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ORIGINAL PAPER

Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure

Natalie Jomini Stroud

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Abstract Today, people have ample opportunity to engage in selective exposure, the selection of information matching their beliefs. Whether this is occurring, however, is a matter of debate. While some worry that people increasingly are seeking out likeminded views, others propose that newer media provide an increased opportunity for exposure to diverse views. In returning to the concept of selective exposure, this article argues that certain topics, such as politics, are more likely to inspire selective exposure and that research should investigate habitual media exposure patterns, as opposed to single exposure decisions. This study investigates whether different media types (newspapers, political talk radio, cable news, and Internet) are more likely to inspire selective exposure. Using data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey, evidence supports the idea that people's political beliefs are related to their media exposure—a pattern that persists across media types. Over-time analyses suggest that people's political beliefs motivate their media use patterns and that cable news audiences became increasingly politically divided over the course of the 2004 election.

Keywords Selective exposure · Media · Presidential politics · Partisanship · Political ideology · 2004 election

In the summer of 2003, questions about the situation in Iraq abounded: Where were the weapons of mass destruction? Was there a link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda? Though facts do not favor either of these contentious explanations for the invasion of Iraq, beliefs that Hussein had weapons and that he was linked to Al Qaeda existed. Intriguingly, some Americans were more likely to express these

N. J. Stroud (✉)
Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station, A1105, Austin, TX 78712, USA
e-mail: tstroud@mail.utexas.edu

beliefs than others. In particular, those viewing FOX news were more likely to believe in both the link and the weapons while those watching PBS and listening to NPR were less likely (Kull et al. 2003-4). The implications of this finding are troubling: Different patterns of news exposure may lead people to develop different impressions of what is happening in the world around them. Without a shared base of information, it is difficult to imagine citizens agreeing on matters of public policy and it is easy to envision citizens developing highly polarized attitudes toward political matters. As media exposure predicts both beliefs and attitudes, the question emerges: what predicts media exposure?

One possible answer is that people engage in selective exposure, the selection of media outlets that match their beliefs and predispositions. The concept of selective exposure is not new—research on the topic surged in the 1960s and then declined in subsequent decades following influential reviews of the literature that did not support the phenomenon (Freedman and Sears 1965; Sears and Freedman 1967). Given changes in the contemporary media environment, however, it is important to return to the study of selective exposure. Today, it is far easier to engage in selective exposure; which is in contrast to times past, when it was "often difficult to get information even on one's own side and …almost inevitably more demanding to find information on the opposite side should one ever be motivated to look for it" (McGuire 1968, p. 799). With respect to political information seeking, people can use today's media to avoid politics altogether (Atre and Katz 2005; Baum and Kernell 1999; Prior 2005, 2007a) or to seek out information on particular issues (Galston 2003; Sunstein 2001). A person also can engage in *partisan* selective exposure, the selection of media sharing one's *political* predispositions. As people's media options increase and they find outlets offering more congenial perspectives, the potential for selective exposure arguably increases; Mutz and Martin (2001) note 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). The mere opportunity to engage in selective exposure in the modern media environment, however, does not mean that people necessarily will seek out congenial media. On the contrary, prior research on selective exposure has produced inconsistent results. In returning to the topic, this article aims to clarify prior research on selective exposure and to investigate the phenomenon with contemporary data.

Selective Exposure

Admittedly, selective exposure is a debated topic. Early researchers were divided in their impressions of the evidence (Donohew and Palmgreen 1971; Klapper 1960; McGuire 1968) and contemporary researchers seem no less at odds regarding whether they should embrace or dismiss selective exposure (Jonas et al. 2005; Kinder 2003; Zaller 1992). 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" (pp. 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 6,000 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). The debate on selective exposure persists today. Kinder (2003) argues that "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). Along similar lines, Zaller (1992) claims that selective exposure is not prevalent; he notes 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). On the contrary, Jonas et al. (2005) contend that "When searching for new information, people are often biased in favor of previously held beliefs, expectations, or desired conclusions" (p. 978). These different conclusions about selective exposure warrant attempts to clarify the concept.

The democratic implications of partisan selective exposure also justify further research. If partisan selective exposure is widespread, the public may develop more polarized, or extreme, attitudes in the direction of their political predispositions (Mutz 2006; Sunstein 2001). And, as the Iraq-weapons-Al Qaeda example suggests, people may develop different beliefs about the world. Further, people's impressions of which issues should be prioritized by the government may diverge due to partisan selective exposure. Without shared priorities, allocation of limited resources, such as time and money, 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. On the other hand, partisan selective exposure may be a myth, as Zaller and Kinder suggest. When confronted with a multitude of options in the contemporary media environment, people may elect to expose themselves to diverse viewpoints and learn more about perspectives with which they are unfamiliar (Stromer-Galley 2003). Of course, the flip side of a world without selective exposure is that people may be less energized to participate in politics—recall that political participation in the United States flourished during the era of the partisan press (Schudson 1995). Reconciling these normative implications critically depends on whether or not partisan selective exposure occurs.

