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Online News Media Use And Political Tolerance

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ONLINE NEWS USE AND POLITICAL TOLERANCE

by

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Detroit turned out to be heaven, but it also turned out to be hell.

Marvin Gaye

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's 24/7 echo chamber amplifies the most inflammatory soundbites louder and faster than ever before. It has also, however, given us unprecedented choice. Whereas most of America used to get their news from the same three networks over dinner or a few influential papers on Sunday morning, we now have the option to get our information from any number of blogs or websites or cable news shows.

And this can have both a good and bad development for democracy. For if we choose only to expose ourselves to opinions and viewpoints that are in line with our own, studies suggest that we will become more polarized and set in our ways. And that will only reinforce and even deepen the political divides in this country. But if we choose to actively seek out information that challenges our assumptions and our beliefs, perhaps we can begin to understand where the people who disagree with us are coming from….

If you're someone who only reads the editorial page of The New York Times, try glancing at the page of The Wall Street Journal once in awhile. If you're a fan of Glenn Beck or Rush Limbaugh, try reading a few columns on the Huffington Post website. It may make your blood boil; your mind may not often be changed. But the practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship.

--President Barack Obama
University of Michigan Commencement Speech

This study aims to examine the relationship between selectivity of media content, particularly that of online news, and feelings of political tolerance. Successful democracies rely on their citizens' tolerance and value for civil liberties (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). The notion of a free exchange of ideas forms a core basis for democratic decision processes, and presumes an unfettered conversation among opposing views. Freedoms of speech and of the press are predicated on this imperative, which are essentially protections for tolerance of difference in a diverse society. This is vital to consider, for political intolerance has far-reaching consequences for any society. An atmosphere of intolerance limits citizens' perceptions of liberties, and makes it easier to

enact laws and regulations limiting freedoms (Gibson, 1992). When individuals perceive constraints on their freedoms and personal expressions, they tend to surround themselves with similar others, have less tolerant partners, become less tolerant themselves, and ultimately barricade themselves in increasingly intolerant communities (Gibson, 1992). The consequence of an intolerant populace in the United States, therefore, is a fragmented and polarized society, conformist and unbending, unwilling to engage in conversation, and a looming threat to the possibility of democratic governance (Gibson, 1992).

Tolerance fundamentally develops as a result of one's exposure to differing viewpoints. It is a slow process of becoming challenged in one's ideas, of accommodating different perspectives, and of allowing opposition (Huckfeldt, Mendez & Osborn, 2004; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood, 1995; Mutz, 2002; Stouffer, 1955). Over the past 50 years, tolerance research has been primarily concerned with explicating interpersonal processes in trying to better understand this construct (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). In this vein, interest has focused on friendships, group memberships and social networks as sources of exposure to differing opinions, as well as personality-based variables which impact interpersonal processes, such as self-esteem and feelings of threat.

An important area left largely unexamined in this approach, however, has been the role of the mass media in the development of tolerance. In modern society, most people derive the greater part of their political information from the mass media (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). It is through newspapers, radio and television news, and the internet that most people become politically knowledgeable, and it is through these sources that most can encounter opposing viewpoints and information (Mutz & Martin, 2001). Traditional

mass media such as newspapers and television news are a primary source for exposure to ideas, events and people which by their sheer number and diversity broaden one's own perspective, engaging one in the very processes of challenge and accommodation so vital to tolerance.

In considering the role of the mass media, however, it is necessary to take into account the potentially selective ways in which people expose themselves to media sources. In the same way in which interpersonal ties with only like-minded people does not engender differing viewpoints and thus does not lead to tolerance, so in the case of media use, selective exposure only to familiar content can mitigate the potential diversity of ideas and thus limit influences on tolerance.

Particularly interesting in this context is the use of the internet for news. With the proliferation of the Internet, individuals have access to a wealth of information and ideas, especially through online news. Compared to its traditional counterparts, however, the internet is different in content and structure, and is particularly amenable in its use to a high degree of selectivity (Singer, 2001). Research has shown, for example, that individuals who primarily access online newspapers for their news are very selective, choosing to expose themselves to information and stories which relate to personal interest and pre-existing views (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2003; Fico, Heeter, Soffin, & Stanley, 1987; Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000).

While greater use of mass media news would be expected to generally increase levels of political tolerance, reliance on online news as a primary news source may not. And given a society increasingly reliant on mediated communication, this is an important

issue to consider with broader implications for civil liberties and democratic governance. This is the focus of this research. This study aims to investigate the relationship between online media use and political tolerance development in American society.

The following introduction will provide a brief overview of the ideas and relationships examined in this study. Each idea will be discussed in more detail in the literature review in chapter two.

The most successful democratic systems and political structures rely on the tolerance of others, the ability to grant participation in the political system to individuals or groups that hold unpopular views (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). The study of political tolerance began in the 1950s with the seminal work of Stouffer (1955), who focused on individuals' willingness to grant nonconformist groups (antireligionists, communists, and socialists) the right to basic civil liberties. He found that while individuals supported the application of civil liberties, they were willing to deny them to members of nonconformist groups. Subsequent research following Stouffer confirmed his findings of intolerance (McCloskey, 1964; Prothro & Grigg, 1960). Over the years, numerous researchers have replicated Stouffer's (1955) study using the same methodological approach, questionnaire, and analysis. Offering a direct comparison to previous decades, it was believed that tolerance was on the rise (Davis, 1975; Nunn, Crocket & Williams, 1977). This idea has since been challenged, however, and it now seems there has been little increase in tolerance (Sullivan, Piereson & Marcus, 1982).

Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus (1982) redefined the framework of political tolerance, methodologically and conceptually. Tolerance is defined as "a willingness to

'put up with' those things that one rejects or opposes." and "a willingness to permit the expression of ideas or interests one opposes" (Sullivan et al., 1982, p. 2). The difference between early studies and the reconceptualized approach by Sullivan et al. is that the former measured tolerance toward members of three pre-identified groups (antireligionists, communists, and socialists), whereas the latter allows the subject to choose groups. This content-controlled approach in choosing one's most disliked group, even somewhat varied at times, has since become an accepted method of political tolerance measurement by researchers (Marcus et al., 1995).

The measurement issues surrounding tolerance, however, have been subject of debate for several decades. While the content-controlled measure of political tolerance is widely used it does not go without criticism, and scholars still debate issues of measurement surrounding the construct (Gibson & Bingham, 1982; McCloskey & Brill, 1983).

The development of political tolerance has been attributed to individual social characteristics, such as education, social status, age, religion, gender, urbanism, and region, as well as psychological determinants such as self-esteem and authoritarianism (Sullivan et al., 1982). Other researchers note that individuals who are more knowledgeable about politics, government, and other political and civic information were more tolerant (Sullivan, Walsh, Shamir, Barnum & Gibson, 1993), while still others argue that tolerance is a learned attitude (McCloskey & Brill, 1983). More recently, research has examined the role of social and institutional contexts in shaping political tolerance (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002; Marcus et al., 1995).

The development of political tolerance has been attributed to one's exposure to differing viewpoints because "it puts a person in touch with people whose ideas and values are different from one's own" (Stouffer, 1955, p.127). Tolerance researchers have primarily examined this from an interpersonal, group-membership perspective. There is a strong positive relationship between number of face-to-face groups one belongs to and political tolerance, where the relationship gets stronger with each additional group membership. The strongest link is when those memberships are to differing types of groups (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002).

Over the last decade, the availability of the Internet has revolutionized how information and news is delivered, allowing individuals alternatives to traditional forms of media (Nie & Erbring, 2000). Research has shown that online news and traditional news, even from the same publication, function differently and pose strikingly different qualities. Researchers have begun to examine the structural and visual differences of traditional and online news, though the *effects* of consuming one particular medium over the other are far less understood. Structurally, for example, online newspapers place stories in differing areas than their print newspaper counterparts. Whereas in print newspapers it is clear what is the most important story, individuals must actively seek out these stories online (Tweksbury & Althaus, 2000). Online newspapers tend to provide links within a story, allowing the reader further access to information and/or related stories. Therefore, information is more plentiful online, though the amount of information may inevitably distract readers as well (Tweksbury & Althaus).

Relevant to the development of political tolerance, however, is selection and

exposure to varying content. Several studies found that readers tend to select content of online news more on the basis of individual and self-interest in comparison to traditional forms of media. Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) examined readers of the online and print version of the *New York Times* to see what type of content they attended to. Those who read the online version of the *New York Times* were less likely to read political, national, and international stories compared to those that read the print version of the *New York Times*. Furthermore, those who read the online version tended to only read stories that matched personal interest (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2003). Other researchers echo these findings, arguing that online news tends to appeal more to the personal interest of a reader, enabling individuals to selectively consume information of personal liking while ignoring other content (Fico et al., 1987).

Several explanations have been offered for why online newspapers may elicit readers to expose themselves to similar opinions and information. The simple page-by-page format of a print newspaper structurally forces individuals to expose themselves to headlines of differing perspectives even while searching for stories of interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984;Graber, 1988). Information in online newspapers is organized topically, allowing readers to quickly find, search, and read stories that clearly match their interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Fico et al., 1987).

A second way online papers may minimize exposure to differing viewpoints is simply the presentation. Althaus & Tewksbury (2002) argue that web-based newspapers do not have the ability to use traditional means to highlight importance of stories, such as large headlines, or visually showing the length of a particular story.

Readers may draw inferences about story importance given the online format (Althaus & Tewksbury).

Other scholars have suggested that online newspapers have not only influenced how information is presented, perceived, and delivered, but the feature of interactivity allows for immediate information that is personalized to one's preference and liking (Rich, 2003).

The majority of individuals derive their information from media sources, which provide exposure to individuals and opinions different from one's own (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). The media that varies in terms of opinions and viewpoints, offers differing political perspectives (Mutz & Martin, 2001), and exposure to various current events and information outside of the familiar. While tolerance is positively related to varying points of view and has been studied primarily interpersonally, one could argue that the media provide an individual with multiple perspectives and differing opinions as well.

However, there is little research examining the relationship between media use and tolerance. What has been done has only focused on the presentation of media content, such as the effects of news framing on political tolerance (Keum, Hillback, Rojas, Gil De Zuniga, Shah & McLeod; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997). Tolerance develops as a result of exposure to differing ideas and points of view, and the news media is a primary source for this information. It is that aspect of this relationship that has not been previously examined. However, since tolerance is related to the exposure to differing points of view we would expect those exposed to more media to be more tolerant.

The above discussion was an introduction to the key ideas examined in this study.

The following chapter will discuss in greater detail concepts of Political Tolerance, Online and Traditional News, and Political Tolerance and Media. Chapter three will address issues of causal assumptions derived from correlational data, and the five hypotheses proposed for the study. Chapter four will overview the methods, and includes a discussion of research design, population, and scales used. Chapter five will present the results of the study, and finally chapter six discusses the overall findings, implications, and limitations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tolerance

The success of political structures and democratic systems is dependent upon its citizens abilities to extend civil liberties to groups or individuals that one finds unfavorable and/or hold unpopular views (Sullivan & Transue, 1999). Tolerance has been defined in many ways by several different researchers, as meanings can differ in various contexts. Tolerance is not a simple concept. In fact, it is quite complex in terms of its definitional consistency among researchers and methodological measurements. The term tolerance itself is not mutually exclusive with a single definitive meaning, with several related concepts, such as tolerance of religion, open-mindedness, democratic, and unprejudiced feelings often stirring the same connotations (Sullivan, Piereson & Marcus, 1982). However, most agree that the basic foundation in defining tolerance include putting up with someone or something one is not fond of and/or accepting something one feels the urge to reject (Vogt, 1997). The following will review (1) the definitional issues of political tolerance, (2) History of political tolerance research and its importance to democratic societies, (3) the measurement issues associated with political tolerance, and (4) a brief evaluation regarding the state of its research.

Definitions of Tolerance

The study of political tolerance began in the 1950s with the seminal work of Stouffer (1955) when he published *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties.* Stouffer was concerned with the growing intolerance of the 1950s, and thus conducted a

large interview that included more than 6000 women and men from across the U.S. While never clearly defining tolerance, Stouffer was interested in an individuals' willingness to grant nonconformist groups the right to basic civil liberties. At the time, non-conformist groups included atheists, socialists, and communists. He found that while individuals supported the application of civil liberties, they were willing to deny them to members of nonconformist groups. Much research on political tolerance was developed and refined as a result of Stouffer's landmark study. However, most of these contributions were regarding methodological refinement, and therefore, a more detailed discussion of Stouffer's study and measurements is discussed in a later section.

Decade's later, political tolerance conceptually changed. Sullivan et al. (1982) defined tolerance as "a willingness to 'put up with' those things that one rejects or opposes." and politically it means "a willingness to permit the expression of ideas or interests one opposes" (p. 2). The rules of any democratic nation should, in theory, be known by its citizens and equally applied to everyone even if those opinions and viewpoints do not coincide with the societal norm. The difference between Sullivan et al. and Stouffer's view regarding tolerance is that the former argue that to be intolerant one must dislike a member of a group first, whereas the latter did not acknowledge this in his conceptualization of the concept.

Other researchers have slightly different yet similar definitions of tolerance, such as "political tolerance refers to a willingness to extend the rights of citizenship to all members of the polity—that is to allow political freedoms to those who are different" (Gibson & Bingham, 1982, p. 604). Tolerance is "opposition to state actions that limit

opportunities for citizens, individually or in groups, to compete for political power" (Gibson & Bingham, 1985, p. 106). Others define tolerance as "the belief that all citizens have the right to express their political views, regardless of how dangerous or repugnant those views may be…Tolerance signals a fundamental commitment to the rules of the democratic game…A high degree of tolerance signifies the recognition of the importance of allowing all in the political community the right to express their views, regardless of content" (Nie, Junn & Stehlik-Barry, 1996, p. 29).

