has not only changed the ways people symbolize status and education but also the ways in which people socialize. People can interact with individuals all over the world (Galvin and Ahjua 2001; Martin 1995). Some may think that the ability to interact with all races, religions, sexes, etc. would expand many people's views. However, is this truly the case, or do people seek others like themselves and exclude everyone else? The Internet has allowed people to isolate and discriminate against others in new as well as traditional ways. For example, people may have discriminated against those who did not wear the most fashionable clothes; now they may discriminate against those who do not know the latest Internet language.

Gender-schema Theory

A schema is a collection of knowledge obtained through experiences with a situation (Weiten 1998). People behave according to these schemas and adapt their schemas to assimilate new experiences and situations. Schemas can be specific to one certain issue or concern within a society. Gender schemas focus on the grouping of knowledge from experiences concerning gender-related issues (Martin and Dinella 2001).

When individuals form certain schemas about the way males and females should act, they usually maintain these beliefs throughout their lives. Parents, family, and friends often play a very large part in the gender-schema formation of individuals. Gender schema formation is usually formed initially during childhood and is either reinforced or altered during interactions during the remainder of a person's life. Once children enter school and participate in various interactions, they usually seek peers with similar styles and schemas, thus re-enforcing them (Hibbard 1998).

The Internet can be a tool used in gender-schema formation for children and the maintenance of these schemas for adults. The different ways in which an individual uses the Internet can also affect a person's gender schemas. Those individuals who are interested in aggressive, dominating, and individualistic activities may choose Internet games that re-enforce these ideas (Larson 2001). Some believe that males interact in dominating, controlling, and instrumental ways, which could possibly be re-enforced through these types of Internet games. Hibbard (1998) referred to this type of interaction as "agentic." Females communicate in a "communal" style, which is concerned with supporting the other person, preserving relationships, and interacting (Hibbard 1998). The different types of communication styles may account for the different ways males and females use the Internet.

Synthesis

Gender schema theory can be seen as a variation of social learning theory in that a person groups his or her experiences into schemas. These schemas are based on a person's experiences, which are influenced by his or her social interactions. These social interactions are interpreted based on how an individual is rewarded or punished, thus

defining social learning theory. Still the social context, the interaction of group members, and the shared meaning of the interaction affect individual behavior.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2002 it was estimated that 54 percent of Americans used the Internet (U.S. Department... 2002). One aspect of this new technology that society as a whole had never experienced before at this level deals with the fact that computers allow for two-way interaction in communication between people. People using the computer not only get information but they can give information as well (Kizza 1998). The ability to gather information on any subject any time and with no censorship allows individuals to gather knowledge in ways never before available.

The Internet has affected society as a whole as well as individuals. The Internet has changed the way society communicates, learns, conducts business and/or finances, conducts politics, spreads culture, causes cultural change, and changes in banking practices, the retail industry, and the service industry (Walters 2001). Other effects the Internet has had on society are changing time and distance concepts. The way in which time and distance are perceived has changed forever in that people all over the world can gather and provide information simultaneously (Burn and Loch 2001). People can research subjects such as politics with ease and with limited effort. The Internet has also changed politics in that political groups can place information where anyone can access it, poll individuals on any subject, advertise their viewpoints, and solicit money from people.

The Internet has also changed people's sense of security and has caused individuals to have new concerns about their privacy. An individual's personal and financial information is somewhere maintained on a computer that has access to the Internet. This information is accessible to those individuals that can enter these systems with or without permission. A new industry has emerged because of this new concern about both individual and commercial privacy. New corporations and businesses have been built on this fear (Chapman and Dhillon 2002; Dhillon and Moores 2001). The Internet is thought to be able to help the economies of every country where individuals, groups, businesses, and corporations have access to the Internet and new technologies (Burn and Loch 2001). Some companies are only Internet-based and provide a service not a product. Other businesses track, purchase, sell, operate, and distribute their products using the Internet. The abilities to obtain jobs with any one of these businesses would allow people to provide for themselves and/or families, thus rewarding them with money and independence as well as productivity.