Dramatically different conclusions about the existence of selective exposure stem from a rich history of conflicting research findings. Several studies document a correspondence between people's beliefs and the information to which they are exposed (Best et al. 2005; Chaffee et al. 2001; Clymer 2004; Ehrlich et al. 1957; Lazarsfeld et al. 1948; McCroskey and Prichard 1967; McGinnies and Rosenbaum 1965; Schramm and Carter 1959; Stempel 1961; Ziemke 1980). Whether people's beliefs *motivate* their exposure, however, is unclear. Rather, the observed match between people's beliefs and the viewpoint of the information to which they are exposed could be due to other factors, such as the availability of information in their immediate environment (Freedman and Sears 1965; Sears and Freedman 1967). Experimental studies that have tried to determine whether people are motivated to select congenial options yield mixed support for selective exposure. In some

instances, individuals do tend to choose information supporting their beliefs (Adams 1961; Barlett et al. 1974; Chaffee and McLeod 1973; Donsbach 1991; Mills 1965a; Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006), but not always (Feather 1962; Freedman 1965; Meffert et al. 2006; Mills et al. 1959; Rosen 1961). These conflicting results point to the possibility of a number of contingent conditions that influence whether people engage in selective exposure to news media (Cotton 1985; Frey 1986). Following this line of research, this study also investigates contingent conditions, including whether different media types (e.g. newspapers, political talk radio, etc.) are more/less likely to motivate selective exposure and whether selective exposure changes during an election season. Specifically, certain media types may facilitate selective exposure based on their availability and the diversity of content they provide. Further, as partisanship is emphasized during presidential campaigns, people may increasingly select congenial outlets as an election approaches. Though a recent meta-analysis provided only modest support for selective exposure (D'Alessio and Allen 2002), early reviews of the literature that argued against selective exposure (e.g. Freedman and Sears 1965) continue to influence current research (see, for example, Kinder 2003; Zaller 1992).

An important reason that selective exposure studies may have produced conflicting patterns of results is the diversity of topics that have been studied. Research on selective exposure has been conducted on topics as diverse as cars (e.g. Ehrlich et al. 1957), parenting techniques (e.g. Adams 1961), personal care products (e.g. Mills 1965b), and political preferences (e.g. Schramm and Carter 1959). In summarizing the research on selective exposure, reviews have tended to group all studies of selective exposure together irrespective of their topic (Cotton 1985; D'Alessio and Allen 2002; Freedman and Sears 1965; Sears and Freedman 1967).[1] Different topics, however, may influence people's propensity to engage in selective exposure. Political topics, as will be discussed shortly, may be particularly likely to inspire selective exposure.

Selective Exposure and Political Predispositions

Theoretically, selective exposure occurs when people's beliefs guide their media selections. Not every belief can guide every media selection, however—if one considered *all* of the beliefs that would favor exposure to a media outlet, for example, and all of the beliefs that would *not* favor exposure to the outlet, one would be at an impasse. Some beliefs, therefore, must be more likely to guide exposure decisions compared to other beliefs.

[1] Note that the test for moderators in the meta-analysis performed by D'Alessio and Allen (2002) narrowly missed marginal significance ($p = 0.13$). The studies included in the meta-analysis, however, warrant some qualification: D'Alessio and Allen only included experimental studies that involved making a choice ($n = 16$). In addition, 15 of the studies included in the meta-analysis had nothing to do with politics. Even if politics were an important moderator, therefore, it is unlikely that it would have been detected in this study.

One possibility is that personally relevant beliefs, those beliefs related to a person's interests or self-identity, are more likely to influence exposure decisions (Donsbach 1991). If one cared little about politics, for example, s/he would have little motivation to seek out congenial media. From a cognitive perspective, personally relevant beliefs are more readily activated from memory and hence, are more likely to guide our thoughts – and, as advanced here, our media selections. 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. They note that "Chronic accessibility may come from a variety of sources. …One example would be the degree to which a given construct is linked with a person's self-concept" (p. 190). Political partisanship represents one such construct (Green et al. 2002; Lau 1989). In contrast to other topics, those with strong political leanings may be particularly likely to engage in selective exposure because their political beliefs are accessible and personally relevant. The second possibility is that topics and beliefs inspiring an affective response may stimulate patterns of selectivity. People may adjust their exposure to political information in order to obtain or maintain a desired emotional state or as a response to a distinct emotion (Valentino et al. 2007). Taber and Lodge (2006), for example, propose that when stimuli elicit an affective response, strong partisans on an issue are more likely to engage in selective exposure (and motivated reasoning) in response to the stimuli. For some scholars, politics often yields an affective response (e.g. Marcus et al. 2000). In particular, those with strongly held political beliefs may avoid media outlets producing negative affect and approach media outlets producing positive affect. In sum, selective exposure may be contingent on the personal relevance of the topic and whether it generates an affective response. For those with strong political predispositions, therefore, political topics may be particularly likely to inspire selective exposure (Lowin 1967; Sears and Freedman 1967). Accordingly, this study tests the following hypothesis concerning partisan selective exposure:

H1 People with more strongly held political predispositions will be more likely to select politically congenial media outlets.

Selective Exposure and Time

It also is important to revisit the topic of selective exposure with new evidence because past research has tended to focus on people's exposure decisions in a single instance—exposure to a movie (Ball-Rokeach et al. 1981; Clymer 2004; Paletz et al. 1972; Stroud 2007), a pamphlet (Chaffee and McLeod 1973; Freedman and Sears 1963), a political speech (McCroskey and Prichard 1967; Schramm and Carter 1959), or a parenting workshop (Adams 1961). Though these studies help us to understand factors that influence single-exposure decisions, they provide limited insight into factors that influence people's more *habitual* exposure decisions and how people's media exposure patterns change over time. A number of variables that influence exposure decisions are more likely to operate in single-exposure instances—lead framing and photograph characteristics (Zillmann et al. 2001,

2004), for example, are more likely to influence single-exposure decisions. More habitual exposure decisions, such as the cable news network one typically watches, however, would not be influenced by these factors. It is possible, therefore, that selective exposure patterns have been underestimated in prior studies.

The research projects that have investigated more habitual exposure patterns by asking people about their preferred cable news station or talk radio program (e.g. Cappella et al. 1996; Pew Research Center 2005) tend to show that people's beliefs are related to their media selections. Many of these studies, however, rely on cross-sectional data without the presence of controls, and so they fall short of documenting causal relationships between people's beliefs and their media consumption (Freedman and Sears 1965; Sears and Freedman 1967). Furthermore, most studies have examined selective exposure for a single media type (e.g. cable news station or talk radio program) at a single point in time, instead of more comprehensively considering people's media consumption patterns.