The previous definitions of tolerance describe it from a political perspective. However, there are other types of tolerance that deserve attention. Vogt (1997) defines tolerance as "intentional self-restraint in the face of something one dislikes, objects to, finds threatening, or otherwise has a negative attitude toward—usually in order to maintain a social or political group or to promote a harmony in a group" (p. 3). Tolerance defined in this way not only includes the political dimensions, but includes a moral and social tolerance aspect.

Similarly, Sullivan et al. (1982) conceptually recognized a social tolerance component as well. While never offering a clear definition, social tolerance items within the political tolerance scale are used. These items describing social tolerance include, "would they invite a member of the group for dinner, would they be upset if a member of that group moved in next door, and would they feel positively about their son or daughter dating a member of that group" (p. 237). Weldon (2006) views social tolerance as "the right to express cultural difference and the acceptance of this by the native population" (p. 355).

Intolerance has never been defined in clear terms, yet researchers conceptualize where it fits within the body of tolerance research. McClosky and Brill (1983) argue that the ability to be intolerant is more natural for individuals than being tolerant. Intolerance is viewed as easier for individuals, and that if one dislikes a person or groups beliefs, they are likely to exhibit intolerance unless "one has discovered that, for some reason, another type of response is legally or socially required, or preferred" (p. 13). In other words, unless individuals feel pressure to exhibit tolerance from an outside source, it is more natural (and likely) for that person to remain intolerant toward a particular person or group. From a cognitive standpoint, intolerance is easier because prejudices and stereotypes about individuals or groups that are different have been shown to cognitively develop with relative ease (Aboud, 1988; Devine, 1989). If individuals can learn prejudice, it is argued that an intolerant individual can *learn* tolerance. In particular, tolerance can be learned through such factors as understanding and learning current information regarding the political landscape, such as what civil liberties are, etc. (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse, and Wood, 1995).

History of Tolerance Research

There have been numerous important developments in political tolerance research that influence political tolerance development, and several methodological changes in tolerance measurement as well. Measurement of tolerance, however, deserves attention of its own and therefore will be discussed in detail in the following section. This section will review the research history surrounding political tolerance, including a discussion of the primary influences in its development, as well as its impact on democratic systems.

These include individual social characteristics, such as education, age, social status, religion, gender, urbanism, and region (Stouffer, 1955), and psychological determinants such as self-esteem and authoritarianism (Sullivan et al., 1982). Researchers have argued the amount of political information, knowledge about government and political processes, and political and civic information are an influence on political tolerance development (Sullivan, Walsh, Shamir, Barnum & Gibson, 1993), while still others argue that tolerance is a learned attitude (McCloskey & Brill, 1983). More recently, research has examined the role of social and institutional contexts in shaping political tolerance (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002; Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood, 1995). The following section will review these major influences on political tolerance, specifically focusing on individual social characteristics, psychological characteristics, political knowledge, and social/institutional contexts. Additionally, the implications of having a politically tolerant or intolerant society on the democratic process will be discussed as well.

The social determinants of political tolerance include characteristics such as education, social status, age, gender, religion, urbanism, and region (Stouffer, 1955). Early studies on tolerance found a positive relationship between level of education and tolerance. Stouffer (1955) reported that only 16 percent of those without a college degree were more tolerant, while 66 percent of college-educated individuals were tolerant. From these findings, it could be argued that tolerance is a learned attribute. Other researchers support these findings (Nunn, Crockett & Williams, 1978), arguing further that education has an even greater impact on tolerance now than at the time of Stouffer's findings. While education may be an important determinant of tolerance, other researchers question how

much influence survey-item wording had on the outcome (Schuman & Presser, 1977). However, using the new content-controlled measure of tolerance, which is discussed in the next section, Sullivan et al. (1982) argue that education is less important than previously reported in other studies.

Stouffer (1955) and many others did not separate social status from that of education, although, many researchers since have made the distinction. Korman (1971) argued that separate of education, experience in the workplace and status within the occupation play a part in political tolerance development. More recent findings, however, show weak correlations between the components of social status and political tolerance (Sullivan et al., 1982).

In the original tolerance study, Stouffer (1955) reported that age had an impact on how tolerant a person is. More specifically, he reported that the younger generation was considerably more tolerant than the older generations. While Stouffer attributed this finding to education, with the younger generation receiving more education than the older, other researchers have investigated age independent of education. Nunn et al., (1978) argue that tolerance for all age groups has increased since the 1950s. Others echo Stouffer's findings, reporting that high school students are significantly more tolerant than their parents (Jennings & Niemi, 1974). More recently, Owen and Dennis (1987) found that adolescents are considerably more tolerant than their parents, and Sullivan et al. (1982) found a small, but significant difference among younger and older respondents.

Another social variable examined in relation to tolerance is gender. Much of the past research recognizes a gender difference, but attribute it to the other social factors

affecting tolerance, such as women being more religious (and those who are religious are less tolerant), etc. (Golebiowska, 1999). Stouffer (1955) tried to control for this but found there was still a gender difference among tolerance, and argued that it was due to the differences in which boys and girls are raised. Golebiowska (1999) found gender differences in political knowledge and expertise, which she argues are what made women exhibit less tolerance compared to men. Using the content-controlled method, Sullivan et al. (1982) found that women and men select different disliked groups, noting that women tend to pick nonreligious groups as their least-liked. However, no differences between men and women were reported (Sullivan, 1982). Religion also plays a factor in influencing tolerance. Stouffer (1955) found that those who described themselves as more religious were less tolerant than others. Sullivan et al. (1982) also found that religion plays a part, noting that different dominations are more tolerant than others, with Baptists being the least tolerant.

The final individual social variables to influence tolerance are urbanization and region. Stouffer (1955) observed that individuals who lived in urban areas showed greater tolerance than those in rural areas, which he credited to living among differing others, and exposure to diverse thinking and ideas. However, Sullivan et al. (1982) discredited this claim noting that urbanization is completely unrelated to tolerance. They did find, however, that individuals living in rural areas were more likely to pick left-wing targets as their least liked group (Sullivan et al., 1982). Similarly, researchers argued that individuals living in the West side of the country were the most tolerant, followed by the East coast, the Middle West, and the South (Nunn et al., 1978; Stouffer, 1955). Sullivan et al.

(1982) found, however, that while the South is significantly different in terms of tolerance, none of the regions was significantly intolerant.

Along with social factors, psychological factors can influence tolerance. Substantial work has been done on the authoritarian personality from the area of social psychology, and tolerance researchers have found several relationships among the concept and tolerance. Authoritarian personality exists because of particular traits within the individual, which include willingness to obey authority, commanding subordinates, hostility, hate toward those in out-groups, etc. Self-esteem is similarly related to tolerance. Researchers have found that those with lower self-esteem and authoritative personality tend to be less tolerant (Sotelo, 2000; Sullivan et al., 1982; Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, Piereson, 1981).

Knowledge of the political system and other political forms of information is related to tolerance. It has been reported that individuals involved in politics, as compared to the general public, know more democratic rules and norms (minority rights, free speech, etc) (McCloskey, 1964). Additionally, these politically involved individuals tend to support democratic freedoms and rules, and apply them more frequently to individuals and situations compared to the general public (McCloskey, 1964).

Sullivan, Walsh, Shamir, Barnum, and Gibson (1993) noted that individual characteristics, such as personality and demographic background, predispose politicians to be more tolerant than the general public. However, the process of political socialization has a far greater influence than individual characteristics. Stouffer (1955) reported similar findings with individual characteristics, arguing that politicians are likely

to be more educated, come from more affluent areas, and live in more urban areas, which make these individuals more tolerant. However, Sullivan et al. found socialization to be a factor because politicians possess more political information, understand the political system, and understand the premise of civil liberties more than the average citizen. This combination, researchers believe, makes them more tolerant (Sullivan et al., 1993).

Similarly, Sniderman (1975) argues that learning about politics and democratic information influences tolerance. He argues that those who know about political information are also more likely to be committed to democratic norms and principles, and therefore likely to be more tolerant. Other researchers also agree that those with political knowledge and expertise about the system make differing tolerance judgments than those who possess less information (Marcus et al., 1995; McCloskey & Brill, 1983; Sullivan et al., 1982).

Researchers have also examined tolerance from an interpersonal, group-membership perspective. There is a strong positive relationship between number of face-to-face groups one belongs to and political tolerance, where the relationship gets stronger with each additional group membership. The strongest link is when those memberships are to differing types of groups (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). Other researchers have produced similar results, reporting that individuals who identify with or are exposed to a face-to-face group are more tolerant (Sotelo, 2000).

The influence of political tolerance and its development is significant to the concept, and health, of democratic societies. In order for a healthy democratic society to exist, citizens must tolerate the political participation and views of others, even if those

others have nonconforming views and if one feels threatened by differing opinions (Putnam, 1993; Sullivan & Transue, 1999). Political tolerance contributes to the development of a culture that is politically homogeneous, a culture that would be limited in political liberty, rights, and freedoms if its citizens were intolerant (Gibson, 1992b). Mass intolerance within a society regarding liberties and political rights of those who hold unfavorable or unpopular views influences how individuals interact with one another (Chilton, 1988).

Political tolerance development has been internationally studied in countries that are both established and emerging democracies. Marquart-Pyatt and Paxton (2007) compared tolerance levels and development between a pre-established democracy and a newly formed democracy. Following the notion that political tolerance is the primary democratic attribute needed in the development and maintenance of successful democracies, researchers compared tolerance in Eastern and Western Europe. Looking at tolerance across six Western countries and eight Eastern European countries, researchers find that tolerance is higher in longer established democracies, whereas individuals in newly established democracies are considerably intolerant. Others had similar sentiments, reporting that stable democracies that have maintained that status over time were more tolerant than those who have not. Researchers also noted that this finding was independent of the socioeconomic status of the country (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003).

Individuals who do not feel that they can express themselves politically, that they themselves do not possess political freedom, are much more likely to be intolerant of others (Gibson, 1992). Moreover, these individuals are likely to live in communities that

are more intolerant, and have significant others who are more intolerant as well (Gibson). Similarly, those who not only feel that they possess political freedom, but are using civil liberties and themselves are immersed in democratic freedom, are significantly more tolerant than those who are not (Peffley & Rohrschneider, 2003). Other researchers echo these findings, reporting that individuals who have political experience, know more about the political systems, its norms, and support the political norms of the system are increasingly more tolerant (Sotelo, 2000).

In summary, many variables have been found to influence tolerance and subsequently impacted the democratic system in numerous ways. Social characteristics, such as religion, urbanism, religion, gender, age, education, and social status (Stouffer, 1955), as well as psychological factors such as authoritarianism and threat (Sullivan et al., 1982) are related to tolerance. Additionally, level of political knowledge (Sniderman, 1975) and social/institutional contexts, such as type and number of groups memberships (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002) impact tolerance as well. The implications of a tolerant society have far reaching implications within a democratic system, with stable democracies being more tolerant, and citizens feeling as though they have political and social freedom.

Measurement Issues in Political Tolerance

Stouffer (1955), as previously mentioned, began the study of political tolerance. His measurement tool and survey items were what subsequent researchers have most commonly used. Stouffer assessed the level of tolerance in individuals by first asking a series of open-ended questions, such as "What kinds of things do you worry about," "Are there other problems you worry or are concerned about, especially political or

world problems" (p. 20). Another set of open-ended questions referred specifically to feelings about communists. For example, this included "What kind of people in America are most likely to be Communists" (p. 20).

Based on the answers to the open-ended questions, Stouffer (1955) complied the Willingness to Tolerate Nonconformists Scale, a 15-item questionnaire. This portion of the assessment aimed to measure how tolerant individuals were of socialists, atheists, communists, and individuals who have been questioned (but deny) being a communist. Subsequent research using Stouffer's measure confirmed his findings of intolerance (McCloskey, 1964; Prothro & Grigg, 1960). In direct contridiction to previous decades, research showed tolerance was on the rise (Davis, 1975; Nunn, Crocket & Williams, 1977).

Closer analysis has since revealed several methodological flaws in Stouffer's scale that contributed to his reported increase in tolerance. Researchers observed that the groups used in Stouffer's measurement of tolerance were all leftist (Socialists, atheist, communists, etc.). So while there were likely high levels of intolerance directed toward communists, atheists, and socialists in 1955, intolerance shifted toward other groups over the years. To address these issues, the General Social Survey in 1976 modified the Stouffer battery to create the tolerance measure used today. Items were derived from the original tolerance measure by Stouffer, but included a greater variety in groups. This 15-item measurement, asks participants about a variety of groups, including antireligious, communists, those who advocate letting the military run the U.S. and eliminate elections, homosexuals, and those who feel blacks are inferior because of genetics. Respondents are

asked three tolerance-based items *per group.* These items ask whether members of the specific group should have books available in the public library, be allowed to give a speech, and be allowed to teach at the university or college level (Mondak & Mitchell, 2003). A sum of individual responses yields a 0-15 score, which is looked at as a range of tolerance with zero being the only completely tolerant answer.

Many researchers use this GSS index today and prefer it to newly developed methods (Gibson, 1992; Nie et al., 1996). Mondak and Mitchell (2003) assessed the trends in tolerance through the examination of the GSS modified Stouffer battery scale. They argue that this measurement cannot accurately assess the full spectrum of tolerance, and rather, only taps into two dimensions of tolerance: (1) whether respondents are tolerant or intolerant, and (2) the breadth and depth among those who register as tolerant (Mondak & Mitchell).

Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1979) also challenged the previously accepted measure by Stouffer (1955). Sullivan et al. (1982) redefined the framework of political tolerance, methodologically and conceptually. Sullivan et al., however, also reject the GSS approach to measuring tolerance, arguing that one cannot measure the tolerance of an individual if he or she does not hold strong negative feelings against a particular group. The GSS measurement, therefore, can only measure the tolerance of those who dislike atheists, communists, racists, homosexuals, and militarists. Researchers argue that when respondents are forced to pick from a set list, one is only measuring attitudes *toward* a group, rather than tolerance *of* the group (Sullivan et al., 1982).

Instead, Sullivan et al. (1982) proposed what is known today as the content-

controlled method of political tolerance measurement. This approach was developed on the premise that "tolerance can only be measured with reference to groups that people strongly dislike, but these groups are bound to vary from person to person" (p. 60). Researchers sought a procedure that would measure one individual's tolerance toward a specific group, while at the same time measuring another's tolerance toward a completely different group. Sullivan et al. presented the respondent with several groups, such as socialists, communists, Ku Klux Klan, John Birch Society, anti-abortionists, pro-abortionists, and atheists. Participants were then asked to identify from the list the group they liked *least*, or the respondent could write in a group that was not found on the list. This ensured the measurement of tolerance toward a disliked group for each individual even though the disliked groups varied (Sullivan et al., 1982). This measure then presents a series of six-items each of which pertains to whether one would tolerate an individual from their least liked group to participate in a number of activities, such as run for President, make a public speech, etc. This content-controlled approach, even somewhat varied at times, has since been the accepted method of political tolerance measurement by researchers (Gibson & Bingham, 1982; McCloskey & Brill, 1983). In its more recent version, the content-controlled measurement asked respondents to rate each group individually based on how much dislike they felt toward the group (Barnum & Sullivan, 1989).

It should be noted, however, that the Stouffer (1955) influenced GSS measure and Sullivan et al. (1982) are not the only political tolerance measures in the field, nor has everyone agreed that one approach is necessarily better than the other. For example,

Gibson (1986) questioned the polarizing left-wing and right-wing groups that Sullivan et al. (1982) used. He argued that selection of least-liked groups is predicted by ideological distance from that group. This means that those who subscribe to left-wing ideological beliefs will be disposed to select right-wing groups and visa versa. Additionally, Gibson objects to the idea of measuring only one disliked group, arguing that some may be intolerant toward only one group while others may be intolerant toward three or four groups. The least-liked measure treats the tolerance of those two individuals equally, and Gibson contends that the second, third, and fourth disliked group must be measured as well.

More recently, Gibson (1992a) compared Sullivan et al. (1982) content-controlled "least liked" measure of tolerance to the traditional Stouffer-based GSS measurement using data obtained from a national survey. Additionally, he modified the two prominent approaches to tolerance measurement in several ways. He used the General Social Survey, which is based off of Stouffer's 15-item survey, asking about three activities and five groups. He also repeated Stouffer's survey using a subset of the items. Expanding upon the most-disliked approach by Sullivan et al., he also measured tolerance for individuals' four most disliked groups. Conversely, he used Sullivan et al. same six-items but only provided two groups, one from the far right and one from the far left (communists and Ku Klux Klan). In conclusion he notes that the derivatives of tolerance are not tied to the measurement used, and therefore argues that future tolerance research can use either approach in assessment. Clearly, he argues, there is not one best way to measure tolerance.

Still others have argued that inclusion of group-based questionnaires (least-liked) has little impact on tolerance, and more so, may hinder the measurement of tolerance all together (Lawrence, 1976; Gibson & Bingham, 1985). Gibson and Bingham (1982) developed the Dimensions of Political Tolerance Scale, which measures how important individuals consider right to voice, politically participate, and organize politically. Individuals who are politically tolerant, researchers' argue, will score high on how favorable they rate social liberties. This particular measure is different than previous forms of tolerance measurement because it eliminates the groups entirely.

Why is the changing methodological approach and measurement such a pertinent issue in the area of political tolerance? Depending on the measurement tool used, researchers have produced drastically different results. For example, Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978) utilized the same content-based measurement employed by Stouffer (1955). Where the results produced by Stouffer revealed a highly intolerant society, Nun et al. concluded that tolerance was on the rise and that "The most important finding from our efforts to track trends in American tolerance is that the citizens who are most supportive of civil liberties have emerged as the majority in our society- and they are not a silent majority" (p. 12). Sullivan et al. (1982) argues that because this study used the same groups as Stouffer that it was actually measuring attitudes toward the groups used in the 1950s. People had grown more favorable of the particular groups, not more tolerant.

State of Tolerance Research

Decades of past research show that political tolerance develops from a number of

factors. Stouffer (1955) was the first to identify individual characteristics that impact levels of political tolerance, and later Sullivan et al. (1982) uncovered various psychological underpinnings of tolerance development as well. More recent research has turned its focus to more complex influences of political tolerance, moving away from the simplistic explanatory account of tolerance development to contextually complex phenomenon.

The notion that contemporary information can influence political tolerance is a newer area of exploration. Marcus et al. (1995) argue that political tolerance cannot simply be attributed to individual disposition, and argue that people consume and are reacting to contemporary information as well. Furthermore, researchers have examined *how* individuals make tolerance decisions, and the underlying process that occurs during these decisions. Researchers argue that people react in a particular way to the information they receive. For example, this is influenced by the order in which they receive information such that. If the information is of some threat to an individual, it can impact the influence the information has on political tolerance as well (Marcus et al., 1992).

From this vein, a greater interdisciplinary focus in the study of political tolerance is emerging The way in which information is presented can be studied from a social psychological perspective, for example with impression formation and schema development process (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Social identity theory can also come into play when dealing with the presentation of threatening information (Tajfel, 1970).

As the above discussion highlighted, the conceptualization of tolerance as a

construct has varied, with methodological and definitional approaches changing overtime. Regardless, politically tolerant citizens and societies are important to functioning democratic systems, and a multitude of social, psychological, and institutional factors are related to tolerance development. The media may function as one of the factors because it provides exposure to a variety of ideas. The following section will discuss the media and the differences between traditional and online formats.

Online and Traditional News

Though the computer has existed for several decades, the personal home computer only surfaced in the 1980s. Over the last decade, the availability of the Internet has revolutionalized how information and news is delivered (Nie & Erbring, 2000). According to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project (2010), 74% of American's 18 years and older use the Internet, with 93% of users between the ages of 18-29 identifying themselves as Internet users. The increased use of online discussions, online news, and unlimited amount of information will serve to create and informed, engaged, and influenced public (Nie & Erbring). However, research has shown that online newspapers and print newspapers, even from the same publication, function differently and pose strikingly different qualities.

The role of news media use in political knowledge and communication has received considerable attention over the years. In general, research has emerged into two camps, with some arguing the negative impact of news on political attitudes while others contending the opposite. For example, television news coverage of political information has been criticized for overly simplifying complex political issues (Capella & Jamieson, 1997), for its episodic coverage of political events and information (Iyengar, 1994), and

has been labeled as a primary cause of a disengaged political public (Putnam, 1995). Generally, however, greater media use has been associated with greater levels of political participation, knowledge, and efficacy (Norris, 2000).

Mass media effects theories have not generally been applied to tolerance research. Framing theory, for example, has some relevance to the issue of tolerance. Framing influences the publics' perception and reasoning of political issues because of the way in which the media depict and present information. In other words, framing not only influences the presentation of a particular issue, but also the effect this depiction has. Iyengar (1991) notes that the media can frame a story either episodically or thematically, with the former focusing on individual cases or episodes and the latter highlighting broader themes. Whether a topic is episodically or thematically framed effects how individuals understand and interpret social and political problems (Iyengar). When specific features of a complex topic are presented as one or two key points, information is limited, and opinions regarding those specific issues are changed (Nelson et al., 1997). However, framing focuses on the portrayal of a single issue, and in terms of tolerance, how it effects feelings about the groups involved in that issue.

TV News and Print News

Previous work examining the differences in print news and television news has been plentiful, and much of the recent research looking at online news stems from these earlier findings. Researchers argue that one's brain activity goes through different processes when varying types of media are used, such as print newspaper compared to television news (Krugman, 1966; Wright, 1981). For example, McLuhan (1964) offered a cognitive explanation for media when he distinguished between "cold" and "hot"

media, where cold media (newspapers) elicited a passive reaction from consumers and hot (television) promote an active response. Therefore, one could argue that using either online or print news as one's primary news source may lead one to view the world differently. Many researchers argue that newspapers are far superior to television news in terms of information dissemination and political issue related information (McLeod & McDonald, 1985; Patterson, 1980). On the other hand, other researchers argue that retention of information may be stronger from television due to individual interest in certain topics (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992), and the mediated and visual appeal of television (Walma van der Molen & van der Voort, 2000).

Research has found that the strongest predictors of political issue and party differences stemmed from the attention and reading of the newspaper (Chaffee, Zhao & Leshner, 1994). Similarly, those who frequently use the newspaper for news can recall political and other news information better than individuals who frequently rely on other mediums (Petty, 1988; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989).

Many scholars feel that television news is not an informative source pertaining to political news and issues (Robinson & Levy, 1986; Berkowitz & Pritchard, 1989). For example, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1984) found that those who were heavy viewers of TV news were more likely to have similar attitudes regarding social and political perspectives. These same individuals had more distrust and fear of others. Those individuals who relied on newspapers for news were more trustful of others and had varying social and political attitudes.

Other researchers note similar differences in individuals who rely on television news from those who rely on newspapers for news. For example, individuals who rely on newspapers have greater political knowledge (Becker & Whitney, 1980).

Print News and Online News

Compared to research exploring the difference between print newspapers and television news, examination of online news is relatively new. The greater incorporation of the Internet into daily life has opened up yet another venue for individuals to gather information. Individuals use the Internet to access a variety of information for various purposes. Cornfield (2003), for example, argued that Internet use is related to political efficacy, participation, and knowledge. Whereas other researchers see the Internet increasing the knowledge gap in political engagement and information, further informing those already politically involved while intellectually leaving behind others (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 2003).

In one study, researchers examined how learning differs as a result of consuming online or traditional news. In a study that examined the way in which memory and memory structure are influenced by print newspapers, online papers, and television, learning was dependent on the medium of consumption (Eveland, Seo, & Marton, 2002). Using an experimental research design, researchers found that print newspapers and television produced more accurate *recall* of political information than online newspapers. However, online newspapers were better able to help individuals' *learn* how to structure their memory and recall functions in the brain. Therefore, researchers conclude that online newspapers are better for learning political information but not for recall of information.

While consumption of newspaper news is better for recall of political, local, and international news information (Eveland et al., 2002).

Currently, researchers have been examining the structural and visual differences of print and online newspapers, though the *effects* of consuming one particular medium over the other is far less understood. Structurally, for example, online newspapers place stories in differing areas than their print newspaper counterparts. Whereas in print newspapers it is clear what is the most important story, individuals must actively seek out these stories online (Tweksbury & Althaus, 2000). Furthermore, online newspapers tend to provide links within a story, which allows the reader further access to information and/or related stories. Therefore, it's been noted that information, such as breaking news, is more plentiful online, though the amount of information may inevitably distract readers as well (Tweksbury & Althaus, 2000).

Singer (2001) examined the print and online versions of several newspapers to compare the type of coverage and frequency of local coverage that both mediums gave. Looking at one week of stories, the print and online editions of six Colorado papers were compared. Results of the content analysis indicated that 11.4% of stories that appeared in the online version did not appear in the print version, whereas 63.9% of the stories that appeared in the print version did not appear in the online version. However, unlike print versions the online paper did allow access to archives and discussion boards, which may or may not impact a particular reader. The multi-media function sets online newspapers apart from their counterparts. Schultz (1999) conducted a content analysis of major online newspapers over a one-year period and found that 16% incorporated some form of multi-media, such as audio or video. Similarly, Dibean and Garrison (2001) looked at

100 online papers and reported that 27.3% incorporated audio and 30.3% incorporated video with their news content. While the effects of such multi-media usage in online papers is not known, it is clear that the trend is continuing to grow with almost half of all online papers using these functions today.

It is likely that the most important difference between print and online newspapers is the interactivity function that the Internet allows. What started out as simply clicking links and gaining access to more stories has shifted into a two-way communicative exchange, merging traditional print news with that of interpersonal communication between other readers, editors, and anyone who has access to a computer. Dibean & Garrison (2001) found that all online papers provided email addresses and other forms of instant contact information for readers to get in touch with newspaper staff. Additionally, many online papers offered forums where readers could post comments regarding stories and respond to others, while others posted online reader polls, and even chat rooms.

Previous work examining the individual effects of print news and television news consumption has been plentiful, though as previously noted, the effects of online news is less known. For example, it's been found that individuals tend to remember more material when exposed to print versions of newspapers in comparison to their partner online versions (Sundar, Narayan, Obregon, & Uppal, 1998).

Some recent work also suggests that online newspapers can affect memory structure (Eveland, Seo, & Marton, 2002). Overall, however, research in this area is still recent.

Online News and Selectivity

Selectivity of news and information has been a subject of discussion for decades, particularly as it relates to political information. Selective exposure theory, for example, stemming from political news content, is a commonly used theoretical approach in understanding the mechanisms of preference and choice in information (Bryant & Miron, 2004). According to the theory, individuals seek information supporting personal position on a topic over information that may challenge that preference. Therefore, individuals are more likely to read, watch, or listen to information that will match personal preference and avoid the information that may challenge it (Fischer, Jonas, Frey, & Schulz-Hardt, 2005; Mutz, 2006).

