The Usage of Partisan News and Its Impact on Compromise

by Laura Evans

B.A. in Political Science & Law and Society, Dec 1999, American University
M.A. in Applied Politics, Dec 2000, American University

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John Sides
Associate Professor of Political Science

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Laura Evans

Dissertation Research Committee:

John Sides, Associate Professor of Political Science, Dissertation Director

Kimberly Gross, Associate Professor of Media and Public Affairs, Committee Member

Eric Lawrence, Associate Professor of Political Science, Committee Member

Abstract of Dissertation

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In the last few years news media has undergone massive fragmentation, calling into question the existence and sustainability of mass media. This trend is compounded by a rise in politically slanted news alternatives. This work will seek to uncover what impact this new media environment, particularly the ability it has given people to selectively choose their news consumption, has on cross-cutting political exposure, ideology and willingness to compromise. I argue that the ability to selectively choose which news outlets and what articles a person will read will cause ideologues to choose those that seem to fit their political point of view. This selective exposure will reinforce political ideologies and weaken willingness to compromise with the opposing party. I explore these hypotheses through a survey exploring the perception of biased media usage at the source level, an experiment in exposure to biased news coverage to determine its effect on attitudes toward compromise and a natural experiment using tagging and tracking methodologies to determine if behavior changes with the inclusion directional labeling.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The public's connection to and understanding of politics and political events happening within the government has long been filtered through a third party, the news media. As Graber notes, "Even for those who neither read, watch, nor listen themselves, the mass media are crucial because they furnish most of the opinion-shaping information which is passed on through personal contacts." (1971: 168). However, in recent years the news media has been substantially impacted by the exceptionally fast rise of new technologies. While only a few decades ago you could count on one hand the number of media outlets who served the mass public, since the advent of digital cable, internet websites and smartphones, mass media seems to be a thing of the past. Informing the public of what government is doing was once the job of broadcast television nightly news and the morning's newspaper. However, it has now become the job of literally thousands of different outlets, bloggers, cable news stations, websites, niche print publications, politicians themselves and more. Further, these new media outlets aren't being used by only the few. In their 2012 bi-annual survey of news and media consumption, the Pew Center found that 39% of Americans get news online every day, up from 34% in 2010, 29% in 2008 and 24% in 2006. Further, all indicators point to this number continuing to rise. While being online in and of itself doesn't mean people aren't exposed to similar news outlets, what was read and exposed to the audience isn't necessarily the same. Simply, it used to be that those interested in getting news tended to come to a more common set of outlets and a common set of news coverage, creating a mass and shared news experience. Now we have fragmentation (both within news and against news) that leads to more competition for audience, their time and attention.

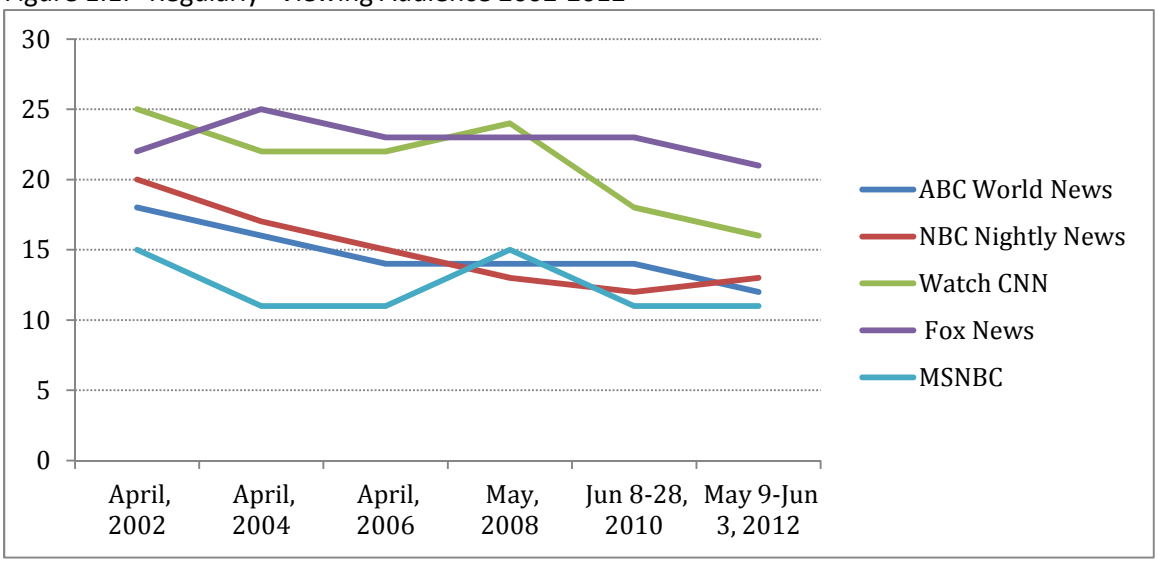
The financing of news media as a business has not changed, however, calling into question the sustainability of mass news media outlets. Despite this upheaval in the news

audience, the news business has yet to find a new lucrative financing model. As a result, news outlets are still reliant on drawing in an audience and attracting advertising dollars with that audience. To do so, and to set themselves apart from the competition, some have chosen to sensationalize stories so they are a "must watch/read" and others have chosen to report from a certain point of view or political ideology. The influence of tailoring to audiences through sensationalized stories was apparent as far back as 1976 when Graber noted, "… the media stress the excitement of campaign skirmishes, instead of dwelling on the manifold problems facing the country and the merits of the solutions proposed or ignored by the candidates… " (1976: 301). Instead of reporting educational material they stress "… negative qualities of candidates and major headlines going to the most damaging accusations." (1976: 301). Though it has a rich American history, tailoring to a particular audience politically is only now re-emerging as an accepted approach to news reporting. Previously, in order to get large audiences, media tried to be unbiased in their reporting. This, however, may be changing.

Though most of the new news sources that appear in the world of fragmentation are committed to a notion of objectivity, some are seeking a partisan audience as their business model. And, though these may still be few in number, competitive pressures may see more news outlets following this model in the future. There are already hints that audiences may be sorting into watching outlets that match their own predispositions. The same Pew study referenced earlier also noted that general news and cable news programs are attracting different audiences. While general news sites such as ABC, NBC and CNN have been consistently declining since 2002, the notably more biased MSNBC and FoxNews have held their "regularly" viewing audience, as Figure 1.1 shows below. FoxNews's stability lies with its strong hold within its respective party. In 2010, four-in-ten Republicans (40%) said they regularly watch Fox News, up from 36% two years prior and just 18% a decade ago. Just ten years ago (2002), Republicans

were as likely to watch CNN (28%) as Fox News (25%). This suggests self-selection is not only occurring but on the rise and general audience media sources (CNN) are declining as a result.

Figure 1.1: "Regularly" Viewing Audience 2002-2012



Source: Pew Bi-Annual Media Consumption Survey, 2012

Not only do consumers have plenty of options available to them, advertisers also have many alternatives at their disposal. Furthermore, buying across mediums and across the web has become increasingly simplified. This has made the traditional sales pitch of mass media- the ability to deliver large audiences- not only less feasible but also less valuable. Instead, outlets also need to distinguish themselves in terms of their audience demographics, loyalty and engagement in order to attract advertising revenue. So, while mainstream media outlets still dominate on the web, their business models are weakening. As a recent report from the Columbia Journalism Review notes, a person buying the paper brings twenty times the revenue of an online reader (Chittum, 2009) even though audiences are dramatically larger on most newspapers' websites and their print audiences are getting smaller.

This is happening as a result of brand advertising dollars not translating to online. As a report by Bain and Company stated, "as audiences shift online, advertisers and media

companies face serious constraints in their ability to deeply engage consumers and build brands." (2009: 2) For example, a traditional newspaper was sold by market penetration against a few other media outlets within the same market. The business model was simple, capture as many readers as possible against these few competitors and only a few options. Now, news brands are finding they have to compete for people's time not against one or two news outlets but many news outlets and worse, entertainment brands, and they simply are unable to do so. They are successfully grabbing audiences online but they aren't spending nearly the same amount of time with their brand as they had in their legacy version (Pew Study, 2012). If an outlet cannot prove engagement then they are not able to convince advertisers that they deliver an audience and their brand is helping their product. They are forced to compete with ad networks and low cost competitors who are delivering exposure at very low costs. In order for traditional media to monetize the digital migration effectively, they must show that their brand adds something to the equation, at this point in time, by proving engagement via time spent, page views consumed and increased frequency of visits. As a result of this consistent issue, advertisers continue to, "…spend about 75 percent of their advertising budgets on TV and print media, nearly three to four times as much as they advertise online." (Bain and Company: 2). Simply, "the vast majority of national advertising dollars reside with large brand-oriented advertising seeking deeper engagement with consumers." (Bain and Company: 6). So, while consumers are online, replacing their habitual newspaper reading, large advertising dollars are not. This has resulted in lower revenues for the print paper (smaller audiences driving down advertising rates) and non-supplemental gains online due to the higher competition and lack of engagement. The result: mass news media as a business is in critical condition.

News media companies, therefore, will seek new and inventive ways to appeal to and engage audiences on their sites. Reporting from a particular political viewpoint is one option of

garnering engagement. Hamilton (2004) shows network news tends to reflect the priorities of young women because they are the most valuable advertising segment. In fact, as some data suggests, there is a benefit to ideological positioning in terms of increasing audience size (see Figure 1.1 above) and other tracking sources have shown a time spent advantage, see Table 1.1 below. ComScore, which uses a cookie tracking methodology, reinforces the Pew Research data. As Table 1.1 depicts, there is an audience engagement benefit of producing slanted news coverage. Huffington Post, a self-described liberal site leads in terms of audience size measured as unique visitors and Fox News, an arguably conservative site, leads the top news sites in the country (according to comScore, December 2013) for the duration of time spent on the site.

Table 1.1: comScore Media Metrix Unified Sites, Desktop Only

Media	Total Unique Visitors (000)	Average Minutes per Visitor	Average Pages per Visitor	Average Visits per Visitor
HUFFINGTONPOST.COM	53,172	14.0	19	4.9
CNN	39,244	21.1	23	10.1
NBCNEWS.COM	35,442	30.7	14	5.3
NYTIMES.COM	30,587	30.4	14	4.9
FOXNEWS.COM	26,562	80.2	30	8.5
ABCNEWS.COM	16,991	11.8	7	3.5
WASHINGTONPOST.COM	14,838	11.0	12	3.8
Wall Street Journal Online	13,857	9.5	8	3.1
CBSNEWS.COM	9,214	4.4	5	3.6

Source: ComScore U.S. Audience, December 2013, Desktop only, unified sites only

The United States has a history of delivering news through biased sources. In its early days as a country, newspapers clearly favored one political party over the other. This shifted in the early 1900s when newspapers and broadcast television sought to be neutral information delivery systems appealing to broad audiences for both technological and, eventually, revenue purposes. As Bimber (2003) details, political information at the start of the country was entirely filtered by political parties. Along with the industrial revolution, the ability to communicate

outside the postal system grew and American political thought saw contribution from interest groups and resource rich parties like businessmen contributing to the debate. In the mid-20th century broadcast television transformed political news into a mass-audience news model run by private entities and market forces. This broadcast change contributed to the news business model as a whole transforming into a mass audience model. Now, we have entered into the next information age with the growth of the Internet. Bimber characterizes this new news information as "information abundance." A period of prolific amount of information, widely distributed and produced by anyone. This has disrupted the news business model by commoditizing the information they produced.

Until recently, broadcast channels, due to its technological constraints, and newspapers, due to its delivery constraints, had near monopolistic positions within the designated media markets they served. In order to preserve these positions, media sought to appeal to all political points of view to increase its audience expansion. This was a viable economic model as Gasper (2009) points out and it continued until the barriers of entry for competition began to erode with the advent of cable television and the internet. Putting forth content in such a personally directed manner has never been so easy and efficient and continues to be developed with new technologies such as computers, mobile and digital set top boxes. These new news sources not only offer consumers the ability to selectively choose what they want to read or what they want to hear but, these technologies also allow the media organization to track and predict usage and, eventually, tailor the content the individual chooses from.

The ability to create slanted content more efficiently and the appeal of that content are two distinct pieces of the media fragmentation equation. This dissertation assumes the former and focuses on the latter. The creation of tailored, biased content is only as successful as the ability to find an audience for it. As a result, this dissertation is framed with the following in

mind: Ideologues will want to read information that reinforces their own point of view and see the world through a partisan perceptual screen. In short, ideologues' news consumptions is within an echo chamber. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *Strong ideologues will choose media sources which fit their political point of view, over neutral or opposing political sources. Further, partisan news audiences will be more likely to be at the ideological extreme than in than have more moderate partisanship.*

If this proves true, it may mean the loss of benefits from cross cutting exposure. As Mutz and Martin (2001: 97) state, "…both in political theory and empirical work, there is near unanimous agreement that exposure to diverse political views is good for democracy." If people are selectively disengaging with viewpoints other than their own, political discourse is likely to suffer in terms of compromise. As Taber and Lodge (2006: 768) note, "Skepticism is valuable and attitudes should have inertia. But skepticism becomes bias when it becomes unreasonably resistant to change and especially when it leads one to avoid information…" In fact, Mutz (2006) even showed that exposure to biased information from both sides can depress political involvement among moderates. The benefits of cross-cutting exposure may solely in the context of an objective news portrayal (neutral exposure) and not in opposing accounts as political punditry offers.

Without a shared understanding, compromise becomes increasingly difficult. A governmental system that is built on public opinion and functions through compromise will likely suffer if disparate information consumption undermines this willingness to compromise and work together. In the mid-1990s Graber predicted, "The end result may be more fragmented polity, making political gridlock more likely." (1996: 33). Though not party-dependent, the United States government was structured in such a way to encourage the diversity of ideas to best answer the country's problems. Though, arguably, they also wanted to have this diversity of perspectives to keep things in check and prevent one group from gaining

too much power, its focus on compromise between the Houses within the Legislature and the Legislature with the Executive Branch is founded on the principle of compromise through multiple points of view. When different parties hold power within these branches, the need for compromise is even more exaggerated. Therefore, in a governmental system built on compromise, can the Democratic tradition of accommodation through difference withstand a lack of shared understanding? So while Graber (1996) argued that fragmented media might result in an echo chamber of news consumption and that might ultimately have negative consequences for the American political system, the question I pose is this dissertation is whether or not this is true. While motivation won't be explored in this dissertation, whether selective behavior occurs or not, how cognizant people are about biased information and the effects of biased information consumption on compromise will be investigated. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *Exposure to biased news consistent with one's own ideology will lessen willingness to compromise compared with exposure to more neutral news coverage.*

Simply, the media has fragmented and competitive pressures have given rise to more partisan news. While most media outlets retain a general commitment to objectivity – and overtly partisan outlets are still the exception to the rule – a better understanding of the degree to which audiences are attracted to like-minded news and the potential effects of such news is valuable. Admittedly, the audience for partisan news is small as most people don't engage with political information regularly. In fact, adding an element of choice (Arceneaux and Johnson, 2013) mitigates most effects in the general populace. But, partisan outlets have attracted an important audience of politically engaged people – who are more likely to follow politics closely and be active in politics. Though the direction effects remain unclear, partisanship may be driving people to partisan news, rather than partisan news creating partisanship, the effects of

extreme partisanship's reinforcement through media choice on willingness to compromise with oppositional points of view is worth exploring.

What we know from the literature is that there is some level of selective behavior when it comes to news consumption. What the existing literature lacks, however, is consumption specifically in reference to political news information. This dissertation will add to the knowledge on media consumption by putting it in context of sources for national politics. It will also extend our understanding by outright testing consumption when the partisan slant of an article is labeled. Much of the existing work has relied on an assumption that the partisan slant is known by the consumer. It then relies on this assumption to determine the prevalence of selectively biased media exposure. Though I am not setting out to prove bias, I am setting out to prove that those who see bias will be more likely to engage in selective exposure.

I will be able to determine if overt partisan labeling of articles, impacts people's readership and engagement with that news. This dissertation will first set out to show that biased news sources do exist- looking it at the program, website and channel levels -and that ideologues tend to self-select into news that share their own political point of view. This will be proven through two differentiated methodologies, survey work on bias perceptions and biased media exposure through a natural experiment. The result of this pattern is an increase in ideological extremists who are unsympathetic to opposing point of views - decreasing the desire to compromise. This will be researched through an online, survey-based, experiment

In conclusion, I believe this dissertation will contribute to the existing literature in a number of ways. First, I look into compromise and its relationship with exposure and the bias of that exposure. In doing so, I offer an alternative view of media bias relying on the clarity of bias instead of external validation of bias. And, lastly, this will be an in-depth look at self-selection in a web environment, and shed light on the influence of media in politics in an increasingly

fragmented media environment, whether incentives exist for news organizations to disseminate biased information versus take a more neutral point view. Last, while the literature has shown that selective exposure impacts trust in government, tolerance, voter turnout, and even political activism, there remains limited understanding on its impact on support for compromise or, more importantly, support for intransigence by party leaders.

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature

2.1 Selective Behavior:

In a recent interview with New York Magazine (October, 2013) Justice Antonin Scalia discussed his media consumption habits. Even though he lives in Washington (where the largest circulated paper is The Washington Post) and works in government, he canceled his subscription to the city's most widely read newspaper. In it he explained, "It was the treatment of almost any conservative issue. It was slanted and often nasty. And, you know, why should I get upset every morning." Instead, he opts for The Washington Times, The Wall Street Journal and to listens to talk radio, all traditionally conservative outlets. While this is just an illustrative example, it has been proven, to some degree, selective behavior occurs in news media consumption among such strong partisans.

How people receive information is an integral part of how people consume media. The ability to receive and process political information and the role ideology plays in this has been studied thoroughly in political science. Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960) first proved that party identification acts as a psychological screen for how we view the world -this would include how people receive news and political information. This perceptual screen may be the result of a deeper psychological attachment to partisanship. As Green, Palmquist and Schickler (2002) note, people hold an affect toward their party which acts as an object of social identification. This leads them to vote consistently over time and may be why party identification serves as a screen for receiving information. Converse (1964) expresses concern about people's ability to process political information, arguing that citizens do not use ideological terms and structures to make sense of politics in any consistently ideological fashion. However, Zaller's (1992) work, specifically *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion,* argues that people selectively choose which information to store. Once people are exposed to new

information, they then choose whether to accept it and add it to their store of considerations. While these considerations are not necessarily ideologically constrained, reception and storage are strongly influenced by party identification and, like Campbell et al., Zaller believes that party identification helps determine how we see the world. He does not equate this to political sophistication but, instead, to cues and consistency of partisan messaging. As a result, those who lack the desire to become more knowledgeable about politics are likely to have inconsistent points of view due to confusion around source cues.

In an era of massive opportunities for self-selection, the same people who were likely to filter through partisan screen may now choose to seek out ideologically consistent news as a means for reinforcement. Though such an argument would make it seem that politics plays an integral role in Americans' lives, some have argued that the levels of ideological thinking are minimal. Converse's (1964) seminal study, *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,* found that large portions of the American public had no clear ideology and no true understanding of the liberal-conservative distinction and lacked the desire to learn. Though they may still use party cues as a means for vote choice, they demonstrated inconsistency in the liberal-conservative dimensions, which he suggested showed a lack of political competence in the electorate. Later work (Delli, Carpini and Keeter, 1991) would suggest that the populace's political knowledge isn't low- citing that the public is actually able to answer certain kinds of questions at higher rates than Converse finds for his questions- they still agree with low constraint in ideology among the mass public. This would, therefore, suggest that such selectivity would occur only among stronger partisans, an area I explore in this dissertation.

This lack of constraint may derive from how people receive and store information and the role the ideological screen plays in that process. Luskin (1990) believes that levels of political information are based on three factors: ability, motivation and opportunity. Individuals must

have the ability to acquire and retain information, the motivation and the opportunity to do such. A lack in any of these three components explains the wide range of political information in the electorate. Further, Luskin argues that motivation could lead to selectivity in reception, should there be the opportunity for a person to do so.