This study aims to measure changes in people's more habitual media exposure patterns. During the course of a presidential campaign, for example, the public may become increasingly aware of the media outlets corresponding to their political predispositions and may switch to more congenial sources. Research documents that politics is more salient to people during presidential elections (Weaver et al. 1981). In an environment where politics and partisanship are emphasized, partisan selective exposure is likely to be enhanced. To evaluate whether selective exposure increases in the short-tem as partisan conflict becomes more heated, Hypothesis 2 will be investigated.

H2 Partisan selective exposure will increase during the course of a presidential campaign.

Selective Exposure and Media Type

Though use of television and radio for gathering political information has remained fairly constant since 1992, people's news media patterns are changing. Specifically, people are moving away from newspapers as a source of political information and toward the Internet (Rainie and Horrigan 2007). Given these shifts, it is important to understand whether patterns of selective exposure differ *across* media types. If so, we may anticipate changes in aggregate levels of partisan selective exposure over time as people's media consumption patterns change.

The Internet, in particular, provides people with ample opportunities to encounter information that either complements or contradicts their political predispositions. In embracing this freedom of choice, it is an open question whether people will seek out likeminded or opinion-challenging online content. On the one hand, it is possible that people will use the Internet to fragment into ever more specific likeminded groups (Sunstein 2001). Indeed, visitors to the Gore and Bush websites in 2000 tended to share the political outlook advanced by the website (Bimber and Davis 2003). On the other hand, people may use the Internet to explore diverse opinions. In a series of in-depth interviews, Stromer-Galley (2003) found that

people discussing politics online tended not to mention that they purposefully sought out likeminded others. Instead, they said that they enjoyed hearing diverse views. Further, Horrigan et al. (2004) concluded that Internet users did not avoid counter-attitudinal partisan messages online. Whether the Internet inspires different patterns of selective exposure in comparison to radio, cable television, and newspapers obviously warrants further research.

In contrast to the Internet, radio, and cable television—all media types with diverse content that is widely available—newspaper availability may limit people's ability to select politically diverse content. In many communities, there is a single newspaper and consumers have limited opportunity to subscribe to non-local papers. If people live in likeminded communities, they may be more likely to consume likeminded newspapers—not because they wouldn't like to read newspapers with contradictory views, but because they have limited access to more diverse newspapers. If one were to find a relationship between people's political predispositions and their newspaper consumption, therefore, one would be concerned that the finding merely provided evidence of de facto selectivity (Freedman and Sears 1965; Sears and Freedman 1967); namely, that people were not motivated to select likeminded newspapers, but that the political make-up of their community was correlated with their political predispositions and that their local newspaper's political outlook was responsive to the political leanings of the community. To compare selective exposure patterns across media types, therefore, the present study includes controls for the partisan make-up of one's community when evaluating the relationship between people's political predispositions and their newspapers choices. This provides a more stringent test for whether other media types inspire different selective exposure patterns in comparison to newspapers.

Given that some media types may facilitate partisan selective exposure while others may constrain this behavior, research question 1 is posed.

RQ1 Is partisan selective exposure contingent on media type?

To investigate the hypotheses and research question, this study examines partisan selective exposure during the 2004 U.S. presidential campaign season. By evaluating the relationship between people's political predispositions and their media selections across four media types and over the course of the campaign, this study aims to provide insight into *whether* and *under what conditions* partisan selective exposure occurs.

Method

This study makes use of data from the 2004 National Annenberg Election Survey (NAES; Romer et al. 2006). Two design components used in this survey are employed in this study: rolling cross-sectional and panel designs. In the rolling cross-sectional design, a set number of randomly selected telephone numbers, known as replicates, are released into the field each night. On the first night that each replicate is released into the field, all numbers within the replicate are dialed.

On subsequent nights, telephone numbers where no one responded to the survey are redialed in an attempt to secure a survey respondent. By following this design, each night of interviewing contains 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 these groups differ demographically or politically, this design yields a random cross-section of the population for each night of interviewing. For the NAES, respondents were required to be over 18 years of age and were randomly selected within each household. The 2004 NAES was conducted between October 7, 2003 and November 16, 2004; analysis in this study, however, uses data gathered between June 9 (the day after the final primary election) and November 1, 2004.[2] Using the RR1 formula of the American Association for Public Opinion Researchers, the response rate to the survey was 22 percent.[3] The second component of the 2004 NAES used in this study is a panel survey conducted around the general election (pre-wave 7/15-11/1; post-wave 11/4-12/28). The re-contact rate was 43 percent.

Dependent Variable Measurement

To measure partisan media use, outlets were classified based on their political leanings.[4] Four different media types were investigated: newspapers, political talk radio, cable news, and political websites.

Newspapers

Survey respondents who read a daily newspaper in the past week (76%) 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 election. Certainly, using newspaper endorsements to measure political leanings lacks the precision of a content analysis; however, without some type of proxy, it is difficult to conceive of how one would categorize

[2] Note that some questions were present on the survey for only parts of this period, as discussed in the appendix. When these variables are employed, the analysis covers only a subset of these dates.

[3] This response rate is comparable to that obtained by others (e.g. Pew Research Center 2004). Controls (see the appendix) are incorporated throughout the analysis to help to take into account differences between the population and the sample.

[4] Note that there is some debate about the accuracy of survey-based media exposure measures (Price and Zaller 1990; Prior 2007b). Two components of this study, however, may boost confidence in the measures. First, the media dependent variables measured content-based exposure (as opposed to frequency of exposure), which may be easier for respondents to accurately recall. Second, in most cases, respondents were asked open-ended questions about their media exposure, so they would have to recall the name of the media program or outlet in order to answer the question. If, however, the media use measures employed in this study did not reflect actual media use, a link between political predispositions and media use would continue to have import: It still would mean that people recognize and report media outlets matching their political predispositions.

thousands of newspapers. There is some support for this measure—Kahn and Kenney (2002) found a significant relationship between the tone of straight newspaper coverage of senatorial candidates and editorial endorsements. Druckman and Parkin (2005) also show a significant relationship between the editorial slant of a newspaper and assessments of senatorial candidates. Further, there is evidence that some people make judgments about a newspaper based on its presidential endorsements. Jaffee (2004), for example, reported that presidential endorsements influence people's subscription decisions.

