

SELECTIVE EXPOSURE TO PARTISAN INFORMATION

Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud

A DISSERTATION

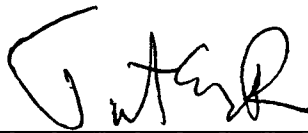
in

Communication

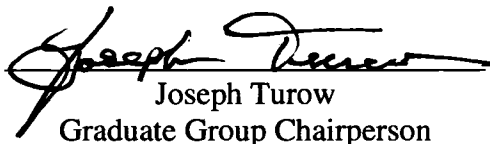
Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2006



Vincent Price
Supervisor of Dissertation



Joseph Turow
Graduate Group Chairperson

UMI Number: 3246247

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3246247

Copyright 2007 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My committee has been a tremendous asset and I am extremely grateful for their time and thoughtful comments on this project. Dr. Joseph Cappella provided valuable insights on many components of this dissertation and his compelling courses provided important groundwork for the types of questions that I hope to address in my career. Throughout my years at the Annenberg School for Communication, I had the privilege of working for Kathleen Hall Jamieson on several of her grant projects. I was honored to have had this opportunity and learned a tremendous amount from the experience. With respect to this dissertation, I sincerely appreciate her big picture questions and prodding to consider the broad implications. I am also grateful for the use of the data from the National Annenberg Election Survey. Finally, I have nothing but gratitude, respect, and admiration for my advisor, Dr. Vincent Price. I cannot thank him enough for his guidance throughout this project and my graduate career. His excellence in teaching, research, professional service, mentoring, and balancing work and family is an accomplishment I can only hope to emulate.

In addition to my committee, I would like to thank two other members of the faculty who I believe were particularly influential in my graduate education. I am thankful to Dr. Robert Hornik for opening my eyes to the philosophical rationale for social science research and for setting high standards for statistical rigor. I am also grateful to Dr. Diana Mutz. Not only did she provide valuable insights into the design of

the experimental work in this dissertation, she allowed me to use the resources of her Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics (ISCAP) to conduct the study.

In my years at the Annenberg School for Communication, several of my colleagues became my very close friends and I know that I will always reflect fondly on their support, insight, and friendship. Kate Kenski and Lilach Nir were both wonderful friends and mentors throughout my graduate career. I am also so thankful for the friendship of Vani Henderson, Ariel Chernin, Alyssa Klein, and Jatin Atre. Friends Ken Winneg and Eran Ben-Porath deserve special acknowledgment because they were kind enough to help me with the coding in this dissertation. I am also grateful to my dear non-Annenberg friends, Jessica Grennan and Rachel Brennan, who were valuable sources of encouragement.

I would not have been in the position that I am today without my family. My parents, Pierre and Sandy Jomini, have been a source of constant love and support and knowing that they believe in me is enough to propel me through the toughest of days. My brother, Paul Jomini, cheered me on throughout my graduate work and his calls always made my day.

Finally, and it is difficult to know how to phrase my appreciation, admiration, and love for this person, I am so grateful to my husband, Scott Stroud. In addition to completing his own dissertation, he has been my biggest supporter and my foundation throughout this process. Though decisions about everything from operationalizations to careers plagued my mind throughout the dissertation process, I know that I made my best decision the day that I married him.

ABSTRACT

SELECTIVE EXPOSURE TO PARTISAN INFORMATION

Natalie (Talia) Jomini Stroud

Vincent Price, Supervisor

In contrast to early studies of voting behavior, where selective exposure was proposed as an explanation for limited media effects, this dissertation contends that selective exposure is a cause of potentially significant media effects. This study documents the extent of exposure to politically congenial outlets and identifies some of its key causes and consequences. Data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey are used to examine the contours of partisan media use, supplemented by an experiment investigating whether the media environment's structure influences partisan selective exposure. The results offer strong evidence that people choose political media in accordance with their political predispositions, and that political interest and knowledge are prerequisites for selective exposure. Media offerings appear to matter: findings suggest that when people have more media options from which to choose, their long-term exposure decisions are more apt to be biased toward congenial media. Over-time survey analyses suggest that salient political media events may encourage selective exposure. Turning to the consequences, analyses provide support for the view that partisan selective exposure contributes to political participation, limited evidence that it leads people to settle on their vote choice earlier in the campaign, and strong evidence

that it leads to higher levels of political polarization. Partisan media use also appears to contribute to differentiated patterns of agenda setting, such that audience members adopt different issue priorities depending on their news exposure. Limited evidence supports the idea that partisan media use primes the use of different issues in judging the president's performance. Results are discussed in light of two contrasting views of partisan media use in writings on communication and democracy. On one hand, partisan selective exposure inspires citizen participation and facilitates a partisan schema for making sense of the political world. On the other hand, it polarizes opinions and fragments the public. This dissertation proposes that, to the extent that the partisan media use is counterbalanced by forces that unite people into a public, it can serve a democratically beneficial role. The explosion of partisan outlets today and the decline of news outlets garnering diverse national audiences, however, warrant critical attention.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SEEKING POLITICAL INFORMATION.....	1
Overview of the Dissertation	7
CHAPTER 2. SELECTIVE EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL INFORMATION	10
Selective Exposure Research	11
Selective Exposure Theory	14
Partisan Selective Exposure	24
Antecedents and Consequences of Partisan Selective Exposure	29
CHAPTER 3: INVESTIGATING THE PHENOMENON.....	36
Measurement: Controls	38
Measurement: Partisan Media Use	43
Analytic Strategy	58
CHAPTER 4: INDIVIDUAL ANTECEDENTS OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE	63
Measuring Political Knowledge and Interest	73
Predicting Partisan Media Use	76
CHAPTER 5: MEDIA ANTECEDENTS OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE	110
The Media Environment	111
Exposure to Political Media Events	137
CHAPTER 6: INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCES OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE	148
Participation and Partisan Selective Exposure	149
Commitment and Partisan Selective Exposure	165
Polarization and Partisan Selective Exposure	181
CHAPTER 7: AGENDA SETTING, PRIMING, AND PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE	200
Issue Agendas in the 2004 Presidential Campaign	210
Most Important Problems and Evaluations of the President	221
CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH	257
Limitations	266
Partisan Selective Exposure and Communication Research	273
Partisan Selective Exposure, Citizens, and Democracy	276
REFERENCES.....	284
APPENDIX A: CLASSIFICATION OF RADIO HOSTS AND PROGRAMS	300
APPENDIX B: REGRESSION ANALYSES SUMMARIES	323
APPENDIX C: SUPPLEMENTAL MEASUREMENT DETAILS	330

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1. Panel Dates and Re-contact Rates.....	37
Table 3.2. Percent of Cross-Media Consumption	53
Table 3.3. Political Ideology and Partisanship of Media Audiences by Medium.....	55
Table 4.1. Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by General Political Knowledge and Ideology/Partisanship.....	81
Table 4.2. Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Campaign 2004 Knowledge and Ideology/Partisanship.....	84
Table 4.3. Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Political Interest and Ideology/Partisanship.....	89
Table 4.4. Regression Analyses of Media Consumption by Political Knowledge and Interest.....	93
Table 4.5. Panel Analyses of Political Interest and Partisan Media Use	96
Table 4.6. Panel Analyses of General Political Knowledge and Partisan Media Use ...	100
Table 4.7. Panel Analyses of Campaign 2004 Knowledge and Partisan Media Use.....	102
Table 5.1. Regression Analyses of Percentage of Time Spent with Magazines	128
Table 5.2. Logistic Regression Analyses of Last Magazine Selected in the Waiting Room	130
Table 5.3. Logistic Regression Analyses of Magazine Selected for Subscription.....	132
Table 5.4. Panel Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Exposure to Political Media Events and Ideology/Partisanship.....	142
Table 5.5. Panel Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and Perceptions of the Debate Winner.....	144
Table 6.1. Regression Analyses of Intentions to Participate and Political Participation by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship.....	156
Table 6.2. Panel Regression Analyses of Intentions to Participate and Partisan Media Use.....	158
Table 6.3. Panel Regression Analyses of Political Participation and Partisan Media Use	159
Table 6.4. Extended Post-Election Panel Regression Analyses of Political Participation and Partisan Media Use.....	163
Table 6.5. Logistic Regression Analyses of Commitment by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship.....	174
Table 6.6. Panel Regression Analyses of Commitment and Partisan Media Use.....	176
Table 6.7. Post-Election Panel Regression Analyses of Time of Decision and Partisan Media Use	178
Table 6.8. Regression Analyses of Political Polarization by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship.....	192

Table 6.9. Panel Regression Analyses of Political Polarization and Partisan Media Use	194
Table 6.10. Aggregate Regression Analysis of Polarization by Congenial Media Exposure.....	196
Table 7.1. Perceptions of the Most Important Problem Facing the Nation.....	211
Table 7.2. Issue Emphasis in Campaign Rhetoric.....	218
Table 7.3. Logistic Regression Analyses Naming the Economy as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship	225
Table 7.4. Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Iraq as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship.....	226
Table 7.5. Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Terrorism as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship	227
Table 7.6. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming the Economy as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship	229
Table 7.7. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Iraq as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship	232
Table 7.8. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Terrorism as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship	234
Table 7.9. Regression Analyses of Overall Presidential Approval by Partisan Media Use and Issue-Specific Presidential Evaluations.....	239
Table 7.10. Regression Analyses of Overall Presidential Approval by Ideology/Partisanship, Partisan Media Use, and Issue-Specific Presidential Evaluations.....	241
Table 8.1. Summary of Significant Cross-sectional Results by Outlet.....	262
Table 8.2. Summary of Significant Panel Results by Outlet.....	263

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and General Political Knowledge	77
Figure 4.2. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and Political Interest	86
Figure 4.3. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship, Political Interest, and Political Knowledge	91
Figure 5.1. Conservative Magazine Subscription by Ideology/Partisanship and Choice	133
Figure 6.1. Intentions to Participate and Participation by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use	154
Figure 6.2. Commitment by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use	172
Figure 6.3. Polarization by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use	190
Figure 7.1. Most Important Problem by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use	222
Figure 7.2. Bush's Performance by Ideology/Partisanship, Bush's Handling of Various Issues, and Partisan Media Use	242

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: SEEKING POLITICAL INFORMATION

In our democratic system, the media are charged with an important role: the role of providing the public with the tools to be good citizens. Through protections of the press's freedom, the Bill of Rights endows the United States' media with the ability to act as a check on the government by informing the public about the performance of their elected officials. While the media can provide tools for good citizenship, it cannot compel people to consume media in a manner consistent with good citizenship. Faced with a choice between reality television and the presidential debates, democracy accords people the freedom to choose the former. Although democracy may depend critically on the media, the commercial media system answers to market demands in determining its programming. If the national news does not attract an audience, it can be cancelled.

People not only have the ability to choose whether or not to consume political news, they also can choose what *type* of political news to consume. In particular, people can select media supportive of their political beliefs. Dubbed partisan selective exposure, people are free to select media that comport with their partisan and ideological political beliefs. Conservative Republicans can depend on Rush Limbaugh for news and liberal Democrats can depend on Al Franken.

The study of political exposure patterns is particularly important today because of transformations occurring in the media environment. Much has changed since the surge of selective exposure research in the 1950s and 60s. Characterizing this media

environment, McGuire (1968) noted that it was “often difficult to get information even on one’s own side and it [was] almost inevitably more demanding to find information on the opposite side should one ever be motivated to look for it” (p. 799). The contemporary media environment, however, invites additional opportunities for selective exposure because of the availability of information sources. With more media options, people can more easily select outlets that match their beliefs and predispositions. With respect to political information seeking, some may avoid politics altogether (Atré & Katz, 2005; Baum & Kernell, 1999; Prior, 2002, 2005), while others may seek out information on particular issues (Galston, 2003; Sunstein, 2001). Individuals also may be more likely to expose themselves to information with a congenial political perspective; Mutz and Martin (2001) caution that “As the number of potential news sources multiplies, consumers must choose among them, and that exercise of choice may lead to less diversity of political exposure” (p. 111). Partisan selective exposure, therefore, may be occurring more frequently as people have more opportunities to find media outlets articulating their preferred political perspective.

Should we worry about increasing partisan selective exposure? Isn’t it worth promoting exposure to political content no matter where people get it? Normative assessments of partisan selective exposure generally take two different stances: those that celebrate the contribution of partisan selective exposure to democracy and those that condemn partisan selective exposure as failing to advance democratically desirable goals.

Proponents of partisan media credit partisan selective exposure with promoting citizen political engagement and helping citizens to make sense of complex political

stimuli. First, partisan selective exposure may motivate people to participate in politics. Schudson (1995), for example, documents that political participation in the United States flourished during the era of the partisan press. By providing partisans with information about participating in politics and energizing them to participate, partisan media use may promote a politically active citizenry.

In addition, partisan media use may help people to make sense of a complex political environment. Though the organization of political views into partisan categories is not always intuitive, parties help people to organize political information. Schudson (1995) notes, “To be sensible, political debate cannot be a set of simultaneous equations that only a computer could handle. It has to be a small set of identifiable branching alternatives that can be examined reasonably enough one at a time. The political party helped make that possible” (p. 200). In conveying information about political parties – instead of a journalistic practice of avoiding coverage of political parties (Schudson, 1995) – partisan media help people to examine political information with partisanship as an organizational scheme.

While some promote partisan media as playing a valuable role in a democratic system, others argue that partisan selective exposure fails to contribute to a properly functioning democracy. First, partisan media use may exacerbate existing divides in the public in terms of political participation and political attitudes. Though partisan media use may contribute to higher levels of participation, a diverse media structure may not promote *equitable* participation. Specifically, discrepancies in participation may result between those engaging in partisan selective exposure and those avoiding political

content altogether. If some participate while others do not, the interests of those not participating may not be adequately represented.

Further, those engaging in partisan selective exposure may develop more polarized attitudes and more fragmented political views. Philosopher John Dewey (1916/1985) argued that democracy functions best when citizens have common goals and interests. The onslaught of diverse media outlets may undercut the development of common goals by leading to higher levels of polarization in the public. Polarized views may contribute to biased information processing (Meffert, Chung, Joiner, Waks, & Garst, 2006) and to less tolerance of alternative viewpoints (Mutz, 2002b). In addition, people's impressions of important issues may further diverge. Without a shared issue agenda, allocation of limited resources, such as time and funding, becomes more difficult. Partisan selective exposure, therefore, may stunt the ability of government officials to create policies that are responsive to the public's needs. Further, it may lead people to question the political legitimacy of public figures not sharing their political perspective.

Second, partisan selective exposure may not produce informed citizens. Good citizens should gather relevant information and critically evaluate options before reaching political decisions. When informed, the public is able to act as a check on government, safeguarding its own interests and helping to ensure that the government is acting in the public good. Empirically, political knowledge is related to many indicators of good citizenship; those with higher levels of political knowledge are "more likely to participate in politics, more likely to have meaningful, stable attitudes on issues, better able to link their interests with their attitudes, [and] more likely to choose candidates who are

consistent with their own attitudes” (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996, p. 272).

Unfortunately, the American public falls short of this normative prescription of informed citizenship on at least two accounts. First, it has been widely documented that the public is largely ignorant about basic political facts, such as the names of their senators or the vice president (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Without adequate political knowledge, individuals may make decisions that do not coincide with their interests (Bartels, 1996; Lau & Redlawsk, 1997). Second, partisan selective exposure acts as a potential threat to the ideal of an informed public. Normatively, it would be desirable to have people make decisions on the basis of unbiased information searches; Lane and Sears (1964) proposed that “to be rational a man must expose himself to congenial and uncongenial matters alike; he must be able to look at both and perceive them as they are; not merely as what he would like them to be, and he must be able to retain this information in an undistorted form” (p. 73). When citizens view information that supports only their preferred perspective, their ability to make reasoned judgments is called into question because they may not have an adequate understanding of both sides of an issue. Exposure to congenial media outlets, therefore, may lead people to sub-optimal political decisions; “An information search that is clearly biased in favor of a preferred alternative leads to the preservation of the information seeker’s position, although this position may not be justified on the basis of all available information” (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2005, p. 978). As this discussion suggests, normative evaluations provide contrasting views of the contribution of partisan selective exposure to a democratic system.

Importantly, all of the normative implications of partisan selective exposure reviewed above contain implicit assumptions about the causal direction of the effects. In each instance, partisan selective exposure is expected to produce political effects. It is interesting, however, that in the communication discipline, selective exposure made its debut as an explanation for why researchers were finding that the media had *limited* effects. The logic was that if people were not exposed to information that conflicted with their beliefs, then they would have no impetus to change their beliefs; Klapper (1960) noted, “Selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention have been shown...to be typically the protectors of predispositions and the handmaidens of reinforcement” (p. 64).

Far from the preamble of a limited-effects perspective, selective exposure now serves as an important predictor of media effects. Oliver (2002) wrote that selective exposure research “appears to support a limited-effects perspective,” and that while “individual differences may well play a role in reinforcement in some circumstances,” individual differences also “can serve to allow for or can intensify media influences” (p. 517). Today, exposure to views paralleling one’s own has been theoretically and empirically connected with important political variables such as political participation, interest, one’s time of voting decision, deliberative opinion, polarization, and ambivalence (Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004; Mutz, 2002a, 2002b; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). This dissertation first aims to extend prior findings about the relationship between homogeneous interpersonal networks and political attitudes and engagement by evaluating the relationship between homogeneous media consumption and political

attitudes and engagement. Second, this dissertation takes findings about partisan selective exposure out of the context of the laboratory to evaluate the relationships employing survey methods. Third, this dissertation explores questions of causal direction by investigating antecedents and consequences of partisan selective exposure.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation investigates a number of consequences and antecedents of partisan selective exposure. In doing so, it endeavors to shed light on some of the causal puzzles that plague our understanding of people's exposure to partisan political information.

In Chapter 2, the research evidence and available theoretical rationales for selective exposure are presented. Though the research evidence for selective exposure in general is rather inconclusive, there is evidence indicating that partisan selective exposure occurs. After reviewing the partisan selective exposure research, gaps in our understanding of partisan selective exposure will be detailed and a series of formal hypotheses will be developed. In particular, this dissertation will pose questions about several antecedents and consequences of partisan selective exposure.

To test the hypotheses, this dissertation relies primarily upon data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey. This survey, conducted throughout the 2004 election, includes both cross sectional and panel components that are used in assessing the relationship between several political variables and partisan selective exposure. The design and structure of this survey are explained in Chapter 3, which also details the measures employed throughout this dissertation. Information about the

operationalization of partisan selective exposure and evidence about the validity of this conception are provided.

Chapters 4 and 5 both look at variables predicted to precede partisan selective exposure. Chapter 4 investigates the relationship between partisan selective exposure, political knowledge, and political interest. It is argued – and the data bear out the proposition – that people with high political knowledge and high political interest are more likely to engage in partisan selective exposure. These individuals have the motivation and ability to recognize and use cues about the political leanings of various media outlets.

Chapter 5 evaluates the relationship between partisan selective exposure and the media in two ways. First, it presents the results of an experiment designed to evaluate whether the structure of the media has any influence on partisan selective exposure. The experiment tests whether people are more likely to engage in partisan selective exposure as the number of choices increase and as the diversity of media content increases. Second, the chapter evaluates whether exposure to mediated political events (e.g. party conventions and political debates) motivates partisan selective exposure.

Chapter 6 examines the relationship between partisan selective exposure and several proposed consequences of this behavior including political participation, commitment to vote for a certain candidate, and political polarization. Specifically, those engaging in partisan selective exposure are expected to develop more polarized attitudes, participate in politics more, and have more crystallized attitudes about their vote choice earlier in the presidential campaign season.

Chapter 7 discusses the relationship between patterns of partisan selective exposure and people's perceptions of the most important issue facing the country. Research suggests that the media play an important role in conveying the importance of various issues to the public. Partisan selective exposure, however, may lead citizens to different conclusions about the most important issues facing the country. With different impressions of the important issues, citizens may employ different criteria in judging the performance of political officials. Chapter 7 tests and finds some support for these ideas.

The final chapter, Chapter 8, reviews the major conclusions emerging from this dissertation. Limitations of the analyses and areas for future research are discussed. This concluding chapter also returns to questions about the implications of partisan selective exposure, both for the conduct of media research and, more broadly, for the progress of democracy.

CHAPTER 2. SELECTIVE EXPOSURE AND POLITICAL INFORMATION

The concept of selective exposure is admittedly controversial. Early researchers were divided in their impressions of the evidence (Donohew & Palmgreen, 1971). For example, while Klapper (1960) noted that “The tendency of people to expose themselves to mass communications in accord with their existing opinions and interests and to avoid unsympathetic material, has been widely demonstrated” (p. 19-20), McGuire (1968) charged that “The survival of the human race for a period that even the most conservative estimates place at a minimum of 6000 years suggests that people seek information on some basis less primitive than seeking support of what they already know and avoiding any surprises” (p. 800). Contemporary researchers seem no less divided regarding whether they should embrace or dismiss selective exposure. Kinder (2003) argues, “Despite all of the early confidence, the evidence for selective exposure turns out to be thin. We now know that people do not, for the most part, seek out mass communications that reinforce their political predispositions” (p. 369). Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, and Frey (2005), however, claim that “When searching for new information, people are often biased in favor of previously held beliefs, expectations, or desired conclusions” (p. 978). Given these divided impressions of the research evidence, a review of the major research findings is in order. After this review, the theoretical models proposed to account for selective exposure are discussed before turning to the research looking specifically at partisan selective exposure.

Selective Exposure Research

In early research on selective exposure, two basic strategies were employed. First, studies investigated exposure in the real world through the use of survey instruments. Second, research evaluated exposure patterns where information was experimentally provided to subjects. Both are discussed below.

Selective exposure in real-world settings has been investigated by looking at the viewpoint advanced in a media outlet (e.g. an advertisement, a newspaper article, a film, etc.) and evaluating whether the audience consisted mainly of individuals sharing the view. Several investigations offered some support for this correlation (McGinnies & Rosenbaum, 1965; Schramm & Carter, 1959; Stempel III, 1961). For example, one frequently cited study evaluated exposure to automobile advertisements after purchasing a new car. The study, conducted by Ehrlich, Guttman, Schönbach, and Mills (1957), demonstrated that new car owners recognized and read advertisements about their own car more than advertisements about other cars that they considered when making their purchase decision. This type of research generally has provided evidence that audiences tend to share the beliefs found in the media to which they were exposed.

A second commonly employed method to measure selective exposure is to provide respondents with a set of statements or brochures that are congenial, uncongenial, or neutral and then to observe what information is chosen by respondents. Since the availability of information is controlled, these studies come closer to documenting a *motivated*, as opposed to circumstantial, selection of materials that agree with one's predispositions. These types of studies have provided mixed support for selective

exposure. After making a choice, some research has shown that individuals are more likely to choose positive information about their own decision compared to positive information about the opposite decision (Mills, 1965a; Mills, Aronson, & Robinson, 1959; Rosen, 1961). For example, Adams (1961) conducted an experiment where mothers were randomly assigned to hear either a talk that comported with their beliefs or a talk that contradicted their beliefs about child development. Given the opportunity to obtain additional information afterward, the mothers preferred congenial information.

Not all early findings consistently supported the notion of selective exposure, however. Some studies provide mixed evidence. Mills, Aronson, and Robinson (1959) and Rosen (1959) found evidence that people preferred positive congenial information to positive uncongenial information. When evaluating negative information about their choice and negative information about an alternative, however, subjects preferred these types of information equally or expressed a preference for negative information about their choice. Other studies did not find evidence of selective exposure. In Freedman's (1965b) study of exposure to information, subjects nearly universally preferred information that contradicted their choice. Further, Feather (1962) found evidence that smokers were more interested than nonsmokers in an article about the connection between smoking and lung cancer. As these examples show, early experimental investigations of selective exposure produced rather inconsistent findings.

Based in part on this mixed track record, Freedman and Sears (1965; Sears & Freedman, 1967) wrote an influential critique of selective exposure research. They conducted a narrative review of laboratory studies and concluded that "a considerable

amount of experimental research has uncovered no general psychological preference for supportive information” (p. 90). Further, Freedman and Sears argued that real-world studies only showed evidence of *de facto* selective exposure. As opposed to selective exposure, which involves the motivated selection of information, *de facto* selectivity means that the observed match between people’s beliefs and the viewpoint of the information to which they are exposed has nothing to do with individual motivation. Instead, other factors, such as the availability of information, are responsible for the correspondence. Under *de facto* selectivity, for example, people living in a Republican-leaning city are exposed to more Republican material simply because it is more widely available, not because they are motivated to seek out Republican material and avoid Democratic material. Freedman and Sears (1965) concluded:

There seems to be ample evidence, both systematic and anecdotal, for the existence of *de facto* selectivity. Most audiences for mass communications apparently tend to overrepresent persons already sympathetic to the views being propounded, and most persons seem to be exposed disproportionately to communications which support their opinions. On the other hand, a considerable amount of experimental research has uncovered no general psychological preference for supportive information (p. 89-90).

Following this early review of the literature, research on selective exposure declined precipitously.

More recent reviews, however, have reached more supportive conclusions toward the concept of selective exposure (Cotton, 1985; D'Alessio & Allen, 2002; Frey, 1986).

Providing an update on the reviews conducted by Freedman and Sears (1965; Sears & Freedman, 1967) by (a) screening studies to include only experimental, choice-based selective exposure studies and (b) using the statistical method of meta-analysis (as opposed to Freedman and Sears narrative technique), D'Alessio and Allen (2002) uncovered some support for selective exposure. Other reviews have raised several methodological issues as to why some studies may not have found evidence of selective exposure. Frey (1986) reviewed literature on selective exposure that had uncovered a number of contingent conditions. For example, research documented that exposure decisions vary on the basis of the perceived refutability of arguments (Kleinhesselink & Edwards, 1975; Lowin, 1967, 1969) and the amount of available information (Frey, 1986). Cotton (1985) outlined a number of methodological flaws plaguing earlier investigations of selective exposure. For example, he argued that the usefulness and attractiveness of the information had not been controlled and may account for different findings. Further, he argued that having subjects select information in an experimental setting where they were aware that their information selection was being monitored may have caused them to be more balanced in their selection. These more recent reviews of selective exposure have helped to spark renewed interest in the topic.

Selective Exposure Theory

Why would people tend to select information consistent with their beliefs and predispositions? The following section details how cognitive dissonance theory, the theory of lay epistemics, the idea of the cognitive miser, and the notion of source quality perceptions provide insight into why selective exposure occurs. Though these theories

are interconnected, they each uniquely contribute to an explanation for what happens “inside the black box” – the psychology behind how and why people would engage in selective exposure.

Cognitive Dissonance

The most frequently cited theoretical basis for selective exposure is cognitive dissonance. In *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Leon Festinger (1957) formally defined cognitive dissonance as occurring when a person holds two cognitive elements x and y such that “not- x follows from y ” (p. 13). Cognitive elements x and y can be any type of cognitive construct, such as a belief, opinion, or piece of information. For example, the action of voting (x) follows from the belief that everyone should vote (y). Dissonance would result if one did not vote (not- x) yet still believed that everyone should vote (y).

Dissonance can be aroused in a number of ways. In the previous example, dissonance is aroused because of a conflict between one's attitudes about voting and one's behavior. Of particular importance in this dissertation, dissonance also can be aroused based on exposure to information that is in opposition to one's beliefs. Reading a pamphlet promoting John Kerry for president in 2004, for example, would arouse dissonance in a person who supported George W. Bush.

People can experience different levels of dissonance; Festinger proposed that the magnitude of dissonance is determined by the proportion of dissonant cognitive elements to consonant cognitive elements, weighted by their importance. As the number or importance of consonant elements increases or as the number or importance of dissonant

elements decreases, dissonance will decline. More dissonance would be aroused if the Kerry pamphlet reader was given the pamphlet by a trusted political opinion leader than if the reader was given the pamphlet by an unknown pamphleteer on the street.

Dissonance is psychologically uncomfortable and once it is aroused, Festinger argues, people are motivated to reduce it. To reduce dissonance, people can increase the number or importance of consonant cognitive elements or can decrease the number or importance of the dissonant cognitive elements. To accomplish these cognitive changes, people have a number of tools at their disposal. People can change their attitudes, thus eliminating inconsistency in their cognitions. The Kerry-pamphlet reader could simply change to support Kerry instead of Bush. Another strategy for dissonance reduction proposed by Festinger is selective exposure. By exposing oneself to information consistent with one's beliefs, people can increase the number and/or importance of consonant cognitive elements. Further, by avoiding information that may challenge one's beliefs, a person attempts to eliminate the possibility of increasing the number and/or importance of dissonant cognitive elements. The pamphlet reader may subsequently expose herself to several pro-Bush websites to bolster her original candidate preference.

Selective exposure patterns, according to Festinger, are based on the magnitude of dissonance. Festinger proposed a quadratic relationship between dissonance and selective exposure such that only the experience of "appreciable dissonance," as opposed to "extremely large amounts" or the "relative absence" of dissonance, would result in selective exposure; he wrote, "The existence of appreciable dissonance and the consequent pressure to reduce it will lead to the seeking out of information which will

introduce consonances and to the avoidance of information which will increase the already existing dissonance” (p. 128). In contrast, extremely large amounts of dissonance may motivate an individual to seek dissonant information in order to motivate a change of cognition and the return to a non-dissonant state. And a relative absence of dissonance would not motivate seeking or avoiding information. Though a quadratic relationship was proposed, few have investigated this empirically and studies that have yield inconsistent findings (Frey, 1982). Ziemke (1980), for example, proposed a curvilinear relationship between certainty and selection of supportive information such that individuals who were most certain of the correctness of their candidate preference and those who were least certain would be less likely to selectively expose in comparison to those with mid-levels of certainty. His analysis, however, did not support this relationship.

Translating Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance to political contexts is not a difficult task, and many have drawn from his theory to explain people’s political attitudes and behaviors. Beasley and Joslyn (2001), for example, used cognitive dissonance to investigate changes in people’s impressions of presidential candidates after an election. Specifically evaluating people’s information seeking behavior, studies have used political brochures to evaluate whether people select information consistent with their political predispositions (e.g. Lowin, 1967). Other studies have examined the characteristics of who watched political events to see if the audience was largely supportive (e.g. McCroskey & Prichard, 1967; Schramm & Carter, 1959).

Though Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance is arguably the most prominent explanation for selective exposure, it is not clear that dissonance is a prerequisite for selective information seeking (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 479).¹ First, people may still be motivated to seek out information that matches their predispositions even in the absence of dissonance. If people find dissonant states psychologically uncomfortable, then it is tenable that they would attempt to avoid dissonant states. One dissonance-avoidance strategy would be to select information consistent with one's beliefs and to avoid inconsistent information irrespective of whether a person feels dissonance. Here, selective exposure would not be due to dissonance, but due to the fear of experiencing dissonance. Second, Festinger's theory posits that people are motivated to be in a non-dissonant state. This may not be true in all instances, however. The theory of lay epistemics addresses these issues and provides a typology of different motivational states. This theory provides insight into the relationship between a person's motivational states and their patterns of information exposure.

Lay Epistemics and Closed Mindedness

Another relevant theory of why selective exposure occurs is the theory of lay epistemics, detailed in Kruglanski's (1989) *Lay epistemics and human knowledge: Cognitive and motivational bases* and expanded in his (2004) *The psychology of closed mindedness*. Kruglanski proposed that individuals are compelled to action based on different epistemic motivations. He outlined a 2 x 2 typology of epistemic motivations:

¹ Though Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory details dissonance as a motivator of selective exposure, he acknowledged that dissonance is likely not the only factor that contributes to exposure patterns; he writes, "Active curiosity and the sheer pleasure of acquiring information for its own sake cannot be ignored in any discussion of voluntary seeking out of new information." (p. 124).

(a) a need for closure versus a need to avoid closure and (b) specific versus nonspecific closure. The first component of the typology is whether individuals need closure, an unambiguous conclusion, or whether they want to avoid closure. Sometimes, Kruglanski argues, people will be motivated to find a conclusion, such as when they are under time pressure to make a decision (need for closure). On other occasions, individuals may want to avoid reaching a conclusion; for example, if they are afraid of making an incorrect decision and have the luxury of unlimited time to gather additional information (need to avoid closure). The second component of the typology is whether individuals are motivated by specific or nonspecific closure considerations. Specific closure entails reaching a preferred conclusion while nonspecific closure entails reaching *any* conclusion. For example, if one wanted to conclude that Bush was the superior choice in the 2004 presidential election, one would have a need for specific closure.

Kruglanski's typology of epistemic motivations has many implications for the strategies people employ when they seek information. The need for nonspecific closure, or the need to find a solution without any regard for what the solution is, motivates a pattern "seizing" and "freezing" in information seeking (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996). Here, people seize upon information permitting them to reach a conclusion. Once a conclusion is reached, however, people "freeze" upon it and avoid non-supportive information because they do not want to encounter disagreement. The need to avoid nonspecific closure corresponds to precisely the opposite pattern of information selection – seizing onto conflicting information in the face of possible closure and freezing information exposure when the information currently available is sufficiently ambiguous.

Those with a need for *specific* closure, or the motivation to find an answer in a preferred direction, bias their information search in the direction of that preferred alternative.

The theory of lay epistemics has wide application in political contexts. In terms of social interactions, one study of lay epistemics demonstrated that people with a higher need for closure have a stronger preference for homogeneous groups sharing their opinion (Kruglanski, Shah, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2002). In terms of information processing, Nir (2004) found that those motivated to process information in partisan ways are more likely to overestimate support for their political preferences. Finally, in terms of information selection, Taber and Lodge (2006) used both lay epistemics and its theoretical cousin, motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990),² to analyze responses to political information. In their study, they investigated “partisan goals,” a motivation to apply one’s “reasoning powers in defense of a prior, specific conclusion” (p. 756). Consistent with lay epistemic theory, Taber and Lodge found evidence that partisan goals influence information seeking.

Though epistemic motivations can be elicited depending on the situation (e.g. time pressure yields higher need for closure), need for closure also is conceived of as an individual predisposition (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Some people have a higher need for closure relative to others. As an individual-level variable, there is a correlation between need for closure and political conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, &

² Motivated reasoning is the idea that reasoning can be driven by either accuracy goals or by directional goals. Directional goals can lead people to process information in a biased manner; “when one wants to draw a particular conclusion, one feels obligated to construct a justification for that conclusion that would be plausible to a dispassionate observer. In doing so, one accesses only a biased subset of the relevant beliefs and rules” (Kunda, 1990, p. 493).

Sulloway, 2003; Kruglanski, 2004). Those identifying as political conservatives have higher need for closure.

As the theory of lay epistemics shows, people may be motivated to consume supportive information – even in the absence of dissonance. These motivations have important political implications and provide a motivational explanation for why some people engage in partisan selective exposure.

Cognitive Misers

Another proposed reason that people exhibit selectivity in their information exposure is that they are “cognitive misers.” Wanting to conserve cognitive resources, people look for ways to simplify information processing tasks. Taylor (1981) noted that a cognitive miser “uses heuristics to reach decisions as quickly as possible” (p. 195-196). In the realm of information seeking, information that runs counter to one’s predispositions may be avoided because it requires more cognitive resources. In support of this idea, Edwards and Smith (1996) demonstrated that it is more resource intensive to process incongruent information. From this cognitive critique, there is “greater expenditure for processing nonsupportive information, along with more potential rewards from supportive information” which gives “supportive information a much higher probability of selection” (Ziemke, 1980, p. 500). Therefore, it is not an attitudinal aversion that prompts selective exposure, but a desire to limit one’s processing. Related to this idea, Kruglanski’s studies often use noise, fatigue, and cognitive overload to create high need for closure (see examples in Kruglanski, 2004). This would produce higher

selection of congenial information according to both the cognitive miser perspective and the theory of lay epistemics (among those seeking specific closure).

Perceptions of Source Quality

A final proposal is that selective exposure occurs because people perceive media outlets differently – some media outlets are perceived to be of high quality while others are perceived to be of low quality. Wanting to maximize the quality of the sources to which they attend, people select those that are perceived to be of high quality. Those sources determined to be of high quality, however, are those expressing consonant views; Sears (1968) argued that “the *perceived truth value* of supportive communications is greater than that of nonsupportive material” (p. 785). Evidence supports the idea that congenial information is judged to be more convincing and legitimate in comparison to contradictory information (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979; Miller, McHoskey, Bane, & Dowd, 1993). Nimmo (1990) argues that individuals seek information sources that share their basic values and personal information seeking strategies. If individuals perceive those sources that are supportive of their beliefs as high quality and those sources that contradict their beliefs as low quality, judgments of source quality may explain selective exposure.

In support of the notion that media perceptions are related to media selections, Tsfati and Cappella (2003) found that mainstream media skepticism was related to lower levels of mainstream news viewing and higher levels of non-mainstream news viewing. Data from the Pew Research Center (2005) showed that even as media trust on the whole declines, people are becoming more selective in the media outlets they perceive as

trustworthy. Further, Frey (1981) found that desire for a congenial source increased when that source had higher credibility.

Research conducted by Fischer, Jonas, Frey, and Schulz-Hardt (2005) provides more direct support for the idea that perceptions of source quality govern exposure decisions. These researchers found that when people were limited in the number of information options that they could select, they were more likely to engage in selective exposure than when they were given free reign to select as many information items as they desired. Investigating the mechanism for this process, Fischer and colleagues found that the correlation between information quality judgments and selected information was stronger when choice was limited than when choice was limitless. While it is not clear whether people generally operate under conditions of limited or limitless choice, the results of this study suggest that quality judgments may underlie selective exposure findings. If people judge congenial partisan outlets to be of higher quality, people would rationally select those media outlets sharing their partisanship.

Summary of Selective Exposure Mechanisms

Each of the selective exposure mechanisms detailed above provides a rationale for why people would make media exposure decisions on the basis of their political beliefs. Though these mechanisms are distinct, they overlap in many ways. For example, one could argue that the source quality mechanism fits well within the parameters of dissonance theory. People wanting to reach accurate decisions would want to seek out sources that they trust. It would be dissonance arousing to read a source that they believed to be untrustworthy. With several theoretical rationales underlying selective

exposure, this chapter now reviews research looking specifically at partisan selective exposure.

Partisan Selective Exposure

Selective exposure theoretically occurs when people's beliefs guide their media selections. Clearly not every belief can guide every selection decision – if one considered all of the beliefs that would favor exposure to a media program and all of the beliefs that would not favor exposure to the program, one would be at an impasse. Some beliefs, therefore, must be more likely to guide exposure decisions than others. Which beliefs are more likely to guide exposure decisions?

One possibility is that personally relevant beliefs are more likely to influence exposure decisions; as Donsbach (1991) notes, “Cognitive dissonance will only play a role in the process of information selection if the topic is of some relevance to the individual” (p. 157). Relevant beliefs may be more readily activated from memory and hence, more likely to guide exposure decisions. As Price and Tewksbury (1997) explain, certain constructs are chronically accessible – irrespective of the situation, they are more likely to be used as a basis for processing information. Political partisanship represents one such construct (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002). Lau (1989) demonstrated that for some, partisanship is a chronically accessible construct. For these people, political media exposure decisions may be related to the perceived partisanship of the media outlet. In addition to chronic accessibility, affective responses also may stimulate patterns of selectivity. Taber and Lodge (2006), for example, propose that when political stimuli elicit an affective response, people are more likely to engage in selective

exposure. As a central part of people's conceptions about politics, this literature leads one to suspect that political beliefs can play an important role in guiding people's information selection.

Indeed, others have observed that political beliefs are particularly likely to motivate exposure; Lowin (1967) noted, "Political selective-exposure studies have met with more success than have others" (p. 2). Even critics of selective exposure acknowledge this possibility; Sears and Freedman (1967) claim that selective exposure is most likely to be found "on long-standing issues (such as those chronically contested by the two major political parties)" (p. 421).

When people select political information containing views in line with their partisan and ideological political beliefs and avoid information contradicting their beliefs, they are engaging in partisan selective exposure. Research investigating partisan selective exposure, in general, has found a relationship between an individual's political preferences and the partisan leanings of the media to which s/he is exposed. As with the selective exposure studies reviewed previously, studies of partisan selectivity have been conducted mainly using two methods: (a) survey studies and (b) studies conducted in a lab setting. Each will be reviewed in turn.

A series of survey studies have documented a correlation between media exposure patterns and audience beliefs. An early study providing evidence of selectivity in political information was conducted by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948). These authors suggested that voters select information in such a way as to "[reinforce] the predispositions with which [they came] to the campaign" (p. 76). Lazarsfeld and his

colleagues documented that Republicans were more likely to expose themselves to and to pay attention to Republican campaign material compared to Democrats. Though these conclusions have been debated (Atkin, 1970; Freedman & Sears, 1965), this early study provided the groundwork for later investigations of political selectivity. For example, Schramm and Carter (1959) found that Republicans were the main audience for a telethon hosted by a Republican gubernatorial candidate. Stempel (1961) found that readers of a school newspaper were more likely to read an article about their favored candidate compared to an article about the opposite candidate. McGinnies and Rosenbaum (1965) documented that those with supportive attitudes toward the government's policies in Vietnam were more likely to expose themselves to a foreign policy speech delivered by President Johnson.³ McCroskey and Prichard (1967) found that those viewing the 1966 State of the Union address were more likely to hold views that were consistent with the president on U.S. policy in Vietnam, though viewers and non-viewers were not significantly different on other attitudes (e.g. increased military spending, war on poverty, etc.). Ziemke (1980) showed that candidate preference was a significant predictor of selectively viewing presidential candidate speeches and selectively reading candidate pamphlets. Chaffee, Saphir, Grap, Sandvig, and Hahn (2001) also found that people were more likely to pay attention to candidate information about their preferred candidate. Several studies have looked at exposure to political television events and films and have illustrated a correspondence between the viewpoint advanced in the film and the viewpoint held by the audience going to see the film (Ball-

³ McGinnies and Rosenbaum only found this relationship for females. Remarking on why they did not find the same relationship for males, they argued that "the limited spread of male initial attitudes provided no opportunity for selective exposure to operate" (p. 240).

Rokeach, Grube, & Rokeach, 1981; Clymer, 2004; Paletz, Koon, Whitehead, & Hagens, 1972). Looking at the Internet, Bimber and Davis (2003) found that that visitors to Gore's presidential campaign website in 2000 tended to be Democrats while visitors to Bush's presidential campaign website tended to be Republicans.

While these studies document a correlation between audience beliefs and discrete political and campaign media events, other studies document a correlation between the political predispositions of media audiences and the media outlets they consume. For example, Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) found that talk radio listeners tended to share the political leanings of the hosts to which they listened. Other research shows clear differences in media exposure along partisan lines; for example, Republicans are more likely to view FOX cable news while Democrats are more likely to view CNN (Pew Research Center, 2005). Best, Chmielewski, and Kreuger (2005) documented that those less favorable toward President Bush were more likely to consult foreign news sources in early 2003 when the U.S. media presented fewer critical assessments of the Bush administration. Broadly, these survey results show correspondences between the predispositions of the audience and the partisan leanings of the media they consume. As correlational studies, however, these results are open to the critique advanced by Freedman and Sears (1965; Sears & Freedman, 1967), namely that they document *de facto* selectivity, but fall short of demonstrating motivated selective exposure.

Laboratory-based investigations have evaluated whether people choose media that match their political viewpoints by providing subjects with a fixed number of political media choices and recording their selections. Given a choice of political pamphlets,

Freedman and Sears (1963) and Chaffee and McLeod (1973) found that subjects were more likely to select the pamphlets of their preferred candidate compared to the pamphlets of candidate they opposed. Further, Barlett, Drew, Fahle, and Watts (1974) documented that people were more likely to return a pre-addressed postcard when an exterior envelope indicated support for their preferred candidate as opposed to when it indicated support for the candidate they opposed. Using a computer simulation of an election campaign, Redlawsk (2002) found evidence that subjects were more likely to view information about candidates they liked in comparison to candidates they did not like. In a study asking people about their newspaper reading habits, Donsbach (1991) found that people were more likely to read positive articles about their preferred candidate. Further, Meffert et al. (2006) showed that people were more likely to expose themselves to information about their preferred candidate.⁴ In their study of exposure to political information, Taber and Lodge (2006) presented participants with congenial and uncongenial information on affirmative action or gun control. They found that participants were more likely to expose themselves to congenial information. These experimental studies provide good evidence of the motivated selection of congenial political information. Based on these studies documenting that political beliefs are related to information exposure, the following hypothesis is posed:

Hypothesis 1: People's political predispositions will be related to the consumption of partisan media

⁴ Interestingly, Meffert et al. found that subjects also preferred negative information about their favored candidate. Meffert et al. propose that people may be more likely to expose themselves to negative information about their preferred candidate if they believe that it is easily refutable. Several experimental studies provide support for this idea (Lowin, 1967; 1969).

Antecedents and Consequences of Partisan Selective Exposure

Equipped with evidence that partisan selective exposure occurs, the question becomes: what are the antecedents and consequences of partisan selective exposure? While the studies reviewed above evaluate whether or not partisan selective exposure takes place, the causes and effects of partisan selective exposure are less well understood. Theoretically, exposure to likeminded views is expected to relate to a number of consequential political variables. Research suggests that exposure to homogeneous views is related to lower levels of ambivalence and higher levels of polarization (Lavine, Borgida, & Sullivan, 2000; Mutz, 2002a), fewer reasons for one's own opinion and the opinion of others (Mutz, 2002b; Price et al., 2002), higher levels of political interest and participation (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002a), and committing to a vote choice decision earlier in a campaign (Mutz, 2002a; Nir, 2005). Many of these studies, however, are based on exposure to homogeneous or heterogeneous *interpersonal* networks. Whether these findings apply to patterns of *media* exposure is an important question that will be addressed in this dissertation.

Hypothesis 2: Partisan selective exposure will be related to political knowledge, political interest, participation, commitment to candidates, and political polarization.

Though political knowledge, political interest, political participation, commitment, and polarization are often portrayed as consequences of selective exposure, their relationship with partisan selective exposure remains unclear in many empirical investigations because of a reliance on cross-sectional surveys. Though the authors of many cross-sectional studies are careful to note that the use of cross-sectional data

impairs empirical demonstrations of causal ordering, they make theoretical inferences about the causal direction. There is, however, a theoretical case to be made that each variable is an antecedent, rather than a consequence, of selective exposure. For example, individuals who hold highly polarized political attitudes may be motivated to engage in selective exposure because they agree more with media outlets that treat their preferred perspective more favorably. Here, polarization would predict selective exposure.

Alternatively, exposure to like-minded media outlets may cause people to become more polarized. In other words, a correlation between a political variable and partisan media consumption could be explained as (a) the media caused the audience to change their attitudes/behaviors or (b) those with certain political attitudes/behaviors were motivated to consume partisan media. The use of cross-sectional data analysis results in ambiguity surrounding the causal direction of the relationship between political variables, like polarization, and selective exposure.

Disentangling this relationship is important for understanding whether people are embedded in media environments that influence their political beliefs and/or if people actively use media based on their political beliefs. There are several possible causal orderings. First, it is possible that political variables such as polarization precede selective exposure. Experimental studies that have manipulated variables such as polarization and have found differences in selective exposure behavior add some credence to this interpretation of causal direction. However, the conflicting results that permeate the early experimental literature on selective exposure leave unresolved many questions about the relationships between the variables. Further, not all experimental

designs lend themselves to justifying a particular causal order. Though Mills and Ross (1964) manipulated two variables proposed to predict selective exposure, certainty and commitment, their certainty manipulation was unsuccessful and so they looked at self-reported certainty as predicting selective exposure – essentially taking their experimental results and treating them as cross-sectional findings. A second possible causal ordering is that these political variables could be consequences of selective exposure. Exposure to congenial views in the media could lead to higher levels of political interest, political participation, commitment to candidates earlier in a campaign, and polarization. Further, partisan selective exposure could result in lower political knowledge. Finally, these variables could be jointly antecedents and consequences of selective exposure. This is a troubling possibility. If selective exposure leads to attitudinal polarization, for example, and attitudinal polarization produces selective exposure, a spiral of polarization would result. Though there are counter-acting forces present, such as the presence of disagreement in networks (Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1995) and the potential for exposure to different views in one's interpersonal networks and in the media (Mutz & Martin, 2001), a spiral effect from partisan selective exposure could be particularly consequential.

With the ambiguity surrounding the antecedents and consequences of selective exposure, surprisingly few studies have attempted to sort out the causal relationship between these variables. Sweeney and Gruber (1984) represent an outstanding exception. The authors used a three-wave panel study to investigate selective exposure during the 1973 Senate Watergate hearings. At each wave, they measured not only selective exposure (operationalized as (a) interest in

politics, (b) attention to Watergate, and (c) frequency of Watergate discussion) but also beliefs and behavioral intentions (operationalized as (a) likelihood of voting Republican (b) beliefs that Nixon has lost his credibility and (c) beliefs that Nixon should resign). By computing cross-lag correlations, Sweeney and Gruber found preliminary evidence that selective exposure led to beliefs and behavioral intentions as opposed to beliefs and behavioral intentions leading to selective exposure. This study is far from the final word on this matter, however. First, many important political variables were not addressed by this research. Second, the results address selective exposure in terms of avoiding or seeking information in general, assuming that that all information sources conveyed a similar point of view. With the multitude of information sources today, however, exposure can vary based on the viewpoint expressed in different media. Third, Sweeney and Gruber used correlations to illustrate their point. As Sweeney and Gruber aptly note, other methods may be more appropriate for testing the causal direction (see Kessler & Greenberg, 1981). Despite Sweeney and Gruber's important first step at understanding the relationship between selective exposure and political variables, additional analysis is warranted. In the following paragraphs, specific hypotheses about the causal direction of the relationships put forth in Hypothesis 2 are formulated. Several additional hypotheses based on political variables theoretically anticipated to be antecedents and consequences of partisan selective exposure also are discussed.

Antecedents

Several individual characteristics and properties of the media are proposed as antecedents of partisan selective exposure. It is anticipated that political knowledge and interest will serve as antecedents of partisan selective exposure. To engage in partisan selective exposure, people must possess the ability and motivation to recognize partisan cues. If one cannot tell whether an outlet leans conservative or liberal, one certainly cannot base one's media decision on the partisan leanings of the outlet. Further, if one is not motivated to consume political content in partisan ways, one would not be expected to engage in partisan selective exposure. With greater ability to recognize partisan cues, politically knowledgeable respondents are more able to engage in partisan selective exposure. In addition, partisans interested in politics should be more motivated to engage in partisan selective exposure. This yields the following expectation:

Hypothesis 3: Higher political knowledge and political interest lead to higher levels of partisan selective exposure.

The media also may contribute to partisan selective exposure; two ways are examined in this dissertation. First, the structure of the media environment can influence people's exposure patterns. With more choices and more diverse content choices, people are more able to select media outlets that correspond to their political preferences. This yields the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: As the number of available options from which to choose increases and as the diversity of political content across the available options increases, partisan selective exposure will increase.

Second, the media may contribute to patterns of partisan selective exposure by showcasing events that inspire people to respond in partisan ways. In a presidential

campaign, political debates and party conventions attract a great deal of media attention. These two events represent different extremes of selective exposure – debates offer two-sided information while conventions are single-sided events. As events energizing one's base, the party conventions may motivate higher levels of partisan selective exposure. The debates, known to reinforce pre-existing candidate preferences (see McKinney and Carlin, 2004), also may motivate higher partisan selective exposure by highlighting people's partisanship. In accordance with these insights, the following hypothesis is posed:

Hypothesis 5: Exposure to the debates and conventions will enhance partisan selective exposure.

Consequences

For the remaining three individual-level variables discussed in Hypothesis 2, recent research assumes that exposure to similar viewpoints causes higher levels of participation, commitment, and polarization (Lavine et al., 2000; Mutz, 2002a). Expanding on this notion, this dissertation investigates whether these variables are appropriately labeled as consequences of partisan selective exposure:

Hypothesis 6: Partisan selective exposure will lead to higher levels of political participation, commitment, and polarization.

One additional consequence that will receive attention in this dissertation is the relationship between perceptions of issue importance and partisan selective exposure. Research in agenda setting investigates the idea that the media convey the importance of issues to the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Rogers & Dearing, 1988). If content differs between media outlets, one would anticipate that the transmitted agenda would

differ depending on which media outlet one chooses (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Given the presence of partisan media outlets and a propensity for people to prefer news media expressing beliefs that match their partisan inclinations, partisan media may further divide people into different publics by leading them to adopt different issue agendas.

Further, different issue agendas may translate into differences in how political leaders are evaluated. Research on priming investigates the idea that issues that are perceived to be more important are more likely to be used in judging the performance of the president (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Agenda setting and priming research provide the theoretical foundations for final hypothesis guiding this dissertation project:

Hypothesis 7: Partisan selective exposure will lead to differences in the issues perceived to be most important and to differences in the weight given to these issues when judging the performance of the president.

In order to evaluate these hypotheses, a nationally representative survey was analyzed and an experiment was conducted. The following chapter provides additional details.

CHAPTER 3: INVESTIGATING THE PHENOMENON

This dissertation predominately uses data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES). The NAES was conducted throughout the 2004 presidential election. The survey asked respondents about a broad range of topics including their political opinions and behaviors, media use, and demographics. The NAES employed two sampling designs: rolling cross-sectional and panel surveys. Each will be discussed in turn.

In the rolling cross-sectional design, a set number of randomly selected telephone numbers, known as replicates, were released into the field each night. On the first night that each replicate was released into the field, all numbers within the replicate were dialed. On subsequent nights, telephone numbers where no one responded to the survey were redialed in an attempt to secure a survey respondent. By following this design, each night of interviewing contained data from those individuals reached using numbers that were released into the field for the first time and data from those individuals who were reached after several nights of calling. To the extent that those who are easy to reach differ demographically and politically from those who are harder to reach, this design yields a random cross-section of the population for each night of interviewing. Respondents who did not complete the survey were re-contacted a maximum number of twenty times over fourteen days. Refusal conversions were employed. Respondents were required to be over eighteen years of age and were randomly selected within each

household. The 2004 NAES was conducted between October 7, 2003 and November 16, 2004. Calling was suspended for major holidays and Election Day. Using the RR1 formula of the American Association for Public Opinion Researchers, the response rate to the survey was 22 percent. Analysis discussed in this dissertation will focus predominately on data gathered between June 9 (the day after the final primary election) and November 1, 2004.

The second component of the 2004 NAES was four panel surveys conducted around the debates, the party conventions, and the general election. Details about these four panels are displayed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. *Panel Dates and Re-Contact Rates*

	Pre-Wave Dates	Post-Wave Dates	Re-Contact Rate
Democratic National Convention Panel	7/16 to 7/25/04	7/30 to 8/8/04	42%
Republican National Convention Panel	8/20 to 8/29/04	9/3 to 9/13/04	36%
Debates Panel	9/20 to 9/29/04	10/14 to 10/24/04	41%
Post-election Panel	7/15 to 11/1/04	11/4 to 12/28/04	43%

To test the hypotheses laid out previously, responses to a host of the survey questions were used. Details for the measurement of the control variables and partisan selective exposure are provided in the sections below. In addition to the operationalization of the control variables and partisan selective exposure, several important political concepts were discussed in the formal hypotheses (e.g. political participation). Rather than review these variables here, however, they are explained prior to their use in later sections. These political constructs include: political knowledge,

polarization, participation, commitment, opinions about the most important problem facing the country, and judgments about President Bush's performance.

Measurement: Controls

The following paragraphs detail demographic, media use and attention, political orientation, and political event-exposure control variables that are utilized throughout this dissertation. These variables were selected as controls because they often have been used in the literature and have documented relationships with many of the political variables to be analyzed. Inclusion of these variables throughout the analyses helps to rule out critiques that observed relationships between the political variables and partisan selective exposure are spurious.

Descriptive statistics for the control variables used throughout the analysis are presented for the cross-sectional survey between June 9 and November 1, 2004. It is important to note, however, that some items were not included on the survey every day and many analyses therefore represent a subset of this time period. These instances are noted below. Since the survey was conducted using the rolling cross-sectional design, however, differences in the descriptive statistics based on different time periods under analysis should be minimal. Throughout this dissertation, responses of "don't know" or refusals to answer a question are not included in the analysis unless otherwise noted.

Demographics

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest level of education completed. This variable was recoded to represent years of schooling completed ($M=14.29$, $SD=2.47$). Respondents also provided their age in years ($M=48.23$, $SD=16.50$) and their

income ($M=64.84$, $SD=49.96$, recoded to approximate an interval level variable). The respondent's gender (55.9% female) and race/ethnicity (8.2% Black/African-American, 8.0% Hispanic) also are included as controls throughout the analysis.

Media Use and Attention

Respondents were asked to indicate how many days in the past week (0 to 7 days) they: watched national network news ($M=2.57$, $SD=2.62$), watched a 24 hour cable news channel ($M=3.06$, $SD=2.84$), watched local television news ($M=3.96$, $SD=2.77$), read a newspaper ($M=3.76$, $SD=2.91$), listened to National Public Radio (NPR, $M=1.17$, $SD=2.21$), and listened to non-NPR radio shows that invite listeners to call in to discuss current events, public issues, or politics ($M=1.29$, $SD=2.18$).

Internet use also was measured. Respondents were asked to identify whether they had access to the Internet or World Wide Web at home, at work, or someplace else. Overall, 72.6 percent of respondents had Internet access. Two questions on the survey asked respondents about their use of the Internet for political information in the past seven days (0 to 7 days). The first read: how many days in the past week did you *access* information about the campaign for president online? The second read: how many days in the past week did you *read* information about the campaign for president online? Until September 29, 2004, respondents who indicated that they had access to the Internet were randomly assigned to one of these questions. After this date, only the question asking respondents about "accessing" information was retained on the survey. Though the two had slightly different means (*access information* $M=0.93$, $SD=1.95$; *read information* $M=1.16$, $SD=2.13$), they had similar distributions and were combined throughout the

analysis. Those who responded that they did not have access to the Internet were coded as accessing political information 0 days in the past week.