The Internet has also changed the way individuals identify themselves. Whereas individuals may have identified themselves by their neighborhood or town, now people who communicate "virtually" identify themselves nationally (Burnett and Marshall 2003; Surratt 2001). Individuals' sense of community has changed in that they have created their own communities that are global communities and are based on both old and new criteria (Galvin and Ahuja 2001; Martin 1995). Individuals also learn to communicate in different ways due to their new communities. There has even been a new language developed within these communities. A status system still applies, but there are new

criteria to decide the status (Galvin and Ahuja 2001). There are many theories about why these changes have occurred and whether changes will continue to occur.

Gender

Gender is "a social, symbolic construction that expresses the meanings a society confers on biological sex" (Wood 1997, p. 413). For the purposes of this study the debate between whether gender is biologically or socially based will not be continued. However, both biological and societal influences will be discussed.

<u>Biological</u>

Some individuals believe in the idea that gender is based on biology. For example, the differing amounts and types of hormones within males and females may cause differences in gender. These hormones are hypothesized not only to have a physiological function and effect on the human body but also a psychological or behavioral effect as well. It has been reported in various mass-media sources that testosterone predominates in males and causes aggressive and dominant behaviors (Wood 1997).

Hormonal levels are not the only physiological cause for gender difference hypothesized by researchers; physiology of the brain is also a possible cause. Men are shown to have a more developed left lobe of the brain (Wood 1997). The left lobe of the brain is thought to be where the logical, linear, and analytical thinking aspects of the brain processes occur. During conversations women are thought to use both the right and the left lobes. This dual access to the brain may account for women's abilities to understand and interpret the emotional state of those with whom they are conversing

more easily than men. The right lobe is thought to be where imaginative, creative, and artistic abilities reside (Wood 1997).

A biological or physiological rationalization of the differences between males and females is not the only plausible explanation for this phenomenon. Several studies that have examined whether there is an influence of culture on the differences between men and women will be covered in the following section. Much of the literature and research encompassing cultural effects on gender differences focuses primarily on aspects of humans' lifespan. The various methods and ways culture influences gender and is taught have characteristics similar to those of the socialization and adaptation of the Internet. These adaptations and socializations have been mentioned by Blumer (1990) in the theory section.

Culture and Socialization

Culture can mean "the totality, including knowledge, beliefs, customs, and morals, shared by members of a society" (Karp and Yoels 1993, p. 6). Culture is a social phenomenon that exists in every society and affects everyone within a given society. This social phenomenon can include, but is not limited to, the language, beliefs, values, norms, clothing, and food of a given society. Culture is transmitted from one generation to another through the process of socialization. Socialization is a process of learning the norms, values, and beliefs of a society (Calhoun, Light, and Keller 1997).

Education

Women who choose more stereotypically female-dominated fields--such as humanities, education, and social sciences--have fewer gender-stereotypic views than do those in male-dominated fields--such as business, natural science, and computer science

(Bryant 2003). While attending college, factors such as grade point average, being employed while in college, interacting with people of other races or ethnicities, being exposed to many politically liberal faculty, studying and completing homework, and discussing racial and ethnic issues can affect a person's gender-stereotypic views (Bryant 2003).

College also affects men and women in that both sexes have been seen to decrease their gender-stereotypic views if they complete a four-year college degree (Bryant 2003). Women may be more affected by college than are men, in that they have more liberal views specifically about women's married roles once they have completed a four-year college degree. Whether a college student is white also appears to affect both men's and women's views of a married woman's role negatively (Bryant 2003). It would appear that white college students have more traditional views of a woman's role.

Socialization

Computers and the Internet are viewed by some to be a significant factor that has improved people's social interactions with individuals around the world (Gergen 1997; Rice 1987). Some people may view computers and the Internet as a social crutch that hinders people's social skills and interactions with others. However, some research has shown that the Internet, specifically chat rooms, may positively affect people's interactions and levels of enjoyment. Shaw and Gant (2002a) studied college students' interactions in Internet chat rooms to measure their levels of loneliness, depression, self-esteem, and social support. They found that participation in Internet chat rooms decreased the participants' levels of depression and loneliness while increasing their self-esteem and social-support levels (Shaw and Gant 2002a).