While empirical research is limited, researchers have argued that Internet use may encourage selectivity of information. The current information environment of online information, by expanding into an increasingly specialized market for news information through changing technologies, allow selectivity of political and other news information (Bimber & Davis, 2003). Sunstein (2001, 2007) contends that the Internet limits discussion and exposure to information that differs from one's own. Individuals may construct "echo chambers" through Internet use, where they exposure themselves to viewpoints that reflect their own. Individuals can avoid information that effectively challenges personal opinion, which in turn fosters a politically fragmented society. Sunstein goes on to argue as more individuals turn to online news for information, the self-selectivity of news information will infiltrate the political news landscape (Sunstein, 2001).

Previous research examining selectivity to media contends that individuals will choose information that conforms to personal opinion when more choice is given. For example, Mutz and Martin (2001) found that when individuals were given the opportunity to choose among various local news stations, each of which supported a particular partisan perspective, they were less likely to be exposed to perspectives different from their own.

Therefore, the structure of online information requires and encourages selectivity of content, and research as shown that individuals are more likely to be choose information based on personal opinion and preference when choice is available. Several studies have supported the notion that readers tend to select content of online news more on the basis of individual and self-interest in comparison to consumption of other media. For example, Fico, Heeter, Soffin, and Stanley, 1987 argue that online newspapers tend to appeal more to the personal interest of a reader, thus enabling individuals to selectively consume information and ignore others.

Tewksbury and Althaus (2000) examined readers of the online and print version of the *New York Times* to see what type of content they attended to. It was found that those who read the online version of the *New York Times* were less likely to read political, national, and international stories compared to those that read the print version of the *New York Times.* Furthermore, researchers found that those who read the online version tended to only read stories which matched personal interest (Althaus & Teksbury, 2002).

Similarly, others have found that those who use the Internet for news, and particularly political information, choose stories that are consistent with personal beliefs

and attitudes. Kobayasi and Ikeda (2009) examined survey data regarding exposure of political information when using the Internet. They found that when individuals browsed the web for political information they were more likely to read information that supported their own political beliefs, particularly if issue importance was perceived as high.

Other researchers support this view and offer numerous explanations for why online newspapers may elicit readers to expose themselves to similar preexisting viewpoints. The simple page-by-page format of a print newspaper, structurally, forces individuals to expose themselves to headlines of differing perspectives even while searching for stories of interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984;Graber, 1988). Whereas those who access information through online newspapers find their information already organized topically, organized in a way that allows readers to quickly find, search, and read stories that clearly match their interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Fico et al., 1987).

A second way online news may minimize exposure to differing viewpoints is simply through the presentation. Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) argue that web-based newspapers do not have the ability to use traditional means to highlight importance of stories, such as large headlines, or visually showing the length of a particular story. Readers may draw inferences about story important given the online formats (Althaus & Tewksbury).

Political Tolerance and Media

The majority of individuals derive their information from media sources, which provide exposure to individuals and opinions different from one's own (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). It is the media, beyond all other sources of information, which vary in terms of political perspectives, political information, and differing opinions and

viewpoints (Mutz & Martin, 2001). Tolerance is positively related to varying points of view (Stouffer, 1955), and one could argue that since media are key in providing individuals' with multiple perspectives and differing opinions, the media may potentially play a significant role in political tolerance development. Though as mentioned, the media—in terms of its use, format, presentation, content—has rarely been explored in relation to political tolerance. The following section will provide an overview of research that has explored political tolerance and media, examining (1) Tolerance and Framing, and (2) Tolerance and Internet users.

Tolerance and Framing

Frames may influence the mental processing of information, applicability of that information, and the accessibility of information (Price & Tewksbury, 1996). Framing can be described as "the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs political issues or public controversy (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997)

Nelson et al. (1997) examined the way in which media framing of civil liberties affected levels of tolerance. Using an experimental method, participants were randomly split into two groups and both shown a video of the Ku Klux Klan at a rally. The first group was shown a news story which framed the Ku Klux Klan as an issue of free speech, while the second group was shown a video which framed the group as disruptive and challenging public order. Participants who where shown the video framed as a free speech issue were significantly more tolerant of the Ku Klux Klan than those who were shown the video framed as disrupting social order. Framing, the researchers argue, shifts

the importance of particular aspects of an issue. Individuals cannot successfully make a tolerance judgment of the group because the framing of the message interferes. Therefore, the way in which media content is presented can significantly influence tolerance judgments of users (Nelson et al., 1997).

Similarly, Keum, Hillback, Rojas, Gil De Zuniga, Shah and McLeod (2005) examined news framing of civil liberties and political tolerance, as well as the impact individual dispositions had on the relationship. Using an online experimental survey method, individuals were exposed to varying types of news stories regarding U.S. security policies and the implications of such policies on a particular group. Researchers were primarily interested in whether framing at a group (social trends) or individual level had a greater impact on tolerance, where the latter is framing around a particular instance and is episodic (Iyengar, 1991), and the former focuses on framing of social trends. Episodic framing contributes to "attributions of responsibility both for the creation of problems or situations (causal responsibility) and for the resolution of these problems or situations (treatment responsibility)" (Iyengar, 1991, p. 3). Results indicated that individuals were less tolerant when exposed to framing at an individual level (Keum et al., 2005).

The most recent examination of news framing examined its impact on political tolerance through the assessment of civil liberties. Boyle, Schmierbach, Armstrong, Cho, McCluskey, McLeod, and Shah (2006) was interested in the tension between civil liberties and national security post September 11th. Using two experimental groups, both groups were presented a news story pertaining to the restriction of civil liberties of an

extremist group by government officials. The cause was either supported or opposed by participants in a particular group. Individuals were much more likely to rally and speak up against issues they were opposed to compared to issues which they supported (Boyle et al., 2006).

Additionally, Boyle et al. (1996) argue that voicing an opinion in favor of the application of civil liberties, or in opposition of the application of civil liberties, to an unfavorable group can be explained by several factors. One factor is that an individual is more likely to express an opinion if the feelings pertain to an entire group (i.e., KKK as a group), but are more likely to remain silent if one's opinion pertains to a single individual (i.e., one member of the KKK).However, researchers note that framing issues may be a short-term effect. People may be willing to express an opinion directly after seeing an unfavorable group framed in a particular way, but it is unclear whether these opinions sustain over time (Boyle et al., 2006). Overall, tolerance is influenced by the way in which media content is presented, as shown through research in framing issues.

Tolerance and the Internet

It has been noted that tolerance develops as a result of exposure to differing ideas and points of view, and the media is a primary source for this information. This arguments has been developed with traditional news media in mind, where the medium structurally forces the user to be exposed to different views (i.e. scanning the newspaper). However, the Internet is a medium that allows users to select content that appeals to personal interest and opinion, and possibly ignore content that does not. Little research has specifically examined Internet use in relation to political tolerance, though what has

been done has simplified investigations into users and non-users of the web.

Though minimal empirical research has examined the impact of Internet use on tolerance, researchers have argued both sides of the issue. For example, Putnam (2000) contends that relying primarily on the Internet permits one to maintain insulated in a homogeneity of perspectives and viewpoints, whereas the non-online world forces one to confront diversity and differing others. Similarly, Sustein (2001) argues that the Internet is a "breeding ground for extremism" (p. 71) because it permits individuals to seek out information and others which conform to preexisting beliefs and values. Sustein goes on to argue that the structure of the Internet is fragmented and isolated, leading to a possibly less tolerant population. The Internet permits users to expose themselves to individuals and information which correspond to their own views, perpetuating the belief that certain viewpoints are right while others are wrong (Sustein, 2001).

Others reject the notion that Internet use leads to an intolerant population. Robinson, Neustadtl, and Kestnbaum (2004) examined the differences in political attitudes among Internet users and non-Internet users. Using Stouffer's tolerance items and Internet use questions from the General Social Survey, researchers found that Internet users were more tolerant when looking at specific characteristics of tolerance. For example, when compared to non-Internet users, Internet users were more likely to believe controversial material should be available in libraries, and that members of groups supporting radical viewpoints should be allowed to teach and speak in public. Additionally, Internet users supported the perspectives of children learning a variety of perspectives, had a greater tolerance for homosexuality and premarital sex, and sex

education in schools. Interestingly, Internet users also extressed greater trust in others and public institutions, and had a more positive perspective than non-Internet users (Robinson et al., 2004).

More recently, Robinson and Martin (2009) also looked at how representative Internet users were in terms of the general population in relation to tolerance. Specifically, researchers were interested in whether Internet users were more or less diverse in their political attitudes and feelings. Overall, Internet users were more supportive of differing experiences and varying points of view in comparison to non-users, though this relationship did not increase with greater Internet use. However, this research simply looked at non-users versus users of the Internet and did not consider content consumed, how participants used the Internet, or other supplemental media use.

The complexity in understanding the impact of Internet use on political tolerance, as the above discussion has shown, is both limited in nature and lacking in empirical investigation. Tolerance develops as a result of exposure to differing ideas and points of view, and a primary source for this information is the news media.

The technological landscape today and the reliance of the web in everyday activity has transformed the way one acquires and consumes news, which requires a greater examination of *how* the Internet is used, as well as whether using it or not impacts tolerance development. It is argued that online use, to gather information, and to engage in social and political grounds, stems from "selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention" of content (Jamieson & Cappella, 2008, p. 75). The Internet both requires and allows users to limit information and/or select content. Because of the

growing use of online news and the selectivity in content the medium permits, diversity of ideas and perspectives may self-limited, and thus, may consequently impede in tolerance development.

CHAPTER 3

HYPOTHESES

The above literature suggests that there is a relationship between greater selectivity in media content and less political tolerance. The conceptual argument is that limited exposure to information and variety in news content also limits exposure to a diversity of ideas and perspectives which is imperative to the development of tolerance.

The technological landscape today and the reliance of the web in everyday activity has transformed the way one acquires and consumes news. Online news use encourages, and arguably requires, users to selectively expose and navigate through information based on personal choice. Political tolerance develops as a result of exposure to varying ideas and perspectives, which the media can and do provide. However, because of the growing reliance on the Internet as a news medium and the selectivity in content the medium permits, individuals are more able to choice information based on personal opinion and preference in ways they previously could not with traditional news media. The current study examines various aspects of this relationship, where reliance in online news and greater selectivity in content are expected to be related to less political tolerance.

Tolerance is impacted by limited exposure because "diversity provides an incentive to lessen complete reliance on established beliefs and predispositions" (Marcus et al., 1995). Similarly, when one exposures him or herself to a contrasting idea or perspective it increases familiarity with what motivates the rationales driving opposing viewpoints, which enables an increase in tolerance (Mutz, 2002; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). The driving idea between exposure to varying ideas and greater tolerance is the

mechanism of perspective-taking. Mutz (2006) argues that "the capacity to see that there is more than one side to an issue, that a political conflict is, in fact, a *legitimate* controversy with rationales on both sides, translates to greater willingness to extend civil liberties to even those groups whose political views one dislikes a great deal" (Mutz, 2006).

It is not uncommon in the social sciences to propose directional models based on correlational data where some of the variables are represented to be dependent on others as linear functions, where the "dependent" variable is a matter of choice, where any causal interpretation of the data rests entirely on assumptions, as for example, in path analysis (Blalock, 1985; Duncan, 1985). While such decisions and presentations are made on the basis of theory, one should nevertheless still be careful in interpreting correlational data in terms of causal assumptions in survey based methods. In the case of this study, the assumption that greater selectivity in news content leads to less tolerance surfaces in the data solely in terms of a correlational relationship between the two variables. One cannot conclude on this basis that selectivity *causes* less tolerance.

There are always alternative models which may explain a relationship between variables. The direction of causality between tolerance, online news media use, and selectivity remains undetermined in this sense. The model could, for example, be reversed, where less tolerant individuals limit their subsequent exposure to diverse content. Less tolerance, therefore, may drive those individuals to selectively choose news media which matches their personal interest. Another possibility is of a mutually causal model, where variables affect one another. In this case, it may be that increased selectivity

decreases tolerance, which, in turn, increases selectivity.

Still it may also be that tolerance is best explained through an intervening model, or third-variable problem. Causality between two variables is confounded because there may be other factors, measured or unmeasured, which affect the relationship. An intervening model may explain the relationship, for example, in that greater selectivity in media content may lead to greater tolerance when a particular condition is present. Previous tolerance research has found a variety of demographic variables variously correlated to tolerance which may influence the relationship between selectivity and tolerance. These include urban/rural environments, religion, gender, education, as well as psychological variables such as fear, self-esteem, political knowledge and experience. Spurious relationships are certainly also possible, where a measured or unmeasured third-variable may be present and affect both variables independently, giving the illusion of a relationship between tolerance and selectivity where none really exists.

Previous research, particularly examining the development of political tolerance, has relied primarily on survey based correlational data to draw inferences regarding the impact of a multitude of variables on political tolerance. In many of the findings, several variables have been argued to be causally related to changes in tolerance even though the data and analyses were correlational in nature (e.g. McCloskey & Zaller, 1984, Sullivan et al., 1993; Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). The literature on the impact of feelings of threat on levels of tolerance is similar in that causal assumptions are inferred from survey data (e.g. Sullivan et al., 1992; Marcus et al., 1995). The list of variables which function as moderating variables in intervening models also generally presume causal direction from

correlational data. For example, Golebiowska, (1999) has made the claim that particular social factors, such as greater religiosity and less political expertise, cause women to be less tolerant than men, even though the data were correlational in nature.