The contemporary news environment offers the electorate Luskin's opportunity. Given the choice, and if they have the motivation to do so, politically interested people will tend to gravitate toward perspectives similar to their own. As Sunstein (2008) notes, the Internet environment has led to fragmented debate, reinforcing and not challenging previously held political perspectives and isolating publics into many issue areas. The potential for reinforcement can motivate selective exposure. As Taber and Lodge (2006) found, the politically aware were more likely to read sympathetic arguments than opposing arguments. Some work has already been conducted looking into media fragmentation and its effects. Lawrence, Sides and Farrell (2010) found that when it comes to blog readership, users are self-selecting and reading those which are in accord with their own political beliefs.

Though examples of self-selection tend to be among small audiences (such a blog readers), this is likely due to Luskin's motivation criteria. Prior (2005) investigated the effect of expanded media choice, finding that the increased number of options has decreased the general level of political knowledge of those who are less interested politically. Where years ago their options on what to watch at certain hours generally forced news exposure, adults not only have a greater number of news stations to turn to, they also have entertainment options to choose outside of news media. Lacking interest, they choose entertainment. As a result, those who have always been politically interested are consuming more news and those lacking in interest are consuming less. "Since political knowledge is an important predictor of turnout and since exposure to political information motivates turnout, the shift from a low-choice to a high-choice

media environment implies change in electoral participation as well." (2005: 578). Simply, cable has made accidental exposure lower and the Internet lowers this yet again. Choice and preference have become more efficient and motivation to stay politically informed is a key driver to exposure.

Furthermore, as citizens increasingly ascribe partisan positions to media and filter information based off of congruity (Bennett and Iyengar, 2008; Coe et al., 2008; Iyengar and Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2008), adhering to these partisan positions may be best mode for news companies to engage audiences as it gives consumers the option to avoid cognitive dissonance-something people will actively seek. As Festinger (1957) found through a series of lab experiments, people will actively avoid cognitive dissonance to the point of lying to themselves. As he states, "The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance" (1957: 3). When this dissonance occurs in media exposure it is often called the "hostile media phenomenon." The hostile media phenomenon notes that individual factors are significant in evaluation of media content. Simply, audiences do not passively receive media content but instead selectively interpret it in light of their own values and predispositions. As Vallone, Ross and Lepper (1985) found, partisans evaluate the fairness/bias of the media differently in light of their own convergent/divergent views and partisans report different perceptions and recollections about content itself as a result. The desire to avoid such uncomfortable dissonance may be motivation enough for partisans to opt-out of mass media, because they are not seeing it as the objective news source it may potentially be.

Therefore, news organizations, in their quest to engage audiences, have good reason to serve like-minded information. Not only does the contemporary news environment provide ample opportunity for people to selectively expose themselves to information, and the fact that

the hostile media phenomenon suggests that many will have the motivation to do so, news organizations may have the financial desire to use such consumption patterns to their advantage. The effects of biased media consumption, however, could have deeper consequences.

2.2 Media Bias:

The desire to engage via politically biased reporting may be exacerbated by the perception of news media as biased even in a mass market world. The bias literature follows two paths: discernment of whether or not the content is actually biased in one direction or the knowledge and discovery of people's perceptions of bias.

In the former, those who have objectively tried to demonstrate media bias find very little. Many are concerned with developing a measure that can be applied to a wide range of news outlets (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006) and, as a result, they don't find consistent evidence of bias, at least in part due to methodological differences (Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt, 1998; Gunther, 1998). In their study of media bias, Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt noted, "…most newspaper and all television newscasts presented both favorable and unfavorable stories on each candidate during the campaign." (2002: 62). Dalton, Beck, Greene and Huckfeldt (1998) found the average newspaper presented a mixture of positive and negative news in relation to the 1992 presidential race, but editorial stance of newspapers is correlated with perceptions of candidates. Similarly, Gunther (1998) found that only in rare occasions did respondents feel their political views were "very distant" from that of their most read newspaper.

Yet, despite the lack of evidence that bias exists in any large measure, people perceive media as biased and unbalanced. This is because the partisan perceptual screen likely influences how people view the media and may be the root cause of why people would seek out only certain types of information. Research has shown that when reporting is balanced, partisans will often see it as biased in favor of the opposing political viewpoint, party or candidate (Vallone, Ross and Lepper, 1985; Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt, 1998). Eveland and Shah (2003) expanded on the concept of the "hostile media phenomenon" finding that a large portion of the

population feels that media are biased and the direction of that bias is against their own viewpoint. Specifically, Republicans, strong partisans, the politically involved, and adults with high levels of ideologically like-minded discussions are the most likely to indicate that the media is biased against their viewpoints.

Regardless of perceptions of bias, work has been done to determine if biased news media objectively exists at the source (channel, paper, site) or program level. Groseclose and Milyo (2005), sought to do this by relating media citations from think tanks and policy groups to Members of Congress who also cited them (using their partisanship as an indication of how liberal or conservative an outlet is), but their methodology has come under fire. Lacking any mechanism for volume of possible citations, few programs or outlets escape the label of "liberal."

To expand upon this previous work, I will seek to understand not only the perceived bias at the source level but the relationship between perception of bias, strength of partisanship and frequency of usage.

2.3 Media Effects:

Patterns of media consumption and the presence of selective exposure is important to understand, as media messages can affect people's attitudes. Media serve as educators, exposing people to new information and different perspectives (Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt,1998; Calhoun, 1988; Garammone and Atkin, 1986; Zhao and Chafee, 1995; Gamson, 1996). Media serve as "agenda-setters" and "primers," affecting which problems people think are important and which criteria they use to evaluate leaders (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Bosso, 1989; Hill, 1985; Gamson, 1996). Perhaps most importantly, media can change people's opinions, contingent on their exposure to and acceptance of that information (Zaller, 1992). For example, media has been proven to affect people's evaluation of political institutions, social

groups and overall political trust (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1998; Arceneaux and Johnson, 2009; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000).

Media has long served as the link between government and the people, serving to educate the public on political and social news events. It is in the role of educators that media serves democracy well: informing the public of events and how they affect social decision making. Their role as educators has been explored in the literature. And, it is in this role, that media has earned the public's trust. As Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt state, "The media's role as intermediary is most evident at election time, when the media are the primary conduits for information on the campaign." (1998, page 111). When Zhao and Chafee (1995) studied campaign advertisements versus television news casts, after controlling for demographic and political interest, attention to news accounted for some of the variability in issue knowledge seen in the general public. Prior (2005), in a series of surveys, also found exactly that. Having access to cable television increased the political knowledge and involvement in the electorate of some people who were motivated to consume it, but it also decreased knowledge among those who weren't eager to watch the news. Similarly, media has been shown to contribute to political socialization, proving that exposure to broadcast news led to greater political and current events knowledge (Garramone and Atkin 1986). Calhoun (1988) agrees, noting that the way people obtain information on people different from themselves is not through personal relationships, but instead through media.

Much of the early research on media's influence focused on their agenda setting and priming effects. Most notably, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) found that television news has a powerful impact on which national problems people view as the most serious. Specifically the stories the news deems most important are, in turn, deemed important by viewers. Television news also has a priming effect; such that citizens tend to judge the President in terms of the

issues they view on television. Correspondingly, Bosso (1989) noted that media has the ability to affect what issues are seen as salient to the public, however, its influence isn't long lasting. In his example, famine in Ethiopia had been ongoing but was not an issue of public concern until it got media exposure from Tom Brokaw. For a short time, attention was high, and then attention suddenly dropped off. He concluded, therefore, that the public becomes highly interested in something, and then eventually loses interest whether or not the issue has been resolved. In similar findings, Hill (1985) noted that television news can influence the relative salience of political issues. He found the ability to recall news items is influenced by viewers' motivations for viewing, prior level of knowledge about the topic or interest in it, viewers' attentiveness and the extent to which viewers plan in advance their exposure to news. Gamson (1996) found that people combine media discourse with popular wisdom and experiential knowledge to make sense of political issues (cultural, personal, and integrated information). They rely most on media for issues with which they have the least information. Though Gamson focused more on how people think about an issue, the words they use and concepts they bring up to discuss the issue (i.e., framing effects), Gamson's notion that media matters most on issues with which have little information may also extend to agenda setting. Simply, we may see bigger agenda setting media effects in issue areas where people have weaker outside sources of information. That may also be why it is not in all cases that media has shown effects. Haller and Norpoth (1997) found that exposure to media does not have an effect when it comes to economic issues.

To date, media studies have largely focused on mass media and their effects. Though differences in effect have been noted between media (Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt, 2002; Garramone and Atkin ,1986), these studies have still concentrated on mass media. Not all media are alike and within media there are differences. Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt (2002) found that interpersonal discussion outweighs the effect of media on vote choice.

However, when it does have an affect it is the product of newspaper editorial pages and not television or newspaper reporting. Garramone and Atkin (1986) found broadcast news exposure to be more related to interpersonal discussion of political and current events than political participation while print news exposure was more strongly related to participation than discussion. Regardless of the medium, media having an effect is not surprising. Research has indicated that the majority of the public believes most of what it sees/hears/reads in the press, regardless of political and demographic variables (Robinson and Kohut, 1988).

I would argue, however, that the media landscape has changed enough to call into question whether mass media effects will still be present in American society in the near future. Though there is still a bigger audience for traditional outlets than for partisan based media, the landscape has changed enough in a few short years that there is increasing potential for targeted media. Thus, the effects of partisan media are still important to understand even if it is not yet the majority of media outlets or media consumption.

The desire to engage based off of political partisanship may be more acceptable in present day even among the traditional mainstream media outlets. While the news may be covered in fairly similar ways even across a diverse group of outlets, the desire to be distinct could cause framing effects to be more prominent. Take for example the leading headlines of the two largest newspapers in New York on October 16, 2013, depicting the passage of the Debt Bill (see Image 2.1 below). Though anecdotal in nature, it is a clear example of the transformation even traditionally neutral media is undergoing in their desire to serve readers. As a result of greater competition, there is an acceptable willingness to show political bias. The quest to engage consumers will heighten the need to report in an angle closer to their readers' point of view. As a result, the ability to receive the benefits of exposure to different points of view via an unbiased source may be minimalized in a media fragmented society.

Image 2.1: Wall Street Journal and New York Times front pages after passage of Debt Bill, October 16, 2013

2.4 Biased Exposure Effects:

It is to be expected that people receive and reuse information obtained through media, since news has longstanding played the role of educators. Similar to general education, people should be altered because of a new understanding produced by researched work. However, when the work, in this case, media's reporting, is biased, untrue or abuses their power, media effects are of normative concern. Most of the media effects studies verify, to some degree, media's agenda setting power. Zaller (1992) noted that media has the opportunity to affect the general public. Specifically, people paying the middle amount of attention are the most apt to be changed by the media. Because people contain large stores of information from which they pull their opinions, the way that information is framed has a large impact because it will affect what information is retrieved. In other words, if media frames issues in a certain way close to election time, they may influence people's vote choice.

Theory has argued that media's desire to influence and misuse their power as educators does exist. Bovitz, Druckman and Lupia (2002) claim news organizations are made up of media

elites who seek to import their ideology through news. Barrett and Barrington (2005) found that newspapers show a bias in their photograph selection. Those whose editorial pages endorsed one candidate tended to show more favorable photographic displays of that candidate as well, concluding that favor from a newspaper extends beyond the editorial team but into entire newsrooms. That said, proving its existence is less my concern. Instead, and consistent with Eveland and Shah (2003) who noted that people believe a bias exists even if there is little systematic evidence of its existence, I argue that perceived bias plays a role in selective exposure and impacts its effects accordingly.

Beyond cognitive understanding and salience, work has also proven that media exposure may also have an effect on emotional reactions toward government. Hibbing and Thiess-Morse (1998) found that a reliance on television and radio news and heavy exposure to it, generates more negativity toward Congress than newspapers or low media exposure overall. While one could argue, "ignorance is bliss," the fact that the reaction is emotional and not just cognitive does suggest a certain abuse of power in the case of television news. Correspondingly, Arceneaux and Johnson (2007) found that uncivil political programs have an effect on political trust in government when people cannot avoid them. Those who choose to watch them are less immediately affected. Television news media has also been shown to affect racial biases, heightening negative attitudes toward blacks among whites (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000), therefore promulgating an untruth. It is not just television news, however, which can be blamed for power abuse. Barrett and Barrington in their work concerning photograph selection conclude, "readers of a particular newspaper are generally exposed to a series of favorable or unfavorable candidate photographs that can help both to create a particular impression of a candidate and to reinforce that impression" (2005: 617).

While Calvert (1985) suggests that self-selection into biased media is a potentially rational strategy, it may also be a strategy with undesirable consequences. A lack of exposure to cross-cutting networks is associated with less tolerance for opposing political viewpoints (Mutz, 2006), albeit higher levels of political participation. Selective exposure to one-sided political arguments is associated with more extreme attitudes (Taber and Lodge, 2006). As Taber and Lodge state, "Our own evidence… presents a compelling case that motivated biases come to the fore in processing of political arguments even for nonzealots" (2006: 767). Their work, however, was limited to affirmative action and gun control issues and did not replicate general exposure to information but rather a lab setting with students compelled to participate.

At this point it is unclear where the directional effect lies. Does politically homogenous media exposure produce ideological extremes or do ideological extremists only expose themselves to certain media? Levendusky (2013) sought to do just that in his book *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. He found in a series of experiments exposing college students to cross-cutting or not cross-cutting media, that exposure to one-sided partisan messaging intensifies preheld beliefs. Meaning, selective exposure pushes extremists further from the center and increases distrust in the opposing party. As he states, "Partisan media do not shift the center of the distribution of mass opinion; rather, they help elongate the tails of distribution." (2013: 141). Arceneaux and Johnson (2013), however, find that partisan media has little effect when choice is allowed. They find that those who choose to watch cable news are already polarized, and their exposure to partisan programming doesn't significantly alter the strength of their partisanship or attitudes. In fact, they find, like Arceneaux, Johnson and Murphy (2012), counter attitudinal programming is more likely to induce hostile perceptions about media and the opposing party. But, Arceneaux and Johnson (2013) clarify, this only when forced to watch such

programming. Like Prior (2005) found, the diversity of media choices, has caused some people to tune out the news and this mitigates oppositional effects.

2.5 Measuring Media Exposure:

It is a difficult task to measure media exposure and attention and recently survey measures have come under criticism. Many call into question the relevance and reliability of survey data (an approach I rely on in my later chapters). New methods offer some potential improvements but they also have limitations.

Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) used comScore panel data (which tracks the Internet usage of individual computers) and not only found that people tend to use traditional mass media sources online (New York Times, CNN, etc.) and not smaller opinionated news sites but that there was a lot of overlap between conservative media (Fox News) and liberal media (MSNBC). Though I don't dispute this occurrence, this automatic measurement fails to capture receivership of the news, just exposure. Further, much of media consumption online isn't through direct means, instead it is from stumbling upon it through social media sites or through search optimization where brand takes a decidedly second seat to headlines. Since SEO algorithms have long favored big and established brands, it is of no surprise we see overlap in them and large numbers in the bigger networks when measuring clicks. The measurement, however, does not allow for intent or even to be certain people knew what site they were on. In fact, it is commonly known that search and social referrals to news sites have very low engagement. We cannot be certain that this exposure was intentional and the clicking to the site didn't simply result in an immediate exit. This measure also does not differentiate political content from other content. These sites cover much more than political news (business, arts, sports, lifestyle) and the overlap seen in the panel data does not distinguish sections consumed in its overlap. Further, it fails to capture and differentiate repeat exposure from single visit. Or,

long term exposure from short time spent. In other words, there is no real understanding of engagement or whether or not they read the account fully. It just captures a click.

LaCour (2013) found similar results when using an automated data capture technique. He employs cellphones which capture programming noise in exchange for a free phone and subsidized service. He found a higher degree of local news exposure – which runs in contradiction to a lot of survey work – consumption around centrist media and little evidence that self-selection to partisan news occurs on a broad scale. In fact, he estimates that only 5% of the electorate uses only one-sided media. While an interesting methodology, it does have its weaknesses. First, this automated technique uses individual survey work (for the purposes of qualifying for the panel) and then relates, potentially, other household members' captured media usage to it. Simply, we cannot be certain it was the same individual making the channel choice or even exposed to the media as the person who took the panel survey. Last, though it collects ambient noise, it fails to assess the level of attention paid to it. Like other studies LaCour finds political exposure bias is greatest among those who consume the most news. The question is, are these news junkies more likely to be opinion leaders? Their numbers suggest niche within the panel but, given the free phone and high subsidy as incentives, we cannot be statistically certain it is accurately estimating the size of the population. Even still, he did find a significant time spent gap between like-minded sources and oppositional sources where like-minded benefited from more engagement. So, while not exclusively received, the time spent with like media is higher than exposure to oppositional points of view in the news viewing public overall.

As mentioned earlier, along with these new approaches, traditional survey work has come under harsh criticism in these recent works. First, these works raise the potential concern that by asking media consumption along with ideology, people will aim to be consistent in their answers and choose liberal media if they are asked and answer they are a liberal. This

endogeneity can be overcome, however, by asking ideology at the end of the survey rather than the beginning. Second, they find people's assessment of the time spent watching news is grossly over-exaggerated. Last, compared with automated techniques, people fail to detail all of the media they actually tune into. Prior (2013) hits this home by comparing Nielsen panel measurements with self-reports. This automated capture, however, may not be an accurate indicator of exposure, nevertheless, reception of information as it too, has its weaknesses. Nielsen's television panel is the only access to television ratings, however, their same methodology used online has come under fire. Though both comScore and Nielsen services use a panel tracker plus cookie tracking methodology, their reported usage data is quite divergent and inconsistently so. Neither organization shares their usage algorithms but inconsistency in rank and volume of the same site's audience, over the same time period, calls into question the accuracy of the automated collection approaches. This automated measure is also constrained by the device. It captures computer usage but fails to capture exposure through mobile phones, tablets, and apps. As a result, it may not be entirely fair to say that this calls into question survey measurement technique's accuracy.

Chart 2.1: comScore versus Nielsen online measurement results

2012 Average Unique Audience				
	ComScore	Nielsen	Vol Diff	% Diff
Yahoo-ABC	85,962	58,867	27,095	32%
CNN	61,489	40,021	21,468	35%
HPMG News	59,901	33,463	26,438	44%
NBC News Digital	56,274	34,896	21,378	38%
CBS News	39,221	13,252	25,969	66%
USA Today	35,121	15,354	19,767	56%
New York Times	29,031	30,246	(1,215)	-4%
Fox News	27,909	22,516	5,393	19%
Tribune Newspapers	27,637	21,761	5,876	21%
Washington Post	18,942	15,699	3,243	17%
Advance Digital	18,172	12,683	5,489	30%
Mail Online	17,776	12,947	4,829	27%
Hearst Newspapers	15,965	11,175	4,790	30%
Examiner.com Sites	14,046	10,493	3,553	25%
BBC	13,544	9,079	4,465	33%
McClatchy Corp	13,448	10,610	2,838	21%
Media News Group	13,271	9,131	4,140	31%
NY Daily News	11,637	9,176	2,461	21%
Source: Pew research, Average Monthly Uniques (000s)				

Next, just because the television is on, it does not mean it is being viewed. Background noise, movement in and out of rooms is a common occurrence in television exposure but not captured in these device technologies. The methodology makes no distinction on attention level paid to some programs over others. Though this would also argue exposure is potentially lower than the low number they have captured, however, many business and all government institutions block usage of these cookies on work sites. Given much of the online news consumption happens during work hours, missing the large company and government employee in the data is a significant weakness.

Last, perhaps the fact that people don't recall the exposure doesn't mean it is inaccurate. Instead, it could mean it never made it through Zaller's (1996) Receive-Accept-Sample (RAS) layer. In other words, it was discarded because it was outside their issue and

partisan perceptions. Of course, this recall may also be due to more than just partisan screening (such as personalities or story topics, etc..) but recall of exposure may still have value in determining the role media plays in political knowledge. The lack of detailed recall may simply mean their lack of attention. Therefore, recall of what they watch may be far more important than the accuracy of detailing all that playing on TV. The issue arises, however, that the time spent with media has been shown to be exaggerated. Though the time spent measure on digital measures only the usage of those who click to a second page, still, analysis should focus on the relative difference between people's assessment of how much time they viewed versus modeling the actual amount.