There are several reasons why computers and the Internet can positively affect social interactions and improve individuals' levels of happiness and fulfillment. Anonymity is one of the most freeing aspects of the Internet. A person can give herself or himself any name and/or descriptions she or he wishes. He or she can reveal as little or as much information as she or he wishes. Some believe the Internet allows for individuals to participate and explore various topics and subjects with little to no stigma. Individuals can participate in taboo or what society may consider deviant behaviors without fear of family or friends finding out (Blair 1998; Ebo 1998; Kling, Lee, Teich, and Frankel 2000; Koch and Pratarelli 2004; Shaw and Gant 2002b). Individuals who have difficulty interacting with others face-to-face find computers and the Internet liberating. Introverts have been shown to enjoy using the Internet more than extroverts (Koch and Pratarelli 2004). People's comfort levels when dealing with computers and the Internet are also very significant (Cutler, Hendricks, and Guyer 2003).

Others believe that the Internet is another tool used in the segregation and discrimination of others. Within the Internet are various cyber communities that are based on characteristics similar to those in the real world (Galvin and Ahuja 2001; Martin 1995; Wolf 1998). These cyber communities are based on a person's education, income, race, and gender (Wolf 1998). Due to the way these cyber communities are set up, they will exclude individuals based on traditional and new forms of discrimination. This new technology could cause a new poor, the technological poor.

The debate over the effects of computers and the Internet will continue for many years. Some compare this debate with the debate that originated when the telephone was invented (Kizza 1998). However, the effects of technology on society continue to be

studied and will continue as new technology enters society. As with the telephone, individuals' reactions and uses of new technology will continue to occur until something else comes along and invokes a new change.

Gender and Computer Use

Early research about the gender differences among computer users suggested that males were perceived as more likely to use computers than were females (Collis 1985). However, for several years there has been a debate regarding whether the gender gap among computer users has decreased or remained the same. It is unfortunate that no clear winner in this debate; both sides will be presented.

Some argue that males are more comfortable and self confident with using and working with computer technology because they spend more time using computers, even at an early age (McCoy and Heafner 2004; Young 2000). Accessibility to computers is also a differing factor between males and females at an early age. Boys appear to have more access to computers than do girls, and they spend more time using them than do girls (Colley and Comber 2003).

Regarding college students there may be a difference of opinion among researchers. Some have found that the choice of majors can affect use and comfort with computers. For those individuals who are majoring in humanities, for example, computers are not frequently used whereas someone majoring in business uses computers often (McCoy and Heafner 2004). When evaluating the distribution of degrees within computer and information sciences, one can see a very large gender discrepancy. At the bachelor's level 72 percent of degrees were earned by men, while 28 percent were earned by women in 2000 (McCoy and Heafner 2004, p. 55). At the master's level 74 percent

were earned by males, while 26 percent were earned by females. At the doctoral level 82

percent were earned by males, while 18 percent were earned by females (McCoy and

Heafner 2004, p. 55).

Ono and Zavodny (2003) state that women are more likely to use the Internet and

more likely to use it at home. However, males are more likely to use the Internet for

longer periods and more intensely than women (Odell, Korgen, Schumacher, and

Delucchi 2000; Ono and Zavodny 2003). Colley and Comber (2003) also found that

males use computers more, enjoy them more, and have more self-confidence when using

them. Males also are more likely to use the computer more often for entertainment,

resource location, playing games, music, and movies whereas females tend to use

computers for school and communication (Howard, Rainie, and Jones 2002; McCoy and

Heafner 2004; Young 2000). Females often use e-mail more than men and differ in the

purpose of using e-mail (Sherman, End, Kraan, Cole, Campbell, Birchmeier, and

Klausner 2000; Weiser 2000). Females are more likely to use e-mail for maintaining

interpersonal and supportive relationships (Dickerson 2003). Females also use the

Internet more to chat on-line, obtain course information, and seek help with education

and research than do males (Weiser 2000). Males often use the Internet for listening to

audio broadcasts, searching for romance, shopping, creating and working on worldwide

web pages, searching for hard-to-find items and productions, pursuing sexual

relationships, viewing pornography, and participating in on-line games than do females

(Weiser 2000). Although there is a gender difference with respect to how

computers/Internet are used, males and females both reported positive attitudes about

computers overall (McCoy and Heafner 2004).

Hypotheses

The purpose of this research is to examine the differences in how the types of sites individuals visit affect their gendered views. I plan specifically to examine: (1) individuals who go to gender-issue sites are less likely to support traditional, female gender-roles and (2) individuals who go to political sites are more likely to support traditional female, gender-roles.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

In the past two chapters both the explanation and description of social effects,

influences, and issues have been used in the attempt to explain the social phenomenon

that is gender-role socialization. To examine the effects that Internet use has on gender

role attitudes, several variables from the GSS data will be analyzed.