Past tolerance studies have generally relied on survey data to understand what factors are related to and/or influence tolerance, and while the existing literature tends to the conclusion that selective exposure to diversity of information causes less tolerance, empirical conclusions of such causal relationships must be made with caution.

This study investigates one aspect of the possible models and causal relationships which may be present between selectivity and tolerance (See Figure 1). In accordance with the prevailing view in the field, the present study tests the idea that greater selectivity is related to (and is assumed to lead to) less tolerance, and thus the hypotheses and conclusions stem from this model. As mentioned earlier, however, alternative models are always possible in such analyses, and may fit the data equally well.

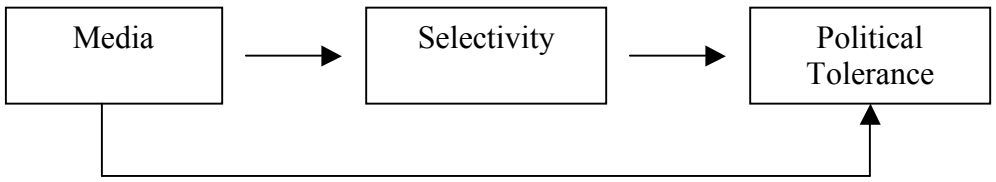

Figure 1. Conceptual Model for Tolerance analyses

Online and traditional news media are different in many ways. Important for this study is the finding that those who read online news can selectively attend to information which appeals to their self-interest (Tewksbury, 2003). Previous research has found that exposure to differing viewpoints increases political tolerance towards others (Stouffer, 1955). More recently, using the same premise of varying points of view researchers have

confirmed this finding, noting that belonging to multiple types of groups increases political tolerance levels (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). However, the media is a primary source of information and can also provide exposure to differing viewpoints and opinions (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1999; Mutz & Martin, 2001). But while this may be true for traditional media, the Internet allows individuals to selectively access information that interests them and conforms to preexisting beliefs (De Ruyter & Scholl, 1998). What is unclear at this time is how the use of new media, particularly online forms of news, impacts levels of political tolerance. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Heavy exposure to news media will be related to greater tolerance.

Previous research has already established that those exposed to differing viewpoints have greater tolerance (Stouffer, 1955). Researchers have found that membership to multiple and varying types of face-to-face groups leads to more tolerant feelings (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). The media provide information and exposure to differing others and varying points of view (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). Therefore, one would expect that greater exposure to news media will relate to greater tolerance.

H2: Selective exposure to news will be related to less tolerance.

Those who are more selective in news content have been found to be attracted to information that fulfills individual or self-interest (Fico et al., 1987; Althaus & Teksbury, 2003). Therefore, one would expect that those who are more selective in the news content, regardless of medium, would be less tolerant.

H3: Heavy exposure to news under the condition of selectivity will be related to less tolerance.

Those who are heavy consumers of news media should be more tolerant because of the heavy exposure to information, differing others, and varying points of view. However, consuming heavy media news under the condition of selectivity will be related to less tolerance.

H4: Online news media use tends to be more selective than non-online news media use.

Those who use online news media will be more selective of news media content than those who use either newspapers or television as a primary news source. Previous research suggests that online news media promotes selectivity of content and that individuals are more likely to expose themselves to information that matches personal interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Graber, 1988; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, 2003).

H5: In general, online news media users are going to be less tolerant compared to other media users.

Tolerance levels are dependent on the exposure to differing viewpoints and varying others (Stouffer, 1955; Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). Online news media allows individuals to be highly selective of news content, and previous research has shown individuals tend to expose themselves to information that matches their own opinion and self-interest when using online news (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Graber, 1988; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, 2003). Therefore, one would expect that individuals who use online media as their primary news source will be less tolerant.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Design

To investigate the relationship between types of news media use and political tolerance, a survey design method was used. Survey research allows information to be gathered from a large group of people, and allows researchers to see relationships and predictors among the independent and dependent variables. Therefore, a 14-page, 124 item survey composed of eight scales was distributed.

Population and Sample

Participants included 305 undergraduate students enrolled in basic communication courses at a large urban university. While there is concern regarding the generalizability of student samples to the general population, some have argued its validity. Basil, Brown, and Bocarnea (2002) note that using a nonrepresentative student population can be used in testing a theory. Using correlation based survey data, research using a college student sample is a valid way to understand processes as long as one has reasoning to expect the sample is comparable to the general population (Basil et al., 2002). The large sample minimized non-sampling forms of error, such as non-response rates and insignificant sample size. IRB approval was obtained (See Appendix A), and the population was contacted though their primary professors and/or instructors. Participants reflected a range of majors, age, gender, and ethnicities.

To reduce sampling bias this investigation incorporated participants from a university-required course (COM 1010: Public Speaking) and an intro-level media course

(COM 1500). This ensured that participants reflected a range of majors and differing perspectives more closely representative of the population. Additionally, this ensured an adequate sample of age, gender, and ethnicities as well.

Other step taken to reduce sampling error in this particular design included variation in the survey order, meaning that some survey packets began with particular scale, while others begin with a different scale.

Data Gathering Methods

Professors and instructors were contacted regarding the distribution of survey packets, and those that did agree to participate allowed time either at the beginning or end of their class period. A researcher brought the surveys, provided brief instructions to the class, and answered any questions before leaving. The instructor then monitored his/her class and collected the surveys before returning them to the researcher. The survey was completely voluntary, and participants were made aware that it was their choice of whether or not they would like to participate. Those who did agree to participate signed a consent form, which was removed from the survey, ensuring all surveys answers were kept anonymous without connection to participant's identity in any way.

In-class, this entire survey packet took participants about 20 minutes to complete. The reliabilities and validities of these instruments are discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis

Scales of Measurement

The independent variables assessed in the study are newspaper use, online news

use, television news use, and the selectivity of content within news media. The dependent variables are political tolerance and tolerance for civil liberties. Additionally, since several other variables have been reported to be highly correlated with tolerance, scales measuring those concepts were included as well. The variables are discussed below.

Media Use

A 22-item Media Use questionnaire was included to gather information regarding time spent with media, type of media used for news, and type of content consumed in types of media. General Media Use was measured by 9-questions which asked about specific time spent using newspaper, online, and television news, as well as specific type of television, radio, and online content subjects consumed (See Appendix B). The Type of News Media scale is four-items which measure the frequency at which individuals use newspapers, online news, and television news sources to get their information (See Appendix C). Finally, the News Frequency scale is a 9-item three-factor measure of the type of information (political news, international, local) which individuals use newspapers, online news, and television primarily for (See Appendix D) (Tewksbury, Hals & Bibart, 2008). This scale uses a seven-point likert scale.

Selectivity

A three-item Media Selectivity scale was included to measure how participants use/select content in newspapers, online news, and television news media (See Appendix E). In each media (newspapers, online, TV) four descriptions of news use selectivity behavior were listed, and participants were asked to select the description which best matched their use of the medium (Tewksbury et al., 2008).

Political Tolerance Scale

The dependent measure is political tolerance. To measure levels of political tolerance the Content-Controlled Measure of Political Tolerance Scale was used (Sullivan, Pierson, & Marcus, 1982). This particular scale is an extension of previously used tolerance scales. The content-controlled measure of political tolerance scale provides participants with a list of groups in politics and participants are asked to choose their least-liked group. If their least-liked group is not on the list participants are asked to provide one. For this particular study, some of the original hated groups listed by Sullivan et al. (socialists, fascists, John Birch Society, Symbionese Liberation Army) were removed from the list and additional groups (Homosexual/Gay activists, Animal Liberation Front, Neo-Nazi) were added to the list (See Appendix F). This was done because many of the original groups did not generate the same feelings as they did decades ago, and therefore more politically relevant groups were substituted.

This is a six-item unidimensional scale with answers ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The scale has an average reliability level of .78, though it has been found to be as high as .96 depending on the country the survey was administered in.

Tolerance for Civil Liberties Scale

Gibson and Bingham (1982) argue that there are four subscales which compose what they refer to as the dimensions of political tolerance, including support for freedom of speech, support for freedom of assembly, support for government repression, and tolerance for civil liberties. For this particular study only the subscale of tolerance for

civil liberties will be used (See Appendix G). Previous research suggests that it is appropriate to utilize only one dimension of this scale and use one component as a unidimensional construct (Weldon, 2006).

One scale item was removed for this particular study. The item "Membership in the John Birch Society by itself is enough to bar an applicant from appointment to the police force" was removed because the John Birch Society is not as relevant as it once was and there was a concern that it would confuse respondents.

The tolerance for civil liberties scale is a 13-item measure that uses an agree/disagree response measure.

Self-Esteem

Several additional measures were added for post hoc analysis and for control purposes. Previous research examining political tolerance has identified several factors that relate to tolerance development which were included in the survey as well. Individuals with low self-esteem have been found to be less politically tolerant (McClosky & Brill, 1983; Sullivan, Pierson, & Marcus, 1982). To measure self-esteem, Rosenberg's (1965) Self- Esteem Scale was included (Appendix H). This is a ten-item measure which uses a four-point likert-type response, ranging from (1) strongly agree to (4) strongly disagree. A reliability coefficient for these items has ranged from .77 to .90.

Threat

Another positive correlation to political tolerance is that of perceived threat, which has been found to be highly predictive of political tolerance (Marcus, Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood, 1992). Included in this study is the Predisposition Threat Scale (See

Appendix I), which is 11-item scale uses an 11-point likert-type response, ranging from (1) not at all threatening to the country to (11) very threatening to the country. A reliability coefficient for this scale is .70 (Marcus et al.)

Authoritarian Personality Scale

Substantial work has been done on the authoritarian personality in social psychology, and tolerance researchers have found several relationships among the concept and tolerance. Authoritarian personality exists because of particular traits within the individual, which include willingness to obey authority, commanding subordinates, hostility, hate toward those in out-groups, etc. Researchers have found that those with authoritarian personality tend to be less tolerant (Sotelo, 2000; Sullivan et al., 1982; Sullivan, Marcus, Feldman, Piereson, 1981). Included is the Authoritarian Personality Scale (See Appendix J). This measure is an adapted F-scale which bases items on behavior, feelings, motivation, and concept of self (Oesterreich, 2005). This 23-item scale was tested over several empirical studies, and has generally produced an alpha-reliability of .85.

General Social Survey Modified Stouffer Index

This 15-item measurement, derived from the original tolerance measure by Stouffer (See Appendix K), asks participants about a variety of groups, including antireligious, communists, those who advocate letting the military run the U.S. and eliminate elections, homosexuals, and those who feel blacks are inferior because of genetics. Respondents are asked three tolerance-based items *per group,* such as whether members of a targeted group should be allowed to teach at college level, should have

books available in a library, and whether they should be allowed to give a speech (Mondak & Mitchell, 2003). A sum from individual responses yields a 0-15 score, with lower scores indicating greater tolerance.

Demographic Items

Political tolerance development is significantly related to a variety of demographic factors, including age, sex, education, income/social status, religion, and political views (Stouffer, 1955; Sullivan et al., 1982), as well as number and types of group membership (Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). Several demographic items are included, such as age, race/ethnicity, age, living situation, marital status, income, education level, sex, political beliefs, religious affiliation, and group membership (See Appendix L).

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

This study was designed to explore the relationship between news media, selectivity of news media content, and political tolerance. For this particular study, news media specifically referred to online news, newspapers, and television news. The central assumption of this investigation was that exposure to varying points of view were needed to be politically tolerant, and that media are a primary source for differing perspectives and information affecting the development of tolerance. However, online formats, because they encourage selectivity of information, limit points of view and ultimately serve to inhibit tolerance development. The following chapter will provide the descriptive results of the study, followed by an analysis of each of the five proposed hypotheses.

Descriptive

The average number of minutes per day participants reported using each medium specifically for news was 7.8 minutes for newspapers (n=305, sd= 12.28), 32.5 minutes for online news (n=305, sd= 37.62), 42.04 minutes for television (n=305, sd= 49.1), and 18.65 minutes for radio (n=304, sd= 29.31). Out of the total sampled population, 5.9 percent indicated using newspapers as a primary news source, while 46.6 reported the Internet, and 46.9 percent use television as a primary news media source (See Table 1).

Table 1
Media Use

Total sample ($N = 305$)	*Mean*
Minutes used	
Newspapers	7.8
Online news	32.5
Television news	42.04
Total sample ($N = 305$)	***Percentage***
Primary news source	
Newspaper	5.9
Online news	46.6
Television news	46.9

Demographic information (See Table 2) regarding the sample included 37.7 percent male and 62.3 percent female, ranging in age from 17 to over 31 years old, with 58.3 percent of the population being 17-20, 30 percent was 21-25, 5.7 percent was 26-30, and 6 percent of the sample over 31 years. Freshman students composed 24.5 percent of the sample, with Sophomores totaling 33.6, Juniors 30.9, and Seniors 11.1 percent of the sample. The racial/ethnic makeup included 47.1 percent White, 39 percent African-American, 6.1 percent Middle Eastern, 3.1 percent Hispanic/Latino, 2.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, .7 percent Native American, and 1.3 percent Other. The sample was 97.3 percent citizens of the United States, 1.7 percent Canadian citizens, and .9 percent citizens from outside Canada and the U.S.

All the variables were checked for skewness and none was found to be out of normal range.