To determine who each newspaper endorsed, public information sources (e.g. *Editor & Publisher*) were consulted whenever possible. For the remaining newspapers, tailored emails were sent to the newspaper. Of the 1,076 emails sent, 537 responses were received. These data were matched to the NAES survey responses. Of the 29,298 respondents who named a newspaper, 77 percent of responses were classified. Fifteen percent of open-ended responses were unable to be classified. For example, when respondents stated that they read the "Courier Post," 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 (only 0.3% were in the latter two categories). From this, two dichotomous variables were created. To create a measure of *reading newspapers endorsing Kerry*, respondents reading a newspaper endorsing Kerry were given a 1 and respondents reading another newspaper, 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. A similar operationalization was used for *reading newspapers endorsing Bush*.

Political Talk Radio

Respondents identifying that they listened to talk radio or National Public Radio (NPR) in the past week (48%) were asked to identify the radio shows and hosts to which they listened. These open-ended responses were coded as liberal or conservative based on: the self-identifications of radio hosts (e.g. Eric Von Wade says his show is conservative), the ideological affiliations ascribed to the programs by trade magazines (e.g. *Talkers* labels Tom Sullivan's show conservative), or how prior research classified the programs (e.g. Hofstetter et al. 1999, identify Roger Hedgecock's program as conservative). Of course, not all hosts and programs mentioned were conservative or liberal. Hosts such as David Brudnoy and Gene Burns identify as libertarian and others such as Doug Stephan and Jim Bohannon tout their moderate political positions. 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.

Seventy-eight percent of responses were categorized using this method. The remaining responses either were unable to be located or were indeterminate (e.g. some respondents only said the radio station frequency, e.g. "101.1"). 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. Of those who said that they listened to political talk radio (including those naming non-political hosts/shows and those naming radio hosts/shows that were not able to be categorized), 28 percent listened to conservative hosts/shows and 25 percent listened to liberal hosts/shows.

Cable News

Respondents were asked to identify which cable news network they watched most often. Of the 66 percent who watched cable news in the past week, 34 percent reported watching FOX, 45 percent CNN, and 12 percent MSNBC. Though all three networks identify as objective outlets, content analyses suggest FOX covers issues in ways more supportive of a conservative/Republican beliefs relative to the other cable news outlets (Aday et al. 2005; Center for Media and Public Affairs 2003, 2004a, b; Project for Excellence in Journalism 2004). Further, Groseclose and Milyo (2005) found that CNN News Night with Aaron Brown was to the left of FOX News' Special Report. Based on this research, choosing either CNN or MSNBC is considered consistent exposure for liberals and Democrats and choosing FOX is considered consistent exposure for conservatives and Republicans. As before, two dichotomous variables were created, one variable indicating that the respondent watched CNN/MSNBC and a second indicating that the respondent watched FOX.

Political Websites

Of respondents with Internet access (76%), 35 percent noted that they had accessed/read information about the campaign for president online in the past week. Of these, 12 percent had accessed a candidate website, 60 percent had accessed a news organization website, and 32 percent identified another political website. These open-ended responses were analyzed and coded as to whether the mentioned websites leaned toward conservative or liberal perspectives (inter-coder reliability using Krippendorff's (2004) alpha = 0.96). Of the 3,343 open-ended responses to this question, 2,712 were able to be categorized. Seventy-two percent of respondents whose responses were able to be categorized named non-partisan 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. Again, two dichotomous variables, one indicating that the respondent

accessed conservative websites and a second indicating that the respondent accessed liberal websites, were created.

Evaluation of Media Coding

The employed categorization methods were strict in the sense that ambiguous cases were not coded as liberal or conservative. There may be some instances, however, 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, in evaluating the hypothesis that political predispositions are related to partisan media consumption, suppose that some liberal respondents were consuming liberal media outlets, but the outlets were not coded as liberal. If the hypothesis were correct, then the percentage of liberals consuming liberal media would be reduced and would be closer to the percentage of conservatives consuming liberal media. This would make one less likely to find support for the hypothesis. The same would hold true if an outlet were coded as liberal or conservative when it was not.

Independent Variable Measurement

Political Predispositions

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%). A partisanship measure was created by combining items asking respondents their partisanship, strength of partisanship, and partisan leanings (for those who did not categorize themselves as partisans) 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 summed to form a single measure of political leanings with larger values indicating strong liberal Democratic leanings and smaller values indicating strong conservative Republican leanings (Range $= -4$ to 4, $M = -0.16$, SD $= 2.14$).[5]

Controls

As described in the appendix, demographic, media use, media attention, and political orientation variables were used as controls throughout the analysis.

[5] The partisanship and ideology measures were combined to create a single measure of political predispositions. The rationale for this combination comes from work showing that these two variables have become increasingly consistent over time (see, for example, Abramowitz and Saunders 2006; Fiorina and Levendusky 2007). As noted in later footnotes, analyses were run to assess whether results changed if partisanship or ideology were included separately in the models or if respondent political leanings were included in the models as a categorical variable (with those not holding clear partisan or ideological attachments as the omitted category).

Results

Two types of analyses were conducted in this study. First, a series of logistic regression analyses were conducted using the cross-sectional NAES data to evaluate the hypotheses and research question. Second, panel analyses were used to further investigate H1 and RQ1.

Cross-Sectional Analyses

With the cross-sectional data, a series of logistic regression analyses predicting exposure to each of the political media types described above were computed. If partisan selective exposure is occurring, respondent political beliefs should significantly predict consumption of each of these outlets (H1). Only the relevant media consumption controls and variables of interest are shown in Table 1.

