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Psychological Processing of Media

Professor Lombard

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Lombard, M., & Weinstein, L. (n.d.). What are Telepresence Experiences Like in the Real World?

A qualitative survey.

### Measuring Telepresence

Our topic was Measuring Telepresence. We learned a great deal of information after reading “What are telepresence experiences like in the real world? A qualitative survey” By Professor Lombard and Lisa Weinstein. We learned that telepresence is generally measured by having a participant use one or a few technological instruments to complete a questionnaire, which contains close ended questions thought to measure different types of presence. However, Professor Lombard and Mrs. Weinstein crafted a paper reporting on a study that utilized a survey online, reaching out to 329 people. The survey defined telepresence, but asked students to describe any experiences resembling telepresence that stood out to them that occurred in their everyday lives. Telepresence refers to getting lost within technology so much that you thought what you were watching or doing was actually real.

By giving survey respondents the definition of Telepresence, Professor Lombard and Mrs. Weinstein were able to get some very valuable feedback. Of the 329 respondents that completed the online survey, 62.6% were female and 37.4% were reported as male. They resided from 19 different countries, with the U.S representing 69.3 percent of the respondents followed by Singapore at 14.6%. The other 17 countries were significantly lower. The age group in which respondents took the survey was 27.7% ages 22-29, ages 14-21 made up 20.1% (66 overall

people in this age), 18.2% were ages 30-37, 12.2 percent of respondents were ages 38-45, 9.4 percent were 46-53, 7.9 percent were ages 54-61 and 3 percent were made up of people ages 62-69. Education was also mentioned in this process as 55.6 percent of respondents had a graduate school degree, followed by some college at 21.3 percent, 1.5 percent of respondents only had a high school degree and then 10.6 percent was made up of people who had a college degree or had some graduate school under their belt. So, most of the people taking the survey acquired their Bachelor's degree in college.

Most of the people taking the survey had a better than average understanding of media production as they were asked what their knowledge level was on a 1-5 scale 1 being they knew the least amount of information. The average score was 3.14. The following question was how much did they know about telepresence and the average was 2.35 percent. So people going in knew a lot less about telepresence. The survey found that 274 people out of the 329 respondents concluded they have experienced telepresence as described by the survey instrument. 210 respondents reported they had experienced it many times. Another thing to note is the technological instruments the respondents said they experienced telepresence varied from person to person. There were over 20 technological instruments in which people experienced telepresence. The 180 respondents out of the 274 reported that they had experienced telepresence at home and the second most was said to be experienced at a movie theatre with 33 respondents saying this was the case, followed by workplace, which made up 26 respondents. Telepresence was also reported being experienced in a car (1.4%) telepresence room, school, simulator, outdoors, train, store, theme park and an internet café. 56.9 percent of these respondents said they were alone when they experienced telepresence, while the rest were made up of people in a group of 1, or more people.

Television certainly was said to evoke the most telepresence out of the respondents. 19.7 percent respondents said they experienced telepresence from watching television, 13.9 percent experienced it from watching movies, 10.9 percent video chat, 9.5 percent computers and 9.1 percent from books. 5 percent used phones, internet, videogames and other technologies to experience telepresence.

The results are a little bit sporadic due to the amount of people taking the survey and the amount of different technologies there are out there, but many respondents got attached similarly to different or the same technological product. Many respondents felt as if they were transported through spatial presence. People playing video games on their computer, or reading a book got so heavily invested they felt as if they were a part of the mediated world. They felt transported if you will. Other people felt complete engagement and felt totally immersed in a video game, book, or movie and started even rooting for or against characters. Afterwards, the experience still took up the respondents' thoughts. Also, Social presence and actor within medium (para-social interaction) was present. An example is one of the respondents watching her favorite television show and yelling at the screen as if the character was right in front of him/her in real time. So they got so immersed, they thought they were really a part of the show. Another feeling respondents felt was social and perceptual realism. They felt the graphics and virtual worlds seemed so real they thought they were actually real. An example is a flight simulator or a Harry Potter Theme park in which respondents thought they were actually flying, or were actually whizzing by with Ron and Harry.

Respondents felt medium as a social actor as well in which they experienced talking to a robot or avatar a real life human interaction because the avatar behaved so human like. Another is inverse presence in which respondents were so used to using their technological devices like

their phones that when they used a projector, they thought they could zoom in on the projector screen, despite it not being touch sensitive. People also become hooked for personal reasons, like those who use skype to talk with a significant other, become invested and feel as if the person they are skyping is actually real. Also, intensity of presence experiences, which is when respondents got emotional as a result of what transpired in the story they were reading or movie they were watching. For example, a character dying, had one of the respondents in tears as she was so heavily invested she got lost in the mediated world. Lastly, respondents felt awareness of mediation. Meaning even though they knew that the technology or mediated world they were immersing themselves in wasn't real, they second guessed themselves because it was so convincing.

There are a lot of different ways in which respondents became immersed in the technological content they absorbed themselves in. But despite the differences, many of these respondents were completely absorbed or got lost in the mediated worlds even if for different purposes. The paper showed that its method of using an online survey giving respondents much information was very effective as most respondents did feel they experienced telepresence once they knew what it was.