Table 2
Demographics

Total sample ($N = 305$)	Percentage
Sex	
Male	37.7
Female	62.3
Age	
17-20	58.3
21-25	30
26-30	5.7
31+	6
Education level	
Freshman	24.5
Sophomores	33.6
Junior	30.9
Senior	11.1
Race/Ethnicity	
White	47.1
Black	39
Middle Eastern	6.1
Hispanic/Latino	3.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.7
Native American	.7
Other	1.3

The scale reliabilities were acceptable, with Cronbach's alpha for Political Tolerance scale was .77, while the GSS Modified Stouffer index produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .85. The Self Esteem scale produced an alpha of .86, Predisposition Threat scale was at .74, Authoritarian Personality scale at .76, and News Frequency Scale at .90. Each of the news frequency subscales pertaining to specific medium, newspaper news frequency (.88), online news frequency (.82), and TV news frequency (.85) was also reliable. The lowest of the reliability measures was the Tolerance for Civil Liberties scale, producing a .41, and was thus dropped from the analysis (See Table 3).

Table 3
Reliabilities

Scale	Alpha	# of items
Political Tolerance	.77	6
GSS Tolerance Index	.85	15
Self-Esteem Scale	.86	10
Predisposition to Threat	.74	11
Authoritarian Personality	.76	23
News Frequency	.90	9
Newspaper	.88	3
Online	.82	3
Television	.85	3
Civil Liberties	.41	3

The News Frequency Scale (*M*= 35.85, sd= 12.73) is made up of three subscales, newspaper news frequency (*M*= 10.00, sd= 5.15), online news frequency (*M*= 12.32, sd= 4.91), and TV news frequency (*M*= 13.49, sd= 5.04), and was compiled by adding the scores of each of the subscales together.

For the Media Selectivity Scale, any responses indicating, "I never read news on (Internet, Newspapers, TV)" was omitted for the purpose of analysis, resulting in the following number of cases: Online selectivity (n=289, *M*= 1.97, sd= .88), Paper Selectivity (n= 249, *M*= 1.8, sd= .82), and TV Selectivity (n= 290, *M*= 2.06, sd= .80). Further, response categories for each selectivity (Internet, Newspaper, and TV selectivity) were recoded such that scores of 3-5 indicated Low Selectivity, 6 indicated middle selectivity, and 7-9 high selectivity. These were then coded as 1 (n= 111), 2 (n= 53), and 3 (n= 72). Following Tewksbury et al. (2008), only those indicating they were low on selectivity (n= 111) or were highly selective of content (n= 72) were used for the

primary analysis.

The GSS Modified Stouffer index was selected for the tolerance measure in the analysis because the reliability scores significantly varied among blacks and whites in the Political Tolerance scale. For the GSS Modified Stouffer index, alpha scale reliabilities for blacks (.89) and whites (.80) were similar. However, the Political tolerance scale reliabilities for blacks (.60) and whites (.80) differed significantly more, so the GSS index was selected for analysis (*M*= 6.31, sd= 4.61). The GSS scores ranges from 0-15, with lower scores indicating greater tolerance and higher scores less tolerance.

News Frequency and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis 1 predicted that heavy exposure to news media would be related to greater tolerance. Previous research has already established that those exposed to differing viewpoints have greater tolerance (Stouffer, 1955), and that media exposure provides varied information (e.g. Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997). Therefore, it was expected that greater exposure to news media would be related to greater tolerance. A Pearson correlation analysis indicated that there was a significant relationship between frequency of news media use and greater tolerance (r= -.09, p= .05, 1-tailed). Table 4 presents this finding. There is a significant relationship between the frequency of overall news media use and greater political tolerance.

Table 4
Frequency of News Media Use and Political Tolerance

(Sub)scale	Pearson's *r*
Total sample (*N* = 305)	
News media Use	-.09*

Note. 1-tail correlation *$p < .05$.
Lower tolerance scores indicate greater tolerance

For further analysis, the continuous variable of news frequency was turned into a categorical variable by taking the extremes of the overall score (9-66), and recoding 9-36 as low media use=2 (n=142), and 37-63 as high media use=1 (n=150). An analysis of means showed significant differences in political tolerance, where higher news frequency was related to significantly greater tolerance (t = -2.24, p= .03) (see Table 5). Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Table 5
Frequency of Media Use and Political Tolerance

	Mean	SD	F	t	df	Sig
Media use						
Low	5.75	4.46				
High	6.94	4.69				
			1.02	-2.24	290	.03 *

Note. 2-tailed Independent t-test, *$p < .05$
Lower tolerance scores indicate greater tolerance

News Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis 2 predicted that selective exposure to news would be related to less tolerance. The Internet is a medium which allows users to choose information, and

previous research has confirmed that individuals select information which conforms to self-interest (Fico et al., 1987; Althaus & Teksbury, 2003). Therefore, it was expected that those who were more selective in their news content use, regardless of medium, would be less tolerant.

To test this hypothesis, the categorical variable of selectivity was dummy coded to create three separate variables of low, medium, and high selectivity for use in correlational analyses. A Pearson correlation revealed a strong significant relationship among both high and low media selectivity. Low overall selectivity of media content had a negative relationship (r= -.18, p= .003, 1-tailed), indicating that low selectivity is significantly related to greater political tolerance. High overall selectivity, however, had a positive relationship (r= .21, p= .001, 1-tailed), meaning that greater selectivity of media content was significantly related to lower tolerance (See Table 6).

Table 6
Media Selectivity and Political Tolerance

(Sub)scale	Pearson's *r*
Total sample (*N* = 305)	
Media Selectivity	
Low	-.18*
High	.21***

Note. 1-tail correlation **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

A multiple regression was preformed in order to examine the strength in high selectivity of media content as a predictor of lower political tolerance. High selectivity of

media content significantly predicted lower tolerance (b= .15, *t*= 3.3, p < .001), explaining a significant portion of the variance in political tolerance scores, R^2 = .05, *F*= 5.54, p = .004 (See Table 7).

Table 7
Media Selectivity and Political Tolerance

	Political Tolerance		
Predictor Variables	β	*B*	*SE*
High Selectivity of media	.15***	1.50	.81
Low Selectivity of media	-.87	-.09	.75
R^2 = .05			

***$p < .001$

A one-way independent ANOVA was also used to examine the relationship between overall selectivity, as well as the selectivity of online news, newspapers, and television independently. When using the categorical score of overall selectivity (1=low, 2=high), there was a significant effect of selectivity on level of political tolerance *F*(1, 175)= 10.51, $p < .001$ (See Table 8).

Table 8
Low and High Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Between Low/High Groups	215.54	1	215.54	10.50	.24	.001***
Total	3819.62	176				
N = 177						

Note. Oneway ANOVA, ***$p < .001$

When the medium selectivity (coded 2) was included in the analysis, an additional contrast analysis showed that there was a significant linear trend, $F(1, 226) = 11.10$, $p < .01$, $w = .62$ (See Table 9), indicating that as individuals became more selective in their content, tolerance decreased proportionately. Planned contrasts revealed that exhibiting any type of selectivity significantly decreased tolerance compared to being nonselective, $t(1, 226) = 2.59$, p< .01 (1-tailed), and that being highly selective significantly decreases tolerance compared to exhibiting medium selectivity of news media $t(1, 226) = 1.82$, p< .05 (1-tailed) (See Table 10).

Table 9
Low, Medium, and High Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Linear Effect Low, Med, High	215.59	1	215.54	11.10	.22	.001***
Total	4400.33	226				
N = 229						

Note. Oneway ANOVA, ***$p < .001$

Table 10
Low, Medium, and High Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Source	*df*	*t*	*p*
Planned contrast			
Low/Med Select (1)	226	2.60	.01**
Med/High Select (2)	226	1.82	.03*

Note. Oneway ANOVA, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

When looking at the three types of media separately in terms of selectivity and political tolerance, both selectivity of online and television news significantly decreased tolerance. Selectivity of online news content was highly significant in decreasing political tolerance $F(2, 281)= 9.8$, $p < .01$, and there was a significant linear trend $F(1, 281)= 11.86$, $p < .01$. Similarly, there was a significant effect of greater selectivity in television news on a decrease in political tolerance $F(2, 279)= 3.7$, $p < .05$, though a linear trend was not significant. Looking at the planned contrast of television to understand why such a linear relationship was not present in television selectivity, found little impact on tolerance between low and medium selectivity $t(1, 279)= .38$, $p> .05$, but a significant negative effect on tolerance when comparing medium and high selectivity conditions $t(1, 279) = 2.70$, $p< .01$ (2-tailed). Selectivity in newspaper content did not have a significant impact on tolerance (see Table 11). While correlational coefficient data cannot imply direct causality between greater selectivity and lower tolerance, results support the hypothesis. Overall, Hypothesis two is supported.

Table 11
Media Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Online Select Low, Med, High						
Between Groups	386.46	2	193.23	9.8	.30	.000***
Linear Effect	233.66	1	233.66	11.10	.20	.001***
Total	5920.89	283				
N= 284						

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Television Select Low, Med, High						
Between Groups	151.99	2	75.99	3.7	.16	.03*
Total	5877.70	281				
N= 282						

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Newspapers Select Low, Med, High						
Between Groups	3.84	2	1.92	.09	.03	.91
Total	4930.87	242				
N= 243						

Note. Oneway ANOVA, *$p < .05$, ***$p < .001$

News Frequency under Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis 3 predicted that heavy exposure to news under the condition of selectivity would be related to less tolerance. Those who are heavy consumers of news media should be more tolerant because of the heavy exposure to information, different others, and varying points of view. However, if individuals are heavy media news consumers but are nonetheless highly selective in their use of the medium, they should be less tolerant.

Using a Pearson correlation, all cases coded as high selectivity (3) were selected for the analysis. While overall frequency of media use was still related to greater tolerance, the relationship was much weaker and non-significant compared to the relationship found when the entire sample was included (r= -.66, p= .29, 1-tailed). Each of the subscale categories of specific media was also significantly weakened when the relationships were examined through the filter of high selectivity, with television news (r= -.07, p= .157, 1-tailed) and Newspaper news use (r= -.12, p= .16, 1-tailed) still related to greater tolerance under the condition. However, under the condition of high selectivity, online news frequency went from significantly leading to greater tolerance to relating to a decrease in tolerance (r= .02, p= .44, 1-tailed), though not significantly, indicating that selectivity in content changed the impact of online news frequency on political tolerance (See Table 12). Additionally, when examining only those cases high in selectivity for online news, frequency of online news use was significantly related to less tolerance (r= .16, p= .05, 1-tailed).

Table 12
Frequency of News Media Use Under Selectivity and Political Tolerance

Under Condition High Selectivity (Sub)scale	Pearson's *r*
Total sample (*N* = 111)	
News media Use	-.07
Online	.02
Newspaper	-.12
TV	.-07

Note. 1-tail correlation

Hypothesis three suggests an interaction between levels of media use and selectivity. And while the correlational analysis seems to support this idea, in order to directly test it, a factorial design ANOVA with two main effects was used to assess the impact of both selectivity and news frequency use on political tolerance, as well as a possible interaction term between selectivity and news frequency. The categorical variable of news frequency was used for the analysis. For selectivity, the somewhat selective middle category was omitted (Tewksbury 2008), leaving extreme cases of low selectivity=1 and high selectivity=2. This produced a two-by-two model with low (N=79) and high (N=98) news use, and low-selective (N=107) and highly selective (N=70) groups.

There was a significant main effect of high selectivity in media content on decrease in political tolerance scores, $F(1, 173) = 6.50$, $p < .01$, and a significant main effect of news use on greater political tolerance $F(1, 173)= 4.14$, $p < .05$. However, there was a non-significant interaction effect between news use and selectivity of content on political tolerance $F(1, 173) = .192$, $p= .66$ (See Table 13).

While the evidence from the correlations tends to support hypothesis three, the lack of an interaction term in the ANOVA does not support it. Overall, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Table 13
Selectivity & News Frequency on Political Tolerance

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Main Effects	313.10	3	104.36	5.15	.29	.002**
Selectivity (S)	131.78	1	131.80	6.50	.19	.01**
News Freq (NF)	83.94	1	83.94	4.14	.15	.04*
S x NF	3.89	1	3.89	.19	.03	.66
Total	3819.64	176				
$R^2 = .06$						

Note. ANOVA, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Online News Use and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis 4 predicted that online news media use tends to be more selective than non-online news media use. Those who use online news media will be more selective of news media content than those who use either newspapers or television as a primary news source. Previous research suggests that online news media promotes selectivity of content and that individuals are more likely to expose themselves to information that matches personal interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Graber, 1988; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, 2003).

The mean selectivity score of Internet, newspaper, and television media use was 1.99, and was used as the test value in a one-sample t-test. Television news use was significantly more selective than the average of the combined three ($t = 2.52$, p= .01), and newspaper news use was significantly less selective (t= -2.86, p= .01) (See Table 14).

Table 14
News Medium Selectivity

One-Sample T-Test					
	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Selectivity					
Newspaper	1.80	.82	-2.86	250	.56
Internet	1.97	.88	.58	293	.01**
TV	2.06	.80	2.52	290	.01**

Note. 2-tailed One-Sample t-test, $^{**}p < .01$

Looking at a paired sample t-test, individuals were significantly more selective with online news use when compared directly to newspaper use (t= 2.18, p= .03), and newspaper use was significantly less selective than television news use (t= -3.91, p= .00), while online news and television news were not significantly different in selectivity (t=-1.20, p= .23). Table 15 presents these findings. Television and online news use are significantly more selective than newspaper news use, but do not significantly differ from one another in terms of selectivity. Hypothesis four is partially supported.