Data

The data I will use to test my hypotheses is the 2002 General Social Survey

(GSS), which was drawn from the cumulative 1972-2004 GSS data set (Davis and Smith

2005). Data were collected in personal interviews. Respondents were English speaking,

noninstitutionalized, adults living within the United States. The 2002 GSS data set

consists of 2,765 respondents. After selecting those individuals who use computers

(COMPUSE) and use the Internet (USEWWW) and those who were asked the version of

the GSS questionnaire with questions about gender-role behaviors in their households,

my final sample consisted of 715 respondents.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variable in this study will be a gender role congruence scale. This

scale is made up of items that examine whether females perform the traditionally female

tasks. The behaviors that comprise the scale were asked in a matrix format with the lead

in question being "In your household, who does the following things?" The behaviors

listed in the question are "does the laundry" (LAUNDRY1), "makes small repairs around

the house" (REPAIRS1), "cares for sick family members" (CARESIK1), "does the

household cleaning" (CLEAN1), "shops for groceries" (SHOP1), and "prepares the

meals" (COOKING1). Originally the valid response categories for these items were 1.

"Always me," 2. "Usually me," 3. "About equal or both together" or "Is done by a third

person," 4. "Usually my spouse/partner," 5. "Always my spouse/partner".

For the purposes of this study the data set was temporarily split by sex. Male

responses to the items were recoded -2 "Always me," -1 "Usually me," 0 "About equal or

both together," 1 "Usually my spouse/partner," 5 "Always my spouse/partner." (The

exception to this was the variable REPAIRS which was reverse-coded because household

repair has traditionally been a male dominated household activity.) This recode meant

that, if their female partner did traditional female household actions, they were scored

higher. The separate female data file was then recoded the complete opposite of the

males -2 'Always my spouse/partner," -1 "Usually my spouse/partner," 0 "About equal or

both together," 1 " Usually me," 2 "Always me." (Again, the variable REPAIRS was

reverse coded.) Afterwards the data set was recombined to give self-report measured

results indicating how much the women in these households conform to traditional

gender-role expectations concerning household work. Once the data set were

recombined, the dependent variables were renamed LAUNDRYT, REPAIRT, CLEANT,

CARESIKT, SHOPT, and COOKINGT. Using the EXAMINE command in SPSS, it was

discovered that the -2 responses were outliers in all five variables so the -2 responses

were recoded and merged with the -1 response category. Then a reliability analysis was

performed and the variable REPAIRT was dropped from further analysis due to the low

reliability with the rest of the variables to be scaled. The results of the frequency analysis

for these new variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency for Recoded Dependent Variables

		Frequency	Percent
LAUNDRYT	-1.00	66	9.9
	0.00	187	27.9
	1.00	247	36.9
	2.00	170	25.4
REPAIRST	-1.00	66	10.1
	0.00	129	19.8
	1.00	320	49.1
	2.00	137	21.0
CARESIKT	-1.00	38	5.9
	0.00	292	45.2
	1.00	197	30.5
	2.00	119	18.4
CLEANT	-1.00	38	5.8
	0.00	243	37.4
	1.00	248	38.2
	2.00	121	18.6
SHOPT	-1.00	72	10.5
	0.00	290	42.5
	1.00	199	29.1
	2.00	122	17.9
COOKINGT	-1.00	87	12.8
	0.00	207	30.4
	1.00	247	36.3
	2.00	139	20.4

The factor analysis (Table 2) indicates that the five variables measure one

underlying concept interpreted as traditional gender roles (TRADROLE). The reliability

analysis completed on the five variables comprising the TRADROLE factor indicates that

the variables form an internally reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$). These five variables

were scaled weighting each variable using factor score coefficients to ensure that each

variable is weighted as to its importance within the underlying factor. For example, the

variables measuring who does the household cleaning (CLEANT) and cares for the sick family members (CARESIKT) were identified as components in the traditional role factor. The variable measuring who does household cleaning is more highly correlated with the underlying factor and, thus, has a factor score coefficient of .282. Who cares for the sick family members, being less correlated to the underlying factor, has a factor score coefficient of only .237. Thus, weighting the variables by these coefficients when they are combined to create the new variable (TRADROLE) ensures that respondents who clean around the house receive a slightly higher score on the female traditional role scale than a respondent who cared for sick family members.