Respondents were asked several questions about how much attention they paid to media coverage of the campaign for president. Response options were on a four-point scale from a great deal of attention (3) to no attention at all (0). Respondents were asked about how much attention they paid to stories on national network or cable television news ($M=1.60$, $SD=1.09$), on local television news ($M=1.32$, $SD=1.07$), and in the newspaper ($M=1.37$, $SD=1.12$). Only those respondents indicating that they consumed each of the various types of media were asked these questions (e.g. only those stating that they watched local news were asked about their attention to local news coverage of the campaign), those indicating that they did not consume each media type were coded as paying no attention to stories about the campaign for president.

Political Orientations

Political interest was assessed by asking a random two-thirds of respondents: “Some people seem to follow what is going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there is an election or not. Others are not that interested, or are interested in other things. Would you say you follow what is going on in government and public affairs:” most of the time (39.8%), some of the time (36.8%), only now and then (17.1%), or hardly at all (6.3%).⁵ This variable was coded such that higher values indicate more interest in politics. Respondents also were asked how many days in the

⁵ This item was removed from the survey between October 8 and October 10. Analysis including this variable does not include these days.

past week (0 to 7 days) they discussed politics with family and friends ($M=3.22$, $SD=2.53$).

Respondents' political leanings play a key role in this dissertation. Participants were asked their political ideology with response options including: very conservative (8.6%), conservative (29.7%), moderate (38.8%), liberal (17.6%), and very liberal (5.2%). Respondents were asked whether they thought of themselves as Republicans (32.2%), Democrats (33.7%), Independents (27.7%), or something else (6.4%). Of Republicans, 65.8 percent considered themselves strong Republicans and 34.2 percent considered themselves not very strong Republicans. Of Democrats, 63.3 percent considered themselves strong Democrats and 36.7 percent considered themselves not very strong Democrats. Those who said that they were Independents, something else, or did not name a party were asked whether they thought of themselves as closer to the Republican or Democratic Party. Thirty-five percent said that they thought of themselves as closer to the Republican Party and 40.8 percent said that they felt closer to the Democratic Party. A partisanship measure was created by combining these items into a five-point scale: strong Republican (20.4%), not very strong Republican / close to the Republican Party (22.8%), not leaning toward either party (10.3%), not very strong Democrat / close to the Democratic Party (25.9%), and strong Democrat (20.5%). Ideology and partisanship were significantly correlated ($r=0.49$, $p<0.001$) and were combined into a single measure of political leanings with larger values indicating strong liberal Democratic leanings and smaller values indicating strong conservative Republican leanings ($Range=2$ to 10 , $M=5.84$, $SD=2.14$).

One additional variable was included as a control throughout the analysis: the strength of one's political leanings. The combined ideology/partisanship measure was "folded" into a measure ranging from 0 to 4 such that strong liberal Democrats and strong conservative Republicans received a 4 and independents who did not lean toward either major party received a 0. Throughout the analysis, this measure controls for how strongly people hold their partisan and ideological political beliefs, irrespective of whether they lean more toward the right or the left ($M=1.83$, $SD=1.12$).

Political Event Exposure

Three of the four panels used throughout this dissertation were conducted surrounding important political events, namely, the party nominating conventions and the political debates. When these panels are used, a control is included for viewing these events. Exposure to these political events was measured by a series of questions on the post-wave of each panel survey which asked respondents to indicate how much of the various events they watched. For the debates, respondents were asked whether they watched all (4), most, some, or none (1), of each of the three presidential debates and the vice presidential debate. These four items were summed to form a scale of debate exposure with higher values corresponding to more debate exposure (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.89; range 4 to 16, $M=10.53$, $SD=4.37$). For the Republican National Convention (RNC), respondents were first asked a factual question employed as a screen; respondents were asked whether the RNC was being held, already had been held, or would be held. It is assumed that those respondents who did not know that the convention had already been held were unexposed to the convention. Those who knew

the convention was over were asked whether they had seen Zel Miller's speech, Dick Cheney's speech, and George Bush's speech at the RNC. Response options included no, didn't see or hear speech (0), yes a few minutes, yes about 20 minutes (half an hour for Bush's speech), and yes, the entire speech (or an hour of Bush's speech) (3). These three items were summed to form a scale of RNC exposure with higher values corresponding to more exposure (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.86, range 0 to 9, *M*=3.18, *SD*=3.28). Questions for the Democratic National Convention (DNC) paralleled those for the RNC except respondents were asked whether they had seen Bill Clinton's speech, John Edwards' speech, and John Kerry's speech. These three items were summed to form a scale of DNC exposure with higher values corresponding to more exposure (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.85, range 0 to 9, *M*=3.02, *SD*=3.25).

Measurement: Partisan Media Use

The main construct under investigation in this dissertation is exposure to partisan media. To develop measures of liberal and conservative media use, exposure to four different media types were used to operationalize partisan selective exposure: newspapers, political talk radio, 24-hour cable television news, and political Internet. In order to operationalize partisan selectivity, two steps were taken. The first step was to identify the partisan leanings of different outlets for each of these four media types. The second step was to operationalize the selection of politically congenial media outlets. Both of these steps will be discussed in more detail below.

The partisanship of various media outlets was operationalized in different ways depending on the type of media. The rolling cross-sectional measures are detailed below, information on these measures in the panel surveys can be found in Appendix C.

Newspapers

Survey respondents were asked how many days in the past week that they read a daily newspaper. Those who stated that they had read a newspaper at least once were asked which newspaper they read most often. The political leanings of the named newspapers were determined based on the presidential candidate endorsed by the newspaper in the 2004 presidential election.

Measuring newspaper leanings based on endorsements raises some questions – does this measurement adequately reflect newspaper political leanings? Prior research has investigated the relationship between a newspaper’s political leanings and their editorial endorsement. In their examination of coverage in the 1992 presidential campaign, Dalton, Beck, and Huckfeldt (1998) found a low correspondence between newspaper endorsements and the leanings of editorial and news content in their sample of 46 different newspapers. Other researchers, however, have found a stronger relationship between news leanings and editorial content; Kahn and Kenney (2002) found a significant relationship between the tone of media coverage and newspaper endorsements. Certainly using newspaper endorsements to measure political leanings lacks some of the precision of a content analysis; however, without some type of proxy, it is difficult to conceive of how one would categorize thousands of newspapers. Not only is there some support for this measure when comparing news coverage to content

analysis (Kahn & Kenney, 2002), but there is evidence that at least some people make judgments about a newspaper based on its presidential endorsement decision. Michelle Koidin Jaffee (2004) of the *San Antonio Express-News* reported that in 2004, presidential newspaper endorsements resulted in lost subscriptions and protests; “In Austin, more than 300 protesters gathered near the newspaper's building. In Philadelphia, about 800 people canceled their newspaper subscriptions. In President Bush's adopted hometown of Crawford, almost half of the newspaper's 920 subscribers cut ties” (p. 1A).

In order to determine who each newspaper endorsed, several strategies were used. Whenever possible, public information sources were consulted to determine which candidate each newspaper endorsed. This included reviewing the trade publication *Editor & Publisher* and releases over the *AP Newswire*. For the remaining newspapers, an email was sent to the newspaper. Emails were tailored by using the name of the newspaper and, when possible, the editor's name in an effort to increase response. Of the 1,076 emails sent, 537 responses were received.

These data were matched to the survey responses in the NAES. Of the 29,298 respondents who identified the newspaper they read most often, this classification strategy enabled classification of 77 percent of responses. Fifteen percent of open-ended responses were unable to be classified. This group included newspapers that could not be found and newspapers for which an endorsement could not be determined. For example, when respondents stated that they read the “Courier Post” most often in the past week, they could be referring to either the Hannibal Courier Post, which endorsed Bush, or the Camden Courier Post, which endorsed Kerry. Eight percent of respondents named

newspapers that were contacted, but did not provide information about who they endorsed. Of the respondents who were able to be classified, 35 percent read a newspaper that endorsed Bush and 46 percent read a newspaper that endorsed Kerry. The remainder read newspapers that declined to endorse a candidate, read more than one paper with different editorial stances, or read a newspaper that gave two conflicting endorsements (a small minority was in the latter two categories, only 0.3% of the respondents). To create a measure of *reading newspapers endorsing Kerry*, respondents reading a newspaper endorsing Kerry were given a 1 and respondents reading a newspaper endorsing Bush, reading a newspaper not making an endorsement, not reading a newspaper, not able to name a newspaper that they read, or who named a newspaper that was not able to be classified were given a 0. An identical operationalization was used for *reading newspapers endorsing Bush*, with the exception of a 1 was given to respondents reading a newspaper endorsing Bush and respondents reading a newspaper endorsing Kerry were given a 0.

Political Talk Radio

Respondents identifying that they listened to talk radio or NPR one or more days in the past week were asked to identify the radio shows and hosts to which they listened. Open-ended responses to this question were classified as liberal or conservative on the basis of three criteria. First, a majority of radio hosts and programs openly identified themselves as conservative or liberal. This was determined by looking at online information about each of the hosts and shows on their own websites and the radio station's online descriptions of the radio show or host. For example, on Greg Garrison's

website, it noted, “Garrison brings his populist conservative values to the airwaves” (<http://www.wibc.com/garrison>, 3/31/06). The second strategy was to evaluate whether the radio hosts and shows were identified in the industry publication *Talkers* as having conservative or liberal political leanings. For example, radio host Ed Schultz is dubbed by *Talkers* (2005) as a “Progressive Democrat.” The third criterion was to look at the academic literature on talk radio to evaluate how radio hosts had been classified previously (see, for example, Hofstetter, Barker, Smith, Zari, & Ingrassia, 1999). Using these criteria, statements that the hosts or programs were liberal, progressive, Democratic, anti-Bush, pro-Kerry, or supportive of issue positions known to be related to the Democratic Party were coded as liberal. Statements that hosts or programs were conservative, Republican, pro-Bush, anti-Kerry, or supportive of issue positions known to be related to the Republican Party were coded as conservative. Appendix A includes a table with the hosts classified as liberal or conservative and brief statements supporting each classification.

Of course, not all hosts and programs mentioned were conservative or liberal. Hosts such as David Brudnoy and Gene Burns identified as libertarian and others such as Doug Stephan and Jim Bohannon touted their moderate political positions. Several shows had two hosts, each with a different political perspective (e.g. The Jerry & Craig Show). Further, some respondents identified programs that were not political in content, such as sports talker Jim Rome and the “steward of late-night paranormal talk” George Noory (Harrison, 2006). All of these types of programs were coded as being neither liberal nor conservative.

Using this method, 78 percent of the radio responses were classified. The remaining responses either were unable to be located (a radio host or program that could not be found using Internet searches) or were indeterminate (such as respondents providing the frequency of the radio station without additional details, e.g. “101.1”).

One coding decision not discussed in Appendix A that will receive special attention here is the coding of the hosts and programs on National Public Radio (NPR). There have been popular claims that NPR tends to be biased in the liberal direction. The limited literature on this topic does not provide a clear answer. Boudreau (2004) found little indication of bias in *Morning Edition*'s coverage of the 2000 election. In his study of *All Things Considered*, however, Larson (1989) found that the program “reported the activities of conservative presidents less favorably than it has those of liberal presidents.” In their study of political talk radio, Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded Diane Rehm of NPR as liberal and *Talk of the Nation* as moderate. Given the controversy surrounding NPR and the frequency with which it was mentioned by survey respondents, analyses were run both with and without NPR coded as a liberal outlet. Differences are noted in the footnotes.

As with the construction of the media consumption variables for newspaper, dichotomous variables were constructed that indicated whether or not the respondent listened to liberal-leaning radio and whether or not the respondent listened to conservative-leaning radio. Respondents listening to non-liberal, non-conservative radio programs or not listening to political talk radio were coded as 0.

Cable News

Respondents were asked to identify which cable news network they watched most often. Of those who watched cable news, 92 percent identified that they watched FOX, CNN, or MSNBC most often. Thirty-four percent reported viewing FOX, 45 percent CNN, and 12 percent MSNBC. Though all three of these news networks self-identify as objective news outlets, content analytic investigations suggest that some have identifiable political leanings. In their analysis, Aday, Livingston, and Hebert (2005) found that FOX news coverage of the 2003 Iraqi War tended to be more supportive of the United States in comparison to CNN, ABC, NBC, and CBS coverage. Further, research conducted by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (2003; 2004a; 2004b) and the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2004) suggests that FOX news covered issues in such a way that is more supportive of conservative and Republican beliefs. Based on content analytic evaluations of the political leanings of FOX news, it will be contrasted with CNN and MSNBC in this study. Though there is little empirical work suggesting that CNN and MSNBC are liberal in their leanings, these outlets will be treated as a contrast to FOX since choosing these cable news networks represents a non-FOX decision.

Political Internet

Survey respondents were asked whether or not they had access to the Internet or the World Wide Web at home, at work, or someplace else. Those who responded that they had Internet access were asked whether they had accessed/read information about the campaign for president online (see discussion of this variable in the measurement of control variables section). Of those with Internet access, 35 percent stated that they had

accessed or read political information online in the past week. Those responding that they had accessed/read information at least one day in the past week were asked where they went to get information: (a) a candidate's website or weblog (b) a news organization's website or weblog or (c) some other website or weblog. Respondents were permitted to give multiple responses. Of those with Internet access who accessed political information online, 12 percent accessed a candidate website/weblog, 60 percent accessed a news organization website/weblog, and 32 percent identified another website/weblog. Those identifying another website/weblog were asked to specify which website/weblog. These open-ended responses were reviewed and coded as to whether they leaned toward conservative or liberal perspectives or not. In order to validate this coding scheme, a subset of 50 open-ended responses were selected and recoded by a second coder. The inter-coder reliability, computed using Krippendorff's alpha was 0.96 (Krippendorff, 2004). Of the 3,343 open-ended responses to this question, 2,712 were able to be categorized. Of the respondents naming a website, 72 percent named non-ideologically leaning or non-political websites (e.g. AOL). Twelve percent named conservative-leaning websites (e.g. rushlimbaugh.com) and 14 percent named liberal-leaning websites (e.g. moveon.org). The remaining 2 percent of respondents either named a website associated with a third party candidate or named multiple websites that had different partisan leanings.

The employed categorization methods are strict in the sense that ambiguous cases were not coded as liberal or conservative. For example, for the radio coding, only those hosts and shows where clear evidence could be offered about the political leanings were

coded as liberal or conservative. Employing this coding scheme, there may be some instances where the outlet was not coded as liberal or conservative because adequate evidence was not found but where, in actuality, the outlet is liberal or conservative. In the event that this occurred, the hypotheses would be *less* likely to be supported. For example, let's say that (a) one were evaluating the hypothesis that partisan media exposure is positively related to political participation and that (b) some respondents were consuming liberal media outlets, but the outlets were not coded as liberal. If the hypothesis were correct, then the mean participation for those coded as *not* consuming liberal media would be inflated and closer to the participation mean for those consuming liberal media. This would make one less likely to find support for the hypotheses.

It is also possible, despite efforts to employ strict criteria in coding the partisan and ideological leanings of the media outlets, that some will believe that an outlet coded as liberal/conservative is not. Again, the effect of mis-categorization would be to decrease the likelihood of finding support for the hypotheses. Continuing the example from above, if an outlet was coded as conservative and was, in fact, moderate, the mean participation score for consuming conservative media would be negatively affected and become closer to the mean participation score for those not consuming conservative media. Thus, one would be less likely to find support for the hypotheses.

Validity

If people are making media choices based on their political leanings, then one would expect that a respondent using a conservative outlet in one media type would be more likely to use a conservative outlet of another media type and less likely to use

liberal outlets of other media types (and vice versa for those using liberal outlets). Media audiences would likely overlap, but not be completely repetitive, however, because use of one politically leaning media does not mean that respondents will elect to use a different type of media. For example, listening to conservative talk radio does not mean that a person necessarily will access the Internet. Table 3.2 below documents the percentage of overlap between media audiences.

Table 3.2. *Percent of Cross-Media Consumption*

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet		All (n=39,338)
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser-vative	Liberal ⁶	FOX	CNN/MSNBC	Conser-vative	Liberal	
Newspaper									
Bush Endorsed	--	--	24.7%	18.4%	23.3%	20.7%	23.6%	17.5%	20.1%
Kerry Endorsed	--	--	26.7%	38.8%	24.3%	30.8%	29.6%	48.3%	26.6%
Talk Radio									
Conservative	16.2%	13.3%	--	--	31.5%	7.2%	61.0%	3.6%	13.2%
Liberal	11.0%	17.6%	--	--	5.5%	15.0%	3.6%	47.8%	12.0%
Cable News									
FOX	25.9%	20.5%	53.4%	10.2%	--	--	63.6%	3.6%	22.4%
CNN / MSNBC	39.3%	44.4%	20.9%	47.8%	--	--	14.3%	55.4%	38.3%
Political Internet									
Conservative	1.0%	1.0%	4.0%	0.3%	2.4%	0.3%	--	--	0.9%
Liberal	0.9%	1.8%	0.3%	4.0%	0.2%	1.4%	--	--	1.0%

Note: Cell entries reflect the percentage of individuals consuming each column variable who also consume the row variable.

⁶ The displayed percentages include respondents stating that they listened to National Public Radio (NPR) in the past week. Removing NPR, the same general conclusions apply. Overall, only 1% of respondents access liberal talk radio (not including NPR). The percentage of individuals reading newspapers endorsing Bush who listen to liberal talk radio is 0.9%. The percentage of individuals reading newspapers endorsing Kerry who listen to liberal talk radio is 1.9%. The percentage of FOX viewers who listen to liberal talk radio is 0.3%. The percentage of CNN/MSNBC viewers who listen to liberal talk radio is 1.3%. The percentage of individuals accessing conservative websites who listen to liberal talk radio is 1.2%. The percentage of individuals accessing liberal websites who listen to liberal talk radio is 10.5%. Of liberal talk radio listeners (without NPR), 17.7% read newspapers endorsing Bush, 50.4% read newspapers endorsing Kerry, 7.7% watch FOX, 49.2% watch CNN/MSNBC, 1.0% access conservative websites, and 10.5% access liberal websites.

Table 3.2 shows the percentage of cross-media consumption for each media type. For example, 16.2 percent of individuals reading newspapers endorsing Bush also listen to conservative talk radio. From this table, two constellations of media consumption emerge: (a) Bush endorsing newspapers, conservative talk radio, FOX, and conservative websites and (b) Kerry endorsing newspapers, liberal talk radio, CNN / MSNBC, and liberal websites. With few exceptions, consuming any type of media in (a) means that the individual is more likely to consume other media types in (a) and less likely to consume media types in (b) and vice versa for consuming any type of media in (b).

As another check on the validity of this coding scheme, an analysis of the audience composition for each media outlet was conducted. Based on the previously reviewed evidence that partisan selective exposure occurs, if the media coding scheme were valid, one would anticipate that the audience for liberal outlets would consist of more liberals and Democrats while the audience for conservative outlets would consist of more conservatives and Republicans. Cross tabulations of the newspaper, talk radio, cable news, and political Internet measures by political ideology and partisanship were conducted and are displayed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. *Political Ideology and Partisanship of Media Audiences by Medium*

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet		All
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal ⁷	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal	
Political Ideology									
Very Conservative	8.7%	5.9%	18.7%	3.5%	15.2%	4.9%	23.7%	1.8%	8.6%
Conservative	32.1%	25.2%	49.2%	13.7%	45.1%	22.4%	59.8%	3.4%	29.7%
Moderate	38.5%	40.7%	25.9%	38.8%	30.1%	44.0%	12.0%	28.6%	38.8%
Liberal	16.0%	21.3%	5.1%	30.6%	7.7%	22.4%	3.0%	40.5%	17.6%
Very Liberal	4.7%	6.9%	1.2%	13.4%	2.0%	6.3%	1.5%	25.7%	5.2%
<i>N</i>	7,735	10,247	5,107	4,606	8,642	14,672	333	385	38,160
Partisanship									
Strong Republican	23.6%	17.1%	50.1%	9.7%	41.5%	12.6%	63.5%	1.8%	20.5%
Not so Strong/Lean Republican	23.9%	20.5%	30.1%	15.2%	28.3%	19.7%	27.2%	5.2%	22.9%
Independent	8.6%	8.6%	5.0%	7.7%	6.4%	8.8%	3.0%	5.4%	10.1%
Not so Strong/Lean Democrat	24.3%	28.2%	9.4%	35.7%	14.2%	31.1%	4.8%	41.5%	26.0%
Strong Democrat	19.7%	25.5%	5.3%	31.6%	9.7%	27.9%	1.5%	46.1%	20.6%
<i>N</i>	7,778	10,296	5,101	4,648	8,673	14,802	334	386	38,646

⁷ The displayed percentages include respondents stating that they listened to National Public Radio (NPR) in the past week. Removing NPR, the distribution of responses is even more polarized. For ideology ($n=383$), 1.6% identify as very conservative, 7.8% conservative, 28.7% moderate, 37.6% liberal, and 24.3% very liberal. For partisanship ($n=386$), 3.9% identify as strong Republicans, 7.5% identify as leaning or not as strong Republicans, 5.2% identify as independents, 40.2% identify as leaning or not as strong Democrats, and 43.3% identify as strong Democrats.

As shown in Table 3.3, compared to the distribution of ideology and partisanship for the entire sample displayed in the last column, audiences for each media type consist more heavily of individuals sharing the leanings of that outlet. Few respondents named a partisan website when asked where they went to obtain campaign information online. Overwhelmingly, those saying that they accessed a liberal website identified as liberals and Democrats and those saying that they accessed a conservative website identified as conservatives and Republicans. Partisan and ideological audience patterns appear for cable news viewing and talk radio as well – those watching FOX or listening to conservative talk radio tend to be Republicans and conservatives while those watching CNN/MSNBC or listening to liberal talk radio tend to be Democrats and liberals. The relationship between newspaper endorsements and ideological and partisan leanings of the newspaper audience is less strong, but still apparent. More Democrats and liberals read newspapers that endorsed Kerry while more Republicans and conservatives read newspapers that endorsed Bush. The checks shown in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 help to establish the validity of the employed coding procedures, the first step in measuring partisan selective exposure.

Using the outlet-specific measures of partisan media use, two indices of media exposure were created. The first index, exposure to conservative media outlets, was created by summing reading newspapers endorsing Bush, listening to conservative talk radio, watching FOX, and accessing conservative websites ($M=0.57$, $SD=0.76$, range 0 to 4). The second index, exposure to liberal media outlets, was created by summing reading newspapers endorsing Kerry, listening to liberal talk radio, watching CNN/MSNBC, and

accessing liberal websites ($M=0.78$, $SD=0.80$, *range* 0 to 4). Both the measures of exposure to the individual outlets and the ideological media exposure indices were used in evaluating ideological media exposure throughout this dissertation. Please note that references to these indices as measuring “liberal media use” and “conservative media use” are employed loosely – recall, for example, that there was little literature on the ideological bent of CNN/MSNBC. These admittedly rough terms, however, are helpful in delineating the two types of media consumption under investigation here.

After coding the political leanings of each of the different types of media and creating the exposure indices, the second step to operationalizing partisan selective exposure was to devise a strategy that would enable one to take the respondent’s political leanings into account when analyzing the data. Partisan selective exposure not only involves the selection of partisan media, but also one’s political predispositions. Therefore, including the respondent’s political predispositions was necessary in order to capture partisan selective exposure. To model congenial exposure, interaction terms incorporating respondent political leanings were included throughout the analysis. Respondent political leanings were measured as the sum of the ideology and partisanship measures as discussed in the controls section. Including an interaction term allowed for conclusions about (a) the effect of consuming each media outlet and (b) whether this effect was enhanced when the respondent’s political leanings corresponded with the media outlet. When evaluating antecedents of partisan selective exposure, respondent political leanings were multiplied by the antecedents under consideration. This allows for conclusions about whether the effect of the antecedent variable leads to partisan

media use in general or if it leads to partisan selective exposure by those sharing the political leanings of the media.

Analytic Strategy

Throughout this dissertation, the first analytic step was to evaluate the relationship between the variable of interest (e.g. political knowledge) and partisan selective exposure. In most cases, charts were created to illustrate the relationship between the variables.

After showing the bivariate relationships, cross-sectional analyses were conducted in order to evaluate whether the relationship between the variables persisted in the presence of the extensive battery of controls discussed previously in this chapter. All cross-sectional analyses were repeated under a number of conditions to test the robustness of the findings. First, as previously mentioned, political ideology and party identification were summed to create a measure of political leanings. To ensure that the findings would persist irrespective of how political leanings were measured, the analyses were repeated for both party identification and political ideology separately. Though both political ideology and party identification were included in the analysis, only one of these measures was included in the critical interaction terms that are used throughout this dissertation. Second, one important concern is that the media outlets, particularly newspapers, merely reflect the community in which they are published. If this were the case, congenial media exposure would not be responsible for a relationship between Bush-endorsing newspapers and polarization, for example. Instead, living in a heavily pro-Bush area would lead both to a Bush-endorsing newspaper and polarization. To

investigate this notion, data on the percent of the vote going to Bush and Kerry in each congressional district was obtained. This information was merged with the 2004 NAES data. To analyze whether the percent of Bush or Kerry vote within a district influenced the documented relationships, hierarchical linear modeling was used with each person nested in a congressional district. Overall, as documented in the footnotes, the results do not change when these alternate models are computed.

Following the cross-sectional analyses, two strategies were used to investigate the over-time relationship between partisan media exposure and the political variable under investigation. The first strategy employed to examine the over-time effect was two-wave panel analysis. There are many available strategies for conducting this type of analysis. For example, one analysis strategy that has been used in the past is to compare cross-correlations. For two variables, x and y , measured at two points in time, this means comparing the correlation between x at time 1 and y at time 2 to the correlation between x at time 2 and y at time 1. This strategy, however, can yield misleading results (Kessler & Greenberg, 1981). Kessler and Greenberg (1981) recommend using regression analysis to investigate relationships in two-wave panels. This analysis technique means that two regressions are run, one predicting x at time 2 and one predicting y at time 2. In both equations, x and y as measured at time 1 are entered as independent variables. Further, a battery of controls is incorporated. Using regression to investigate causal direction in a two-wave panel has been used in the communication discipline. Yanovitzky and Cappella (2001), for example, used this type of cross-lagged linear regression analysis in

their investigation of the effects of political talk radio. They provide the following discussion of the interpretation of these analyses:

By including a lagged measure of each respondent attitude as an explanatory variable in a regression model predicting that person's attitude in the following wave, all factors other than [political talk radio, PTR] reception that may account for change in attitudes between waves are controlled for... Thus, to the extent that PTR reception, as an additional predictor, is shown to have an independent contribution to attitude change between two adjacent waves... PTR reception may be understood as *causing* attitude change (385-386, emphasis added).

The same strategy is employed here where the analysis investigates the influence of changes in partisan media use on political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as well as the influence of changes in political knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors on partisan media use.

Where possible, a second strategy for over-time analysis was used to evaluate the relationships between the variables. This strategy involved looking at the relationships between the variables at the aggregate level of the day. For each day, a mean amount of congenial media exposure and a mean amount of each political variable under analysis was computed. To operationalize congenial media exposure at the aggregate level, the following technique was used. First, an individual-level measure of congenial media exposure was created. For liberal Democrats, this was the number of liberal media outlets consumed. For conservative Republicans, this was the number of conservative media outlets consumed. Second, the average amount of congenial media exposure was

computed for each day. The result of this strategy was a dataset with a mean value of congenial media exposure and a mean value of the political variable under investigation (e.g. political interest) for each day. For those days without values (for example, surveying was not conducted on July 4, 2004), the mean for that day was replaced with the mean from the surrounding days.

This type of data can be analyzed using time-series techniques. Different techniques from OLS regression are warranted when there is serial autocorrelation in the data. In standard regression, one assumes that each individual observation is unrelated to the other individuals in the dataset – this is the standard independent observations assumption. When analyzing data at the aggregate level, however, this assumption is not always reasonable. For example, it is possible that the mean amount of political polarization today is related to the mean amount of political polarization yesterday. To analyze this type of data, one first models over-time trends in the data (Romer, 2004). One strategy of modeling over-time trends that is employed in this dissertation is to include increasingly higher powers of time in a regression equation predicting an over-time series (e.g. $y_t = t + t^2 + t^3 + \dots$ where t =time). Though changes in the R-square value can be used to determine the number of time trend terms to include, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) are generally preferred because they more harshly penalize for overfitting (Diebold, 2004). After removing trends in the data, one can investigate whether there is any evidence of autocorrelation in the data by looking at the correlation between the series and lagged versions of the series (e.g. the correlation between x_t and x_{t-1}). If there is evidence of

autocorrelation, various techniques can be used to model these relationships. Throughout this dissertation, the series under investigation at the aggregate level did not display any signs of autocorrelation after detrending. This enabled the use of regression analysis with aggregate data. To perform this analysis, relationships between the two variables over time were evaluated. If lags of variable x (x_{t-1}, x_{t-2}, \dots) help to explain variable y (y_t), then there is evidence that x causally precedes variable y . Though this analysis does not rule out alternative explanations, arguments that an over-time aggregate level relationship is spurious must explain why a third variable would lead to changes in y occurring one (or more) days after influencing x .

Survey analyses were appropriate for evaluating most of the hypotheses, with one exception. To investigate hypothesis 4, which proposed that changes in the diversity of political content and the number of media options would influence partisan selective exposure, an experiment was used because the number and diversity of media outlets did not vary over the course of the 2004 campaign. In this experiment, people were permitted to choose magazines from a set of options. The number of magazines in the choice set and the diversity of political viewpoints represented in the choice set were manipulated. Exposure patterns were recorded and used to investigate partisan selective exposure. Additional details about the experiment will be provided in Chapter 5.

The measures and techniques detailed in this chapter were used to investigate the causes and effects of partisan selective exposure. The results of this analysis are detailed in the next four chapters.

CHAPTER 4: INDIVIDUAL ANTECEDENTS OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

A number of factors likely explain why people engage in partisan selective exposure. Two important factors discussed in this chapter are people's ability and motivation to select politically congenial media outlets. With higher levels of political knowledge, people may be better *able* to select politically congenial media and with higher levels of political interest, people may be more *motivated* to select politically congenial media (Hypothesis 3).

At first glance, greater ability and motivation do not necessarily translate into a higher propensity to engage in selective expose; as Barlett et al. (1974) argued, "well-educated, middle-class people should be less likely to ignore dissonant information – a rather primitive method of protecting oneself from it; rather, they should be more inclined to read and refute it" (p. 269). Consistent with this proposition, Chaffee and colleagues (2001) found that political knowledge and political curiosity predicted exposure to both congenial *and* uncongenial political information. Yet the subjects in both the Chaffee et. al. study and the Barlett et al. study displayed an overall preference for political information matching their political preferences. Providing a potential explanation for these findings, Sears and Freedman (1967) argued that people have little interest in hearing opposing arguments with which they are already familiar, "Selective exposure effects seem to be most apparent, therefore, when the audience is most familiar with the

arguments on both sides of the issue” (p. 421). If those high in political knowledge and interest are already familiar or believe that they are familiar with opposing arguments, then they may be particularly likely to engage in partisan selective exposure.

Another reason that more politically interested and knowledgeable people would engage in partisan selective exposure is that they are more sensitive to partisan cues in the media. As Zaller (1992) theorized, lower levels of political knowledge are associated with a diminished ability to recognize political cues.⁸ Supporting this idea, Lodge and Hamill (1986) showed that those with higher levels of political knowledge and interest are better able to categorize political statements into partisan categories. Studies specifically evaluating perceptions of media cues, however, seem to point in the opposite direction, namely, that people are not very good at reporting the political perspective of the media that they consume (Dalton et al., 1998; Mutz & Martin, 2001). Mutz and Martin, for example, reported that only 48 percent of respondents agreed with a content analytic assessment of the presidential candidate favored by their newspaper. Further, Dalton et al. showed that people who were more attentive to a political campaign had only a slight advantage in accurately perceiving the political leanings of the newspaper they read.

⁸ Zaller (1992) argued that selective exposure is not prevalent; he explicitly noted that “Most people...are simply not so rigid in their information-seeking behavior that they will expose themselves only to ideas that they find congenial. To the extent selective exposure occurs at all, it appears to do so under special conditions that do not typically arise in situations of mass persuasion” (p. 139). This stance justifies his use of general political knowledge and not media exposure as a predictor of attitudes in his analysis. Though Price and Zaller (1993) took great pains to demonstrate that general political knowledge was a superior predictor of *knowledge* of news events compared to education, the same is not clear for *attitudes*. Some demonstrations, in fact, have found that exposure is an important predictor of attitudes above and beyond the variance accounted for by political knowledge (Lee & Cappella, 2001).

How could it be that knowledgeable and interested people are good at recognizing political cues but may not be so good at classifying the media that they consume? Though there are many differences between classifying policy statements and answering questions about the political views of the media, one difference has particular relevance. In comparison to questions about the partisan leanings of policy statements provided to subjects during a lab session (Lodge & Hamill, 1986), questions about the cues contained in the media *that people consume* (Dalton et al., 1998; Mutz & Martin, 2001) may be particularly difficult for people to answer. People are more invested in the latter questions because they involve making judgments about a behavior in which people have already engaged. Answers, therefore, may reflect a myriad of non-cue related considerations. People may project their own views onto the media they consume (“I consume media outlet X. I am a Democrat. Therefore, the media I consume must support Democratic candidates.”). Alternatively, people may perceive their chosen media outlet as unbiased (“I consume media outlet X. I am an unbiased news consumer. Therefore, the media I consume must be unbiased”). It is not that people do not use political cues when consuming media. Rather, people have a hard time self-reporting cue use.

If people are not good at classifying the views contained in the media that they consume and if those with higher attention to political campaigns show only small gains in their ability, why would political knowledge and interest predict partisan selective exposure? The hostile media bias provides an important insight into this process. Research on this phenomenon suggests that people are likely to see the media as biased

against their own perspective, and that knowledgeable people are more likely to perceive the media as hostile (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). Politically knowledgeable and interested people, therefore, may be more sensitive to cues in the media not because they are great at identifying the media's leanings, but because they are sensitive to cues that the media is *not* congenial. Even if people do not perform well in classifying the leanings of the media they consume, they may be better at classifying the media that they do not consume.

Differences in the perceived political leanings of media outlets may translate into predictable patterns of information processing and exposure. One study, for example, showed that individuals with high affect and high knowledge were more likely to process information in ways congenial with their attitudes (Biek, Wood, & Chaiken, 1996). Berelson and Steiner (1964) also argue that interest propels people to "see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to their predispositions" (p. 529). Applying these insights to the study of information exposure patterns, politically knowledgeable and interested people may be more likely to engage in partisan selective exposure.

Several lab-based studies document a relationship between political knowledge, interest, and the selection of congenial information. In their experiment, Taber and Lodge (2006) found that those with higher levels of political knowledge were more likely to expose themselves to information consistent with their beliefs on the issues of gun control and affirmative action. Sharing the theoretical perspective of this dissertation, they noted that "our theory predicts less bias for unsophisticated and uncommitted

respondents not because they possess a greater sense of evenhandedness, but rather because they lack the motivation and ability to engage in attitude defense” (p. 767). Lavine, Borgida, and Sullivan (2000) found that attitudinal involvement, operationalized with items assessing interest and attention, was positively related to higher levels of interest in reading congenial articles. These laboratory studies document that when asked to select information, subjects with higher political knowledge and interest are more likely to select congenial information.

Not everyone with high political knowledge and interest would be expected to engage in partisan selective exposure, however. Only those with clear political inclinations would be expected to seek out politically congenial information. Katz (1968) proposed that interest by itself may be unrelated to selective exposure because those individuals with general interest would be more balanced in their information seeking. A combination of high interest and strong political inclinations, however, would be expected to produce higher levels of partisan selectivity. Accordingly, this chapter evaluates the joint effect of political interest and political inclinations on people’s selection of partisan media. Political knowledge is expected to follow the same pattern. Knowledge by itself may not motivate people to seek out partisan media. With high political knowledge and strong political inclinations, however, people may be particularly motivated and able to select congenial media outlets. It is proposed, therefore, that the relationships between exposure to partisan media, political interest, and political knowledge will be moderated by political inclinations.

Up to this point in this chapter, the reviewed literature has posited that political interest and knowledge are antecedents of exposure to partisan media. The causal direction, however, may be reversed. Perhaps exposure to congenial political information predicts political interest and knowledge. People may learn better from congenial sources and may develop more political interest when receiving complementary information from the media.

Though research has not isolated the effects of partisan media use, research has evaluated media exposure's contribution to political knowledge and interest with mixed results. Several analyses documented a positive relationship between television and newspaper use and political knowledge (Chaffee & Schleuder, 1986; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Research also shows a positive relationship between radio listening and political interest (Johnson & Kaye, 2003). Internet use also positively contributes to political knowledge (Horrigan, Garrett, & Resnick, 2004; Kenski & Stroud, 2006) and political interest (Johnson & Kaye, 2003). In addition to cross-sectional analyses, panel studies have documented that news use contributes to political knowledge (Eveland, Hayes, Shah, & Kwak, 2005).

Other research, however, is less optimistic about the relationship between political knowledge, political interest, and media exposure. Graber (1994), for example, argued that in failing to present information in ways encouraging learning, the media are partially responsible for low levels of political knowledge. By presenting political information in ways that are not compelling, the media may contribute to lower levels of political interest as well. Others posit that the documented relationships between political

knowledge and media use are spurious; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, and Robinson (2001), for example, argued that “The literature reveals...that after controlling for education and political interest, there is little evidence of an effect of Internet use on political knowledge” (p. 320). Supporting this notion, Johnson, Briama, and Sothirajah (1999) showed that political Internet use and attention to election information online were unrelated to knowledge of Clinton and Dole issue positions in the 1996 election after controlling for a host of other variables. By the same criteria, relationships between political interest and media use could be spurious.

Mixed patterns of results can suggest that the relationship under investigation is moderated by other variables. Indeed, several researchers suggest that people’s motivations to use media and their media selections play an important role in determining the media’s effect. Eveland’s (2001; Eveland, Shah, & Kwak, 2003) cognitive mediation model, for example, documents that certain motivations to use the media (e.g. a surveillance motivation) contribute to political knowledge. Similarly, Scheufele and Nisbet (2002) showed that while web use for political information seeking was unrelated to political knowledge, entertainment web use was negatively related to political knowledge. These studies emphasize the necessity of taking into account the *type* of media usage. Following in this tradition, *partisan* media use may have a unique relationship with political knowledge and interest. The following paragraphs consider how partisan selective exposure may lead to political interest and knowledge.

Theoretical and empirical work suggests that partisan selective exposure may contribute to higher levels of political interest. In terms of cognitive dissonance theory,

one dissonance reduction strategy is to reduce the importance of the conflicting cognitions (Festinger, 1957). Those exposed to heterogeneous or contradictory political views, therefore, might decide that politics is unimportant to reduce the dissonance produced from encountering these views. Alternatively, those exposed to homogeneous political views may continue to see politics as interesting and important because they feel no dissonance in maintaining this belief. Some evidence regarding the connection between patterns of partisan selectivity and political interest can be found in research on the political composition of one's interpersonal network. Huckfeldt et al. (2004) found that political interest was depressed when people discussed politics with people holding different political opinions. Further, political interest was highest among people who were surrounded with many discussion partners favoring the same candidate. If this result occurs because homogeneous discussion partners expose people to congenial *information*, one would anticipate that information exposure in the media would have a similar influence. Therefore, it would be expected that political interest would be higher for those engaging in partisan selective exposure.

In contrast to political interest, political knowledge may be *negatively* affected by partisan selective exposure. Two processes may connect partisan selective exposure to lower political knowledge. First (and perhaps too obvious to state), the information provided by a media outlet determines what information people can gain from exposure. If partisan media outlets focus on only one side of a political issue and fail to provide consumers with adequate information about both sides of the issue, this could translate into lower political knowledge scores. Second, the way that people process congenial

information may not favor information retention. Congenial information is subject to less scrutiny than information contradicting one's beliefs (Edwards & Smith, 1996). If congenial information is processed less systematically, long-term information gain may be hampered. Partisan selective exposure, therefore, could be negatively related to political knowledge.

Support for the idea that information gain may decline with exposure to congenial viewpoints comes from studies investigating what happens when people encounter political disagreement in their interpersonal discussion networks. Price, Cappella, and Nir (2002), for example, found that the more people disagree with their acquaintances, the better able they are to articulate points of view that differ from their own. Mutz (2002b) also found that exposure to dissonant views is related to higher levels of awareness for other points of view. Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn (2004) reported that:

Partisan discussants enhance the tendency of respondents to provide reasons for liking their own candidates and disliking the opposition candidates, but these partisan discussants are less likely to inhibit the respondents from offering reasons for disliking their own candidates and liking the opposition candidates (p. 76).

Though providing reasons for why others may disagree is not identical to political knowledge, the two are strongly related, as is documented by the large standardized regression coefficients in both the Mutz and Price et al. articles. Broadly, these investigations suggest that exposure to similar views may yield lower levels of political knowledge. These studies, however, did not investigate partisan media exposure. Rather, they investigated the composition of one's interpersonal network. Whether

exposure to political views in one's interpersonal network has the same effect as exposure to political views in the media is unclear. To the extent that both would be expected to transmit information with certain biases, partisan media exposure should have a similar effect on people's political knowledge. These studies suggest that congenial media exposure may suppress political knowledge.

Not all accounts of the relationship between political knowledge and partisan selective exposure suggest that partisan selectivity would lead to lower levels of political knowledge, however. People may remember congenial information better than uncongenial information "because of its superior fit with existing attitudes [and] its inherent pleasantness" (Eagly, Kulesa, Chen, & Chaiken, 2001, p. 7). If congenial information is more memorable, then information gain may be enhanced from partisan selective exposure. Further, political interest correlates strongly with political knowledge (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). If partisan selectivity leads to higher levels of political interest as previously suggested, this could in turn lead to higher levels of political knowledge.

Based on this literature, this chapter evaluates the relationships between partisan selective exposure, political interest, and political knowledge. After establishing that politically knowledgeable and interested political partisans are more likely to select congenial political media outlets, this chapter takes up the issue of causal direction. Specifically, this chapter investigates whether political knowledge and interest are antecedents or consequences (or both) of partisan selective exposure.

Measuring Political Knowledge and Interest

Two measures of political knowledge are used throughout this analysis: campaign 2004 knowledge and general political knowledge. As the names imply, campaign 2004 knowledge measures contemporary knowledge about the 2004 presidential campaign while general political knowledge aims to tap into an individual's base levels of knowledge about politics and the government in general. Using both of these constructs to evaluate the relationship between partisan selective exposure and political knowledge is important because of the questions raised about the causal direction. From a measurement perspective, general political knowledge is more likely to predict partisan selectivity because it is a more stable indicator of political aptitude. Alternatively, campaign 2004 knowledge may be more likely to be influenced by partisan selective exposure. Since *a priori* there is a suggestion that these two measures may differ in terms of the direction of causality with partisan selective exposure, both are tested.

Campaign 2004 Knowledge

For the cross-sectional analysis, a scale of campaign 2004 knowledge was created by summing responses to nine different political knowledge questions. These items were: (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (2) Who favored changing the recently passed Medicare prescription drug law to allow re-importing drugs from Canada – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (3) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money

– Over 50 thousand a year, Over 100 thousand a year, Over 200 thousand a year, or Over 500,000 a year (4) Who was a former prosecutor – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (5) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (6) Who favors laws making it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (7) Which candidate favors placing limits on how much people can collect when a jury finds that a doctor has committed medical malpractice – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (8) Which candidate wants to make additional stem cell lines from human embryos available for federally funded research on diseases like Parkinson's – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? (9) Which candidate favors increasing the five dollar and fifteen cent minimum wage employers must pay their workers – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both, or neither? Each of these nine items was coded as 1 if the respondent provided the correct response. A code of 0 was used when the respondent incorrectly answered the question, when the respondent said that they did not know the answer, and when the respondent refused to answer the question. Responses were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.74, *M*=5.69, *SD*=2.43, *n*=4,788). These items were asked of a random two-thirds of 2004 NAES respondents between October 14, 2004 and November 1, 2004. For the panel surveys, similar scales were developed and are described in Appendix C.

General Political Knowledge

A scale of general political knowledge was created using five items. The first four items were asked of survey respondents (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996): (1) Do you

happen to know what job or political office is now held by Dick Cheney? (2) Who has the final responsibility to determine if a law is constitutional or not? Is it the president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court? (3) How much of a majority is required for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto? (4) Do you happen to know which party has the most members in the United States House of Representatives?

Correct answers were coded as a 1 and incorrect answers (including don't know and refused) were coded as 0. The fifth measure included in the scale was the interviewer's assessment the interviewee's knowledgeability (Zaller, 1986). This measure asked the interviewer to give the interviewee a grade of A through F for how knowledgeable s/he was during the interview. This grade was collapsed into a dichotomous measure where scores of A and B were coded as 1 and C, D, and F were coded as 0. These five measures were summed to create a measure of general political knowledge (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.64, *M*=3.21, *SD*=1.47, *n*=16,444). Note that the general political knowledge battery was asked of a random two-thirds of respondents and was only on the survey between July 16 and August 8; between August 20 and September 12; and between September 20 and October 24, 2004.⁹

Political Interest

Though political interest was discussed in Chapter 3 as a control variable, it is used throughout this chapter as a dependent variable. As a reminder, this variable was measured with a question: "Some people seem to follow what is going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there is an election or not. Others are not

⁹ These two measures of political knowledge are correlated ($r=0.58$, $p<0.001$) though they are not identical, as the results document.

that interested, or are interested in other things. Would you say you follow what is going on in government and public affairs: most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all.” This variable was coded such that higher values indicate higher levels of political interest.

Predicting Partisan Media Use

Political Knowledge and Partisan Media Use

In order to investigate the relationship between political knowledge and partisan selective exposure, an analysis was conducted to determine whether politically knowledgeable individuals were more likely to consume media consistent with their political leanings. The charts in Figure 4.1 depict the relationship between general political knowledge, political ideology/partisanship, and outlet-specific partisan media use. In these charts, the *x*-axis represents general political knowledge and the *y*-axis represents the percentage of respondents consuming each media type. Those identifying as liberal Democrats are contrasted with those identifying as conservative Republicans. The dashed black line indicates the percentage of liberal Democrats consuming each media type while the black line indicates the percentage of conservative Republican consuming each media type.

Figure 4.1. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and General Political Knowledge

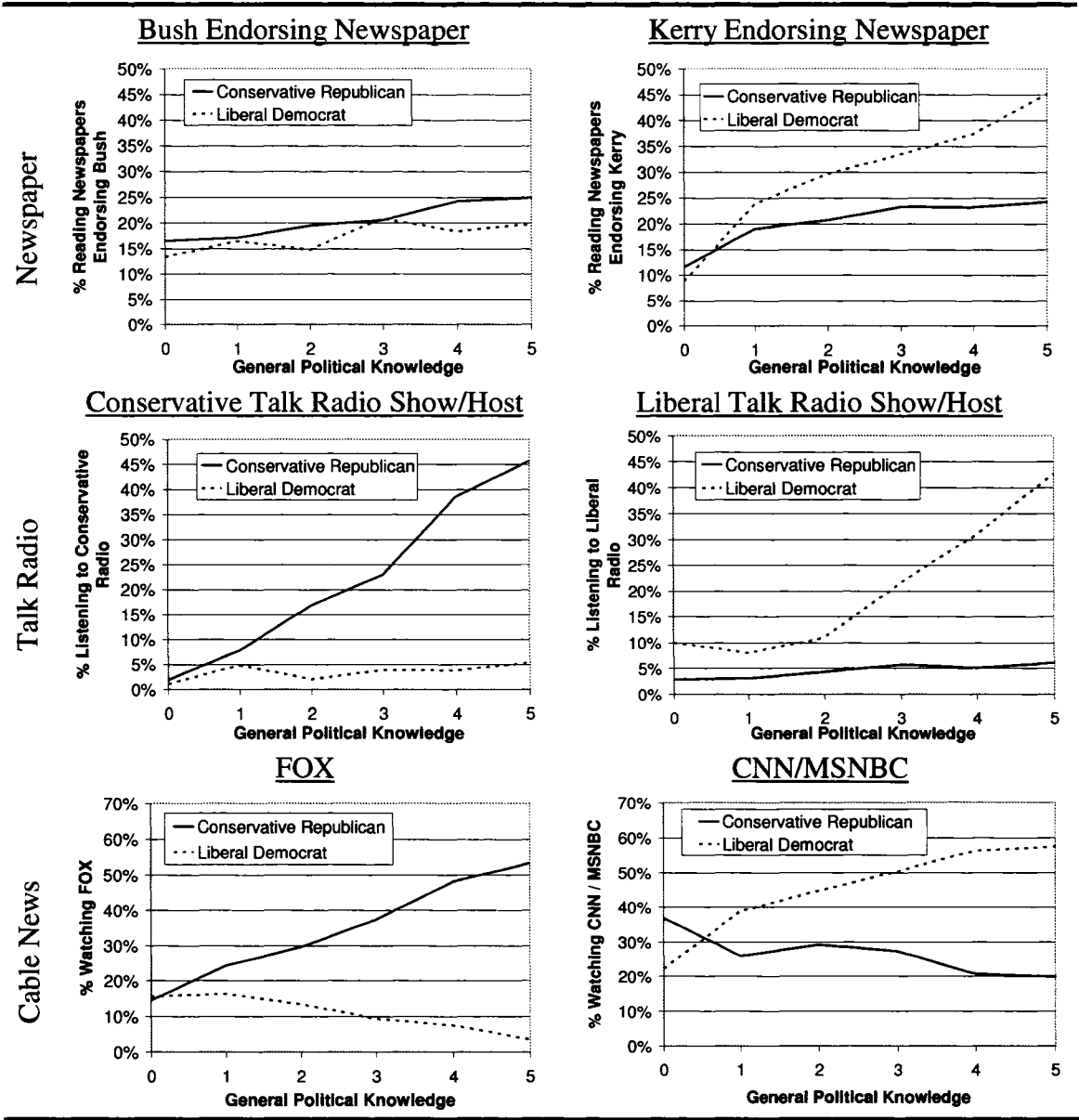
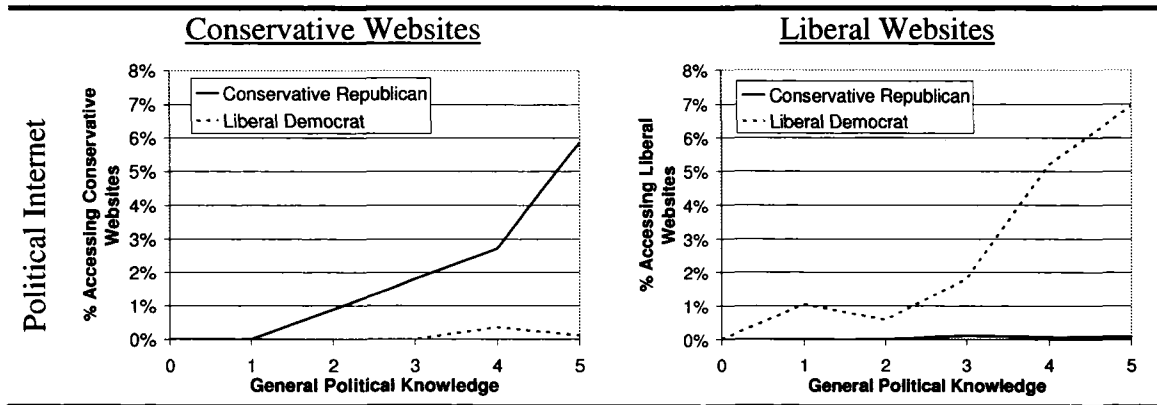


Figure 4.1. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and General Political Knowledge
(continued from previous page)



Across all media types, as general political knowledge increases, respondents are more likely to select media that matches their political leanings. As general political knowledge increases, more conservative Republicans read newspapers endorsing Bush, listen to conservative radio hosts and programs, watch FOX, and access conservative websites. As general political knowledge increases, more liberal Democrats read newspapers endorsing Kerry, listen to liberal radio hosts and programs, watch CNN/MSNBC, and access liberal websites. This relationship is most dramatic for cable news viewing, where liberal Democrats with high levels of general political knowledge watch FOX even less than liberal Democrats with low levels of general political knowledge. The same is true for conservative Republicans viewing CNN/MSNBC. The charts in Figure 4.1 illustrate that as general political knowledge increases, partisan selectivity increases.¹⁰

¹⁰ The same general patterns hold when campaign 2004 knowledge is substituted for general political knowledge and is therefore not depicted here.

As a more rigorous test of the relationship between political knowledge and media exposure, a series of logistic regression equations were computed. In these logistic regressions, the dependent variable for each equation is a dichotomous variable measuring whether or not respondents consumed each media type. The three independent variables of interest are as follows: the main effect of ideology/partisanship (where higher values correspond to more liberal/Democratic political leanings), the main effect of political knowledge, and the interaction effect between ideology/partisanship and political knowledge. If people are engaging in partisan selective exposure, one would anticipate a strong main effect for ideology/partisanship. More conservative Republicans should be more apt to consume conservative-leaning media. More liberal Democrats should be more apt to consume liberal-leaning media. Further, the interaction between the ideology/partisanship measure and the measure of political knowledge should demonstrate that more knowledgeable partisans are more likely to consume media matching their political predispositions if the hypothesized relationship is correct.

A series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political discussion, strength of ideological/partisan leanings), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, access to the Internet, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapter 3 were included as controls, though they are not shown in Table 4.1. A summary of the full equations including these controls can be found in Appendix B. Importantly, each analysis controls for the amount of time spent with each type of media. Therefore, results showing that more knowledgeable respondents are

more likely to watch FOX, for example, are not due to the fact that more knowledgeable respondents are more likely to watch *any* cable news, irrespective of outlet. Further, political interest, the other individual antecedent of partisan selective exposure proposed in this chapter is controlled in all of the analyses. Since political interest and political knowledge are significantly correlated (political interest correlation with general political knowledge $r=0.44$, $p<0.001$, correlation with campaign 2004 knowledge $r=0.46$, $p<0.001$), failure to include interest may obscure the nature of the relationship between political knowledge and partisan media use.

Table 4.1. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by General Political Knowledge and Ideology/Partisanship*
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper ¹¹		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal ¹²	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
Political Interest	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.17** (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.11*** (0.03)	0.07 (0.18)	0.08 (0.17)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	-0.37*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.02)	-0.30*** (0.02)	0.23*** (0.01)	-0.42*** (0.10)	0.72*** (0.13)
General Political Knowledge	0.03 (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	0.23*** (0.04)	0.15*** (0.03)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	0.01 (0.13)	0.45* (0.18)
Ideology/Partisanship * General Political Knowledge	-0.02* (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.11*** (0.01)	0.08*** (0.01)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.11+ (0.06)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.09	0.17	0.52	0.47	0.38	0.31	0.31	0.34
<i>N</i>	13,142		13,115		13,154		13,142	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and general political knowledge are mean centered.

¹¹ The newspaper analyses were re-run as hierarchical linear models with respondents clustered into congressional districts and a control for the percentage of the vote going to Bush. The results were unchanged.

¹² This analysis was re-run eliminating NPR listeners as liberal talk radio listeners. The results were unchanged.

In Table 4.1, each column represents a logistic regression analysis where the column heading is the dichotomous dependent media variable. For example, the logistic regression in the first column is a prediction of reading a newspaper endorsing Bush (0=did not name a newspaper endorsing Bush, 1=named a newspaper endorsing Bush). The first row of coefficients documents that political interest, the other antecedent variable under investigation, is controlled and that it significantly relates to patterns of media use in few instances. The next three rows of coefficients document the main and interactive logistic regression coefficients for ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, and the interaction between these variables after adding the battery of controls.

The results provide important verification that people consume media that matches their political inclinations. Recall that the ideology/partisanship variable is coded such that smaller values correspond to more conservative Republican leanings and larger values correspond to more liberal Democratic leanings. With this in mind, the negative coefficient for ideology/partisanship associated with consuming newspapers endorsing Bush documents that conservative Republicans are more likely to consume Bush-endorsing newspapers. Liberal Democrats are significantly more likely to read newspapers endorsing Kerry, to listen to liberal talk radio, to watch CNN or MSNBC, and to access liberal websites compared to other respondents. Stronger liberal Democrats are more likely than weaker liberal Democrats to consume these media types. Conservative Republicans are significantly more likely to read newspapers endorsing Bush, to listen to conservative talk radio, to watch FOX, and to access conservative

websites compared to other respondents. Again, stronger conservative Republicans are more likely than weaker conservative Republicans to consume these media.

In Table 4.1, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and general political knowledge is significant for both newspapers and cable television. Conservative Republicans with higher levels of general political knowledge are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Bush and to name FOX as their cable news station of choice relative to other respondents. Liberal Democrats with higher levels of general political knowledge are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Kerry and to name CNN or MSNBC as their cable news station of choice relative to other respondents.