Even with conflicting evidence on self-selection's prominence, media and their bias and media effects in general, most of literature seems to indicate that its existence is only among a small, select group of all adults. That said, media is still in transition. As a result, people's media habits are still in transition and some are still firmly rooted in the past. How the younger generation adapts and matures in this new media world will have the greatest insight into what is to come with American politics. Further, the impact of these ideologues on the rest of the population needs to be further explored. If this behavior is pronounced among opinion leaders and heavy voters, we may see the impact in government without seeing it ever reach a majority of Americans.

Chapter 3: Media Bias and Selective Exposure

Patterns of media consumption and the presence of selective exposure are important to understand, as media messages can affect people's attitudes. The degree to which people seek out and engage with politically biased information is an important part of understanding potential media effects. A key assumption in my dissertation is that the greater the competition within the media landscape, the greater the willingness to show political bias because media organizations who show a bias are benefited by a more engaged user. Simply, in an arena of vast competition (online news), the quest to engage consumers will heighten the need to report in an angle closer to their point of view. The justification for being biased, therefore, could a business justification. This chapter seeks to determine if the underlying logic for that business decision holds, that partisanship will lead people to use media which reinforces their partisanship. Simply, if we see that people are more engaged with sources they perceive as partisan on their side – whether or not the content is in fact partisan biased on their side – it will reinforce to the notion of whether it work as a means of attracting audience. As part of this, I will be looking into perceptions of the bias of outlets and the degree to which that really is driven by individual level predispositions like strength of partisanship.

The specific hypothesis explored in this analysis is: The strength of an individual's ideology will be associated with greater usage of like-minded partisan media as well as their perception of overall prevalence of bias compared to moderates. Further, ideologues will engage with media in their same political point of view more than those of opposing or centrist viewpoints.

3.1 Biased Media

Though this chapter focuses more on self-selection and the perception of bias, its import does hinge on the notion that some news media outlets are, in fact, biased. The research

and evidence has been somewhat mixed but does center on one overall notion, a few cable news channels are politically biased but most media sources are seen as objectively neutral – presenting both sides' viewpoints equally.

One measure of media bias has been Groseclose and Milyo's (2005) media scoring. They first conducted a content analysis of news reports and Congressional citations for references to think tanks. Then, using the ADA scale for legislators, Groseclose and Milyo determined the ideology of news sources from closeness of their content to that of the lawmaker. Simply, if a media outlet cited the same sources (think tanks and policy group mentions, specifically) as a legislator then Groseclose and Milyo assigned the outlet the same liberal/conservative ADA score. Though this represented a new technique for measuring media from the subjective content analysis approaches which preceded it (Lazarsfield, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944), it still has its weaknesses. This measure fails to capture contextual references such as sarcasm and does not have enough volume of mentions overall to have stability within an outlet. Further, it takes into consideration only think tanks and policy groups but certain issues political arguments don't necessarily involve equal numbers of mentions from think tanks. It, therefore, can be an inaccurate measure of media bias and simply a measure of think tank activity.

A few recent studies looking at content bias have shown some cable news channels do exhibit political bias. For instance, LaCour (2013), seeking a similar approach to Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011), constructed a new measure of media slant which factored in the similarity of a news program's language to that of a Congressional legislator and his/her affiliated party. Since the parties have become more ideological and all Republicans are to the right of all Democrats today (Prior, 2013), this is now a sound approach to content bias. Simply, he uses the frequency of particular phrases as part of his index, subtracting the number of uses by Republicans from

the number of uses by Democrats and applying that ratio to the media. What he found was that Fox News is systematically conservative in its content and MSNBC is liberal.

For the most part, the bias literature is concerned with developing a measure that can be applied to a wide range of news outlets (Groseclose and Milyo, 2005; Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006) and, as a result, there isn't consistent evidence of bias, at least in part due to methodological differences (Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt, 1998; Gunther, 1998). Consistent with Eveland and Shah (2003), who noted that people believe a bias exists even if there is little systematic evidence of its existence outside a few cable outlets (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2006; Groeling and Baum, 2007), I argue that perceived bias plays a role in selective exposure, even if that bias cannot be scientifically proven. Simply, whether or not media bias exists matters but what also matters is people's perception of its existence because their perception can alter usage and recall (Zaller, 1992). What this chapter focuses on is if the perception of bias is correlated with partisanship, and whether partisans are more likely to watch/read partisan news (where there is some belief that the news is slanted in a single direction).

Last, the method used in this chapter is survey research, resulting in a reliance of self-reported exposure as a key variable in the analysis. Though it may not be entirely accurate (as these newer methodologies suggest) it retains its value because it may actually reflect engagement. Simply, the media a respondents says they use may be the ones actually paid the most attention to as opposed to those less or even not at all attending to. Though this isn't yet a tested and validated assertion, it has merits enough not to be dismissed.

3.2 Hostile Media Phenomenon

What factors influence people's judgments of media bias? What influence does partisanship have in this? And does the perception of bias influence usage? The premise

asserted here is the roots of the perception of bias may not be in the content itself but the lens through which users evaluate it.

Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt (1998), investigated voters' perceptions of bias in newspaper coverage of the 1992 presidential election and found a lack of a relationship between respondents' perceptions of which presidential candidate their daily newspapers favored in the campaign and the actual slant of their paper's coverage. What they discovered was the level of personal attachment to their political party and their own presidential candidate in it seemed to matter more in determining bias. This tendency for partisans to see news coverage as biased against their own party is described as the "hostile media phenomenon." The "hostile media phenomenon" was first identified by Vallone, Ross and Lepper (1985), who had pro-Arab and pro-Israeli students observe an identical news broadcast in which the responsibility of Israeli troops for the 1982 massacre of civilians in Lebanese refugee camps was hotly debated. Vallone and his colleagues found that both sides of the debate thought the taped broadcast was biased in favor of the opposing side. Simply, the hostile media effect or hostile media phenomenon is when partisans from different sides perceive the same news media story (often a story which could be argued to be objective and presenting of both sides) as biased against their side.

Since, there is evidence of the ‘‘hostile media phenomenon" existence (Gunther, Christen, Liebhart, & Chia, 2001; Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985), in which partisans perceive more bias in programs that do not align with their own political perspective than with programs which do align with the pre-conceived beliefs, despite the lack of evidence of bias within the content itself, it follows that this may serve as motivation for selective exposure. Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) examined how mass media influences people's choice in voting for the President. They found, at that time, that electorates selectively expose themselves to media propaganda of their

own party over that of the opposing. Coe et al. (2008) found that partisans find like-minded programming more interesting and informative, indicating it can increase engagement with the source. As they state, "…the results of these studies demonstrate that the world of cable news is increasingly one in which partisanship is a driving force" (2008: 216). Pfau, Houston, and Semmler (2007) found, through survey research, significantly differentiated news exposure between Democrats and Republicans for the 2000 and 2004 campaign coverage.

Overall, the preference for like-minded information driven by dissonance avoidance has largely been proven to only occur under only specific circumstances (Jonas, Schulz-Hardt, Frey, and Thelen, 2001). However, works have shown selective extends to news exposure in general. As Iyengar and Hahn (2009: 33) find, "there is a substantial level of polarization in exposure to soft news." Stroud reasserts this finding that politically motivated selective exposure exists in political talk radio, cable news, and website selection. Further, during politically charged season (in this case the 2004 election cycle) as the general election grew closer, "people's cable news selections were increasingly related to their beliefs." (2008: 359). While the audience numbers may not be as large as the audience numbers for mainstream news, what the literature has found is where there is the possibility for selective exposure, we see some evidence of it occurring.

In this multi-channel environment, media outlets have created and provided diverse information to be competitive (Bennet and Iyengar, 2008). The vast array of choices will result in some degree of selective exposure and this selective behavior will function to reinforce -not necessarily alter - people's pre-held beliefs (Bennet and Iyengar, 2008). As Bennett and Iyengar summarize, "Among the relatively attentive stratum, partisans will gravitate to information from favored sources, while ignoring sources or arguments from the opposing side" (2008: 730).

This chapter explores the individual level dynamics that underlie perception of media bias and use of biased (or, more accurately, perceived biased) sources. Specifically, I examine media bias at the program and source level through the users' eyes. Whether bias can be scientifically proven to exist is important but whether or not people perceive its existence may be just as important in determining its impact. Thus, I will seek to understand the perceived bias of media sources and explore the relationship between perception of bias and strength of partisanship. Specifically, to what degree does partisanship factor into both perceptions of bias and usage of (perceived) biased media? To do this, we must compare the distribution of party identification across the measure of perceived media bias. The hypotheses tested in this analysis include:

1) Strong partisans will be more likely to see the news media as partisan. So compared with independents and weaker partisans both strong Republicans and strong Democrats will see more organizations (sources) and more programs as biased.

2) As suggested by the hostile media phenomenon, partisanship will be associated the direction of the perceived bias. Democrats will see more outlets as having a conservative bias, while Republicans will see more outlets as having a liberal bias.

3) People will use media that are perceived to be biased in their party's direction more so than with the opposing or centrist media choices. Partisanship will be a driver of biased media usage.

This study improves on existing work around the hostile media phenomenon by more directly testing the hostile media effect outside of an experimental context and then more explicitly relating that to selective exposure. While much work has concerned whether or not bias, in fact, exists, I focus on the perception of bias and its impact. I discover this through a survey which looks at perceived bias and news and information usage in tandem. Further, I expressly ask users media consumption habits and sources used for national political information, and do not assume news usage is politically motivated.

3.2 Data Collection Methodology

In order to examine these relationships between perception of bias, use of biased media sources and partisanship, I draw on data from two online surveys. These surveys asked respondents about media familiarity, frequency of usage, and perceptions of bias for each media source. I specifically ask people about their familiarity with and use of 53 specific different national news sources including news outlets and specific programs on those news sources. This question allows me to determine at a more fine grained level the specific sources being used. Also, I then asked about perception of bias for each of these sources, regardless of usage. These two series (usage and bias) will be the main survey data used in the analysis. The appendix further details the survey questions used.

The survey asked about exposure to the top television and cable stations in terms of audience size, according to Nielsen Ratings, along with the top circulated papers, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation, and the largest audience news websites, according to Nielsen Net Ratings. The two online surveys were conducted among adults 18 years of age and older. Since the short fielding time period for online surveys may make the results more susceptible to the news cycle, and, depending on the issues of the day, this could, perhaps, exaggerate or mitigate the numbers who perceive bias, the study was fielded at two different time periods. The first study was conducted between November 16 and November 19, 2010 and the second from April 5 through April 12, 2011. With the exception of minor state and demographic differences there were no significant differences in the samples for these two studies and, therefore, they were combined in the analyses that follow.[1] There were a combined total of

[1] There are no differences in the results when the analyses are run on the separate samples.

4,647 responses across both surveys, however fifteen percent of respondents were eliminated for a final n size of 3,968. [2]

The sample for these surveys was gathered using Survey Sampling International. Their online panel consists of 19 million households nationwide who agree to participate in surveys in order to earn points for rewards and be entered into sweepstakes. While one could argue it is not a random sample and not representative, therefore, making it difficult to generalize from these findings, it would be difficult to argue that it is more likely to see bias (outside of partisan effects) in any one direction which would be particularly problematic given the focus of this study. The sample over-represents Democrats (43%) at the expense of Independents (30%). According to Gallup surveys conducted at the same time these percentages should be reversed. That said, work has been done to show that national panels aren't wholly representative of the national population (Malhotra and Krosnick, 2007; Sanders, Clarke, Stewart, and Whiteley, 2007; Baker, Reg et al., 2010) and that they over-represent politically interested and involved people—i.e., the kind of people who are more likely to perceive media bias. Since this relies on such an online population, the degree to which there is inherent error is unknown in my results, but if there is, it is likely in overestimating the level of perceived bias and usage. Simply, it may over represent the type of person interested in politics, who is likely to perceive bias and attend to news.

I compare the combined online sample with the population parameters from the 2010 US Census. All demographics from the combined sample match the U.S. 2010 census population statistics with the exception of race, education and oversample of people in the lowest income. The sample skews slightly White (census is 75% while survey is 82%) but not at the expense of

[2] Respondents eliminated were those who did not answer "5" on statement question to make sure they were paying attention: "If you are still paying attention to this survey, choose the answer "5" to this question" removing 656 respondents from the total sample. Respondents who did not live in the continental United States (n=24) were also removed.)

another racial grouping. This difference may be due to not having multiple race options in the survey choice set. The education skew is likely the result of the online platform approach as the sample underestimates individuals with lower education levels (the high school or less segment). Ideologically, these respondents did mirror the population as a whole but underestimates those who classify themselves as Independents and overestimates Democrats. See Tables A.1 - A.3 in the appendix for respondent demographic details.

Survey work on media consumption has come under fire for not matching the more "accurate" electronic collection techniques now available. While these techniques may be truer measure of exposure, I argue surveys may hold value in being a gauge for reception of information and engagement with a source. It is for this reason I am less concerned about the accuracy of the time spent with each media than with people's perception of what is accurate. What information manages to get through all the daily distractions and produce recall of their exposure is better measured by survey work and not automated tracking. Ultimately, what I am measuring is recall of exposure (not exposure overall) and its relationship to perceived biased media.

The question does remain, however, whether the fact that people may not recall accurately all their exposure impact their perceptions of bias? This is beyond the bounds of the data but does present an important caveat to the work. If people's recall is somehow affected by biased exposure, or partisanship, then I may be over-estimating the level of selective exposure. For instance, if strong partisans are more likely to recall biased media than their exposure to neutral media than weak partisans or Independents, then the differences I observe may be over-estimating the amount of selective exposure. For example, a Republican may be more likely to recall exposure to Fox News not necessarily because they are exposed more but

they recall their exposure better as a result of agreeing with the information presented than, say, an Independent or Democrat who was exposed but later forgot.

For national political news; broadcast, cable and the Internet dominate as people's main media source. Only one in ten rely on newspapers in their print form, radio and magazines (see Figure A.1 in the appendix), which is not unlike other findings for research studies such as the Pew Research Center. Considering their dominance and for the purposes of this work, we will focus on broadcast, cable and Internet for the analyses. While this limits our understanding of the number of sources people are exposed to and their potential effects, the hypothesis is less reliant on the exhaustive list of exposure but more on the relationship between bias and some source usage. Also, the "liberal only" exposure analyzed later may be overrepresented if these other sources were more neutral or conservative in nature. Here, again, I am less concerned with measuring the prevalence of selective exposure but its relationship to partisanship.

The key dependent variables used in the analysis are media usage and media bias. Each was captured in ordinal scales, with usage options ranges as follows: 0=Never, 1=Less than once a month, 2=Once a month, 3=2-3 times a month, 4=Once a week, 5=2-3 times a week, 6=4-6 times a week and 7=Every day. The other central variable, media bias, was asked using the following question "Some people think that different news media have different political biases. For the following media outlets, please tell me whether you think they are very liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, very conservative or if you view them to be neither liberal nor conservative" with the scale increasing toward conservative bias. The appendix details the question wording for each of these variables.

3.3 Results and Analysis

The analysis presented here fleshes out the idea that there exists an interrelationship between partisanship and media usage and between partisanship and perceptions of bias. The

first part of the analysis will look into the relationship between media usage and partisanship. It will demonstrate that partisans not only actively use more sources for news than Independents but the specific sources used by strong Democrats differs from the specific sources used by strong Republicans. This will seek to confirm previous studies' findings that selective behavior occurs among partisans and strengthen the relationship by relating media consumption directly to national political information, versus broader news exposure. Next, the relationship between strength and direction of partisanship to existence and direction of perceived source bias will be explored. In this area, I will seek to examine the hostile media phenomenon's existence and prevalence by party identification. Last, the analysis will go beyond the bivariate relationships and determine how much partisanship accounts for the variability in perceptions of bias as well as the variability in source usage. This will conclude by conducting a multivariate examination of how much partisanship explains: perceptions of bias, source use and whether someone uses only biased news sources.

Who Uses What Media?

Respondents reported knowing only a few of the array of political sources for national political news. Though 53 different sources were asked about in total, on average people were only very familiar with seven (median of four) and used an average of 3.6 different sources weekly. Most of the sources I asked about were used by only a few respondents, and only a few of the sources where used by many respondents. The median number of mentions is one, and the seventy-fifth percentile is only three.

As Table 3.1 shows, usage of cable and broadcast news channels was considerably higher than for online sources. This was even the case for the online counterpart to the news channel. For instance, CNN cable network is considerably more popular (25% weekly usage) than their online counterpart with 14% percent of respondents using it weekly. Most of the

sources measured had very low audience usage with 20 of the 37 broadcast, cable and websites measured having less than 5% weekly usage. Consistent with other research (Lawrence, Sides and Farrell, 2010), I find the stronger the affiliation with the party the more sources used (see appendix Tables A.4 and A.5 for detail). On average strong Democrats were familiar with 9.7 and used 2.6 sources daily while weak Democrats were familiar with 6.1 sources and used only 1.0 source daily. This was also the case for Republicans were strong Republicans were familiar with 7.0 and used 1.8 sources daily on average and weak Republicans were familiar with 5.2 and used 1.0 (see appendix Table A.5 for detail).

Table 3.1: Frequency of usage of individual sources

Source Usage	Daily/ Weekly	Monthly
NBC	37	41
ABC	36	41
CBS	34	39
Fox News	32	36
FOX	32	36
CNN	25	31
MSNBC	19	23
CNBC	16	19
FOXNEWS.com	14	17
cnn.com	14	17
Msnbc.com	10	13
ABC.com	10	13
CBS.com	9	12
nbc.com	8	11
nytimes.com	6	8
usatoday.com	6	8
cnbc.com	5	7
time.com	4	6
NPR.com	4	5
washingtonpost.com	4	5
newsweek.com	4	6
The Huffington Post	4	5
drudgereport.com	3	3
wsj.com	3	4
reuters.com	3	4
washingtontimes.com	2	3
latimes.com	2	3
politico.com	2	2
nypost.com	2	3
examiner.com	2	3
boston.com/bostonglob	2	3
csmonitor.com	1	1
ap.org	1	1
slate.com	1	1
republicmagazine.com	1	1
Daily Kos	1	1
tnr.com	1	1
Base: All		

Note: Entry is the proportion of individuals who said used the source daily/weekly (collapsed) or monthly, n=3968

Usage and Party Affiliation – Is there a relationship?

Do people of the same party tend to watch/read the same sources? By looking at the party affiliation percent usage for each of the different sources used, we can see that the old adage of *birds of a feather, flock together* holds true for a few news sources. As Table 3.2

demonstrates, those who identify themselves with the Republican party tend to watch Fox News, Fox, and go to foxnews.com. Those who identify with Democrats are more likely to watch MSNBC, NBC, ABC, CBS, msnbc.com, cnn.com and the New York Times' website online. Table 3.2: Media usage by partisanship (significantly more likely than sample average is highlighted in yellow)

Daily/Weekly Usage	All	Strong Repub	Repub	Weak Repub	Indep lean Repub	Indep	Indep lean Dem	Weak Dem	Dem	Strong Dem	Other
Fox News	32	57	44	28	50	30	26	23	24	23	19
CNN	25	27	30	20	29	24	31	23	27	27	15
MSNBC	19	14	15	15	12	18	28	17	25	32	14
CNBC	16	14	15	12	16	15	18	16	20	22	11
NBC	37	30	38	33	33	34	43	39	48	48	25
ABC	36	31	38	30	32	34	40	36	44	46	23
CBS	34	30	34	31	28	33	38	35	43	43	23
FOX	32	44	38	30	39	33	25	28	31	28	22
FOXNEWS.com	14	33	21	11	23	11	10	5	12	9	10
cnn.com	14	10	12	9	9	16	23	13	18	22	11
Msnbc.com	10	7	8	6	5	10	14	8	15	18	6
ABC.com	10	9	8	7	9	9	13	8	16	15	7
CBS.com	9	7	8	6	8	7	13	6	14	12	8
nbc.com	8	6	7	6	7	7	13	7	13	11	5
nytimes.com	6	5	4	2	4	5	9	6	8	12	3
usatoday.com	6	6	5	5	7	5	10	3	8	9	4
cnbc.com	5	5	4	3	6	6	7	4	7	6	3
Base: All											

The online versions of the different media tend to have a stronger political skew in general and even in comparison to their television counterpart (Table 3.3). For instance, there is a 14 percentage point gap between the percent of Fox News television viewers who are Republican versus Democrat but online this gap increases to 22 percentage points. What might explain the wider partisan gaps online compared to television? While I cannot definitively speak to this question, two possibilities suggest themselves. First, on the Internet, unlike television browsing, you need to seek this information out. Outside of being directed to it through social, which was still in its relative infancy in 2010, people don't actively stumble upon programming online to the degree they may on television. Second, recall of what sites you are on may be lower online as the constant branding on cable television isn't as apparent on their online

counterpart, therefore, the survey may be only capturing the intentional internet browsing and not the passive exploration of search and social.