Table 15
News Medium Selectivity

Selectivity Pairs	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Newspaper/ Online	.15	1.10	2.10	245	.05*
Online/ TV	-.10	1.22	-1.20	281	.23
Newspaper/ TV	-.28	1.10	-3.90	239	.000***

Note. 2-tailed Paired-Sample t-test, $^{*}p < .05$, $^{***}p < .001$

Online News Use and Political Tolerance

Hypothesis five predicted that in general, online news media users are going to be less tolerant compared to other media users. Tolerance levels are dependent on the exposure to differing viewpoints and varying others (Stouffer, 1955; Cigler & Joslyn, 2002). Online news media allows individuals to be highly selective of news content, and previous research has shown individuals tend to expose themselves to information that matches their own opinion and self-interest when using online news (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Graber, 1988; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, 2003). Therefore, one would expect that individuals who use online media as their primary news source will be less tolerant.

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine the impact of medium of news use on political tolerance. Online news use significantly affected tolerance in a negative way $F(2, 291)= 2.97$, $p < .05$ (See Table 16). An additional contrast analysis showed that there was a significant linear trend, $F(1, 291) = 5.54$, $p < .05$, indicating that political tolerance decreased according to type of news media use, beginning with newspapers, followed by television, and finally with online news having the greatest significant effect on lowering tolerance. Again, while the data support the assumptions of hypothesis five, one should caution drawing causal relationships from survey data. Hypothesis five is supported.

Table 16
Primary News Source and Political Tolerance

Source	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	η^2	*p*
Newspaper, TV, Online						
Between	123.92	2	61.96	2.97	.14	.05*
Linear	115.60	1	115.60	5.54	.14	.02*
Total	6200.30	291				
N = 294						

Note. Oneway ANOVA, *$p < .05$

Additional analyses examined several covariates and their relationship to the key ideas in this study. Given that political tolerance was the dependent variable, political affiliation in relation to selectivity was examined. Participants rated themselves on a 7 point-likert scale regarding their liberalism or conservatism. Using a person correlation, selectivity of content within each medium was not related to liberal or conservatism, and a regression analyses found no significant relationship between liberal-conservatism and selectivity of the medium. In a final regression analysis combining together the variables of low-middle-high selectivity and news frequency regressed on tolerance. The only significant variable was high selectivity on lower tolerance.

The above results overall supports the ideas that media use, selectivity, and political tolerance are related. As expected, greater media use was related to greater tolerance, greater selectivity in media content was related to lower tolerance, and that online news users had significantly lower tolerance scores than television and newspaper users. In general, online news use was more selective than traditional media, though differences between selectivity of online and television were more similar than expected.

Surprisingly, however, heavy media use under the condition of selectivity did not have a significant impact on tolerance.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

A total of five hypotheses were investigated in this particular study, with all but one having full or partial support. This chapter will discuss the implications of these findings, the limitations of the study, and the possibilities for future research.

This investigation into the influence of news media use on political tolerance produced both expected and surprising results. The logic that led to the prediction that greater news media use would increase political tolerance stemmed from the notion that exposure to varying ideas and viewpoints is essential to being tolerant (Stouffer, 1955). Additionally, the media are a primary source of information, and thus can provide that exposure to those viewpoints (Chaffee & Kanihan, 1997; Mutz & Martin, 2001).

Researchers have argued that political information and news exposure influence tolerance, and those that knew more political and civic information were more tolerant (Sullivan et al., 1993). Previous research examining media use, specifically television and newspapers, found that individuals who rely on newspapers as a primary news source were more politically knowledgeable, whereas individuals who relied on television as a primary news source maintained similar political and social opinions as others and retained less political information (Gerbner et al., 1984). It was not surprising, therefore, that newspaper use was significantly related to greater tolerance while television was not.

The Internet is still relatively under researched in comparison to other mass communication media. Online news and other information is widely available, though it is still unclear how people access, use, and retain online information and the effects it can have. Our understanding of the effect of Internet use on exposure to news, political, and

other information still remains largely debated. Some argue that the medium will enhance exposure, allowing individuals to access a vast amount of information particularly pertaining to news and political information (Cornfield, 2003; Hill & Hughes, 1998), while others maintain an almost opposite view, that the medium permits selective exposure to content (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 2003; Sunstein, 2001). In the case of this study, frequency of news use was significantly related to political tolerance. Access to *all* news media, including newspapers, television, and radio, in addition to a plethora of social networking sites, blogs, and message boards can provide many forms of news, information, and varying perspectives. It was not surprising, therefore, that increases in frequency of news use were related to an increase in tolerance.

Media, however, provide the potential for selective use. In this sense, the Internet, for example, can arguably offer the greatest amount of selectivity, since its very structure requires users to select, navigate and make specific choices in selection of content to attend to. Based on previous research arguing that exposure to a diversity of perspectives and varying points of view is important to the development of political tolerance, hypothesis two predicted that generally greater selectivity in media content would be negatively related to political tolerance.

Based on this analyses, it is fair to argue that selectivity in media content is significantly related to less political tolerance. A strong linear trend was present in this effect, with tolerance decreasing significantly with each increase in the level of selectivity in media content. In other words, the more selective an individual becomes in choosing news media, the more political tolerance decreased.

In looking at the selectivity of each medium separately, greater selectivity in online news and television news both had a significant effect on lower political tolerance. Again this trend was linear, with tolerance significantly decreasing when individuals were more selective with television content compared to newspaper content, and decreasing even more with selectivity of online content compared to television content. It is unclear why greater selectivity in a particular medium has a differential negative impact on tolerance. It may be that in the case of newspapers, as opposed to internet news use for example, selective use still involves a scanning of headlines and exposure to a diversity of views even while paging through for a particular content to read. This raises questions regarding the conceptualization of selectivity also since the construct might mean something different in the case of different media. Of course, both assumptions stem from the model that selectivity in content leads to less tolerance, and thus causality should be interpreted with caution and an awareness that other models of explanation may exist.

Hypothesis four predicted that online news use would be more selective than both television and newspaper use stemming from the idea that online news is a medium which requires its users to choose content and that individuals are more likely to seek information which fulfills personal interest (Dozier & Rice, 1984; Graber, 1988; Althaus & Tewksbury, 2002, 2003). However, results indicated that while individuals tend to be significantly more selective with online news and television news use in comparison to newspaper use, selectivity of online and television news content did not differ significantly from one another.

Earlier hypotheses confirmed the idea that greater selectivity in media content use is related to less tolerance, and that frequency of reading or watching news is related to greater tolerance. It seemed logical, therefore, that heavy media use that was also used under highly selective conditions would be related to less tolerance. However, findings looking at high media use within a highly selective population did not support this notion.

Online news is a medium that requires selectivity in content, and the current findings support that this medium is significantly more selective than newspapers. As expected, use of online news as a primary news source is significantly related to less tolerance than using television and newspapers as a primary news sources. Political tolerance significantly decreased when individuals used television as a primary news source compared to newspapers, and decreased significantly even more for online users compared to television users.

In summary, this study found that in general, less selective and frequent news use was related to greater tolerance, but that Internet news use was more selective and reliance on that medium for news was related to a decrease in tolerance.

Limitations and Future Research

Though the results of this study largely confirm the proposed assumptions that online news use and selectivity of content significantly affect political tolerance, various limitations should be addressed. Possibly the most obvious limitation to this study was the sample of participants who used newspapers as their primary news source (5.9%) and the relatively minimal time spent reading the newspaper (7.8 minutes a day). The sample in this study was a college-age university population, a demographic not as reliant on paper newspapers compared to other mediums.

Additionally, the population sample was predominately women. Previous research has found that woman tend to be, in general, less tolerant than men. Though it is unclear why, many speculate that it stems from traditional gender roles and less contact with individuals compared to men. Similarly, this sample contained a significant black population. Previous research has noted that groups or individuals who experience disadvantage or feel threatened may both interpret civil liberties differently and develop tolerance differently as a result. Therefore, future research should seek populations with greater diversity in age, sex, and ethnicity.

Another limitation to this study was the very notion of selectivity as a concept. Conceptually, selectivity is a complex idea that is both hard to define and difficult to recall doing. Both hypothesis four and the analysis of the independent selectivity measures of newspaper, online, and television news media bring issues of selectivity measurement into question. Selectivity in newspaper use (i.e., skipping to sections of interest, reading stories based on headlines of interest, etc.) is an easily envisioned action, and thus recall of selective use could be more accurate. With television, however, what does it mean to be selective in news content? And with the Internet, is it possible to be nonselective? Selectivity in television content may conceptually mean something different for different people, with one person possibly interpreting it as having the news on as background noise while doing something else, while another may interpret it as actively flipping through stations to seek a differing news story, and still others may conceptualize it as setting a DVR (digital video recorder) to capture, and possibly fast-forward through stories that one finds uninteresting. Online selectivity poses similar definitional problems in that conceptually it is unclear what it means to be selective.

Does an individual have to read *all* of the stories on the front page of a website to be considered nonselective? Clearly, the construct of selectivity requires a deeper understanding and conceptual explication in future research.

The conceptualization and measurement of online news use also has limitations. The Internet is still relatively under researched in comparison to other mass communication media. Traditional forms of media are watched online, printed online, and broadcast online, allowing users to consume online news media while simultaneously consuming traditional forms as well. This combination complicates the previously clear relationships between specific media exposure and its exclusive effects. It is unclear whether individuals who reported using online news were using traditional forms of news media through the web, and furthermore, whether watching a news broadcast online should be measured as exposure to TV or online mediums.

Perhaps assuming that only news use could provide exposure to varying ideas and points of view is limited in scope. Websites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter arguably have the potential to connect people around the world. Individuals can have a highly diverse set of perspectives and varying points of view at their fingertips, which may function to increase tolerance in the same way news media exposure does. Social networking websites in particular, such as Twitter and Facebook, do not merely function as a social connectivity tool. These sites allow users to choose and post stories to share with friends, and be exposed to news from the stories which friends have posted. This alternative approach to receiving and sharing news and its impact on the development of tolerance should be examined in future research as a function of the modern digital landscape.

Finally, the concept of tolerance within the online environment may benefit from drawing upon previous theoretical groundings. Noelle-Neumann's (1977) Spiral of Silence Theory, for example, states that individuals are social beings who want to be respected, and therefore fear social isolation from their immediate environment. To avoid isolation, individuals are constantly surveying their environment, assessing what opinions are dominant, prevalent, and popular, and will express themselves according to their findings. Individuals will express themselves if their personal opinion is shared with others, but will remain silent if their opinion is not widely accepted.

According to Noelle-Neumann (1984), it is the media, above all other forms of informational influence that provide an agenda that reinforces a select number of viewpoints, while restricting other competing ideas. When exposed to the restricted perspectives in the mass media, individuals are less inclined to voice their own opinion if they feel they are in the minority, and thus conform. Given the current findings, individuals are selective of media content, and selectivity is negatively related to political tolerance. Previous findings stemming from spiral of silence research are applicable to new media and selectivity, as well as political tolerance, and future research should draw from this previous work.

Conclusion

Successful democratic systems and communities depend on the tolerance of their citizens. The results of this study suggest that an increase in media news use has a significant effect on greater political tolerance. While this might be welcome news in an information-based society where news is so readily available and accessible, there is nevertheless reason for worry. Online news and information are widely available and are

becoming increasingly preferred over traditional forms of mass media. A survey by Pew Research found that the 56 percent of respondents preferred online news a result of the convenience it offered (Pew Center, 2000). The very structure of the Internet, however, requires individuals to be selective in their use, and that selectivity in news content can significantly reduce tolerance. The potential implications for a wired society, increasingly reliant on online communication, increasingly selective in exposure to information, and also increasingly intolerant are far-reaching and should be of concern not only for social scientists, but for all modern democracies.

APPENDIX A

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

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NOTICE OF EXPEDITED APPROVAL

To: Jessica McCabe
Communication
585 Manoogian

From: Ellen Barton, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3)

Date: December 04, 2008

RE: HIC #: 118908B3E

Protocol Title: Online News Media Use and Political Tolerance

Sponsor:

Protocol #: 0812006598

Expiration Date: December 03, 2009

Risk Level/Category: 45 CFR 46.404 - Research not involving greater than minimal risk

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The above-referenced protocol and items listed below (if applicable) were **APPROVED** following *Expedited Review* (Category 7*) by the Chairperson/designee *for* the Wayne State University Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3) for the period of 12/04/2008 through 12/03/2009. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

- Information Sheet

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. You *may* receive a *"Continuation Renewal Reminder"* approximately two months prior to the expiration date; however, it is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval ***before*** the expiration date. Data collected during a period of lapsed approval is unapproved research and can ***never*** be reported or published as research data.

All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the HIC **BEFORE** implementation.

Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the HIC Policy (http://www.hic.wayne.edu/hicpol.html).

NOTE:

1. Upon notification of an impending regulatory site visit, hold notification, and/or external audit the HIC office must be contacted immediately.
2. Forms should be downloaded from the HIC website at **each** use.