Table 2: Factor Loadings and Factor Score Coefficients for Traditional Female Roles

	Traditional Roles Factor	Factor Score Coefficients
LAUNDRYT	.753	.265
CARESIKT	.674	.237
CLEANT	.800	.282
SHOPT	.758	.267
COOKINGT	.776	.274
Eigenvalue	2.84	
Proportion of Variance	56.75	
Cronbach's Alpha	.81	
(N)	604	

As indicated in Table 3 the variable TRADROLE has a range of -2.45 to 1.00, with a mean of .004 and a standard deviation of .98.

Table 3: Variable Description and Descriptive Statistics of Dependent Traditional Female Role Variables

Variable	Range	Mean	SD
TRADROLE	-2.45 to 1.00	.004	.98

Independent Variables

There are two main independent variables of interest used in this study. They consist of whether the participant has visited gender/women's issues and/or political sites. POLCAM12 measures whether respondents visited political sites, and FE12 measures whether they visited gender/women's issues sites. Questions regarding these two behaviors were asked as part of a matrix question regarding Internet use. The lead-in question was "In the past 12 months, have you used the Web to find out about or discuss?" The specific behaviors of interest were asked by "Political campaigns" (POLCAM12) and "Gender/women's issues (FE12). Response categories for these two items are 1 "Yes" and 2 "No." However, both POLCAM12 and FE12 were recoded where those who did not visit a political or gender/women's issue site were coded as zero. In Table 4 we see that 42.7% of the individuals in the survey report that they had been to a political campaign website in the past 12 months, while only 35.3% of those surveyed reported going to gender issues websites.

Table 4. Frequencies for Independent Variables (n = 309)

		Frequency	Percent
POLCAM12	0 No	177	57.3
	1 Yes	132	42.7
FE12	0 No	200	64.7
	1 Yes	109	35.3

Mediating Variable

Six additional questions discerning the extent to which people visit Internet web sites to change or confirm their worldviews will be included in the analysis. These items are believed to mediate the relationship between gender-role behavior and visiting gender-issues websites. Although there are no specific variables on the GSS 2002 data

set that ask whether respondents' views were changed or confirmed by visiting a web

site, six variables measuring whether a person's view was changed or confirmed by

visiting websites of a political nature were included. The six items were:

- POLAGREE – Is it VERY TRUE for you, SOMEWHAT TRUE, or NOT TRUE that you visit political sites with points of view that you agree with?
- POLDSAGR – Is it VERY TRUE for you, SOMEWHAT TRUE, or NOT TRUE that you visit sites that challenge your own opinions and provide different perspectives on political affairs?
- POLNEW –Now I would like you to think about the last time you used the Web to get information or exchange views about a political or social-policy issue, current affairs, or a political campaign. Thinking back to this occasion, did you learn anything new about the issue or campaign?
- POLCHNGE – Now I would like you to think about the last time you used the Web to get information or exchange views about a political or social-policy issue, current affairs, or a political campaign did your Web experience change your view in any way?
- POLCONF – In general, when you visit Web sites devoted to political or social policy issues, current affairs, or political campaigns, is it VERY TRUE for you, SOMEWHAT TRUE, or NOT TRUE that visiting such sites tends to strengthen or confirm the opinions you already hold?
- POLFORMS – In general, when you visit Web sites devoted to political or social policy issues, current affairs, or political campaigns, is it VERY TRUE for you, SOMEWHAT TRUE, or NOT TRUE that visiting such sites leads you to change your mind on issues?

The variables, POLAGREE, POLDSAGR, POLFORMS, and POLCONF, were

recoded so those respondents answering VERY TRUE scored a 2, while those

answering SOMEWHAT TRUE and NOT TRUE respectively scored 1 and 0. The

variables, POLNEW and POLCHNGE, were recoded so those respondents who did

not visit these sites scored a zero while those who visited these sites scored a one.

As with the dependent variable, a factor analysis was completed to insure that

these variables measured one underlying concept and to provide appropriate

weighting for each variable in relation to the underlying concept. The factor analysis

(Table 5) suggests that the six variables measure one underlying concept, interpreted

as change in world view, and this factor has an alpha ($\alpha = .75$) indicating that the new variable created from this factor analysis is internally reliable.