Table 3.3: Difference between television and online counterpart in party composition of those who used source in past week

	Offline			Online		
% composition	% Repub	% Dem	Gap	% Repub	% Dem	Gap
Fox News	38	24	14	43	21	22
CNN	28	33	-5	20	40	-20
MSNBC	21	42	-21	19	45	-26
CNBC	23	39	-16	21	38	-17
NBC	25	39	-14	20	43	-23
ABC	26	38	-12	21	42	-21
CBS	26	39	-13	22	41	-19
Base: Used source in past week						

As expected, at the program level we see more differentiation by party than at the channel/source level. The average usage gap at the source level was 11.6 (median 11) while at the program level the usage gap between strong Democrats and strong Republicans was 16.6 (median 16). Weak Democrats and weak Republicans not only have lower viewership - as they likely lack the political motivation for news watching (Prior, 2005)- they don't show a single significant skew for any particular program. Independents who lean Republican have an above average usage of six programs while Republicans skew only high on three programs. Most of the seven Republican skewing programs are driven by large viewership among strong Republicans. Strong Republicans have intensely varied usage, ranging from being nine percentage points lower than the average (NBC Nightly News) to a high of 24 percentage points higher than average for the Glenn Beck Show. The variability holds true for strong Democrats as well but with less intensity. At its peak, they skew only 12 percentage points above the mean (ABC World News Tonight) and only a five percentage point difference at its lowest (Fox News Live).

Table 3.4 Program usage by partisanship

Daily/Weekly Usage	All	Strong Repub	Repub	Weak Repub	Ind lean Repub	Indep	Ind lean Dem	Weak Dem	Dem	Strong Dem	Other
60 Minutes	20	16	18	19	18	15	24	21	26	30	12
ABC World News Tonight	19	13	19	15	17	16	22	19	26	31	12
Anderson Cooper 360	9	5	5	5	8	7	14	8	14	21	5
CBS Evening News	20	13	21	18	17	19	22	21	28	26	15
Fox and Friends	11	30	17	8	24	6	5	5	7	9	6
Fox News Live	17	36	25	15	29	11	11	10	14	12	12
Face the Nation	6	4	6	4	7	4	6	6	10	10	4
Glenn Beck Show	9	33	14	6	21	4	2	4	3	3	5
Hanity and Colmes	6	22	10	3	14	2	2	2	3	2	3
Chris Matthews Hardball	5	3	4	5	4	3	7	2	7	14	3
Meet the Press	8	5	6	5	9	6	10	5	13	17	5
NBC Nightly News	22	13	23	17	19	20	26	23	31	29	16
MSNBC Live	9	4	5	6	5	6	14	5	13	18	7
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	6	21	12	3	17	3	2	3	2	3	3
Larry King Live	7	4	7	4	7	6	8	8	11	13	3
The Daily Show	11	3	6	9	8	9	27	6	15	22	6
The O'Reilly Factor	12	36	22	8	31	6	6	4	6	6	5
The Rush Limbaugh Show	7	27	11	5	14	2	2	2	3	4	3
The Situation Room	5	2	3	4	4	3	8	3	8	13	3
CBS World News	15	13	15	14	13	13	15	15	21	19	12
Base: All											

Note: (significantly more likely than sample average is highlighted in yellow)

Do people see sources as biased?

To answer this, users were asked which sources they felt had a bias one way or the other. In each case I only examine those who say they were familiar or somewhat familiar with the source. Averaging across all sources asked about, 31% of respondents saw a liberal skew, 32% saw neither a liberal nor conservative skew and 17% saw a conservative skew. Using this average as the baseline, I then look at sources seen as more liberally biased and conservatively biased than the overall average. Using this approach, seven sources were seen as liberally biased and five were seen as conservatively biased. Of note, this measurement does not mean (except in one case) that a majority of the survey respondents saw the source as having a liberal or conservative bias, just a comparative bias to the rest of the media asked. In the end, CNN, MSNBC, MSNBC.com, nytimes.com, huffingtonpost.com, npr.com and LAtimes.com were all seen as skewing liberal while Fox, Fox News, wsj.com and drudgereport.com were all seen as conservatively slanted. (See appendix Table A.6 for details).

At the program level we see more clearly defined perceptions of skew than we saw at the source level. There were five programs where a greater than average percentage felt they were liberal and eight programs that a being seen as conservative. The liberal programs were The Daily Show, MSNBC Live, Anderson Cooper 360, Chris Matthews Hardball, and Countdown with Keith Olberman. Chris Matthews and Keith Olberman had the largest percent of respondents believing it to be liberal (59%). On the other side, The O'Reilly Factor, The Rush Limbaugh Show, Fox and Friends, Glenn Beck Show, The 700 Club, Hanity and Colmes, On the Road with Greta Van Susteren and the Laura Ingraham Show were considered the most conservative (see appendix Table A.7). At first glance, there was slightly more consistency in people designating shows as conservative than as liberal. The most conservative show (The Glenn Beck Show) had 66% of respondents seeing it as conservative, compared to the most liberal showing having 59% seeing it as liberal (see appendix Table A.6-A.7 for a complete list).

The degree a source or program it is seen as biased could simply be the hostile media phenomenon in action. This can be examined by looking the relationship between people's party identification and their perception of bias. I use the sample average who report a source is liberal as the test against which we compare the bias perceptions of partisans. As Table 3.5 shows, and in line with my hypothesis, partisanship is associated with a greater tendency to see media as biased. Specifically, strong Republicans see 20 of the 26 sources asked about as being more liberally biased than respondents as a whole (all Republicans combined see 15 as liberally biased). It is worth noting that for 15 of these sources, more than 50% of strong Republicans see the source as having a liberal bias. By comparison, strong Democrats only see 5 sources as more liberally biased than the sample as a whole. We see similar patterns at the program level (Table 3.6) Overall, results are somewhat consistent with the hypothesis that stronger partisans are more likely to see bias than weaker partisans irrespective of the direction of the bias as we see

higher percentages within strong Republican and strong Democrats compared to in the all Republicans and all Democrats.

In cases where both parties see the source as biased in the same direction, it seems likely that there is a content bias to that source rather than something driven by perceptions resulting from partisanship. Simply, in such cases its bias designation isn't the result of the hostile media phenomenon.

Table 3.5 Percent who say the source is very or somewhat liberal by party ID

%say it is liberal	Average	Strong Republican	All Republicans	Strong Democrat	All Democrats
NBC	32	63	48	28	25
ABC	30	63	47	24	21
CBS	31	65	48	25	22
FOX	19	12	15	24	23
CNN	39	71	53	34	29
Fox News	18	7	12	25	23
MSNBC	44	64	53	53	40
FOXNEWS.com	18	7	11	26	24
ABC.com	27	50	38	26	21
cnn.com	32	59	46	33	27
Msnbc.com	38	56	45	47	36
CBS.com	28	56	43	27	22
nbc.com	28	53	40	30	23
usatoday.com	27	39	32	23	26
cnbc.com	28	50	37	30	23
newsweek.com	29	42	39	25	24
nytimes.com	41	65	58	33	33
time.com	29	46	39	29	25
reuters.com	23	45	29	24	18
The Huffington Post	54	62	57	62	56
NPR.com	47	84	58	55	44
nypost.com	30	49	34	27	26
washingtontimes.com	29	44	33	38	29
wsj.com	20	28	23	22	19
drudgereport.com	19	19	15	30	25
latimes.com	40	77	57	36	33
Base: Very or Somewhat Familiar with Source					

Note: significantly more likely than sample average is highlighted in yellow

Table 3.6 Percent who say the program is very or somewhat liberal by party ID (significantly more likely than sample average is highlighted in yellow).

% say it is liberal	All	Strong Republican	All Republicans	Strong Democrat	All Democrats
60 Minutes	32	59	42	29	25
ABC World News Tonight	34	67	48	28	23
Anderson Cooper 360	42	59	46	43	39
CBS Evening News	34	65	48	26	22
Countdown with Keith Olberman	58	63	58	72	61
Fox and Friends	18	6	11	30	24
Fox News Live	19	8	14	31	24
Face the Nation	24	50	34	20	17
Glenn Beck Show	13	4	9	20	18
Hanity and Colmes	11	4	6	28	17
Chris Matthews Hardball	58	54	58	68	60
The 700 Club	13	8	9	21	17
Morning Joe	28	45	35	19	22
Scarborough Country	24	43	30	17	19
Meet the Press	27	55	38	21	17
Paula Zahn Now	28	39	32	22	24
Campbell Brown: No Bias No Bull	34	58	42	27	27
NBC Nightly News	34	64	47	27	24
MSNBC Live	42	59	49	48	37
Lou Dobbs Tonight	18	21	16	27	20
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	14	11	13	25	16
Imus in the Morning	25	21	22	27	27
The Daily Show	52	56	51	65	58
The Laura Ingraham Show	16	8	12	30	20
The McLaughlin Group	17	21	22	19	13
The O'Reilly Factor	15	7	11	20	19
The Rush Limbaugh Show	15	4	11	21	20
The Situation Room	28	45	37	24	22
This Week	25	48	34	19	18
CBS World News	31	66	45	25	20

Base: Very or Somewhat Familiar with Source

There is constraint in this bias designation. In not one example does a program cross the liberal conservative scale, meaning, in no case did Democrats find a program conservative and Republicans found it liberal. Disagreement between the parties was debated between neutral versus biased but not the direction of that bias. Overall Democrats see less slant overall (mean range among the programs is 1.9 to a high of 3.9 for strong Democrats compared to 2.0 to 4.6 for strong Republicans).

While using the survey responses to designate whether a media outlet is, in some objective sense, partisan, may not be all that reliable, my concern for the purposes of understanding media effects is less the accuracy of the actual partisanship of these outlets but

the perception of them being so. Whether or not people perceive a source as biased and how that impacts their willingness to consume, avoid, or recall media is the central concern. It is potentially part of the decision making process for adults on what they choose to rely on for political information and how much time they spend with the source. This perception can serve as a screen for consumption and this screen through which they take in information – or avoid information – is critical to determining media effects on political polarization. Simply, recall considers what Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) suggest, "Both Bayesian and non-Bayesian mechanisms may lead people with divergent political views to interpret the same information differently…" therefore, a true objective measure may not be the only thing that is relevant to determining effects.

A media bias variable was calculated for each program and source. Looking within each partisan grouping (pure Independents, Republicans, and Democrats) if the mean bias score for the source/program was between 2.6-3.5 this was coded as neutral. If 3.6 to 4.0 it was coded as conservative, if between 4.1-5.0 it was coded as very conservative, if score was between 2.0-2.5 it was considered liberal and 1.5-1.9 it was considered very liberal. Table 3.7 details how many sources fell into each one of these groups. As hypothesized, strength of partisanship is associated with a greater tendency to see bias within media regardless of direction. So compared to pure Independents, both strong Republicans and strong Democrats see more organizations as biased (although strong Democrats, not extraordinarily so). While there is some evidence that partisans are more likely to see programs as biased it is largely occurring among Republicans. Further, the bias perceived isn't uniformly against their point of view. There are cases among both strong Democrats and strong Republicans where they see programs as biased in their own ideological favor.

Table 3.7: Number of sources seen as biased by Party ID

			Source Level		
# of sources	Strong Republican	All Republicans	Independent	Strong Democrat	All Democrats
Very Conservative	0	0	0	0	0
Conservative	3	2	0	1	0
Neutral	0	3	16	13	15
Liberal	10	11	0	2	1
Very Liberal	3	0	0	0	0
			Program Level		
Very Conservative	2	2	1	0	0
Conservative	5	3	2	3	4
Neutral	0	5	13	12	12
Liberal	12	9	3	4	3
Very Liberal	0	0	0	1	0

The other hypothesis tested in this survey work is partisanship's association with perceived directional bias. Counter to my predictions, across both programs and sources, strong Democrats only see four sources as being conservatively biased while strong Republicans see ten sources as conservative. I would have expected Democrats to see more sources as being conservatively biased than Republicans but this is not the case. However, the reverse held true. Strong Democrats see only seven sources as liberal and strong Republicans see an astounding 25 media sources as liberal.

This asymmetry, though not predicted, has been found in other studies concerning the hostile media phenomenon. Peffley, Avery and Glass (2001) found an asymmetry in perceptions of media bias between those with pro-life and pro-choice positions on abortion. Simply, the association between abortion views and a belief in a hostile media was found to exist mostly among pro-life individuals, who are much more likely than individuals with pro-choice views to believe their group is treated unfairly by the news media. This may be the case here where Republicans are much more likely to see bias than Democrats because there is the feeling they have been treated unfairly by mass media for so long. Another study found asymmetry relating to the majority opinion. The degree of perceived partisan bias in mainstream media coverage on

an issue was positively related to the degree of incongruity between one's own opinion and perceived majority opinion (Hwang, Pan and Sun, 2008). This again may be the case here. Democrats may have been less likely to perceive bias in news coverage since they held the majority in the Senate and a Democrat was in the White House (which was the case during the fielding of both surveys).

Do people knowingly use biased media?

Given the perceptual screen people use when evaluating media choices, we created a new variable to determine slant. Simply, I took into consideration partisanship with bias perceptions and score each source using the below criteria. Building off the above designations, where I compare the within party designation of the bias, I create a media slant variable. If both Democrats and Republicans see a news source as liberal (both give it an average bias score of 2.0 or less) then it is coded as very liberal. The theory behind this designation is that it is not the hostile media effect in action but something that is ostensibly biased. However, if Republicans (including leaners) saw the program as liberal (mean score of 2.0 or less) and Democrats saw it as neutral (mean score of 2.6-3.5) it was designated as liberal. The same methodology was used for conservative and neutral designations as follows:

1. Democrats and Republicans see as liberal - very liberal
2. Republicans see as liberal but Dems see as neutral – liberal
3. Democrats see as conservative but Republicans see as neutral – conservative
4. Democrats and Republicans see as conservative- very conservative
5. All others - neutral.

There were two cases which lived outside this construct, where Republicans saw them as more conservative and Democrats as neutral, these were Fox and Friends and Fox Live. These were both coded as conservative. Using this methodology, among the 19 programs asked, two were seen as very liberal (The Daily Show and HardBall with Chris Matthews), eight were seen as liberal, two were seen as conservative and four were considered very conservative.

Table 3.8: Program bias designation

	Media Bias
60 Minutes	L
ABC World News Tonight	L
Anderson Cooper 360	L
CBS Evening News	L
Fox and Friends	C
Fox News Live	C
Face the Nation	N
Glenn Beck Show	VC
Hanity and Colmes	VC
Chris Matthews Hardball	VL
Meet the Press	L
NBC Nightly News	L
MSNBC Live	L
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	N
The Daily Show	VL
The O'Reilly Factor	VC
The Rush Limbaugh Show	VC
The Situation Room	N
CBS World News	L

Using the same approach with networks and websites, Fox News station and foxnews.com are classified as very conservative (VC) and MSNBC is seen as very liberal (VL).

Table 3.9: Channel bias designation

	Media Bias
MSNBC	VL
Fox News	VC
CNN	L
FOX	N
NBC	L
ABC	L
CBS	L
Msnbc.com	L
FOXNEWS.com	VC
nbc.com	L
ABC.com	L
CBS.com	L
cnn.com	L
nytimes.com	L
usatoday.com	N
cnbc.com	L

Using this bias measure, we see evidence of selective exposure. Again, looking at weekly usage of each source, I find that Democrats are significantly more likely to use liberally slanted media compared to Republicans. As Table 3.10 notes, 75.3% of Democrats watch any liberal program compared to 63.6% of Republicans on a weekly basis. Similarly, Republicans are more likely to use conservatively slanted outlets than neutral or liberally biased sources. Of note, this table does not indicate sole liberal or conservative usage, someone using both liberal and conservative media on a weekly basis would be counted in both percentages. The difference in usage between the different types of media is less interesting and not focused on here because they are largely a function of the number of sources perceived as bias in each category. The higher liberal usage is expected as there are 22 sources included in this percentage. The higher neutral numbers, which only include 5 sources, are the result of the high usage of Fox – the broadcast channel.

Table 3.10: Usage of biased media by Party ID

% daily/weekly usage	ALL	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS
LIBERAL MEDIA	66.7	75.3	63.6
NEUTRAL MEDIA	40.2	38.2	47.5
CONSERVATIVE MEDIA	39.1	29.6	54.9
none	26.4	23.2	21.5

Base: All

Using these scores and combining both sources and programs, I created a variable looked at individual level consumption habits. If the respondent used only liberal, only conservative, only neutral where if they consumed only one source in a given week- and it was a liberal source- they would be designated as consuming only liberal media. If they consumed liberal and neutral, they would be designated as such. I, therefore, created mutually exclusive categories of combinations. In doing so, I find that 24% of respondents consume only liberal media and 3% consume only conservative sources but none consume only neutral. Cross usage is far more common with liberal and neutral consumption accounting for 10% of weekly usage and 3% consume neutral and conservative. An additional 7% consume liberal and conservative only. There is a large amount of usage of all three categories with 27% using at least one of all three types of sources (liberal, conservative and neutral) for a total cross usage consumption figure of 47%. One quarter (26%) don't use any of these media on a weekly basis.

This much larger liberal usage is largely because more sources were seen as liberal. Recall, Republicans were far more likely to see a source as liberal when a Democrat was seeing the source as neutral. Those instances were recorded as liberal media. So, while it is coded as liberal media, Democrats may be consuming under the perception of it being a neutral source.

How much does partisanship matter in media usage and bias perceptions?

Using each media's usage as the dependent variable, I ran OLS regressions to determine the effect party ID has on usage while controlling for gender, education, race, ethnicity, marital

status and income. Table 3.11 reports regression analyses results of the impact of partisanship frequency of use for each program and source. The table also lists the directional bias for each program which resulted from the previous analysis. Partisanship is coded with all degrees of freedom. And, the media consumption variable includes the entire range of frequency options.

Generally, the models (using partisanship and other demographic variables) do not have much power in explaining the choice to use particular channels and programs. There exists a relationship between media usage and these variables but there still exists a lot of variation around the regression line as indicated by the average R^2 value across all of the models of .063 (median=.037). The model is most significant in explaining the variance within The Rush Limbaugh Show viewership (r^2=.226) followed by The O'Reilly Factor (r^2=.207). It is the least effective at explaining the usage variance for Face the Nation (r^2=.001).

Nonetheless, there is a significant relationship between party ID and media usage for many programs and outlets. The exceptions are: CBS World News, Face the Nation, nytimes.com, usatoday.com, cnn.com, abc.com, msnbc.com, cnbc.com, nbc.com, and cbs.com. For these outlets we see no significant difference between Democrats and Republicans in their likelihood of use. Not surprisingly, partisanship is a bigger predictor in program usage as compared to channels/source usage, with partisanship being a significant variable in 17 of the 19 programs compared to only eight of the 16 sources measured. Overall, I see significant effects but somewhat larger effects on average for the conservative programs. Compared to perceived liberal (average beta=.086) and neutral (average beta=-.05) media, partisanship is a much bigger factor in usage of media perceived to be conservative (average beta=-.301) across both programs and sources and particularly for those deemed to be very conservative (average beta=-.319).

As expected, significant negative coefficients coincide with conservative media and they are all positive for liberal media usage. In short, as we would expect Democrats are significantly more likely to use liberal media and less likely to use conservative media. Using the example of The O'Reilly Factor, an increase from being an Independent who leans Republican to a Republican (a two point increase on the ordinal party ID scale) leads to an increase in show viewership from 4-6 times a week (p=6.116) to everyday (p=6.846). Therefore, while these are admittedly small effects, there is evidence that partisanship is a contributing factor to media usage, particularly conservative media usage.