Unexpectedly, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and general political knowledge is negative and marginally significant in predicting liberal Internet use. For the remaining media types, listening to conservative or liberal talk radio and accessing conservative Internet websites, the interactions between ideology/partisanship and general political knowledge are not significant, but are in the expected direction. It is important to note, however, that in three of the four talk radio and political Internet equations, general political knowledge contributed positively to consumption of that type of media. More politically knowledgeable individuals were more likely to consume talk radio (whether liberal or conservative) and to access liberal political websites.

Since general political knowledge and campaign 2004 knowledge tap into different knowledge constructs, the logistic regression analyses were repeated substituting campaign 2004 knowledge for general political knowledge. There were some differences, as shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Campaign 2004 Knowledge and Ideology/Partisanship*
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper ¹³		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal ¹⁴	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
Political Interest	0.05 (0.06)	-0.14* (0.06)	0.11 (0.10)	0.11 (0.10)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.16** (0.06)	-0.41 (0.32)	0.08 (0.38)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.07** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.02)	-0.40*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.03)	-0.40*** (0.03)	0.34*** (0.02)	-0.81** (0.31)	0.40* (0.16)
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.22*** (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	-0.04 (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	0.16 (0.20)	0.32+ (0.17)
Ideology/Partisanship * Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0.002 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.04 (0.07)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.12	0.19	0.54	0.49	0.43	0.37	0.43	0.41
<i>N</i>	4,000		3,992		3,999		3,996	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and campaign 2004 knowledge are mean centered.

¹³ This analysis was re-run as a hierarchical linear model with respondents clustered into congressional districts and controlling for the percentage of the vote going to Bush. The results were unchanged.

¹⁴ This analysis was re-run eliminating NPR listeners as liberal talk radio listeners. The interaction between campaign 2004 knowledge and ideology/partisanship fell below significance, though it remained in the same direction.

With campaign 2004 knowledge as the key independent variable (Table 4.2), the interaction between campaign 2004 knowledge and ideology/partisanship is a significant predictor of cable news viewing and liberal talk radio listening. Like the interaction with general political knowledge and ideology/partisanship, more knowledgeable conservative Republicans are more likely to watch FOX and more knowledgeable liberal Democrats are more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC. Also, more knowledgeable liberal Democrats are more likely to listen to liberal talk radio relative to other respondents. The interaction terms in the newspaper equations, however, are no longer significant. Campaign knowledge is not a significant predictor of consuming newspapers endorsing Bush or Kerry. Campaign knowledge continues to have a significant main effect in predicting listening to conservative talk radio and in accessing liberal websites. Whether as a main effect or as an interactive effect with ideology/partisanship, these results provide support for the idea that political knowledge is related to patterns of partisan media exposure, particularly for cable news viewers.

Political Interest and Partisan Media Use

As with the relationship between outlet exposure and political knowledge, the percentage of respondents using each media type by ideology/partisanship and level of political interest is charted below. The x -axis here represents political interest. As before, the figures compare those respondents who identified as liberal Democrats to those respondents who identified as conservative Republicans.

Figure 4.2. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and Political Interest

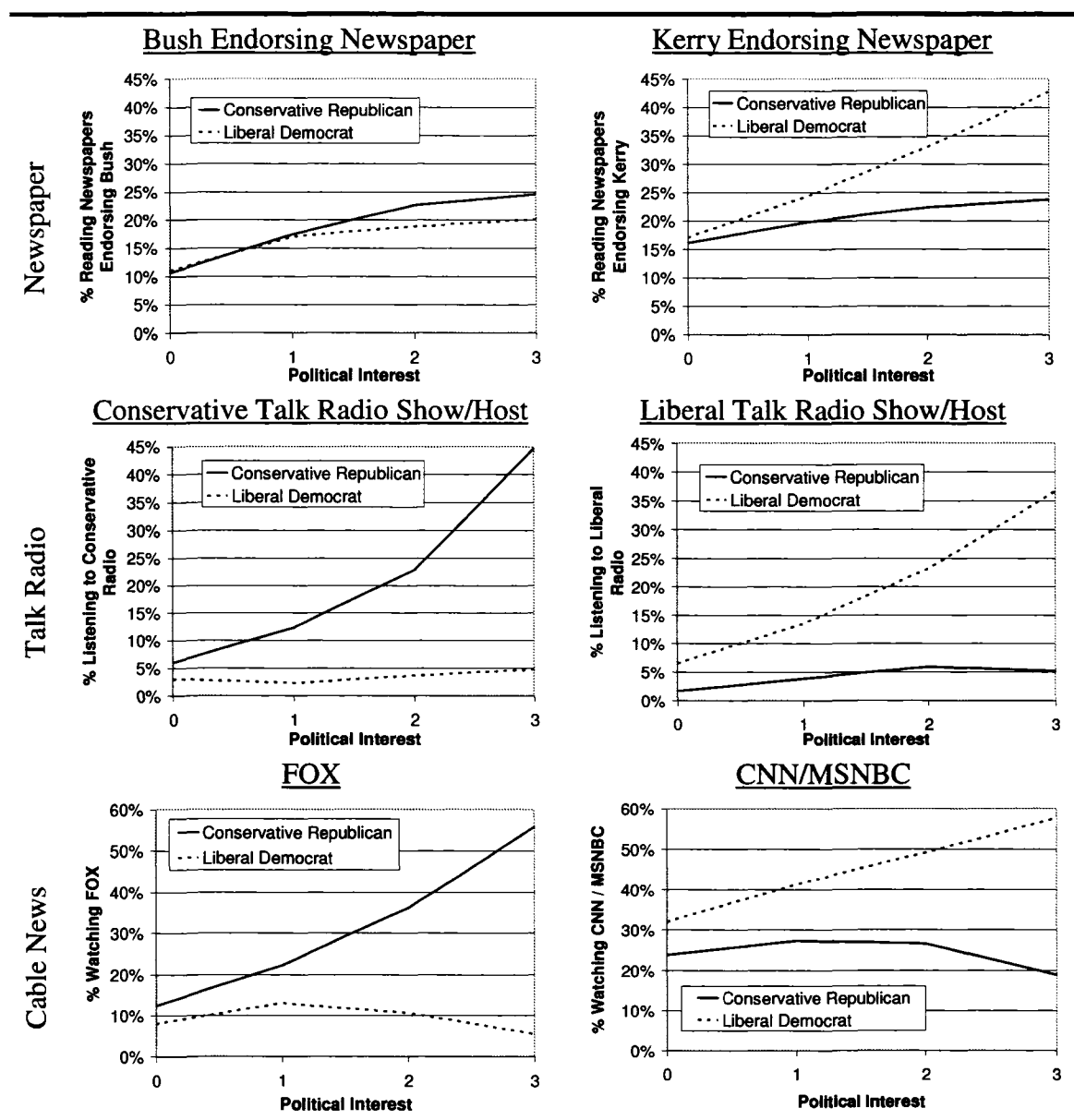
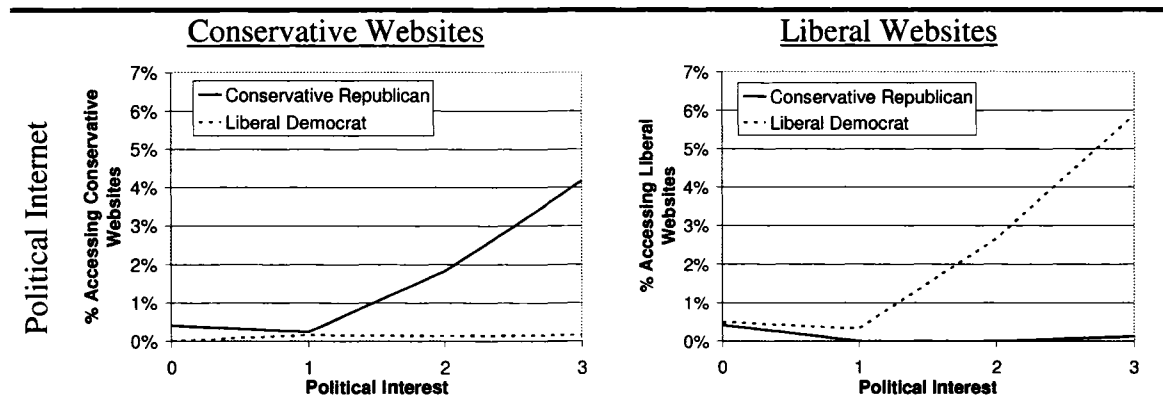


Figure 4.2. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and Political Interest
(continued from previous page)



As shown in Figure 4.2, higher levels of political interest correspond to higher levels of partisan selective exposure across all media types. Looking at patterns of newspaper exposure, as political interest increases, conservative Republicans are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Bush and liberal Democrats are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Kerry. The relationships between political interest and talk radio and cable news exposure follow the same pattern. While there are relatively low levels of conservative talk radio listening among liberal Democrats, conservative Republicans are more likely to listen to conservative radio as their political interest increases. Again, the same pattern holds for liberal radio – as political interest increases, a greater percentage of liberal Democrats listen to liberal talk radio. Cable news viewing patterns also depend on respondent political leanings and level of political interest. As political interest increases, more liberal Democrats watch CNN or MSNBC and fewer liberal Democrats watch FOX. The opposite relationship appears for conservative Republicans – as political interest increases, more watch FOX and fewer watch CNN or MSNBC. Exposure to ideological websites follow a similar pattern – as political interest increases,

more liberal Democrats access liberal websites and more conservative Republicans access conservative websites.

A logistic regression analysis for each media type was conducted in order to evaluate whether the relationship between ideology/partisanship, political interest, and media exposure depicted above would persist after controlling for a host of possible third variables. As before, a series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political discussion, strength of ideology/partisanship), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, Internet access, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapter 3 were included as controls, though they are not shown in Table 4.3. General political knowledge also was included as a control. A summary of the full regression results can be found in Appendix B.

Table 4.3. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Political Interest and Ideology/Partisanship*
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper ¹⁵		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal ¹⁶	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
General Political Knowledge ¹⁷	0.03 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.11 (0.10)	0.21* (0.10)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	-0.38*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	-0.32*** (0.01)	0.24*** (0.01)	-0.44*** (0.09)	0.65*** (0.11)
Political Interest	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.05 (0.03)	0.12* (0.06)	0.11* (0.06)	-0.12*** (0.04)	-0.13*** (0.03)	-0.09 (0.21)	0.35 (0.29)
Ideology/Partisanship * Political Interest	-0.03+ (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	-0.05* (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.16*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.01)	-0.10 (0.08)	-0.12 (0.10)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.09	0.17	0.52	0.47	0.37	0.31	0.31	0.34
<i>N</i>	13,142		13,115		13,154		13,142	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and political interest are mean centered.

¹⁵ This analysis was re-run as a hierarchical linear model with respondents clustered into congressional districts and controlling for the percentage of the vote going to Bush. The results were unchanged.

¹⁶ This analysis was re-run eliminating NPR listeners as liberal talk radio listeners. The results were unchanged.

¹⁷ Using campaign 2004 knowledge as a control instead of general political knowledge, the results are similar. The only change in the interaction term is for the equation predicting reading newspapers endorsing Bush, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and political interest was not significant and was positive when campaign 2004 knowledge was controlled instead of general political knowledge.

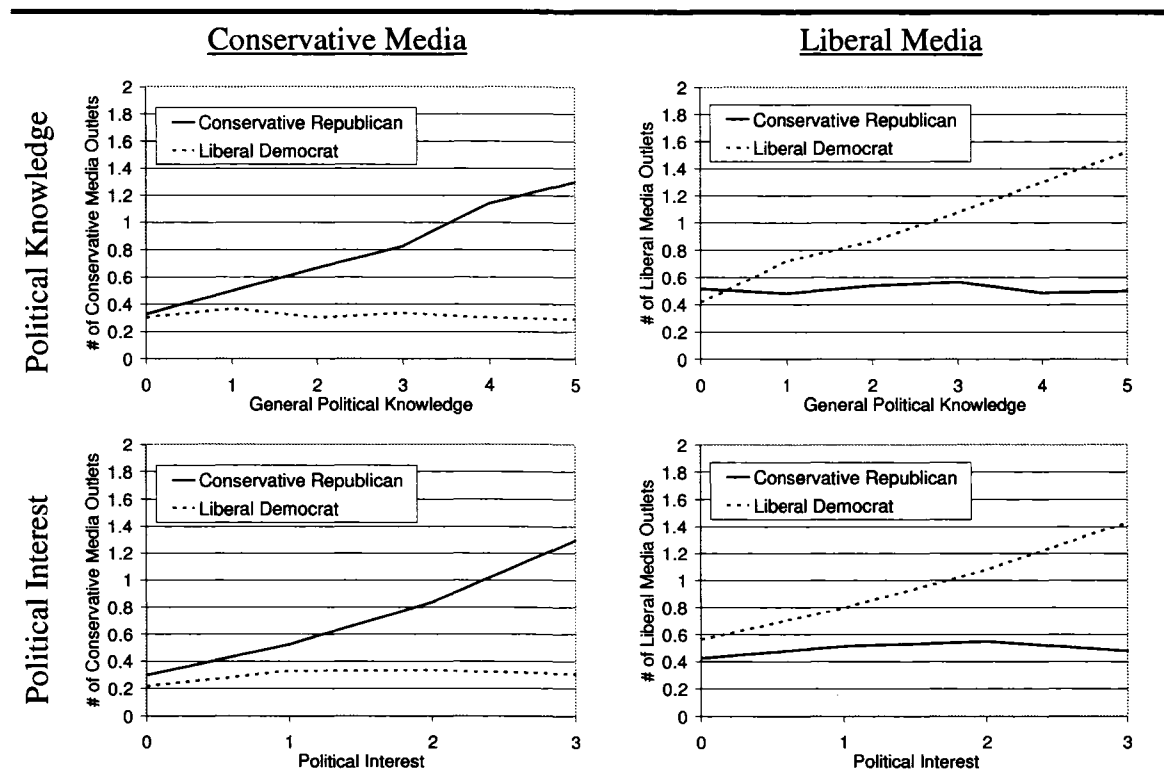
The results shown in Table 4.3 demonstrate that there is a relationship between consuming partisan media and political interest for several media types. For newspapers, there is a significant interaction between political interest and ideology/partisanship for those reading newspapers endorsing Kerry and a marginally significant interaction for those reading newspapers endorsing Bush; both are in the predicted direction. This suggests that higher levels of political interest correspond with higher partisan selectivity of newspapers. For talk radio, more politically interested individuals are more likely to listen to liberal talk radio and liberal Democrats are more likely to listen to liberal talk radio; however, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and political interest is not significant. For conservative talk radio listening, the interaction is significant. More interested conservative Republicans are more apt to listen to conservative talk radio. As with political knowledge in the prior section, the strongest findings are for CNN/MSNBC and FOX news viewing. Here, more politically interested liberal Democrats are more likely to view CNN or MSNBC and more politically interested conservative Republicans are more likely to view FOX relative to other respondents. Finally, there is no relationship between political interest and accessing liberal or conservative Internet websites.

Partisan Media Use by Political Knowledge and Political Interest

Though it is possible to evaluate the relationship between partisan selective exposure, political knowledge, and political interest outlet-by-outlet, another strategy is to use indices of conservative and liberal media exposure as described in Chapter 3. Recall that two indices were created from the outlet-specific measures of partisan media

exposure: an index of liberal media exposure and an index of conservative media exposure (both range from 0 to 4 with higher values indicating more exposure). Figure 4.3 depicts the bivariate relationships between political knowledge, political interest, and patterns of media consumption using the indices of exposure.

Figure 4.3. Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship, Political Interest, and Political Knowledge¹⁸



The charts in Figure 4.3 correspond well to the general conclusions from the outlet-by-outlet analysis. As general political knowledge increases, conservative Republicans consume more conservative outlets while liberal Democrats do not.

¹⁸ Again, the relationship between media exposure and campaign 2004 knowledge is similar to the relationship between media exposure and general political knowledge and therefore, is not charted here.

Alternatively, as general political knowledge increases, liberal Democrats consume more liberal outlets while conservative Republicans do not.

The significance of the relationships between the partisan media use indices, political knowledge, and political interest were evaluated using regression analyses. The purpose of these additional analyses is twofold. First, while the bivariate results in Figure 4.3 closely follow the general conclusions from the outlet-by-outlet analyses, it is not clear whether the depicted relationships are significant or whether they will persist in the presence of a battery of control variables. Second, both political interest and political knowledge are proposed as antecedents of partisan selectivity, but it is not clear which, if either, variable dominates. Though the analyses presented in Tables 4.1 through 4.3 include both political knowledge and political interest, they do not incorporate interactions for ideology/partisanship, political interest, and political knowledge into a single equation. Incorporating all of these variables into a single equation allows one to investigate whether political interest and political knowledge are additive or multiplicative in their effects on partisan media use. If they were multiplicative, a person with *both* high political interest and high political knowledge would be expected to consume even more ideologically consistent media outlets compared to the individual contributions of having high interest and of having high knowledge. To evaluate the relationship between political knowledge, interest, and ideology/partisanship, a three-way interaction was incorporated in the analysis in Table 4.4. As before, the regression models control for a battery of demographic, media use, and political orientation

variables, though they are not shown in Table 4.4. A summary is included in Appendix

B.

Table 4.4. *Regression Analyses of Media Consumption by Political Knowledge and Interest*¹⁹

Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media			Liberal Media		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Ideology/ Partisanship (IP)	-0.08*** (0.003)	-0.08*** (0.003)	-0.07*** (0.003)	0.08*** (0.003)	0.08*** (0.003)	0.07*** (0.003)
Interest (I)	0.00004 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
General Political Knowledge (GPK)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02** (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)
I * IP	-0.05*** (0.003)		-0.03*** (0.003)	0.04*** (0.003)		0.03*** (0.004)
GPK * IP		-0.03*** (0.002)	-0.02*** (0.002)		0.03*** (0.002)	0.02*** (0.002)
GPK * I			0.01** (0.004)			-0.01** (0.005)
GPK * I * IP			-0.01*** (0.002)			0.01** (0.002)
R-square	0.34	0.34	0.35	0.31	0.31	0.31

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, n=13,089

Note: Ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge, and political interest are mean centered.

¹⁹ The analysis was repeated using several alternate methods. First, it was repeated using campaign 2004 knowledge as opposed to general political knowledge. Though some of the main effects changed in their significance, none changed in direction. Further, the interaction effects were unchanged in significance or direction. Second, the analysis was repeated using hierarchical linear modeling with respondents nested in congressional districts and a control for the percentage of the vote going to Bush. The results were unchanged. Third, the analysis was re-run using ideology and partisanship separately. Again, the results were unchanged. Fourth, without including NPR-listeners as liberal talk radio listeners, the results remain the same.

The results of Table 4.4 confirm that general political knowledge and political interest are related to patterns of partisan selective exposure. For both exposure to liberal media and exposure to conservative media, three models were run. Model 1 evaluated the relationship between political interest, ideology/partisanship and partisan media use. The results document that liberal Democrats with more political interest consume more liberal media outlets compared to other respondents. Further, conservative Republicans with more political interest consume more conservative media outlets compared to other respondents. Model 2 evaluates the relationship between political knowledge and ideology/partisanship on consuming partisan media. The results confirm that higher levels of political knowledge contribute to higher levels of ideologically consistent media exposure and lower levels of ideologically inconsistent media exposure.

Model 3 includes both political interest and political knowledge in equations predicting partisan media exposure. In both instances, those with higher levels of interest and political knowledge consume more likeminded media outlets. Further, the three-way interaction is significant and in the expected direction. Politically knowledgeable *and* interested partisans are even more likely to consume congenial media compared to those with high political knowledge and compared to those with higher political interest.

These results document that there are many advantages to using the indices as opposed to using the outlet-by-outlet analysis. First, the indices and individual media outlets theoretically capture the same phenomenon – partisan media exposure. Summing these equivalent concepts, therefore, is theoretically supported. Second, the findings are easier to interpret using the indices. As opposed to the eight analyses run in the outlet-

by-outlet analysis, only two analyses capture the same expected relationship. Third, the findings are generally similar. Though the results differed somewhat between media outlets, the larger take-away points (e.g. political knowledge and interest are related to the selection of partisan media outlets) remain the same. Based on these reasons, the results using the indices will be presented for the remainder of this dissertation. All analyses were repeated using the individual outlet measures and these results will be summarized, but not displayed in detail.

Over-Time Analyses

While the previous analyses document cross-sectional relationships between partisan selective exposure, political knowledge, and political interest, the causal direction of the relationships are unclear. Political interest and knowledge could lead to partisan selective exposure. Alternatively, partisan selective exposure could contribute to political interest and knowledge. The remainder of this chapter evaluates the causal direction of the relationship.

Political interest. To evaluate the over-time relationship between political interest and partisan selective exposure, a series of panel analyses were conducted. For each of the four panels conducted as part of the 2004 NAES (DNC, RNC, Debates, and post-election), analyses were run to evaluate both possible causal directions. One set of analyses evaluated the effect of the interaction between ideology/partisanship and political interest measured at time 1 on partisan media use measured at time 2. This tests whether those with strong political leanings and high political interest are more likely to select congenial political media. The other set of analyses evaluated the effect of the

interaction between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship measured at time 1 on political interest measured at time 2. This tests whether partisans consuming congenial media outlets develop higher levels of political interest. Throughout these analyses, the pre-wave value of the dependent variable is included as a control. In addition, the same demographic, media, and political orientation variables from the cross-sectional analyses are controlled. For panels conducted around events (DNC, RNC, and debates), a variable measuring exposure to the political event as detailed in Chapter 3 was controlled. Only the coefficients for the variables of interest are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5. *Panel Analyses of Political Interest and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Political Interest → Media		Media → Political Interest		
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	
DNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Political Interest	0.04 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	Partisan Media Use	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.03)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.02)	Interaction	0.002 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
R-square	0.53	0.53	R-square	0.59	0.59
N	549		N	555	
RNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	Ideology/Partisanship	0.002 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.04)
Political Interest	0.0001 (0.03)	-0.01 (0.04)	Partisan Media Use	0.05 (0.04)	-0.001 (0.01)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.001 (0.02)	Interaction	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
R-square	0.58	0.49	R-square	0.55	0.55
N	582		N	587	

Table 4.5. *Panel Analyses of Political Interest and Partisan Media Use*
(continued from previous page)

	Political Interest → Media			Media → Political Interest	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Debates					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.004 (0.01)	-0.0003 (0.01)
Political Interest	0.05 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)	Partisan Media Use	-0.04 (0.04)	0.004 (0.03)
Interaction	-0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	Interaction	0.002 (0.02)	0.005 (0.01)
R-square	0.57	0.53	R-square	0.57	0.57
<i>N</i>	679		<i>N</i>	683	
Post-Election					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.0001 (0.01)	-0.001 (0.01)
Political Interest	0.01 (0.01)	0.003 (0.02)	Partisan Media Use	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)
Interaction	-0.01* (0.01)	0.02*** (0.01)	Interaction	-0.005 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
R-square	0.56	0.45	R-square	0.51	0.51
<i>N</i>	3,328		<i>N</i>	3,354	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, political interest, and partisan media use are mean centered.

The panel analyses in Table 4.5 provide some support for the idea that political interest motivates partisan selective exposure. In three of eight cases, the interaction between political interest and ideology/partisanship is significant and in the predicted direction. Though the remaining cases are not significant, they remain in the predicted direction. Alternatively, in no case is the interaction between ideology/partisanship and partisan media use significant in predicting post-wave political interest. Further, the non-significant partisan media use coefficients are not consistent in the direction of their

relationship with political interest. Overall, this analysis provides support for the idea that political interest leads to partisan selective exposure.

As a second method of evaluating the relationship between political interest and partisan selective exposure, an aggregate-level time series analysis was conducted. For liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans, the average amount of political interest and the average amount of congenial media exposure were computed for each day. With this aggregate level data, it was possible to evaluate the over-time relationship between political interest and partisan selective exposure. One can evaluate whether previous days of political interest (days $t-1$, $t-2$, etc.) help to explain partisan selective exposure on day t . Further, one can investigate the reverse causal direction, namely, that partisan selective exposure on previous days is related to political interest on day t .

Before conducting this over-time analysis, the data were evaluated for the presence of trends and cycles. Both political interest and partisan selective exposure increased linearly over time. After detrending, inspection of the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation plots provided no indication of autocorrelation in the data. Without any autocorrelation, additional steps were not required to model these patterns.

To evaluate the relationship between political interest and partisan selective exposure, the correlations between the series over time were computed. There was a significant contemporaneous correlation between political interest and partisan selective exposure ($r=0.21$). There was no evidence, however, that participation led to partisan selective exposure (partisan selective exposure and lagged political interest $r=-0.001$;

partisan selective media exposure and lagged political interest $r=0.07$).²⁰ This aggregate analysis did not provide any indication as to the causal direction of the relationship between partisan selective exposure and political interest. The panel analyses, however, provided support that political interest motivates consumption of congenial media outlets.

Political knowledge. With some support for the idea that political interest leads to partisan selective exposure, the final part of this chapter turns to evaluating the causal direction of the established relationship between political knowledge and partisan selective exposure. Changes in the political knowledge items included on the survey over time prohibit the use of aggregate-level time series analyses; therefore, only panel analyses are used to investigate the nature of the relationships. Further, respondents were not asked the general political knowledge questions on any of the post-election panels. Therefore, it was not possible to assess whether there was any evidence that congenial media exposure leads to higher levels of general political knowledge. Fortunately, it was possible to assess this reverse causal direction using the 2004 campaign knowledge battery and this section will turn to this analysis shortly. First, the panel analyses of the relationship between general political knowledge and partisan media exposure are presented. In each analysis, the pre-wave value of partisan media use was included as a control. The demographic, media, and political orientation variables from Chapter 3

²⁰ Note that there was some evidence of a 2-day lag between political interest and lagged partisan selective exposure ($r=0.16$), but not between partisan selective exposure and lagged political interest ($r=-0.10$). Regression analysis was used to evaluate whether incorporating the two-day lag of partisan selective exposure improved predictions of political interest. Accordingly, two models were estimated. In the first, the contemporaneous effect of partisan selective exposure and the over time trend were included as independent variables. In the second, the one and two-day lags of partisan selective exposure were added to the equation. One metric for assessing model fit that penalizes the inclusion of too many variables, the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was used to compare these models. The BIC is recommended by Diebold (2004) for this purpose, with smaller values indicating better fit. The equation incorporating the lags did not yield a smaller BIC (BIC two lags=-213.22, BIC contemporaneous only=-218.17).

were included as controls. Convention and debate exposure also were controlled in the corresponding panels. Table 4.6 displays the panel results for the relationship between general political knowledge and patterns of partisan media exposure.

Table 4.6. *Panel Analyses of General Political Knowledge and Partisan Media Use Coefficient (SE)*

	General Political Knowledge → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)
General Political Knowledge	0.02 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
R-square	0.64	0.54
<i>N</i>	549	
RNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.01)
General Political Knowledge	0.03 (0.02)	0.004 (0.02)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02+ (0.01)
R-square	0.58	0.49
<i>N</i>	582	
Debates		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.04** (0.01)	0.04** (0.02)
General Political Knowledge	0.01 (0.02)	0.04+ (0.02)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02+ (0.01)
R-square	0.57	0.53
<i>N</i>	679	

Table 4.6. *Panel Analyses of General Political Knowledge and Partisan Media Use*
(continued from previous page)

	General Political Knowledge → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Post-Election		
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)
General Political Knowledge	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Interaction	-0.01** (0.004)	0.02*** (0.004)
R-square	0.57	0.45
<i>N</i>	3,328	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Ideology/partisanship and general political knowledge are mean centered.

In five of eight cases, the interaction between general political knowledge and ideology/partisanship significantly contributes to predicting patterns of ideological media use. Though not significant, the remaining three cases are in the hypothesized direction. Conservative Republicans with higher levels of general political knowledge consume more conservative media compared to other respondents. Liberal Democrats with higher levels of general political knowledge consume more liberal media compared to other respondents. This analysis provides good evidence that general political knowledge contributes to partisan selective exposure.

In addition to general political knowledge, the relationship between campaign 2004 knowledge and exposure to partisan media outlets was investigated. Since campaign 2004 knowledge was measured during both the pre- and post-waves, it was possible to investigate the reverse causal direction, namely, that exposure to politically congenial media outlets leads to political knowledge. Note that because the campaign

2004 knowledge questions on the NAES changed over time, the scales used to measure campaign knowledge change for each panel. Please see Appendix C for the question wording and construction of all related political knowledge scales. The results of the panel analyses are shown below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7. *Panel Analyses of Campaign 2004 Knowledge and Partisan Media Use Coefficient (SE)*

	Campaign 2004 Knowledge →Media			Media → Campaign 2004 Knowledge	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.03 (0.02)	0.03+ (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.02 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	Partisan Media Use	-0.17* (0.09)	0.09 (0.08)
Interaction	0.0005 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	Interaction	-0.06+ (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)
R-square	0.63	0.53	R-square	0.57	0.57
N	550		N	557	
RNC					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	0.04** (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	0.06* (0.03)	0.04 (0.03)
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	-0.0002 (0.01)	-0.02 (0.02)	Partisan Media Use	0.13 (0.09)	0.05 (0.08)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)	Interaction	0.0001 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)
R-square	0.58	0.49	R-square	0.59	0.59
N	583		N	589	
Debates					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.03 (0.04)	0.06 (0.10)
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	Partisan Media Use	-0.04 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.03)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01* (0.01)	Interaction	-0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)
R-square	0.57	0.53	R-square	0.52	0.52
N	681		N	686	

Table 4.7. *Panel Analyses of Campaign 2004 Knowledge and Partisan Media Use*
(continued from previous page)

	Campaign 2004 Knowledge →Media			Media → Campaign 2004 Knowledge	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Post-Election					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	0.09** (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	Partisan Media Use	0.12 (0.09)	0.04 (0.08)
Interaction	-0.01* (0.003)	0.01** (0.004)	Interaction	-0.04 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)
R-square	0.61	0.51	R-square	0.63	0.63
<i>N</i>	1,071		<i>N</i>	1,089	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, campaign 2004 knowledge, and partisan media use are mean centered.

The analysis in Table 4.7 does not document a unidirectional causal relationship between partisan selective exposure and campaign 2004 knowledge. Rather, there is limited evidence in favor of both possible causal directions. In three of eight cases, campaign 2004 knowledge and ideology/partisanship significantly interact in predicting partisan media use. These instances occur in the post-election and debate panels where there is a longer period of time between the pre- and post-wave surveys. Conservative Republicans with higher levels of campaign 2004 knowledge consumed more conservative media outlets and liberal Democrats with higher levels of campaign 2004 knowledge consumed more liberal media outlets compared to other respondents. In two of eight cases, the interaction between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship was significant when predicting campaign 2004 knowledge. The two instances documenting that partisan selective exposure predicts campaign 2004 knowledge occurred in the DNC

panel, where there was a relatively short period of time between the pre- and post-waves of the survey. Here, conservative Republicans consuming conservative outlets and liberal Democrats consuming liberal outlets had higher levels of political knowledge compared to other respondents. Overall, the evidence suggests that general political knowledge and interest lead to partisan selective exposure. For campaign 2004 knowledge, there is some evidence that congenial media exposure increases knowledge. There also is some evidence that politically knowledgeable respondents seek out congenial media outlets.

Outlet-by-Outlet Panel Analyses

The panel analyses above used the indices of partisan media use to investigate the relationship between media consumption patterns, political interest, and political knowledge. All of the panel analyses were repeated using the individual media outlet measures in place of the indices of media exposure to evaluate differences between outlets. To evaluate whether knowledge and interest predict partisan media exposure for each outlet, logistic regressions were computed with consumption of each media outlet measured in the post-wave as the independent variable for each of the four NAES panel surveys. This allowed for an investigation of whether knowledge or interest as measured in the pre-wave significantly interacted with ideology/partisanship in predicting use of each partisan media type. Second, to evaluate whether partisan selective exposure led to political knowledge and interest, regression analyses were run with general political knowledge, campaign 2004 knowledge, and interest measured at the post-wave as dependent variables and media exposure, ideology/partisanship and the interaction

between media exposure and ideology/partisanship measured at the pre-wave included as independent variables. In the analyses, the pre-wave value of the dependent variable and the same controls used throughout were incorporated.

Throughout this analysis, few relationships were significant. Notably, cable news viewing was most frequently significant in evaluating the relationships with political knowledge and interest. Possible explanations for this intriguing finding will be discussed later in Chapter 8. Below, the outlet-by-outlet results are summarized for general political knowledge, campaign 2004 knowledge, and political interest.

General political knowledge was consistently related to patterns of cable news viewing. In all of the panel analyses, liberal Democrats with higher levels of general political knowledge were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC in the post-wave compared to other respondents. In three of four panel analyses, conservative Republicans with higher levels of general political knowledge were more likely to watch FOX in the post-wave compared to other respondents. The sole exception to this pattern occurred in the DNC panel, where the coefficient was not significant, but was in the expected direction. The only other significant finding was in the equation predicting listening to liberal talk radio – more politically knowledgeable liberal Democrats were more likely to listen to liberal talk radio in the post-wave of the DNC panel compared to other respondents.

Turning to the results for campaign 2004 knowledge, conservative Republicans with higher campaign 2004 knowledge were more likely to watch FOX in the post-election survey compared to other respondents. Liberal Democrats with high campaign 2004 knowledge were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC and to read newspapers

endorsing Kerry in the post-election survey. They also were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC in the post-debate panel compared to other respondents. Evaluating the reverse causal direction, namely that media use contributes to campaign 2004 knowledge, conservative Republican FOX viewers had higher levels of campaign 2004 knowledge in the post-wave of the debate and DNC panels relative to other respondents. Respondents accessing conservative websites had higher campaign 2004 knowledge in the post-wave of the post-election panel. Liberal Democrats watching CNN/MSNBC had higher levels of campaign 2004 knowledge in the post-wave of the DNC panel.

Across all media types and panels, there were only two instances of a significant relationship between political interest and partisan media use. Politically interested liberal Democrats were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC in the post-wave of the election panel compared to other respondents. And in the reverse causal direction, liberal Democrats watching CNN/MSNBC in the pre-wave reported *lower* levels of political interest in the post-wave of the post-election survey compared to other respondents.

Cue Recognition, Political Knowledge, and Political Interest

In the literature review at the beginning of this chapter, it was proposed that one reason that political knowledge and interest may contribute to partisan selective exposure is that more interested and knowledgeable people may use political cues in the media as a basis for making exposure decisions. Though prior literature suggested that people weren't very good at identifying the leanings of the political media they consume (Mutz & Martin, 2001), they may still be good at identifying more objective political media cues.

A partial test of this idea is possible using the 2004 NAES data. In the post-election survey, respondents who identified that they had read a newspaper in the past seven days were asked who their newspaper endorsed for president. Using the results of this question, one can ascertain whether interested and knowledgeable respondents are better able to identify their newspaper's political endorsement. Accordingly, a dichotomous measure of correctly identifying who a newspaper endorsed was created such that correct responses were given a "1" while respondents incorrectly identifying their newspaper's endorsement or saying that they did not know who their newspaper endorsed were given a "0". Fifty percent of respondents correctly identified the endorsement of their newspaper. To evaluate whether political knowledge and interest were related to knowing who one's newspaper endorsed, a logistic regression predicting correctly identifying the newspaper endorsement was conducted. Controls for the demographic, media use, and political orientation variables as discussed in Chapter 3 were included in the analysis. The results document that political interest was related to knowledge of the newspaper endorsement ($B=0.13$, $SE=0.07$, $p<0.10$), as was general political knowledge ($B=0.16$, $SE=0.05$, $p<0.001$).²¹

²¹ In the final equation, 2,186 respondents were included and the Nagelkerke R-square was 0.14. Substituting campaign 2004 knowledge for general political knowledge, campaign knowledge is significantly related to being able to identify newspaper endorsements ($B=0.19$, $SE=0.05$, $p<0.001$). As an additional step, the regression analyses from Models 1 and 2 in Table 4.4 were replicated with the recognition of news cues included as a control variable. The aim of this analysis was to evaluate whether the relationship between political knowledge or political interest and the consumption of conservative or liberal media outlets would be suppressed when the ability to identify newspaper endorsements was included in the equations. This did not occur. In no instance did the inclusion of the measure of cue recognition influence the relationship between knowledge, interest, and partisan media consumption. These findings do not support the idea that cue recognition is responsible for the relationship between political knowledge, interest, and partisan media use. Additional analyses with more sensitive measures of media cue recognition are warranted, however.

Conclusion

The cross-sectional results in this chapter document that political knowledge and interest are related to patterns of partisan media exposure. Politically interested and knowledgeable conservative Republicans consume more conservative media outlets than other respondents and politically interested and knowledgeable liberal Democrats consume more liberal media outlets than other respondents. Evaluating these relationships over time, there is good evidence that general political knowledge is an important pre-requisite for the selection of politically congenial media outlets. There is also evidence that political interest contributes to the selection of congenial media outlets.

These results add important insights to prior literature. First, they extend the undergraduate sample laboratory findings of Taber and Lodge (2006) and Lavine, Borgida, and Sullivan (2000) to show that political knowledge and interest contribute more broadly to patterns of information selection. Second, recall that Chaffee and colleagues (2001) found that political knowledge predicted both exposure to congenial and uncongenial information. Here, Chaffee et al.'s central finding is replicated – knowledge often had a significant and positive main effect on the consumption of both liberal and conservative media. Consistently, however, the relationship between knowledge and information exposure was moderated by ideology/partisanship. This coincides with research suggesting that it is important to understand motivations and types of media use when investigating the relationship between the media and other variables (see for example Eveland, 2001; Eveland et al., 2003).

This chapter documents that individual differences influence patterns of partisan selective exposure. Other factors, however, undoubtedly influence whether the media contributes to people's information selections. Specifically, does the media's structure influence how people go about selecting political information sources? And do media events such as the presidential debates and party conventions influence patterns of information exposure? The next chapter seeks to address these questions.

CHAPTER 5: MEDIA ANTECEDENTS OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

Whether people engage in partisan selective exposure is dependent on what is available in the media. Most obviously, if a certain political perspective is not represented in the media, people with that political perspective cannot select congenial media outlets. With more media choices and a diverse range of political views available via the media, however, people are better able to find outlets sharing their political beliefs.

In addition to the composition and number of available choices, the media may encourage partisan selective exposure by transmitting political events to the public. Specifically, in highlighting partisanship, the presidential debates and the party conventions may contribute to increasing partisan selective exposure. Though debates help to inform citizens about the candidates and their issue positions (Benoit, Hansen, & Verser, 2003), the competitive format highlights partisanship. Watching the debates, therefore, may prime people to respond to political stimuli in partisan ways. National party conventions, where a presidential candidate officially accepts his party's nomination, also present an important opportunity for the national political parties and presidential candidates to convey their ideas to the public. Viewers of these events, who tend to share the political preferences of the convention (Ziemke, 1980), may have their partisanship reinforced. This may encourage further partisan selective exposure.

This chapter evaluates two ways that the media can influence partisan selective exposure. First, the structure of the media can influence people's exposure patterns. By providing customers with more outlet choices and more diverse content, the media enable people to find outlets matching their political beliefs (Hypothesis 4). Second, the content of the media can influence people's exposure patterns. In transmitting political events that emphasize party identification, the media may encourage people to use their partisanship as a guide for making media exposure decisions (Hypothesis 5). These propositions will be evaluated in the following two sections. In each section, the relevant literature will be explored, the employed methodology will be reviewed, and then the results presented and discussed.

The Media Environment

The media environment has undergone important shifts over the past several decades. Consumers now have more media options and more diverse content from which to select than in the past. Cable television and the Internet in particular have redefined the media landscape. The number of television channels has dramatically increased; in 1989, households received an average of 27.7 television channels. By 1999, however, households received an average of 62.0 television channels (Nielsen Media Research, 2000). And with a click of the mouse, the Internet connects consumers to innumerable options. These media provide consumers with access to more diverse content; instead of a few outlets battling to capture a mass audience, a host of niche outlets cater to the interests of more specialized audiences (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001; Turow, 1997; Webster, 1986). While locating a media source espousing a minority viewpoint would

have been difficult decades ago, it is now a relatively simple pursuit. Content variety has expanded not only in terms of specialized entertainment programming; the content terrain for news also has changed. News websites, for example, increasingly cater to specialized interests and in turn, attract specific audiences (Tewksbury, 2005).

Structural changes in the media environment have the potential to influence people's media selection behavior. Faced with a multitude of possibilities, people must make decisions about the media they will view; browsing through all the possible media content options is no longer feasible. And as the diversity of the options increases, people are better able to make selections coinciding with their preferences – instead of choosing between a few similar options, the new media environment provides people with access to nearly any type of content that they could desire. Providing consumers with both a need to select and an opportunity to select from a large variety of options, the media environment arguably facilitates people's selection of media that is consistent with their preferences. Research documents that more choice enables more selectivity. Those with a preference for entertainment media are more likely to select entertainment options as they are given larger numbers of media choices from which to choose (Atre & Katz, 2005). In addition, people with more options from which to select are more likely to choose their preferred genres of programming (Youn, 1994). Besides enabling people to select their preferred genre, research suggests that as choice increases, people are more likely to choose to materials supporting their beliefs and opinions (Fischer, Schultz-Hardt, & Dieter, 2004; Frey, 1986). By providing participants with a set of supportive and non-supportive media options, Fischer et al. and Frey documented that post-

decisional media choices are more likely to be in support of one's decision as more choices are available. Research on the influence of the number of media choices makes two general points. First, people's exposure patterns change based on the number of choices available. Second, as more choices are available, consumers are more likely to choose content that coincides with their beliefs and preferences.

Given that general media selection patterns change in response to the available choices, it is reasonable to contend that people's *political* media choices also will be influenced by changes in the media environment. Specifically, partisan selective exposure may differ given changes in the media environment. Accordingly, two specific changes in the new media environment are highlighted for analysis in this section: increases in diversity and increases in the number of available media options. Previous research suggests that people's preferences play a stronger role in determining their media choices as the number of options increase; yet this provocative finding has not been evaluated based on people's political media decisions. Therefore, this section evaluates whether the number of available options from which to choose influences partisan selective exposure.

Further, while studies have varied the number of available choices, studies have not isolated the influence of changes in the diversity of options on people's media selections. Diversity, however, could have an influence independent of the number of options on people's media selection patterns. In particular, as people have more diverse options from which to choose, they are better able to find sources that more closely match their own beliefs. This, in turn, should lead to increases in the amount of selective

exposure based on people's political beliefs. Accordingly, this section also evaluates the unique contribution of diversity on partisan selective exposure.

Methodology

An experiment was designed to evaluate whether people's partisan selectivity behavior would change when faced with more political media options from which to choose and more diverse political content across the options. This study used political magazines in order to vary the number of options and the diversity of political content. Each subject was given a certain combination of magazines (a choice set) from which to choose. The number of magazines in a subject's choice set and the diversity of political viewpoints expressed within the choice set were manipulated based on a 2 (number of choices) by 2 (diversity) design. Further, subjects were able to make magazine selections in two contexts: browsing magazines in a waiting room and choosing a magazine subscription. These contexts have many similarities to the types of media choices people make in the contemporary media environment. Surfing the web and flipping through channels on television are both activities that allow people to browse different media outlets with little commitment. The magazine browsing condition parallels these behaviors. Other media selections, however, require more of a commitment on behalf of a consumer. Signing up for a year long magazine subscription, as was used in this study, is a prime example. In addition, consider the debate surrounding whether cable customers should be able to select channels à la carte, as opposed to purchasing pre-determined bundles (Federal Communications Commission, 2004). Permitting cable

viewers to select specific media channels for long-term commitments could parallel people's magazine subscription decision making.

Procedure. In order to disguise the purpose, this study was conducted in conjunction with another study unrelated to political media choice. Participants were recruited to participate in the other study and were told that the study involved viewing an episode from a popular television series and answering questions about the program. There was no mention of politics in the recruitment materials. Upon arrival at the study site (a room within a university library), a research assistant informed the participant that the study was running late and asked the participant to wait in a small waiting area set up outside of the room. In the waiting area, there was a chair, a table, and an experimentally manipulated set of magazines randomly arranged on the table. Choice was manipulated by randomly arranging either 3 or 5 magazines on the waiting room table. Diversity was manipulated by including more ideologically extreme magazine options in a high diversity condition in comparison to a low diversity condition. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

The waiting area had a distinctive feature that made it particularly conducive to this study: there was a large window in the back of the waiting area that connected the library to an adjacent lobby area. Seated at a table outside of this window was a confederate who appeared to be a student engaged in his/her studies. The confederate observed and recorded the subject's magazine choices. No subject expressed suspicion about the confederate. Participants remained in the waiting area for up to five minutes before the research assistant re-appeared and invited the participant into the study room.

The first measure of partisan selective exposure was made based on the magazines selected for browsing in the waiting area. Once in the study room, subjects answered a battery of questions about their political leanings, knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. Next, subjects viewed a popular television program for approximately 45 minutes as a part of the other study and then answered a battery of questions about the program.

Following their completion of the other study, subjects were told that as a thank you for their participation, they could select a magazine for a free subscription. The same magazines that had been available in the waiting area were presented to the subjects. The subject's subscription choice represented a second opportunity to evaluate partisan selective exposure.

Following their subscription selection, subjects completed a questionnaire asking them to give their perceptions of the partisan and ideological leanings of each magazine in their choice set. Subjects then were informed that their magazine selections had been recorded with the intent of analyzing whether people's political beliefs were related to their magazine selection. Once informed of the study purpose, subjects were asked to provide their consent for the data to be used. All subjects provided consent. Subjects were paid in exchange for their time.

Materials. Prior to the experiment, a pre-test was conducted in order to select magazines for this study. Sixteen magazines were pre-tested to evaluate people's perceptions about the political leanings of the magazines. On a scale from strongly favored (5) to strongly opposed (1), each respondent was asked to rate each magazine s/he viewed as to whether the magazine favored liberal/conservative views,

Democratic/Republican views, and whether s/he thought that the magazine favored John Kerry/George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election. Responses to the six items were summed to form a scale of magazine leanings with higher values corresponding to a more liberal-leaning magazine (average magazine *Cronbach's alpha* = 0.91). Based on the pre-test, two magazines were used to create the high diversity manipulation, one rated as highly liberal (*The Nation*, $M=25.33$) and one rated as highly conservative (*National Review*, $M=9.43$). The other magazines used in the study were rated as conservative (*The American Spectator*, $M=15.67$, *The Weekly Standard*, $M=10.00$)²² or liberal (*The Atlantic*, $M=18.67$, *Harper's*, $M=22.14$), but not as highly conservative or highly liberal relative to the *National Review* or *The Nation*. Magazines were arranged into conditions such that each condition included an equal number of conservatively rated magazines and liberally rated magazines. In each condition, a magazine that people did not consistently perceive to have clear political leanings (*The Economist*, $M=18.50$) was included in the choice set. Efforts were made to balance the degree of liberalness and conservativeness within each condition. Based on the pre-test, magazines were arranged into the following conditions:

Low Choice, Low Diversity: *American Spectator*, *Economist*, *Atlantic*

Low Choice, High Diversity: *National Review*, *Economist*, *Nation*

High Choice, Low Diversity: *American Spectator*, *Weekly Standard*,
Economist, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*

High Choice, High Diversity: *National Review*, *American Spectator*, *Economist*,
Atlantic, *Nation*

²² Note that fewer conservative magazines were available for pre-testing. The *Weekly Standard* was added later in the pre-test process and though it was rated as fairly conservative, it was still selected as a less conservative magazine. *A priori*, it was assumed that this magazine would garner a less conservative score with additional observations because the political leanings of the magazine were somewhat less obvious than the other choices. This assumption was confirmed in the experiment where the *Weekly Standard* was not rated as highly conservative. These results will be presented shortly.

The selected magazines provided subjects with several cues that allowed them to infer the partisan leanings of the content. First, the covers contained cues about the magazine's political leanings. For example, while *The Nation* headline chided, "In your face: Bush's war on the press," the *National Review* cover headline boasted, "We're winning: How the U.S. learned the art of counterinsurgency in Iraq." Second, articles and commentaries also provided clues about the magazine's political leanings.

Measures: Dependent variables. As with the other sections of this dissertation, the dependent variables used here are liberal and conservative media exposure decisions, in this case, magazine exposure decisions. To analyze the data gathered from observing subjects in the waiting room, two different methods were used to operationalize magazine exposure. The first method was to create a measure of the percentage of total magazine viewing time spent with conservative/liberal magazines. Percentages were used because some participants did not spend the full five minutes viewing the magazines (though 61 percent did). Though this method has the advantage of accounting for total magazine viewing irrespective of how many magazines were viewed by the respondent, it is disadvantageous in that subjects may have initially picked up a magazine that disagreed with their political views and taken some time to reach this conclusion before settling on a magazine choice.

To balance this disadvantage, a second method of measuring magazine exposure was used. In the second method, the political leanings of the last magazine viewed were used to indicate magazine exposure. The last magazine viewed by a respondent was used in this calculation because it allowed subjects maximal time for making errors. If

respondents were driven to select politically congenial content, as theory would suggest, then they might have realized after flipping through a magazine that they had incorrectly perceived its leanings. While this second method of measurement is disadvantageous because it focuses solely on the last magazine viewed, it has the advantage of permitting time for changes in magazine choice. Using these two complementary methods to measure magazine exposure allows for a stronger test of the influence of choice and diversity on people's information selection.

For the subscription condition, the magazine selected for a free subscription was coded as conservative or liberal.²³

Measures: Independent variables. Participants were asked to indicate their ideological leanings on a 7-point scale from extremely conservative (-3) to extremely liberal (3). Eight percent identified as extremely liberal, 18 percent liberal, 7 percent slightly liberal, 35 percent moderate, 10 percent slightly conservative, 14 percent conservative, and 5 percent extremely conservative. Participants also were asked whether they identified as Republicans, Democrats, or as part of another party.

Republicans and Democrats were asked if they identified as strong or not as strong

²³ Analyses of the last magazine viewed in the waiting room and the magazine chosen for a subscription could have been done differently. Instead of running analyses looking at whether the respondent (a) chose a liberal magazine or (b) chose a conservative magazine, one could use an ordinal variable with three values (choosing liberal magazine, choosing neutral magazine, choosing conservative magazine) since choosing a neutral magazine is arguably less antithetic to the partisan selective exposure hypothesis in comparison to choosing a counter-ideological magazine. The hostile media phenomenon, however, provides a theoretical rationale for coding the dependent variable in the way proposed (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). According to the hostile media phenomenon, perceptions of the media vary such that people perceive "neutral" media to be biased against their own viewpoint. Perceptions of the *Economist*, the neutral magazine in the present study, follow this very pattern. In a regression analysis predicting ratings of the *Economist* (controlling for general political knowledge and the experimental manipulations), ideology/partisanship is related to ratings ($B=-0.05$, $SE=0.03$, $p<0.10$) such that conservative Republicans rate the *Economist* as more liberal-leaning than did others, and liberal Democrats rate the *Economist* as more conservative-leaning than did others. For this reason, it is more appropriate to include the *Economist* with the other counter-attitudinal magazines in the analysis.

partisans. Respondents identifying with another party were asked if they leaned toward the Democratic or Republican Party. A 7-point scale was created such that 27 percent of participants identified as strong Democrats (3), 21 percent not strong Democrats, 24 percent leaning Democrats, 3 percent independents, 8 percent leaning Republicans, 5 percent not strong Republicans, and 12 percent strong Republicans (-3). The partisanship and ideology scales were significantly correlated ($r=0.51, p<0.001$) and were combined to create a measure of ideology/partisanship. Interactions between ideology/partisanship and the experimental manipulations allow for tests of the hypotheses.

Measures: Covariates. As shown in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, general political knowledge and political interest are pre-requisites for engaging in partisan selective exposure. Both were measured in this study and evaluated across conditions. General political knowledge was measured by asking respondents a series of 10 questions that were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha* =0.81).²⁴ On average, respondents answered 6 questions correctly ($SD=2.88$). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate whether there were any differences in general political knowledge across conditions. In this analysis, choice, diversity, and the interaction between choice

²⁴ The ten questions were: (1) Which one of these parties is more conservative than the other at the national level – Democrat or Republican? (2) Which one of the parties has the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington – Democrat or Republican? (3) Which one of the parties has the most members in the U.S. Senate – Democrat or Republican? (4) Who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is Constitutional or not – the President, Congress, or the Supreme Court? (5) Which one of the following is the main duty of Congress – write legislation, administer the President's policies, or watch over the state governments? (6) Whose responsibility is it to nominate judges to the Federal Courts – the President, Congress, or the Supreme Court? (7) How much of a majority is needed for the U.S. Senate and House to override a presidential veto – bare majority (one more than half the votes), two-thirds majority, or three-fourths majority? (8) Do you happen to know what job or political office is currently held by Dick Cheney – U.S. Senator, U.S. Vice President, or Governor of Wyoming? (9) What job or political office is currently held by Trent Lott – U.S. Senator, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, or Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court? (10) What job or political office is currently held by William Rehnquist – U.S. Senator, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, or Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court? Incorrect responses and responses of don't know or refused were coded as 0. Correct responses were coded as 1.

and diversity were entered into the model. This test revealed some differences in general political knowledge across conditions, namely, those in high choice conditions had higher levels of political knowledge in comparison to those in low choice conditions. For this reason, general political knowledge was included as a covariate throughout the analysis.

Interest was measured using the following question wording: “Some people seem to follow what is going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there is an election or not. Others are not that interested, or are interested in other things. Please indicate how often you follow what is going on in government and public affairs.” Response options included most of the time (37%), some of the time (34%), only now and then (23%), and hardly at all (7%). An ANOVA of interest by experimental condition revealed that interest did not differ across conditions. Interest was therefore not included as a covariate in the analysis.

Participants. One hundred and five community members in the Philadelphia area participated in the study. Sixty-three percent of subjects were female, 31 percent identified as white or Caucasian, and 64 percent identified as Black or African-American. Cross-tabulations of gender and race by condition revealed no significant differences between the experimental conditions. The average age of the participants was 32 ($SD=12$, $Range=18$ to 74) and the average number of years of education was 14 ($SD=2$, $Range=8$ to 18). ANOVAs demonstrated that neither age nor education differed across the experimental conditions. Since there were no differences across conditions for these demographic measures, they were not included as covariates in the analysis.

Design advances over prior investigations. The employed experimental design has many advantages; several features are particularly noteworthy. First, participants were unaware that their magazine selection decisions were a component of the study. In some previous studies, participants were aware that their information choices were part of the study (see, for example, Freedman, 1965b). When participants are aware that their selections are being observed, they may modify their behavior to be more ideologically balanced in their exposure decisions (Cotton, 1985). Second, subjects were permitted to make their magazine selections using whatever criteria they wanted. Experimental procedures requiring subjects to employ certain selection strategies can influence how subjects behave. Mills, Aronson, and Robinson (1959), for example, had subjects rate six different articles as to how desirable each would be to read. Research suggests that requiring subjects to make multiple media selections prior to consuming any content reduces the observed level of selectivity (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, & Thelen, 2001). Third, this study did not force participants to make a selection – they could opt-out of choosing by not viewing any magazines in the waiting room or by forgoing the free magazine subscription. Other studies, however, require participants to make choices; Mills (1965a), for example, had subjects rate all of the experimental choice options and had them make a choice. Requiring subjects to make a selection can influence observed patterns of choice (Dhar & Simonson, 2003). Fourth, this study used observed behavior as an outcome variable. Asking respondents to rate articles in order to ascertain their exposure preferences may result in thoughtless engagement in an experiment because respondents may perceive that their preferences are without meaning – they never

actually have to *consume* the media they say that they prefer. Brock (1965), for example, replicated Feather's (1962) selective exposure study but included a manipulation where subjects were led to believe that they would actually have to consume the articles they said that they preferred. Brock found higher levels of selective exposure when subjects believed they would be reading their article choices.²⁵ These features of the employed experimental design serve to remedy issues that could suppress the observed level of selectivity.

Other design features focus on issues that could increase the observed level of selectivity. This study utilized realistic stimuli in an attempt to model a natural choice environment. Though investigating media selection using stimuli consisting of a list of one-sentence-theses provides important insights into certain aspects of media selection (see, for example, Mills et al., 1959), exposure decisions are arguably based on more information – lead framing and photograph characteristics, for example, have been shown to relate to exposure decisions (Knobloch, Hastall, Zillmann, & Callison, 2003; Zillmann, Chen, Knobloch, & Callison, 2004; Zillmann, Knobloch, & Yu, 2001). This experiment used widely available magazines as stimulus materials. Though this makes it more likely that idiosyncratic features of the magazines will influence exposure decisions, it enables results that are more generalizable to media exposure contexts. In addition, a magazine rated as ideologically neutral was included in all of the experimental conditions. This yielded choice sets more closely mirroring a naturally occurring information selection environment. Not including a neutral option and providing only polar opposite choice

²⁵ Note that this change was confined to smokers who rated articles claiming there was no link between smoking and cancer more highly when they were led to believe they would have to read the article.

options may lead to overestimates of selectivity behavior (see the strategy used by Lavine et al., 2000).²⁶ In support of this, studies including a neutral or more balanced option find that the neutral option often is chosen by respondents (Chaffee & McLeod, 1973).

Though these experimental design features are most readily associated with differences in absolute levels of selective exposure, relative levels of selective exposure also may be affected. For example, differences in the experimental conditions may correspond to different selection strategies being used by respondents. If a search strategy were mandated by the experimental procedure, these differences would not be captured. By incorporating these insights from previous research, the employed research design attempts to capture choices in a more realistic context.