Table 5: Factor Loadings and Factor Score Coefficients for Visiting Political Sites

	Changing View CHNGEVW	Factor Score Coefficients
POLAGREE	**.661**	.250
POLDSAGR	**.622**	.235
POLNEW	**.695**	.263
POLCHNGE	**.570**	.215
POLFORMS	**.726**	.274
POLCONF	**.699**	.264
Eigenvalue	**2.65**	
Proportion of Variance	**44.13**	
Alpha	**.75**	
(N)	**301**	

The new variable created from the combination of these variables, CHNGEVW, measures whether the respondent's views were changed by visiting the sites, with respondents scoring lower on the scale if there was no change in view. As indicated in Table 6, the variable CHNGEVW has a range of -1.69 to 2.20, with a mean of .009 and a standard deviation of 1.0.

Table 6: Variable Description and Descriptive Statistics of Mediating Variable Change World Views

Variable	Range	Mean	SD
CHNGEVW	-1.69-2.20	.009	1.0

Control Variables

The control variables included each participant's age, sex, income, and education. The age of respondents was examined individually (AGE). Looking at Table 7, we see that the age of respondents ranged between 18 and 89 with the mean age being 46. Age has been shown to affect Internet use in that teens use it for education, entertainment,

recreation, etc., depending on where they are using the Internet (La Ferle, Edwards, and Lee 2000). Older adults have been shown to use the Internet less frequently.

Table 7: Variable Description and Descriptive Statistics of Control Variables

Variable	Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD
	Before Transformation			After Transformation		
AGE	18-99	46.55	17.73	18-89	46	16.93
EDUC	0-20	13.73	6.43	7-20	13.42	2.95
INCOME	1-99	20.02	17.58	1-23	15.91	5.46

Sex will also be examined by using individual responses (SEX). The sex gap with respect to using a computer or the Internet has maintained in years past. Males have been shown to use computers more and for different reasons than do females (Colley and Comber 2003). However, other research has shown that females are now closing the gender gap with respect to many of the uses and functions for the Internet (Ono and Zavondy 2003).

Education also plays a part in whether adults use the Internet. Adults who have completed high school or college often use the Internet more (Cutler, Hendricks, and Guyer 2003). Education will be measured in years of education completed (EDUC). The education variable was recoded to correct the variable skewness. The variable specifically measuring education was positively skewed with respondents having six years of education or less being outliers. To correct the skewness these responses were collapsed into the category of seven years of education or less. As can be seen in Table 7, the variable transformation shrinks the standard deviation with little change to the mean education level.

Income has also been shown to affect Internet use because individuals who have a better income can afford both the technology and services (Dhillon 2002; McNutt 1998;

Riedel, Wagoner, Dresel, Sullivan, and Borgida 2000). Income will be examined using the groups asked, such as $1.00 to $1,000, $1,000 to $2,999, $3,000 to $3,999…$250,000 or more (INCOME). The income variable was also recoded to correct the variable, which was highly negatively skewed with a skewness value of -0.82. To correct the skewness of the income variable the square root data transformation was used, correcting the skewness to .13 and making the data more evenly distributed.

Analysis

The relationship between the dependent variable and the independent, control variables, and mediating variables was examined in both a bivariate and a multivariate context. First to test my hypotheses, I examined the bivariate correlations between the dependent variables and other variables. Next, I examined the relationships in the multivariate context using a regression model. This analysis creates a model with three separate steps, with the first step being an examination of the relationship between the dependent variable and the control variables. The second step examines the relationship between the dependent variable, control variables, and the independent variables. The final step in the forward-step-regression model examines the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables and the effects of the control and mediating variables on the relationship.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research was to examine the differences in how the types of sites individuals visit affect their gendered views. I planned to examine specifically (1) individuals who go to gender-issue sites are less likely to support traditional, female gender-roles and (2) individuals who go to political sites are more likely to support traditional female, gender-roles.

The results of the bivariate correlation analysis with respect (Table 8) to age of respondent is a weak positive relationship $(r = .103)$; as age increases the actions of TRADROLE increases. This relationship is significant at $p < .01$. There is a weak negative relationship with respect to income in that as income increases the traditional role decreases. This relationship was significant at $p < .01$. There is a moderate positive relationship with respect to sex with females performing more traditional household tasks. This relationship was significant at $p < .001$. No other relationships were significant.