Table 3.11: Media usage OLS regression results

				Unstandardized Coefficients				95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
PROGRAMS	bias	n size	adj r sq	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Chris Matthews Hardball	VL	312	.082	.218	.050	4.368	.000	.120	.316
MSNBC Live	L	386	.060	.193	.042	4.588	.000	.110	.275
The Daily Show	VL	536	.037	.174	.039	4.501	.000	.098	.249
The Situation Room	N	232	.042	.144	.059	2.454	.015	.028	.260
Anderson Cooper 360	L	449	.034	.098	.040	2.426	.016	.019	.177
ABC World News Tonight	L	798	.024	.082	.028	2.952	.003	.027	.137
NBC Nightly News	L	914	.024	.078	.027	2.860	.004	.025	.132
Meet the Press	L	511	.015	.060	.029	2.119	.035	.004	.117
CBS Evening News	L	859	.018	.058	.028	2.060	.040	.003	.113
60 Minutes	L	1169	.009	.056	.018	3.185	.001	.021	.090
CBS World News	L	703	.013	.048	.032	1.511	.131	-.014	.110
Face the Nation	N	430	.001	.044	.034	1.310	.191	-.022	.111
Fox News Live	C	687	.128	-.242	.030	-7.972	.000	-.302	-.183
Fox and Friends	C	475	.165	-.253	.037	-6.926	.000	-.325	-.181
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	N	298	.137	-.328	.050	-6.563	.000	-.427	-.230
Hanity and Colmes	VC	330	.143	-.336	.050	-6.796	.000	-.434	-.239
The O'Reilly Factor	VC	591	.207	-.340	.035	-9.633	.000	-.409	-.270
Glenn Beck Show	VC	460	.188	-.363	.041	-8.752	.000	-.444	-.281
The Rush Limbaugh Show	VC	465	.226	-.424	.042	-10.204	.000	-.506	-.343
SOURCES									
CNN	L	1313	.076	.238	.025	9.395	.000	.188	.288
MSNBC	VL	887	.039	.177	.029	6.083	.000	.120	.235
nytimes.com	L	289	.096	.087	.055	1.583	.115	-.021	.196
NBC	L	1511	.017	.077	.021	3.655	.000	.036	.118
ABC	L	1480	.015	.069	.021	3.245	.001	.027	.111
nbc.com	L	453	.005	.065	.044	1.471	.142	-.022	.152
CBS	L	1434	.017	.055	.022	2.563	.010	.013	.098
Msnbc.com	L	498	.018	.051	.041	1.248	.213	-.029	.131
CBS.com	L	453	.005	.042	.042	.981	.327	-.042	.125
cnn.com	L	628	.030	.017	.036	.472	.637	-.054	.088
ABC.com	L	507	.030	.017	.039	.425	.671	-.060	.093
usatoday.com	N	352	.049	.000	.049	.004	.997	-.096	.096
cnbc.com	L	283	.009	-.059	.056	-1.040	.299	-.169	.052
FOX	N	1356	.040	-.112	.024	-4.702	.000	-.158	-.065
FOXNEWS.com	VC	640	.077	-.203	.034	-5.988	.000	-.270	-.137
Fox News	VC	1317	.119	-.250	.022	-11.142	.000	-.294	-.206

Much like the media usage regression, in seeking to determine partisanship's impact on perceived media bias, I used individual's bias rating for each program and ran OLS regressions to determine the effect party ID has on perceived bias while controlling for gender, education, race, ethnicity, marital status and income. Table 3.12 documents the impact partisanship has on the perception of bias for each show and source.

The results provide mild support for the "hostile media phenomenon." Again, the explanatory power of the models is limited (the highest adjusted R^2 value across all models is

.092- meaning only 9% of the variance within that dependent variable is explained by the partisanship and demographics). That said, partisanship is a significant predictor of perceived bias in nearly all cases. In line with the biased media hypothesis, the coefficients for partisanship had the correct sign between liberal and conservative media. The independent variable is coded where higher is more Democratic and the dependent is coded where higher is perceived as more biased liberal. A negative coefficient can be read as someone increases in their party ID strength toward being a Democrat, they are more likely to designate the media source/program as conservative. There were two examples which ran counter to this theory. Chris Matthew's Hard Ball and The Daily Show were both designated as very liberal, yet the coefficient is in the wrong direction. This, however, can be explained by partisanship being an insignificant factor in both cases at the $p<.05$ level.

Unlike usage, the stronger the degree of bias (seen as "very liberal" or "very conservative" versus just "liberal" or "conservative"), the weaker the evidence for the hostile media phenomenon. In fact, of the six programs with a "very" label, only two show significant relationships to partisanship (Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck shows). This is compared to 12 of the 13 neutral, liberal or conservative programs showing significant effects for partisanship. This is not the case for sources. All sources but the FOX broadcast channel showed a significant and correct directional relationship with partisanship. What seems to be the case here, and what we saw in the formation of the bias variable creation, there are programs which operate at the extremes and these are seen by both Democrats and Republicans as biased in the same direction. The hostile media phenomenon seems more to do with the perceptions of those which operate in the prism of neutrality or soft partisan slants (i.e., Meet The Press, Anderson Cooper, broadcast channels' nightly news programs) which produce hostile media effects over

programming which are more overtly going after niche audiences (such as The O'Reilly Factor, The Daily Show) .

Table 3.12: Media bias OLS regression results

				Unstandardized Coefficients				95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
PROGRAMS	bias	n size	adj r sq	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Fox and Friends	C	923	.069	-.050	.014	-3.482	.001	-.078	-.022
Fox News Live	C	1321	.057	-.032	.012	-2.632	.009	-.056	-.008
60 Minutes	L	1827	.038	.058	.008	7.573	.000	.043	.073
ABC World News Tonight	L	1494	.075	.087	.008	10.500	.000	.071	.104
Anderson Cooper 360	L	916	.004	.025	.012	2.118	.034	.002	.047
CBS Evening News	L	1574	.080	.089	.008	10.710	.000	.072	.105
Meet the Press	L	1162	.056	.073	.009	7.689	.000	.054	.092
NBC Nightly News	L	1591	.061	.075	.008	9.306	.000	.059	.091
MSNBC Live	L	894	.036	.050	.012	4.125	.000	.026	.074
CBS World News	L	1414	.080	.090	.009	10.577	.000	.074	.107
Face the Nation	N	1037	.049	.072	.010	6.925	.000	.051	.092
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	N	613	.002	-.007	.015	-.476	.634	-.037	.023
The Situation Room	N	580	.034	.046	.015	3.138	.002	.017	.075
Glenn Beck Show	VC	929	.085	-.076	.015	-5.169	.000	-.104	-.047
Hanity and Colmes	VC	730	.037	-.026	.016	-1.704	.089	-.057	.004
The O'Reilly Factor	VC	943	.034	-.007	.015	-.461	.645	-.036	.022
The Rush Limbaugh Show	VC	1021	.074	-.071	.015	-4.623	.000	-.102	-.041
Chris Matthews Hardball	VL	283	.039	-.024	.026	-.933	.352	-.074	.026
The Daily Show	VL	993	.054	-.024	.013	-1.869	.062	-.048	.001
SOURCES									
CNN	L	1631	.089	.107	.009	12.000	.000	.090	.125
NBC	L	1829	.079	.091	.008	11.429	.000	.076	.107
ABC	L	1817	.092	.095	.008	12.236	.000	.080	.111
CBS	L	1799	.088	.097	.008	12.042	.000	.081	.112
Msnbc.com	L	910	.016	.029	.013	2.305	.021	.004	.054
nbc.com	L	832	.037	.056	.012	4.821	.000	.033	.079
ABC.com	L	920	.044	.061	.011	5.622	.000	.040	.083
CBS.com	L	869	.045	.071	.011	6.237	.000	.048	.093
cnn.com	L	966	.056	.077	.011	6.864	.000	.055	.099
nytimes.com	L	558	.086	.101	.016	6.423	.000	.070	.131
cnbc.com	L	602	.023	.059	.015	4.081	.000	.031	.088
FOX	N	1731	.069	-.003	.011	-.237	.813	-.024	.018
usatoday.com	N	684	.033	.040	.013	3.160	.002	.015	.065
Fox News	VC	1654	.078	-.028	.011	-2.480	.013	-.050	-.006
FOXNEWS.com	VC	1058	.078	-.072	.014	-5.263	.000	-.099	-.045
MSNBC	VL	1373	.065	.064	.010	6.239	.000	.044	.084

To dig into this relationship further, I looked at *only* perceived liberal media consumption (as opposed to cross-ideology or neutral media consumption) as a function of party identification, age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, education and marital status. Like the above, each independent variable removed "dk/refused/other" responses and these respondents were excluded from the analysis. In order to determine the probability of consuming only liberal biased media, I performed a logistic regression where 1 equals consumes

only liberal media in a given week and 0 means does not consume only liberal media. Those who did not consume any media on a weekly basis were eliminated from the model. The final regression included 2388 cases for analysis.

The model shows if we knew nothing about the viewers and guessed that a person would consume liberal media, we would be correct 53.6% of the time. All variables significantly contribute to the predictive value of the model with exception of gender, income and marital status which are insignificant at the $p<0.05$ level. The case model chi square has seven degrees of freedom, a value of 252.35 and a probability of $p<0.000$. Thus, the model only containing the constant is a poor fit indicating that the predictors do have a significant effect on the dependent variable. Though not entirely analogous to the r^2 prediction in linear regression, the Cox and Snell R^2 =0.10 indicating that 10% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model. Nagelkerke R^2=.134 indicates a moderate relationship of 13.4% between the predictors and the prediction. A better goodness-of-fit review is to look at the proportion of cases identified correctly by the model. In this case, 67.7% were correctly identified as not watching liberal media and 56.9% were correctly identified as watching liberal media, and overall 62.7% were correctly classified. This is an improvement from the 53.6% correct classification within the constant model.

Party identification adds more value to predicting liberal media consumption than most of the other variables (Hispanic ethnicity being the one exception). This was established by the statistical significance $P<0.000$ and its large impact in the probability of consumption. Looking at the change in odds of party identification, the logistic regression coefficients show that as someone increases toward becoming a stronger Democrat, their chances of them consuming only liberal media sources increase. Specifically, if someone increases one degree on the party identification scale, they are 1.2 more times likely to consume only liberal media (education was

dropped from the model due to collinearity). Coefficient impact and significance is detailed in the appendix (Table A.9).

In order to better understand these effects present, I calculated the predicted probability that someone will use liberal media for those with different partisan identification. Using this single entry method logistic equation, the probability of consuming liberal media can be calculated in for all partisanship scenarios. Specifically, I used the scenario of a White, non-Hispanic female, 35 years in age, who has a household income of $100K, and never married and altered the partisanship level to see the media usage impact:

$$p = \frac{e\{(.248 \times \text{partyID}) + (.191 * 35) + (-.100 * \text{female}) + (-.005 * \text{income}) + (-.350 * \text{race}) + (.630 * \text{ethnicity}) + (.042 * \text{marital}) - 3.289\}}{1 + e\{(.248 \times \text{partyID}) + (.191 * \text{age}) + (-.100 * \text{female}) + (-.005 * \text{income}) + (-.350 * \text{race}) + (.630 * \text{ethnicity}) + (.042 * \text{marital}) - 3.289\}}$$

Table 3.13 shows the probability of watching or examining only liberal news sources by partisanship. As you can see, a strong Democrat (p=.770) is twice as likely to watch only liberal news as a strong Republican (p=.316). The probability that an Independent but leans Democrat will watch only liberal media is 61.4% but, holding all things equal, the probability of a strong Democrat only using liberally biased media is 77%. Though this doesn't definitively prove causation, there is clearly a relationship between partisanship and selective political media exposure in the case of liberal media. However, with only 3% of (perceived) conservative only usage, selective exposure isn't yet occurring in a large percent of the American population. This analysis simply shows that when it does occur, partisanship is a driving force behind it.

Table 3.13: Probability predictions of using only liberal media by party ID

	Probability
Strong Republican	31.6%
Republican	37.2%
Weak Republican	43.1%
Independent lean Republican	49.3%
Independent	55.4%
Independent lean Democrat	61.5%
Weak Democrat	67.1%
Democrat	72.4%
Strong Democrat	77.0%

3.4 Conclusion

Analysis into media usage and political partisanship's relationship with each news source, showed the hostile media phenomenon true in its suggestion that strong partisans will more likely see more outlets as being biased and see them favoring the opposing political ideology. The regression analysis showed, however, that the presence of the phenomenon was less at the extremes – those media seen as very liberal or very conservative - but, instead in the designations of simply conservative or liberal. Regardless, since this hostile media phenomenon exists in people's perception of bias, my interest is largely in outlets which see themselves as objective but people see as biased – which I used a proxy of differences in partisan designation to determine. This detailed look at media slant finds that while people see media as biased and the stronger the party membership the more likely they are to see politicization in news reporting. The political slant wasn't always perceived to be counter to their own party membership and this is why we see less evidence of the hostile media phenomenon in the more niche media. I also find biased media does get the added benefit of engagement, with Democrats more likely to use any liberal media and Republicans more likely to use conservative media than sources slanted toward their counterpart. This has reinforced the business incentive

to be biased in order to encourage more engaged audience – a concept which will be explored in the next chapter.

The normative consequences of this are debatable. When content bias hasn't been proven, does it matter that there is a perception of bias? And, though strength of partisanship does predict usage of media perceived to be biased in the same direction this may not be intentional nor proof that bias exists. This is particularly the case if the bias is simply a function of elites claiming it is as Ladd (2012) claims. He found that partisan media criticism by elites has eroded the public's trust in media as an institution. He argues that the perception of bias are consequences of political and economic competition but compared to a centralized, unchallenged and trusted news media establishment a sensationalized system doesn't produces any less desirable normative consequences.

Though I find there is a level of intentional biased media usage, many individuals are exposing themselves to the other side as previous studies have indicated (LaCour, 2013). Also, much like other work (Lawrence, Sides, and Farrell, 2010), I find those who are selecting information from an ideological point of view tend to be stronger partisans. Last, we also see on a weekly basis a fair amount of opting out of media consumption for national politics much like Prior (2005) saw in his study of media choice, suggesting partisanship has some relationship to consuming news at all. Though partisanship explained only a small part of the media usage variance when controlling for demographics it still has statistically significant explanatory power. Other factors such as convenience, habit, host personalities and subject matter not explored here may be stronger determinants still.

Are strong partisans more extreme because of their biased media consumption or are strong partisans simply choosing biased media? The directional causation of biased consumption and strength of partisanship identification is still left unclear. Regardless, it does prove some

selective exposure exists though, admittedly, not as large as expected given the filter for national political information. I do find, where there is selective biased news exposure -in the case of liberal media - it will occur more frequently the stronger the Democratic partisanship. Though other studies have found exposure to be more varied with little selectivity when taking into consideration all news exposure (LaCour, 2013), recall of what they use for national political information shows a slightly different pattern.

These results were dependent on a survey and it remains to be proven whether it is the most accurate mode for measuring media usage. The degree to which partisans and different political party partisans may recall exposure or admit to exposure may be overestimating the impacts I see in the results. More research is needed in the area of selective news exposure, its impact on political discourse and voting, and whether it has grown over time. Though selectively biased exposure may still be low and confined to particular populations, as habits change and non-partisans choose to opt-out of media exposure, its effects on information dissemination could have larger implications.

APPENDIX:

Table A.1: Demographics of survey respondents

	Sample	2010 Census
Gender		
Male	46%	49%
Female	55%	51%
HH Income*		
Less than $35,000	43%	35%
$35,000 - $49,999	19%	17%
$50,000 - $74,999	19%	22%
$75,000 - $99,999	10%	13%
$100,000 -$149,999	6%	8%
$150,000 +	2%	5%
Marital Status		
Married	48%	48%
Not Married	44%	33%
Children in Household		
Any Children in HH	28%	33%
Age**		
18-24	10%	10%
25-34	18%	18%
35-44	13%	18%
45-54	21%	20%
55-64	20%	16%
65+	18%	18%
Education*		
High School Grad or Less	26%	49%
Some College	43%	29%
College Graduate or more	21%	22%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	82%	75%
Black/African American	10%	14%
Asian /Other	8%	14%
Hispanic origin/descent	6%	16%
**Where 2010 was unavilable, based off the 2000 census*		
***Census based off age 20+ population*		

Table A.2: Party ID comparison

	Gallup	Sample
Republican	28	27
Independent	41	30
Democrat	30	43

Like the U.S. in general, the sample was equally dispersed between liberal and conservative, with both a mean and medium score of 5 on a 0-10 scale.

Table A.3: Political ideology

Using a scale from zero to 10 where zero means very conservative and 10 means very liberal, generally speaking where would you place yourself on that scale?	
Mean	5.0
Median	5.0

By combining a series of party identification questions, a party identification variable was created with a relatively equal dispersion between the different parties. Further, the party identification variable is internally cohesive. Meaning, the ideological scale corresponds with both the party affiliation and the strength of the affiliation (Pearson coefficient of .459). This political affiliation variable will be used for the majority of the analysis (see appendix for question wording details).

Party ID question roots:
Party Id is a combination of three variables:
-In politics, as of today do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat or an Independent? (to Republicans & Democrats)
-Would you consider yourself a strong ____
(to Independents)
-As of today, do you lean more to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party?

- Strong Republican=those who identify themselves as Republican and said they are a "very" strong Republican
- Republican=those who identify themselves as Republican and said they are a "somewhat" strong Republican
- Weak Republican=those who identify themselves as Republican and said they are not a strong Republican
- Independent Lean Republican=those who identify themselves as Independent and said they lean more towards the Republican party
- Independent= those who identify themselves as Independent and said they lean more towards neither party
- Independent Lean Democrat=those who identify themselves as Independent and said they lean more towards the Democrat party
- Weak Democrat=those who identify themselves as Democrat and said they are not a strong Democrat
- Democrat=those who identify themselves as Democrat and said they are a "somewhat" strong Democrat
- Strong Democrat=those who identify themselves as Democrat and said they are a "very" strong Democrat

Figure A.1: Media rely on most

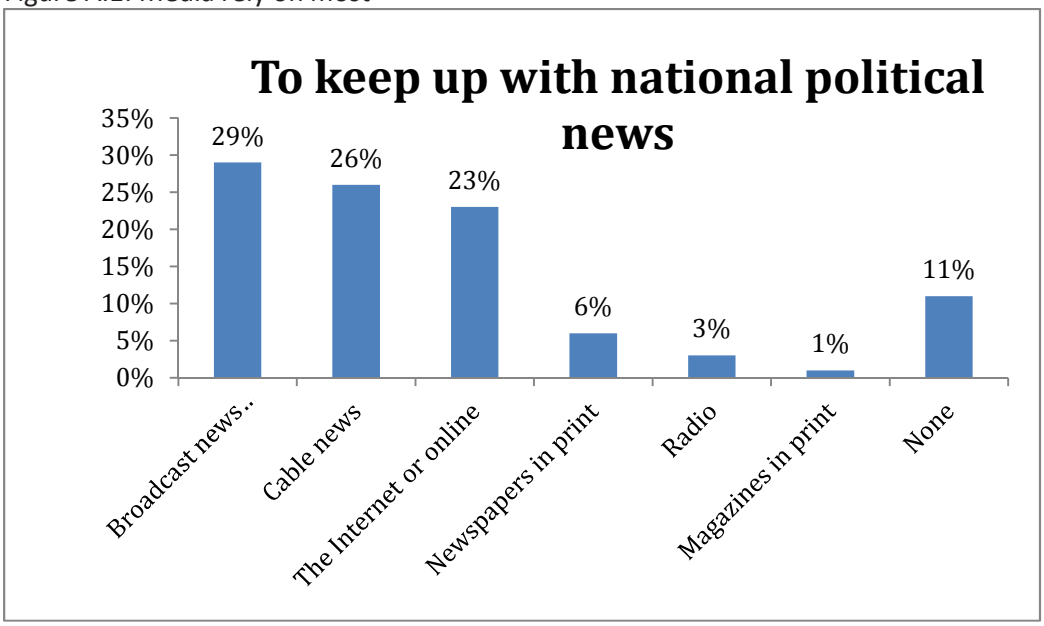


Table A.5: Party affiliation and number of sources used.