In Table 1, each column represents a separate logistic regression model. For each equation, the dependent variable is the use of the media type noted in the column heading. For example, in the first column of coefficients, the logistic regression results model the likelihood of reading a newspaper that endorsed Bush in the 2004 presidential election. Across all of the equations, ideology/partisanship is significantly related to consuming each media type.[6] 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 radio, watch CNN/MSNBC, and access liberal websites. These relationships persist in the presence of extensive controls.[7]

[6] Results are unchanged if partisanship and ideology are included separately in the analysis. Analysis also was repeated using a combination of ideology and partisanship as a categorical variable. Results for conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats are in line with Table 1, with the exception of liberal websites, where liberal Democrats were no more likely than those without partisan and ideological attachments to access them. Liberal and moderate Republicans followed conservative Republicans and were less likely to access liberal websites, to watch CNN/MSNBC, or to read newspapers endorsing Kerry and more likely to watch FOX and to listen to conservative talk radio shows. Conservative and moderate Democrats followed liberal Democrats and were less likely to watch FOX or to listen to conservative talk radio shows and more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC compared to those without partisan and ideological attachments.

[7] It is possible that demographic variables, such as age and gender, may moderate patterns of partisan selective exposure. After all, Ziemke (1980) finds stronger evidence that younger individuals certain about their candidate preference engage in selective exposure compared to older individuals and Chaffee and Miyo (1983) find more evidence for selective exposure among adolescents compared to their parents. Further, Garrett (2006) shows that men are more familiar with the arguments of their preferred candidate than women. This potentially indicates that men are more apt to engage in selective exposure. To evaluate this, the analyses from Table 1 were run with the addition of an interaction between age and ideology/partisanship or an interaction between female and ideology/partisanship. Results were inconsistent. For age, younger liberal Democrats were more likely to listen to liberal radio compared to older liberal Democrats, older conservative Republicans were less likely to watch CNN/MSNBC compared to younger conservative Republicans, and older liberal Democrats were less likely to watch FOX compared to younger liberal Democrats. For gender, male liberal Democrats were more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC and less likely to watch FOX. Female conservative Republicans were less likely to access liberal websites compared to female liberal Democrats.

Table 1 Logistic regression analyses of media exposure by demographics, media use, and political orientations[a]
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper		Talk radio		Cable news		Political internet	
	Bush endorsed	Kerry endorsed	Conservative	Liberal[b]	FOX	CNN/MSNBC	Conservative	Liberal
Cable news	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.04*** (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)
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	−0.03* (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)
Internet access	0.13^{+} (0.07)	0.14* (0.06)	0.37*** (0.11)	0.10 (0.11)	0.13^{+} (0.07)	0.19** (0.06)	[c]	
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)
Ideology/partisanship	**−0.08*** (0.01)**	**0.11*** (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)**
Nagelkerke R-square	0.09	0.18	0.52	0.47	0.37	0.30	0.31	0.34
N	13,142		13,115		13,154		13,142	

Note: Analyses included all controls described in the appendix. Only the relevant media use variable controls are shown here

$^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

[a] Full tables are available upon request from the author

[b] Given some controversy as to whether NPR is appropriately labeled liberal talk radio (see, for example, Cappella et al. 1996, where Diane Rehm of NPR is coded as liberal and *Talk of the Nation* is coded as moderate), the liberal talk radio model was repeated without NPR included as a liberal outlet. Ideology/partisanship remains significant and positive in predicting the consumption of liberal talk radio

[c] 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 (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" (pp. 46−47)

Though cable television news, talk radio, and Internet websites are widely available, people's newspaper choices may be based on their locale more than on their political inclinations. In order to evaluate the robustness of the results for the relationship between respondents' political leanings and the endorsement practices of the newspapers they read, hierarchical linear models were run with respondents clustered into congressional districts, controlling for the percentage of the 2004 presidential vote within each district going to Bush. All controls included in Table 1 were included in this analysis as well. The results for ideology/partisanship are robust when using this method. Living in a district with a higher percentage of the vote going to Bush in 2004 is significantly and positively related to reading a newspaper endorsing Bush ($B = 0.02$, SE $= 0.01$, $p < 0.001$) and is significantly and negatively related to reading a newspaper endorsing Kerry ($B = -0.04$, SE $= 0.005$, $p < 0.001$). Even after controlling for the political composition of one's congressional district, respondent ideology/partisanship continues to significantly predict reading newspapers endorsing Bush ($B = -0.04$, SE $= 0.01$, $p < 0.001$) and reading newspapers endorsing Kerry ($B = 0.05$, SE $= 0.01$, $p < 0.001$). This analysis provides support for H1 and helps to answer RQ1: There is evidence of partisan selective exposure across outlets.

To evaluate whether patterns of partisan selective exposure changed over time (H2), a variable measuring when during the campaign the respondent completed the survey was created, hereafter referred to as *time*. Each survey day was given an increasing number between 1 and 146, corresponding to the 146 days of the general election campaign period. Time as a main effect and the interaction between time and ideology/partisanship were incorporated into the models shown in Table 1. For equations predicting exposure to newspapers, talk radio, and websites, interactions between time and ideology/partisanship were not significant. In predicting naming FOX as one's preferred cable network, however, the interaction between time and ideology/partisanship was significant (ideology/partisanship $B = -0.26$, SE $= 0.04$, $p < 0.001$, time $B = -0.0012$, SE $= 0.0009$, $p = 0.17$, ideology/partisanship $\times$ time $B = -0.0009$, SE $= 0.0004$, $p < 0.05$). Likewise, in predicting naming CNN or MSNBC as one's most frequently watched cable news network, the interaction again was significant (ideology/partisanship $B = 0.15$, SE $= 0.03$, $p < 0.001$, time $B = -0.0009$, SE $= 0.0007$, $p = 0.16$, ideology/partisanship $\times$ time $B = 0.0013$, SE $= 0.0003$, $p < 0.001$). These results are depicted in Figs. 1 and 2. Results document that over the course of the presidential campaign, conservative Republicans became more likely to name FOX as their preferred cable news network and liberal Democrats became more likely to name CNN or MSNBC