The original hypotheses for this study concerning visiting both gender-issues sites and political sites and their effects on traditional female gender-roles were not supported by the current results. The only significant findings of the current study are those related to sex, age, and income, with sex having a more significant effect than either of the other two variables. Females tend to have a more traditional view of female gender-roles. It

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does not appear that visiting gender-issues or political sites affects a person's traditional

female gender-role.

TABLE 8. Bivariate Correlations between TRADROLE and Other Variables.

	TRADROLE
AGE	.103**
EDUC	-.015
SQINCOME	-.116**
SEX	.429***
POLCAM12	-.017
FE12	-.009
POLFE12	-.049
CHNGEVW	-.107

*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

The regression model (Table 9) indicates that of the variables entered the control

variable measuring sex of respondent (SEX) is the only variable that affects the

respondent's view of traditional female roles (p = .000). In this analysis females tended

to score .368 standard deviations higher in their traditional gender-role behaviors as

compared with males. This finding indicates that females tend to toe the gender line

much more strongly than males in that they are more likely to do the traditionally female

household tasks and not do traditionally male tasks. Male respondents, however,

reported that they engaged in both traditionally male and traditionally female household

jobs. The variables measuring age, income, and education do not appear to affect how

the respondent views traditional female roles within the household. The variable

POLFE12 measuring the interaction effect between POLCAM12 and FE12 was dropped

from the analysis to prevent multicollinearity.

Table 9: Betas and Coefficients of Determination for Traditional Gender Role Action Scale Regressed on Control Variables, Independent Variables, and the Mediating Variable (n = 141)

	Model 1	Model 2
AGE	.140	.125
EDUC	.003	.010
SQINCOME	-.079	.093
SEX	.368***	.360***
POLCAM12	-.058	-.031
FE12	-.079	.074
POLFE12		
CHNGEVW		-.077
R^2	**.156**	**.160**

*** $p < .001$

Although the hypotheses that individuals who visit gender-issue sites are less

likely to support traditional female-gendered actions and individuals who visit political

sites are more likely to support traditional female-gendered actions are not supported, the

analysis shows that the variable measuring the respondent's sex can account for more

than 16% of the variation in the respondents' view on traditional gender roles. These

results suggest that knowing an individual's sex is a better predictor of whether or not the

individual will have traditional views regarding household tasks; however, other

variables not included in this examination may also affect individuals' views.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It would appear that females are the ones who are most likely to conform to traditional gender roles, especially in the area of female-traditional household tasks. However, these findings do not support the hypotheses of this study concerning the effects of visiting gender-issues and political websites on female traditional roles. Whether a respondent was male or female was the only factor that affected their performance of traditionally gendered household tasks.

The information gathered on gender-issues sites tends to focus on the injustices of society and the discrimination of individuals based on their sex. Gender-issues sites also discuss the segregation that occurs based on other individual characteristics such as age, income, etc. These sites may be viewed as more liberal in nature. It was originally thought that visiting these sites might indicate a person had less traditional ideas of female roles; however, this observation is not so.

It was also thought that individuals who visit certain political sites may not hold strict traditional ideas about female tasks. Whether or not visiting these sites changed, confirmed, or formed a person's political views was thought to be able to demonstrate the influence the Internet and its information has on individuals. This influence was not seen in the current study. However, it may be due to the questions used in this study. A better variety of questions concerning the influence the Internet may have on individuals needs

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to be examined. In specific, questions need to be asked concerning other aspects of people's lives other than politics that would give a better idea of the influences the Internet may have on individuals within society and society as a whole.

At this time, the Internet itself is still new, and as such, the effects that the Internet has on society and its views are inconclusive. Studies examining the effects of the Internet are just beginning to appear, and this research has been focused primarily on the financial sector or focuses on the deviant uses in which people use the Internet. Studies relating to gender and Internet focus primarily on who uses the Internet and for whom and what it is used. However, they do not focus on how the Internet affects our views, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, research regarding issues such as Internet use and its effects should be conducted.

Other issues that should be considered are those of how gender roles are measured and how specific questions regarding this measure are asked. For example, there is no specific question on the GSS survey concerning beliefs about gendered roles. Consequently, studies created with the measure of gendered roles in mind should be conducted with questions designed specifically to measure individuals' beliefs regarding gendered roles. Current research indicates that women use the Internet more than men for research purposes, and this may affect the outcome of any study in which gender is involved.

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