Mean	Very Familiar	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Less than once a month/never
Strong Republican	7.0	1.8	4.7	5.5	1.7
Republican	6.0	1.3	4.2	5.1	1.0
Weak Republican	5.2	1.0	3.2	4.1	1.2
Independent lean Republican	6.5	1.5	4.3	5.2	1.4
Independent	6.2	1.2	3.8	4.8	1.4
Independent lean Democrat	7.7	1.5	5.2	6.3	1.2
Weak Democrat	6.1	1.0	3.5	4.7	1.3
Democrat	7.8	1.6	5.0	6.2	1.3
Strong Democrat	9.7	2.6	5.9	7.3	2.1
Other	4.9	1.1	2.8	3.7	1.1
Base: All (those not familiar with at least one source were coded as 0)					

Table A.6: Perception of source bias among those familiar with sources

	Liberal	Neither	Conservative
Average	31	32	17
NBC	32	34	9
ABC	30	36	9
CBS	31	35	9
FOX	19	25	34
CNN	39	31	10
Fox News	18	20	44
MSNBC	44	25	9
FOXNEWS.com	18	22	42
ABC.com	27	37	11
cnn.com	32	36	11
Msnbc.com	38	28	10
CBS.com	28	37	10
nbc.com	28	36	9
usatoday.com	27	38	11
cnbc.com	28	34	14
newsweek.com	29	35	14
nytimes.com	41	30	11
time.com	29	39	12
reuters.com	23	47	11
The Huffington Post	54	20	10
NPR.com	47	32	11
nypost.com	30	31	17
washingtontimes.com	29	35	17
wsj.com	20	33	36
drudgereport.com	19	27	42
latimes.com	40	32	11

Base: Very or Somewhat Familiar

Table A.7: Frequency distribution of program bias

	Liberal	Neither	Conservative
Average	27	32	26
60 Minutes	31	42	10
NBC Nightly News	31	41	9
CBS Evening News	32	39	10
ABC World News Tonight	32	40	8
CBS World News	29	41	10
Fox News Live	18	27	39
Meet the Press	25	44	12
The O'Reilly Factor	14	20	48
Face the Nation	23	44	15
The Daily Show	51	23	7
The Rush Limbaugh Show	14	11	65
MSNBC Live	39	34	10
Anderson Cooper 360	41	35	10
Fox and Friends	16	23	49
Glenn Beck Show	11	14	66
Chris Matthews Hardball	59	17	14
The 700 Club	13	19	50
Hanity and Colmes	9	29	53
Countdown with Keith Olberman	59	16	10
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	13	32	41
The Situation Room	27	42	14
Lou Dobbs Tonight	19	30	35
This Week	23	44	13
American Morning	32	38	11
Imus in the Morning	25	32	27
The McLaughlin Group	18	41	26
Paula Zahn Now	27	38	13
The Laura Ingraham Show	15	20	54
Morning Joe	27	36	24
Scarborough Country	22	33	26
Campbell Brown: No Bias No Bull	33	39	13

Base: very/somewhat familiar

Considering the range was 1-5 (5 meaning very conservative, 4=somewhat conservative, 3=neither conservative nor liberal, 2=somewhat liberal and 1=liberal), the perceived bias of each program has a rather high standard deviation from the mean, indicating that the answers are spread out over a large range of values. This variability is likely the result of partisanship.

Table A.8: Bias distribution

	Mean	Median	SD
60 Minutes	2.7	3.0	.86
ABC World News Tonight	2.6	3.0	.87
Anderson Cooper 360	2.5	3.0	.91
CBS Evening News	2.6	3.0	.89
Fox and Friends	3.5	4.0	1.15
Fox News Live	3.4	3.0	1.15
Face the Nation	2.9	3.0	.89
Glenn Beck Show	4.1	5.0	1.20
Hanity and Colmes	3.8	4.0	1.10
Chris Matthews Hardball	2.2	2.0	1.19
Meet the Press	2.8	3.0	.87
NBC Nightly News	2.6	3.0	.87
MSNBC Live	2.5	3.0	.98
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	3.4	3.0	1.00
The Daily Show	2.2	2.0	1.02
The O'Reilly Factor	3.7	4.0	1.22
The Rush Limbaugh Show	4.1	5.0	1.35
The Situation Room	2.8	3.0	.94
CBS World News	2.7	3.0	.89

Base: Used source in past week

Table A.9: Logistic regression results

				95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Party ID	.248	.000	1.281	1.238	1.327
Age	.191	.000	1.211	1.101	1.331
Gender	.100	.255	1.105	.931	1.312
Income	-.005	.752	.995	.965	1.026
Race	-.350	.000	.705	.603	.824
Hisp	.630	.003	1.878	1.234	2.858
Marital	.042	.061	1.043	.998	1.089
Constant	-3.289	.000	.037		

Questionnaire wording:
Q5 What media source do you use MOST often when you are trying...

	Broadcast news television	Cable news	The Internet or online	Newspapers in print	Radio	Magazines in print	None	Don't know
To keep up with local political news	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
To keep up with national political news	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
To keep up with national and world news	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
To get commentary and opinion about the news	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
To get the latest breaking news	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q9 How familiar are you with each of the following television news sources for national political news?

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
MSNBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Fox News	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CNN	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CNBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q10 How familiar are you with each of the following television news sources for national political news?

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
FOX	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ABC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q11 How familiar are you with each of the following magazines as news sources for national political news?

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
Time magazine	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Drudge Report	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The New Republic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Newsweek	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Republic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q13 How familiar are you with each of the following newspapers as a source for national political news?

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't Know
Washington Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Wall Street Journal	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
LA Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Christian Science Monitor	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
New York Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Washington Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Politico	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
USA Today	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
New York Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Examiner	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Boston Globe	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q12 How familiar are you with each of the following Internet news sources for national political news? (For these sources, think ONLY about their online edition, not your familiarity with their print or television station.)

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
MSNBC.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
FOXNEWS.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
washingtontimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nbc.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
time.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
drudgereport.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ABC.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NPR.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
wsj.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
latimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
csmonitor.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
cnn.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ap.org	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
reuters.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nytimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
washingtonpost.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
politico.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
usatoday.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
newsweek.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nypost.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
slate.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
republicmagazine.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

cnbc.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
examiner.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
boston.com/bostonglobe	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Daily Kos	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Huffington Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
tnr.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q14 How often, if ever, do you use each of these media sources for national political news? This list includes the TV stations, print publications and Internet sites you were very familiar with in the previous questions.

	Every day	4-6 times a week	2-3 times a week	Once a week	2-3 times a month	Once a month	Less than once a month	Never	Don't know
MSNBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
FOX News	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CNN	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CNBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
FOX	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NBC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ABC	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Time Magazine	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Drudge Report	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The New Republic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Newsweek	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Republic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Washington Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Wall Street Journal	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Los Angeles Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Christian Science Monitor	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The New York Times	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Washington Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Politico	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
USA Today	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
New York Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Examiner	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Boston Globe	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Msnbc.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
FOXNEWS.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
washingtontimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nbc.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
time.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

drudgereport.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ABC.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NPR.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
wsj.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
tnr.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
latimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
csmonitor.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
cnn.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ap.org	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
reuters.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nytimes.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
washingtonpost.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
politico.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
usatoday.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
newsweek.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
nypost.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
slate.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
republicmagazine.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
cnbc.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
examiner.com	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
boston.com/bostonglobe	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Daily Kos	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Huffington Post	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q18 Some people think that different news media have different political biases. For the following media outlets, please tell me whether you think they are very liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, very conservative or if you view them to be neither liberal nor conservative.

Q19 The following questions pertain to particular programs on broadcast or cable news television or their online counterpart. How familiar are you with each of the following programs in relation to their coverage of national political news:

	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not too familiar	Not at all familiar	Don't know
60 Minutes	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
ABC World News Tonight	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
American Morning	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Anderson Cooper 360	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS Evening News	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Countdown with Keith Olberman	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Fox and Friends	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Fox News Live	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Face the Nation	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Glenn Beck Show	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Hanity and Colmes	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Chris Matthews Hardball	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Big Story with John Gibson	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The 700 Club	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Morning Joe	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Scarborough Country	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Reliable Sources	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Meet the Press	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Paula Zahn Now	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Campbell Brown: No Bias No Bull	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NBC Nightly News	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
MSNBC Live	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lou Dobbs Tonight	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
On the Road with Greta Van Susteren	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Larry King Live	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Imus in the Morning	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Daily Show	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Laura Ingraham Show	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The McLaughlin Group	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The O'Reilly Factor	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Rush Limbaugh Show	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Situation Room	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
This Week	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
CBS World News	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Q20 How often, if ever, do you watch each of these programs for national political news?

Q23 For the following TV programs, please tell me whether you think they are very liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, very conservative or if you view them to be neither liberal nor conservative.

Chapter 4: Political Bias Increases Engagement

The previous chapter showed that bias exists and strong partisans may self-select into biased news sources. That chapter, however, relied on survey work and respondent recall of consumption, which may be flawed. In the aim of seeking alternative evidence for self-selection, this chapter uses an alternate research design to determine if behavior changes when bias of an article is clearly labeled. Specifically, it utilizes a natural experiment and automated tracking to capture data on people's actual online click patterns to understand if there is a change when people are provided information that allows them to self-select. In fact, this chapter introduces an approach which can quantify the effects of encouraging ideologically driven behavior among political information consumers and what impact it may have. If such encouragement increases overall engagement, it lends incentive to the production of ideological leaning content.

4.1 Selective Exposure and Cross-Cutting Networks:

Much work has already been conducted looking into media fragmentation and its effects. Lawrence, Sides and Farrell (2010) found that political blog readers tend to read blogs that accord with their own political beliefs. Prior (2005) finds that expanded media choice has decreased the exposure to political content and, thus, has decreased levels of political knowledge of those who are less interested politically. Whereas years ago limited media options compelled a certain amount of exposure to the news, now people have many entertainment options to choose from. As a result, those who have always been politically interested are consuming more news and those lacking in interest are consuming less.

Given the choice, politically interested people will tend to gravitate toward perspectives similar to their own. As Sunstein (2008) notes the internet environment has led to fragmented debate, reinforcing and not challenging previously held political perspectives and isolating publics into many issue areas. Though other work suggests this only is occurring in a small

population (Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2011; LaCour, 2013). That said, the potential for reinforcement can motivate selective exposure. As Taber and Lodge (2006) found, the politically aware were more likely to read sympathetic arguments than opposing arguments. Calvert (1985) suggests that this is a potentially rational strategy.

But it is also a strategy with undesirable consequences. A lack of exposure to cross-cutting networks is associated with less tolerance for opposing political viewpoints (Mutz, 2006), albeit higher levels of political participation. Selective exposure to one-sided political arguments is associated with more extreme attitudes (Taber and Lodge, 2006). As they state, "Our own evidence… presents a compelling case that motivated biases come to the fore in processing of political arguments even for nonzealots" (2006: 767). Their work, however, was limited to affirmative action and gun control issues and did not replicate general exposure to information but rather a lab setting with students compelled to participate.

News media don't often label themselves as "biased" in one political direction or the other. Objectivity is still a major tenant of journalism and news media companies. However, given the increased and fragmented competition and people's perceptual screen (when choosing media they aren't necessarily making a cognitive choice to choose one outlet over another based on an ideological bias but, instead, it is seen as closer to the "truth") does it even make sense for news organizations to report from one side? So, when news is clearly labeled as coming from one perspective or the other, do patterns of behavior change? Specifically, do we see engagement increase? Further, do we find there is more or less cross-cutting news exposure when the point of view is clearly stated? Simply, if users already believe there is a bias, are there incentives for already labeled "biased" news organizations to simply succumb to it? If such encouragement increases overall engagement, it lends incentive to producing ideological leaning content. This chapter seeks to shed light on these questions.

4.2 Research Design:

Experimentation as a research methodology has its strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps its greatest strength is its ability to allow researchers to draw causal inferences. One is capable of isolating and testing specific treatments in order to be confident that results are due to specific changes in the independent variables. While the degree of control is a strength of this research design, it also has the potential to be a prohibitive weakness. In seeking to control everything but the independent and dependent variables, the research environment can be artificial. Thus, the results may not be applicable outside those guidelines and outside the specific laboratory. Further, results are always subject to the charge that they depend precariously on exactly how the variables under investigation are created or measured. Simply, its greatest weakness is that the results are not generalizable to a larger population or context.

The approach in this chapter tries to overcome these concerns by making use of a natural experiment. The Washington Post website underwent a design change in March 2011. Their Opinions pages shifted from its authors having no partisan labels (it was left to the user to decide) to being labeled as either “right-leaning” or “left-leaning.” How users of the site and their behavior changed can impact our understanding of engagement with partisan content. It further lends insight into preferences for cross-cutting information versus single ideological reading patterns. I take advantage of this kind of natural experiment by examining web traffic prior to and after this change to understand audience interests and effect of signaling partisanship on attention.

This is not a laboratory experiment, but instead an experimental approach allowing me to gather data from observation into real-world behavior in a pre/post framework. A natural experiment is a study in which the subject assignment to the treatment is haphazard and random. The approach used here satisfies this definition as there is little reason to believe that

anything was altered between the audience pre-conditions and post-conditions of this experiment. Aiding to its generalizability is the change to the website was not directly created for the purpose of the experiment and therefore plausibly random. Simply, there is little reason to believe that the shift was in response to a desire for more self-selective behavior, but instead was born from the desire for better navigation. Further, this was conducted with a real news outlet and real consumers of that news outlet. As a result, there is reason to believe that the results are generalizable, unlike typical experimental approach (where one constructs their own stimuli and you recruits people who may not be typical newspapers readers to participate limiting generalizability) at least to the population who consumes political opinion news online.

Natural experiments have become increasingly prominent in recent years. They have been used to help make causal inferences on political participation (Krasno and Green, 2008) and the impact of elections (Gordon and Huber, 2007). Krasno and Green (2008) conducted a natural experiment to determine if television campaign advertising affected voter turnout, by comparing the differences in turnout levels within the same state but in areas with contrasting media markets. Their key independent variable is the volume of presidential campaign advertising aired in the media zone. This example had two critical elements of natural experiments: the amount of advertising was exogenous to their experimental framework and there is no reason to believe the population within these different zones was not randomized in terms of receptivity to advertising. Gordon and Huber (2007) studied the impact of judgeships resulting from partisan systems versus retention systems and its impact on the severity of sentences handed down. Using Kansas – where the process for selecting judges differs from district to district between partisan competitive elections versus a system of gubernatorial appointment and noncompetitive retention elections - they find judges in partisan systems sentence more severely than those in retention systems. Again, there was no reason to believe

the caseload and type of cases differed dramatically by district type and therefore it satisfied both the randomness criteria and the exogenous independent variable of a natural experiment. Similar to these studies, the study presented here uses a naturally occurring change in the navigation structure of The Washington Post as a natural experiment to test the effects of clear partisan labeling on traffic and engagement with partisan news content.

4.3 Labeling Experiment Framework:

In seeking to test the theory of selectivity in web usage, a large scale natural experiment occurred on washingtonpost.com which put forth the ability to test whether or not labeling an author as "left" or "right" causes there to be more selective exposure along ideological lines. My specific hypotheses are:

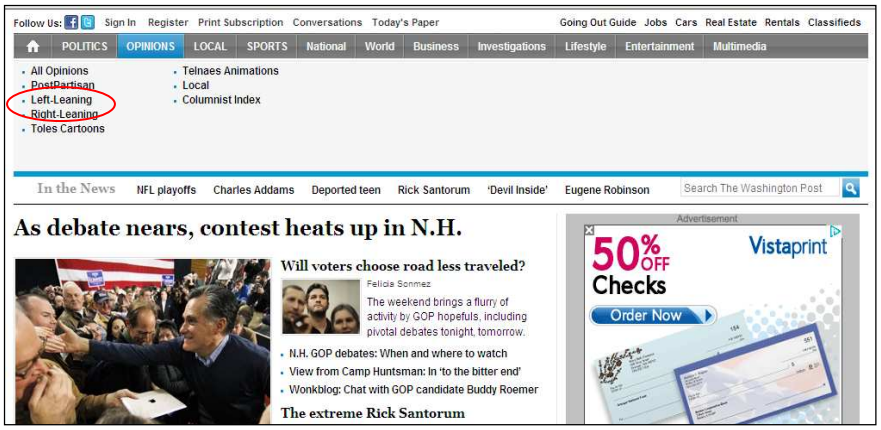
> *Hypothesis 1: When the political slant of the writer is not stated, there will be more overlap in readership between left and right writers than when they are labeled politically and separated.*
>
> *Hypothesis 2: When labels are added to authors visitors engagement (as measured in the number and percent of visits incorporating more than one author) will increase overall, compared to when there were no labels.*

The Washington Post's editorial and opinion pages have always been made up of a mix of both right and left leaning columnists. It has always been the editorial mission of these pages to present a mix of opinion and presenting this mix each day is foremost in the minds of the editors creating the pages. This is also the case with the online site. An even mix of these columnists, and later bloggers, would all appear on the site and on the section fronts of the Opinions section. In neither one of these venues, however, were writers labeled as "left" or "right." If a reader was unfamiliar with the writer, they would have to read the column to determine the political affiliation a columnist might have. This created the possibility of cross-cutting exposure– particularly for first time visitors.

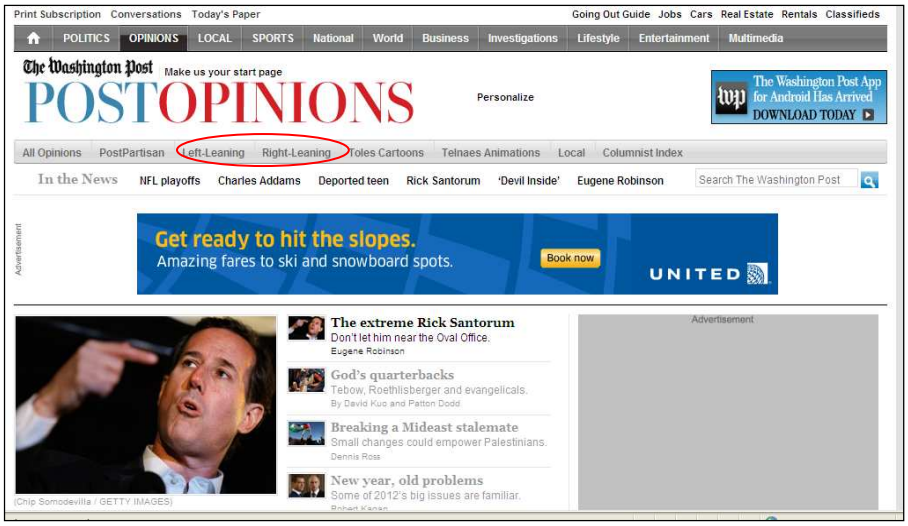
In the middle of March 2011, the Opinions section on The Washington Post site was changed as part of a desire for better navigation opportunities. After the homepage, the Politics section and Opinions section are always in the top sections of the site, attracting the most visitors to their stories each month. According to The Washington Post's own internal tracking, the Opinions section attracted at the time, on average, 8.7 million unique visitors each month (2011 monthly average). This makes the scale of this experiment quite large. It is important as well since the change in the site had the potential for an impact the site's overall numbers which are used for advertising sales purposes.

As part of this change, subsections within the Opinions sections changed, creating two pages: "right-leaning" and "left-leaning." The political stance of the authors segregated them into these respective pages. The example below illustrates that on the Washington Post homepage, nothing changed. The order of the sections remained the same.

But on the navigation bar under "Opinions," two new subsection options were added -- "left-leaning" and "right-leaning" -- as seen below. This change was made March 18, 2011. Prior to this, the navigation had not changed in several years (date of the original design is unknown).