Results

Manipulation and stimulus check. A manipulation check was conducted in order to confirm that respondents perceived the magazines to have the same political leanings as found in the pre-test. Participants rated each magazine in their choice set on three scales: whether the magazine seemed to be liberal/conservative, whether the magazine seemed to be Democrat/ Republican, and whether the magazine seemed to favor Bush/Kerry in the 2004 presidential election. An average of these measures was calculated to create a scale of magazine leanings for each magazine (average magazine *Cronbach's alpha*=0.75). This measure ranged from 1 (very conservative/Republican/supportive of Bush) to 5 (very liberal/Democrat/supportive of Kerry), with 3 indicating

²⁶ Lavine, Borgida, and Sullivan (2000) evaluated selective exposure by having respondents rate a pro- and an anti-affirmative action article. Note that the purpose of their study was to investigate the relationship between selective exposure and other variables, however, not to determine the absolute level of selective exposure.

that on average, the magazine was perceived as having no clear political leanings. One-tailed t -tests were used to evaluate whether perceptions of each magazine differed from 3, as anticipated in the experimental design. All of the magazines classified as liberal based on the pre-test were evaluated by the experimental subjects as liberal (*Nation* $M=3.28$, $t(40)=1.63$, $p<0.10$; *Atlantic* $M=3.27$, $t(48)=2.55$, $p<0.01$; *Harper's* $M=3.49$, $t(20)=2.75$, $p<0.01$). All of the magazines classified as conservative based on the pre-test were evaluated by the experimental subjects as conservative (*American Spectator* $M=2.54$, $t(54)=-3.41$, $p<0.001$; *National Review* $M=2.67$, $t(37)=-1.89$, $p<0.05$; *Weekly Standard* $M=2.74$, $t(17)=-1.53$, $p<0.10$). In addition, the mean ideological rating for the *Economist*, the magazine selected as the neutral magazine, was not significantly different from 3 ($M=2.92$, $t(80)=-1.00$, $p>0.10$).

Not only was it necessary to document that the magazines were perceived to lean in the same direction as the pre-test, it also was necessary to evaluate whether the high diversity condition was perceived to consist of more politically diverse options in comparison to the low diversity condition. As detailed above, participants rated the political leanings of each magazine they viewed. To evaluate the perceived diversity of the options, the variance of the magazines evaluated by each respondent was computed. The average variance of political leanings in the high diversity condition was compared to the average variance of political leanings in the low diversity condition using a t -test. Though the difference between the conditions was in the correct direction (*Low diversity average variance* $=0.80$, $SE=0.15$; *High diversity average variance* $=1.09$, $SE=0.18$), it

was not significant using a one-tailed t -test ($t(81)=-1.23, p=0.11$).²⁷ This provides only minimal support for a successful manipulation of diversity.²⁸

Analysis of magazine selection in the waiting room. First, an analysis was conducted to investigate the decision to view a magazine in the waiting room. This analysis was prompted by the possibility that the high choice and/or the high diversity condition may have influenced people not to view any of the magazines because it may have increased their feelings of uncertainty (Dhar & Simonson, 2003). In the present study, 32 percent of participants did not view a magazine in the waiting room. A logistic regression analysis was performed with a dichotomous dependent variable where 1 indicated that the respondent viewed a magazine in the waiting room and 0 otherwise. Choice, diversity, the interaction between choice and diversity, and general political knowledge were included as predictors. These variables were not significant ($p>0.10$) in predicting magazine viewing in the waiting room.

Though subjects were permitted to browse as many magazines as they wanted, looking at more than one magazine in the waiting room was relatively rare. Of the subjects who opted to view a magazine in the waiting room, 72 percent looked at only

²⁷ Using a two-tailed t -test, the choice manipulation was unrelated to the perceived variance of the magazine leanings ($t(81)=-0.36, p=0.72$). The variance measure, however, is biased against finding any differences because 5 values (high choice condition) will always yield a smaller variance than 3 values (low choice condition). An alternative measure, the average perceived distance from neutral of each magazine, was computed for each respondent. Computing a t -test using this alternate measure also revealed that there were no differences between high and low choice conditions ($t(81)=-0.45, p=0.65$). Using this alternate measure, the high diversity condition had a higher mean ($M=0.73, SE=0.08$) than the low diversity condition ($M=0.62, SE=0.06$), but again, the difference was not significant ($t(81)=-1.18, p=0.24$). Analyses of variance replicated this general pattern and provided no support for any interactive (choice \times diversity) differences.

²⁸ Analyses reported in this section were repeated using perceived variance as an individual-level covariate, controlling for the diversity manipulation. There was no evidence that this individual measure was related to magazine selection.

one. A logistic regression analysis (1=switched magazines during the time in the waiting room, 0=did not switch) revealed that the experimental manipulations of choice and diversity were unrelated to switching behavior, controlling for political knowledge.

As previously described, one method of operationalizing magazine exposure was to evaluate whether the percentage of total time spent with favorable magazines in the waiting room differed based on the experimental condition. Choice and diversity were included as independent variables in a regression analysis predicting the percentage of time spent with liberal and conservative magazines.²⁹ Ideology/partisanship and interactions with the experimental conditions also were included. General political knowledge was included as a control. The results are shown below in Table 5.1.

²⁹ Choice and diversity were coded such that -1=low choice / low diversity and 1=high choice / high diversity.

Table 5.1. *Regression Analyses of Percentage of Time Spent with Magazines*
Coefficient (SE)

	Liberal Magazines	Conservative Magazines
General Political Knowledge	0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Ideology/Partisanship (IP)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.04+ (0.02)
Choice ³⁰	0.14* (0.06)	-0.18** (0.06)
Diversity	0.05 (0.06)	-0.12+ (0.06)
Choice * Diversity	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.06)
Choice * IP	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)
Diversity * IP	-0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Choice * Diversity * IP	0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Constant	0.23 (0.15)	0.64*** (0.15)
R-square	0.16	0.19

$N=66$, + $p<0.10$, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

³⁰ The main effect of choice is particularly puzzling. A *t*-test revealed that in the high choice condition, participants spent more time with liberal magazines (*High choice % of time with liberal magazines* $M=0.50$, $SE=0.08$; *Low choice* $M=0.21$, $SE=0.07$; $t(67)=-2.81$, $p<0.01$) and less time with conservative magazines (*High choice % of time with conservative magazines* $M=0.31$, $SE=0.08$; *Low choice* $M=0.62$, $SE=0.07$; $t(67)=2.78$, $p<0.01$) compared to the low choice condition. Inspection of the percentage of time spent with each magazine by condition revealed that popular conservative magazines in the low choice conditions were less popular in the high choice conditions. Participants spent an average of 54% of their time with the *American Spectator* in the low choice, low diversity condition, but spent only 23% of their time with the *American Spectator* in the high choice, low diversity condition. While participants spent an average of 32% of their time with the *National Review* in the low choice, high diversity condition, they spent an average of only 1% of their time with the *National Review* in the high choice, high diversity condition. Further, the conservative magazines added to the choice sets in the high choice conditions did not attract many participants – participants spent under 10% of their time with the added conservative magazines. In comparison, participants spent *more* time with liberal magazines in the high choice conditions. While participants spent an average of 12% of their time with the *Atlantic* in the low choice, low diversity condition, they spent 24% of their time with the *Atlantic* in the high choice, low diversity condition. The amount of time spent with the *Nation* did not vary as much – participants spent an average of 15% of their time with the *Nation* in the low choice, high diversity condition and spent 11% of their time with the *Nation* in the high choice, high diversity condition. The added liberal magazines in the high choice conditions, however, received more attention from respondents. In the high choice, low diversity condition, participants spent an average of 10% of their time with *Harper's* and participants spent an average of 18% of their time with the *Atlantic* in the high choice, high diversity condition.

As the results in Table 5.1 show, there was no evidence that the choice and diversity manipulations were related to the percent of time spent with liberal or conservative magazines. The interactions between choice, diversity, and ideology/partisanship were all non-significant. Further, there was only limited evidence that ideology/partisanship was related to magazine choice. Removing the non-significant interactions with ideology/partisanship, there was a marginally significant effect of ideology/partisanship such that conservative Republicans spent a larger percentage of their time with conservative magazines compared to liberal Democrats ($B=-0.03$, $SE=0.02$, $p<0.10$).³¹

Another strategy used to measure magazine exposure in the waiting room was to evaluate the relationship between the experimental manipulations and the last magazine selected in the waiting room. Using the same strategy as Table 5.1, logistic regression analyses were conducted to evaluate whether the experimental manipulations were related to magazine exposure. The results can be found in Table 5.2.

³¹ Though ideology/partisanship was used as a measure of political leanings, it was possible to use party by itself or ideology by itself as an indicator of political leanings (higher values indicating more liberal/Democratic leanings). Using these alternate measures produced some different findings, as will be noted in the footnotes. For this analysis, partisanship did not significantly interact with the experimental manipulations. As a main effect only, partisanship was related to the percentage of time reading liberal magazines ($B=0.05$, $SE=0.03$, $p<0.10$) and to the percentage of time spent reading conservative magazines ($B=-0.07$, $SE=0.03$, $p<0.05$). Ideology was not significantly related to either the percentage of time spent with liberal or conservative magazines.

Table 5.2. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Last Magazine Selected in the Waiting Room*
Coefficient (SE)

	Liberal Magazine	Conservative Magazine
General Political Knowledge	0.14 (0.11)	-0.21* (0.10)
Ideology/Partisanship (IP)	0.11 (0.10)	-0.19+ (0.10)
Choice ³²	0.75* (0.35)	-0.81* (0.35)
Diversity	0.19 (0.35)	-0.47 (0.34)
Choice * Diversity	-0.32 (0.35)	-0.01 (0.35)
Choice * IP	0.01 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.10)
Diversity * IP	-0.12 (0.10)	0.13 (0.10)
Choice * Diversity * IP	0.00 (0.10)	-0.10 (0.10)
Constant	-1.71* (0.81)	1.29+ (0.73)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.28	0.29

$N=66$, + $p<0.10$, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

As shown in Table 5.2, there again was no evidence that the experimental manipulations were related to the magazine selected by participants in the waiting room. All interactions between choice, diversity, and ideology/partisanship were non-significant. Again, removing the non-significant interactions between the experimental manipulations and ideology/partisanship, there is a marginally significant relationship between ideology/partisanship and selection of conservative magazines such that conservative Republicans were more apt to select conservative magazines in the waiting

³² Again, the main effect of choice is puzzling. The same patterns detailed in footnote 30 appear here.

room compared to liberal Democrats ($B=-0.15$, $SE=0.09$, $p<0.10$).³³ There was little support for the idea that choice and diversity influenced people's magazine selections in the waiting room.

Analysis of magazine subscription selections. It also was hypothesized that participants would be more likely to select congenial magazine subscriptions under conditions of high choice and diversity. As with the analyses of magazine selection in the waiting room, choice, diversity, ideology/partisanship and the interaction between these variables were included in a logistic regression equation predicting what type of magazine was chosen for subscription. Political knowledge was included as a control. The results are shown in Table 5.3.

³³ If partisanship was used instead of ideology/partisanship and non-significant interactions with experimental conditions were removed, stronger Republicans were more likely to select a conservative magazine in the waiting room ($B=-0.28$, $SE=0.14$, $p<0.05$) and stronger Democrats were more likely to select a liberal magazine in the waiting room ($B=0.24$, $SE=0.14$, $p<0.10$). When ideology was used, there were no significant relationships between ideology and choosing magazines of different political leanings.

Table 5.3. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Magazine Selected for Subscription*
Coefficient (SE)

	Liberal Magazine	Conservative Magazine
General Political Knowledge	-0.05 (0.10)	0.32** (0.12)
Ideology/Partisanship (IP)	0.40** (0.14)	-0.25* (0.13)
Choice	0.21 (0.41)	-0.35 (0.35)
Diversity	-0.69+ (0.41)	0.30 (0.36)
Choice * Diversity	0.32 (0.41)	0.26 (0.35)
Choice * IP	0.19 (0.14)	-0.26* (0.13)
Diversity * IP	0.18 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.13)
Choice * Diversity * IP	0.01 (0.14)	-0.21 (0.13)
Constant	-0.77 (0.73)	-3.36*** (0.92)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.36	0.39

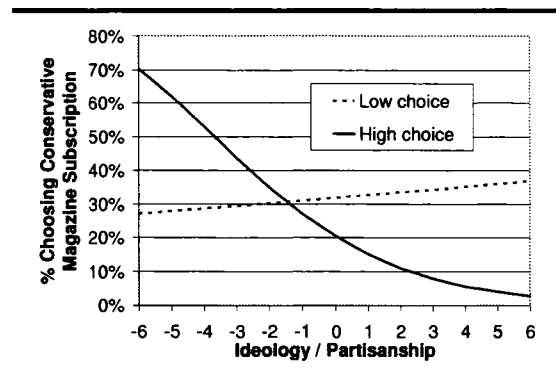
$N=85$, + $p<0.10$, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

As shown in Table 5.3, choice and diversity were unrelated to selecting a liberal magazine subscription. Further, while ideology/partisanship was not significantly related to choosing liberal magazines in the prior analyses, it was significant here. Removing all non-significant ideology/partisanship interactions, liberal Democrats were more likely to choose liberal magazine subscriptions compared to conservative Republicans ($B=0.36$, $SE=0.11$, $p<0.01$).³⁴

³⁴ When ideology was used instead of ideology/partisanship as an indicator of political leanings, choice x ideology was a significant predictor of choosing a liberal magazine subscription ($B=0.63$, $SE=0.28$, $p<0.05$)

Turning to the model predicting selection of a conservative magazine, there is some support for the notion that the number of available choices was related to patterns of partisan selective exposure. A figure of the logistic regression results can be found in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1. Conservative Magazine Subscription by Ideology/Partisanship and Choice



Note: Chart represents logistic regression predictions with choice, diversity, ideology/partisanship, and the interaction between choice and ideology/partisanship entered into the model. Non-significant interactions were eliminated. General political knowledge also was included in the model as a control; results depict the relationship between choice and ideology/partisanship for participants with an average level of general political knowledge.

As shown in Figure 5.1, at higher levels of choice, conservative Republicans are more likely to select conservative magazines and liberal Democrats are less likely.³⁵ It is

and diversity x ideology was a marginally significant predictor of choosing a liberal magazine subscription ($B=0.46$, $SE=0.26$, $p<0.10$). The three-way interaction was not significant and was dropped from the analysis. Graphing this relationship and including the main effects, results showed that participants were more likely to choose ideologically consistent magazines when they had more diverse choice options. When partisanship was used to predict choosing a liberal magazine instead of ideology/partisanship, choice and diversity were unrelated to magazine exposure. Partisanship did, however, significantly predict liberal magazine selection ($B=0.35$, $SE=0.14$, $p<0.05$) such that stronger Democrats were more likely to choose liberal magazines compared to stronger Republicans.

³⁵ The same general pattern occurred if ideology or partisanship was substituted for the combined ideology/partisanship measure, though the interaction effect between choice and ideology was significant ($B=-0.71$, $SE=0.28$, $p<0.05$) while the interaction effect between choice and partisanship narrowly missed marginal significance ($B=-0.26$, $SE=0.16$, $p>0.10$).

important to note, however, that these results are contingent on which interaction terms are included in the computation.³⁶

Discussion

Throughout this study, there was evidence that people's political leanings play a role in people's magazine exposure decisions. In four of six cases, ideology/partisanship was significantly related to magazine choices such that liberal Democrats were more likely to select liberal magazines and conservative Republicans were more likely to select conservative magazines. This provides additional evidence that partisan selective exposure occurs.

There was only minimal evidence, however, regarding the hypothesized relationships between the experimental manipulations of choice and diversity and partisan selective exposure. There was some limited evidence from the subscription choices that the number of available choices was related to partisan selective exposure. Modeling selection of conservative magazine subscriptions, partisan exposure patterns increased in the high choice conditions compared to low choice conditions. Further, it is of note that when ideology was used, as opposed to the combined ideology/partisanship measure, more choice enhanced partisan selectivity in the selection of a liberal magazine subscription as well (footnote 34). In the waiting room condition, there was no evidence

³⁶ As such, caution should be used when interpreting this result. In the original equation, note that the three-way interaction between ideology, choice, and diversity is nearly marginally significant ($B=-0.21$, $SE=0.13$, $p=0.11$). When this three-way interaction is included in developing Figure 5.1, the results are substantially different. The current results are presented, however, because the exclusion of one case resulted in a decline in the magnitude and significance of the three-way interaction term ($B=-0.15$, $SE=0.11$, $p=0.18$). This case was excluded on theoretical grounds – only one participant identified as a current subscriber to one of the magazines contained in his/her choice set. This would have yielded a choice set that differed from the intended manipulation and hence, this case was excluded.

that choice was related to partisan selective exposure. Further, there was little evidence that the diversity of the magazine choices was related to partisan selective exposure.

This study has several important limitations. Though limitations that apply across chapters in this dissertation are discussed in Chapter 8, the limitations of this experiment are discussed here. First, the generalizability of the results, as with most experiments, is an open question. Community members in the greater Philadelphia area participated in this study allowing for conclusions extending beyond the context of college undergraduates; however, whether other study populations would exhibit the same patterns cannot be determined from the current project. Further, the decision to use political magazines as opposed to other, more popular, media choices may raise questions about the generalizability of the findings. Though it is assumed that these patterns extend to other media, it remains an empirical question. The manipulations of choice and diversity also limit the conclusions. There was some indication that the diversity manipulation was insufficient which may have resulted in the lack of findings for this manipulation. Further, the difference between 3 and 5 choices could be expanded to include a wider range of choices. Iyengar and Lepper (2000), for example, argue that more choices (e.g. over 20 options) may produce different results because at some point, participants must develop shortcuts instead of extensively processing information about all choice options. Expanding the variety of choice options may be a fruitful way to extend this experimental design. Though the perceived magazine leanings provide evidence that some magazines were perceived to be liberal and others conservative, it is

worth noting that the differences were not large. This may have reduced the observed occurrence of partisan selective exposure.

Though the differences found in this experiment should be approached somewhat cautiously, they have a number of implications. There is reason to anticipate that differences between long-term exposure decisions (the subscription condition) and short-term exposure decisions (the waiting room) would persist in future iterations of this study. Long-term decisions, such as choosing a magazine subscription, may cause people to think more carefully about their magazine choice. Short-term browsing decisions may result in less careful processing and more exposure to diverse views.

When evaluating the magazines more thoughtfully, people undoubtedly have a host of criteria they employ. For example, Zillmann and colleagues (2001) document that pictures and images can influence exposure patterns. Political leanings, therefore, are just one of many possible criteria for selecting a magazine subscription. With only three options from which to choose (low choice condition), many of the miscellaneous, non-political reasons for choosing a magazine could govern an individual's subscription decision. When presented with five options (high choice condition), however, the likelihood that a miscellaneous, non-political reason would determine a magazine subscription decision declines. In more concrete terms, suppose that a liberal Democrat subject were given a choice set with several non-liberal magazines and just one liberal magazine. In this choice set, there are many reasons that the subject would not choose the liberal magazine. Given two liberal magazines, however, it is less likely that *both* of the liberal magazines would fail to meet the miscellaneous non-political criteria.

Assuming that people are driven to choose matching outlets, careful processing under conditions of high commitment and more options from which to choose would be expected to yield higher levels of partisan selective exposure.

Overall, this study suggests that the media environment may influence people's media selections. When faced with increasing options from which to choose, there was some indication that longer-term decisions motivate selection of political media with more congenial political perspectives. As this line of research continues, persistent findings indicating that choice is related to higher levels of partisan selective exposure would represent an extremely troubling finding. If exposure to likeminded views increases polarization (Sunstein, 2001) and lowers levels of political tolerance (Mutz, 2002b), this finding would signal that changes in the media environment could have important political consequences.

The composition of media choices available to consumers is not the only way that the media may influence patterns of partisan selective exposure. By showcasing political events, the media bring politics to the forefront of public attention. Campaign events, such as party conventions and presidential debates, are widely viewed political events that are broadcast on the major television networks that may influence patterns of partisan selective exposure.

Exposure to Political Media Events

Political events covered in the media may motivate partisan selective exposure because they trigger people's partisan inclinations. In celebrating political parties, the national party conventions explicitly invoke people's partisan identifications. And in

pitting one political perspective against another, political debates encourage partisans to take sides during the event. This section will evaluate two ways in which viewing the debates and national party conventions may influence people's patterns of partisan selective exposure. First, viewing the debates and conventions may lead partisans to increase their levels of congenial media exposure because these events reinforce and highlight partisan distinctions. Second, impressions of candidate performance in the debates also may influence people's patterns of media consumption. Perceiving that a preferred candidate has lost the debates may lead people to seek reinforcement for their political preferences from congenial media outlets.

Background

Debates. Since 1976, presidential debates have been a mainstay of the modern presidential campaign season. These events have long been heralded as an important opportunity for overcoming people's selective exposure tendencies – both candidates are present and it is difficult to avoid encountering information contradicting one's predispositions (Lang & Lang, 1961). Scholars have investigated many effects of the debates. One consistent finding is that the debates help people learn about the candidates (Benoit et al., 2003). Those coming to the debate with strong partisan inclinations, however, rarely change their mind about their candidate preference (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Sears & Chaffee, 1979). Instead, debates often serve to reinforce people's partisan inclinations. One potential effect of the debates has received little attention; as McKinney and Carlin (2004) note, there is little research on the effect of the debates on

information seeking. In the context of this dissertation, the presidential debates may be related to partisan selective exposure in at least two ways.

First, by highlighting partisanship, the debates may lead people to use partisanship as a cue in making subsequent media exposure decisions. Viewing the debates and rooting for one's preferred candidate arguably brings one's partisanship to the forefront of memory. Post-debate, when making decisions about media exposure, people may be more likely to select congenial political media. Accordingly, this section tests the hypothesis that debate viewing is related to increased partisan selective exposure.

Second, perceptions of candidate performance may influence subsequent exposure decisions. Viewing the debates has the potential to unexpectedly arouse dissonance in viewers since candidate performance is somewhat unpredictable. Though candidates rehearse for the debates, these events allow viewers to see the candidates "unprotected by speech writers" (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988, p. 143). One potentially dissonance-arousing instance that will be investigated in this section is the perception that one's preferred candidate has lost the debate. Perceptions that one's candidate is under attack lead to attitudinal and exposure changes. Evaluating attitudinal changes from a dissonance perspective, Beasley and Joslyn (2001) found that the act of voting in a presidential election had a polarizing effect while supporting the loser of the election had a depolarizing effect. Similarly, supporting the loser in a debate may lead people to be less certain about their electoral choice. This may lead people to change their exposure patterns to restore their confidence. Prior research suggests that people adjust their

exposure patterns when one's preferred candidate is under attack. Specifically, research documents that in this situation, discussion, interest, and attention to politics may decline (Sweeney & Gruber, 1984). While Sweeney and Gruber document that events can influence people's exposure behavior, they did not evaluate the political composition of information consumed. To allay the dissonance produced by perceiving that a preferred candidate has lost the debates, it is hypothesized that individuals will increase their post-debate partisan selective exposure.

Conventions. In contrast to the debates, political conventions are one-sided events. Audiences can be relatively well assured that they will not be confronted with contradictory information if they share the partisanship of the convention. The party faithful viewing the event will be exposed to messages that they generally support – no dissonance should be aroused and if anything, certainty and commitment should be increased by viewing a convention. Alternatively, those affiliated with the opposite party who opted to watch the convention (presumably they believe that the event would not arouse considerable dissonance else they would not watch) would likely counterargue the presentations and would find more certainty and commitment toward their candidate of choice. Consistent with the idea that people seek media based on their political beliefs, literature documents that liberal Democrats are more apt to watch the Democratic National Convention and conservative Republicans are more apt to watch the Republican National Convention (Ziemke, 1980). In highlighting partisanship and attracting a largely congenial audience, one effect of the party conventions may be to bring people's partisan affiliations to the forefront of their thinking. This may influence people's

information seeking patterns – after viewing the convention, people may be more apt to seek out congenial information sources.

To investigate these ideas, the following section uses the 2004 NAES data to investigate whether political media event exposure influences people's exposure to partisan media.

Results

Influence of exposure to political events on partisan selective exposure. To evaluate whether viewing the debates and party conventions influenced people's patterns of media consumption, panel regression analyses were conducted. In these analyses, the dependent variables were the indices of exposure to liberal or conservative media outlets (detailed in Chapter 3) measured in the post-wave of each panel. The pre-wave measure of exposure to liberal or conservative media outlets was included as a control. The series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political discussion, strength of ideological/partisan leanings), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, access to the Internet, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapter 3 were included as controls. Further, since the evidence in Chapter 4 suggested that both general political knowledge and political interest were antecedents of partisan selective exposure, both were incorporated as controls. The independent variables of interest were ideology/partisanship and event exposure. As described in Chapter 3, event exposure was measured by summing a series of questions asking respondents whether they saw the various parts of the RNC, DNC and debates (RNC

range 0 to 9, DNC range 0 to 9, Debate range 4 to 16, higher values correspond to more viewing). The results of these analyses are shown in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. *Panel Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Exposure to Political Media Events and Ideology/Partisanship*³⁷
Coefficient (SE)

	Ideology/ Partisanship	Event Exposure	Interaction	R-square	N
DNC Panel					
Liberal Media	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.002 (0.004)	0.53	549
Conservative Media	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)	-0.001 (0.004)	0.64	549
RNC Panel					
Liberal Media	0.04** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.002 (0.004)	0.49	582
Conservative Media	-0.01 (0.02)	0.02* (0.01)	-0.01+ (0.003)	0.58	582
Debate Panel					
Liberal Media	0.06*** (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)	0.002 (0.003)	0.53	679
Conservative Media	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.57	679

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and event-exposure variables are mean centered.

In Table 5.4, each row represents the results of a regression analysis. For example, the first row of coefficients corresponds to the regression analysis predicting the use of liberal media outlets. Each column shows the coefficients of the independent

³⁷ Without including NPR as a liberal radio outlet, the results are unchanged. Substituting ideology and partisanship for the combined ideology/partisanship measure, results were largely unchanged. The interaction between ideology and RNC viewing was not significant, though it remained in the same direction. The interaction between party and RNC viewing, however, was significant (p<0.05) and in the same direction. This analysis was repeated using hierarchical linear modeling with respondents clustered into congressional districts and a control for the percent of the district voting for Bush. The results were unchanged.

variables of interest. This table documents that both exposure to the debates and exposure to the DNC were unrelated to patterns of partisan selective exposure. Watching the RNC, however, was related to more consumption of conservative media in the post-wave. There was a marginally significant interaction between viewing the RNC and ideology/partisanship in predicting consumption of conservative media in the post-wave. Conservative Republicans watching the RNC were even more likely to consume conservative media after the RNC compared to other respondents – even when controlling for their consumption of conservative media prior to the debates.

The final hypothesis regarding the relationship between partisan media exposure and media event exposure proposed that perceiving that one's preferred candidate lost the debates would lead people to increase their partisan selective exposure. As the key independent variable, respondents to the post-wave of the debate panel survey were asked to identify who they thought did best in the presidential debates. Of those who watched at least a few minutes of the debates, 64.8 percent of respondents perceived that Kerry had won the debates and 25.5 percent of respondents perceived that Bush had won the debates. In order to evaluate whether perceptions of who won the debates influenced partisan media use, regression analyses predicting the consumption of liberal and conservative media outlets were conducted. As in Table 5.4, demographic, media, and political orientation variables from Chapter 3 were included as controls. Further, the pre-wave value of conservative or liberal media use and exposure to the debates were controlled in the analysis. Only the main independent variables of interest are shown in Table 5.5. Also, since those individuals viewing the debates were expected to adjust their

media exposure patterns on the basis of viewing the debates, this analysis was conducted only for those individuals who saw at least some of the debates.

Table 5.5. *Panel Analyses of Partisan Media Use by Ideology/Partisanship and Perceptions of the Debate Winner*³⁸
Coefficient (SE)

	<u>Conservative Media</u>		<u>Liberal Media</u>	
	Bush Won	Kerry Won	Bush Won	Kerry Won
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
Perception of Winner	0.05 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.07)	-0.16 (0.10)	0.14+ (0.08)
Interaction	0.03 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)
R-square	0.60	0.60	0.53	0.53

$N=580$, + $p<0.10$, * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Note: Ideology/partisanship is mean centered.

As shown in Table 5.5, impressions of who won the presidential debates were unrelated to the consumption of conservative media. When the main and interaction effects of perceiving Bush as the winner of the debates and ideology/partisanship were included in the analysis, there was no relationship between perceptions of the debate winner and the consumption of liberal media. Removing the non-significant interaction

³⁸ This analysis was re-run including all respondents, even those who did not watch any of the debates. When this was done, the marginally significant relationships between perceiving Bush as the winner and consuming liberal media and between perceiving Kerry as the winner and consuming liberal media were no longer significant, though they remained in the same direction. This analysis also was re-run using ideology and partisanship separately. The results were largely unchanged. Though the marginally significant relationship between perceptions that Kerry won the debates and consumption of liberal media dropped below significance when the interaction between Kerry won and partisanship was included in the equation, it was marginally significant when the non-significant interaction was removed. All other results were the same. Finally, the analysis was re-run using hierarchical linear modeling and clustering respondents into congressional districts. After controlling for the percent of the congressional district vote that went to Bush, the main effect of perceiving that Bush won the debates was significant and negatively related to consuming liberal media and the main effect of perceiving that Kerry won the debates was significant and positively related to consuming liberal media.

between ideology/partisanship and perceiving Bush as the winner yielded a marginally significant relationship between perceptions that Bush won and liberal media use, however ($B=-0.13$, $SE=0.07$, $p<0.10$). Those perceiving that Bush won the debates were less likely than those perceiving that Bush did not win the debates to consume liberal media after the debates. There was some evidence that impressions that Kerry won the debates were related to changes in liberal media exposure. Respondents perceiving that Kerry won the debates reported higher levels of consuming liberal media outlets. This relationship was unmoderated by ideology/partisanship.³⁹

Outlet-by-Outlet Analyses

The event-exposure analyses were repeated for the individual media outlets. Few results were significant. As in the previous chapter, patterns of cable news viewing produced the most consistent findings. Liberal Democrats viewing the RNC were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC in the post-wave compared to other respondents. Alternatively, conservative Republicans viewing the DNC reported were more likely to listen to liberal radio relative to other conservative Republicans.

Conservative Republicans perceiving that Bush won the debates were more likely to report reading conservative newspapers relative to other respondents. Liberal Democrats perceiving that Bush won the debates were more apt to report watching FOX in the post-debate survey than other liberal Democrats. Alternatively, respondents perceiving that Bush won the debates watched less CNN/MSNBC in the post wave compared to other respondents. Respondents perceiving that Kerry won the debates

³⁹ Removing the non-significant interaction between ideology/partisanship and perceiving that Kerry won the debates yielded a marginally significant relationship between perceptions that Kerry won and liberal media use ($B=0.13$, $SE=0.07$, $p<0.10$).

watched more CNN/MSNBC in the post-wave compared to other respondents. The effects of perceptions of the winning debate candidate on CNN/MSNBC viewing were unmoderated by ideology/partisanship. The rationale behind the persistent cable news effects will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Summary of Findings

This section looked specifically at exposure to the 2004 presidential debates and the national party conventions to address the following question: do political media events influence people's partisan media exposure patterns? This section offers some evidence that this does occur. Conservative Republicans viewing the RNC consumed more conservative media outlets after the debates compared to other respondents. Further, debate viewers perceiving that Bush won the debates consumed fewer liberal media outlets in the post-wave of the debate panel survey. Debate viewers perceiving that Kerry won the debates consumed more liberal outlets in the post-wave. Contrary to prediction, however, these relationships were unmoderated by ideology/partisanship. As prior literature would predict (Tsfati, 2003a), however, conservative Republicans were more likely to believe Bush won and liberal Democrats were more likely to believe that Kerry won.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Two logistic regression analyses were run, including all of the controls described in Chapter 3. The dependent variables were perceptions of the winner of the debates (Bush or Kerry). The coefficient for ideology/partisanship was significant in both analyses (Bush won: $B=-1.07$, $SE=0.16$, $p<0.001$; Kerry won: $B=0.77$, $SE=0.08$, $p<0.001$). Liberal Democrats were more likely to perceive that Kerry won the debates and conservative Republicans were more likely to perceive that Bush won the debates relative to other respondents.

Conclusions

The results of this chapter and the previous chapter provide some information about the conditions motivating partisan selective exposure. Chapter 4 shows that politically knowledgeable and interested individuals are more likely to engage in partisan selective exposure. This chapter provides preliminary evidence, albeit needing replication, that the structure of the media environment may influence patterns of partisan selectivity. Namely, the experimental analysis suggested that with more choices, people are more likely to engage in partisan selective exposure when they make long-term exposure decisions. This is potentially troubling, considering the explosion of media choices that has taken place over the past several decades. Further, this chapter provides some evidence that political media events influence where people go for political information. Although the debates and party conventions serve important functions in informing the electorate about the presidential candidates, the analyses suggested that they may encourage people to engage in partisan selective exposure.

With information about what motivates partisan selective exposure, this dissertation now turns to another important question – what effect does partisan selective exposure have? If people consume media outlets that match their political predispositions, are there any consequences? The next two chapters investigate attitudinal and behavioral consequences of patterns of partisan media use.

CHAPTER 6: INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCES OF PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

Partisan selective exposure may affect a number of important political variables. First, as people are increasingly exposed to congenial political views via the media, they may be more likely to participate in politics. Politically congenial media messages may activate people's partisan inclinations and motivate them to participate. Further, calls to action from ideologically congenial media hosts and programs may be particularly effective at inciting political participation. Second, partisan selective exposure may motivate people to decide for whom to vote earlier in a campaign because congenial media provides people with few reasons to doubt their candidate preference. Finally, partisan selective exposure may lead people to develop more polarized attitudes toward political candidates. As partisan media convey information more supportive of one candidate, those in agreement with the media perspective may develop a stronger affinity for their preferred candidate. Accordingly, this chapter will evaluate the potential effects of partisan selective exposure on political participation, commitment, and polarization (Hypothesis 6). For each of these political variables in turn, previous research will be reviewed, the measures used will be detailed, and then the results presented. After reviewing each variable, a general conclusion will summarize the results for all of the effects investigated in this chapter.

Participation and Partisan Selective Exposure

Background

Citizen participation ranks as an essential part of a democratic system. Equitable participation is particularly important to ensure so that different groups are adequately represented in government (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003). Though voting is one way citizens can participate, other activities, such as working for a political campaign, also are considered acts of political participation. Of particular importance to the current project, patterns of partisan selective exposure may influence political participation. This section tests the hypothesis that partisan selective exposure leads to higher levels of political participation. Two types of research provide the foundation for this expected relationship.

First, research generally shows that news and political media use are positively related to political participation (Eveland & Scheufele, 2000; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; McLeod et al., 1999). The more people consume news and political information, the more they participate in politics. Though this relationship has been documented cross-sectionally, the use of panel data to investigate the direction of causality rarely has been used. In one important exception, Shah et al. (2005) found that online information seeking contributes to higher levels of political participation. Studies on the relationship between political participation and media use, however, have not investigated the potentially unique contribution of partisan selective exposure. Consequently, additional analysis is warranted.

Second, the relationship between the political composition of one's interpersonal network and political participation has been investigated, with mixed results. Nir (2005) looked at the diversity of political opinions within one's interpersonal network and did not find any relationship between having an interpersonal network with diverse political opinions and political participation. It is not clear, however, that Nir's null result applies to the current investigation. In her measurement of diverse networks, an individual in an interpersonal network consisting solely of people sharing her/his political opinions and an individual in an interpersonal network consisting solely of people *not* sharing her/his political opinions receive the same numerical score. Separating those in completely congenial networks from those in completely uncongenial networks may yield different results. Others have found a positive relationship between network heterogeneity and participation (e.g. Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004). The empirical definition of heterogeneity used by these authors, however, involves not only exposure to others with different political viewpoints, but also others of different genders and ethnicities. This operational difference makes the results less applicable to the current project. Finally, and most directly applicable to the current project, Mutz (2002a) used cross-sectional data to demonstrate that higher levels of exposure to others holding different political points of view is related to lower levels of political participation. Mutz's measure of disagreement, in contrast with Nir's and Scheufele et al.'s, evaluates the amount of political disagreement with one's own view encountered within one's network. The obverse of her results, therefore, may speak directly to the current project. Namely, exposure to *homogeneous* views may be related to higher levels of participation.

Mutz (2002a) accounts for her findings by providing a social explanation – people wanting to avoid interpersonal conflict develop more ambivalent political attitudes and participate less. If social reasons account for the relationship between political participation and uncongenial *interpersonal* networks, why would exposure to congenial *media* messages encourage participation? Several possible explanations are offered here. First, partisan selective exposure may *motivate* people to participate by contributing to the development of more polarized attitudes. Information – without social context – can contribute to changes in people’s attitudes. For example, compared to individuals acquiring inconsistent information, Jonas, Diehl, and Brömer (1997) found that individuals acquiring consistent information were less ambivalent. Building on this study, receiving information that is consistent with people’s political beliefs may further polarize their political attitudes. Though the relationship between polarization and selective exposure will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, what is important here is that partisan selective exposure may lead to polarization which in turn may motivate people to participate in politics. Second, partisan selective exposure may *enable* people to participate. Ideological media may provide people with information requisite for participation. Accessing a partisan website, for example, makes it very easy for people to contribute money to a campaign. Finally, partisan selective exposure may *validate* people’s beliefs in a way that encourages participation. By making people more certain of the veracity of their political beliefs, people may feel not only more assured about participating, but more obligated to participate. As this discussion suggests, there is reason to believe that partisan media exposure will contribute to political participation.

The causal ordering between partisan selective exposure and political participation is not clear. It could be that political participation motivates selectivity. Mutz (2002a) acknowledges this possibility in her work on interpersonal networks; “It is plausible that participating in political activities could *lead* one to associate with a more politically homogeneous group of contacts, thus political participation could cause lower levels of cross-cutting exposure rather than vice-versa” (p. 845).⁴¹ Though her argument is based on network composition, the same reverse causal argument is possible based on media exposure in at least two conceivable ways. First, those participating in politics may find partisan political information to be more useful. Those participating in politics tend to be stronger partisans (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003) and many opportunities for political participation tend to be partisan in nature – consider, for example, working for a candidate, donating money to a campaign, or wearing a campaign button. In order for individuals to gain information useful for their partisan participation, they may be more apt to select media supportive of their political beliefs. The second, and related, rationale is that those with higher levels of political participation may be more motivated to recognize the political cues contained in the media compared to those who do not participate. Through their participation in partisan activities, they may be better trained to recognize these cues and may have developed stronger beliefs about the partisan leanings of different media outlets. With a plausible reverse causal argument, it is important to investigate the causal order of the relationship between political participation and partisan selective exposure.

⁴¹ Note that Mutz (2002a) dismisses this notion because she contends that reverse causality is not plausible for her other dependent variables of interest, including time of decision. There is, however, some suggestion of reverse causality in the literature; a possibility that I discuss in the commitment section.

Measurement

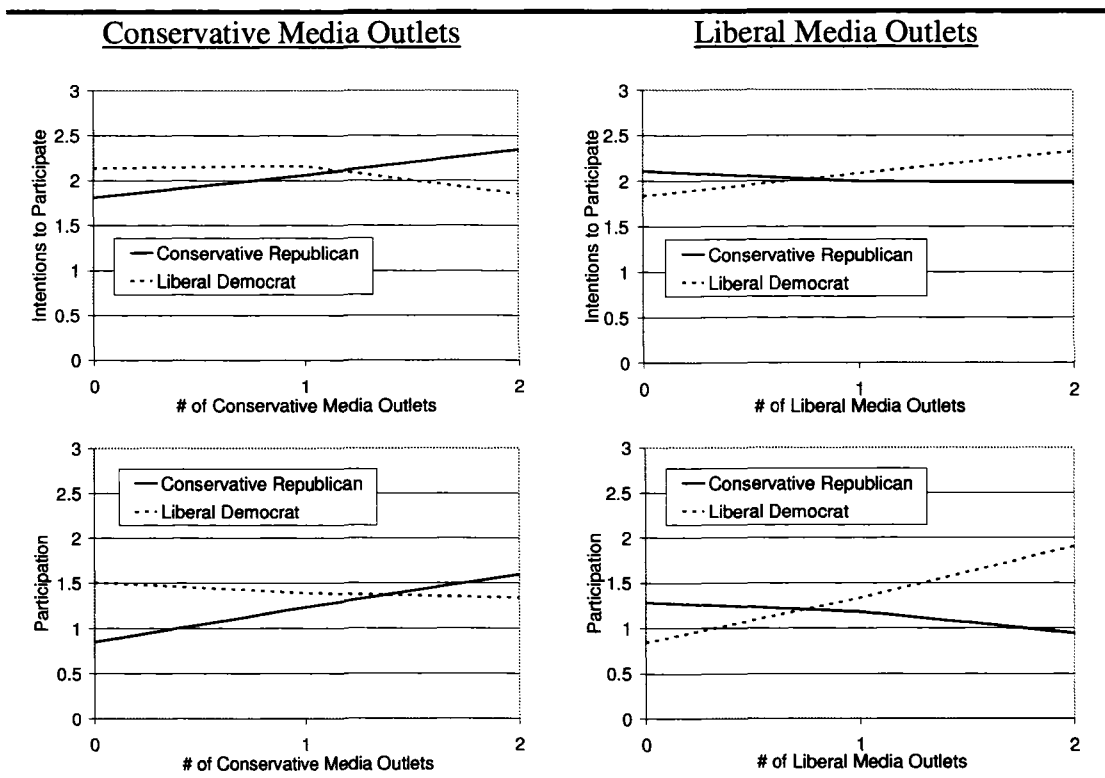
Political participation. Political participation was measured in two different ways. From July 16 through September 13, 2004, participation was assessed by asking participants, “How likely are you to participate in this year’s presidential campaign, either by working to help one of the candidate’s campaigns, by donating money to a campaign, by attending a campaign event of some kind, or by trying to convince others to vote for him as well? Would you say you are: very likely to do at least one of these things, somewhat likely, or not very likely?” Forty-five percent of respondents were not very likely (1), 21 percent somewhat likely and 34 percent very likely (3). Beginning on September 20, 2004, participation was assessed using the following items: During the presidential campaign, have you: (a) talked to any people and tried to show them why they should vote for or against one of the presidential candidates (b) gone to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular presidential candidate (c) done any other work for one of the presidential candidates (d) given money to any of the presidential candidates (e) worn a presidential campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car or placed a sign in your window or in front of your house? A random one-third of respondents were asked each participation question with response options of yes, coded 1, or no, coded 0. These five items were summed to create an index whereby higher values indicate more participation ($M=1.02$, $SD=1.17$).

Results

Bivariate. As an initial step, the bivariate relationships between political participation and media consumption patterns are shown in Figure 6.1. As liberal

Democrats consume additional liberal media outlets, they have higher rates of participation compared to conservative Republicans. The same holds true for conservative Republicans, where higher rates of conservative media consumption correspond to higher levels of participation. The relationship between respondents' intentions to participate and partisan media exposure follow an identical pattern.

Figure 6.1. Intentions to Participate and Participation by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use⁴²



As the charts in Figure 6.1 document, congenial media exposure is related to participation. Whether the relationship is statistically significant and if it persists in the presence of controls remains to be analyzed, however.

⁴² Though the maximum number of conservative/liberal media outlets respondents could consume is 4, the charts constrain the x-axis to 2 because of the small number of individuals consuming 3 or more uncongenial outlets.

Cross-sectional. The relationship between intentions to participate and partisan selective exposure as well as the relationship between political participation and partisan selective exposure were evaluated using regression analysis. A series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political interest, political discussion, strength of ideological/partisan leanings, general political knowledge), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, access to the Internet, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapters 3 and 4 were included as controls in the analysis, though they are not shown in Table 6.1. A summary of the equations including these controls can be found in Appendix B. Table 6.1 shows the main and interaction effects of ideological media consumption and ideology/partisanship.

Table 6.1. *Regression Analyses of Intentions to Participate and Political Participation by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁴³
Coefficient (SE)

	<u>Intentions to Participate</u>		<u>Participation</u>	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	0.01* (0.005)	0.01+ (0.005)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.06* (0.03)	0.05+ (0.03)
Interaction	-0.02** (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)
R-square	0.25	0.25	0.31	
<i>N</i>	7,329		2,891	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

As shown in Table 6.1, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and partisan media use is significant in both the participation and the intentions to participate equations.

Liberal Democrats consuming more liberal media outlets have higher levels of participation and higher intentions to participate compared to other liberal Democrats.

Conservative Republicans consuming more conservative media outlets have higher levels of participation and higher intentions to participate compared to other conservative

Republicans. The assumed causal direction is that consumption of congenial media

⁴³ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. As intention to participate had only three values, the analysis was repeated using a cumulative logit model designed for analyses with ordinal dependent variables. The results were unchanged. Though the liberal and conservative media use equations are presented separately for purposes of consistency with other analyses throughout this dissertation, note that the interaction results are unchanged if liberal and conservative media use are included in the same equation.

outlets leads to higher levels of participation and higher intentions to participate; however, this has not been empirically demonstrated. The next section turns to this endeavor.

Over-time analyses. As previously outlined, two types of analyses were conducted to try to sort out the causal relationship between participation and congenial media consumption. First, panel analyses were conducted for the four NAES panels. Since the participation question wording differed over the course of the NAES, participation was measured differently depending on the panel survey. For the RNC and DNC panels, participation was measured using the item asking respondents to identify their intentions to participate (see Table 6.2). For the post-wave and debate panels, participation was measured using the index of political participation activities (see Table 6.3). In all panel analyses, the same battery of controls from the cross-sectional analyses was used. Further, the pre-wave value of the dependent variable was controlled. Finally, for the debate, RNC, and DNC panels, a control for exposure to the political event as described in Chapter 3 was incorporated into the analysis. Only the main effects and interactions of ideology/partisanship and intentions to participate for the DNC and RNC panels are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2. *Panel Regression Analyses of Intentions to Participate and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Intentions to Participate		Intentions to Participate → Media		
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	
DNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	0.04* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.06 (0.04)	0.002 (0.04)	Intentions to Participate	-0.06* (0.03)	0.06 (0.04)
Interaction	0.03+ (0.02)	-0.0003 (0.02)	Interaction	-0.004 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
R-square	0.55	0.55	R-square	0.64	0.53
N	554		N	548	
RNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	0.03 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	Ideology/Partisanship	0.01 (0.02)	-0.004 (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.03 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.04)	Intentions to Participate	0.03 (0.03)	0.05 (0.03)
Interaction	-0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	Interaction	-0.02 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
R-square	0.56	0.56	R-square	0.58	0.50
N	586		N	582	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, intentions to participate, and partisan media use are mean centered.

The results of the panel analyses shown in Table 6.2 provide little information about the causal direction of the relationship between partisan media use and intentions to participate. In only one instance does partisan media use contribute to intentions to participate and it is in the opposite of the predicted direction – liberal Democrats listening to conservative media outlets reported higher intentions to participate in the DNC panel. Table 6.2 also offers little evidence that intentions to participate drive congenial media exposure. In one instance, intentions to participate had a significant main effect on media

consumption; intentions to participate were negatively related to conservative media use in the DNC panel. Further, in only one instance is the interaction between ideology/partisanship and intentions to participate significant. Liberal Democrats with higher intentions to participate were more likely than other liberal Democrats to consume liberal media in the RNC panel. While Table 6.2 presents the relationship between intentions to participate, ideology/partisanship, and partisan media use, Table 6.3 documents the relationship between actual participation, ideology/partisanship, and partisan media use.

Table 6.3. *Panel Regression Analyses of Political Participation and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Participation			Participation → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Debate					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.03+ (0.02)	0.03+ (0.02)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.06** (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.04 (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)	Participation	0.001 (0.04)	0.07+ (0.04)
Interaction	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.03)	Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
R-square	0.74	0.74	R-square	0.58	0.61
N	329		N	329	
Post-Election					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.08+ (0.05)	0.04 (0.04)	Participation	-0.001 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Interaction	-0.04* (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.002 (0.01)
R-square	0.61	0.61	R-square	0.63	0.45
N	766		N	761	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, participation, and partisan media use are mean centered.

Unfortunately, the results of the panel analyses as displayed in Table 6.3 also provide little insight into the causal direction of the relationship between partisan selective exposure and political participation. In only one case does partisan selective exposure predict participation as anticipated. In the post-election panel, strong conservative Republicans consuming conservative media outlets have slightly higher levels of political participation in the post-wave compared to other conservative Republicans. Further, in one instance there is an indication that participation contributes to partisan media use. The more people participated in politics, the more likely they were to consume liberal media outlets (without the interaction term, $B=0.08$, $SE=0.04$, $p<0.05$). Overall, the panel analyses did not provide much evidence in support of either causal direction.

The second statistical strategy employed to assess the causal direction of the relationship between partisan selective exposure and political participation was analyses of the patterns at the aggregate level. Only those respondents identifying as conservative Republicans or liberal Democrats are included in the analysis because clear determinations about congenial exposure can be made only for these respondents. For conservative Republicans, the number of conservative outlets consumed is included as congenial exposure. For liberal Democrats, the number of liberal outlets consumed is included as congenial exposure. For each day, the average amount of political participation and the average amount of congenial media exposure were computed. This permitted an evaluation of whether the mean level of participation influenced the mean level of partisan selective exposure. If the mean level of participation from prior days (at

time $t-1$, $t-2$, etc.) is significantly related to the mean value of partisan selective exposure (at time t), then there is an indication that participation leads to partisan selective exposure. Alternatively, if the mean level of partisan selective exposure from prior days contributes to the mean value of participation, then there is evidence that partisan selective exposure leads to political participation. Two aggregate level analyses were conducted, one for intentions to participate and a second for participation.

Several steps were taken before progressing with the over-time analysis. First, the series were evaluated for the presence of any trends. Both participation and intentions to participate increased linearly during the time period under analysis. Second, the series were evaluated for the presence of auto-correlation by inspecting the auto-correlation and partial auto-correlation plots. None of the series displayed any evidence of auto-correlation. Without any auto-correlation in the data, additional steps to model these patterns in the data were not necessary.

To evaluate the relationship between participation and partisan selective exposure, the correlations between the series over time were investigated. There was a contemporaneous correlation between political participation and partisan selective exposure ($r=0.28$) and a contemporaneous correlation between intentions to participate and partisan selective exposure ($r=0.26$). There was no evidence, however, that participation led to partisan selective exposure (partisan selective exposure and lagged participation $r=0.09$; partisan selective media exposure and lagged intentions to participate $r=-0.08$). Further, there was no evidence that partisan selective exposure led to participation (participation and lagged partisan selective exposure $r=-0.08$; intentions

to participate and lagged partisan selective exposure $r=-0.13$). Unfortunately, the aggregate-level over-time analysis did little to assist in sorting out this causal puzzle.

Why would none of the over-time analyses provide an indication of the causal direction despite the presence of a cross-sectional relationship? One possibility is that the amount of time that elapsed between the pre- and post-wave of the survey (and the day-by-day aggregate analysis) was too short to see the effects – perhaps the relationship between partisan selective exposure and participation develops over longer periods of time. To provide a preliminary test of this notion, those respondents who both answered the survey between July 16 and September 13 (the date range when the intention question was included on the survey) and completed the post-wave post-election panel survey were isolated. The same battery of demographic, political, and media use controls were used in predicting post-wave participation. The pre-wave control used in this analysis, however, is admittedly less stringent than the pre-wave value of the dependent variable. Here, pre-wave *intentions* to participate are included as a control in the regression analyses of respondents' post-wave participation (measured using the index). The main results are shown in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. *Extended Post-Election Panel Regression Analyses of Political Participation and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Participation			Participation → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Post-Election					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.03 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.04** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.05)	Intentions to Participate	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)
Interaction	-0.07** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)	Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02** (0.01)
R-square	0.38	0.37	R-square	0.53	0.44
<i>N</i>	927		<i>N</i>	1,814	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, intentions to participate, and partisan media use are mean centered.

Controlling for pre-wave intentions to participate, there is some support for the notion that partisan selective exposure leads to higher levels of participation. In Table 6.4, liberal Democrats consuming liberal media and conservative Republicans consuming conservative media had higher levels of participation in the post-wave relative to other likeminded partisans. There is also some indication that liberal Democrats with higher intentions to participate in the pre-wave consumed more liberal media outlets in the post-wave compared to other respondents – the reverse causal direction. Table 6.4, therefore, provides some evidence that participation contributes to congenial media exposure for liberal Democrats and that the consumption of congenial media exposure contributes to participation. The relationship, however, may occur over a longer period of time.

Outlet-by-outlet analyses. While the results presented above discuss the relationship between the indices of media exposure and political participation, the cross-

sectional and panel analyses were repeated for each individual media outlet. In the cross-sectional analysis, conservative Republicans listening to conservative talk radio or watching FOX reported higher intentions to participate compared to other conservative Republicans. Respondents accessing liberal websites also had higher intentions to participate compared to those not accessing liberal websites. Looking at the participation index, conservative Republicans reading newspapers endorsing Bush or watching FOX had higher levels of participation relative to other conservative Republicans. Further, liberal Democrats reading newspapers endorsing Kerry, listening to liberal talk radio, or watching CNN/MSNBC also reported higher levels of participation compared to other liberal Democrats. Again, those accessing liberal websites had higher levels of political participation with respect to those not accessing liberal websites.

In the panel analyses, following the results in Tables 6.2 and 6.3, there were few significant relationships between partisan selective exposure to individual media outlets and political participation. Following Table 6.4, however, the long-range panel predicting post-wave participation controlling for pre-wave intentions to participate provides some evidence regarding the causal direction. Here, liberal Democrats reading newspapers endorsing Kerry or watching CNN/MSNBC participated more relative to other liberal Democrats. Conservative Republicans watching FOX also had higher levels of participation relative to other conservative Republicans. Those accessing partisan websites had higher levels of participation compared to those not accessing partisan websites. The other plausible causal direction, namely participation predicting media exposure, received little support in the long range panel. Only when predicting

CNN/MSNBC viewing was the interaction between ideology/partisanship and intentions to participate significant.

Summary of findings. The results of this section demonstrate that political participation is related to partisan selective exposure. Few over-time results were significant, providing limited guidance on the causal direction of the relationship between partisan selective exposure and participation. The analysis of the panel data with the largest time lapse between pre- and post-waves, however, suggested that congenial media exposure leads to higher levels of political participation and that, at least for liberal Democrats, participation leads to more congenial media exposure.

Commitment and Partisan Selective Exposure

Background

In this section, one's time of decision – when, during a campaign, one decides for whom to vote – is proposed to relate to patterns of partisan selective exposure. Specifically, partisan selective exposure may lead people to make a commitment to vote for a candidate earlier in a campaign.

Some evidence supporting this relationship comes from the study of the relationship between one's time of decision and the political composition of one's interpersonal discussion network. Mutz (2002a) found that individuals exposed to more disagreement in their discussion networks were more likely to delay their presidential vote decision.⁴⁴ Mutz explains her finding as a desire to protect one's social relationships

⁴⁴ Nir (2005) found that individuals with *high* levels of individual ambivalence who were imbedded within an ambivalent network took a *long* time to decide for whom they would vote. Individuals with *low* levels of individual ambivalence who were imbedded within an ambivalent network took a comparatively *short* time to decide for whom they would vote. As discussed in the section on participation, however, Nir's

– to avoid conflict with one’s political discussion mates who disagree, a person delays deciding for whom to vote. This explanation provides little guidance on why the media may influence when one decides for whom to vote; the relationship between media consumption and time of decision likely has little basis in an individual’s distaste for social conflict. As another explanation, ideological media outlets may provide *information* that influences when people decide for whom to vote. Faced with contradictory media messages, people may rationally delay their vote decision in order to gather additional information. Alternatively, patterns of partisan selective exposure may lead people to make their candidate choices earlier in a campaign because the media messages justify and confirm an individual’s candidate preference. Equipped with information largely agreeing with one’s candidate choice from the media, a person would have little reason to delay making a commitment to vote for his/her preferred candidate.

Though making a commitment to a political candidate during a campaign is proposed as a consequence of selective exposure, there is a precedent in the literature for the opposite casual direction. Perhaps making a decision about for whom to vote is a prerequisite for selective exposure. Early researchers debated whether people engage in selective exposure prior to making a decision (Festinger, 1957; Janis & Mann, 1968). Festinger (1957; 1964) argued that people are unbiased in their information search before a decision is made; he (1964) wrote that “information seeking in the pre-decision period is not selective but is rather objective and impartial” (p. 95-96). Cognitive dissonance

operational definition of network ambivalence makes it difficult to translate her findings to the current study.

theory maintains that dissonance is not aroused in pre-decisional states and hence, people are not motivated to select and avoid information. Some early experimental results suggested that dissonance reduction strategies tend to be post-decisional (Davidson & Kiesler, 1964; Jecker, 1964a). Prior to voting for a candidate, therefore, a voter behaving as the theory of cognitive dissonance suggests would not engage in partisan selective exposure. This behavior would occur only after the individual had settled on a preferred candidate.