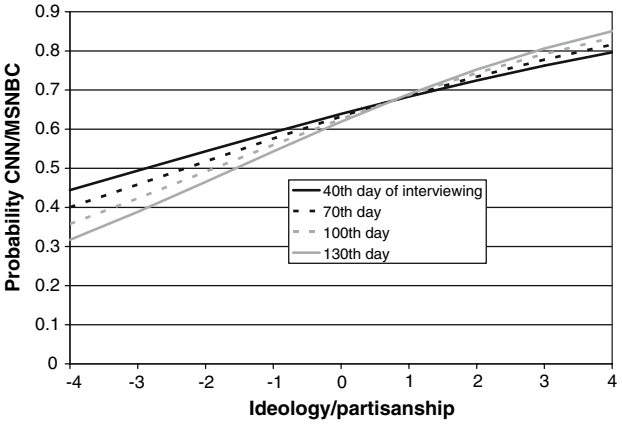

Fig. 1 Probability of naming CNN/MSNBC as most watched cable news network by ideology/partisanship and time of interview. *Note*: Since (a) general political knowledge was only on the survey for a subset of the survey field period and (b) general political knowledge was not a significant predictor of naming either CNN/MSNBC or FOX as the most watched cable news station (not shown, but included in computing results for Table 1), results were repeated without including general political knowledge as a control. Results were unchanged

compared to other respondents. This provides partial support for H2, that partisan selective exposure increased over the course of the campaign.[8,9]

Panel Analyses

While the cross-sectional results document a relationship between political beliefs and the consumption of different media outlets, the causal direction is ambiguous. To further investigate H1 and RQ1, a second strategy of panel analyses was used. Kessler and Greenberg (1981), for example, recommend using this type of panel regression analysis. Others, such as Slater (2004), explain the problems of relying exclusively on cross-sectional data without analyzing longitudinal relationships. In particular, cross-sectional data analysis is mute on issues of causal ordering.

[8] Additional analysis was run adding interactions between time, ideology/partisanship, age, and gender. There was little evidence that the over-time relationships between ideology/partisanship and cable news consumption were moderated by age or by gender. There was one significant three-way interaction such that over time, younger liberal Democrats were less likely to watch FOX and younger conservative Republicans were more likely to watch FOX in comparison to older respondents. When general political knowledge was excluded (see note in Fig. 1), however, the interaction was no longer significant.

[9] When ideology and partisanship are entered separately in the cable news equations, results are similar, with one exception: in predicting watching FOX, the interaction between ideology and time is not significant ($p = 0.11$), though it remains in the same direction. When a categorical ideology/partisanship variable is used to evaluate the cable news findings, liberal, moderate, and conservative Republicans are more likely to watch FOX and less likely to watch CNN/MSNBC over time in comparison to those without partisan and ideological attachments. Without general political knowledge, conservative Republicans were less likely to watch CNN/MSNBC over time and liberal Democrats were less likely to watch FOX over time in comparison to those without partisan and ideological attachments.

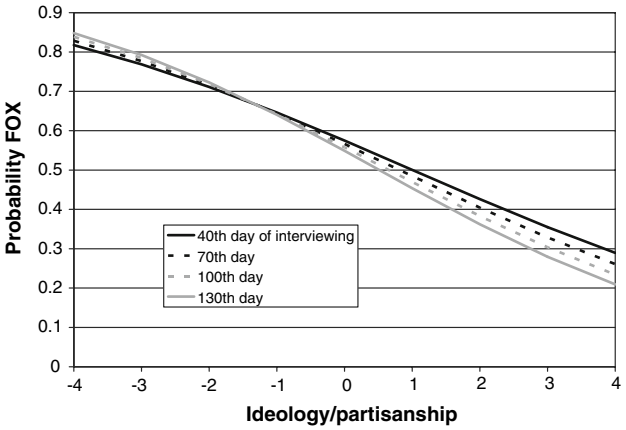

Fig. 2 Probability of naming FOX as most watched cable news network by ideology/partisanship and time of interview (see note in Fig. 1)

Following the strategy that Yanovitzky and Cappella (2001) used in their investigation of the effects of political talk radio, this study evaluates the contribution of political predispositions to media use. Adopting their discussion to the current application, they note that including a lagged measure of the dependent variable in a regression model as an independent variable (in this case, exposure to political media), allows one to evaluate whether the independent variable of interest (in this case, ideology/partisanship) independently contributes to the dependent variable. To the extent that ideology/partisanship contributes to political media exposure between the two waves, there is some evidence that ideology/partisanship causes media exposure (see Yanovitzky and Cappella, pp. 385–386).

To conduct this analysis, the same controls described in the appendix were included in the logistic regression models. In addition, the pre-wave value of each dependent variable was included in each analysis.

As with Table 1, each column in Table 2 represents a separate logistic regression analysis. The results of Table 2 provide clearer evidence that people's political beliefs lead them to select certain media outlets (H1).[10] For talk radio, cable news, Internet websites, and reading newspapers endorsing Kerry, respondent political beliefs are significant predictors of selecting certain outlets, even after controlling

[10] When partisanship and political ideology are included in the panel analyses separately, results are similar. For accessing conservative Internet websites, however, ideology is not significant. Further, neither partisanship nor ideology significantly predicts reading Kerry or Bush-endorsing newspapers. A categorical ideology/partisanship variable produces similar results. Conservative Republicans are less likely to listen to liberal radio or watch CNN/MSNBC and are more likely to listen to conservative radio and watch FOX. The opposite holds true for liberal Democrats. Further, liberal Democrats also are less likely to access conservative websites. Liberal and moderate Republicans, following conservative Republicans, are less likely to consume liberal radio and more likely to watch FOX. Conservative and moderate Democrats, following liberal Democrats, are more likely to watch CNN/MSNBC and less likely to watch FOX compared to those with no partisan leanings and a moderate ideology.