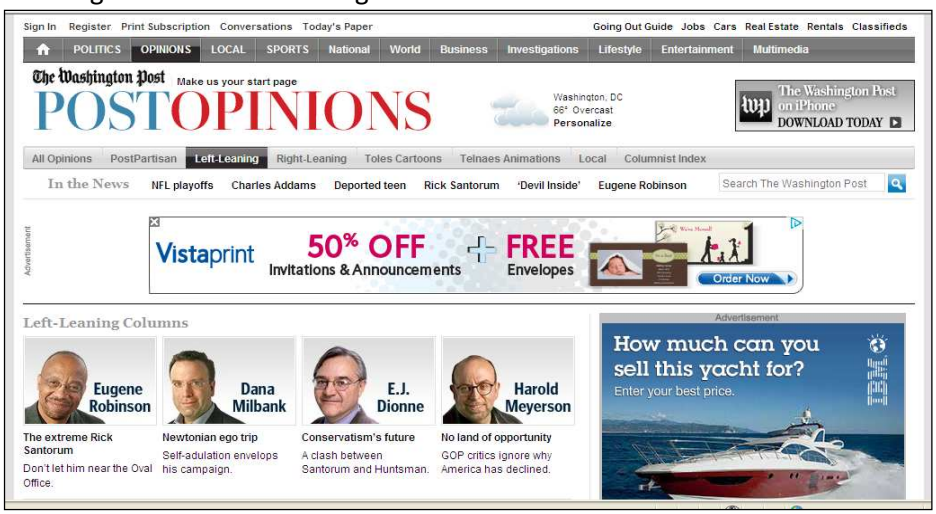


The front page of the Opinions section featured subsections. As a result, the additional navigation buttons were added there.



Two corresponding section fronts were created. Pictured directly below are the section fronts for "left-leaning" and "right-leaning" columnists. The main columnists are featured at the top and the remainder of the page is made of bloggers and guest voices all with a similar ideological bent. This marked the first time a political position label was officially set for these columnists.

Washington Post “Left-Leaning” sub-section front:



Washington Post “Right-Leaning” sub-section front:

Navigation icons are a critical element in what people decide to read. In the Poynter Institute’s 2007 eye tracking study (Poynter Institute, 2007), they found that navigation bars, teasers and story lists get primary attention from online users. Furthermore, they found that there were two different and equally common styles of reading, “methodological” and “scanning.” Methodical readers tend to read from top to bottom, without much scanning around the page, re-read some material and use drop-down menus and navigation bars to locate stories. Scanning readers tended to scan pages, headlines and photos, jump around the screen, looking at different elements, then they would eventually click on a story and read.

Regardless of approach, navigation cues catch attention and shape patterns of consumption across all reader types. For this reason the change not only labeled the authors but altered the navigation as well.

To understand whether this labeling – making it easier for individuals to determine the partisan slant of the writer led to less overlap in readership of authors on the left and the right, I examine the traffic data. Guest voices change too often and guests write too infrequently to be included in the analysis. Also, not all authors pre-dated the change so the experimental data set is limited to authors where both pre/post effects can be seen. As a result, effects are measured by looking at differences on the following authors only:

Michael Gerson (R)
George F. Will (R)
Kathleen Parker (R)
Charles Krauthammer(R)
Jennifer Rubin (R)
Marc A. Thiessen (R)
Ruth Marcus (L)
Dana Milbank (L)
E.J. Dionne Jr. (L)
Eugene Robinson (L)
Richard Cohen (L)
Greg Sargent (L)

Since the previous arrangement – where authors were not labeled – was in existence for several years, the results of the experiment are reviewed over several months. This not only allows us to see changes over time, it allows for a pre/post comparison to be made several months in – so users have time to notice and establish habits around the change. Data is reviewed at the two month and six month mark to determine if the patterns of behavior alter between later and earlier months.

It should be noted there are data limitations. Only the visitors' behavior is knowable in internal tracking. We do not have insight into the visitor's own political partisanship. I, therefore, do not specifically know or measure if people are choosing ideologically consistent writers from the perspective of their own partisanship. However, I can decipher if they go to one sided writers only, which I treat as a proxy that the writer is ideologically consistent. As a result, the variables will consist of experimental data gathered by cookieing users, not through knowledge of the user himself. Since there are multiple devices used per user (and cookies are attached to devices and not users), and the fact that there are multiple users to one device and varying and unknowable degrees of cookie deletion, the behavior tracked and analyzed is confined within a single visit to the site. We cannot see multiple visits from one user with any degree of certainty. This also means I cannot specifically control for individual characteristics or changes in the overall sample in this analysis, such as any demographic shifts in users over the experimental time period.

The central variable in the analysis is the visit. Of note, a visit expires after 29 minutes of inactivity on the page. As an example, if someone clicked to Eugene Robinson, then left the site for some other reason, only to then come back 10 minutes later and clicked into E.J. Dionne it would count as a "left and then left" visit. However, if they didn't come back for 30 minutes, it would count as two single author visits (one for Eugene Robinson and the other including only E J Dionne). The denominator in all of the analysis below is the visit. Unique visitors (commonly seen as unique individuals) are not included within this analysis and as a result, we do not know how many individuals are included in this "visits" number. Further, the total visit number includes only visits which included at least one of the authors. This does not represent Opinion section visits.

A dual (left and left, left and right, right and left, and right and right) can occur in two ways. First, a simple two author visit is easily classified into these four categories. However, when a visit consumes more than two authors, the visit is broken down into two pair paths. For instance, if in a visit someone consumed Robinson then Dionne, and then go on to Gerson, this would count as a left then left visit and then another left then right visit for the purposes of the path percentages. Three or more authors visited within a single visit is not a prevalent occurrence but does result in the percentage in the tables below adding up to more than 100%.

The data is also constrained to people who go directly to the section. This has two important impacts. First, it deletes from the dataset any spikes due to chance encounters that can occur through visits from search results or social referrals. These referrals tend to have high variability in users month to month while “direct” or sought after content is consistent. Second, it also eliminates the impact of other parts on the site to visit frequency. For instance, it removes the impact more links on the homepage might have on the visit frequency. Simply, the data is isolated to people who went directly to the authors or directly to the section.

The behavior changes tracked and monitored over three time periods included authors visited, number of authors visited, and pathing between authors. The unit of analysis is a single visit and the visits varied from each time period with a low of 6.8M visits to a high of 9.6M (detailed below). In total, data from 23.3M visits were collected for analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis and Results:

The first time period studied was pre-experiment period of January and February 2011. This is the baseline against which any conclusions about effects will be measured. Overall, the range between the authors is wide and there is no natural pattern across or within political segments in both the pre-experiment and post-experimental time periods. Any difference in overlap between the individual authors are likely insiginificant. Since opinion authors aren't necessarily writing on the same subject matter/ topic areas, they aren't necessarily natural linkages occurring. However, what is of interest is to look at the groupings of authors and how they are different across the experiment time period. The authors are therefore combined by ideological leaning for the majority of the analysis.

In collapsing the left-leaning authors together and right-leaning authors together, we find very little relationship between political leaning and overlap in readership. Table 4.1 demonstrates, in most visits (93.4%) readers are viewing only one of these authors, suggesting little overalp in general. Overall, 3.4% of visits read a left author then another left author and 2.4% read a right author then another right author. There is also a small amount of political line crossing, suggesting that some cross-cutting exposure does occur in the pre-experiment framework of no labels. There is somewhat less reading of a left-leaning and then right leaning author (2.19%) compared to right author then a left author (3.7%) readership.

Table 4.1 Overlap between party readership pre-experiment

	Jan-Feb 2011
Left then reading Left	3.36%
Left then reading Right	2.19%
Right then reading Right	2.43%
Right then reading Left	3.72%
% single author visits	93.42%
Total visits	6,776,430

In looking into first two months after the experiment occurred (April and May, 2011), we first see a slight increase in the overall number of visits (from 6.78M in January and February time period to the 6.87M in the following two months). This increase could be a signal of somewhat greater usage after the change but it is weak. It may also be due to unknown variables such as an increase in the amount published and a better user experience.

Early results show consistency in increased overlap between left and left readership and left then right readership (Table 4.2). However, I also find declines in right leaning authors overlap between both the right and left. Conducting a difference in proportions test, this is significant in all cases at p value<.05 level. For instance, left then reading left having a z-score of 14.7. At the end of two months there is also evidence of more engagement with a decline of single author visits from 93.42% in January and February to 92.4% in April and May. This again is a significant difference at the p<.05 level, with non-overlapping confidence intervals for each proportion and a zscore of 24.3.

As Table 4.2 shows, in these first two months there is an increase of left then additional reading regardless of direction but first reading a right-leaning author and then additional authors is negative overall. Though I would have expected this increase in left to left, the left to right increase would not have been predicted assuming it promotes self-selective behavior. The increase may be at least in part due to the Democratic skew of The Washington Post's readership base. According to comScore, 35% of the monthly uniques visiting the site in January 2014 were Democrats versus only 24% being Republican. I would expect the decline in the right to left linking under this scenario as there is clearer and better signals. Meaning, those who previously encountered the right leaning authors may have been more accidental and right by accidental then went on to left. Now, they can go directly to what they prefer to read, in this example, the left. My hypothesis would predict an increase in right to right, which is not the

case. The readership of the site skews Democratic and as a result the visitors who are reading the right leaning articles are, perhaps, less engaged and less likely to notice labeling changes – or may take more time to notice with lower visit frequency. As the experimental data shows, the left then reading left percentages are higher than the right than reading right, suggesting lower overall engagement from this sector. But, all of these changes may just be the result of a period of sorting and getting used to these new changes. Due to this and the minor changes in visits, the remainder of the analysis focuses on the impact six months after the change.

Table 4.2: Overlap between party readership first 2 months post-experiment

	Jan-Feb 2011	Apr-May 2011	2 Month Change
Left then reading Left	3.36%	3.83%	13.9%
Left then reading Right	2.19%	2.50%	14.1%
Right then reading Right	2.43%	2.00%	-17.9%
Right then reading Left	3.72%	2.51%	-32.6%
% single author visits	93.42%	92.35%	
total visits	6,776,430	6,869,248	

Since these contrarian findings (right then reading right less and left then reading right more) may be the result of just initial inexperience with the new navigation, the results were then compared to results from six months after the change in navigation and labeling first occurred specifically to determine how the overlap between the authors and within the authors' labeled political leaning changed or didn't change over time. In looking six months after the experiment occurred (October and November, 2011), we again see an increase in the overall number of visits though far more pronunced this time (from 6.78M in January and February time period to the 9.62M six months following). While this may be due to a better user experience overall, it is an early indicator that engagement increased signficantly with the change.

The changes between and within each political grouping altered significantly during the experiment. As the table below notes, the average overlap within the left grew significantly. More people began reading a left labeled author then another left labeled author and more articles were read overall (with the single author visits dropping from 93.4% to 87.8%). Interestingly, this continued to occur among the left then reading right, which saw a 47% increase. Right then reading right also increased 31% yet the right then reading left path dropped 2.3%. Though this is a small drop, it is statistically significant and still results in rejecting null hypothesis that sample proportions are equal (Table 4.4).

Table 4.3: Overlap between party readership 6 months post-experiment

	Jan-Feb 2011	Oct-Nov 2011	6 Month Change
Left then reading Left	3.36%	5.50%	63.5%
Left then reading Right	2.19%	3.22%	47.1%
Right then reading Right	2.43%	3.18%	30.9%
Right then reading Left	3.72%	3.64%	-2.3%
% single author visits	93.42%	87.77%	
Total visits	6,776,430	9,619,304	

Table 4.4: Significance testing of Right then reading Left proportions changes

	Jan-Feb 2011	Oct-Nov 2011
Sample proportion	0.0372	0.0364
95% CI (two-tailed)	0.0367 - 0.0377	0.036 - 0.0368
z-score	2.7	
P-value	0.0073	

To further decipher why this change in behavior occurs, I collapsed the data a third way. The data below combines all the visits that included at least one right author and all the visits that included at least one left author – regardless of the direction it started in. In the pre-experiment time period, right reading included 54% of the visits to the Opinion section. Six months later, that percentage shifted to 49%, showing a decrease in the readership of the right

overall. The opposite occurred with the left, starting at 50% of the visits. In this case, left author leaning readership jumped to 59%. So while we see more left then reading right behavior in the above, it is more a function of an increase in the left readership than it is in an increase in the reading of the right. This may also be due to the Democratic skew of washingtonpost.com's audience overall.

Table 4.5: Pre-post visits brekadown across all author categories and all author visits

	Jan-Feb	Oct-Nov
Visit:	2011	2011
Included a right	54%	49%
Included a left	50%	59%

Cutting the data yet again, I separate visits into those that included reading both a right and left leaning author, left leaning authors only and right leaning authors only. Contrary to my hypothesis, there is an increase in cross-cutting behavior overall (from 4% of the visits including a left and a right author in the pre-experiment scenario to 7% in the post-experiment). This is in tandem, however, with an increase in left-only readership (from 46% to 51% of visits including only left-leaning articles). There is also a decrease is right-only behavior when labeling occurs. Though these seem like small changes, they are both statistically and substantively quite significant given the very large sample size.

Table 4.6: Pre-post visits brekadown across all author categories and all author visits

	Jan-Feb	Oct-Nov
Visit included:	2011	2011
left and right	4%	7%
left only	46%	51%
right only	50%	42%

Though it cannot be known if publishing went up over this period of time or the number of links read from the data, in order to determine if the effects were potentially isolated to a few stories or a single event or if they were broader in nature, I looked at the changes within the

individual authors and their overlap. In other words, if the change occurred because of a single or a few authors becoming more popular, I should see much of the overlap occurring in only a few of the authors. This is the same case for publishing, if a few authors linked to other authors more or a few authors published more, I should see these overlap effects isolated to only a few. This, however, is not the case. In fact, looking at the median overlap with the other authors in the sample set, I see consistent evidence that the overlap is occurring across all authors and particularly within their own partisan author set. For example, as Table 3.7 details, visits to articles written by Krauthammer, a conservative writer, overlapped 1% of the time with other conservative authors and 1.5% with liberal leaning authors in the pre-test conditions. Post-test, the overlap increased within his party to 2.5% (median) a 150% increase, but decreased with the opposing ideology (-27%). Irrespective of the shifts within the same ideology or the opposing, the engagement change overall was up for all cases but George Will, showing that labeling the authors produced more engagement overall.

Table 4.7: Pre-post right-leaning authors' overlap within ideology and opposing ideologies

	Right					
Jan-Feb 2011	Gerson	Will	Parker	Krauthammer	Rubin	Thiessen
median - all	3.2%	2.2%	1.4%	1.0%	0.7%	6.1%
median - within	3.2%	1.7%	1.4%	1.0%	0.6%	2.7%
median - opposite	6.5%	2.8%	1.2%	1.5%	0.9%	6.5%
Oct-Nov 2011						
median - all	5.4%	1.9%	4.2%	1.6%	2.1%	2.9%
median - within	5.4%	2.6%	4.2%	2.5%	1.9%	3.2%
median - opposite	5.4%	1.4%	4.2%	1.1%	3.8%	2.9%
% change - all	69%	-14%	200%	60%	200%	-52%
% change - within	69%	53%	200%	150%	217%	19%
% change - opposing	-17%	-51%	246%	-27%	341%	-56%

This is further evidenced by Table 3.8 which shows the change among the left leaning authors. In every case, we saw an increase in the overlap with other authors (overall, within the left leaning author set and with the opposing ideology). Though the number of left-leaning links

and pages visited and number of right-leaning links visited is not known in this data set, this within a single visit change is evidence that promoting the ideological leaning of authors increases engagement. In all cases, the changes in the proportions were statistically significant.

Table 4.8: Pre-post left-leaning authors' overlap within ideology and opposing ideologies

	Left					
Jan-Feb 2011	Marcus	Milbank	Dionne	Robinson	Cohen	Sargent
median - all	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%	1.9%	1.5%	1.0%
median - within	2.3%	2.2%	1.1%	1.9%	1.5%	1.1%
median - opposite	1.1%	1.5%	1.7%	2.7%	1.9%	0.8%
Oct-Nov 2011	Marcus	Milbank	Dionne	Robinson	Cohen	Sargent
median - all	5.3%	3.5%	2.6%	3.9%	6.2%	1.8%
median - within	6.4%	3.5%	2.1%	3.9%	6.2%	2.4%
median - opposite	3.1%	2.7%	3.0%	4.1%	3.0%	1.5%
% change - all	253%	106%	63%	105%	313%	80%
% change - within	178%	59%	91%	105%	313%	118%
% change - opposing	182%	80%	79%	50%	59%	100%

4.5 Conclusions:

Three main results came out of this experiment. As hypothesized, engagement goes up in reading within a single ideology. Both left then left readership went up and right then right readership went up when the content was labeled. Also, as hypothesized, engagement went up overall when the bias of the article was noted. There were fewer single article readership and higher overlap overall with political labeling. There is evidence, therefore, that reporting from a political point of view is a means of engaging people to read more.

There is evidence for self-selected behavior and an increase, for some, in cross cutting. What we saw was an overall increase in all types of behavior – including both self-selected and cross cutting – for increased engagement. So why might this be? Considering the overall Democratic leaning of the site, it may be likely the conservatives visiting washingtonpost.com are more moderate in their leanings to begin with. They, therefore, may welcome more cross-cutting exposure than say, strong conservatives and this is where we are seeing the left and

then right overlap. Alternatively, moderate or Independent readers who follow particular authors- even if it may be of the opposing point of view- may continue to do so even after the labeling exposed their leanings and simply began to read left-leaning authors because they were now more easily available (located on the same page).

As we saw in the previous chapter, self selection largely only occurs with strong partisans. This may also be why we see more self selection occurring among left leaning authors. Since the site is seen as more liberal to begin with, it may be attracting proportionally more strong partisans from the Democratic party than the Republican party. If we had a measure to include strength of party ID, I suspect we would see the cross-cutting behavior exhibited in the increase of left to right-leaning authorship patterns would be exhibited by more moderate Democrats.

Regardless of these potentially anti-theoretical findings, I was still able to learn two things from this experiment. First, engagement, as measured by a decline in the percent of single author visits, goes up overall when the political stance of an author is highlighted. Compared to the pre-experiment time period, we see far fewer single author visits in the post period change. Second, there is an increase in self-selective behavior. We see large changes in the percent of visits which included a left then reading left (64% increase at the six month mark) and right then reading right (31% increase). Right only does suffer, declining from both a single author visit standpoint (as demonstrated in Table 4.5 and 4.6) and the decline in right then a left reading (Table 4.3). This may be the result of a desire to know political stance in advance and, in case of left readering authors, the desire to read content through such a political lens. However, contrary to my hypothesis, cross-cutting behavior still exists when content is labeled but it is lessened among the right leaning authors then reading left.

Additional work should take into consideration the predisposition of the audience. Since this data was collected, many news sites have changed their online business mondel to include a subscription. Introducing a consumer payment increases the need to engage users to reduce churn beyond just advertising impacts. As a result, showcasing what individuals personally want to read may be even more important than in a simple ad-supported model. Its introduction also has the technological advantage of not relying on cookies to track users creating a far more customizable newsfeed automatically for the individual. Future work should look into these logged in users, across time and devices, and factor in their own partisan leanings.

As we saw from this chapter, engagement can increase through pointing out the political nature of an article and this can increase overall engagement. When site programmers can see an individual's willingness to engage with only one particular point of view and technological advances allow them to target people individually, it is clear that targeting based off of political partisanship will yield engagement increases. Like Chapter Three, this experiment shows there could be an incentive for news organizations to showcase politically biased news.

Chapter 5: Effects of Partisan Media Exposure on Compromise

On January 9, 2014, Bloomberg published an article headlined "*Fighting Quartet Atop Congress Slowed by Years of Grudges*" in which they detail a history of party leaders' unwillingness to compromise and a Congress plagued by dysfunction. This, sadly, does not stand alone in the recent coverage of Congress. While all sides will agree that Congress has shown its inability to enact change, many, like the Congress that represents them, blame the other side. This unwillingness to hear the other side and to compromise may reflect our political information consumption.

As previous chapters showed, people perceive media as slanted, there is agreement on both sides of the spectrum about the slanted nature of certain outlets and there is some degree of self-selection into such biased news media. This chapter explores what impact exposure to like-minded or cross cutting media has on political attitudes. As Chapter Three showed, self-selection may be associated with partisan extremity but, the question remains: is this a causal relationship? In this chapter I seek to determine if exposure to partisan media, among those who share that partisan orientation, leads to less willingness to compromise. If partisan news media produces an unwillingness to compromise, this would have a tremendous normative impact. The United States government was designed for compromise. If people are consuming more biased news media – at the expense of cross-cutting exposure and neutral sources - and its impact is to reduce the desire to compromise, this may translate to their representatives and help create legislative gridlock. The specific hypothesis explored in this experiment and analysis is: The degree to which people are supportive of compromise among the different political parties will be, to some degree, dependent on exposure to partisan media.