Not only Festinger's contemporaries (Janis & Mann, 1968), but also more recent scholarship has raised questions about the likelihood that unbiased information search occurs prior to reaching a decision (Brownstein, 2003; Mills, 1999; Tyszka, 1986). Janis and Mann (1968) proposed that prior to a decision, individuals feel conflict (as opposed to dissonance) between choosing one option as opposed to the other. They suggested that biased information seeking can occur prior to the moment of decision in order to avoid pre-decisional conflict. In support of this idea, Mills and Jellison (1968) found that "*prior to a commitment* people who are certain that one alternative is best will avoid information favoring a different alternative" (p. 61, emphasis added). Attempting to conduct a critical experiment to test when selectivity occurs, Jecker (1964b) found a relationship such that those who were pre-decisional were less likely to selectively expose compared to a control condition and compared to those who were post-decisional. The relationship, however, was not statistically significant. Further, though the experiment was meant to demonstrate that *pre*-decisional information search differs from *post*-decisional information search, Jecker had the participants rate the experimental

stimuli during the pre-test. It is not clear that the act of rating the objects in the pre-test did not have some type of decisional effect thus rendering the pre-decisional condition post-decisional. More recent research, however, also suggests that people engage in pre-decisional selectivity (Brownstein, 2003).

Determining conclusively whether someone engages in pre- versus post-decisional selectivity, however, is tricky. How do you isolate a person's moment of decision and what does it mean to decide? Casting a ballot certainly represents a moment of decision, but people can decide for whom to vote far earlier in a campaign. Instead of considering pre- versus post-decisional selectivity, one can evaluate the relationship between commitment and selectivity. Instead of attempting to isolate a moment of decision, commitment considers the strength with which a person intends to follow through on the behavior of voting for a specific candidate. As people develop a preference and become more committed to this preference, the logic goes, they may increasingly engage in selective exposure. An individual with little or no clear preference for any of the available alternatives has very low commitment and little incentive to seek out congenial perspectives. Alternatively, an individual who has indicated a more established preference has a higher level of commitment and thus is more likely to engage in selective exposure. Lau and Redlawsk (2006) conducted an experimental study with particular relevance to this discussion. Subjects in their study participated in a computer simulation of a primary election where they could choose from bits of information crossing a computer screen. Their information selection during the simulated campaign was recorded. Lau and Redlawsk found that early in the primary, information

exposure was nearly evenly divided between the candidates. As the hypothetical primary drew near, however, information exposure became more confined to the candidate the individual ultimately chose. These changes over the course of the campaign may be attributed to changes in commitment. As individuals became increasingly committed to their favored candidate over time, they engaged in more selective exposure. Since commitment may lead to selective exposure, an analysis of the causal direction of the relationship between the variables was conducted.

Measurement

Commitment. Three types of questions were combined to create a measure of commitment. The first questions used in creating a measure of commitment asked respondents for whom they intended to vote. Beginning on June 9, respondents were asked, "If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for George W. Bush, the Republican, John Kerry, the Democrat, or Ralph Nader?" Beginning on July 6, 2004, a different vote intention question was added and asked of a random half of the respondents. This question read, "If the 2004 presidential election were being held today, would you vote for George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, the Republicans, John Kerry and John Edwards, the Democrats, or Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo of the Reform Party?" Beginning on July 21, 2004 the question not naming running mates was dropped in favor of the question including the names of the presidential running mates. A comparison of the response distribution of these two questions during the overlap period yielded no significant differences ($\chi^2=7.183$, $df=6$,

$p=0.30$). Therefore, responses to the two versions of the vote choice question were combined for analysis.

The second set of questions used to determine respondents' commitment level asked respondents about the likelihood that they would change their mind. Respondents who answered that they intended to vote for Kerry, Bush, or Nader were asked: "Will you definitely vote for <candidate> for president, or is there a chance you could change your mind and vote for someone else?" If they indicated that there was a chance that they could change their mind, respondents were asked, "Is there a good chance you'll change your mind or would you say it's pretty unlikely?"

The final question used in creating a measure of commitment asked respondents about voting early. Beginning on September 23, respondents were asked if they had early voted ("Some states allow individuals to vote before Election Day, that is vote early at a polling station or by filling out an absentee ballot. How about you? Have you already voted in this year's presidential election or not?").

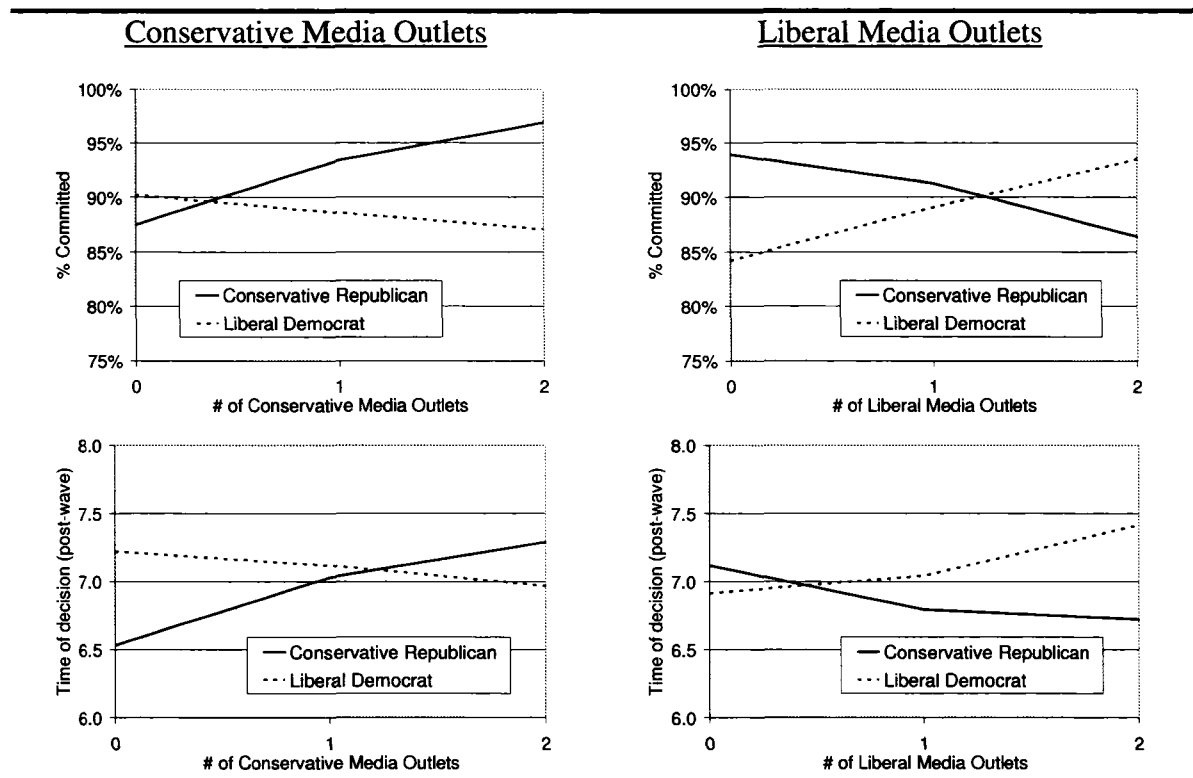
These three measures were used to create a dichotomous measure of commitment. Respondents who said that they did not know for whom they would vote and respondents who named a candidate but said that there was a good chance that they would change their mind were coded as having a low level of commitment. Respondents naming a candidate and stating that there was little chance they would change their mind and respondents who voted early were coded as having a high level of commitment. Throughout the general election, 84.4 percent of respondents had a high level of commitment. Note that respondents who named a candidate other than Bush, Kerry, or

Nader (0.6% of respondents) and respondents who said that they did not intend to vote (2% of respondents) were not included in the analysis.

Post-election time of decision. After the election had passed, the same measure described above could not be used. Instead, respondents were asked when they made up their mind about how to vote for president in the November general election. Response options included: Election Day (3.3%), the day before the election (1.5%), the weekend before the election (1.3%), in the last week before the election (5.6%), in the last month before the election (11.2%), or more than a month before the election (76.7%). Those identifying that they decided more than a month before the election were asked if they made up their mind earlier in the fall campaign (15.8%), during the summer (22.6%), or before the summer (59.9%). This measure was coded such that higher values indicate an earlier time of decision. It was anticipated that this measure would parallel the commitment measure described above because people that were interviewed prior to the election that were uncertain about their vote choice should respond to this post-election question that they made up their mind later in the campaign. As anticipated, these measures are significantly related ($r=0.41$, $p<0.001$).

Results

Bivariate. As a starting point, the bivariate relationships between commitment and media consumption and the bivariate relationships between time of decision and media consumption were evaluated. Figure 6.2 shows the percent of respondents who identified as committed to their vote choice and the average time of decision based on their partisan media use.

Figure 6.2. Commitment by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use⁴⁵

Analysis of the bivariate relationship between commitment and exposure to congenial media outlets yields the expected pattern. As depicted in Figure 6.2, congenial media exposure corresponds with higher levels of commitment and uncongenial exposure corresponds with lower levels of commitment and a longer decision time. Recall that higher time of decision values mean that respondents made up their mind about their vote choice earlier in the campaign. The charts in Figure 6.2 show that those consuming congenial media outlets made up their mind earlier compared to those consuming uncongenial media outlets.

⁴⁵ Though the maximum possible number of conservative/liberal media outlets is 4, the charts constrain the x-axis to 2 because of the small number of individuals consuming 3 or more uncongenial outlets.

Cross-sectional. To rule out potential third-variables that may account for the relationship between media exposure and commitment, a series of logistic regression analyses were conducted. Each analysis controlled for a battery of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political interest, political discussion, strength of ideological/partisan leanings, general political knowledge), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, access to the Internet, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapters 3 and 4. A summary of the complete regression results can be found in Appendix B. The main and interactive effects of interest can be found in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Commitment by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship and Regression Analysis of Time of Decision by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁴⁶
Coefficient (SE)

	<u>Commitment</u>		<u>Time of Decision</u>	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	0.03+ (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.05 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.05 (0.05)	-0.08+ (0.04)
Interaction	-0.12*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.06** (0.02)
R-square	0.15 ⁴⁷	0.15	0.16	0.16
<i>N</i>	12,707		3,019	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use are mean centered. Coefficients for commitment are logistic regression coefficients, while coefficients for time of decision are regression coefficients.

Table 6.5 documents that the results of the logistic regression analyses. These results confirm the findings from the charts. Liberal Democrats consuming liberal media outlets and conservative Republicans consuming conservative media outlets are more likely to be committed to their presidential candidate choice compared to other likeminded partisans. Further, liberal Democrats consuming liberal media decide for whom to vote earlier in the campaign. The interaction term between conservative media use and ideology/partisanship is insignificant in predicting time of decision; however, it

⁴⁶ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. Further, the interaction results are unchanged if liberal and conservative media use are included in the same equation.

⁴⁷ Note that the R-square values associated with "commitment" are Nagelkerke R-square values corresponding to the logistic regression analysis.

remains in the expected direction. Whether congenial media exposure is causally related to higher levels of commitment, however, is unclear. It is conceivable that people with higher levels of candidate commitment seek out media that supports their candidate preference. The next series of analyses attempts to sort out the causal direction of the relationship between congenial media exposure and commitment to a candidate.

Over-time analyses. The first strategy employed to evaluate the causal relationship between commitment and partisan selective exposure was to run a series of panel analyses. In each analysis, the same controls from the cross-sectional analysis were incorporated with two additions. First, the pre-wave value of the dependent variable was controlled. Second, for the DNC, RNC, and debate panels, a measure of event viewing as described in Chapter 3 was included as a control. Note that commitment was measured in two different ways depending on the panel. For the DNC, RNC, and debate panels, commitment was measured by analyzing how likely people were to vote for a candidate. In the post-wave of the post-election panel, however, commitment was measured based on when people decided for whom they would vote. Due to these different measurements, the results of the post-election panel analyses are displayed in Table 6.7 while the results for all of the other panels are displayed in Table 6.6.

In Table 6.6, analyses testing whether partisan media use leads to commitment are conducted using logistic regression since commitment is a dichotomous variable. Analyses of whether commitment leads to partisan media use are conducted using regression analysis.

Table 6.6. *Panel Regression Analyses of Commitment and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Commitment			Commitment → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.18+ (0.10)	0.19+ (0.10)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.03 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)
Partisan Media Use	-0.21 (0.26)	0.07 (0.24)	Commitment	-0.05 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.07)
Interaction	-0.07 (0.12)	0.25* (0.13)	Interaction	0.001 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.46	0.47	R-square	0.64	0.55
<i>N</i>	538		<i>N</i>	538	
RNC					
Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.10)	Ideology/ Partisanship	0.02 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)
Partisan Media Use	0.33 (0.29)	0.10 (0.26)	Commitment	0.05 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)
Interaction	0.03 (0.12)	0.03 (0.13)	Interaction	-0.04 (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.32	0.31	R-square	0.58	0.48
<i>N</i>	572		<i>N</i>	568	
Debate					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.07 (0.13)	0.01 (0.12)	Ideology/ Partisanship	-0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
Partisan Media Use	0.22 (0.32)	0.13 (0.29)	Commitment	-0.01 (0.07)	0.01 (0.08)
Interaction	-0.07 (0.18)	0.07 (0.18)	Interaction	-0.04 (0.05)	0.02 (0.05)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.40	0.40	R-square	0.59	0.52
<i>N</i>	651		<i>N</i>	660	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship and partisan media use are mean centered. Coefficients for commitment → media are regression coefficients.

Coefficients for media → commitment are logistic regression coefficients.

Table 6.6 shows the results of three panel analyses. Across all three panels, there is little evidence supporting either causal direction. In only one instance is the interaction

between congenial media exposure and ideology/partisanship significant. In the DNC panel, liberal Democrats consuming liberal media outlets were more likely to be committed to a candidate in the post-wave.

The results for the post-election panel are shown in Table 6.7. To determine whether there was any evidence that partisan selective exposure led people to make their candidate decision earlier in the campaign, a regression analyses predicting people's time of decision was run. In this analysis, respondents' reported commitment during the pre-wave of the survey was controlled and whether ideology/partisanship and partisan media use measured at time 1 predict respondents' reported time of decision in the post wave was assessed. To evaluate the other possible causal direction, namely that commitment leads to congenial media use, a regression analysis predicting liberal and conservative media use was run. The main independent variables of interest were respondents' reported levels of commitment to the candidate as measured in the pre-wave of the survey and their ideology/partisanship.

Table 6.7. *Post-Election Panel Regression Analyses of Time of Decision and Partisan Media Use*
Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Time of Decision			Commitment → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Post-Election					
Ideology/ Partisanship	0.03* (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)	Ideology/ Partisanship	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.03 (0.05)	-0.10* (0.04)	Commitment	0.04 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Interaction	-0.02 (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	Interaction	-0.07*** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
R-square	0.28	0.28	R-square	0.56	0.45
<i>N</i>	2,976		<i>N</i>	3,260	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship and partisan media use are mean centered.

As displayed in Table 6.7, the post-election panel yields more evidence regarding the causal direction of the relationship between partisan media use and commitment. The results show that committed liberals Democrats consume more liberal media and committed conservative Republicans consume more conservative media relative to other respondents. This suggests that commitment leads to partisan selective exposure. There is also some evidence of the opposite causal direction; namely, strong liberal Democrats consuming liberal media decided for whom they would vote earlier in the campaign compared to other respondents.

The second method used to evaluate the causal direction was time-series analysis. The percent of the sample that was committed to a candidate and the mean amount of exposure to congenial media content were computed for each day. Before progressing with an over-time analysis, both series were detrended. Exposure to congenial media and

commitment increased linearly over time. Inspection of the autocorrelation plots revealed no serial correlation in the residuals for either series.

The contemporaneous correlation between exposure to congenial media and commitment documented that these variables were unrelated at the aggregate level ($r=0.06$). Further, there was no indication that either variable precedes the other (lagged exposure to congenial media, commitment $r=-0.12$; exposure to congenial media, lagged commitment $r=0.09$). This aggregate analysis did not yield any support for the relationship between commitment and exposure to congenial media.

Outlet-by-outlet analyses. Though indices of ideological media exposure were used throughout this section, all analysis was repeated for individual media outlets. Consistent with the finding that cable news viewing was most often related to political participation, cable news viewing also was most consistently related to people's candidate commitment and time of decision. In the cross-sectional analyses, liberal Democrats reading newspapers endorsing Kerry, listening to liberal talk radio, or watching CNN/MSNBC had higher levels of commitment to a candidate compared to other liberal Democrats. There was also a marginally significant relationship between accessing liberal websites and higher levels of commitment. Relative to other conservative Republicans, conservative Republicans listening to conservative talk radio or watching FOX also had higher levels of commitment to a candidate.

In the individual outlet panel analyses, as in Table 6.6, there were few significant relationships between commitment and partisan media use. The greatest evidence for a causal direction came from the post-election panel, as in Table 6.7. In these analyses,

committed conservative Republicans were more likely to listen to conservative radio programs, to watch FOX, and to access conservative websites relative to other respondents. Committed liberal Democrats were more likely to consume liberal radio programs. There was less evidence in support of the opposite causal relationship in the post-election panel – only congenial talk radio listening contributed to commitment. Liberal Democrats listening to liberal radio and conservative Republicans listening to conservative radio were more likely to be committed to a candidate relative to other likeminded partisans.

Summary of findings. The cross-sectional findings document a relationship between commitment to a political candidate, when a person decides for whom to vote, and exposure to ideological media. Two types of analyses were conducted to clear up the ambiguous causal direction. First, the aggregate over-time analysis did not provide any insight into the relationship between partisan selective exposure and commitment. Second, many of the panel analyses did not yield a significant relationship between ideological media exposure and commitment to a candidate. In the post-election panel, there was some evidence that partisan media use contributed to higher levels of commitment for liberal Democrats. In the individual media outlet analysis, only two of eight post-election panel analyses supported this causal relationship. Evidence from the post-election panel presented more evidence in favor of the opposite causal direction, namely, that commitment contributes to congenial media exposure. Committed liberal Democrats and committed conservative Republicans were both more likely to consume politically congenial media in the post-election survey. This pattern was replicated in the

individual media outlet analyses where four of eight panel analyses showed that commitment led to partisan selective exposure. Given that the evidence of causal direction appeared only in the post-wave panel, the relationship between media exposure and commitment may require longer periods of time.

Polarization and Partisan Selective Exposure

Background

There is little disagreement in the scholarly literature that political elites have become increasingly polarized in the past several decades (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2005; Jacobson, 2003). Whether patterns of polarization in the mass public resemble elite polarization, however, is an issue that truly polarizes academics. Some argue that the public has become increasingly polarized (Jacobson, 2003) while others claim that it has not (Fiorina et al., 2005). An analysis of the media may play an important role in mediating this debate, however. After all, the media are the primary way that elite polarization would be transmitted to the public. This section evaluates whether those engaging in partisan selective exposure have higher levels of political polarization. As media consumers are exposed to views that resonate with their own, it is anticipated that they will develop attitudes that are more extreme in the direction of their original views.

The potential for partisan selective exposure to result in higher levels of polarization, or more extreme attitudes, has received a great deal of attention. In his widely read *Republic.com*, for example, Sunstein (2001) issued a strong warning about the consequences of exposure to consonant views; with particular reference to the Internet, he cautioned that polarization and fragmentation would result, leading to less

tolerance and more extreme views. These concerns persist in empirical studies on polarization; correlational studies, studies of discrete media events, experiments, and interpersonal network studies all provide the groundwork for the hypothesis that partisan media exposure is related to the development of polarized attitudes.

Several correlational studies provide some evidence for a relationship between media exposure and polarization. Mendelsohn and Nadeau (1996) compared media coverage and people's opinions in two instances. In the first instance, different media outlets generally presented a similar perspective on an issue. Correspondingly, people tended to converge in their opinions on the issue. In the second instance, media coverage differed with some outlets supporting one perspective and others supporting an alternative. In this situation, opinions were more polarized. Though this study does not investigate selectivity versus media effects, it does advance the argument that polarization can be related to media coverage. Investigating the relationship between selective exposure and attitudinal extremity, Lavine, Borgida, and Sullivan (2000) asked their sample of undergraduates to rate their interest in two editorial articles on opposite sides of the affirmative action issue. Selective exposure was measured by subtracting interest in the congruent article from interest in the incongruent article. These authors found that selective exposure was positively related to attitudinal extremity. Bimber and Davis (2003) conducted a survey asking respondents about viewing candidate websites. They found that people were far more likely to visit the site of their preferred candidate. While most respondents indicated that the site did not change their perceptions, "about 25-30 percent...reported feeling either a little or a lot more positive about the candidate"

(p. 136). While it is questionable whether individuals can adequately report the effects of their exposure, this study indicates that there is at least the potential for the Internet to polarize attitudes.

Research on the effects of exposure to discrete political media events yields mixed evidence as to whether selective exposure polarizes opinion. In their study of the film "The Right Stuff," Adams and colleagues (1985) found that individuals who watched the pro-Glenn film had more favorable attitudes toward John Glenn, a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, after exposure to the film. Paletz et al. (1972), however, demonstrated that boomerang effects (whereby the film results in attitude change away from the film's message) can also occur when, for example, the content of a media message is perceived to be offensive. Further, Ball-Rokeach (1981) failed to find effects of exposure to *Roots II* after controlling for selective exposure. These studies demonstrate that there are limitations in the relationship between polarization and selective exposure, particularly from a one-time exposure to media. Further, they suggest that polarized attitudes may motivate exposure rather than the other way around.

Experimentally, there is some evidence that congenial media exposure should relate to more polarized attitudes. Bimber and Davis (2003) conducted an experiment during which participants were exposed to a candidate website – though most participants did not experience any short-term changes, a large minority reported more polarized beliefs following their exposure. The study results do not speak directly to the effects of selective exposure, however, because respondents were asked to go to a number of

different candidate websites and then asked questions about their website visits. Looking at gun control and affirmative action, Taber and Lodge (2006) found that biased information processing and exposure to pro-attitudinal arguments led to more polarized attitudes. While these studies provide experimental evidence that polarization may result from exposure to information, they investigate instances where participants were exposed to information only briefly. Whether the effects found in lab settings will persist in longer-term and more real-world contexts is a question that will be explored shortly.

Other studies have evaluated the relationship between exposure to homogeneous interpersonal networks and polarization. Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn (2004) found that as levels of homogeneity in an individual's interpersonal network increased, polarization increased. In other words, those with politically likeminded discussion partners held more polarized attitudes than people discussing politics with others holding divergent political preferences. This finding is arguably relevant to investigating the effects of exposure to homogeneous media messages. In particular, the two primary explanations that have been offered as to why groups tend to polarize should continue to apply in mediated contexts. The first, and stronger, mechanism underlying the tendency for likeminded groups to develop polarized attitudes is that group members are exposed to persuasive arguments (Isenberg, 1986). By hearing arguments that are in favor of one side, group members are persuaded to develop more polarized attitudes in the direction of the group norm. In an identical process, consuming media advancing a specific point of view should provide people with information supporting their perspective and therefore, polarization. The second explanation for polarization is social comparison, whereby

people want to be perceived well by their fellow group members and hence adjust their opinions toward the perceived group mean. Though this is not as easily transferred into a mediated context, there may be a social element to information selection as well. Chaffee and McLeod (1973) found that individuals who discussed the campaign more often were more likely to seek out partisan political information. Perhaps individuals who belong to homogeneous discussing groups seek more information because this information has social utility – people may want their discussion partners to think they are well informed or they may feel that it is expected that they contribute to the available argument pool. Related work has shown that homogeneous discussing groups prefer supportive over contradictory information to a degree larger than the preference for supportive information among individuals (Schulz-Hardt, Frey, Lüthgens, & Moscovici, 2000). By seeking and internalizing more favorable partisan information for social reasons, individuals may become more polarized. As this discussion demonstrates, the mechanisms proposed for why homogeneous interpersonal networks lead to polarization also should explain why exposure to consonant media messages would lead to polarization.

The research detailed above supports the interpretation that partisan selective exposure should cause higher levels of polarization. Several studies investigating the relationship, however, have relied on cross-sectional data which is mute on issues of causal direction. The causal direction is particularly important to empirically evaluate because early literature on selective exposure proposed that variables similar to polarization were not consequences, but antecedents of selective exposure. Furthermore,

Festinger's theoretical explication of cognitive dissonance provided some indication that polarization may predict selectivity behavior. This evidence is discussed in more detail below.

Looking at earlier literature on selective exposure, certainty and confidence were proposed as causes of selective exposure. Certainty, or "the perceived probability that [one's choice] is better than the alternatives" (Mills & Ross, 1964, p. 552) and the related concept of confidence, or how assured one feels about their perspective compared to others,⁴⁸ have been investigated as antecedents of selective exposure. Festinger (1964) argued that avoidance of dissonant information would occur only when an individual lacked the confidence that they could counter it.

Though certainty and confidence are treated separately in the empirical literature on selective exposure, they are related concepts. For example, in attitude research, certainty and confidence measurements are highly related and have been combined into scales for analysis (see for example Berger & Mitchell, 1989). The similarity between confidence, certainty, and polarization is striking. An individual who is maximally favorable toward their preferred candidate and maximally *unfavorable* toward a disliked alternative undoubtedly has very high levels of confidence and certainty. In addition to the similarity of these concepts on their face, operationalizations of certainty and polarization are similar in the literature. For example, though he summed several

⁴⁸ The definition provided here differs from definitions included elsewhere in the literature. For example, Canon (1964) argues that confidence refers to how able one feels to deal with dissonant information. This definition, however, seems to contain Canon's hypothesis that high levels of confidence lead to increasing willingness to expose oneself to discrepant information. Furthermore, manipulation checks simply ask respondents how confident they feel in their decision. For this reason, the more general definition of confidence offered above is preferred.

indicators in his study, Ziemke (1980) included the relative difference between candidates on a feeling thermometer as an indicator of certainty. Several experimental studies manipulated certainty by having subjects rate various products according to their desirability and then making them choose either (a) between similarly ranked products or (b) differently rated products (e.g. Mills, 1965b). These are quite similar to polarization, the absolute value of differences in thermometer ratings, leading to the suggestion that polarization leads to selective exposure.

Early research on the relationship between selective exposure and certainty/confidence posited a negative relationship, namely, that the more confident or certain the individual, the less likely s/he would be to engage in selective exposure. Given high levels of certainty or confidence, exposure to discrepant information may not be dissonance arousing. Instead of avoiding the information, an individual may seek out discrepant information because of his/her confidence or certainty that s/he would be able to refute it. Alternatively, if a position is not held with certainty, an individual may seek confirmatory information in order to maintain the position. If this were in fact the case, then relationships between selective exposure and polarization in cross-sectional analysis may be *underestimated* because the positive (selective exposure → polarization) and negative (polarization → selective exposure) influences might cancel each other out. Evidence supporting a negative relationship between certainty/confidence and selective exposure, however, is relatively weak. A series of experiments aiming to understand the conditions that motivate selective exposure were conducted in the 1960s. Though the use of experiments has the potential to clear up ambiguity in causal direction because the

independent variable is under the control of the experimenter and is known to occur prior to the dependent variable, selective exposure experiments that have manipulated certainty and confidence have yielded conflicting results. Manipulating certainty by giving subjects differentially preferred products from which to choose, Mills (1965b) found that less certain individuals were more likely to seek supportive information; however, Thayer (1969) failed to replicate this finding. Another series of experiments manipulated confidence by giving subjects feedback on their performance on several judgment tasks – some subjects were given positive feedback about their performance and others were given negative feedback. After receiving feedback, subjects made a preliminary judgment on a task and then were given the opportunity to read additional information before making a final judgment. The available information contained perspectives confirming and disconfirming the subject's preliminary judgment on the final task. Their information selection was recorded and used to measure selective exposure. While Canon (1964) found evidence that confidence was related to selective exposure, others using similar designs failed to replicate the findings (Freedman, 1965a; Lowin, 1969; Schultz, 1974). Though certainty was manipulated in a study by Mills and Ross (1964), the certainty manipulation was unsuccessful and the authors used a measure of self-reported certainty to calculate their results. Though these experimental investigations illustrate early interest in whether certainty and confidence were antecedents of selective exposure, they do little to clarify the relationship.

Survey studies also have proposed certainty as a predictor, rather than as a consequence, of selective exposure. In Ziemke's (1980) work, certainty is proposed as an

independent variable that motivates selective exposure. Looking at six different independent variables (convention selectivity, speech selectivity, advertising selectivity, news selectivity, pamphlet selectivity, and late speech selectivity), Ziemke found a significant relationship between choosing preferred information and certainty in nearly half of the cases. In all significant cases, the coefficient was positive, indicating “the more certain [the voters] are, the more they select information supportive of *their candidate*” (p. 505, italics from original source). Further, several cases where Ziemke found no evidence of a relationship (e.g. advertising selectivity and news selectivity) don’t hamper the certainty/selective exposure relationship because they involve media that people would be less able to selectively seek/avoid in the 1976 election. This research suggests that certainty should be positively related to polarization and theoretically proposes that certainty precedes polarization.

In sum, the current literature supposes that exposure to congenial political views causes higher levels of polarization. There is, however, a suggestion in the earlier literature that polarization could cause selectivity behavior. The following section aims to evaluate the relationship between partisan media use and polarization.

Measurement

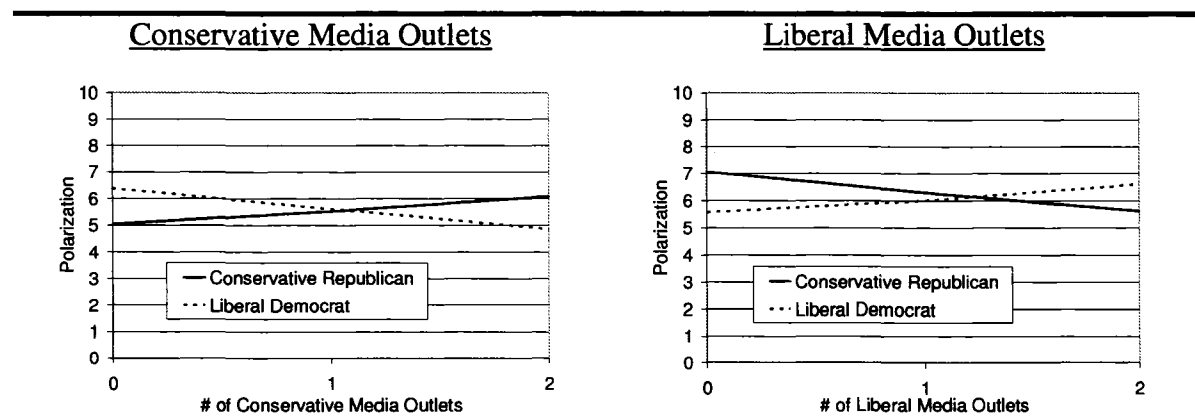
Political polarization. Political polarization was measured by computing the absolute value of the difference between thermometer ratings for each of the major party candidates. Respondents were asked, “Now for each of the following people in politics, please tell me if your opinion is favorable or unfavorable using a scale from 0 to 10. Zero means very unfavorable, and 10 means very favorable. Five means you do not feel

favorable or unfavorable toward that person. Of course you can use any number between zero and 10.” They were asked this question both for Bush ($M= 5.25, SD=3.71$) and for Kerry ($M=5.07, SD=3.29$). Don’t know and refused responses were treated as missing data. Polarization, computed by taking the absolute value of the difference between ratings of Bush and Kerry for each respondent, had a mean of 5.56 and a standard deviation of 3.22. On average, respondents rated Bush 5 points more/less favorably than Kerry.

Results

Bivariate. In order to investigate the relationship between partisan selectivity and polarization, the mean polarization value was computed for different levels of consumption of conservative and liberal media outlets. Polarization levels of respondents identifying as liberal Democrats are compared to those identifying as conservative Republicans in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3. Polarization by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use⁴⁹



⁴⁹ Though the maximum possible number of conservative/liberal media outlets is 4, the charts constrain the x-axis to 3 because of the small number of individuals consuming 4 uncongenial outlets.

Figure 6.3 provides evidence consistent with the hypothesis that partisan selective exposure is related to political polarization. When respondents consume media consistent with their political predispositions, they are more polarized than if they consume media that is inconsistent with their political predispositions. This holds for both liberal and conservative media consumption, for both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans.

Cross-sectional. Figure 6.3 provides information about the bivariate relationship between partisan selective exposure and polarization. These figures, however, do not include controls for other variables that may be responsible for the media/polarization relationship. A series of cross-sectional regression analyses using data from the 2004 NAES were conducted to test the relationship after including a battery of controls.

As before, a series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political interest, political discussion, strength of ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, Internet access, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapters 3 and 4 were included as controls, though they are not shown in Table 6.8. Results for the polarization regression equation including the controls can be found in Appendix B.

Table 6.8. *Regression Analyses of Political Polarization by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁵⁰
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.14*** (0.04)
Interaction	-0.12*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.04)
R-square	0.21	0.21
<i>N</i>	12,840	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use are mean centered.

The regression analyses found in Table 6.8 document a cross-sectional relationship between polarization and partisan selective exposure. In this table, each column represents a regression analysis whereby the dependent variable is political polarization and the independent variables of interest include ideology/partisanship, the number of liberal or conservative media outlets consumed, and the interaction between ideology/partisanship and the number of liberal or conservative media outlets consumed. For both liberal and conservative media consumption, congenial exposure is related to higher levels of polarization.

Over-time analyses. Over-time analyses also were conducted in order to investigate whether there was any evidence that partisan selective exposure leads to

⁵⁰ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. Further, including both conservative and liberal media use in a single equation produces no changes in the interaction results.

polarization. This analysis is warranted because a plausible reverse causal argument can be made, namely, that more polarized individuals are motivated to engage in selective exposure. As before, two types of over-time analyses were conducted.

The first strategy was to use the four two-wave panel surveys conducted as part of the 2004 NAES and to examine the evidence regarding the causal direction of the effect. For each panel, two sets of regression analyses were computed. The first looked at the effect of media consumption on polarization. As with the cross-sectional analysis, the variable of interest was the interaction between ideology/partisanship and media use. If partisan selective exposure yields higher levels of polarization, this interaction should be significant. The panel analyses incorporated the same battery of controls that were included in the cross-sectional analyses. In addition, for the debate and party convention panels, a measure of exposure to the debate or conventions also was included as a control. Finally, the pre-wave value of the dependent variable was included as a control. Only the variables of interest are shown below in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9. Panel Regression Analyses of Political Polarization and Partisan Media Use Coefficient (SE)

	Media → Polarization			Polarization → Media	
	Conservative Media	Liberal Media		Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	0.09* (0.04)	0.08+ (0.04)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03* (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	0.01 (0.13)	-0.11 (0.11)	Polarization	0.003 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Interaction	-0.10+ (0.05)	0.09+ (0.05)	Interaction	-0.001 (0.004)	0.003 (0.005)
R-square	0.64	0.64	R-square	0.65	0.53
N	537		N	533	
RNC					
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	0.11 (0.13)	-0.18 (0.12)	Polarization	-0.001 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)
Interaction	-0.04 (0.05)	0.10* (0.05)	Interaction	-0.004 (0.004)	0.01 (0.004)
R-square	0.66	0.66	R-square	0.58	0.49
N	579		N	578	
Debates					
Ideology/Partisanship	0.10* (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.04** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	0.12 (0.12)	-0.01 (0.11)	Polarization	-0.002 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)
Interaction	0.003 (0.05)	-0.004 (0.05)	Interaction	-0.01 (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)
R-square	0.65	0.65	R-square	0.57	0.53
N	675		N	670	
Post-Election					
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.05** (0.02)	-0.05* (0.20)	Ideology/Partisanship	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.03 (0.06)	-0.13* (0.05)	Polarization	0.01 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
Interaction	-0.05* (0.02)	0.04+ (0.02)	Interaction	-0.004** (0.002)	0.004* (0.002)
R-square	0.48	0.48	R-square	0.57	0.45
N	3,298		N	3,276	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Independent variables ideology/partisanship, polarization, and partisan media use are mean centered.

As Table 6.9 shows, in five of eight cases, the interaction between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship is significant ($p < 0.10$) and in the predicted direction. Alternatively, the interaction between polarization and ideology/partisanship is only significant in two of eight cases. Overall, the panel analyses support the idea that congenial partisan media exposure contributes to higher levels of polarization.

The second strategy for examining the causal direction of the relationship between the variables was to conduct an over-time analysis at the aggregate-level. As before, only those respondents identifying as conservative Republicans or liberal Democrats are included in the analysis because clear determinations about congenial exposure can only be made for these respondents. For conservative Republicans, the number of conservative outlets consumed is included as congenial exposure. For liberal Democrats, the number of liberal outlets consumed is included as congenial exposure. The average amount of congenial media exposure and the average level of polarization were computed for each day.

Before proceeding with the over-time analysis, several initial steps were taken. First, the data were evaluated for whether there was any evidence of an over-time trend. Both congenial media exposure and polarization increased linearly over time. Second, the auto-correlation and partial auto-correlation plots were inspected to evaluate whether there was any indication of serial correlation in the data. There was no indication of auto-correlation in either series. Without any auto-correlation, standard regression techniques were employed. The results of the aggregate-level analysis are shown in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10. *Aggregate Regression Analysis of Polarization by Congenial Media Exposure*⁵¹

Coefficient (SE)	
Time trend	0.007*** (0.001)
Congenial media exposure	0.95** (0.31)
Lagged congenial media exposure	0.53+ (0.31)
R-square	0.52
<i>N (days)</i>	145

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

The results shown in Table 6.10 provide evidence that congenial media exposure leads to polarization. In the table, the significant time trend indicates that aggregate polarization increased over time. Congenial media exposure has a significant contemporaneous effect on polarization – on any given day, the mean level of polarization is related to the mean amount of congenial media exposure. Further, congenial media exposure has a marginally significant lagged effect on polarization. Higher values of congenial media exposure on a prior day contribute to higher levels of polarization on subsequent days. Alternatively, there was no evidence that lagged polarization led to congenial exposure ($r=0.09$).

Outlet-by-outlet analyses. The results presented above utilize an index of liberal media exposure and an index of conservative media exposure to evaluate the relationship between congenial media exposure and polarization. Alternatively, it is possible to evaluate the relationship between partisan selectivity and polarization for individual media outlets. Instead of the indices reported above, the cross-sectional and panel

⁵¹ Note that results are unchanged if a lagged value of polarization is incorporated into the analysis.

analyses were repeated for each media outlet measure separately. In the cross-sectional analyses, the results support the interpretation that congenial media exposure is related to polarization, irrespective of the media outlet. Conservative Republicans reading Bush-endorsing newspapers, listening to conservative talk radio, or watching FOX had more polarized attitudes toward the candidates. Liberal Democrats reading Kerry-endorsing newspapers, listening to liberal talk radio, watching CNN/MSNBC, and accessing liberal websites had more polarized attitudes toward the candidates. Using the individual outlets in the panel analyses, however, produced few significant results in support of either causal direction.

Summary of findings. In summary, the results of this section extend laboratory findings (e.g. Taber & Lodge, 2006) to show that exposure to congenial media outlets is related to higher levels of polarization. Further, these results document that the finding that homogeneous social network exposure corresponds to higher levels of political polarization (Huckfeldt et al., 2004) holds for homogenous media exposure as well. In addition to extending these results, the evidence also provides support for the causal direction that congenial media exposure leads to higher polarization.

Conclusions

The results of this chapter document that partisan selective exposure is related to political participation, candidate commitment, and polarized attitudes. Despite high levels of stability in the measures, as will be reviewed in Chapter 8, there were several significant findings from the panel analyses. There was some evidence that partisan selective exposure leads to both political participation and commitment to vote for a

particular candidate earlier in a campaign. For both of these variables, there also was some evidence of the reverse causal direction, namely that participating and committed partisans consume more congenial media relative to other respondents. The analysis in this chapter provided strong evidence that congenial media consumption contributes to political polarization.

In the outlet-by-outlet analysis, there was evidence that congenial media exposure is related to participation, polarization, and commitment. Overall, findings were strongest when looking at cable news viewing, followed closely by talk radio listening. Relative to likeminded respondents, conservative Republicans listening to conservative talk radio and watching FOX had higher intentions to participate, higher levels of polarization, and higher commitment to vote for their preferred political candidate. Relative to likeminded respondents, liberal Democrats listening to liberal talk radio and watching CNN/MSNBC participated in politics more, had higher commitment to vote for their preferred political candidate, and had higher levels of polarization. Newspaper reading patterns also were related to political polarization and participation in the hypothesized direction. In the panel analyses, however, few individual media outlets were significantly related to polarization, participation, or commitment.

Evidence of the relationship between political participation and commitment came from panel surveys with a longer lag between the pre- and post-waves. For participation, this likely comes as little surprise considering the effort that is required to participate in politics – people need time to change their patterns of political participation. Candidate commitment also may take longer amounts of time to change.

The relationship between political polarization and partisan selective exposure, however, appeared over both short and long periods of time.

This chapter has evaluated several individual-level consequences of partisan selective exposure. The next chapter also looks at the relationship between partisan selective exposure and beliefs and attitudes by evaluating the moderating role of partisan media use in agenda-setting and priming theories.

CHAPTER 7: AGENDA SETTING, PRIMING, AND PARTISAN SELECTIVE EXPOSURE

Patterns of partisan selective exposure may have important implications for what issues people consider important. If partisan media outlets highlight different issues, then audiences may develop different impressions of what issues are important. Furthermore, exposure to partisan media outlets may lead people to employ different issue-criteria when evaluating public officials. If people believe that a certain issue is important, they may be more likely to evaluate public officials based on the officials' performance relative to that issue. These propositions (Hypothesis 7) are discussed in more detail below.

Agenda-setting research investigates the correspondence between coverage of an issue in the media and the salience of the issue in the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Agenda setting contends that as the media devote more attention to an issue, the public increasingly perceives the issue as important. Overall, research on agenda setting supports the notion that media attention to an issue translates into increased public attention; "The mass media influence the public agenda. This proposition...has been generally supported by evidence from most public agenda setting investigations, which cover a very wide range of agenda items, types of publics, and points in time" (Rogers & Dearing, 1988, p. 579). A meta-analysis found evidence supporting the relationship

proposed by agenda setting (Wanta & Ghanem as discussed in McCombs & Reynolds, 2002).

Exploring the relationship between agenda setting and patterns of media selection is not a new idea. In fact, the original agenda-setting article by McCombs and Shaw (1972) juxtaposed agenda setting and selective perception. McCombs and Shaw reasoned that if selective perception occurred, people should be more likely to follow their preferred candidate's issue agenda as presented in the media as opposed to the media agenda across candidates. These individuals, therefore, would selectively perceive the issue agenda of their preferred candidate and adopt it as their own while ignoring the issue agendas of other candidates as presented in the media. To test this claim, McCombs and Shaw conducted a content analysis to evaluate (a) the comprehensive issue agenda as presented in the media, irrespective of candidate and (b) each candidate's individual issue agenda as presented in the media. They found that the voters' issue agendas were more strongly correlated with media coverage in general, as opposed to media coverage of their preferred candidate. Based on this, McCombs and Shaw concluded that the phenomenon they were describing was "better explained by the agenda setting function of the mass media than by selective perception" (p. 182). Several caveats about the generalizability of this finding are warranted, however. Recall that the results of this initial study were based on a sample of *undecided* voters. These individuals are less likely to have strong partisan and political affiliations that may have resulted in patterns of selective perception. Furthermore, McCombs and Shaw were concerned with media in general and not the different partisan leanings of different media

outlets. In other words, selection of partisan outlets was not evaluated in this important initial study of agenda setting.

In the presence of partisan media outlets, the agenda-setting function of the media may have a fragmenting effect. In order to detail how this can occur, the following paragraphs will explore who sets the agenda, research on the new media environment and agenda setting, and finally, variables found to relate to the agenda-setting effect.

Who Sets the Agenda?

Though much of the early research on agenda setting asked whether the public's agenda was related to the media's issue agenda, researchers soon began to ask: who sets the media's agenda?

One potentially important source of the media's agenda is the president. Through his various activities, the president has ample opportunities to garner media coverage for his agenda. For example, Behr and Iyengar (1985) found that a presidential speech can generate press coverage. As a prominent speech given by the president, the State of the Union address presents an excellent opportunity for examining the president's ability to set the agenda. In an over-time analysis, Cohen (1995) found evidence that the president's State of the Union address can influence the public's issue agenda. Though Cohen did not look at the media's role in transmitting (and potentially modifying) the president's message to the public, his analysis offers clear evidence of the powerful influence the president can have on public opinion.

Just as the president has an agenda-setting power, the agendas of political contenders also have the power to influence the media agenda. For example, Cassara

(1998) documented an increase in media coverage of Jimmy Carter's pet issue of human rights during the campaign season of 1976. Roberts (1997) found that political advertising can have an agenda-setting effect.

As this chapter investigates, the leanings of the media may be an important determinant of which candidate messages are transmitted to the public. Investigating candidate-generated media coverage of issues, Petrocik (1996) illustrated that Democratic presidential contenders tend to emphasize Democratic issues (e.g. civil liberties, farmers) while Republican presidential contenders tend to emphasize Republican issues (e.g. big government, civil and social order). To the extent that partisan media outlets differentially cover these agendas, different media audiences may develop different impressions of the most important issues facing the country (the main dependent variable in agenda setting). Few studies speak directly to this possibility. In an important study, Johnson, Wanta, Byrd, and Lee (1995) conducted a historical analysis of Franklin Roosevelt's ability to transmit his agenda to the media. They found evidence that he was more effective at transmitting his agenda to congenial newspapers compared to uncongenial newspapers. This chapter builds on the Johnson et al. study by evaluating whether public attention to different media outlets translates into different issue agendas.

Agenda Setting and the New Media Environment

As the number of media outlets available to consumers increase and content becomes more diverse, scholars have surmised that the new media environment signals that agenda setting will fail to retain its theoretical import. The idea that agenda setting will end, McCombs (2004) argues, is based on "the broad assumption that audiences will

fragment and avail themselves of vastly different media agendas... There is also a corollary expectation that the redundancy across outlets that has characterized mass communication for many decades will be greatly reduced as niche media offer very different agendas” (p. 147). This chapter does not go so far as to contend that each individual will have an idiosyncratic issue agenda because of individualized patterns of media exposure, though perhaps this is a future end-point of the increasing choice and diversity in the media system. Instead, this chapter seeks to evaluate whether there is any evidence that exposure to different media outlets corresponds to different issue agendas.

Little research has been conducted on agenda setting in the new media environment. Some studies have found that the press has an important influence on online issue agendas (Roberts, Wanta, & Dzwo, 2002). Other studies have specifically sought to examine the difference between online and offline agenda setting. Althaus and Tewksbury (2002) presented some intriguing empirical evidence that agenda setting differs in the new media environment. Althaus and Tewksbury conducted an experiment comparing agenda-setting effects for online and offline versions of the *New York Times*. The authors randomly assigned students to either read the online or offline version of the *Times* for five subsequent days. Evaluation of the participant ratings of the most important problems facing the country showed significant differences between the groups. Specifically, they found that online newspaper readers rated international issues as less important compared to those reading the paper copy. Applying these findings to the argument above, agenda setting in the new media environment is contingent on exposure decisions and the undergraduate students in the Althaus and Tewksbury study,

assumed to be less interested in international news, are able to avoid this type of content online. Therefore, more choice in the new media environment may lead to more selectivity based on individual beliefs and patterns of interest. This may feed differences in issue agendas.

Variables Related to Agenda Setting

Evaluating the relationship between agenda setting and other theoretically important variables provides some insights about the potential influence of partisan outlets on agenda setting. Two variables will be discussed below. First, agenda setting is related to particular patterns of media coverage and exposure. Second, more trustworthy media is more likely to translate into agenda-setting effects.

Agenda setting and exposure to media content. In many instantiations, agenda setting refers to the transmission of a *single* agenda from the media to the audience. In their original article about agenda setting, McCombs and Shaw content analyzed popular newspapers, magazines, and television evening news broadcasts. Each media outlet was treated as an imperfect indicator of issue importance; they noted, “the political world is reproduced imperfectly by individual news media. Yet the evidence in this study that voters tend to share the media’s *composite* definition of what is important strongly suggests an agenda-setting function of the mass media” (p. 184). Many later investigations of agenda setting share this assumption; for example, in defending their content analysis of the *New York Times*, Winter and Eyal (1981) wrote, “it was thought that *Times* coverage would be indicative of national media coverage” (p. 379).

Summarizing the research on agenda setting, Dearing and Rogers (1996) stated that “at a

given point, or over a certain period of time, different media place a similar salience on a set of issues” and that “In general, the media tend to agree in the number of, or the proportion of, news stories that they devote to a particular issue” (p. 90, italics removed).

Both theoretical and empirical work on agenda setting has contributed to the notion that the media convey a homogeneous agenda to the public. Theoretical work on what establishes the media’s agenda tends to operate on the assumption that the media transmit a relatively uniform agenda. For example, if all journalists are trained similarly, then it would be anticipated that they would all transmit similar agendas through the media. Dearing and Rogers (1996) noted that characteristics of the journalistic industry, such as high mobility and the fact that journalists receive similar education, gives rise to a “similarity of professional values” (p. 35). If the media transmits a similar agenda, then irrespective of the outlet to which people attend, agenda setting contends that people should adopt similar issue agendas. Though it may have been true at some point that the mainstream media all transmitted nearly identical information, media messages are arguably far more diverse today.

Part of the contention that the media transmits a homogeneous agenda may be attributable to the analytic techniques employed in this area of research. Many agenda-setting studies have been conducted based on an aggregate level of analysis – the rank ordering of important issues covered in the media as correlated with the rank ordering of important issues named by the public. It is possible, however, that this aggregate level of analysis hides important distinctions between individuals; Dearing and Rogers (1996), for example, suggest that individual agendas may be influenced by state and local issue

agendas. By dividing the public into different groups based on their media consumption patterns, differences in agendas may be apparent.

It is clear that agenda setting occurs because people are exposed to specific content. For example, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) showed that subjects in their experiments changed their opinion of what was the most important problem based on exposure to media. Subjects viewing media on different topics tended to name the topic covered in the media they viewed as the most important. Cook et al. (1983) used their knowledge of an investigative report on fraud and abuse in home health care before it was aired to test agenda setting. The investigators contacted members of the public and randomly assigned them to either watch the health care program or to watch an alternative program on the night the health care program aired. Their results provided support for the idea that viewing the broadcast led to changes in the perceived importance of health care as a problem. As these studies demonstrate, exposure to *specific* content influences the judgments that people make about which issues are important. If two groups were exposed to different content, one would anticipate that the two groups would name different issues as the most important. Therefore, people engaging in partisan selective exposure could develop different ideas about which issues are important because of their exposure to different media content.

Agenda setting and trustworthy media. One important moderator of the agenda-setting relationship with particular relevance to this discussion is media trust. With particular application to agenda setting, Iyengar (1988; Iyengar & Kinder, 1985) argued that more credible sources lead to more agenda setting. Similarly, Tsfaty (2003)

demonstrated that media skeptics were less likely to display agenda-setting effects. Wanta (1997) found that media believability was indirectly associated with agenda setting. Miller and Krosnick (2000) found a more complicated relationship, namely that knowledgeable citizens who trusted the media were more likely to display agenda-setting effects compared to others. If people engaging in partisan selective exposure are choosing media outlets that they rate as more trustworthy (e.g. more consistent with their partisanship), then the agenda-setting potential of the media may be enhanced.

Putting together the two propositions above, namely (1) content differences lead to agenda-setting differences and (2) trustworthy media lead to stronger agenda-setting effects, partisan outlets may be better able to define the relevant issues for their audience. Therefore, a partisan outlet could cover the issues emphasized by a preferred candidate more often and cover issues emphasized by a less preferred candidate less often. This is particularly worrisome – partisan media outlets would be able to fragment the public's agenda in such a way as to benefit preferred candidates. Further, citizens may increasingly view the political world from different perspectives depending on their political leanings. This could have important implications for reaching consensus and making policy decisions.

Priming

The political consequences of agenda setting were explicitly investigated by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) in their exploration of priming. In political communication research, priming typically involves the finding that issues that have been emphasized in the media are weighted more heavily in people's subsequent judgments of the president

(Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Krosnick & Kinder, 1990). Therefore, if the economy were discussed heavily in the media, people would be more apt to judge the president's performance on the basis of the economy as opposed to the host of other possible criteria on which they could judge the president (e.g. foreign policy, domestic policy, etc.). The mechanism underlying agenda setting and priming has been contested. One explanation is that both agenda setting and priming occur because certain constructs are activated by the media and hence are more accessible when subsequent judgments are made (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). If this is the case, then partisan outlets can manipulate the criteria that their audience employs to evaluate the candidates by emphasizing certain issues and downplaying others. If a media outlet tends to advocate conservative perspectives and the conservative candidate has a stronger economic policy stance compared to the liberal candidate, the outlet could cover economic issues more heavily. Furthermore, if the conservative candidate had some weaknesses in foreign policy, foreign policy topics could be covered less often. Another proposal is that priming occurs because individuals learn about the issue positions through media coverage and then subsequently adopt the issue position advanced (Lenz, 2005).⁵² Based on this proposal as well, partisan outlets can manipulate what issue facts are presented in the media in order to encourage learning that is favorable to a preferred candidate. Irrespective of whether the stronger relationship between an issue receiving heavy media coverage and one's assessment of the president's performance occurs due to priming or learning, partisan selective

⁵² Note that Lenz (2005) argues that we should call this phenomenon "learning" as opposed to "priming."

exposure could be consequential by leading to the use of different criteria in evaluating political leaders.

In the remainder of this chapter, the relationship between partisan media use, agenda setting, and priming are explored. After detailing the specific survey measures to be employed in the analysis, an exploration of issue emphasis in the 2004 presidential election is presented. This analysis provides the necessary information for developing more detailed hypotheses about the influence of partisan media use on agenda setting and priming. Afterward, the results of the agenda setting and priming analyses are presented in turn followed by a discussion of the results.

Issue Agendas in the 2004 Presidential Campaign

Issue Importance among Respondents

Though there is no agreed upon way to measure issue agendas at the individual level,⁵³ one method that has been employed is to use dichotomous dependent variables indicating whether or not the respondent named a certain issue as the most important issue facing the country (Tsfati, 2003b). In this type of analysis, for example, a respondent naming the economy as the most important issue would receive a 1 while respondents naming other issues as most important would receive a 0.

To capture individual impressions of issue importance, 2004 NAES respondents were asked, "In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing our country

⁵³ Many previous analyses of agenda setting have relied on aggregate level data and have compared the issue agenda for a sample of a population to the issue agenda of a media outlet; as McCombs (2004) noted, a great deal of agenda-setting evidence comes from studies conducted at the aggregate level.

today?" Respondents were permitted to give any response to this open-ended question.⁵⁴

Schulman, Ronca, and Bucuvalas, Incorporated (SRBI), the firm managing data collection, had trained coders review the open-ended responses and code them into categories. The percentages based on this scheme are displayed in Table 7.1.⁵⁵

Table 7.1. *Perceptions of the Most Important Problem Facing the Nation*⁵⁶

Issue	% of Respondents
Iraq War/Iraq Situation	19%
Economy	16%
Terrorism/War on Terrorism	14%
Other	10%
Unemployment/Job Security/Layoffs	8%
National Security/Homeland Security	5%
Lack of Moral Values/Family Values	5%
Dislike Bush/Current Leaders	4%
Education/Education Problems	3%
Politicians/Government	3%
Foreign Policy	3%
Lack of Religion/Faith	2%
Poverty/Homelessness	2%
Violence/Crime	1%
Jobs Going to Other Countries/Outsourcing	1%
Immigration/Illegal Aliens	1%
Drugs	1%
Taxes	1%
Children Issues	1%
Rising Gas Prices	1%
Environment	1%
Energy	0%
World Peace	0%
Middle East	0%

⁵⁴ Though the question wording encouraged respondents to name a single issue, multiple issue responses were recorded. Respondents naming more than one issue were given a "1" on all issues named.

⁵⁵ As a check on the validity of the employed coding scheme, 100 survey responses were randomly selected from the survey. The responses were recoded using the SRBI coding criteria. A comparison of the sample recoding and the coding done by SRBI yielded a Krippendorff's alpha of 0.86, an acceptable level of reliability (Krippendorff, 2004).

⁵⁶ Note that multiple responses were recorded, therefore the percentages do not sum to 100 percent.

Though SRBI created a scheme of issue codes based on the survey responses, there is no inherent reason to maintain the same coding scheme for analysis purposes. When an argument could be made that multiple categories represented different ways of naming the same issue, they were combined. The analysis presented here focuses on the three issues most frequently named in the NAES survey: terrorism, the economy, and Iraq. The operationalization of each of these categories will be discussed in turn.

To create a measure of naming terrorism as the most important problem facing the nation, responses of terrorism/war on terrorism and national/homeland security were combined. These items were combined for two reasons. First, they were often discussed in combination during the campaign. For example, one frequent line in Bush's campaign speeches was, "We will fight the terrorists overseas so we do not have to face them here at home." Kerry also frequently equated terrorism and homeland security; in one speech, he noted, "border inspectors tell us they lack the basic training and ready access to information they need to keep terrorists out." Second, the results of three regression analyses with the following dependent variables were compared: (1) naming terrorism as the most important problem, (2) naming national security as the most important problem, and (3) naming either of these issues as the most important problem. If combining were appropriate, one would anticipate that the R-square value from the combined terrorism/national security measure would be higher than the R-square value associated with either the terrorism or national security measure. To do this, a battery of demographic, political orientation, and media use variables were included as independent variables in a logistic regression analysis predicting the most important problem named

by the respondent.⁵⁷ Combining these two issues resulted in a substantial increase in the R-square value. Predicting naming terrorism as the most important problem facing the country yielded a Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.14 and predicting naming national security yielded a Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.08. Predicting naming terrorism *or* national security yielded a Nagelkerke R-square value of 0.17, an improvement over either measure by itself. Eighteen percent of respondents named terrorism or national security as the most important problem facing the country.