Table 2 Logistic regression panel analyses of media exposure by demographics, media use, and political orientations
Coefficient (SE)

	Newspaper		Talk radio		Cable news		Political internet	
	Bush endorsed	Kerry endorsed	Conservative	Liberal[a]	FOX	CNN/MSNBC	Conservative	Liberal
Ideology/partisanship	−0.03 (0.03)	0.05* (0.02)	−0.36*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.03)	−0.35*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.02)	−0.25* (0.11)	0.71** (0.26)
Nagelkerke R-square	0.51	0.51	0.57	0.42	0.56	0.47	0.38	0.35
N	3,375		3,346		3,373		3,371	

Note: Analyses included all controls described in the appendix. In addition, each analysis included a control for the pre-wave value of the dependent media variable

$^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

[a] The liberal talk radio analysis was repeated without NPR included as a liberal outlet. Results were unchanged

for the respondent's pre-wave selection of the media outlet.[11] It is important to note, however, that if the panel analysis for reading newspapers endorsing Kerry is re-run using a hierarchical linear model with survey respondents clustered into congressional districts and the percent of the Bush vote within each congressional district included as a control, the coefficient for ideology/partisanship remains in the same direction, but falls below significance. Further, ideology/partisanship is not significant in predicting reading newspapers endorsing Bush, though the coefficient is in the expected direction. It also is possible to examine the reverse causal direction, namely whether partisan media use contributes to ideology/partisanship. In this analysis, there is some evidence that partisan media use contributes to stronger ideology/partisanship.[12]

Discussion

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 media types evaluated in this study, 64 percent of conservative Republicans consume at least one conservative media outlet compared to 26 percent of liberal Democrats. In contrast, 43 percent of conservative Republicans consume at least one liberal outlet while 76 percent of liberal Democrats consume at least one liberal outlet. These striking percentages document the extent of partisan selective exposure in the contemporary media environment.[13]

This study investigates whether people's political predispositions motivate their media selections. The evidence clearly suggests that this is the case. Both in the

[11] Additional analysis was run incorporating interactions between ideology/partisanship and age and between ideology/partisanship and gender. For age, none of the interactions were significant. For gender, only one interaction was marginally significant: male liberal Democrats were more likely to read newspapers endorsing Kerry compared to female liberal Democrats. Overall, there is no evidence that either age or gender consistently moderates partisan selective exposure.

[12] Similar panel analyses were conducted to examine the reverse causal direction; namely, whether partisan media use contributes to ideology/partisanship. In two instances—listening to conservative talk radio and watching FOX—media consumption was related to being a stronger conservative Republican. Further, watching CNN/MSNBC and accessing liberal Internet websites were related to being a stronger liberal Democrat. There are several interpretations for these results. It is possible that consuming congenial media helped people to *learn* what terms described their existing political identity (e.g. liberal, conservative, etc.). This is particularly possible considering that this study took place during a heated presidential campaign. It also is possible that viewing these media outlets *changed* or *intensified* people's political identities.

[13] Note that 46 percent of respondents were categorized as liberal Democrats or conservative Republicans. If the analysis is repeated to compare Democrats (including those leaning toward the Democratic Party) and Republicans (including those leaning toward the Republican Party), 90 percent of the respondents are included. Here, 68 percent of Democrats versus 48 percent of Republicans use at least one liberal outlet. Thirty percent of Democrats and 57 percent of Republicans use at least one conservative outlet.

cross-sectional and panel analyses, people's political predispositions predict their selection of political talk radio, cable news, and Internet websites. Even with a control for the partisanship make-up of their congressional district, people's political beliefs are related to the newspapers they read. People's political predispositions, however, are not significant in predicting newspaper selection in the panel analyses, though the coefficients are in the expected direction. Considering that switching newspapers is arguably the least likely switch that a person would make, these results are hardly surprising. Overall, however, the results document that partisan selective occurs across outlets.

Results also show that during the course of the 2004 general election campaign, people's cable news selections were increasingly related to their political beliefs. There are a number of reasons why this sorting pattern would have been visible for cable news and not for any of the other media types considered. First, the partisanship of cable news was highlighted during the 2004 general election campaign and people may have learned from this attention. For example, the film *OutFoxed* received much attention during the summer of 2004. In arguing that FOX is a conservative cable news network, this film may have contributed to the sorting effects documented here. Second, cable news may be particularly likely to inspire partisan selective exposure. It is possible that because cable news networks are widely available (in contrast to diverse newspapers) and identify as objective outlets (in contrast to some talk radio programs and Internet websites), people are more likely to select a cable news network based on their political beliefs. Third, 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 exhibit stronger relationships.

In imagining what critics of selective exposure might say about this study, several comments are warranted. With respect to the critique of de facto selectivity levied by Freedman and Sears (1965), it would be difficult to argue that these results do not demonstrate motivated selective exposure. In the contemporary media environment, de facto selectivity is less plausible because media outlets are widely available. Therefore, availability is unlikely to account for the relationships found here. Further, in the case of newspapers, the cross-sectional analysis controlling for the partisan make-up of the respondent's district did not change the results. In this study, an extensive battery of controls, including education—the variable discussed most extensively by Sears and Freedman (1967)—are used in an attempt to counter claims of spuriousness. Even in the presence of these controls, the relationships persist. The panel analyses also provide stronger evidence about the causal direction of the relationship, thus furthering claims that people's media use is motivated by their political beliefs. In part, the analysis here agrees with Zaller (1992) and Kinder (2003)—partisan selective exposure is not so pervasive that people have *completely* surrounded themselves with likeminded media outlets. The analysis presented here

does, however, quickly part ways with these scholars, arguing that people's political predispositions *are* important determinants of their media use. As such, this study suggests a different role for the media. Zaller, for example, locates the media's power in the transmission of elite messages of varying intensities. This study, however, suggests that the media's power also may come from the partisan leanings of different outlets. In other words, different media outlets may transmit different perspectives to different audiences.