*Based on the Expedited Review List, revised November 1998

APPENDIX B

General Media Use

How many HOURS PER DAY do you typically spend reading a paper newspaper?
ENTER APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF TIME (IN HOURS PER DAY) _____

How many HOURS PER DAY do you typically spend using online news?
ENTER APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF TIME (IN HOURS PER DAY) _____

How many HOURS PER DAY do you typically spend watching television news?
ENTER APPROXIMATE AMOUNT OF TIME (IN HOURS PER DAY) _____

Which types of online news sites do you *regularly* access during an average week (Check all that apply)
_____Google news
_____Yahoo news
_____CNN.com
_____NY Times.com
_____Local TV news online sites
_____You Tube
_____Daily show/Colbert Report online
_____Fox News online
_____MSNBC online
_____Blogs
_____AP news online
_____Facebook/MySpace
_____Other_____(Please Specify)

Which online news source from the above list would you say you PRIMARILY get your news from? Please list below:

_____

Which types of TV news shows do you *regularly* watch in an average week (Check all that apply)
_____CNN
_____CNBC
_____Local CBS
_____Local NBC
_____Local ABC
_____MSNBC
_____CSPAN
_____Fox News
_____Comedy Central
_____Other_____(Please Specify)

Which source from the above list would you say you PRIMARILY get your news from? Please list below:

_____

Please list the specific news program (i.e., O'Reilly Factor, Daily Show, CBS Evening News, etc.) that you primarily watch to get your news:

_____

What programs do you typically get your news from?
_____NPR
_____Satellite Radio
_____Local AM radio news
_____Other_____(please specify)

APPENDIX C

Type of News Media Scale

How often would you say you use a **paper newspaper** for getting your news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
very seldom very often

How often would you say you use an **online news source** for getting your news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
very seldom very often

How often would you say you watch **television news** for getting your news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
very seldom very often

If you had to choose **one**, what media do you use as your primary news source?
_____ Newspaper
_____ Online news
_____ Television

APPENDIX D

News Frequency Scale

When you read a **paper newspaper** how closely do you tend to follow political figures and political events news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you read a **paper newspaper** how closely do you tend to follow international affairs news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you read a **paper newspaper** how closely do you tend to follow local government news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you use an **online news source** how closely do you tend to follow political figures and political events news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you use an **online news source** how closely do you tend to follow international affairs news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you use an **online news source** how closely do you tend to follow local government news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you watch **television news** how closely do you tend to follow political figures and political events news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you watch **television news** how closely do you tend to follow international affairs news?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not at all closely very closely

When you watch **television news** how closely do you tend to follow local government news?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all closely						very closely

APPENDIX E

Media Selectivity Scale

Please circle the statement that best describes how you use the following media: Online news, Newspapers, Television news.

Online News
When reading online news, I usually start with reading a news site's first screen, and then go through the rest of the site.

When reading online news, I usually click first to a specific section I'm interested in, and then go through the rest of the Web site.

When reading online news, I usually read a specific section I'm interested in first, and then skip the rest of the Web site.

I never read news on the Internet

Newspapers
When reading newspapers, I usually start with reading the front page, and then go through the rest of the newspaper.

When reading newspapers, I usually skip to a specific section I'm interested in, and then go through the rest of the newspaper.

When reading newspapers, I usually read a specific section I'm interested in, and then skip the rest of the newspaper.

I never read newspapers

Television
When watching television news, I usually watch a news program from start to finish.

When watching television news, I start paying attention to news stories I'm interested in, and then watch the rest of that news program.

When watching television news, I only pay attention to the stories that I like.

I never watch television news.

APPENDIX F

Political Tolerance Scale

The following is a list of political groups that have been active in the U.S.: ACLU, communists, Ku Klux Klan, Homosexual/Gay activists, atheists, pro-choice, anti-abortionists, Black Panthers, Animal Liberation Front, Neo-Nazi.
Which of these groups do you like the least? If there is some group that you like even less than the groups listed here, please think of that group.

Please write your least liked group:_____
For the least-liked group you selected answer the following questions with (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree:

1. Members of the [least-liked group] should be banned from being President of the United States.*
2. Members of the [least-liked group] should be allowed to teach in public schools
3. The [least-liked group] should be outlawed.*
4. Members of the [least-liked group] should be allowed to make a speech in this city.
5. The [least-liked group] should have their phones tapped by our government.*
6. The [least-liked group] should be allowed to hold public rallies in our city.

*Disagreement represents the "tolerant" response.

APPENDIX G

Tolerance for Civil Liberties Scale

The following is a list of statements about civil liberties.

(Respondents indicate agreement or disagreement with the allowance or repression of these liberties; o score for this subscale is calculated since it is subsequently broken up into three different dimensions based on the results of factor analysis)

1. High school students are within their rights when they express political opinions, circulate petitions and handbills, or wear political insignia in school
2. A woman has a private right to decide whether to have a child or undergo an abortion.
3. Police should be allowed to conduct a full search of any motorist arrested for an offense such as speeding*
4. A man should be denied unemployment compensation if fired from his job for growing a beard.*
5. Court calendars are so crowded that the right to trial by jury should be restricted to person's accused of major crimes only.*
6. Students should shout down speakers, ignoring the principles of academic freedom.
7. The CIA should be able to prevent any former employees from writing about the agency without the CIA's prior approval.*
8. Government consolidation of dossiers (files) on individual citizens violates the right to privacy.
9. A radio station, which permits the reading of an anti-Semitic poem over the air, should have its FCC license revoked.*
10. In their fight against crime the police should be entitled to use wiretaps and other devices for listening in on private conversations.*
11. The use of tax funds to support religious schools involves taxation for religious purposes and thus violates the First Amendment.
12. In light of present standards of justice and humanity, the death penalty has become "cruel and unusual punishment" in violation of the Eighth Amendment (Prevents government from imposing excessive bail, excessive fines, and cruel and unusual punishments).
13. The "separation of church and state" clause of the First Amendment should be used to eliminate the tax-exempt status of religious institutions.

*Disagreement represents "tolerant" response.

APPENDIX H

Self Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. After reading each of the following statements indicate how (1) strongly agree to (4) strongly disagree.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
2. At times, I think I am no good at all*
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of*
6. I certainly feel useless at times*
7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself*
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel like a failure*
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself

*Represents reverse coding

APPENDIX I

Predisposition Threat Scale

On a scale from 1 to 11, suppose 1 means that the group is not at all threatening to the country, 11 means that the group is very threatening to the country, and the middle number—6—means that the group is somewhat threatening to the country. On this scale, between 1 and 11, circle the number which best describes how threatening you believe each group is to the country as a whole.

1. Religious fundamentalists
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

2. American communists
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

3. Ku Klux Klan
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

4. American Nazis
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

5. Those who are prolife on abortion
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

6. Those who are prochoice on abortion
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

7. Those who oppose any prayer or religion in the public schools
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

8. Feminists
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

9. American racists
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

10. Socialists
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

11. Those who actively oppose nuclear weapons and our foreign policy
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

APPENDIX J

Authoritarian Personality Scale

Bold indicates the authoritarian personality response

I always do things in the same way	I like to give new things a try
If something happens to somebody I tend to think: "He/She deserved it!"	I sympathize with people to whom something happens
I like to meet new people	**I don't like to meet new people**
I feel uncomfortable in new and Unfamiliar situations	I like new and unfamiliar situations
I tend to side with the stronger party	I often side with the weaker party
I like change	**I don't like change**
I back down in conflicts, but I look for revenge	I tend to address conflicts directly
I admire dominant people	I despise people who try to dominate others
People who are not on my side are against me	I can accept people who are not on my side
I try to avoid contact with people who are different	I like to have contact with people, even those who are different
I like groups where everything has been organized	I like groups where the members have to organize everything by themselves
When people depend on me, I like to make them feel it	When people depend on me, I don't make them feel it
I like to join people I do not know	**I feel uncomfortable with people I do not know**
I admire people who have the ability to give in	**I think people who give in are sissies**
I want to have a peaceful life	I want to have an exciting life
I like spontaneous people, even if they sometimes are unpredictable	**I prefer people whose behavior can always be predicted**

I have problems following orders that I am not absolutely convinced of	**I have no problems following orders, even when I am not convinced of their necessity**
I feel sorry for people in severe trouble	**I don't feel sorry for people in severe trouble**
I always like to learn new things	**I am satisfied with what I know**
I am irritated by people who call well established things into question	I admire people who call well-established things into question
I follow orders given by superiors, even when I am not convinced	I try to get around orders which do not convince me
I like to be confronted with new ideas	**I don't like to be confronted with new ideas**
I don't discuss fundamental questions	I think I might learn something new even when fundamental questions are at stake

APPENDIX K

General Social Survey Modified Stouffer Index

There are always some people whose ideas are considered bad or dangerous by other people. For instance, somebody who is against all churches and religion . . .
If such a person wanted to make a speech in your (city/town/community) against churches and religion, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
4 ALLOWED
5 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote against churches and religion should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

Or consider a person who favored government ownership of all the railroads and all big industries.
If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community favoring government ownership of all the railroads and big industries, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
4 ALLOWED
5 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Some people in your community suggested a book he wrote favoring government ownership should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

Or consider a person who believes that Blacks are genetically inferior.
If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community claiming that Blacks are inferior, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
4 ALLOWED
5 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote which said Blacks are inferior should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

Now, I should like to ask you some questions about a man who admits he is a Communist.
Suppose this admitted Communist wanted to make a speech in your community. Should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Suppose he is teaching in a college. Should he be fired, or not?
4 FIRED
5 NOT FIRED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Suppose he wrote a book which is in your public library. Somebody in your community suggests that the book should be removed from the library. Would you favor removing it, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

Consider a person who advocates doing away with elections and letting the military run the country.
If such a person wanted to make a speech in your community, should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
4 ALLOWED
5 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Suppose he wrote a book advocating doing away with elections and letting the military run the country. Somebody in your community suggests that the book be removed from the public library. Would you favor removing it, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

And what about a man who admits that he is a homosexual?
Suppose this admitted homosexual wanted to make a speech in your community. Should he be allowed to speak, or not?
1 ALLOWED
2 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

Should such a person be allowed to teach in a college or university, or not?
4 ALLOWED
5 NOT ALLOWED
0 I DON'T KNOW

If some people in your community suggested that a book he wrote in favor of homosexuality should be taken out of your public library, would you favor removing this book, or not?
1 REMOVE
2 NOT REMOVE
0 I DON'T KNOW

APPENDIX L

Demographic Items

I am _____ Male _____ Female

My age is: _____ 17-20 years old
_____ 21-25 years old
_____ 26-30 years old
_____ 31+ years old

I would describe my race/ethnicity as:
_____ African-American
_____ Asian/Pacific Islander
_____ Caucasian/European
_____ Hispanic/Latino
_____ Middle Eastern
_____ Native American / Inuit

I would describe my family's ethnic background_____

I am a citizen of
_____ United States
_____ Canada
_____ Other (Please specify) _____

I am:
_____ 1st year college student _____ 3rd year college student

_____ 2nd year college student _____ 4th year college student

I am in a personal relationship that I would describe as:
_____ Single _____ In a dating relationship _____ Married

I would describe my current living arrangement as:
_____Live with parents _____Live alone _____Live with roommates
_____Other

Approximately, what was your family's total household income last year?

_____ more than $25,000 _____ more than $100,000
_____ more than $50,000 _____ more than $150,000
_____ more than $75,000

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about liberals and conservatives. On the following scale, where would you place your political views?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Extremely conservative Extremely liberal

How important is religion in your life?
_____ Not at all important
_____ Somewhat important
_____ Very important

Now we would like to know something about the groups or organizations to which individuals belong. Here is a list of various organizations/groups. Please check **each** group that you are a member of:
_____Service/Fraternal
_____Veterans
_____Religious
_____Nationality/Ethnic
_____Women Rights
_____Union
_____Business/Professional
_____Political Issue
_____Civic Non-partisan
_____Liberal or Conservative
_____Candidate Party
_____Youth
_____Literary/Art/Study
_____Hobby/Sports/Leisure
_____Neighborhood/Homeowners
_____Charitable/Social Service
_____Greek
_____Church
_____Educational
_____Cultural
_____Other (Please specify each)_____

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ABSTRACT

ONLINE NEWS MEDIA USE AND POLITICAL TOLERANCE

by

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This study examined the relationship between online news media use, selectivity in media content, and political tolerance. Tolerance develops as result of exposure to a diversity of ideas and perspectives, which the media provide. Online news use encourages and requires users to selectively expose and navigate through information based on personal choice. Online news permits individuals to choose information based on personal opinion and preference in ways traditional forms of mainstream media do not allow. Therefore, it was expected that online news use and selectivity in media content would negatively relate to tolerance.

A total of 305 participants were surveyed from a large urban university. Based on the data, greater media use was significantly related to higher tolerance. Additionally, online news use was significantly related to less tolerance compared to television and newspaper use. Greater selectivity in media content was significantly related to lower tolerance, and online news media use was significantly more selective in content than newspapers, but similar to selectivity in television. However, heavy media use under the

condition of selectivity was not significantly related to lower tolerance. Implications for the study of the relationship between online news use, selectivity, and political tolerance is discussed.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I received my B.A. and M.A. in Communication from Central Michigan University, and began my Ph.D. program at Wayne State in 2005. My research branches into two dominant areas of inquiry, ethnic populations and their ethnic media use, and issues of tolerance and new media. Both of these interests, I feel, are centrally relevant to a better understanding of modern society. Much of the U.S. is home to a diverse population and the role of this population in society, its struggles with acculturation, and its continually negotiated identity are all increasingly important concerns for study. Similarly, tolerance for political and civil liberties, often tied to a discourse on a diversifying America, is an essential component of Democracy. As the US transforms into a "minority-majority" nation, these issues will be on the forefront of social investigations, policy and concern.

The emergent area of online news use and social media websites as a source for information is particularly pertinent to issues of selectivity and the filtering of information to cater toward personal interest. This transforming context of news dissemination and consumption may have a broad impact on the social and political feelings of individuals, especially, as in my research, on matters of tolerance.

Beyond academics, I am a huge baseball fan and my summers typically revolve around the Detroit Tiger's schedule.