To create a measure of naming the economy as the most important problem facing the country, responses of: economy, unemployment/job security/layoffs, jobs going to other countries/outsourcing, and taxes were combined. These issues were combined because they all represent economic terms. Again, these issues were often discussed concurrently in the candidates' rhetoric. Bush, for example, discussed the economy as related to taxes in his campaign speech, "We reduced taxes on everybody who pays taxes. And the result of our good policies is clear to all. Our economy is growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years." Kerry equated jobs, outsourcing, and the economy:

Because the truth is, middle-class families can't afford four years of a Bush economy. Too many jobs are being shipped overseas, and the ones that replace them often don't pay enough to make ends meet. Our economy is losing high-paying, middle-class jobs and creating more temporary and part-time jobs without benefits.

⁵⁷ The independent variables used included: demographic – education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age; political orientation – political interest, political discussion, strength of ideological/partisan leanings, general political knowledge, ideology/partisanship; and media use – network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, access to the Internet, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper. More detailed information about these measures can be found in Chapters 3 and 4.

As these examples show, unemployment, outsourcing, and taxes were all discussed in the context of the economy. As with terrorism, changes in the R-square value were assessed. Here, the Nagelkerke R-square value increased minimally when combining all of these items (economy=0.06, taxes=0.03, outsourcing=0.04, unemployment=0.07, combined=0.07).⁵⁸ Though the increase was quite small, these items were combined to improve the distribution of the variable for subsequent analysis and to account for the overlap of these issues as discussed by the candidates. Twenty-five percent of respondents named the economy (or unemployment/job security/layoffs, jobs going to other countries/outsourcing, or taxes, hereafter referred to as “the economy”) as the most important problem facing the country.

Naming Iraq as the most important problem facing the country was the final issue considered during this analysis. Overall, nineteen percent of respondents named Iraq as the most important problem facing the nation.

Presidential Performance Judgments

Survey respondents were asked to make several judgments about the president’s performance. They were first asked to make an overall judgment about whether they approved or disapproved of the way George W. Bush was handling his job as president. Response options included: disapprove strongly (36.0%), disapprove somewhat (12.0%), approve somewhat (20.7%), and approve strongly (31.3%). This question was coded such that larger values indicate more approval. Second, respondents were asked to evaluate the president’s performance on three specific issues: the economy, the situation

⁵⁸ The improvement in the Nagelkerke R-square for unemployment compared to the combined measure was notably small. For unemployment, the Nagelkerke R-square value was 0.067 while for the combined measure, the Nagelkerke R-square value was 0.068.

in Iraq and the war on terrorism.⁵⁹ Response options were “approve” (coded 1) or “disapprove” (coded -1). Forty-six percent of respondents approved of the president’s handling of the economy, 45 percent approved of his handling of the situation in Iraq, and 53 percent approved of his handling of the war on terrorism. To test whether partisan media use was related to different criteria for judging the president’s performance, regression analyses were employed. The overall judgment of presidential performance was used as the outcome variable, while the specific issue judgments were used as dependent variables. Interactions between partisan media exposure and the issue-specific judgments were used to test whether people employed different judgment criteria depending on their media use.

To develop specific agenda setting and priming hypotheses based on partisan media use, it was necessary develop a measure of the priority equated to each of the issues (economy, Iraq, terrorism) in the media.

Issue Importance in the Media and in the Campaign

An ideal method for evaluating the relationship between a media outlets’ issue agenda and the audience’s issue agenda would be content analyze each outlet and compare these results to the issue agendas of the audience for each outlet. For the present project, conducting a content analysis of each of the thousands of newspapers, radio stations, cable news stations, and Internet websites named by the respondents was not possible. Based on the literature, however, there is a compelling and much more manageable proxy.

⁵⁹ Note that the question about Bush’s handling of the war on terrorism was asked of only one half of the sample.

Agenda-setting researchers have investigated how issues are selected for media coverage – how is it determined which issues receive media attention and which do not? As previously discussed, the president and presidential candidates are one potential source of the media’s agenda (Cassara, 1998; Gilberg, Eyal, McCombs, & Nicholas, 1989; Miller & Wanta, 1996; Roberts, 1997; Wanta, Stephenson, Turk, & McCombs, 1989). When a president or presidential candidate emphasizes an issue, this translates into media coverage of the issue which, based on agenda setting, can lead to more public attention. In the context of the current project, the agendas of the presidential candidates may be differently conveyed depending on the political leanings of a media outlet.

As a starting point for the present analysis, therefore, Bush and Kerry rhetoric was reviewed to establish the candidates’ agendas and to develop expectations about the relationships between issues named as the most important and patterns of partisan media exposure in the public. Several sources were used to establish the candidates’ agendas. First, the party platforms and candidate convention speeches were gathered and analyzed. Second, Kerry and Bush advertisements gathered by the Campaign Media Analysis Group were reviewed (see Goldstein & Freedman, 2002 for details). Finally, candidate speeches made during the last week of the 2004 election campaign were analyzed.⁶⁰ Use of these multiple sources representing different times in the campaign allowed for investigation of the consistency and development of the candidates’ agendas over time.

⁶⁰ Thirty-four Bush speeches were obtained via the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (<http://www.gpo.gov/nara/nara003.html>). Eight speeches were obtained through contacting Kerry’s campaign staff and his senate office. Though Kerry made more public appearances during the final week of campaigning, his staff noted that at these other appearances, Kerry’s statements were delivered “off the cuff” (A. Boyd, personal communication, May 19, 2006).

For each of these sources, the same coding scheme was used. Coders were asked to evaluate whether there was any mention of Iraq, terrorism, or the economy in each unit of analysis. For the party platforms, convention speeches, and candidate speeches, each sentence was coded for whether it contained any of these issues. Previous research investigating the relationship between presidential rhetoric and agenda setting has used similar units of analysis to equate more time or space with more coverage of an issue (Gilberg et al., 1989; Miller & Wanta, 1996; Wanta et al., 1989). Inter-coder reliability was assessed by having two separate coders assess two speeches (one Bush, one Kerry) each. Krippendorff's alpha was computed with the sentence as the unit of analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). The average Krippendorff's alpha across issues and coders was 0.80.⁶¹ Using the sentence as the unit of analysis is conservative, however, because the object of analyzing the candidate speeches is to evaluate the candidate's agenda across *all* of his speeches. Looking at the speech as the unit of analysis, there was perfect agreement between the coders on the order of the issue priorities contained within each speech. Each advertisement was coded separately as to whether the economy, Iraq, or terrorism was mentioned in the advertisement. Inter-coder reliability was assessed by having an additional coder evaluate 15 Kerry advertisements and 15 Bush advertisements. The average Krippendorff's alpha across issues was 0.93.⁶²

Based on the issue coding scheme outlined above, the emphases on the economy, Iraq, and terrorism by Bush and Kerry are shown in Table 7.2.

⁶¹ More specifically, the Krippendorff's alphas for economy were 0.79 and 0.89; for Iraq they were 0.84, 0.83; and for terrorism they were 0.76 and 0.69.

⁶² More specifically, the Krippendorff's alpha for terrorism was 1.00, for economy was 1.00 and for Iraq was 0.79. Due to the low frequency of mentions of Iraq (only 5 possibilities out of the 30 ads), the reliability for Iraq was the result of one disagreement between the coders.

Table 7.2. *Issue Emphasis in Campaign Rhetoric*

	Party Platforms	Convention Speeches	Candidate Ads ⁶³	Candidate Speeches ⁶⁴
Bush				
Economy	14%	13%	39%	18%
Iraq	4%	12%	6%	7%
Terrorism	11%	16%	39%	12%
Total ⁶⁵	1,866	295	67	9,559
Kerry				
Economy	14%	13%	47%	20%
Iraq	7%	5%	15%	26%
Terrorism	15%	5%	15%	22%
Total	957	309	156	523

Across all campaign components, the candidates placed at least some emphasis on each of the three main issues under investigation. Overall, the economy received attention from both campaigns. It received more attention, however, from the Kerry campaign. Forty-seven percent of Kerry advertisements discussed the economy while 39 percent of Bush advertisements discussed the economy. Kerry also was slightly more likely to mention the economy in his speeches during the final week of the campaign. If media outlets attracting more liberal audiences were more sympathetic to the Kerry agenda in their coverage, then one would anticipate that these audiences would be more

⁶³ Weighting each advertisement by the number of times it was shown yields a similar pattern. For Bush, 45% name the economy, 7% Iraq, and 37% terrorism. For Kerry, 59% name the economy, 15% name Iraq, and 23% name terrorism.

⁶⁴ For all locations where Kerry made an appearance and the transcript was not available from his staff, coverage of the event in local newspapers was reviewed. This was done by using Lexis Nexis and searching for articles in the state of the speech on the day of his stop and the day following his stop. Each article was required to contain Kerry's name and any of the following terms: visit, stop, or speech. All articles discussing Kerry's speech using this method were evaluated ($n=44$). Each sentence paraphrasing Kerry's speech or directly quoting Kerry was included in the analysis. Of all sentences mentioning the economy, Iraq, or terrorism ($n=165$), the economy was named most frequently (39%), followed by Iraq (40%), and followed by terrorism (30%).

⁶⁵ Total represents number of sentences for the party platforms and candidate speeches. Total represents number of advertisements for the candidate ads measure.

likely to name the economy as the most important problem. Further, based on priming research, these audiences should be more apt to evaluate Bush's performance based on his handling of the economy. On the other hand, if outlets attracting more conservative audiences were more sympathetic to the Bush agenda in their coverage, one would anticipate that these audiences would be *less* likely to name the economy as the most important problem and less likely to use his handling of the economy as a criterion for evaluating his overall job performance.

There also are notable differences between the Bush and Kerry campaigns in terms of their relative emphases on Iraq and terrorism. Across all of the campaign rhetoric measures, the Bush campaign emphasized terrorism more than Iraq. Similarly, terrorism received more emphasis than Iraq in the Democratic platform. In Kerry's convention speech and in the Kerry advertising, however, Iraq and terrorism received similar amounts of attention. And in the final week of the campaign, Kerry emphasized Iraq more than terrorism in his campaign speeches.

Overall, the Kerry campaign placed more emphasis on the economy and Iraq while the Bush campaign placed more emphasis on terrorism.

Assuming that congenial outlets will cover issues in a way more sympathetic to their preferred candidate, these observations allow for predictions about the relationship between partisan media use and issues named as the most important. Specifically, it is anticipated that those consuming conservative media will be *less* likely to name the economy or Iraq as the most important problem facing the country and will be *more* likely to name terrorism. Further, those consuming liberal media will be *more* likely to

name the economy or Iraq as the most important problem facing the country and *less* likely to name terrorism.

Based on the idea that people find congenial media more trustworthy and that trustworthy media yields stronger agenda-setting effects (Iyengar, 1988; Tsfaty, 2003b; Wanta, 1997), consumers of congenial media should be more likely to display agenda-setting effects. Therefore, the agenda-setting effects should be moderated by ideology/partisanship such that: (a) among those consuming conservative media, conservative Republicans will be less likely to name the economy or Iraq and more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem facing the country compared to liberal Democrats and (b) among those consuming liberal media, liberal Democrats will be more likely to name the economy and Iraq and less likely to name terrorism as the most important problem facing the country compared to conservative Republicans.

If media exposure patterns are related to judging some issues as more important in comparison to others, research on presidential priming would suggest that people would be more apt to use these issues when making judgments about the president's performance. In particular, it is advanced that those consuming conservative media outlets will be *less* likely to use the president's handling of the economy and the situation in Iraq as criteria for judging his overall performance. They will be *more* likely to use terrorism as a criterion for judging his performance. Further, those consuming liberal media outlets will be *more* likely to use the president's handling of the economy and the situation in Iraq as criteria for judging his performance. They will be *less* likely to use terrorism as a criterion for judging his performance.

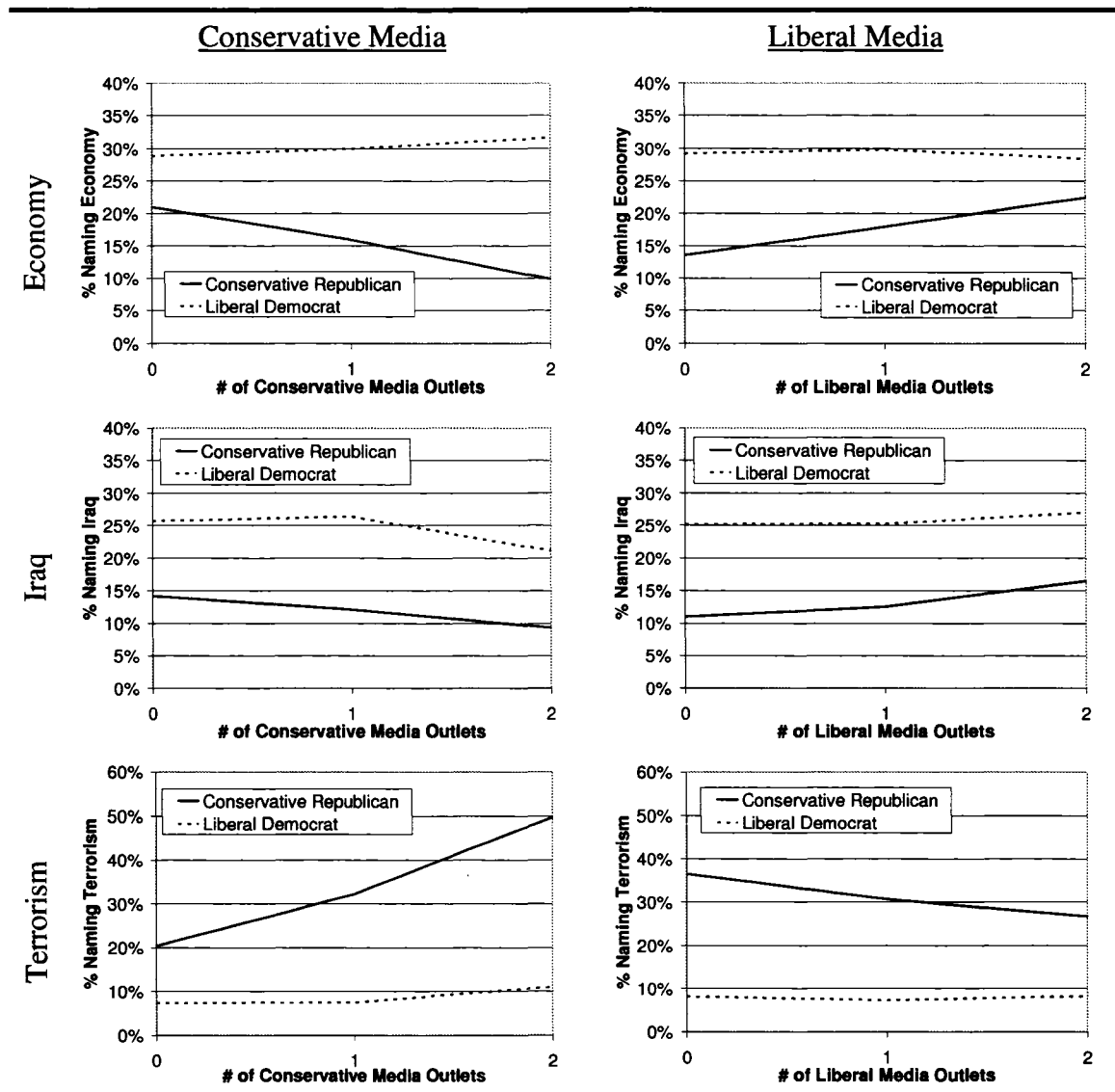
Just as agenda-setting effects of partisan media outlets may be moderated by ideology/partisanship, the consumption of politically congenial outlets may lead people to be even more likely to use the issues emphasized in congenial outlets when evaluating the president's performance. Among those consuming conservative media, therefore, conservative Republicans may be less likely than liberal Democrats to use the economy or Iraq and more likely to use terrorism as criteria for judging the president's performance. Alternatively, liberal Democrats consuming liberal outlets may be more likely than conservative Republicans to use the economy and Iraq and even less likely to use terrorism as criteria for judging the president's performance.

Most Important Problems and Evaluations of the President

Agenda Setting: Bivariate

In order to investigate whether partisan selective exposure is related to differences in naming the economy, terrorism, and Iraq as the most important problem, bivariate analyses were conducted. The percentage of respondents naming each of the issues as the most important problem based on their political leanings and patterns of media consumption can be found in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1. Most Important Problem by Ideology/Partisanship and Partisan Media Use⁶⁶



In Figure 7.1, the first row of charts depicts the percentage of respondents naming the economy as the most important problem. Consistently, liberal Democrats were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem. Further, in both charts, liberal Democrats were approximately equally likely to name the economy irrespective of

⁶⁶ Though the maximum possible number of conservative/liberal media outlets is 4, the charts constrain the x-axis to 2 because of the small number of individuals consuming 3 or more uncongenial outlets.

their media consumption patterns. Conservative Republicans consuming more conservative media outlets were less likely to name the economy while conservative Republicans consuming more liberal outlets were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem compared to other conservative Republicans.

The second row of charts shows the relationship between political leanings, partisan media consumption, and naming Iraq as the most important problem. Overall, liberal Democrats were more likely to name Iraq as the most important problem compared to conservative Republicans. Irrespective of their political leanings, as respondents consumed more conservative media outlets, they were less likely to name Iraq as the most important problem. As they consumed more liberal media outlets, conservative Republicans were more likely to name Iraq as the most important problem. Among liberal Democrats, there was a slight rise in naming Iraq as the most important problem as the number of liberal media outlets consumed increased.

The third row of charts shows the relationship between patterns of partisan media consumption, political leanings, and beliefs that terrorism is the most important problem facing the nation. Compared to the other two issues named as most important, the relationship between media exposure, political viewpoints, and naming terrorism is the most dramatic. Overall, conservative Republicans were more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem compared to liberal Democrats. Conservative Republicans were even more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem the more conservative media outlets they consumed. When they consumed more liberal media outlets, however, conservative Republicans were less likely to name terrorism as the most

important problem. On the contrary, liberal Democrats named terrorism as the most important problem with about equal frequency irrespective of their partisan media use.

Agenda Setting: Cross-sectional

No controls were incorporated in the preparation of the charts in Figure 7.1. Further, the significance of the relationship was not established. Accordingly, logistic regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationship between naming an issue as the most important problem, the political leanings of the respondent, and partisan media use. As before, a series of demographic (education, income, race/ethnicity, gender, age), political orientation (political discussion, political interest, strength of ideology/partisanship, general political knowledge), and media use (network news, cable news, local news, newspaper, NPR, talk radio, Internet access, political Internet use, attention to network/cable news, local news, newspaper) variables as described in Chapters 3 and 4 were included as controls, though they are not shown in Table 7.3. Full regression results can be found in Appendix B. The cross-sectional results for naming the economy, Iraq, and terrorism as the most important problem will be discussed in turn.

Table 7.3. *Logistic Regression Analyses Naming the Economy as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁶⁷
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	0.16*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.21*** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)
Interaction	0.08*** (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.08	0.07
<i>N</i>	12,822	

+*p*<0.10, **p*<0.05, ***p*<0.01, ****p*<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

Table 7.3 presents the logistic regression results predicting naming the economy as the most important problem. Here, conservative Republicans consuming more conservative media outlets were less likely to name the economy as the most important problem compared to other respondents. Conservative Republicans consuming more liberal outlets, however, were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem relative to other conservative Republicans. Confirming the results from the bivariate charts in Figure 7.1, liberal Democrats responses do not vary much based on their patterns of media consumption. Stronger liberal Democrats, however, were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem relative to other respondents.

⁶⁷ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. If conservative and liberal media use are included in a single equation, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and liberal media use falls below significance, though it remains in the same direction.

Table 7.4. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Iraq as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁶⁸
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	0.13*** (0.01)	0.13*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	-0.11** (0.04)	0.06+ (0.04)
Interaction	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)
R-square	0.06	0.06
<i>N</i>	12,822	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

In Table 7.4, the interaction between partisan media use and political leanings was not significant in predicting naming Iraq as the most important problem facing the country. Eliminating these non-significant interactions for ease of interpretation, liberal media use was unrelated to naming Iraq as the most important problem ($B=0.05$, $SE=0.03$, $p>0.10$). Conservative media use, however, was significantly related to naming Iraq as the most important problem ($B=-0.10$, $SE=0.04$, $p<0.01$). The more conservative media outlets consumed, the lower the likelihood of naming Iraq as the most important problem. In both analyses, ideology/partisanship was significant and positive – liberal Democrats were more likely to name Iraq as the most important problem compared to conservative Republicans.

⁶⁸ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. If conservative and liberal media use are included in a single equation, liberal media use falls below significance.

Table 7.5. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Terrorism as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*⁶⁹
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.27*** (0.01)	-0.28*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use	0.31*** (0.04)	-0.26*** (0.04)
Interaction	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
R-square	0.18	0.18
<i>N</i>	12,822	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

The final cross-sectional analyses of the relationship between naming an issue as the most important problem facing the country and the consumption of partisan media are shown in Table 7.5. Here, logistic regression analyses were conducted predicting naming terrorism as the most important problem. In both equations, conservative Republicans were more likely name terrorism as the most important problem compared to liberal Democrats. The measures of partisan media use also were significantly related to naming terrorism as the most important problem. The more liberal media outlets consumed, the *less* likely respondents were to name terrorism as the most important problem. The more conservative outlets consumed the *more* likely respondents were to name terrorism as the

⁶⁹ Interaction results are unchanged if ideology or partisanship is used in place of ideology/partisanship or if NPR-users are not counted as liberal talk radio listeners. If the regression is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered within congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the results are unchanged. If conservative and liberal media use are included in a single equation, the interaction between ideology/partisanship and liberal media use is significant and negative, while the significant interaction between ideology/partisanship and conservative media use is unchanged.

most important problem. The relationship between conservative media use and naming terrorism as the most important problem was moderated by ideology/partisanship such that conservative Republicans consuming conservative media outlets were even more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem compared to other respondents.

Agenda Setting: Over-Time Analyses

The cross-sectional results document that patterns of partisan media use are significantly related to the issue respondents name as the most important. What is unclear is whether exposure to partisan media precedes naming an issue as the most important. Perhaps conservative Republicans viewing partisan media outlets already believe that terrorism is the most important problem and their patterns of media exposure do not influence their perceptions. The following analyses evaluate whether the consumption of partisan media predicts the likelihood of naming terrorism as the most important problem at a later point in time.

Panel studies conducted around the DNC, the RNC, the debates, and the general election were used to investigate whether partisan media use led to different impressions of the most important problem facing the nation. This diversity of panels was particularly appropriate because the time lag required for agenda-setting effects to occur is a matter of theoretical debate. One theory of why agenda setting occurs is that issues mentioned in the media become more accessible in a person's memory. When called to identify the most important problem, accessible issues are more likely to be named because they are more easily retrieved (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). This type of accessibility tends to be a rather short-term phenomenon (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, & Carpentier,

2002). Other rationales, however, would lead one to conclude that a longer lag is more appropriate. One notion is that agenda setting occurs because people learn about issues from the media. Repeated exposure to redundant messages, according to this rationale, is what produces the observed effect. Supporting this perspective, McCombs (2004) argues that agenda-setting effects are best seen with longer lags.

As with the cross-sectional analyses, the same set of demographic, political, and media use variables were controlled in each analysis. In addition, whether the respondent named the issue as the most important problem in the pre-wave was controlled. The results, therefore, represent the effect of partisan media use on naming an issue as the most important in the post-wave controlling for whether the respondent named that issue in the pre-wave of the survey. In each of the panels conducted around a political event, namely the DNC, RNC, and debate panels, exposure to the event (as detailed in Chapter 3) was included as a control. The panel analysis results for naming the economy, Iraq, and terrorism as the most important problem will be discussed in turn.

Table 7.6. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming the Economy as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.16* (0.07)	0.17* (0.07)
Partisan Media Use	-0.09 (0.18)	0.07 (0.17)
Interaction	0.05 (0.09)	-0.02 (0.08)
R-square	0.40	0.40
N	536	

Table 7.6. *Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming the Economy as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*
(continued from previous page)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
RNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.22*** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.06)
Partisan Media Use	-0.04 (0.19)	0.04 (0.18)
Interaction	0.22* (0.09)	-0.15+ (0.08)
R-square	0.41	0.41
N	571	
Debates		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.29*** (0.06)	0.29*** (0.06)
Partisan Media Use	-0.12 (0.16)	-0.03 (0.17)
Interaction	0.09 (0.07)	-0.12 (0.08)
R-square	0.35	0.35
N	670	
Post-Election		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.11*** (0.02)	0.11*** (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	-0.04 (0.07)	0.11+ (0.06)
Interaction	0.02 (0.03)	-0.06* (0.03)
R-square	0.24	0.24
N	3,263	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

The results in Table 7.6 provide limited evidence regarding the relationship between consuming partisan media and the belief that the economy is the most important problem facing the country. In only three of eight cases was there any evidence of a relationship between partisan media exposure and naming the economy as the most

important problem. In each of these cases, the opinions of conservative Republicans were as predicted; conservative Republicans consuming conservative outlets were less likely to name the economy as the most important problem and conservative Republicans consuming liberal outlets were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem relative to other conservative Republicans. The results for liberal Democrats, however, contradicted the predictions. Liberal Democrats consuming liberal outlets were less likely to name the economy and liberal Democrats consuming conservative outlets were more likely to name the economy relative to other liberal Democrats. The specific results are discussed below.

In the RNC panel, conservative Republicans consuming conservative media outlets were less likely to name the economy as the most important problem compared to other respondents. Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, were more likely to name the economy relative to other respondents when they consumed conservative media. The opposite relationship appears for evaluating the relationship between consuming liberal media outlets and naming the economy as the most important problem. Conservative Republicans consuming liberal media were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem relative to other conservative Republicans. Liberal Democrats consuming liberal media, however, were *less* likely to name the economy as the most important problem compared to other liberal Democrats.

In the post-wave panel, conservative Republicans consuming liberal media outlets were more likely to name the economy as the most important problem relative to other conservative Republicans. Liberal Democrats consuming liberal media outlets, however,

were slightly less likely to name the economy as the most important problem compared to other liberal Democrats.

The panel analyses for partisan media use and naming Iraq as the most important problem are displayed in Table 7.7.

Table 7.7. *Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Iraq as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship*
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.25** (0.08)	0.28*** (0.08)
Partisan Media Use	-0.12 (0.23)	-0.36 (0.23)
Interaction	-0.07 (0.09)	0.15 (0.10)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.38	0.38
<i>N</i>	536	
RNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.16* (0.08)	0.22** (0.08)
Partisan Media Use	-0.80** (0.28)	0.27 (0.22)
Interaction	0.003 (0.11)	-0.13 (0.09)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.36	0.35
<i>N</i>	571	
Debates		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.09 (0.06)	0.09 (0.06)
Partisan Media Use	0.08 (0.20)	0.10 (0.18)
Interaction	0.08 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.07)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.39	0.39
<i>N</i>	670	

Table 7.7. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Iraq as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship
(continued from previous page)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Post-Election		
Ideology/Partisanship	0.11*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)
Partisan Media Use	-0.09 (0.07)	0.05 (0.06)
Interaction	0.005 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.19	0.19
<i>N</i>	3,263	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

As shown in Table 7.7, the relationship between partisan media use and naming Iraq as the most important problem was not significant in most cases. In only one instance was the measure of partisan media use significant: in the RNC panel, those viewing more conservative media outlets were less likely to name Iraq as the most important problem in the post-wave of the survey compared to other respondents. Overall, the panel analyses provide little evidence that consuming partisan media predicted naming Iraq as the most important problem.

As shown in Table 7.8, there is more evidence of a relationship between partisan selective exposure and naming terrorism as the most important problem.

Table 7.8. Panel Logistic Regression Analyses of Naming Terrorism as the Most Important Problem by Partisan Media Use and Ideology/Partisanship
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
DNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.19* (0.09)	-0.22** (0.08)
Partisan Media Use	-0.10 (0.24)	0.003 (0.19)
Interaction	-0.27** (0.10)	0.12 (0.09)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.54	0.53
<i>N</i>	536	
RNC		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.32*** (0.08)	-0.30*** (0.08)
Partisan Media Use	0.18 (0.26)	-0.45+ (0.24)
Interaction	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.56	0.56
<i>N</i>	571	
Debates		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.30*** (0.08)	-0.33*** (0.08)
Partisan Media Use	0.19 (0.22)	0.04 (0.18)
Interaction	0.02 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.09)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.49	0.49
<i>N</i>	670	
Post-Election		
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.20*** (0.03)	-0.20*** (0.03)
Partisan Media Use	0.19* (0.09)	-0.27** (0.08)
Interaction	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.39	0.39
<i>N</i>	3,263	

+ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Ideology/partisanship and partisan media use variables are mean centered.

In four of eight analyses shown in Table 7.8, partisan media use significantly predicted naming terrorism as the most important problem. In three of these four cases, the effect was not moderated by ideology/partisanship. In these instances, liberal media use was negatively related to naming terrorism as the most important problem and conservative media use was positively related to naming terrorism as the most important problem. The interaction between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship was significant when predicting conservative media use in the DNC panel. Here, conservative Republicans consuming conservative media were more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem relative to other respondents. Interestingly, liberal Democrats consuming conservative media outlets were even *less* likely to name terrorism as the most important problem relative to other respondents.

Agenda Setting: Outlet-by-Outlet Analyses

Up to this point, the presented agenda-setting results have used the indices of media exposure to evaluate the relationship between partisan media exposure and perceptions of the most important problem facing the nation. The cross-sectional and panel analyses were repeated for each of the individual media outlets to evaluate the agenda-setting hypotheses.

In the cross-sectional analysis, fifteen of twenty-four analyses documented that partisan media use significantly predicted the issue named as the most important problem. Nine of the fifteen cases were main effects and the remaining six were significant interactive effects (media outlet x ideology/partisanship). The main effects were consistent with the hypotheses that consuming liberal media outlets is related to

naming the economy or Iraq as the most important problem facing the nation and consuming conservative media outlets is related to naming terrorism as the most important problem. For the six interactive effects, only one did not provide some support for the hypotheses.⁷⁰ In several of the interactions, however, there was support for the hypotheses for people with one political leaning (liberal Democrat or conservative Republican), but not for the other. This will be discussed in more detail shortly.

In the panel analyses, far fewer results were significant. Across all the analyses, there were only eighteen significant relationships between partisan media use and naming an issue as the most important problem facing the nation supporting the hypotheses.⁷¹ In seven cases, the relationship between naming an issue as the most important problem and media exposure was not moderated by ideology/partisanship. Again, the main effects were consistent with the hypotheses. For these instances, liberal media exposure corresponded to a higher likelihood of naming the economy and Iraq as the most important problem and a lower likelihood of naming terrorism as the most important problem. Unmoderated conservative media exposure effects were just the opposite – conservative media exposure corresponded with a higher likelihood of naming terrorism as the most important problem and a lower likelihood of naming Iraq or the economy as the most important problem. In the remaining cases where the relationship was

⁷⁰ The interaction between ideology/partisanship and Bush-endorsing newspaper consumption in predicting naming Iraq as the most important problem yields findings in the opposite direction of the hypothesis: conservative Republicans consuming Bush-endorsing newspapers are *more* likely to name Iraq as the most important problem and liberal Democrats consuming Bush-endorsing newspapers are *less* likely to name Iraq as the most important problem.

⁷¹ In only one case was there a significant relationship that was not in line with expectations. Conservative Republicans consuming newspapers endorsing Bush were more likely than other conservative Republicans to name the economy as the most important problem in the debate panel.

moderated by ideology/partisanship, support was mixed for the hypotheses. In every case, there was some evidence that ran counter to expectation regarding the relationship between media exposure and the issue named as the most important problem. For example, liberal Democrats listening to conservative radio were more – not less – likely to name Iraq as the most important problem compared to other liberal Democrats. In seven of these ten instances, those engaging in counter-attitudinal exposure display the opposite of the anticipated effect (e.g. liberal Democrats listening to *conservative* talk radio are *more* likely to name Iraq as the most important problem compared to other liberal Democrats).

Throughout the outlet-specific analyses, the most persistent differences in the issues named as the most important were between FOX and CNN/MSNBC viewers. Of the six possible relationships between cable news viewing and naming an issue as the most important in the cross-sectional analyses, all were significant. Of the 24 possible relationships in the panel analysis, nine were significant. Newspaper consumption based on candidate endorsement was significant in only one of six cases in the cross-sectional analysis. In the panel analyses, however, newspaper consumption was significantly related to naming the most important problem in five of 24 cases. Combined, cable news and newspaper findings accounted for over 80 percent of the significant findings in the outlet-by-outlet panel analyses. Though there are many possible reasons for why this would be the case, it is interesting to note that these two outlets attract a broader political audience in comparison to ideological talk radio and Internet (see Table 3.2). Further, it is arguable that these outlets are the least overt in their political leanings. Perhaps this

combination gives these outlets greater ability to influence people's impressions of most important problems facing the country.

Talk radio and Internet use were both related to impressions of which issue is the most important, as the significant cross-sectional relationships document. In the panel analyses, however, the use of partisan talk radio and partisan websites account for comparatively fewer significant findings. In the cross-sectional analyses, talk radio consumption patterns are significantly related to the most important problem named by the respondents in five of six cases. In the panel analyses, however, only three of a possible 24 relationships were significant. The weakest evidence for a relationship between media exposure and differences in the identified most important problem is for the Internet. Here, only three of six cases are significant in the cross-sectional analysis and none of the cases are significant in the panel analysis.

Priming

Given evidence that partisan media use is related to agenda setting, the next set of analyses evaluated whether partisan media use would lead people to use these issues differently in evaluating the president's performance. In order to conduct this analysis, regressions predicting respondents' overall approval of the way Bush was handling his job as president were run. The demographic, media use, and political orientation variables from Chapter 3 were included as controls. Further, general political knowledge and interest were included as controls since the analysis in Chapter 4 documented that these variables are antecedents of partisan selective exposure. The main independent variables of interest were the indices of conservative and liberal media exposure and the

issue-specific measures of Bush's handling of the economy, Iraq, and terrorism.

Significant interactions between the issue-specific evaluations of Bush's performance and partisan media use indicate that people employ the issue-specific criteria differently depending on their media consumption. The results are shown in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9. *Regression Analyses of Overall Presidential Approval by Partisan Media Use and Issue-Specific Presidential Evaluations*⁷²
Coefficient (SE)

	<u>Conservative Media</u>			<u>Liberal Media</u>		
	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism
Partisan Media Use	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.10*** (0.01)
Issue-Specific Bush Approval	0.70*** (0.01)	0.71*** (0.01)	0.66*** (0.01)	0.70*** (0.01)	0.72*** (0.01)	0.66*** (0.01)
Interaction	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)
R-square	0.71	0.72	0.71	0.71	0.72	0.71
N	12,555	12,592	6,294	12,555	12,592	6,294

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Partisan media use is mean centered.

Each column in Table 7.9 represents a regression analysis predicting overall approval of President Bush. As shown in the first row of coefficients in Table 7.9, partisan media use had a significant main effect on overall approval of Bush. Even after controlling for a host of demographic, media use, and political orientation variables,

⁷² Instead of running a separate analysis for each issue-specific evaluation, these models could have been combined so that evaluations of the president on terrorism, Iraq, and the economy were included in one equation predicting overall evaluations of the president (see, for example, Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Evaluations of the president on the economy, Iraq, and terrorism, however, were highly correlated ($r(\text{terrorism, Iraq})=0.80$; $r(\text{terrorism, economy})=0.70$; $r(\text{Iraq, economy})=0.74$). Including all of them in the same model makes multicollinearity an important concern. Therefore, the present strategy was selected. Running the analysis using hierarchical linear modeling with respondents clustered into congressional districts and controlling for the percent of the vote going to Bush, the results were unchanged. Not including NPR listeners as liberal talk radio listeners also did not influence the results.

conservative media use was positively related to Bush approval and liberal media use was negatively related to Bush approval. Further, the second row of coefficients documented that people's issue-specific evaluations of Bush contributed to people's overall approval of Bush. If one approves of how Bush is handling the economy, Iraq, or terrorism, one is more likely to approve of Bush overall. The third row of coefficients tested the hypothesis that partisan media exposure changes the criteria citizens employ in evaluating the president. There was only limited evidence that this occurs. The only significant interactions were between partisan media use and Bush's handling of the war on terrorism. Here, those consuming conservative media were more likely to use the president's performance in the war on terror as a criterion for determining the president's performance while those consuming liberal media were less likely to use the president's performance on terrorism as a criterion for determining the president's performance.

Given that several of the agenda-setting relationships were contingent on ideology/partisanship, an analysis was conducted to evaluate whether the relationship between issue-specific evaluations of the president's performance and consumption of partisan media was moderated by ideology/partisanship. The results are shown below in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10. *Regression Analyses of Overall Presidential Approval by Ideology/Partisanship, Partisan Media Use, and Issue-Specific Presidential Evaluations*⁷³
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media			Liberal Media		
	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism
Ideology/ Partisanship (IP)	-0.19*** (0.004)	-0.19*** (0.004)	-0.21*** (0.01)	-0.19*** (0.004)	-0.19*** (0.004)	-0.21*** (0.01)
Partisan Media Use (PMU)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.02)	-0.10*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	-0.16*** (0.02)
Issue-Specific Bush Approval (ISBA)	0.71*** (0.01)	0.72*** (0.01)	0.67*** (0.01)	0.71*** (0.01)	0.72*** (0.01)	0.67*** (0.01)
PMU * ISBA	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.05*** (0.01)
IP * PMU	0.002 (0.01)	0.001 (0.01)	-0.003 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.0001 (0.005)	-0.02*** (0.01)
IP * ISBA	0.04*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.005)	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.004)	-0.05*** (0.01)
IP * PMU * ISBA	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.005)	-0.04*** (0.01)
R-square	0.71	0.73	0.71	0.71	0.73	0.71
<i>N</i>	12,555	12,592	6,294	12,555	12,592	6,294

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Note: Partisan media use and ideology/partisanship are mean centered.

Throughout this analysis, the three-way interaction between ideology/partisanship, partisan media use, and issue-specific Bush approval was significant. As three-way interactions are difficult to interpret, a visual depiction is shown in Figure 7.2.

⁷³ This analysis was repeated with ideology and partisanship as main effects in the model instead of ideology/partisanship. In one set of analyses, the interaction effects were computed using political ideology. In another set of analyses, the interaction effects were computed using partisanship. In general, the results were similar. In only two instances did the three-way interaction fall below significance, when evaluating the interaction between: (1) ideology, liberal media use, and Bush's handling of the economy and (2) ideology, liberal media use, and Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq. The direction of the relationship was unchanged, however. Running the analysis using hierarchical linear modeling with respondents clustered into congressional districts and controlling for the percent of the vote going to Bush, the results were unchanged. Not including NPR listeners as liberal talk radio listeners also did not influence the results.

In the first column of charts in Figure 7.2, those using two conservative media outlets are contrasted with those using no conservative media outlets. In the second column, the charts contrast those using two liberal media outlets to those not using any liberal media outlets. The solid lines indicate respondents consuming two conservative/liberal media outlets while the dashed lines indicate respondents not consuming any conservative/liberal media outlets. Further, the gray lines indicate conservative Republicans while the black lines indicate liberal Democrats.

Figure 7.2. Bush's Performance by Ideology/Partisanship, Bush's Handling of Various Issues, and Partisan Media Use

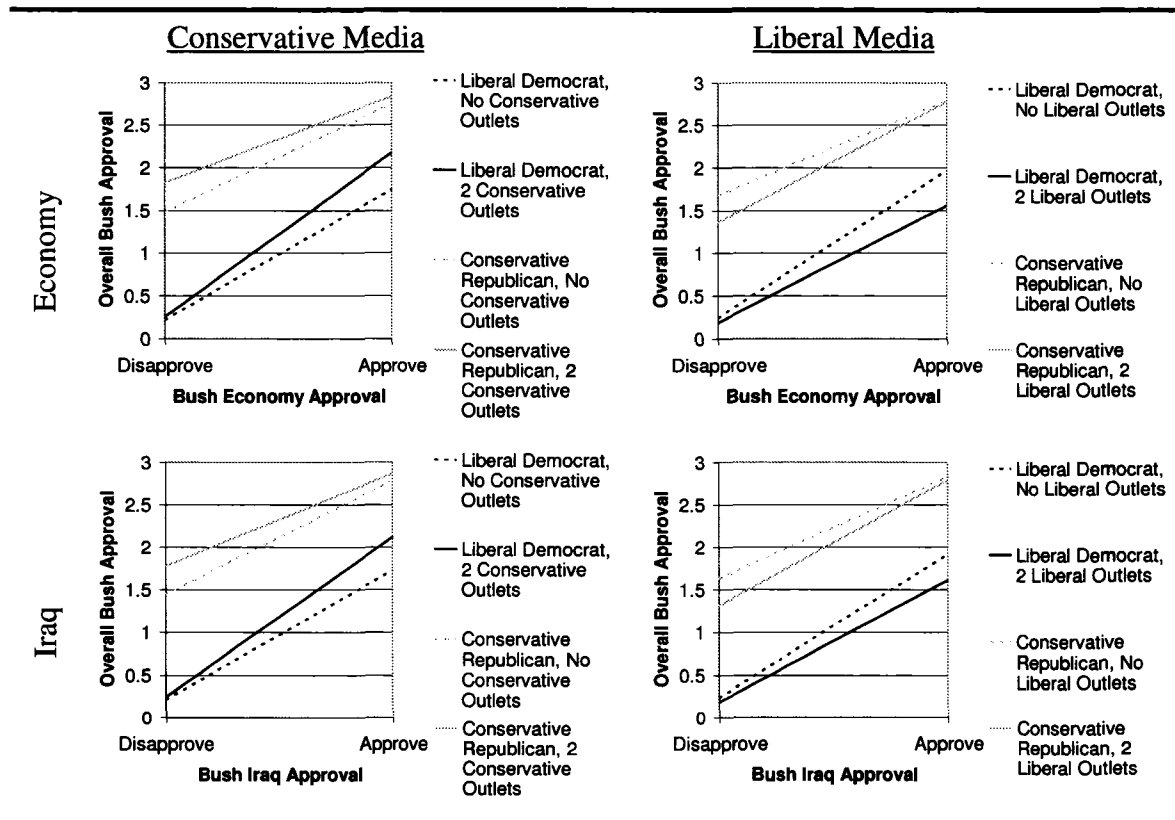
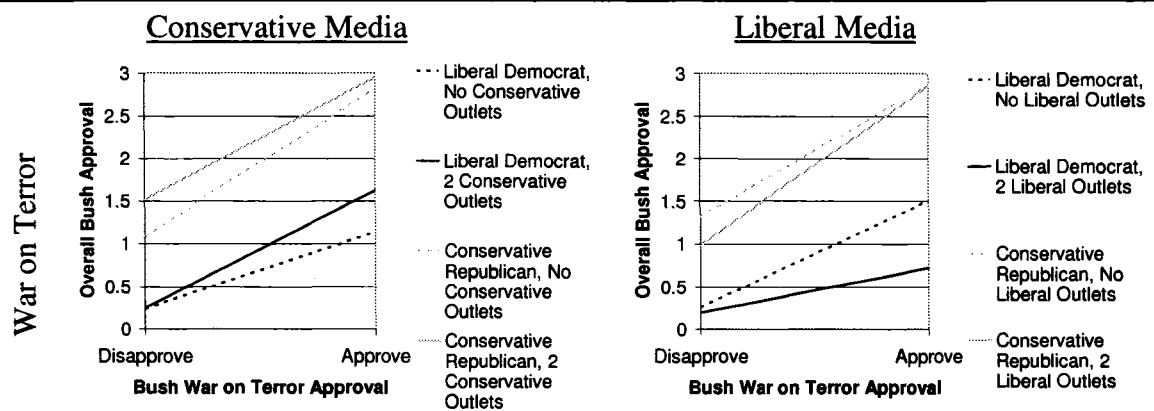


Figure 7.2. Bush's Performance by Ideology/Partisanship, Bush's Handling of Various Issues, and Partisan Media Use (continued from previous page)



Note: All covariates are included at their mean value. In the regression analysis, ideology/partisanship varies from -4 to 4. These charts contrast liberal Democrats, given a value of 3 and conservative Republicans, given a value of -3.

Throughout the charts in Figure 7.2, the lines all have a positive slope, indicating that people approving of Bush's handling of the economy, the situation in Iraq, and the war on terrorism are more likely to approve of Bush's handling of the presidency overall. Further, the gray lines are consistently higher than the black lines, illustrating that conservative Republicans approved of Bush's overall performance more than liberal Democrats. In the first column of charts, the solid lines are consistently higher than the dashed lines, documenting that respondents consuming two conservative media outlets approve of Bush's performance more than respondents consuming no conservative media outlets. In the second column of charts, the dashed lines are consistently higher than the solid lines, documenting that respondents consuming two liberal outlets disapprove of Bush's performance more than respondents consuming no liberal media outlets.

The idea of presidential priming proposes that hearing more about an issue in the media will lead people to evaluate the president using that issue as a basis for their judgments. Statistically, this hypothesis has been evaluated by looking at the magnitude of the coefficient of the issue in predicting presidential approval and determining whether the coefficient is greater under a “treatment” condition of media exposure. This hypothesis contends that the slope would be greater for those individuals who were exposed to the issue in the media compared to those who were not. In the charts above, a steeper slope indicates that people use the issue-specific criterion more in developing their overall impressions of Bush.

In fact, the pattern of slopes was not consistent with expectation. For example, the first chart in the upper left hand corner of Figure 7.2 shows the relationship between approving of Bush’s performance in handling the economy and overall approval of Bush’s handling of the presidency. Inspecting the gray conservative Republican lines, the slope of the line for conservative Republicans watching two conservative media outlets is not as steep as the slope of the line for conservative Republicans not watching any conservative media outlets. For liberal Democrats, the slope of the black solid line is steeper than the slope of the black dashed line – liberal Democrats consuming two conservative outlets use their evaluation of how well Bush handled the economy to develop their overall impression of Bush more than liberal Democrats consuming no conservative outlets.

Recall that consistent with the priming literature, it was hypothesized that the consumption of conservative media would lead people to increase their use of Bush’s

handling of the war on terrorism in formulating their overall approval of Bush, particularly among conservative Republicans. Further, it was hypothesized that the consumption of liberal media would lead people to increase their use of Bush's handling of the economy and Iraq in formulating their overall approval of Bush, particularly among liberal Democrats.

Overall, the results do not support these hypotheses. Instead, a rather intriguing pattern emerges. Consistently, people consuming two *congenial* media outlets have a *less* steep slope relative to likeminded partisans not consuming congenial media. In developing their overall assessment of Bush's performance, those consuming congenial media use Bush's stance on the economy, Iraq, and terrorism less than those with similar political leanings not consuming congenial media. This analysis suggests that when people consume congenial media, it doesn't matter as much what they think about how well Bush performs with respect to the economy, Iraq, or terrorism. Rather, conservative Republicans consuming conservative media approve of Bush's overall performance more than other respondents and liberal Democrats consuming liberal media disapprove of Bush's overall performance more than other respondents.

Alternatively, those consuming two *uncongenial* media outlets have *steeper* slopes relative to those not consuming uncongenial media. In developing their overall assessment of Bush's performance, those consuming uncongenial media employed Bush's stance on the economy, Iraq, and terrorism *more* than politically likeminded respondents who did not consume *uncongenial* media.

Priming: Outlet-by-Outlet Analyses

As was done throughout this dissertation, the above analyses were re-run for each of the individual media outlets. The outlet-by-outlet analyses corresponding to Table 7.9 produced a few significant results. Those listening to liberal radio or watching CNN/MSNBC were less likely to employ the president's performance in the war on terrorism in evaluations of his overall performance. FOX viewers, however, were more likely. The coefficients for Bush's handling of the economy and the situation in Iraq were smaller for those consuming conservative radio in predicting Bush's overall performance. Compared to other respondents, the coefficient for Bush's handling of the economy was larger for those reading newspapers endorsing Kerry.

Looking at the results corresponding with Table 7.10 with the three-way interaction term between issue-specific Bush evaluation, ideology/partisanship, and media exposure, the results were largely replicated when looking at the individual media outlets. Though there was multicollinearity in some of the estimates due to the large number of interactions, the persistence of the original pattern is particularly noteworthy. The three-way interaction between political leanings, approval of Bush's handling of the war on terrorism, and media use remained negative and significant for each of the four individual liberal outlet measures. This three-way interaction was positive and significant when using FOX viewing or conservative radio listening in place of the conservative media index. When evaluating the contingent relationship between Bush's overall performance and his handling of the situation in Iraq, the results were again largely replicated: reading newspapers endorsing Kerry, watching CNN/MSNBC and

accessing liberal websites all produced negative and significant three-way interactions with ideology/partisanship and Bush's handling of the situation in Iraq. Alternatively, listening to conservative radio, watching FOX, and accessing conservative websites produced significant positive interactions when combined with ideology/partisanship and the president's handling of the situation in Iraq. Finally, in several instances, the relationship between evaluations of Bush's handling of the economy and Bush's overall handling of the presidency was moderated by partisan media use and ideology/partisanship. The three-way interaction between ideology/partisanship, media use, and evaluations of the president's handling of the economy was significant and negative for all four of the individual liberal media outlets. Looking at the conservative media outlets, the interaction was significant and positive only for FOX viewing. Broadly, these results document that the relationships found in Table 7.10 persist irrespective of the outlet.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

This chapter provides a good deal of evidence that media exposure patterns are related to people's perceptions of issue importance. In five of six cross-sectional analyses, the partisan media use indices were significantly related to the issue named as the most important problem. Across the four panels, two partisan media exposure indices, and three issues, media exposure patterns were significantly related to naming an issue as the most important problem in only eight instances. Though the hypotheses predicted interactive effects such that congenial media exposure would amplify the

relationship between an issue being named as the most important and partisan media use, partisan media use had a significant main effect on issues named as most important in several instances. These main effects were consistent with the notion that consuming liberal media was related to a higher likelihood of naming the economy and Iraq as the most important problems and consuming conservative media was related to a higher likelihood of naming terrorism as the most important problem.

Interactions between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship were proposed such that respondents would be influenced to name issues consistent with the political leanings of the media they consume and that these effects would be strongest for people consuming media matching their ideological/partisan leanings. The nature of the interactions, however, did not provide consistent support for this hypothesis. Throughout the results, conservative Republicans consuming liberal media had more liberal issue agendas. When liberal Democrats consumed conservative outlets, however, there were several instances where their impressions of the most important problem were not more conservative relative to other liberal Democrats. For example, in the cross-sectional results, liberal Democrats were approximately equally likely to name the economy as the most important problem irrespective of their exposure to partisan media. The panel analyses also provided examples where liberal Democrats consuming conservative media were not more likely to perceive issues emphasized by the Bush campaign as more important. Some possible explanations for these results will be explored shortly.

Overall, the agenda-setting results from this chapter provide evidence that the consumption of conservative media outlets corresponds to holding a conservative issue

agenda and that the consumption of liberal media outlets corresponds to holding a liberal issue agenda. The findings are mixed, however, regarding whether this relationship is moderated by ideology/partisanship.

The priming results provide some evidence that patterns of media exposure influence the criteria that people use when evaluating the president, but key aspects of the findings ran counter to expectations. Two types of analyses were run. First, interactions between partisan media use and approval of Bush's handling of the economy, the situation in Iraq, and the war on terrorism were computed. The results indicated that relative to other respondents, those consuming liberal media outlets were less likely to use the war on terrorism as a criterion for judging the president's overall performance and those consuming conservative media were more likely to use the war on terrorism as a criterion. Second, analyses incorporating interactions between partisan media use, issue-specific judgments of the president's performance, and ideology/partisanship were computed. Here, an unexpected result was obtained. Namely, compared to likeminded partisans, those consuming politically congenial media were less likely to use *any* of the issue-specific judgments of President Bush as criteria for evaluating the president's overall performance. Why this pattern might have emerged will be taken up for discussion in a moment; first, some limitations of the analysis will be considered.

Limitations

While general limitations that apply across chapters will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, several limitations specific to the results in this chapter warrant consideration here. First, the manner in which the partisan media agenda was determined

was admittedly indirect. A content analysis of each outlet was not conducted in order to establish its issue agenda. Instead, it was presumed that the candidate agendas would be differentially transmitted via outlets with different political leanings. Where possible, analysis of the media's content would be an intriguing next step. It would be particularly interesting given the contrast between the results shown here and those of Dalton, Beck, Huckfeldt, and Koetzle (1998). Recall that in comparing aggregate level issue agendas of newspapers endorsing Clinton to newspapers endorsing Bush, Dalton and colleagues found few differences. If, as the Dalton et al. findings suggest, there is little difference in the issue priorities of partisan media outlets, what could be responsible for the findings documented here? Perhaps some of the differences can be explained by reviewing the historical analysis of agenda setting presented by Johnson, Wanta, Byrd, and Lee (1995) where the authors *did* find differences in the transmitted media agendas depending on the newspaper. Johnson et al. found that Roosevelt's ability to set the media's agenda was stronger with congenial newspapers compared to uncongenial newspapers. Though differences in the time period analyzed in these two pieces of scholarly work are an important limitation in comparing these two articles, one difference seems particularly instructive. In the Dalton et al. article, the issues under investigation are far less nuanced compared to the issues under investigation in the Johnson et al. article. In Dalton et al., the issues under investigation include: economic issues, budget and finance, social programs, and foreign policy. In the Johnson et al. article, the issues include: justification of New Deal policies, success of the National Industrial Recovery Act,

success of the Economy Act, and Tennessee Valley Authority/conservation. In the Johnson et al. article, issues are not only more specific, they are valenced.

In looking at the patterns documented in this chapter, it is possible that different valences accorded to the issues in the media are responsible for the observed agenda-setting effects. For example, though Kerry placed more emphasis than Bush on the economy, the candidates also spoke about the economy with different valences. Bush, for example, frequently highlighted the strength of the present economy (“This economy of ours is strong and getting stronger”) and criticized the economy that *would* develop if Kerry were elected (about Kerry’s plan to raise taxes for those earning more than \$200,000, Bush said “when you’re running up the top two tax brackets, you’re taking the job creators. And that makes no economic sense.”). Kerry, on the other hand, frequently criticized the present economy (“After four years in office, this President has ...given more to those with the most at the expense of middle-class working families who are struggling to get ahead.”) and highlighted the economy that *would* develop if he were elected (“As President, I will fight for good jobs with decent benefits that pay you more so you can pay your bills and build a decent life.”). Studies on framing (e.g. Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997) and second-level agenda setting (e.g. Kioussis, 2005) suggest that differences in how an issue or candidate is presented can influence people’s responses. If Dalton et al.’s finding that there were no differences between newspaper issue agendas holds in 2004 and persists across the other outlets used in this study, the valence of the coverage may be responsible for the effect. A content analysis of media coverage could help to reconcile these findings.

A content analysis also could provide insight about the mechanism underlying agenda-setting effects. Instead of investigating whether or not there is a relationship between media coverage and public issue perceptions, this investigation could begin with the results presented here and analyze what in the media is responsible for the documented relationships. Perhaps a media content analysis would provide an explanation for *why* the relationship between media consumption and issues named as the most important is significant in some instances, but not in others.

Another important limitation pertains to the priming results. Specifically, the issue-specific approval ratings of President Bush's performance were highly correlated with each other and with overall approval of Bush's performance. These measures arguably tap into the same underlying construct: evaluations of President Bush. This limits the ability of this analysis to find priming effects. Future analysis should evaluate the priming hypothesis using items worded to encourage people to differentiate between their overall impressions of the president and judgments of his issue-specific performance.

Implications and Future Research

In the agenda-setting analysis, the observed differences between liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans are intriguing. Though the analyses presented in this chapter do not provide insights into why this may be the case, several possibilities are worth considering. First, it is worth noting there is a significant correlation between political conservatism and a need for cognitive closure (Jost et al., 2003). A higher need for cognitive closure could explain the present findings in two ways. First, in the context

of their media consumption, those with a higher need for cognitive closure may be more apt to adopt the perspective of the media that they view because it provides an answer to what issues are most important. With a lower need for cognitive closure, people may be less apt to adopt the media view and may seek additional information. Second, in the context of participating in the NAES, when faced with a question about the most important problem, respondents wanting cognitive closure may respond with the first issue that comes to mind as a response. This response may be consistent with the issues that were recently or frequently covered in the media. With a higher need for cognitive closure, conservative Republicans may be more apt to provide “media” responses to the most important problem. Another possible explanation for the results is that liberal Democrats may have certain attitudes or beliefs that lead them to boomerang against the messages they receive. Perhaps liberal Democrats are more apt to counter-argue media messages. These possibilities are mere suppositions, however, and additional research is required to provide evidence for these claims.

Overall, the agenda-setting results were most pronounced for the issue of terrorism. Related to this, Jost and colleagues documented that “fear and threat are ... related to political conservatism” (p. 362). Consistent with this finding, conservative Republicans were consistently more likely to name terrorism as the most important problem than liberal Democrats. Perhaps this relationship occurs because the media message of terrorism comports well with being sensitive to fear and threat – matching a personal inclination with an issue position may be an effective strategy for setting the agenda. Further, since defense-related issues are typically considered to be owned by

Republicans (Petrocik, 1996), media with conservative Republican leanings may elect to emphasize these issues. This confluence of individual predisposition, campaign strategy, and partisan media coverage may be particularly powerful in creating terrorism agenda-setting effects among conservative Republicans.