This article has a number of limitations. First, this study presents analysis based on data gathered during the 2004 U.S. presidential election. The extent to which partisan selective exposure persists in other contexts demands additional exploration. This includes whether the documented short-term shifts in selective exposure documented here persist, disappear, or expand after the election. Second, the panel analyses conducted in this study relied on only two waves of data. This limits the extent to which causal conclusions can be drawn. Though using panel regression analysis, as employed in this study, is preferable to using cross-lag panel correlations (Kessler and Greenberg 1981), there are still issues in conclusively resolving the causal direction based on this analysis. For example, drawing conclusions from this analysis assumes that the time lag between the pre- and post-wave is properly specified (Kessler and Greenberg 1981; Slater 2004). Given that little theoretical attention has been paid to the lag length for the topic of selective exposure, this study utilized available data to make its case. By looking at selective exposure over the course of a presidential campaign, it was anticipated that politics would be increasingly salient to the public, making it an ideal time period for conducting this analysis. Future analysis, however, could vary the lag between the pre- and post-waves to further investigate the relationship. Third, the measures of media exposure impose some limitations. The Internet question, for example, did not ask respondents who ventured to candidate websites whether they visited only one or multiple candidate sites. This may lead to an underestimation of the extent of partisan selective exposure. Further, the cable news question asked respondents about their *most* watched station, not about all stations that they watched. Given that the media measures have various limitations, it is instructive to note the *consistency* of the relationship between media consumption and political leanings.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a number of contributions to the literature. The results of this analysis suggest that we should revive the concept of selective exposure. Investigations of selective exposure, however, should consider topic as a moderator of whether selective exposure will occur. Political leanings represent one fruitful area for studying selective exposure because of people's attachments to political parties; tellingly, Green et al. (2002) equate party identification and religious identification. This study also showcases that a more comprehensive modeling of people's media environment can provide key insights into the extent of partisan selective exposure. The breadth of content-specific media questions on the NAES allowed for analysis of exposure to many different media types. Instead of results pertaining to a single media type or single instance of exposure, these findings document a more general cross-outlet pattern: Political beliefs play an important role in determining where people turn for political information. New media types, such as the Internet, continue to inspire partisans to

seek out likeminded sites. There is no evidence here to suggest that the Internet will eliminate these relationships. Further, there is some evidence that partisan selective exposure rose during the 2004 presidential campaign. It seems that partisan selective exposure is less a matter of which medium one uses and more a matter of the political context.

This research has implications for the media's role in democracy. As a commercial enterprise, the media are subject to market pressures. If political partisanship is a viable segmentation strategy, news outlets may increasingly target their news toward consumers with specific political leanings. This research 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. Though patterns of partisan selective exposure may encourage political participation (Schudson 1995), they also may fragment and divide the public into polarized partisan groups (Mutz 2006; Sunstein 2001). People may develop different impressions about the world in which they live (see, for example, Kull et al. 2003-4). The results presented here 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.

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Appendix: Control Variables

Demographics

- Education (recoded to interval level variable of years of schooling, $M = 14.29$, $SD = 2.47$)
- Income (recoded to interval level variable of thousands of dollars, $M = 64.84$, $SD = 49.96$)
- Race/ethnicity (8.2% Black/African–American, 8.0% Hispanic)
- Gender (55.9% female)
- Age in years ($M = 48.23$, $SD = 16.50$)

Media Use (Respondents were asked how many days in the past week (0–7) they used each media type)

- Watched national network news ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 2.62$)
- Watched a 24 h 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, $M = 1.17$, $SD = 2.21$)

- 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 access (respondents were asked whether they had access (yes/no); 76.2% have access)
- Used the Internet for political information ($M = 1.00$, SD = 2.02)[14]

Media Attention (Respondents were asked how much attention they paid to stories/articles about the campaign for president in each media type with response options: no attention at all (0), not too much, some, and a great deal of attention (3))[15]

- Attention to national network or cable television news ($M = 1.60$, SD = 1.09)
- Attention to local television news ($M = 1.32$, SD = 1.07)
- Attention to newspaper coverage ($M = 1.37$, SD = 1.12)

Political Orientations

- Political discussion in past week with friends/family (Range = 0–7, $M = 3.22$, SD = 2.53)
- Political interest (Range = 1–4, higher values indicate more interest, $M = 3.10$, SD = 0.90)[16]
- General political knowledge (5 items asking about Cheney's job, which institution has the responsibility to determine if a law is constitutional, the 2/3 requirement to override a presidential veto, the majority party in the House of Representatives, and the interviewer's assessment of the interviewee's knowledgeability (Zaller 1986) collapsed into a dichotomous measure where scores of A and B were coded as 1 and C, D, and F were coded as 0, $\alpha = 0.64$, $M = 3.21$, SD = 1.47).[17] Don't know and refused responses were coded as incorrect.
- Strength of ideology/partisanship (Range = 0–4, higher values indicating stronger leanings, $M = 1.83$, SD = 1.12)

[14] Two questions were combined to form this variable. 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? 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 without Internet access were coded as 0.

[15] Only those respondents indicating that they consumed each of the various types of media were asked these questions. Those indicating that they did not consume each media type were coded as 0.

[16] This item was removed from the survey between October 8 and October 10, 2004. The question read: "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, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?".

[17] General political knowledge battery was asked of a random two-thirds of respondents between July 16 and August 8; between August 20 and September 12; and between September 20 and October 24, 2004.

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