The priming investigation produced unexpected results. Partisan selective exposure was related to less use of issue-specific criteria in judging the president's overall performance. One methodological explanation with particular appeal in explaining these results is that there was restricted variance in the measures of presidential approval for those engaging in partisan selective exposure. Strong conservative Republicans consuming several conservative outlets generally approved of Bush on all criteria – handling of the economy, Iraq, terrorism, and his overall handling of the presidency. Further, liberal Democrats consuming several liberal outlets generally disapproved of Bush on all criteria. Without variance in these measures, the correlation between approval of Bush's overall performance and Bush's handling of various issues is not as strong. This explanation and these results provide some suggestion that individuals consuming congenial media outlets do not differentiate between Bush's handling of specific issues and Bush's overall handling of the presidency as much as others do. Though these results were not in line with the priming hypothesis, this is not to say that priming did not occur. Rather, a different type of priming may be at work – perhaps partisan outlets prime certain assessments of the president *across* issues. Replication of this finding and investigations into the causal direction of this cross-sectional analysis would be profitable next steps.

Conclusion

This chapter documents that partisan media use is related to different perceptions of the most important issues facing the nation. This arguably represents an important change in the agenda-setting function of the mass media. In a fragmented media system characterized by many diverse sources of news and information, different media audiences can develop divergent impressions of the most important problems facing the nation. Instead of conceiving of the media as transmitting a unified set of issue messages, researchers must consider different patterns of exposure and different patterns of media content. This change does not, however, equate to the end of agenda setting. Rather, it represents an opportunity for media researchers to develop a greater understanding of individual differences in how agenda setting functions. Historically, investigations of agenda setting have performed well at the aggregate level – the public's issue agenda in the aggregate is highly related to the issue agenda conveyed in the media. At the individual level, however, the agenda-setting hypothesis has not fared as well because researchers have encountered difficulty in predicting individual-level issue agendas. By looking specifically at individual patterns of consumption, we may be better able to predict individual-level issue agendas.

Though the patterns are less clear, this chapter also documents some differences in the way people evaluate the president based on their patterns of media consumption. Irrespective of their impressions of the president's performance on the economy, Iraq, or terrorism, liberal Democrats consuming more liberal outlets evaluated the president's overall performance more poorly than other respondents while conservative Republicans

consuming more conservative outlets evaluated the president's overall performance more positively than other respondents. This is potentially worrisome – people engaging in partisan selective exposure may not be engaging in critical, reflective thought when they evaluate the president.

Given the presence of partisan media outlets and a documented propensity for people to prefer news media expressing beliefs that match their partisan inclinations, this chapter proposes that partisan media may further divide people into different publics by transmitting different partisan agendas. The ability of the media to fragment citizens has arguable consequences not only in terms of social cohesion, but also in terms of the development of public opinion and beliefs of political legitimacy. For these reasons, the influence of partisan media use is particularly consequential.

CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Not everyone seeks out political information from the media. There are undoubtedly people who opt out of politics and avoid political media content altogether. And not everyone who seeks out political information from the media wants to find outlets with a congenial political perspective. A substantial proportion of the public, however, consumes media sharing their political predispositions. Of the outlets evaluated in this project, 64 percent of conservative Republicans consume at least one conservative media outlet compared to 28 percent of liberal Democrats. In contrast, 42 percent of conservative Republicans consume at least one liberal outlet while 75 percent of liberal Democrats consume at least one liberal outlet. This dissertation offers substantial evidence that people's political predispositions are related to their patterns of media consumption. As first detailed in Chapter 3 and then confirmed in the cross-sectional analyses in Chapter 4, conservative Republicans are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Bush, listen to conservative talk radio, watch FOX, and access conservative websites. Liberal Democrats are more likely to read newspapers endorsing Kerry, listen to liberal talk radio (whether or not NPR is included as a liberal outlet), watch CNN/MSNBC, and access liberal websites. Looking at these relationships over time, there is consistent evidence that people's political leanings lead them to congenial media outlets. Furthermore, in the experiment, political predispositions predicted magazine

selection. This provides strong support for the idea that people's political predispositions are related to patterns of partisan media consumption (Hypothesis 1 from Chapter 2).

What causes people to seek out congenial political outlets? The results of Chapter 4 document that ability and motivation are prerequisites for engaging in partisan selective exposure. Respondents with strong political beliefs, higher levels of political knowledge, and higher levels of political interest are more likely to select media outlets that comport with their political predispositions (Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3). These antecedents signal that partisan media use is motivated. If partisan selective exposure were a haphazard occurrence – say, for example, that people merely consumed whatever media happened to be available – political knowledge and interest would not be related to partisan media use after general media consumption had been controlled.

As investigated in Chapter 5, the media also contribute to partisan selective exposure. The experimental analysis provided preliminary evidence that people are more likely to pick politically congenial media when they have more choices and are making long-term exposure decisions (Hypothesis 4). Furthermore, by showcasing events highlighting partisan differences between the candidates (e.g. the debates and party conventions), the news media provide an impetus for motivated consumers to engage in partisan selective exposure. Republican convention exposure was related to higher consumption of conservative media. Perceptions that Bush won the 2004 presidential debates was related to less consumption of liberal media and perceptions that Kerry won the 2004 presidential debates was related to more consumption of liberal media. These

findings provide some evidence that the debates and conventions enhance partisan selective exposure (Hypothesis 5).

A number of political consequences related to partisan selective exposure were evaluated in Chapter 6. While the cross-sectional results documented strong relationships between partisan selective exposure and political participation, stronger commitment to vote for a particular candidate, and political polarization (Hypothesis 2), the evidence was mixed regarding the causal direction of these relationships (Hypothesis 6). There was limited evidence that partisan selective exposure leads people to settle on their presidential vote choice earlier in the campaign season. Contrary to expectation, there also was some evidence that committed partisans were more likely to consume congenial political media. There was somewhat stronger evidence that partisan selective exposure leads people to participate in politics. Again, however, there was some indication of the reverse causal direction; namely that participation in politics contributes to congenial media exposure. Finally, there was good evidence documenting that partisan selective exposure contributes to higher levels of political polarization. As people consume partisan media that matches their political predispositions, they develop more polarized attitudes.

Partisan media use was related to the agenda-setting ability of the media (Hypothesis 7). Chapter 7 illustrated that patterns of partisan media use were related to different impressions of what issues facing the nation are most important. Though it was anticipated that this relationship would be moderated by ideology/partisanship, there

were many instances where this was not the case. Instead, partisan media use had a main effect on the issues named as most important in several instances.

Further, Chapter 7 provided some evidence that partisan selective exposure was related to issue priming in judgments of President Bush's overall performance (Hypothesis 7). Compared to other respondents, those consuming conservative media placed more weight on Bush's performance in the war on terrorism when judging Bush's overall performance. In contrast, those consuming liberal media placed less weight on Bush's performance in the war on terrorism when judging Bush's overall performance.

When ideology/partisanship was incorporated into the models, the results did not support the priming hypothesis. Consistently, people consuming congenial media were less likely than other respondents to use Bush's performance in handling the economy, the situation in Iraq, and the war on terrorism in determining their overall approval of Bush. Irrespective of their impressions of Bush's performance in each of these areas, liberal Democrats consuming liberal media were more apt to disapprove of Bush's overall performance as president and conservative Republicans consuming conservative media were more apt to approve of Bush's overall performance as president.

Outlet-by-Outlet Analyses

Throughout this dissertation, the presented results were computed using the indices of conservative and liberal media exposure. The use of these indices was beneficial in that they provided a clearer picture of the relationships between partisan media use and the various political variables of interest. All analyses, however, were

replicated using each of the individual outlet measures. A summary of these results is provided in Table 8.1 and Table 8.2.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Note that the political priming results are not included in these tables because these results are not based on two-variable interactions as the others are.

Table 8.1. *Summary of Significant Cross-sectional Results by Outlet*

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
Antecedents of Partisan Media Use								
General Political Knowledge	X	X			X	X		*
Campaign 2004 Knowledge				X	X	X		
Political Interest	X	X	X		X	X		
Consequences of Partisan Media Use								
Political Participation	X	X		X	X	X		X
Intention to Participate			X		X			X
Commitment		X	X	X	X	X		X
Time of Decision				X	X	*		
Polarization	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Economy a Problem			X	X	X	X	X	
Iraq a Problem	*		X		X	X	X	
Terrorism a Problem			X	X	X	X		X

Note: For antecedents of partisan media use, an x represents a significant interaction between the political variable (e.g. general political knowledge) and ideology/partisanship in predicting consumption of each media outlet. For consequences of partisan media use, an x represents a significant main effect of partisan media use in predicting the political variable (e.g. political participation) or a significant interaction between ideology/partisanship and partisan media use in predicting the political variable. A * represents a results that was counter to prediction.

Table 8.2. *Summary of Significant Panel Results by Outlet*

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser-vative	Liberal	FOX	CNN/MSNBC	Conser-vative	Liberal
Antecedents of Partisan Media Use								
General Political Knowledge	0	0	0	1	3	4	0	0
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	0
Political Interest	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
DNC Exposure ¹	0	0	0	*	0	0	0	0
RNC Exposure ¹	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Debate Exposure ¹	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bush Won the Debates ³	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Kerry Won the Debates ³	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Political Participation ⁴	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
Commitment	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Polarization	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Consequences of Partisan Media Use								
Campaign 2004 Knowledge	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0
Political Interest	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Political Participation ⁴	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1
Commitment ²	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
Time of Decision ¹	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Polarization	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Economy as a Problem	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Iraq as a Problem	0	0	2	0	1	2	0	1
Terrorism as a Problem	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	0

Note: Cell entries are the number of panels out of 4 with significant results in accordance with the hypotheses. For antecedents of partisan media use, significant results are interactions between the political variable and ideology/partisanship when predicting partisan media use. For consequences of partisan media use, significant results are main effects of partisan media use or interactions between partisan media use and ideology/partisanship in predicting the political variables. ¹Only one panel was used. ²Only three panels were used ³Only one panel was used and significant main effects of perceptions that a candidate won the debates are included in the summary ⁴Results are out of five panels, including the longer-term panel analysis discussed in Chapter 6. Intentions to participate and participation are combined.

The summary of the cross-sectional outlet-by-outlet results (Table 8.1) shows that the findings using the ideological media exposure indices are largely replicated if each media outlet is considered separately. As with the indices, the results in Table 8.2 document that few relationships were significant in the panel analyses using the outlet-by-outlet measures. Reasons for this will be discussed shortly in the limitations section. One of the most striking patterns emanating from Tables 8.1 and 8.2 is the large number of findings associated with cable news viewing. In comparison to all other media outlets, cable news was most consistently related to the political variables in expected ways.

General Discussion

Though many results were discussed in the individual chapters, two patterns of results emerging across chapters are particularly noteworthy. First, many of the partisan media effects discussed in Chapter 6 were moderated by ideology/partisanship. In Chapter 7, however, there were several instances where ideology/partisanship did *not* moderate the effects of partisan media use on people's impressions of the most important problem. If partisan media outlets emphasize issues on which preferred candidates perform better, then consumers with congenial political views may be empowered in their belief that their preferred candidate is indeed a better choice – hence they develop more polarized views and participate more. Counter-attitudinal exposure, however, may yield precisely the opposite effect. Adopting the media's definition of the most important issues, those consuming uncongenial media may question their candidate preference if that candidate does not perform as well on these issues. This, in turn, could lead to lower levels of polarization and participation.

Second, as documented in the outlet-by-outlet results throughout this dissertation, cable news consumption was most consistently related to the political variables. Several possible explanations exist for this finding. First, this finding may be a measurement artifact. Recall that cable news exposure was the only partisan media variable that did not require the construction of a classification system for many different outlets. The use of classification systems and coding schemes to identify outlets as liberal and conservative, as was done when evaluating the partisanship of websites and radio programs, undoubtedly leads to some measurement error. Further, newspaper endorsements may not be a perfect indicator of the political leanings of the newspaper (Dalton et al., 1998). As a measurement less prone to error, cable news viewing may show stronger relationships with political attitudes and behaviors compared to other political media outlets.

It is also possible that television may be more influential on people's political attitudes and behaviors because of its unique properties. Television takes advantage of both sight and sound, which may better enable people to remember televised messages. Graber (2001), for example, argues that audiovisual information is privileged in information processing. Further, unlike print media, where people can re-read portions of an article, television requires people to keep pace with the transmission of messages. In doing so, television may not provide people with the critical reflection time needed to discount media messages. Jamieson (1992) notes that television's

visual capacity couples with an ability to reconfigure 'reality' in ways that heighten the power of the visceral appeal. Its multimodal nature makes analytic

processing of rapidly emerging claims all but impossible. And its status as entertaining wallpaper grants television the privilege of surrounding us with claims that education has taught us to reject were they lodged on the printed page.

(p. 10)

Another contributing factor may be that the cable news stations are self-proclaimed unbiased news networks. This claim may inspire people to trust the media outlet more – which may amplify the media’s effect (see, for example, Tsfati & Cappella, 2003). For these reasons, cable news outlets may consistently have more powerful effects on people’s political attitudes and behaviors.

Limitations

While the research findings in this dissertation have a number of important implications, they are subject to a number of limitations that should be acknowledged. First, exposure to partisan media was operationalized using a number of different strategies, as discussed in Chapter 3. While the survey measures used to operationalize partisan selective exposure were assets because they provided information about outlet-specific exposure, there also were some drawbacks to the employed measurement strategy. The wording of several of the media exposure variables encouraged respondents to provide only one answer. For example, the cable news question asked respondents to identify which cable news network they watched most often: FOX, CNN, or MSNBC. Though they could volunteer other responses, very few respondents did so. More sensitive media measures that allow respondents to identify all of the outlets that

they watched and questions providing an indication of the amount of viewing for each outlet would be helpful in better capturing people's media exposure behavior.

The measure of partisan Internet exposure was particularly problematic for the purposes of this project. Survey respondents were asked to identify whether they accessed a news organization website, a candidate website, or some other site. Only the open-ended responses from those saying that they went to another site were used to create a measure of partisan Internet exposure. However, some of the respondents saying that they went to a candidate's website may have only gone to the website of their preferred candidate (Bimber & Davis, 2003) – a behavior that would qualify as partisan selective exposure. Further, some respondents may have gone to conservative or liberal news organization websites – www.chronwatch.com, for example, openly identifies as a conservative news organization. The small number of Internet findings in the outlet-by-outlet analyses summarized in Tables 8.1 and 8.2 may be partially due to this inadequate measurement.

Throughout, this dissertation contrasts liberal and conservative political views. This is obviously an oversimplification not only of the political views represented in the media, but also of the political views represented in the public in at least two ways. First, coding could be conducted to distinguish a much wider variety of political perspectives (e.g. libertarian, green party, etc.). To the extent that a majority of the public self-classifies as Democrats, Republicans, liberals, and conservatives and the predominant use of this classification system by media outlets, however, I suspect that the main patterns documented throughout this dissertation would persist. Second, coding schemes using

more subtle classifications of the strength of the political views depicted in the media could be used. However, establishing reliable indicators for the strength of political leanings in the media would undoubtedly be an extremely difficult endeavor. What's more, it is not clear that this would improve upon the current coding scheme since members of the public may well not make such fine distinctions when making their media choices. At any rate, the rather general measures of partisan media exposure used here constitute an important limitation of the current analysis.

A second limitation pertains to the types of causal conclusions that can be drawn. Assessing causality is tricky business, and there are few fool-proof ways to conclusively demonstrate causal relationships. Even experiments, the gold standard of internal validity, can generate findings that do not apply outside of the laboratory (Hovland, 1959). Using survey analyses, there is always the possibility that uncontrolled variables account for the relationships between partisan selective exposure and the variables used throughout this dissertation. To try to defend against this possibility, an extensive battery of demographic, political orientation, and media use variables were controlled throughout the analysis. Panel analyses also incorporated controls for the pre-wave value of the dependent variable. Further, an experiment was conducted where participants were randomly assigned to conditions. The possibility of spuriousness, however, cannot be eliminated, particularly in light of cases where the patterns of results emerging from the panel analyses and the experiment were not clear-cut.

The ability to draw causal conclusions is also limited based on the time ordering of the relationship between variables. Throughout this dissertation, the main strategy

used was to conduct analyses where the same group was interviewed at two points in time. Responses to the dependent variable measured in the pre-wave were controlled in an analysis predicting the variable measured in the post-wave. Relationships between the independent variable of interest (measured at time 1) and the dependent variable (measured at time 2) after controlling for the dependent variable at time 1 were taken as evidence of causal direction.

Though using this type of regression analysis is preferable to using cross-lag panel correlations (Kessler & Greenberg, 1981), there are still issues in conclusively resolving the causal direction based on this analysis. Drawing conclusions from this analysis assumes that the time lag between the pre- and post-wave is properly specified. Unfortunately, theoretical discussions of the effects discussed throughout this dissertation provide little guidance on the expected lag between partisan media exposure and political effects (or between political precursors and partisan media exposure). Lags that are too long or too short may result in improper conclusions. Slater (2004) notes that “effects of message exposure may be short-lived. If so, longitudinal lags...may be too long to detect lagged effects of message exposure” (p. 174). Further, Kessler and Greenberg (1981) write that if “the true lag lies beyond the time interval of study” (p. 132), then the researcher may fail to find relationships. With limited theoretical guidance on the appropriate time lag, relationships between media exposure and the political variables under investigation may not be appropriately documented. This does not mean that the causal relationships documented here do not exist; rather, it means that findings of null effects should be approached cautiously. If one had theoretical reason to believe that the

lag length was not well represented in this dissertation, it is possible that a null effect found here could be significant were the lag length properly specified. This issue plagues communication research more generally and warrants additional attention. In this regard, I sympathize with Eveland, Hayes, Shah, and Kwak (2005), who noted that “potentially the most important avenue for further research is to vary the time lag across studies” (p. 439).

In using four different panels with different amounts of time between the pre- and post-wave and regressions conducted at the aggregate level, this dissertation offers some insight into the appropriate lag lengths for investigations of the relationship between congenial media exposure and the outcome variables discussed. Though theory ideally would guide the determination of the lag length, in the absence of theory, the empirical findings here can help to guide theoretical advancements. For example, there was little evidence of a short-term relationship between partisan selective exposure and political participation. The short-term panels and the time series analysis yielded little information about the direction of causality between these variables. When the longest possible lag was isolated, however, there was some evidence that congenial media exposure leads to political participation. Alternatively, for political polarization, there was evidence that congenial media exposure contributed to political polarization in both the short and long term. If these patterns persist throughout additional analyses in other contexts, this provides important guidance for people developing theories of *why* the media has an effect. For participation and partisan selective exposure, theoretical expectations involving short term lags would not comport with the findings here.

Further, theoretical accounts of the relationship between polarization and congenial media use must take care to explain both short and long-term effects.

Reaching unequivocal conclusions about the appropriate lag length for detecting media effects, however, is not possible in the present analysis. Though there is evidence that for some variables, the effect of congenial media exposure takes a longer period of time to unfold, this interpretation is confounded with other explanations. For example, in this study, there was a larger sample size available in the longer panels. It is possible that the larger sample size allowed detection of smaller effects. In addition, the panels took place at different times during the campaign season. The results could have been due to different effects occurring at different points of time rather than different lag lengths. Additional analysis to tease out these differences is warranted.

The third limitation of the research emanates from the finding that the panel analyses produced far fewer significant results in comparison to the cross-sectional analyses. One possible explanation for this occurrence is that the sample size in the panels is small relative to the sample used in the cross-sectional analyses. This case loss may have made it less likely to find significant effects. A second explanation is that the measures used were fairly stable over time. To evaluate the stability of these measures, I was able to take advantage of a small subsample of respondents ($n=433$) who responded to the survey three times: in the cross-section, in the debate panel, and in the post-election panel. The results of this analysis confirm that the outlet exposure measures were highly stable over time. After adjusting for measurement reliability, the correlations between the number of liberal and conservative media outlets consumed over time exceed

0.88.⁷⁵ Other measures under investigation also were fairly stable. For example, after adjusting for measurement reliability, the correlations between polarization over time exceeded 0.92. With highly stable measures, it is more difficult to detect changes over time.

Fourth, a large number of statistical tests were conducted throughout this dissertation. The danger in doing many tests is that one will, simply by chance, obtain a significant result (Type I errors). Replications of this analysis using different data sets can help to rule out this possibility.

Fifth, the generalizability of the results is an important concern. The data used throughout this dissertation was gathered in the context of the 2004 presidential election. During a presidential election, media attention and exposure are at heightened levels; whether these results will continue to hold in other electoral contexts and in non-election contexts is an important question.

These limitations aside, this study has a number of key strengths. First, this study employed a large-scale, nationally representative sample survey to evaluate partisan selective exposure. As a nationally representative sample, findings from the NAES are generalizable to the broad population. Further, the breadth of content-specific media questions allowed for analysis of exposure to many different media types. Instead of results pertaining to a single type of media, these findings document that partisan selective exposure is a more general, cross-outlet pattern with consistent political

⁷⁵ In order to estimate reliability and stability using a 3-wave panel, several assumptions must be made in order to generate an identified model. Here, it was assumed that the variable measured at time 1 had no effect on the variable measured at time 3 after the variable at time 2 was controlled. Further, it was assumed that the reliability of the measures was identical at each point in time.

antecedents and consequences. This dissertation also employed many methodologies in order to understand partisan selective exposure. In addition to cross-sectional survey analysis, the experiment documented patterns of partisan media exposure. Further, four different panel surveys and aggregate analyses were used to investigate the influence of partisan media use. This permitted analysis of both short and long-term lagged effects. These substantial strengths represent important improvements over prior research.

Partisan Selective Exposure and Communication Research

The study of partisan selective exposure has much to contribute to the study of communication and media effects. Three specific contributions are explored here. First, this research and its findings challenge the common assumption that selective exposure corresponds to a conception of limited media effects. Second, the effects of partisan selective exposure call into question the treatment of (a) the media as an undifferentiated transmitter of messages and (b) the audience as an undifferentiated receiver of messages. Third, the study of partisan media exposure provides insight and future research opportunities regarding the relationship between the effects of the media and interpersonal communication. Each of these areas will be reviewed in turn.

In the communication field, the study of selective exposure has a long history. In early research and theory, selective exposure was proposed as a rationale behind limited media effects (Klapper, 1960). For example, in their ambitious overview of findings regarding human behavior, Berelson and Steiner (1964) noted that “people tend to see and hear communications that are favorable or congenial to their predispositions; they are more likely to see and hear congenial communications than neutral or hostile ones” (p.

529). This correspondence translates into a limited media effects perspective because if people are only exposed to views matching their beliefs, then they would be unlikely to change their beliefs. Though this dissertation broadly agrees with Klapper that selective exposure is a “handmaiden of reinforcement” and a “protector of predispositions” (p. 64), this dissertation significantly parts ways with the limited effects perspective. As a handmaiden of reinforcement, the media does not fail to influence the public. Instead, partisan selective exposure produces more polarized attitudes, higher levels of political participation, and differences in public issues judged to be most important.

Second, several research traditions in communication assume that the media convey homogeneous messages to the public. Research in agenda setting, for example, often assumes that different media outlets devote approximately equal amounts of attention to various political issues. As another example, cultivation research often assumes that media exposure, irrespective of media content, leads people to adopt the media’s portrayal of reality. Previous research has levied important critiques against assuming that exposure to any media outlet will have the same effect on the public. Hawkins and Pingree (1981), for example, found that content-specific measures were better predictors of cultivation effects than were measures of total viewing time. Following along these lines, research on partisan selective exposure questions the notion that the media transmit a single agenda. If the media were transmitting the same issue agenda, for example, then one would *not* expect to find that different patterns of media exposure are related to different issues being named as the most important. The results in

Chapter 7, however, provide evidence that partisan media use contributes to different conceptions of the most important issues facing the nation.

Not only does this research question assumptions that media content is homogeneous, it also questions the assumption that the media audience is homogeneous. This type of research has roots in the uses and gratifications tradition. This tradition assumes that people actively seek out media content to fulfill their needs (e.g. cognitive and affective needs, see Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Because people have different motivations for consuming media, the influence of the media may not be the same for all respondents. Accordingly, this dissertation evaluated whether people's political leanings would amplify or diminish the influence of partisan media use. Following research documenting that people's motivations for viewing the media contribute to what people take from the media (see, for example, Eveland, 2001; Eveland et al., 2003), this research suggests that people's political leanings both motivate media exposure *and* moderate the influence of partisan media outlets. In doing so, this dissertation adds to the conception of media effects as moderated by individual motivations and predispositions.

Third, a tradition of research in communication contrasts the effects of the media with the effects of interpersonal communication. Mutz and Martin (2001), for example, document that people perceive that they are exposed to more political disagreement in the media compared to their interpersonal contacts. Others posit that interpersonal communication can enhance media effects (Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Scheufele, 2002) or can motivate people's media exposure (Chaffee & McLeod, 1973). This dissertation

drew from research on the effects of exposure to homogenous interpersonal networks to generate hypotheses about the effects of homogenous media selections. In many cases, the effects of partisan media exposure seem to parallel the effects of homogeneous network exposure. For example, just as exposure to homogeneous political networks is related to higher polarization and participation, exposure to homogenous media is related to higher polarization and participation.

Questions about the relative influence of interpersonal networks and media and the ways that they may interact, however, were not explored in this dissertation and provide an important avenue for additional research. Do interpersonal contacts influence people's political attitudes and behaviors more so than the media? Does the composition of one's interpersonal network moderate the influence of partisan media use or vice versa? Future research into these issues would provide important insights into the media's political role and give us a much more refined understanding of overall partisan information exposure.

As this discussion aims to establish, the study of partisan selective exposure has much to offer to a more general understanding of communication and media effects. Partisan selective exposure also has important implications for the functioning of our democratic system, as noted at the outset, and so this dissertation goes to these implications in the closing paragraphs.

Partisan Selective Exposure, Citizens, and Democracy

Freedom of the press is an important part of a democratic system. In the United States, for example, the press's freedom is enshrined in the Bill of Rights. As a

commercial enterprise, however, the media are subject to market pressures. As more media options become available to consumers, each media outlet competes for a smaller niche audience. If political partisanship persists as a viable segmentation strategy, news outlets may increasingly target their news to attract consumers with specific political leanings. This dissertation suggests that there is indeed demand for this type of media targeting: There are quite clear relationships between the political leanings expressed by media outlets and the political leanings of the audience.

Increasing consumption of congenial political media, whether or not it represents a commercial feat of effective segmentation, should not necessarily be greeted as an unalloyed good. It should, at a minimum, raise the eyebrows of those concerned with the non-commercial role of the press in our democratic system, its role in providing the public with the tools to be good citizens. Can a partisan media fulfill this role?

As with most puzzles garnering sustained academic attention, the answer to this question is not readily apparent. Though a partisan media system can exacerbate social divides and cleavages, it also can invigorate citizens and assist voters trying to make sense of a complex political world.

Partisan media contribute to a democratic system by providing an impetus for political participation. As a frequently employed benchmark, political participation is arguably an important component of a properly functioning democracy. By providing information and motivation, partisan media encourage political participation. In support of this idea, Schudson (1995) noted that political participation skyrocketed during an era of partisan press; “the press of the heyday of American political participation, from the

1840 to 1900, was ... typically loyal to political parties; [the press] served as information promoting boosters of a particular political organization” (p. 199). Consistent with this observation, this dissertation finds that congenial media exposure contributes to political participation.

Partisan media also can help citizens make sense of politics by highlighting partisanship as an organizational scheme. With a working knowledge of political parties, citizens can use partisanship as a political heuristic and as a basis for categorizing political information (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Lodge & Hamill, 1986). In discussing politics using partisan terms, partisan media outlets may help people to develop partisan schemas. Consistent with this idea, the analyses of campaign knowledge in this dissertation provide no indication that partisan media exposure leads to lower levels of knowledge. On the contrary, there is some evidence that congenial media exposure leads to higher knowledge. Based in part on this rationale, Schudson (1995) encourages media coverage of political parties and points to benefits of incorporating partisanship in the media.

Theories about the possible dangers of the partisan media provide a stark contrast to these optimistic treatments. Specifically, concern has been voiced that partisan selective exposure exacerbates divides in who participates in politics and impedes the development of common goals and interests. A partisan media system also may fail to assist citizens in effectively evaluating the performance of public officials.

Though partisan selective exposure increases political participation, not everyone consumes partisan media. A fractured media system not only permits partisan selective

exposure, it permits political avoidance. Those uninterested in politics can avoid political content. When those people with a preference for entertainment have more media options, research suggests that they have lower levels of political engagement (Prior, 2005). The combination of enhanced engagement among those consuming partisan media and depressed engagement among those consuming non-political media is worrisome, because people's political interests may not be equitably represented. Those engaging in partisan exposure may have their political interests over-represented in comparison to those avoiding politics. An explosion of both partisan and non-political media, therefore, may in tandem compound gaps in citizen participation.

Partisan selective exposure also works against the development of shared interests. John Dewey (1916/1985) argued that a properly functioning democracy is characterized by common goals and interests. As people develop different issue agendas fed by their media exposure patterns, they may increasingly fail to share such a common agenda. This consequently may impede the creation of broadly supported public policies and the ability of diverse interests to reach consensus and rally around important social issues. Shaw and Hamm (1997) share this concern, noting:

The traditional mass media are in decline as audiences shift to more individualized media, and, partially as a result, the ability of leaders to hold large social systems together is also in decline because citizens are as likely to seek out messages from other individuals or groups who think like themselves as they are to remain committed to messages that represent the entire group (p. 210).

As the findings here indicate, partisan selective exposure contributes not only to differences in the political issues perceived to be most important; it also contributes to more polarized attitudes. More polarization may lead citizens to have less tolerance for people with other political perspectives, an effect that could confound efforts to reach social consensus and solve important social issues.

Third, people engaging in partisan selective exposure may not be adequately informed to perform their duties as citizens. In the present study, there is no evidence that partisan selective exposure depresses political knowledge. On the other hand, the examination of knowledge, in particular the *types* of knowledge evaluated, was necessarily limited in this research. Normative prescriptions contend that good citizens should employ rational criteria in reaching political decisions. There is some suggestion from the present results that this process may be thwarted by partisan selective exposure. Namely, in making judgments of the performance of the president, those consuming congenial media outlets were less likely to use the president's performance in handling the economy, the situation in Iraq, or the war on terrorism as a basis for their judgment compared to likeminded partisans not consuming congenial outlets. Though several interpretations of this result are possible, one possibility is that partisan selective exposure leads people to employ non-issue-based criteria in forming their political evaluations. Partisan media exposure may lead citizens to not hold leaders accountable for their performance on important political issues.

Partisan selective exposure also has implications for how politicians interact with the public. Importantly, political strategists can use a fractured media system to their

advantage. Instead of sending their political clients “to the wolves” to face a divided or critical audience, it is strategic to deliver certain messages to a congenial audience. Consider, for example, Vice President Dick Cheney’s exclusive FOX interview after he accidentally shot hunting partner Harry Whittington. Some messages that may engender animosity in an uncongenial audience can inspire congenial audiences, and savvy political consultants can take advantage of partisan selective exposure to target political messages. Without the loyal opposition or a non-partisan entity checking and counter-arguing a partisan version of reality, politicians may more readily get away with distortions of the truth. This creates a type of partisan selective production whereby political officials can differentially grant interviews and differentially convey information depending on the political leanings of the media outlet. In accordance with this view, media outlets then become, perhaps hopelessly, confounded with political parties.

How do we reconcile these two divergent views of the role of partisan media in a democratic system? Should we bemoan or celebrate partisan media? Though undoubtedly anticlimactic, it seems that the most satisfying response to this question is: It depends.

A desirable media system would maximize the benefits of partisan media exposure while minimizing the consequences. If everyone engaged in partisan selective exposure, the consequences of partisan selective exposure would be *maximized*. People would increasingly fragment into different groups and develop different goals, attitudes, and perceptions. Alternatively, if no one engaged in partisan selective exposure, the benefits of partisan selective exposure would be *minimized*. Political participation would

not be encouraged and political media coverage would be less effective in helping people to understand politics. Hence, neither extreme yields a desirable system.

These extremes are reflected well in Carey's (1969/1997) description of two forces at work in the media environment. He labels media targeting broad national audiences a *centripetal* force and media targeting small segments of the population a *centrifugal* force. As an introductory physics book would explain, equilibrium is reached when centripetal and centrifugal forces are balanced. Accordingly, a system where people consume partisan media outlets *and* political media outlets catering to more politically diverse audiences yields equilibrium. As Katz (1996) notes, "If one were designing a participatory democracy, one would make provision for a central space in which all citizens could gather together and for dispersed spaces in which they could meet in smaller, more homogeneous groups" (p. 23). If centrifugal forces dominate, the system must bolster centripetal forces to regain equilibrium. If centripetal forces dominate, the system must bolster centrifugal forces to regain equilibrium.

Today, partisan selective exposure is arguably gaining momentum. There is something compelling about contemporary partisan media that attracts likeminded audiences. Perhaps partisan media provide a refreshing contrast to the "fiercely dull" (Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997) news coverage of putatively nonpartisan outlets. The day may soon come – some might well argue that it has already arrived – when the media no longer help to unify the public. The high levels of partisan media exposure, attitude polarization, and divergences in public agendas documented here certainly can be read as disconcerting. The challenge then becomes figuring out how a free press can help society

to balance this drive for partisan information and the need for a society to unite its citizens.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J. S. (1961). Reduction of cognitive dissonance by seeking consonant information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 62(1), 74-78.
- Adams, W. C., Salzman, A., Vantine, W., Suelter, L., Baker, A., Bonvouloir, L., et al. (1985). The power of "The Right Stuff": A quasi-experimental field test of the docudrama hypothesis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 49(3), 330-339.
- Aday, S., Livingston, S., & Hebert, M. (2005). Embedding the truth: A cross-cultural analysis of objectivity and television coverage of the Iraq war. *Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, 10(1), 3-21.
- Allison, P. D. (1999). *Logistic regression using the SAS system: Theory and application*. Cary, NC: SAS Institute.
- Atkin, C. K. (1970). Reassessing two alternative explanations of de facto selective exposure. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34(3), 464-465.
- Atre, J., & Katz, E. (2005). *What's killing television news? Experimentally assessing the effects of multiple channels on media choice*. Paper presented at the International Communication Association Conference, New York, NY.
- Ball-Rokeach, S. J., Grube, J. W., & Rokeach, M. (1981). "Roots: The next generation" - Who watched and with what effect? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 45, 58-68.
- Barlett, D. L., Drew, P. B., Fahle, E. G., & Watts, W. A. (1974). Selective exposure to a presidential campaign appeal. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 38, 264-270.
- Barnhurst, K. G., & Mutz, D. C. (1997). The new long journalism: The decline of event-centered coverage in American newspapers. *Journal of Communication*, 47, 27-53.
- Bartels, L. M. (1996). Uninformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 194-230.
- Baum, M. A., & Kernell, S. (1999). Has cable ended the golden age of presidential television? *American Political Science Review*, 93(1), 99-114.
- Beasley, R. K., & Joslyn, M. R. (2001). Cognitive dissonance and post-decision attitude change in six presidential elections. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 521-540.

- Benoit, W. L., Hansen, G. J., & Verser, R. M. (2003). A meta-analysis of the effects of viewing U.S. presidential debates. *Communication Monographs*, 70(4), 335-350.
- Berelson, B., & Steiner, G. A. (1964). *Human behavior: an inventory of scientific findings*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.
- Berger, I. E., & Mitchell, A. A. (1989). The effect of advertising on attitude accessibility, attitude confidence, and the attitude-behavior relationship. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16, 269-279.
- Best, S. J., Chmielewski, B., & Krueger, B. S. (2005). Selective exposure to online foreign news during the conflict with Iraq. *Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, 10(4), 52-70.
- Biek, M., Wood, W., & Chaiken, S. (1996). Working knowledge, cognitive processing, and attitudes: On the determinants of bias. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22(6), 547-556.
- Bimber, B., & Davis, R. (2003). *Campaigning online: The internet in U.S. elections*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Boudreau, T. (2004). *Down to the Wire: NPR's "Morning Edition" Coverage of the 2000 Presidential Election Campaign*. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Toronto, Canada.
- Brock, T. (1965). Commitment to exposure as a determinant of information receptivity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2(1), 10-19.
- Brownstein, A. L. (2003). Biased predecision processing. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(4), 545-568.
- Canon, L. K. (1964). Self-confidence and selective exposure to information. In L. Festinger (Ed.), *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance* (pp. 83-95). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cappella, J. N., Turow, J., & Jamieson, K. H. (1996). *Call-in political talk radio: Background, content, audiences, portrayal in mainstream media*. Philadelphia: Annenberg Public Policy Center.
- Carey, J. (1969/1997). The Communications Revolution and the Professional Communicator. In E. S. Munson & C. A. Warren (Eds.), *James Carey: A Critical Reader* (pp. 128-143). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cassara, C. (1998). US newspaper coverage of human rights in Latin America, 1975-1982: Exploring President Carter's agenda-building influence. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(3), 478-486.

- Center for Media and Public Affairs. (2003). *The diversity debate: Media coverage of affirmative action in college education*. Washington, D.C.
- Center for Media and Public Affairs. (2004a). *Campaign 2004: The summer: How the media covered the presidential campaign during summer 2004*. Washington, D.C.
- Center for Media and Public Affairs. (2004b). *Campaign 2004: The media agenda*. Washington, D.C.
- Chaffee, S. H., & McLeod, J. M. (1973). Individuals vs. social predictors of information seeking. *Journalism Quarterly*, 50, 237-245.
- Chaffee, S. H., & Metzger, M. J. (2001). The end of mass communication? *Mass Communication & Society*, 4(4), 365-379.
- Chaffee, S. H., Saphir, M. N., Grap, J., Sandvig, C., & Hahn, K. S. (2001). Attention to counter-attitudinal messages in a state election campaign. *Political Communication*, 18, 247-272.
- Chaffee, S. H., & Schleuder, J. (1986). Measurement and effects of attention to media news. *Human Communication Research*, 13(1), 76-107.
- Clymer, A. (2004). *Fahrenheit 9/11 viewers and Limbaugh listeners about equal in size even though they perceive two different nations, Annenberg data show*. Retrieved March 3, 2006, from http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/naes/2004_03_fahrenheit_08-03_pr.pdf
- Cotton, J. L. (1985). Cognitive dissonance in selective exposure. In D. Zillmann & J. Bryant (Eds.), *Selective exposure to communication* (pp. 11-33). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- D'Alessio, D., & Allen, M. (2002). Selective exposure and dissonance after decisions. *Psychological Reports*, 91, 527-532.
- Dalton, R. J., Beck, P. A., & Huckfeldt, R. (1998). Partisan cues and the media: Information flows in the 1992 presidential election. *American Political Science Review*, 92(1), 111-126.
- Davidson, J. R., & Kiesler, S. B. (1964). Cognitive behavior before and after decisions. In L. Festinger (Ed.), *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance* (pp. 10-19). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Delli Carpini, M. X., & Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Dewey, J. (1916/1985). *Democracy and education*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Dhar, R., & Simonson, I. (2003). The effect of forced choice on choice. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *XL*, 146-160.
- Diebold, F. X. (2004). *Elements of forecasting* (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: Thomson.
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, W. R., & Robinson, J. P. (2001). Social implications of the Internet. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *27*, 307-336.
- Donohew, L., & Palmgreen, P. (1971). A reappraisal of dissonance and the selective exposure hypothesis. *Journalism Quarterly*, *48*(3), 412-420.
- Donsbach, W. (1991). Exposure to political content in newspapers: The impact of cognitive dissonance on readers' selectivity. *European Journal of Communication*, *6*, 155-186.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.
- Eagly, A. H., Kulesa, P., Chen, S., & Chaiken, S. (2001). Do attitudes affect memory? Tests of the congeniality hypothesis. *Current directions in psychological science*, *10*(1), 5-9.
- Edwards, K., & Smith, E. E. (1996). A disconfirmation bias in the evaluation of arguments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *71*(1), 5-24.
- Erlich, D., Guttman, I., Schönbach, P., & Mills, J. (1957). Postdecision exposure to relevant information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *54*, 98-102.
- Eveland Jr., W. P. (2001). The cognitive mediation model of learning from the news: Evidence from nonelection, off-year election, and presidential election contexts. *Communication Research*, *28*(5), 571-601.
- Eveland Jr., W. P., Hayes, A. F., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, N. (2005). Understanding the relationship between communication and political knowledge: A model comparison approach using panel data. *Political Communication*, *22*, 423-446.
- Eveland Jr., W. P., & Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Connecting news media use with gaps in knowledge and participation. *Political Communication*, *17*, 215-237.
- Eveland Jr., W. P., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, N. (2003). Assessing causality in the cognitive mediation model: A panel study of motivations, information processing, and learning during campaign 2000. *Communication Research*, *30*(4), 359-386.

- Feather, N. T. (1962). Cigarette smoking and lung cancer: A study of cognitive dissonance. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 14(1), 55-64.
- Federal Communications Commission. (2004). *Media bureau releases report on cable a la carte pricing model*. Retrieved February 1, 2006, from http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-254443A1.pdf
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Festinger, L. (1964). *Conflict, decision, and dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Fiorina, M. P., Abrams, S. J., & Pope, J. C. (2005). *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Fischer, P., Jonas, E., Frey, D., & Schulz-Hardt, S. (2005). Selective exposure to information: The impact of information limits. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35, 469-492.
- Fischer, P., Schultz-Hardt, S., & Dieter, F. (2004). Selective exposure to supporting vs. conflicting information: The moderating role of information number. *International Journal of Psychology*, 39(5-6S), 204.
- Freedman, J. L. (1965a). Confidence, utility, and selective exposure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2(5), 778-780.
- Freedman, J. L. (1965b). Preference for dissonant information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2(2), 287-289.
- Freedman, J. L., & Sears, D. O. (1963). Voters' preferences among types of information. *American Psychologist*, 18, 375.
- Freedman, J. L., & Sears, D. O. (1965). Selective exposure. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 57-97). New York: Academic Press.
- Frey, D. (1981). Postdecisional preference for decision-relevant information as a function of the competence of its source and the degree of familiarity with this information. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 17, 51-67.
- Frey, D. (1982). Different levels of cognitive dissonance, information seeking, and information avoidance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43, 1175-1183.

- Frey, D. (1986). Recent research on selective exposure to information. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 19, pp. 41-80). New York: Academic Press.
- Galston, W. A. (2003). If political fragmentation is the problem, is the Internet the solution? In D. M. Anderson & M. Cornfield (Eds.), *The civic web: Online politics and democratic values* (pp. 35-44). Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Gilberg, S., Eyal, C., McCombs, M., & Nicholas, D. (1989). The state of the union address and the press agenda. *Journalism Quarterly*, 57, 584-588.
- Goldstein, K., & Freedman, P. (2002). Lessons learned: Campaign advertising in the 2000 elections. *Political Communication*, 19, 5-28.
- Graber, D. A. (1994). Why voters fail information tests: Can the hurdles be overcome? *Political Communication*, 11, 331-346.
- Graber, D. A. (2001). *Processing politics: Learning from television in the Internet age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, D., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2002). *Partisan hearts & minds: Political parties and the social identities of voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hardy, B. W., & Scheufele, D. A. (2005). Examining differential gains from Internet use: Comparing the moderating role of talk and online interactions. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 71-84.
- Harrison, M. (2006). New format for heavy hundred: The 100 most important hosts now ranked leading elite group of 250. *Talkers Magazine*, 165.
- Hawkins, R. P., & Pingree, S. (1981). Uniform content and habitual viewing: Unnecessary assumptions in social reality effects. *Human Communication Research*, 7(4), 291-301.
- Hofstetter, C. R., Barker, D., Smith, J. T., Zari, G. M., & Ingrassia, T. A. (1999). Information, misinformation, and political talk radio. *Political Research Quarterly*, 52(2), 353-369.
- Horrigan, J., Garrett, K., & Resnick, P. (2004). *The Internet and democratic debate: Pew Internet & American Life Project*.
- Hovland, C. I. (1959). Reconciling conflicting results derived from experimental and survey studies of attitude change. *American Psychologist*, 14, 8-17.

- Huckfeldt, R., Mendez, J. M., & Osborn, T. (2004). Disagreement, ambivalence, and engagement: The political consequences of heterogeneous networks. *Political Psychology, 25*(1), 65-95.
- Huckfeldt, R., & Sprague, J. (1995). *Citizens, politics, and social communication*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Isenberg, D. J. (1986). Group polarization: A critical review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*(6), 1141-1151.
- Iyengar, S. (1988). New directions of agenda-setting research. In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* (Vol. 11). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). *News that matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyengar, S. S., & Lepper, M. R. (2000). When choice is demotivating: Can one desire too much of a good thing? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*(6), 995-1006.
- Jacobson, G. C. (2003). Partisan polarization in presidential support: The electoral connection. *Congress & the Presidency, 30*(1), 1-37.
- Jaffee, M. K. (2004, October 29). Endorsements fire up readers: In polarized presidential race, papers' picks sparking unprecedented outrage. *San Antonio Express-News*, p. 1A.
- Jamieson, K. H. (1992). *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction, and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jamieson, K. H., & Birdsell, D. S. (1988). *Presidential debates: The challenge of creating an informed electorate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Janis, I. L., & Mann, L. (1968). A conflict-theory approach to attitude change and decision making. In A. Greenwald, T. Brock & T. Ostrom (Eds.), *Psychological foundations of attitudes* (pp. 327-360). New York: Academic Press.
- Jecker, J. D. (1964a). The cognitive effects of conflict and dissonance. In L. Festinger (Ed.), *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance* (pp. 21-30). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Jecker, J. D. (1964b). Selective exposure to new information. In L. Festinger (Ed.), *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance* (pp. 65-81). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Johnson, T. J., Braima, M. A. M., & Sothirajah, J. (1999). Doing the traditional media sidestep: Comparing the effects of the internet and other nontraditional media with traditional media in the 1996 presidential campaign. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(1), 99-123.
- Johnson, T. J., & Kaye, B. K. (2003). A boost or bust for democracy? How the web influenced political attitudes and behaviors in the 1996 and 2000 presidential elections. *Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, 8(3), 9-34.
- Jonas, E., Schulz-Hardt, S., & Frey, D. (2005). Giving advice or making decisions in someone else's place: The influence of impression, defense, and accuracy motivation on the search for new information. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(7), 977-990.
- Jonas, E., Schulz-Hardt, S., Frey, D., & Thelen, N. (2001). Confirmation bias in sequential information search after preliminary decisions: An expansion of dissonance theoretical research on selective exposure to information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(4), 557-571.
- Jonas, K., Diehl, M., & Brömer, P. (1997). Effects of attitudinal ambivalence on information processing and attitude-intention consistency. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 190-210.
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(3), 339-375.
- Kahn, K. F., & Kenney, P. J. (2002). The slant of the news: How editorial endorsements influence campaign coverage and citizens' views of candidates. *American Political Science Review*, 96(2), 381-394.
- Katz, E. (1968). On reopening the question of selectivity in exposure to mass communications. In R. P. Abelson, E. Aronson, W. J. McGuire, T. M. Newcomb, M. J. Rosenberg & P. H. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook* (pp. 788-796). Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
- Katz, E. (1996). And deliver us from segmentation. *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Sciences*, 546(1), 22-33.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509-523.
- Kenski, K., & Stroud, N. J. (2006). Connections between Internet use and political efficacy, knowledge, and participation. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 50(2), 173-192.

- Kessler, R. C., & Greenberg, D. F. (1981). *Linear panel analysis: Models of quantitative change*. New York: Academic Press.
- Kinder, D. R. (2003). Communication and politics in the age of information. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 357-393). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Kleinhesselink, R. R., & Edwards, R. E. (1975). Seeking and avoiding belief-discrepant information as a function of its perceived refutability. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 31(5), 787-790.
- Knobloch, S., Hastall, M., Zillmann, D., & Callison, C. (2003). Imagery effects on the selective reading of Internet newsmagazines. *Communication Research*, 30(1), 3-29.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Krosnick, J. A., & Kinder, D. R. (1990). Altering the foundations of support for the president through priming. *American Political Science Review*, 84(2), 497-512.
- Kruglanski, A. W. (1989). *Lay epistemics and human knowledge: Cognitive and motivational bases*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Kruglanski, A. W. (2004). *The psychology of closed mindedness*. New York: Taylor & Francis Books.
- Kruglanski, A. W., Shah, J. Y., Pierro, A., & Mannetti, L. (2002). When similarity breeds content: Need for closure and the allure of homogeneous and self-resembling groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(3), 648-662.
- Kruglanski, A. W., & Webster, D. M. (1996). Motivated closing of the mind: "Seizing" and "freezing". *Psychological Review*, 103(2), 263-283.
- Lane, R. E., & Sears, D. O. (1964). *Public Opinion*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lang, K., & Lang, G. E. (1961). Ordeal by debate: Viewer reactions. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(2), 277-288.
- Larson, M. S. (1989). Presidential news coverage and "All things considered": National Public Radio and news bias. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 19(2), 347-354.
- Lau, R. R. (1989). Construct accessibility and electoral choice. *Political Behavior*, 11(1), 5-32.

- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (1997). Voting correctly. *American Political Science Review*, 91(3), 585-598.
- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2001). Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45, 951-971.
- Lau, R. R., & Redlawsk, D. P. (2006). *How voters decide: Information processing during election campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lavine, H., Borgida, E., & Sullivan, J. L. (2000). On the relationship between attitude involvement and attitude accessibility: Toward a cognitive-motivational model of political information processing. *Political Psychology*, 21(1), 81-106.
- Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). *The people's choice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lee, G., & Cappella, J. N. (2001). The effects of political talk radio on political attitude formation: Exposure versus knowledge. *Political Communication*, 18, 369-394.
- Lenz, G. S. (2005). *Learning, not priming: Reconsidering the evidence for the priming hypothesis*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Lodge, M., & Hamill, R. (1986). A partisan schema for political information processing. *American Political Science Review*, 80(2), 505-520.
- Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37(11), 2098-2109.
- Lowin, A. (1967). Approach and avoidance: Alternate modes of selective exposure to information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 6(1), 1-9.
- Lowin, A. (1969). Further evidence for an approach-avoidance interpretation for selective exposure. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 5, 265-271.
- Mayer, W. G. (2004). Why talk radio is conservative. *Public Interest*.
- McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the agenda: The mass media and public opinion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- McCroskey, J. C., & Prichard, S. V. O. (1967). Selective-exposure and Lyndon B. Johnson's 1966 "State of the Union" address. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 11(4).

- McGinnies, E., & Rosenbaum, L. L. (1965). A test of the selective-exposure hypothesis in persuasion. *Journal of Psychology*, *61*, 237-240.
- McGuire, W. J. (1968). Selective exposure: A summing up. In R. P. Abelson, E. Aronson, W. J. McGuire, T. M. Newcomb, M. J. Rosenberg & P. H. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Theories of cognitive consistency: A sourcebook* (pp. 797-800). Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
- McKinney, M. S., & Carlin, D. B. (2004). Political campaign debates. In L. L. Kaid (Ed.), *The handbook of political communication* (pp. 203-234). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- McLeod, J. M., Scheufele, D. A., & Moy, P. (1999). Community, communication, and participation: The role of mass media and interpersonal discussion in local political participation. *Political Communication*, *16*, 315-336.
- Meffert, M. F., Chung, S., Joiner, A. J., Waks, L., & Garst, J. (2006). The effects of negativity and motivated information processing during a political campaign. *Journal of Communication*, *56*(1), 27-51.
- Mendelsohn, M., & Nadeau, R. (1996). The magnification and minimization of social cleavages by the broadcast and narrowcast news media. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *8*(4), 374-390.
- Miller, A. G., McHoskey, J. W., Bane, C. M., & Dowd, T. G. (1993). The attitude polarization phenomenon: Role of response measure, attitude extremity, and behavioral consequences of reported attitude change. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*(4), 561-574.
- Miller, R. E., & Wanta, W. (1996). Sources of the public agenda: The president-press-public relationship. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, *8*(4), 390-402.
- Mills, J. (1965a). Avoidance of dissonant information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *2*(4), 589-593.
- Mills, J. (1965b). The effect of certainty on exposure to information prior to commitment. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *1*, 348-355.
- Mills, J. (1999). Improving the 1957 version of dissonance theory. In E. Harmon-Jones & J. Mills (Eds.), *Cognitive dissonance: Progress on a pivotal theory in social psychology* (pp. 25-42). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Mills, J., Aronson, E., & Robinson, H. (1959). Selectivity in exposure to information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *59*, 250-253.

- Mills, J., & Jellison, J. M. (1968). Avoidance of discrepant information prior to commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 59-62.
- Mills, J., & Ross, A. (1964). Effects of commitment and certainty upon interest in supporting information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 68(5), 552-555.
- Mutz, D. C. (2002a). The consequences of cross-cutting networks for political participation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(4), 838-855.
- Mutz, D. C. (2002b). Cross-cutting social networks: Testing democratic theory in practice. *American Political Science Review*, 96(1), 111-126.
- Mutz, D. C., & Martin, P. S. (2001). Facilitating communication across lines of political difference: The role of mass media. *American Political Science Review*, 95(1), 97-114.
- Nielsen Media Research (2000). *2000 Report on television: The first 50 years*. New York.
- Nimmo, D. (1990). Principles of information seeking in information processing: A preliminary political analysis. In S. Kraus (Ed.), *Mass communication and political information processing* (pp. 3-17). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Nir, L. (2004). *What we think others think: A motivated reasoning model of public opinion perception and expression*. Unpublished Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Nir, L. (2005). Ambivalent social networks and their consequences for participation. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 17(4), 422-442.
- Oliver, M. B. (2002). Individual differences in media effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 507-524). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Paletz, D. L., Koon, J., Whitehead, E., & Hagens, R. B. (1972). Selective exposure: The potential boomerang effect. *Journal of Communication*, 22, 48-53.
- Petrocik, J. R. (1996). Issue ownership in presidential elections, with a 1980 case study. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(3), 825-850.
- Pew Research Center. (2005). *Trends 2005*. Washington, DC.
- Price, V., Cappella, J. N., & Nir, L. (2002). Does disagreement contribute to more deliberative opinion? *Political Communication*, 19, 95-112.

- Price, V., & Tewksbury, D. (1997). News values and public opinion: A theoretical account of media priming. In G. Barnett & F. J. Boster (Eds.), *Progress in the Communication Sciences* (Vol. 13, pp. 173-212). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.
- Price, V., & Zaller, J. (1993). Who gets the news? Alternative measures of news reception and their implications for research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 57(2), 133-164.
- Prior, M. (2002). Liberated viewers, polarized voters - The implications of increased media choice for democratic politics. *The Good Society*, 11(3), 10-16.
- Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 577-592.
- Project for Excellence in Journalism. (2004). *The debate effect: How the press covered the pivotal period of the 2004 presidential campaign*. Washington, DC.
- Redlawsk, D. P. (2002). Hot cognition or cool consideration? *Journal of Politics*, 64(4), 1021-1044.
- Roberts, M. (1997). Political advertising's influence on news, the public, and their behavior. In M. McCombs, D. L. Shaw & D. Weaver (Eds.), *Communication and democracy: Exploring the intellectual frontiers in agenda-setting theory* (pp. 85-96). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rogers, E. M., & Dearing, J. W. (1988). Agenda-setting research: Where has it been, where is it going? In J. A. Anderson (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* (Vol. 11, pp. 555-594). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Romer, D. (2004). Time Series Models. In D. Romer, K. Kenski, P. Waldman, C. Adasiewicz & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *Capturing Campaign Dynamics: The National Annenberg Election Survey*, (pp. 117-189). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rosen, S. (1961). Postdecision affinity for incompatible information. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(1), 188-190.
- Rosenstone, S. J., & Hansen, J. M. (2003). *Mobilization, participation, and democracy in America*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R., Roskos-Ewoldsen, B., & Carpentier, F. R. D. (2002). Media priming: A synthesis. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (pp. 97-120). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Scheufele, D. A. (2002). Examining differential gains from mass media and their implications for participatory behavior. *Communication Research*, 29(1), 46-65.
- Scheufele, D. A., & Nisbet, M. C. (2002). Being a citizen online: New opportunities and dead ends. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 7(3), 55-75.
- Scheufele, D. A., Nisbet, M. C., Brossard, D., & Nisbet, E. C. (2004). Social structure and citizenship: Examining the impacts of social setting, network heterogeneity, and informational variables on political participation. *Political Communication*, 21, 315-338.
- Schramm, W., & Carter, R. F. (1959). Effectiveness of a political telethon. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 23(1), 121-127.
- Schudson, M. (1995). *The power of news*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Schultz, C. B. (1974). The effect of confidence on selective exposure: An unresolved dilemma. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 94, 65-69.
- Schulz-Hardt, S., Frey, D., Lüthgens, C., & Moscovici, S. (2000). Biased information search in group decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 655-669.
- Sears, D. O. (1968). The paradox of de facto selective exposure without preferences for supportive information. In R. P. Abelson, E. Aronson, W. J. McGuire, T. M. Newcomb, M. J. Rosenberg & P. H. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Theories of cognitive consistency: A sourcebook* (pp. 777-787). Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
- Sears, D. O., & Chaffee, S. H. (1979). The uses and effects of the 1976 debates: An overview of empirical studies. In S. Kraus (Ed.), *The great debates: Carter vs. Ford 1976* (pp. 223-261). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sears, D. O., & Freedman, J. L. (1967). Selective exposure to information: A critical review. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 31, 194-213.
- Shah, D. V., Cho, J., Eveland Jr., W. P., & Kwak, N. (2005). Information and expression in a digital age: Modeling Internet effects on civic participation. *Communication Research*, 32(5), 1-35.
- Slater, M. D. (2004). Operationalizing and analyzing exposure: The foundation of media effects research. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(1), 168-183.
- Stempel III, G. H. (1961). Selectivity in readership of political news. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 25(3), 400-404.

- Sunstein, C. (2001). *Republic.com*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sweeney, P. D., & Gruber, K. L. (1984). Selective exposure: Voter information preferences and the Watergate affair. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(6), 1208-1221.
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 755-769.
- Taylor, S. E. (1981). The interface of cognitive and social psychology. In J. H. Harvey (Ed.), *Cognition, social behavior, and the environment* (pp. 189-211). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Tewksbury, D. (2005). The seeds of audience fragmentation: Specialization in the use of online news sites. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 49(3), 332-348.
- Thayer, S. (1969). Confidence and postjudgment exposure to consonant and dissonant information in a free-choice situation. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 77, 113-120.
- Tsfati, Y. (2003a). Debating the debate: The impact of exposure to debate news coverage and its interaction with exposure to the actual debate. *Harvard Journal of Press/Politics*, 8(3), 70-86.
- Tsfati, Y. (2003b). Does audience skepticism of the media matter in agenda setting? *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 47(2), 157-176.
- Tsfati, Y., & Cappella, J. N. (2003). Do people watch what they do not trust? Exploring the association between news media skepticism and exposure. *Communication Research*, 30(5), 504-529.
- Turow, J. (1997). *Breaking up America: Advertisers & the new media world*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tyszka, T. (1986). Information and evaluation processes in decision making: The role of familiarity. In B. Brehmer, H. Jungerman, P. Lourens & G. Sevon (Eds.), *New directions in research on decision making* (pp. 151-161). North Holland, the Netherlands: Elsevier Science.
- Vallone, R. P., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1985). The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut massacre. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49(3), 577-585.
- Wanta, W. (1997). *The public and the national agenda: How people learn about important issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Wanta, W., Golan, G., & Lee, C. (2004). Agenda setting and international news: Media influence on public perceptions of foreign nations. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81(2), 364-377.
- Wanta, W., Stephenson, M. A., Turk, J. V., & McCombs, M. (1989). How president's state of union talk influenced news media agendas. *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 537-541.
- Webster, D. M., & Kruglanski, A. W. (1994). Individual differences in need for cognitive closure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(6), 1049-1062.
- Webster, J. G. (1986). Audience behavior in the new media environment. *Journal of Communication*, 36(3), 77-90.
- Yanovitzky, I., & Cappella, J. N. (2001). Effect of call-in political talk radio shows on their audiences: Evidence from a multi-wave panel analysis. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 13(4), 377-397.
- Youn, S. (1994). Program type preference and program choice in a multichannel situation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 38, 465-475.
- Zaller, J. (1986). *Analysis of information items in the 1985 NES pilot study*: National Election Studies.
- Zaller, J. R. (1992). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ziemke, D. A. (1980). Selective exposure in a presidential campaign contingent on certainty and salience. In D. Nimmo (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook* (Vol. 4, pp. 497-511). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.
- Zillmann, D., Chen, L., Knobloch, S., & Callison, C. (2004). Effects of lead framing on selective exposure to internet news reports. *Communication Research*, 31, 58-81.
- Zillmann, D., Knobloch, S., & Yu, H.-S. (2001). Effects of photographs on the selective reading of news reports. *Media Psychology*, 3(301-324).

APPENDIX A: CLASSIFICATION OF RADIO HOSTS AND PROGRAMS

As detailed in Chapter 3, survey respondents identifying that they listened to political talk radio were asked to name the hosts or programs to which they listened. These open-ended responses were used to create a measure of exposure to conservative talk radio and a measure of exposure to liberal talk radio. To determine whether the host or program was conservative or liberal, a three-fold strategy was used. First, I searched for each host or program identified by the respondent on the Internet. The host or program website was evaluated to see if the host explicitly claimed to have a political leaning. Second, industry publications, particularly *Talkers* magazine, were consulted for references to the political leanings of the radio host (Cappella et al., 1996). Finally, prior literature was consulted to evaluate whether there was any precedent for classifying the program or host as having certain political inclinations. A summary of the evidence leading to the classification of each of the hosts and programs used in this dissertation is provided on the subsequent pages.

Table A.1: *Classification of Radio Hosts and Programs as Liberal and Conservative*

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Air America	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website tag states that Air America is a “progressive talk radio network” (www.airamericaradio.com/, 4/4/06)
Jamie Allman	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the morning show archives, he address his comments to his “fellow conservatives” (http://www.971talk.com/weekdays/allmans_rant9.aspx, 6/3/06)
American Family Radio	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes that the news is “refreshingly different from the usual liberal news sources...” (http://www.afr.net/newafr/about.asp, 3/3/0/06) and that “our goal is to present the day’s news from a Christian perspective” (http://www.afr.net/newafr/afnews.asp, 3/30/06) The website says that it is “Today’s radio for life” (http://www.afr.net/newafr/default.asp, 4/4/06) and includes articles supporting hot-button conservative issues such as marriage and abortion (http://www.afr.net/newafr/scrollbox.asp, 4/4/06)
America Talks	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website says program is “from a conservative perspective” (http://www.americatalks.com/, 5/9/06)
Armstrong & Getty	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station website notes “conservative talk show hosts Armstrong & Getty” (www.910knew.com/podcast/ang.xml, 3/30/06) and station website identifies them as conservative talk hosts (http://www.quakeradio.com/debate/great_debate_about.html, 3/30/06)
Arnie Arnesen	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website discusses her extensive background in Democratic politics (http://www.arniearnesen.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=9&Itemid=27, 5/9/06) <i>Talkers</i> magazine notes that Arnesen’s program would be friendly to Kerry; “Other than Al Franken, does the Kerry campaign even know who their talk show host friends are? Are syndicated hosts Alan Colmes, Ed Schultz, Arnie Arnesen, Bev Smith, Tony Trupiano and a score of local hosts chopped liver?” (Ratner, 2004, http://www.talkers.com/images/Ratner.pdf, 5/26/06)
Chris Baker	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His website notes that he is an “independent conservative, who's not afraid to take on both Republicans and Democrats” (http://www.ktrh.com/pages/chrisbaker2.html, 3/31/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Glen Beck	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined as conservative in <i>Public Interest</i> (Mayer, 2004) • On his website, it states: “Conservative talk radio is fast becoming the loudest and most prevalent voice in our culture, now Frontline takes an in-depth look at Glenn Beck” and “Liberals in Congress have recently launched a major assault on conservative media by proposing sweeping regulations of mass media – regulations designed to muzzle popular conservative talk show hosts like Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck” (http://www.glennbeck.com/web/index.shtml, 3/29/06) • Beck believes that his “politics lean toward libertarian but also promotes traditional family values.” (http://www.971talk.com/weekdays/beck_glenn.aspx, 3/29/06)
Mark Belling	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On his website, it notes that his show is “a mixture of his principled conservatism, lifestyle issues...” (http://www.belling.com/mark_belling.html, 3/30/06) • <i>Talkers</i> 2006 notes that he fills in for Rush Limbaugh (Harrison, 2006)
Bill Bennett	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On his website, he identifies as a conservative, though he notes that “I’m not going to assume that the conservative line is always right” ; website also notes that “he is a well-known Republican” (http://www.bennettmornings.com, 3/30/06)
Marc Bernier	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press articles on Bernier’s website note that “Mr. Bernier's program is part of a network of conservative-minded local radio shows” (http://www.marcberniershow.com/2001/nyt_press_release_12_29_03.html, 5/12/06) • He also notes that he is a Republican, though he says that he does not always vote for Republicans (http://www.marcberniershow.com/2001/20_questions.html, 5/12/06)
Tammy Bruce	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 “An unconventional conservative...” • Her websites notes that she supported President Bush (http://tammybruce.com/biography.php, 4/3/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Shannon Burke	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes, “loves the city of Winter Park. That’s mostly because that's where the Republicans live.” (http://shannon.wtks.com/shannon_bios.html, 5/9/06) Website discusses liberals calling show and insulting Burke’s politics (http://shannon.wtks.com/shannon_fun9-30-04.html, 5/9/06)
Burt & Kurt	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their website includes a satire CD the hosts made about John Kerry (http://www.burtandkurt.com/Kerry%20Waffles.htm, 5/9/06) The show’s endorsement of Bush is included on their website; “I do believe that George W. Bush is the better man.” (http://www.burtandkurt.com/kurtswip%20November%202004.htm, 5/9/06)
John Carlson	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers</i> calls him a “prominent conservative issues talk host” (Harrison, 2006)
Howie Carr	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He recommends on his website that his listeners go to the <i>Free Republic</i>, a “conservative news and discussion forum” (http://www.howiecarr.com/, 3/16/06) His upcoming guests included: Veteran Washington reporter Bill Sammon discussing his new book <i>Strategy: How George W. Bush Is Defeating Terrorists, Outwitting Democrats, and Confounding the Mainstream Media</i> and Comedian Brad Stine talking about his new book <i>Live from Middle America: Rants from a Red-State Comedian</i>. (http://www.howiecarr.com/, 3/16/06) He links on his website to another site he created called “The REAL John Kerry” that discusses Kerry’s background and voting record from an anti-Kerry perspective (http://www.liveshot.cc/, 5/26/06) On the day before the election, three Republican governors were interviewed, 2 explicitly campaigning for President Bush (http://www.howiecarr.com/, 3/16/06)
Alan Chartock	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the station website, Chartock notes, “For president of the United States, I endorse John Kerry” (http://www.wamc.org/archives/2004_10_29_archive.html, 6/5/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Alan Colmes	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “Progressive perspective” • <i>Talkers</i> states that he does “progressive late-night news/talk” (Harrison, 2006) • His website notes, “America's first nationally syndicated liberal” (http://www.alan.com/staff/alan.htm, 4/3/06)
Counterspin	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “CounterSpin is FAIR's weekly radio show” (http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=5, 5/9/06) • FAIR is “a progressive group” (http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=100, 5/9/06)
Christine Craft	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website shows photos and discusses participation in anti-Bush protest (http://www.1240talkcity.com/shows/christinecraft/, 5/10/06) • She is a featured host on 1240AM, a “progressive talk radio” station (http://www.1240talkcity.com/shows/christinecraft/, 5/26/06)
Bill Cunningham	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “Cincinnati’s conservative firebrand” • <i>Talkers</i> 2006 notes that he is “leading conservative voice in Cincinnati”
Bob Davis	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His station website dubs that he is “bent conservative” (http://www.am1500.com/davis.htm, 6/6/06)
Mark Davis	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “A mainstay of conservative talk”
Dennis and Judi	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes that they are “an ounce of conservative” (http://www.nj1015.com/personalities/dennis-judi.shtm, 5/10/06)
Michael DelGiorno	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the station website, it notes “Since beginning his ‘Standing Up For What's Right’ mission on KFAQ, Michael has led two Pro-America rallies, a Pro-Police rally, two trips to the state capitol to support traditional marriage and other Conservative issues” (http://www.1170kfaq.com/delgiornobio.html, 4/1/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
James Dobson	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On his website, he mentions awards he has received for “Courageous and committed service to the conservative cause” and pro-life positions (http://www.family.org/welcome/bios/A0022947, 3/30/06) • His website notes that he is a conservative Christian and articulates his position against special rights for gay and lesbian populations (http://family.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/family.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faaid=1225, 5/26/06)
Bob Dutko	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes that he is “Bob fiercely defends the unborn against the abortion industry, traditional values against the homosexual agenda, scientific evidence for Biblical Creation against evolution, our nation's Christian heritage against the anti-God movement, our culture against secular humanism and the Church against the dangers of postmodern pluralism” (http://www.wmuz.com/bob_dutko.htm, 3/30/06) • During October, 2004, the following Kerry topics were covered: (1) Bob spoke with the author of the book: "57 Varieties of Radical Causes: Theresa Heinz Kerry's Charitable Giving" which provided research and evidence of how Teresa Heinz Kerry has funded pro-terrorist, and Anti-American Propagandist groups. (2) Bob spoke about Hassan Nemazee, one of John Kerry's main campaign fund-raisers accused of using his position to advance the Islamic Republic agenda in Iran. It was argued that Iran reportedly gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Kerry campaign. (3) In a piece interviewing an ex-gay organization, it was noted that, “Senator Kerry stated that he would meet with the organization, but never followed through” • During October, 2004, the following Bush topics were covered: (1) A book on Iraq that “discusses Bush's insight into the aftermath of 9/11 and the understanding that America will not be safe until the Middle East is Free.” (2) Bob spoke with a representative from "9/11 Families for a Safe and Strong America" about her organization's support for President Bush (3) Bob spoke with the editor of the book: "Thank You President Bush: Reflections on the War on Terror, Defense of the Family, and Revival of the Economy."

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Larry Elder	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> states that he is “the leading African-American conservative” (Harrison, 2006) • His website states “a blend of fiscal conservative and social liberal – with attitude – Elder’s libertarian views” (http://www.larryelder.com/bio.html, 3/31/06) • Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) characterized Elder as conservative
Dave Elswick	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “conservative talk host” • Station website notes his “conservative views” (http://www.karnnewsradio.com/showdj.asp?DJID=16060, 3/31/06)
Al Franken	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “standard bearer for progressive talk genre” • <i>Talkers</i> notes that he is “The poster boy for progressive talk radio” (Harrison, 2006) • On the website for his show, it states, “After debunking right-wing propaganda in his bestselling books <i>Lies</i>, and the <i>Lying Liars Who Tell Them</i> and <i>Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot</i>, Al Franken is taking the fight to America’s airwaves” (http://shows.airamericaradio.com/alfrankenshow/about, 4/4/06)
Free Speech News	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website tag notes, “A daily half-hour progressive US radio newscast” (fsrn.org/, 5/12/06)
FOX	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence suggests that FOX tends to be more conservative (Aday, Livingston, & Herbert, 2005; Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004)
Mike Gallagher	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tag for his website is “Nationally syndicated conservative talk show host can be heard mornings” (3/30/06) • On his website, he discusses his book <i>Surrounded by idiots: Fighting liberal lunacy in America</i>” • <i>Public Interest</i> classifies him as conservative (Mayer, 2004) • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “Issues, lifestyles and politics from conservative point of view”
Greg Garrison	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the station website, it notes “Garrison brings his populist conservative values to the airwaves” (http://www.wibc.com/garrison, 3/31/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Doug Giles	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His website includes many quotes about his anti-liberal take on the issues; e.g. “Doug takes on the liberal orthodoxy and takes no prisoners” and “Giles confronts liberals and their lunacy” (http://clashradio.com, 5/12/06)
Steve Gill	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes that he was voted “Nashville's Best Conservative” (http://www.997wtm.com/page.cfm?pid=36, 5/15/06)
Dom Giordano	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “Conservative former teacher”
Norman Goldman (The Norman Invasion)	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website laments Bush as president and encourages Democrats to unite One show title on the website reads “Bush is an imbecile” Site lists “Norman’s favorite liberal resources” (http://www.thenormaninvasion.com/, 5/16/06)
Janeane Garafalo	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadcasts on Air America, an acknowledged left-leaning radio station (http://www.airamerica.com/schedule, 4/4/06)
Enid Goldstein	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She is a featured talker on Sacramento’s “Left Station” (http://www.kctc.com/Article.asp?id=202794&spid=, 5/12/06)
Amy Goodman (Democracy Now)	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website includes articles that label Goodman as liberal; the website quotes the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> saying “Left-wing radio’s Amy Goodman” The website also includes an article in the <i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> noting that “Democracy Now!, is produced by Pacifica Radio, a politically progressive public radio network” (http://www.democracynow.org/static/Philly.shtml, 4/4/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Michael Graham	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His website touts his background as a GOP political consultant (http://www.wtkk.com/FMTALKPersonalities/MichaelGraham/tabid/64/Default.aspx/, 5/26/06) • His online blog includes notes such as: “anti-Bush boneheads” (http://thenaturaltruth.blogspot.com, 5/26/06) • <i>Washington Post</i> called him a “conservative talk host” (http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/22/AR2005082201255.html, 5/14/06)
Bob Grant	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> calls him an “high-strung, acid-tongued, conservative New Yorker” (http://www.talkers.com/greatest/16rGrant.htm, 5/9/06) • Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded him as conservative
Leon Gray	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station where Leon is a host is called “Progressive Talk” (http://680wwtq.com/, 5/13/06) • Website also calls Leon a “loyal Democrat” (http://680wwtq.com/pages/leongray.htm, 5/13/06)
Sam Greenfield	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website details liberal position on partial birth abortion, criticizes George Bush and Rumsfeld, and encourages people to vote for Democrats (http://hometown.aol.com/massapequa/SamGreenfield.html, 5/13/06)
Ken Hamblin (Black Avenger)	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website tag notes that Hamblin is a “nationally syndicated conservative” (www.ksfo.560.com/showdj.asp?DJID=2366) • Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded him as conservative
Sean Hannity	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biography on FOX News notes that he is a conservative (accessed 3/14/06) • KBOI station description notes that he has “considerable conservative leanings” (http://www.670kboi.com/programs/php, 3/30/06) • Identified by Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) and <i>Public Interest</i> (Mayer, 2004) as a conservative host

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Thom Hartmann	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website calls him a “progressive radio host” (http://www.thomhartmann.com/, 5/10/06) • His radio program is carried on Air America, where he is called “a brilliant, well-informed, liberal” (http://www.airamericaradio.com/thomhartmannpage, 5/26/06) • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 calls Hartmann a “thoughtful approach to progressive talk” (5/26/06)
Roger Hedgecock	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified as a conservative talk radio host (Hofstetter, Barker, Smith, Zari, & Ingrassia, 1999) • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “prince of conservative talk”
Scott Hennen	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest host for Sean Hannity (http://www.ksfo560.com/viewentry.asp?ID=341577&PT=Program%20Summaries, 4/3/06) • Website includes links to articles such as “To ABC's Surprise, Katrina Victims Praise Bush and Blame Nagin” (http://www.wday.com/index.cfm?page=scottstack, 4/3/06) • In his online biography, he quotes a <i>Wall Street Journal</i> article dubbing him the “Rush Limbaugh of the Prairie” (http://www.areavoices.com/hottalk/?page=profile, 4/3/06)
Hugh Hewitt	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> notes that he is an “important conservative voice” (Harrison, 2006) • His website promotes his books, including <i>Painting the map red: The fight to create a permanent Republican majority</i> and has notes saying “Buy conservative advertising” (www.hughhewitt.com/, 4/3/06) • Website tag notes that he is a “nationally syndicated conservative talk show host” (www.hughhewitt.com/, 5/26/06)
Eric Hogue	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a website to which Hogue contributes, it describes his radio show as “the only morning, conservative political talk show in the nation’s largest state Capitol.” (http://www.californiarepublic.org/archives/Columns/Hogue/HogueHome.html, 3/30/06) • His station website also notes that “he has guest hosted for nationally syndicated talkers such as Michael Medved, Hugh Hewitt, Dennis Prager, Laura Ingraham and San Diego’s Roger Hedgecock.” (http://www.ktkz.com/personalities.aspx, 3/30/06)
Spencer Hughes	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On his website, he states “my politics clearly fall to the right of center.” And he discusses his “conservative ideals” (http://www.spencerhughes.net/SPENCER/bio.html, 4/3/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Rusty Humphries	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Interest</i> identifies him as conservative (Mayer, 2004) • <i>Talkers</i> calls him a “multi-talented conservative talker” (Harrison, 2006) • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “syndicated conservative talk”
Karen Hunter	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> notes that Karen was pro-Kerry (http://www.talkers.com/forum7.html, 5/16/06) • Collaborator with Al Sharpton on his book (http://www.wvrl1600.com/personalities.asp?PID=2,5/16/06)
Laura Ingraham	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Laura infuses her program with a level of energy and commitment to conservative principles” (http://www.gracebroadcasting.com/patriot/otherstaff.htm, 3/29/06) • <i>Public Interest</i> (Mayer, 2004) identifies her as conservative
Jesse Jackson	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public supporter of the Democratic Party, Jackson has a “clear progressive agenda” and “helped the Democratic Party regain control” (http://www.rainbowpush.org/about/revjackson.html, 5/16/06)
Bruce Jacobs	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes that “Like Rush, Bruce is grateful for the opportunity to stir things up and bring a more independent, conservative voice to Valley radio” (http://www.kfyi.com/pages/bruce_jacobs.html?feed=119450&article=358790, 3/31/06)
John and Ken	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website includes text of articles naming John and Ken Show as conservative; “Schwarzenegger, appearing on the conservative Los Angeles KFI radio’s “John and Ken talk show” (http://www.johnandkenshow.com/archives/2005/04/, 4/1/06) and “Conservative talk show hosts John and Ken” (http://www.johnandkenshow.com/archives/2006/01/16/, 4/1/06)
Greg Knapp	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website includes links to other websites defending Bush’s wiretapping use, about the war on terror (“Harry Reid and the Democrats are trying to convince you that Bush lied us into the war in Iraq and that’s what the Scooter Libby indictment is really about. WRONG!”), links to sites disputing Michael Moore, links about Saddam’s ties to terrorism, a section with links under the heading “The “elite media” hates Bush voters,” sites touting the Bush economy and a link to “Kerrynomics Explained! The candidate spells out his prescription for economic disaster” (http://www.klif.com/Headlines4.asp?TableNo=2&TableName=ThirdList, 5/12/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Sonali Kolhatkar (Uprising)	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadcast on Pacifica, which highlights that it is “progressive and independent” (http://www.wjol.com/blog/index.php, 5/16/06) Citation on the website characterizes the show as “left” (http://uprisingradio.org/home/?page_id=15, 5/16/06)
Lars Larson	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On his website, he refers to himself as “Right on the left coast” (http://www.larslarson.com, 4/1/06) His station website also notes that he “has acted as a regular fill-in host on the nationally syndicated The Michael Savage Show” (http://radio.ksl.com/index.php?nid=115, 4/1/06)
Mark Levin	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes that Levin is “one of America’s preeminent conservative commentators” (http://www.wabcradio.com/showdj.asp?DJID=12009, 3/30/06)
Jason Lewis	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “conservative talk pro” Local station website notes that he is “Charlotte’s Mr. Right” and that he “was the Republican nominee for the United States Congress from Colorado’s Second District” in 1990 (http://www.wbt.com/programming.cfm?personsID=5, 4/1/06)
G. Gordon Liddy	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified by <i>Public Interest</i> (Summer, 2004) as a conservative host <i>Talkers</i> calls him a “conservative historical icon” (Harrison, 2006) <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “a thinking person’s conservative” Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded as conservative
Rush Limbaugh	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On local Boston talk station, he is billed as: “the media pundit who reshaped the political landscape with his entertaining and informative brand of conservatism” (http://www.wrko.com/showdj.asp?djid=13405, 3/28/06) Identified by <i>Public Interest</i> (Mayer, 2004) and Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) as a conservative host

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Lionel	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “politically impossible to categorize” • On his website, he includes many anti-Bush, anti-Republican jokes (http://www.lionelonline.com/reading.htm, 4/1/06) • On his website he notes, “Lest you think that I’m biased, an anti-Bush partisan (at least this current regime), well, you’re right” (http://www.lionelonline.com/links.htm, 4/1/06) • Lionel broadcasts on progressive radio stations affiliated with Air America (http://www.whmp.com/, 5/26/06)
Bob Lonsberry	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His website notes “Lonsberry is a Republican” (http://www.lonsberry.com/bio.cfm, 3/30/06)
Steve Malzberg	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website dubs him a “conservative stalwart” (http://www.malzbergtalk.com/talk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=69, 5/10/06)
Tom Marr	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes, “Get your first slice of the conservative pie in morning Baltimore radio on the Tom Marr Show” (http://www.tommarr.com/, 5/16/06)
Jay Marvin	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Featured host on “Progressive Talk 760 AM” (http://www.760thezone.com/pages/jaymarvin.html, 5/13/06) • Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded as a liberal host
Jaz McKay	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website includes links to a site to “protect your children’s morality from liberal legislators,” “Take down Hitlery! Click here to join us in our support of John Spencer as he battles for Hillary’s Senate Seat in the 2006 election!” “Buy the ‘I used to be a liberal’ single here,” “Gun owners of America: ... get information on protecting your 2nd amendment rights,” and “stop the ACLU” (http://www.knzs.com/jaz.shtml, 5/13/06)
Adam McManus	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His website states, “liberals are mentally challenged” and articulates many popular conservative beliefs on issues (http://www.takeastand.net/adamsstands.asp, 5/15/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Michael Medved	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Public Interest</i> identifies him as conservative (Mayer, 2004) • His website tag states “Nationally syndicated conservative talk show host”; also, the corner of his website includes the following phrase: “it’s cool to be conservative” (www.michaelmedved.com, 3/30/06)
Stephanie Miller	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> (2005) notes that she “tackles issues and lifestyles from a progressive standpoint” • Her website includes a graphic stating “Liberal and proud of it” (http://www.stephaniemiller.com/, 6/3/06)
Melanie Morgan	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station website notes that Morgan “delivers the news with her unique conservative spin” (http://www.ksfo560.com/showdj.asp?DJID=11187, 4/1/06)
Bill O'Reilly	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> trade publication calls him “one of America’s most colorful conservative broadcasters” (Harrison, 2006). • <i>Public Interest</i> identifies him as conservative (Mayer, 2004)
Pacifica	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several Pacifica stations taut their progressive leanings; KPFK notes that it is “progressive and independent” (http://www.kpfk.org/, 5/16/06) • Broadcasts programs coded as liberal, e.g. Democracy Now
Janet Parshall	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “Issues, politics and lifestyles from conservative Christian standpoint”
Frank Pastore	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a promo for an event, it notes that Pastore is an “advocate for both the Christian faith and conservative political philosophy” (www.frankpastore.com/calendar/index.asp?EventNumber=5944, 5/26/06) • He includes an article from the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> on his website that notes that he presents information “from a conservative Christian perspective” (http://www.frankpastore.com/aboutfrank/latimes_dec05.asp, 3/30/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Kim Peterson (Kimmer Show)	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes “Get your daily dose of un-apologetic, America-loving, wussy-liberal-blasting, hard-news and ever-so-slightly-biased commentary here!” (http://www.kimmershow.com/, 5/12/06)
Point of View	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website states, “<i>Point of View</i>’s loyal listening audience thrives on the daily interviews and interaction with informative guests including authors, politicians, opinion leaders, conservative activists, and subject matter experts.” (http://www.pointofview.net/CC_Content_Page/0,,PTID320166 CHID685254 CIID,00.html, 5/9/06) USA Radio Network which broadcasts Point of View notes that the program “brings insight on today’s events from a conservative perspective” (http://www.usaradio.com/point_of_view.php, 5/26/06)
Dennis Prager	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website includes articles written by Prager and lectures delivered by Prager, including: “Why I cannot vote for John Kerry” (10/19/04) and “Why Democrats use 12-year-olds” with the following line: “The Democratic party is as shameless as it is immature” He includes links on his website to articles that describe him as conservative (ChronWatch, 5/10/03; Stanford Daily 5/9/03; Stanford Review 5/22/02; The Tennessean, 7/26/03; Wall Street Journal 6/30/04).
Bill Press	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His promotion on Sirius radio notes, “Bill Press ... brings his liberal agenda to SIRIUS for a brand new ‘liberal way’ to start your day!” (http://www.sirius.com/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Sirius/CachedPage&c=Channel&cid=104779630493, 5/9/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Jim Quinn	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a section of the website known as “Righteous Links,” Quinn and co-host Rose provide links to homeschooling websites (http://www.warroom.com/rightlinks.htm, 5/26/06) • Station website knows, “Quinn and Rose broadcast from a secure location, somewhere in the heartland of America -- just down the hall from Dick Cheney.” (http://www.wpgb.com/pages/quinnrose.html, 5/26/06) • <i>Pittsburgh Post-Gazette</i> notes that Quinn hosts a “controversial, right-leaning political talk show” and that the new show “will be virtually the same” (McCoy, 12/3/03, http://www.post-gazette.com/tv/20031203quinn1203fnp4.asp, 4/3/06)
Henry Raines (American AM)	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes, “it is the only five-day-a-week show in Tampa Bay targeted at a large but ignored audience, the Democratic and Independent listener.” (http://1490wwpr.com/hosts.html, 5/17/06)
Al Rantel	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His website notes that he is “conservative by nature, yet surprisingly liberal in his thinking” (http://www.kabc.com/showdj.asp?DJID=13652, 3/30/06) • His website also includes opinion articles with a conservative tone; for example: “The liberals want us to believe that they, too, support confronting evil” (http://www.kabc.com/listingsentry.asp?id=315735&pt=detailed+information, 3/30/06) • The front page of the website includes links to college Republicans, Conservative Woman, the Republican Party and not to any Democratic equivalents (http://alrantel.com/, 5/26/06) • However, he is also critical of the president at times. One article notes, “in the case of Bush’s latest statements, they promise to bring even greater problems ahead” (http://www.kabc.com/listingsentry.asp?id=408231&pt=detailed+information, 3/30/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Michael Reagan	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers 2005</i> states “Consistent conservative talk pro” • His website promotes that he is “the eldest son of Ronald Reagan” (http://www.reagan.com/about.php, 3/30/06) • On the website of his carrier, it states, “You’ve heard Michael speak his conservative views on the radio...now he is available in your market” (http://www.radioamerica.org/Program2003/reagan_weekend.htm)
Randi Rhodes	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coded by Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) as conservative • <i>Talkers</i> states “one of the highest profile progressive talk hosts” (Harrison, 2006) • She broadcasts on Air America, which is identified as a “progressive talk radio network” (http://www.airamericaradio.com/, 4/3/06)
Rick Roberts	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He notes on his website that his show is conservative; “She agreed to come on...that was until she found out the show was Conservative.” (http://760kfmb.com/rick_blog/index.php?paged=3, 4/3/06)
Rocky D	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coded by Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) as conservative • Links to an article from his website that discusses his conservative politics (http://rockyd.com/post%20and%20courier%20article.htm, 5/15/06) • He notes that for a time, he was the “only non-liberal in the newsroom” and that he was fired for “unfairly making fun of Bill Clinton” (http://rockyd.com/rockybio.htm, 5/15/06)
Lee Rogers and Melanie Morgan	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website notes, “The host, Lee Rodgers, guides the show with his years of experience. Melanie Morgan, reporter turned soccer-mom turned talk-show host, delivers the news with her unique conservative spin” (http://www.ksfo560.com/showdj.asp?DJID=11187, 5/12/06) • Lee’s biography notes, “he takes pot shots at government, liberalism, and all aspects of American culture while championing rampant free enterprise” (http://www.ksfo560.com/showdj.asp?djid=2254, 5/12/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Mike Rosen	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His station website states, “He’s a free market conservative, pro-defense, pro-choice in just about everything and anti-government meddling in your life. He eats liberals for lunch.” (http://www.850koa.com/pages/shows_rosen.html, 4/1/06)
Michael Savage	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified by <i>Public Interest</i> (Mayer, 2004) as a conservative host Identified by station carrying his program as the “compassionate conservative” (http://www.670kboi.com/programs.php, 3/30/06)
Dr. Laura Schlessinger	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Public Interest</i> identifies her as conservative (Mayer, 2004) On her website, she notes that she received the 2001 Conservative Leadership Award (http://www.drlaura.com/about) and she notes that she was included in the American conservative women calendar (http://www.drlaura.com/reading/?mode=view&id=272, 5/26/06)
Ed Schultz	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers 2005</i> states “Progressive Democrat” <i>Talkers</i> states “most listened-to progressive talk host in America” (Harrison, 2006)
Jay Severin	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers 2005</i> states “independent conservative” In his website bio, he is classified as a “radical independent” (http://www.wtkk.com/FMTALKPersonalities/JaySeverin/tabid/69/Default.aspx)
Michael Smerconish	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) coded as conservative <i>Talkers 2005</i> states “conservative lawyer/newspaper columnist” Website cites column calling the show “conservative-leaning” (http://www.mastalk.com/mastalk/movers_shakers.aspx, 5/13/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Tavis Smiley	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1996 book, <i>Hard left: Straight talk about the wrongs of the right</i> proclaims, “Tavis Smiley, the left's hard-hitting answer to talk radio conservatives” (www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0385484046?v=glance, 5/27/06) On his homepage, it states, “An outspoken and liberal African-American, Smiley became known to many as a kind of anti-Rush Limbaugh” and “Observers have said that Smiley's liberal stance on many issues, and the diversity of perspectives presented on the show, are what set it apart from similar programs.” (http://www.tavistalks.com/CONTENT/About_Tavis_Smiley/index7.html, 5/27/06)
Ron Smith	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The promotion on his station website says "Drive home on the 'right' side of the road with The Ron Smith Show" (http://www.wbal.com/shows/smith, 3/31/06) Though Smith is critical of Bush, he still takes a hard conservative line; “Remember when we voted for George W. Bush back in 2000 because he was a conservative, a man of integrity who would restore dignity to the presidency after eight years of Clintonian sleaze?” (http://wbal.com/shows/smith/commentary/story.asp?articleid=41552, 5/26/06)
Tony Snow	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website biography states: Snow “took a two-year break from journalism to serve in the administration of President George H. W. Bush...” (http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,112960,00.html, 3/30/06) Appointed by President Bush as the White House Press Secretary
Tom Sullivan	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers</i> 2005 states “well-spoken conservative” <i>Talkers</i> 2006 notes that he “fills in for Rush” (Harrison, 2006)
Brian Sussman	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes that he is an “authentic right wing, ultra-conservative, neocon, theocon” (http://www.ksfo560.com/showdj.asp?DJID=12168, 5/9/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Charlie Sykes	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site describing his participation in a panel describes him as “leading conservative voice” (http://www.wispolitics.com/index.iml?article=56496, 3/31/06) • Sykes has a blog affiliated with his talk radio show; here, he includes posts about Kerry taking a poll instead of making a statement about the bin Laden tape, about the left transferring their hatred of bin Laden to Bush, about Kerry failing to answer media questions while Bush does, and a post claiming that Edwards and Kerry “will say anything” (http://www.620wtmj.com/_content/talk/charliesykes/index.asp?id=8&month=10&year=2004, 5/26/06)
Ray Taliaferro	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website has an anti-Bush logo and notes “2000+ died because Bush lied...how many more will die in Bush’s war?” (http://www.raytal.com/home.html, 5/9/06)
Stacy Taylor	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station site notes, “Stacy Taylor is San Diego’s leading independent and progressive voice” • Station is a “Progressive Talk” station (http://www.1360klsd.com/stacytaylor.html, 5/16/06)
Cal Thomas	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He labels himself pro-choice on his website (www.calthomas.com, 5/9/06) • His column / views were highly supportive of Bush in the 2004 election, “George W. Bush should be given four more years as president of the United States” (see, for example http://www.jewishworldreview.com/cols/thomas102804.asp, 5/9/06) • He notes on his website, “Liberal Democrats care about the homeless as much as Palestinian ‘leaders’ care about refugees. In both cases, people are used as political tools to achieve the aspirations and enhance the power of their exploiters.” (www.calthomas.com, 5/26/06)
Phil Valentine	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talkers</i> notes that he is conservative (Harrison, 2006) • The tag for the website calls him a “conservative radio talk show host” (www.philvalentine.com, 3/30/06)
Jim Villanucci	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On his website, he notes that Jim is “slightly right of center, moderate republican, fiscal conservative, social moderate, compassionate conservative” (http://www.radiojim.com/faq.html, 3/30/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Eric Von Wade	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website tag notes, “Conservative talk radio in the Corpus Christi area hosted by Eric Von Wade” (www.ericvonwade.com/, 5/12/06)
Bernie Ward	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His website notes that he is “unabashedly liberal” (http://kgoam810.com/complexshowdj.asp?DJID=3284, 3/30/06) Cappella, Turow, and Jamieson (1996) identify Ward as a liberal host
Ricci Ware	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station website notes that he is “San Antonio’s most recognized conservative radio voice” (http://www.ktsa.com/pages/14659.php?, 5/14/06)
Peter Werbe	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website includes lots of anti-Bush details, such as links to pro-impeachment documents, “Bush Crime Family and the Sopranos,” he calls the president “Madman Bush” He trumpets his “Democratic Media Award” on the site (http://www.peterwerbe.com/index.htm, 5/15/06) Website tag says “progressive Detroit radio host”
Pat White	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website includes posted letters from listeners thanking the show for its conservative perspective (http://www.thepatwhiteshow.com/e-mails_of_interest.htm, 5/12/06) Website includes mock schedule about Kerry that includes the following: “8:00pm- John Kerry presents one side of the issues; 11:20pm- John Kerry presents the other side of the issues” (http://www.thepatwhiteshow.com/articles_and_stories.htm, 5/26/06)
Kirby Wilbur	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Talkers</i> magazine notes that he supported Bush, “even hosts who support George W. Bush had differing views on his strengths and weaknesses. KVI’s Kirby Wilbur was frank about Bush’s stance with hard-core Republicans” (http://www.talkers.com/forum6.html, 6/6/06) Broadcasts on the FOX News radio network (http://www.kvi.com/, 6/6/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Scott Wilder	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended books on his website that were also included on his program include: “Unfit for command: Swift boat veterans speak out against John Kerry” and “Misunderestimated: The President battles terrorism, John Kerry, and the Bush haters” (http://www.wildershow.com/, 4/3/06) Blog connected to the radio show contains the following posts in October, 2004: “Teresa [Heinz-Kerry] doubts that Laura [Bush] has ever held real job,” “more Blacks supporting Bush,” a critique of Kerry’s description of Tora-Bora, Kerry’s “wrong world view on the war,” and a link to an article noting “why we back Bush” (http://wildershow.blogspot.com/2004_10_01_wildershow_archive.html, 5/26/06)
Armstrong Williams	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>USA Today</i> reported that Williams was paid by the Bush administration to promote No Child Left Behind throughout 2004 on his show (Troppo, 1/7/05, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2005-01-06-williams-whitehouse_x.htm, 4/4/06)
Mark Williams	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On his website, it notes, “With Mark, it's not Right vs. Left... it's Right vs. Wrong, and in Mark's world the Left is usually just plain wrong.” (http://www.marktalk.com/, 5/9/06)
The Young Turks	Liberal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the website, “The Young Turks, the first nationwide liberal talk show” (http://www.youngturk.com/, 4/3/06)
John Ziegler	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website notes about a Democratic candidate, “I disagree with many, though hardly all, of his political positions...” (http://www.johnziegler.com/news.php?a_id=109, 5/13/06) Makes political recommendations on his website for Bush and Republican candidates; “Here, for whatever it is worth, are John Ziegler's recommendations on how to vote on what he perceives to be the most important issues on the November 2nd ballot...President... George Bush” (http://www.johnziegler.com/news.php?news_listPage=5&a_id=68, 5/13/06)

Talk Radio Program	Classification	Content Evidence
Martha Zoller	Conservative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Talkers 2005</i> states “multi-talented Southern conservative”<li>• Her website notes, “Faith is the cornerstone of her strength and drives her conservative values.” (http://www.marthazoller.com/, 4/3/06)<li>• Broadcasts on righttalk.com, a conservative radio broadcast site (http://righttalk.com/programs.php, 5/14/06)

APPENDIX B: REGRESSION ANALYSES SUMMARIES

Throughout this dissertation, regression and logistic regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the relationship between partisan media exposure, ideology/partisanship, and the various political variables of interest. The control variables were not shown when the results were displayed in text, however. For each of the cross-sectional analyses, the full regression results with the controls are provided in this appendix for reference.

Table B.1: *Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Exposure by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
Education	0.01 (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.08 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Income	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)
Black/African-American	-0.01 (0.09)	0.18* (0.08)	-0.83*** (0.17)	-0.49*** (0.14)	0.11 (0.10)	0.06 (0.08)	-0.73 (0.73)	-0.21 (0.38)
Hispanic	0.20* (0.09)	-0.28** (0.10)	-0.35+ (0.18)	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.29** (0.11)	0.16+ (0.08)	-1.02 (0.73)	0.10 (0.41)
Female	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.18* (0.07)	-0.06 (0.07)	0.10+ (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.13 (0.20)	0.25 (0.18)
Age	-0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Network News	-0.01 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)
Cable News	-0.02+ (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.05** (0.01)	0.30*** (0.01)	0.31*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)
Local News	0.05*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.02)	-0.03+ (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.12* (0.05)	-0.12* (0.05)
Newspaper	0.15*** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.01)	0.03+ (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.03* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.05)	-0.12* (0.05)
NPR	-0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	-0.03+ (0.02)	0.55*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	-0.03 (0.05)	0.05+ (0.03)
Talk Radio (Non-NPR)	0.03** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.55*** (0.01)	-0.25*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.01)	-0.12*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)

Table B.1: *Logistic Regression Analyses of Partisan Media Exposure by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*
(continued from previous page)

	Newspaper		Talk Radio		Cable News		Political Internet	
	Bush Endorsed	Kerry Endorsed	Conser- vative	Liberal	FOX	CNN/ MSNBC	Conser- vative	Liberal
Internet Access	0.16* (0.07)	0.12* (0.06)	0.37*** (0.11)	0.09 (0.11)	0.13+ (0.07)	0.19** (0.06)	76	76
Political Internet Use	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.03+ (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.04** (0.01)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.35*** (0.04)	0.30*** (0.03)
Network News Attention	0.04 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.16*** (0.04)	0.00 (0.04)	0.37*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.03)	0.14 (0.12)	0.00 (0.10)
Local News Attention	-0.04 (0.03)	-0.05+ (0.03)	-0.13** (0.05)	-0.08 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)	0.14 (0.13)	0.11 (0.12)
Newspaper Attention	0.24*** (0.03)	0.37*** (0.03)	-0.08+ (0.04)	0.12* (0.05)	-0.07* (0.03)	0.10*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.12)	0.28* (0.12)
Political Discussion	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.04* (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
Political Interest	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)	0.17** (0.05)	0.12* (0.05)	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.10*** (0.03)	0.07 (0.18)	0.08 (0.17)
General Political Knowledge	0.03 (0.02)	0.05* (0.02)	0.25*** (0.03)	0.15*** (0.03)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.10 (0.10)	0.21* (0.10)
Strength of Ideology/ Partisanship	0.05* (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.06+ (0.04)	0.05 (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.12*** (0.02)	0.02 (0.12)	-0.17 (0.12)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.01)	-0.40*** (0.02)	0.20*** (0.02)	-0.35*** (0.01)	0.26*** (0.01)	-0.48*** (0.08)	0.57*** (0.09)
Constant	-2.12*** (0.19)	-3.46*** (0.18)	-3.53*** (0.32)	-6.00*** (0.30)	-0.09 (0.22)	-2.91*** (0.17)	-19.97 (696.19)	-27.39 (691.42)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.09	0.17	0.52	0.47	0.37	0.30	0.31	0.34
N	13,141		13,115		13,154		13,142	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

⁷⁶ Including Internet access in the Internet use models results in quasi-complete separation because no-one without Internet access looks at liberal or conservative websites. Since this is an important control variable, it was left in the equation, even though its coefficient is not estimated. Allison (Allison, 1999) notes that “This model controls for the variable that produced the problem, and there is no reason to be suspicious of the results for *other* variables” (p. 46-47).

Table B.2: *Regression Analyses of Indices of Partisan Media Exposure by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*
Coefficient (SE)

	Conservative Media	Liberal Media
Constant	0.57*** (0.05)	-0.46*** (0.05)
Education	-0.004 (0.003)	0.02*** (0.003)
Income	-0.0004** (0.0001)	0.001*** (0.0001)
Black/African-American	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.004 (0.02)
Hispanic	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Female	-0.001 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Age	0.0002 (0.0004)	-0.003*** (0.0004)
Network News	-0.04*** (0.003)	0.02*** (0.003)
Cable News	0.04*** (0.002)	0.05*** (0.003)
Local News	0.01*** (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)
Newspaper	0.03*** (0.003)	0.02*** (0.003)
NPR	-0.02*** (0.003)	0.09*** (0.003)
Talk Radio (Non-NPR)	0.10*** (0.003)	-0.04*** (0.003)
Internet Access	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)
Political Internet Use	0.002 (0.003)	0.01* (0.003)
Network News Attention	0.07*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)
Local News Attention	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.005 (0.01)
Newspaper Attention	0.01 (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)
Political Discussion	0.01** (0.003)	-0.01+ (0.003)
Political Interest	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
General Political Knowledge	0.02*** (0.005)	0.02** (0.01)
Strength of Ideology/ Partisanship	0.05*** (0.01)	0.00005 (0.01)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.09*** (0.003)	0.09*** (0.003)
R-square	0.33	0.30
N	13,089	

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table B.3: *Regression Analyses of Political Outcomes by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*

	Participation	Intention to Participate ⁷⁷	Commitment ⁷⁸	Time of Decision	Polarization
Constant	-0.74*** (0.16)	1.00*** (0.08)	0.43+ (0.22)	4.38 (0.28)	2.94*** (0.22)
Education	0.02+ (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.00)	-0.05*** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.11*** (0.01)
Income	0.00 (0.00)	0.00** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.001 (0.001)	0.00 (0.00)
Black/African-American	0.13+ (0.07)	0.29*** (0.03)	0.27** (0.10)	-0.06 (0.14)	0.17+ (0.10)
Hispanic	0.07 (0.08)	0.04 (0.04)	0.10 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.15)	-0.14 (0.10)
Female	0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.02)	-0.03 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.41*** (0.05)
Age	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.01** (0.00)	0.002 (0.002)	0.02*** (0.00)
Network News	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)
Cable News	0.01+ (0.01)	0.01+ (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.002 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Local News	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.03* (0.01)
Newspaper	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.02 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.02+ (0.01)
NPR	0.03** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.01)	0.002 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Talk Radio (Non-NPR)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.02*** (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	0.03+ (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Internet Access	-0.01 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.09 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.21** (0.07)
Political Internet Use	0.05*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.00)	0.03+ (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)
Network News Attention	0.00 (0.02)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.08* (0.04)	0.14*** (0.03)
Local News Attention	0.08** (0.02)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.04)	-0.04 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)
Newspaper Attention	0.08** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.01)	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)
Political Discussion	0.11*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.00)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.20*** (0.01)
Political Interest	0.06* (0.03)	0.13*** (0.01)	0.15*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.05)	0.27*** (0.04)
General Political Knowledge	0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.09*** (0.02)	0.09** (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)
Strength of Ideology/Partisanship	0.24*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.61*** (0.03)	0.47*** (0.03)	0.87*** (0.02)
Ideology/Partisanship	0.04*** (0.01)	0.01* (0.00)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03+ (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)
R-square	0.30	0.25	0.15 ⁷⁹	0.16	0.20
N	2,897	7,376	12,771	3,035	12,905

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

⁷⁷ Re-running this analysis using a cumulative logit model yields a few changes: Hispanic was positive and marginally significant, female was positive and marginally significant, age was negative and significant (p<0.05), and cable news fell to non-significance (though remained in the same direction).

⁷⁸ As commitment is a dichotomous variable, coefficients represent logistic regression coefficients.

⁷⁹ Note that this value represents the Nagelkerke R-square value for logistic regression analysis.

Table B.4. *Logistic Regression Analyses of Issue Named as the Most Important Problem by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*
Coefficient (SE)

	Economy	Iraq	Terrorism
Constant	-1.99*** (0.17)	-2.07*** (0.19)	-0.84*** (0.21)
Education	0.00 (0.01)	-0.02+ (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Income	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.002*** (0.00)
Black/African-American	0.14* (0.07)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.36** (0.11)
Hispanic	0.09 (0.08)	0.28*** (0.08)	0.13 (0.10)
Female	-0.24*** (0.04)	0.28*** (0.05)	-0.02 (0.05)
Age	0.00+ (0.00)	0.01*** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Network News	0.06*** (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)
Cable News	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)
Local News	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Newspaper	0.02* (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
NPR	-0.03** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)
Talk Radio (Non-NPR)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.04** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)
Internet Access	0.02 (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.02 (0.07)
Political Internet Use	0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Network News Attention	-0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.17*** (0.03)
Local News Attention	0.07** (0.03)	0.00 (0.03)	-0.08* (0.03)
Newspaper Attention	-0.02 (0.03)	0.08* (0.03)	-0.04 (0.03)
Political Discussion	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.03* (0.01)
Political Interest	0.06* (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.08* (0.04)
General Political Knowledge	0.05** (0.02)	-0.13*** (0.02)	0.03 (0.02)
Strength of Ideology/Partisanship	-0.17*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.06* (0.02)
Ideology/Partisanship	0.17*** (0.01)	0.14*** (0.01)	-0.30*** (0.01)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.07	0.06	0.17
N	12,885	12,885	12,885

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table B.5. *Regression Analyses of Overall Approval of Bush by Demographics, Media Use, and Political Orientations*
Coefficient (SE)

	Bush Approval
Constant	4.00*** (0.06)
Education	-0.01* (0.004)
Income	0.001** (0.0002)
Black/African-American	-0.43*** (0.03)
Hispanic	-0.04 (0.03)
Female	0.01 (0.02)
Age	0.0003 (0.001)
Network News	-0.02*** (0.004)
Cable News	0.01*** (0.003)
Local News	0.01** (0.004)
Newspaper	-0.01* (0.004)
NPR	-0.03*** (0.004)
Talk Radio (Non-NPR)	0.03*** (0.004)
Internet Access	0.05* (0.02)
Political Internet Use	-0.01*** (0.004)
Network News Attention	0.01 (0.01)
Local News Attention	-0.01 (0.01)
Newspaper Attention	-0.02+ (0.01)
Political Discussion	-0.02*** (0.004)
Political Interest	-0.03* (0.01)
General Political Knowledge	-0.03*** (0.01)
Strength of Ideology/Partisanship	0.05*** (0.01)
Ideology/Partisanship	-0.39*** (0.004)
R-square	0.55
N	12,925

+p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

APPENDIX C: SUPPLEMENTAL MEASUREMENT DETAILS

Details about the question wording for the rolling cross-sectional survey component of the 2004 NAES are provided in the main text. This appendix provides a supplement detailing the question wording and descriptive statistics for measures used from the 2004 NAES panel surveys. The question wording or details of the scale construction are only included when they differ from the cross-sectional survey measures.

DNC Panel ($n=1,016$)

Newspaper Classification (80% classified; of those classified, 45% endorsed Kerry and 36% endorsed Bush)

Radio Classification (81% classified; of those classified, 48% listened to conservative radio, 39% listened to liberal radio including NPR, 3% listened to liberal radio not including NPR)

Internet Classification (81% classified; of those classified, 14% liberal and 15% conservative)

Cable Classification (of cable news listeners, 33% FOX, 62% CNN/MSNBC)

Political Interest (2/3 of respondents, $M=3.20$, $SD=0.87$)

Intentions to Participate ($M=2.02$, $SD=0.89$)

Polarization ($M=5.50$, $SD=3.09$)

Commitment (85% decided)

Most Important Problem (economy 26%, Iraq 17%, terrorism 23%)

DNC Panel

(continued from previous page)

*Pre-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)*8 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.67, *M*=4.08, *SD*=2.15)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) Who wants to make it easier for unions to organize – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) Who wants to limit the amount of money people can be awarded in law suits – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (4) Who wants to extend all provisions of the USA Patriot Act in order to fight terrorism – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) Who favors the federal government helping to pay for health insurance for all children and helping employers pay the cost of the workers' health insurance – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (7) Who is a former prosecutor – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (8) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

*Post-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)*7 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.67, *M*=4.44, *SD*=1.93)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) Who favors the federal government helping to pay for health insurance for all children and helping employers pay the cost of the workers' health insurance – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (4) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) Who wants to make it easier for unions to organize – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) Who wants to limit the amount of money people can be awarded in law suits – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Who wants to extend all provisions of the USA Patriot Act in order to fight terrorism – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

RNC Panel (n=1,049)

Newspaper Classification (83% classified, of those classified, 46% endorsed Kerry and 37% endorsed Bush)

Radio Classification (84% classified; of those classified, 46% listened to conservative radio, 34% listened to liberal radio including NPR, 5% listened to liberal radio not including NPR)

Internet Classification (86% classified; of those classified, 13% liberal and 11% conservative)

Cable Classification (of cable news listeners, 35% FOX, 58% CNN/MSNBC)

Political Interest (2/3 of respondents, $M=3.24$, $SD=0.87$)

Intentions to Participate ($M=2.02$, $SD=0.91$)

Polarization ($M=5.77$, $SD=3.12$)

Commitment (88% decided)

Most Important Problem (economy 29%, Iraq 16%, terrorism 25%)

Pre-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)

7 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.64, $M=3.61$, $SD=1.92$)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (3) Who is a former prosecutor – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (4) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) Who wants to make it easier for unions to organize – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) Who wants to limit the amount of money people can be awarded in lawsuits – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Which candidate proposes moving sixty to seventy thousand troops stationed in Europe and South Korea to other locations, including the United States, in the next decade – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

RNC Panel

(continued from previous page)

Post-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)7 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.67, *M*=4.40, *SD*=1.90)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) Who favors eliminating tax breaks for overseas profits of American corporations and using the money to cut taxes for businesses that create jobs in the United States – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (4) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) Who wants to make it easier for unions to organize – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) Who wants to limit the amount of money people can be awarded in lawsuits – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Which candidate proposes moving sixty to seventy thousand troops stationed in Europe and South Korea to other locations, including the United States, in the next decade – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

Debate Panel (*n*=1,248)*Newspaper Classification* (81% classified; of those classified, 48% endorsed Kerry and 34% endorsed Bush)*Radio Classification* (81% classified; of those classified, 41% listened to conservative radio, 29% listened to liberal radio including NPR, 4% listened to liberal radio not including NPR)*Internet Classification* (72% classified; of those classified, 19% conservative, 20% liberal)*Cable Classification* (of cable news listeners, 37% FOX, 57% CNN/MSNBC)*Political Interest* (2/3 of respondents, *M*=3.29, *SD*=0.82)*Political Participation* (1/3 of respondents)5 items were summed to create an index of political participation (*M*=1.14, *SD*=1.23)*Polarization* (*M*=5.95, *SD*=3.09)

Debate Panel

(continued from previous page)

Commitment (91% of respondents decided)*Most Important Problem* (economy 31%, Iraq 21%, terrorism 23%)*Pre-wave Political Knowledge* (2/3 of respondents)7 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.66, *M*=3.65, *SD*=1.96)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) Who favors completely eliminating the estate tax, that is the tax on property left by people who die – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (4) Who is a former – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) Who wants to make it easier for unions to organize – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Who favors federal funding of research on diseases like Parkinson's using stem cells taken from human embryos – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

Post-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)10 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.74, *M*=7.04, *SD*=2.45)

- (1) Who favors allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (2) Who favors eliminating tax breaks for overseas profits of American corporations and using the money to cut taxes for businesses that create jobs in the United States – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) Who favors completely eliminating the estate tax, that is the tax on property left by people worth more than one and a half million dollars who die – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (4) John Kerry says that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (5) Who is a former prosecutor – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (6) Who favors making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Which candidate wants to make additional stem cell lines from human embryos available for federally funded research on diseases like Parkinson's – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

Debate Panel*Post-wave Political Knowledge*

(continued from previous page)

- (8) Who favors laws making it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (9) Which candidate favors placing limits on how much people can collect when a jury finds that a doctor has committed medical malpractice – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (10) Which candidate favors increasing the five dollar and fifteen cent minimum wage employers must pay their workers – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

Post Election Panel (n=8,664)

Newspaper Classification (78% classified; of those classified, 47% endorsed Kerry and 35% endorsed Bush)

Radio Classification (80% classified; of those classified, 41% listened to conservative radio, 44% listened to liberal radio including NPR, 5% listened to liberal radio not including NPR)

Internet Classification (79% classified; of those classified, 20% conservative, 22% liberal)

Cable Classification (of cable news listeners, 37% FOX, 57% CNN/MSNBC)

Political Interest (2/3 of respondents, $M=3.25$, $SD=0.87$)

Political Participation (1/3 of respondents)

5 items were summed to create an index of political participation ($M=1.25$, $SD=1.23$)

Polarization ($M=5.49$, $SD=2.99$)

Time of Decision (measure presented in text was used)

Most important problem (economy 25%, Iraq 25%, terrorism 18%)

Pre-wave Political Knowledge (scale presented in text was used)

Post-wave Political Knowledge (2/3 of respondents)

13 items were summed to create a scale (*Cronbach's alpha*=0.78, $M=8.96$, $SD=3.12$)

- (1) Who favored allowing workers to invest some of their Social Security contributions in the stock market – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?

Post Election Panel*Post-wave Political Knowledge*

(continued from previous page)

- (2) Who favored eliminating tax breaks for overseas profits of American corporations and using the money to cut taxes for businesses that create jobs in the United States – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (3) Who favored changing the recently passed Medicare prescription drug law to allow re-importing drugs from Canada – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (4) Who favored a health insurance plan that would do both of the following: help to pay for health insurance for all children and help employers pay the cost of the workers' health insurance – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (5) John Kerry said that he would eliminate the Bush tax cuts on those making how much money – over 50 thousand a year, over 100 thousand a year, over 200 thousand a year, over 500,000 a year?
- (6) Who is a former prosecutor – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (7) Who favored making the recent tax cuts permanent – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (8) Which candidate wanted to make additional stem cell lines from human embryos available for federally funded research on diseases like Parkinsons – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (9) Who favored laws making it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (10) Which candidate stated he favored reinstating the military draft – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (11) Which candidate favored placing limits on how much people can collect when a jury finds that a doctor has committed medical malpractice – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (12) Which candidate favored increasing the five dollar and fifteen cent minimum wage employers must pay their workers – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?
- (13) Which candidate favored an amendment to the Constitution saying that NO state can allow two men to marry each other or two women to marry each other – George W. Bush, John Kerry, both or neither?