To explore this, I conduct a survey experiment comparing willingness to compromise among registered voters when arguments are made by a partisan media source versus a non-

partisan source on a polarized topic. The central question is: does the willingness to compromise across party lines alter under conditions of media polarization compared to exposure from sources without apparent polarization? I specifically address this question in terms of debates about the Affordable Care Act.

5.1 Media Effects

Political information is often consumed via the news media. News exposes people to political events, information, analysis and, often, opinion and perspectives. This intermediary role can impact citizens' knowledge, understanding and the importance consumers' place on different issues. A myriad of studies have shown that manner in which media discusses political news can impact people's perceptions (Conway, Wyckoff, and Ahern, 1981). For example, media affect people's evaluation of political institutions, social groups and overall political trust (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1998; Arceneaux and Johnson, 2009; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000). Garamone and Atkin (1986) found that in young adults media contributed to political socialization, affecting interpersonal conversation and anticipated participation and Mutz and Soss (1997) found in experimental survey work that while media doesn't necessarily impact personal perceptions about the salience of an issue, it does impact people's belief in what the community thinks is important and what the dominant opinion is.

But as some media outlets move from a more neutral information sharing approach that worked well in a limited competition environment- their one-to-many business model - to an approach that requires attracting people and their time in the media landscape of unending competition (one-to-one business model), the need to engage and be distinctive arises. This may in par explain the increasing volume of politically charged sources. These are sources where information and opinion are often mixed within a "news" story. How this new news

environment impacts the polity is worth re-exploring given the technological shifts that have occurred over the last two decades.

It is widely acknowledged that news media serve as "agenda-setters" and "primers," affecting which problems people think are important and which criteria they use to evaluate leaders (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). In their study of national broadcast news, Behr and Iyengar (1985) found that television news influences the public concern and not vice versa. What the media cared about translated into the issues cared about by its viewers. The fear then becomes that ideologically driven elites may be able to set a nationwide agenda. However, research has shown that this fear may be unfounded. Bovitz, Druckman and Lupia determined that market conditions stopped media elites from being able to push opinion. They do contend though, "if the public influences media elites' news content decisions, then news organizations are giving the public what they want" (2002: 146). It is this scenario where the new media environment enters. Information on what engages users is more easily available than ever before. This has made it easier for news outlets to give people what they want.

When partisans want reinforcement of political views and the media delivers, we enter a situation where groups feel they are "right" because the information givers – the previous educators – have told them as much. I argue that biased reporting– something that used to be reserved to editorial and opinion pages – may make its way into some outlets' general news reporting (due to the engagement benefits noted in Chapter Four) and when it does, it will impact political tolerance. There is evidence to suggest that biased reporting, even when it used to be segregated, can have an impact. Beck, Dalton, Greene and Huckfeldt (2002) found that when media matter, it isn't the general news reporting (which showed, at the time, a minor bias in favor of a particular candidate) but the more overtly biased editorial pages of newspapers which had a direct relationship with vote choice. Capella and Jamieson (1996) found in a series

of experiments that subtle changes in the way news stories are framed can affect the receivers' responses. Specifically, in both print and broadcast media, how stories are covered can impact consumers' skepticism in both candidates and the government overall. Perhaps most importantly, the media can change people's opinions, contingent on their exposure to and acceptance of that information (Zaller, 1992).

This exposure and acceptance can occur because people may be motivated to use one sided media. Uniformly one-sided messages promote conformity and can be especially persuasive to the consumer as Zaller has shown. Exposures to two-sided messages are harder to process and result in ambivalence. As Zaller states, "… in an environment that carries roughly evenly balanced communications on both sides of issues, people are likely to internalize many contradictory arguments, which is to say, they are likely to form considerations that induce them to both favor and oppose the same issues." (1992: 59) If a user is exposed to only one-side of the argument, the messaging can be especially persuasive, regardless of political stance, and alter one's point of view. Further, the political information seekers, those sophisticated enough to pick up on messaging cues which led them to polarize in lock-step with their party, a one message partisan model can likely result in polarization. However, Dalton, Beck and Huckfeldt (1998) found that the perception of the information exposed to is impacted by people's partisanship as well as the actual content of the information. It is for this reason; any analysis must take into consideration predisposed points of view. If someone is already inclined to believe the messages from the one side, and they are fed only messages from that point of view, it can have strongly persuasive and lasting effects.

While previous chapters looked into the desire to seek out partisan information, this chapter looks into what happens when they encounter that information. How arguments are framed, particularly the degree to which they refute alternative views versus enforce their own,

can impact how people form their opinions (Druckman and Nelson, 2003). The reason for this is long understood as theory of motivated reasoning or the partisan perceptual screen (Lavine, Johnston, and Steenbergen, 2012). In short, motivated reasoning theory suggests that partisans will view their party's positions as more valid than a positional argument not sponsored by their party or a frame sponsored by the other party. In other words, people use partisan screens in evaluating content even over the content's merits. This is largely out of ease. Much research has suggested that individuals generally lack motivation to dig into political issues and evidence. Taber and Lodge (2006: 767) conclude, "despite our best efforts to promote the even-handed treatment of policy arguments in our studies, we find consistent evidence of directional partisan bias." This is made worse by those who possess strong partisan identities being more inclined to base their opinion nearly entirely on their partisan cues. As Prior (2005) found and Graber (1996: 34) eloquently asserts "While available food for political thought has grown, despite much overlap and redundancy, the appetite and capacity to consume it remain limited." In such cases where news media are presenting such biased information as fact, this lack of motivation and the corresponding precondition of using cues, I hypothesize partisan rhetoric will have debilitating effects when it comes to compromise.

Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus (2013) recently dug into the question of whether elite polarization is resulting in a more polarized citizenry. Through survey experiments, they find that that polarized environments change decision making by increasing the importance of party endorsements and decreasing the impact of substantive information. They conclude this is occurring because polarization in elites stimulates partisan motivated reasoning. Dancey and Goren (2010: 697) explain, "…citizens will adjust their issue attitudes and party loyalties to conform to one another when news organizations cover divisions among party elites on an issue." Similarly, Levendusky (2010: 110) found in his experiments, "…when elites polarize,

ordinary voters will hold attitudes that are more tightly connected to one another." In sum, under conditions of polarization, partisan identification becomes stronger and more cohesive. With this higher constraint and partisan cues, Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus (2013) actually find that even with less content to back them up, people will have more confidence in their opinion when the argument is framed through a partisan cue. Having more confidence without context and evidence, I theorize, will decrease the willingness to compromise with the oppositional party.

This, however, assumes that partisan messaging is making its way to the populace. This would mean that the press has an incentive to relay biased information. Gasper (2009) developed a formal model noting that politicized news is an economically beneficial market position. Specifically, even though consumption is about information gathering on the part of the viewers, it is profitable for a news organization to position itself away from its competition. This stems from Zaller's (2002) notion that people don't want the cognitive dissonance caused by oppositional viewpoints. Purposive consumption of biased media occurs because it brings enjoyment to the viewer. Due to that, Gasper's demand-side modeling shows it is more economical for an advertising based platform to appeal to a new segment rather than compete for the same audience. This is often played out in everyday media. For instance, *The Economist* recently published (January 25, 2014) an article entitled *"What does the Fox say?"* noting the frustration elites have voiced with such reporting. It cites a Republican politician's:

> …denunciation of MSNBC, a lefty cable news channel which has been especially tough on his boss. The statement called MSNBC's reporting "almost gleeful," grumbled about presenters comparing Mr. Christie to Richard Nixon and accused the channel of devoting excessive airtime to the governor's woes…. Ask Democrats why they struggle to win support for such policies as Obamacare, immigration reform or action on global warming, and they often blame Fox News for misinforming voters.

While recent work supports the notion that polarization of messaging and consumption leads to more cohesive partisanship, the normative consequences of it is also debated. Early work (Converse, 1964) worried that the lack of issue constraint within ideology meant unclear signals to their legislatures, suggesting highly constrained partisans would lead to better representation. Recent work also affirms its appeal. Levendusky (2010: 125) asserts, "citizens who vote correctly is an important step towards a healthier democracy." But constraint within the party and closeness to party elites is how "correct voting" is defined. If opinions are formed merely out of limited exposure and sound-bite messaging, the representative part of our democracy may have been met but not the deliberative part. Achen and Bartels fear the party consistency comes from partisan messaging and post facto rationalization and not from a review of facts and reasoning. As they conclude, "increased consistency between their own issue preference and their vote intentions was mostly due to shifts in their issue positions to match their vote intentions, not shifts in their vote intentions to match their issue positions" (2006: 3).

This reliance on partisan messaging and inference may be the result of one-sided news and information consumption. Exposure to cross-cutting networks was commonly seen as a critical aspect of deliberative democracy (Fishkin, 1991). Mutz (2002) found that exposure to both sides not only increased the awareness of the other side and deeper understanding of their own position but increased political tolerance. Mutz and Martin (2001) found that this cross-cutting exposure was largely through the media. Personal networks were far less likely to be cross-cutting. So, if personal discussions are unlikely to be cross-cutting and segments of the population are self-selecting into partisan media, what does that mean for tolerance?

The lack of tolerance, the lack of seeing the value in the oppositional point of view and the lack of support for compromise calls into question the stability of the political system. As Mutz (2007: 621) eloquently notes, "Without the acquiescence of those on the losing side,

Democratic government could not continue peaceably. And without some degree of respect for oppositional views, it is doubtful that the losers in any given content would tolerate the winners for long… a process that produces outcomes that seem totally without justification is unlikely to persist." The solution to this has been the call for more deliberative discussion and exposure to opposing points of view. But, can exposure to the points of view from the other side effectively promote compromise? Does one sided exposure inhibit it? This chapter aims to shed some light on these questions.

The specific hypothesis explored in this analysis is:

> *Central hypothesis:* Exposure to congruent partisan media will lead to less willingness to compromise with the opposing party. Exposure to neutral media or to partisan media from the other side will not affect willingness to compromise.

5.2 Methodology

I conducted an experiment to test my hypotheses via the Internet, with a sample drawn to be representative of registered voters within the U.S., during February 3 –6, 2014. The experiment appeared within a larger survey and the sample was divided into three groups, with each being exposed to separate news story about health care reform. The facts were constant across the stories and were gleaned from a published article which ran on the CNN website (article detailed in References section). One treatment was framed as a USA Today story and presented the facts in a neutral way. One was framed as Fox News and used these facts to motivate an argument against Obamacare, spinning inconvenient facts as necessary. The third was framed as MSNBC and it did the same thing, but in support of Obamacare. The treatments used are located in the Appendix.

I contracted with a survey research company, SurveyMonkey, to collect the data. The sample was drawn from a panel of respondents who had opted in to complete online surveys in return for charitable donations and sweepstakes entries. The panel was originally developed

based from recruitment of other survey completes and is therefore a nonprobability sample. After data cleaning, the survey was completed by 1192 adults nationwide and included questions related to usage and frequency of usage among different media outlets, interest in political news, interest in different issue areas (economic recovery, health care reform, Immigration policy, social security reform, federal budget deficit, etc..), knowledge of issues, attitudes toward government performance, political party identification and demographics in addition to willingness to compromise – the key dependent variable. Important to note, the willingness to compromise question was asked both before and after the treatment occurred. The difference in the pre/post shifts are reviewed along with the impact the treatment had in the post-treatment question response. In the appendix, I describe the experimental design in greater detail.

While the sample overall skews more educated, white and higher income than the U.S. census, the treatment categories are demographically very similar with one exception. The segment who was randomly assigned to the MSNBC article treatment skewed higher income ($150K plus at the expenses of $50K-$99,999). Given that this is not likely related to shifts in compromise, distribution was not corrected using weights. See appendix Table A.1 for full detail on the demographic makeup of each treatment group.

The use of experiments in studying media effects is not new. In fact, some of the more important work has been achieved by isolating causal variables through the use of lab and field experimental techniques. For instance, Iyengar and Kinder (1987), in seeking to understand the effect of television news media on presidential performance and issue importance, created a series of experiments. As Green and Gerber (2003: 109) note, political science has not made vast use of experimentation. While they contend “some of the most compelling works in social science seize upon opportunities to study naturally occurring variations in independent variables

when this variation is unfettered by problems of unobserved heterogeneity", they do contend that a well done laboratory experiment can avoid the dangers of field work and "*in principle* test the causal propositions they advance" (2003: 110).

One concern in any experiment regarding party and issue attitudes is that asking about party identification primes respondents to base attitudes on that identity. I attempted to avoid this issue within the experiment by asking party identification after the experiment was completed. Because the experiment asks only about the Affordable Care Act, some may argue this experiment may lack some degree of external validity. However, given that healthcare has been debated for decades, and it is a prominent feature in the current polarized partisan debate, it is a worthwhile issue to explore because it is the kind of topic one would expect to see partisan media focus on.

The partisan messaging used in this experiment wasn't a replication of a pre-existing article, but a compilation of a few articles where the salient points were made. This type of partisan messaging has been apparent for many months, if not years. In fact, the partisan examples used may have been on the more neutral side of the discourse that has taken place. For example, a recent article published on MSNBC.com on February 5, 2014 entitled "Paul Ryan: Obamacare is a 'poverty trap'" started with the lead of: "After a day of rampant misinformation, dishonest political attacks, and misleading media reports, Congressional Budget Office director Doug Elmendorf took the stand before a House committee to explain what, exactly, his report says about Obamacare." Therefore, the treatments used were not simply an experiment of extremes but a real-world example of news around healthcare reform coverage.

This work contributes to the existing literature by specifically testing the relationship between prior attitudes, biased media and the willingness to compromise. Using a survey based experimental design offers the ability to draw causal conclusion about the relationship between

exposure and willingness to compromise. It will shed light on the influence of media in politics in an increasingly fragmented media environment. In doing so, it speaks to the potential effects of consumption of biased news in a deliberative democracy.

5.3 Results and Analysis

In order to assess these hypotheses, I began with an analysis into the relationship between party identification and self-reported knowledge of the healthcare debate (which are asked prior to the experimental treatments) in the full survey sample. Next, I looked at the impact of partisan media treatments by party ID. Specifically answering: does partisan media impact the individuals from the same party more than those from the opposing party when it comes to compromise? Under what conditions does this occur? Last, I explored overall results by subject matter knowledge. For instance, are people who know less about the healthcare debate more susceptible to partisan messaging?

It is important to note that when looking at claimed knowledge of each party's health care positions, we see a significant gap in knowledge about the opposing party's point of view. For instance, 76% of strong Republicans mentioned they knew "a great deal" or "a good amount" about the Republican Party's position on health care reform but only 67% say they know the same level of information about the Democrat's position. The gap is even larger among strong Democrats with 93% knowing "a great deal" or "a good amount" about the Democratic position but only 73% having the same level of knowledge about the Republican point of view. The level of knowledge of either position is lowest for weak Democrats followed by pure Independents. This is relevant to the analysis as when I look at partisan media impacts, the level of perceived knowledge (while controlling for partisanship) of the opposing point of view, for some, it may be new information. Simply, among those without knowledge about the other side's position, this

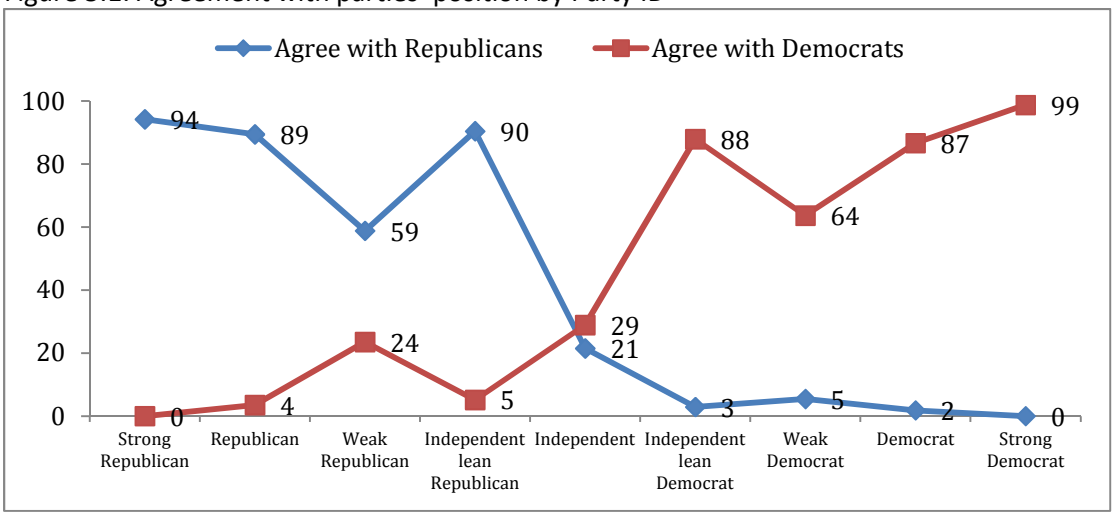
exposure to partisan media from the other end of the spectrum may be providing new information.

Table 5.1: Health care position knowledge by party ID

	Democratic:			**Republican:**		
	A great deal	A good amount	Total	A great deal	A good amount	Total
Strong Republican	25	42	67	31	45	76
Republican	20	46	67	18	52	70
Weak Republican	21	50	71	15	59	74
Independent lean Republican	33	48	81	26	51	76
Independent	18	43	61	17	36	54
Independent lean Democrat	28	53	81	21	43	64
Weak Democrat	9	33	42	9	25	35
Democrat	22	50	72	17	38	55
Strong Democrat	47	46	93	33	40	73

Partisans are in agreement with their respective party's position on healthcare reform. And, the strength of the partisanship increases with the strength of the agreement. Meaning, there is significant constraint with agreement with their own party. Weakest agreement occurs among weak Republicans with 59% saying they either "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" with the Republican position, followed by weak Democrats with 64% agreeing with their party's position. All other partisan breakdowns had at least nine in ten agreeing with their own party. Of note, 40% of Independents felt there wasn't any difference between the two parties.

Figure 5.1: Agreement with parties' position by Party ID



There are strong pre-conceived notions about the healthcare reform debate and who is to blame for the lack of compromise. Specifically, 90% of strong Republicans think that Obama is not compromising and that it is a bad thing compared to 0% of strong Democrats. On the other end of the spectrum 96% of strong Democrats think that the Republican leaders in Congress are not compromising and that is a bad thing, while 12% of strong Republicans agree with that statement. Due to this high correlation between party ID and agreeing with the same party's position on the healthcare debate, a focus on Party ID is nearly synonymous with a focus on agreeing with the party position. Thus it is not surprising to find that strong partisans also view the other side's lack of compromise as the problem.

Table 5.2: Willingness to compromise by Party ID (pre-treatment)

Which of the following statements best match your opinion on Obama's willingness to compromise with Republican leaders on health care reform:					
	Obama IS compromising and that is a GOOD thing	Obama IS NOT compromising and that is a GOOD thing	Obama IS compromising and that is a BAD thing	Obama IS NOT compromising and that this a BAD thing	Don't know enough to judge
Strong Republican	4	0	2	90	4
Republican	4	4	3	82	8
Weak Republican	12	9	6	65	9
Independent lean Republican	1	0	1	94	4
Independent	12	12	9	48	19
Independent lean Democrat	38	22	22	6	13
Weak Democrat	24	9	11	27	29
Democrat	39	27	16	4	15
Strong Democrat	45	29	20	0	6
Which of the following statements best match your opinion on Republican leader's willingness to compromise with Obama on health care reform:					
	Republican leaders ARE compromising and that is a GOOD thing	Republican leaders ARE NOT compromising and that is a GOOD thing	Republican leaders ARE compromising and that is a BAD thing	Republican leaders ARE NOT compromising and that is a BAD thing	Don't know enough to judge
Strong Republican	13	40	29	12	6
Republican	15	32	23	21	9
Weak Republican	9	24	15	44	9
Independent lean Republican	16	31	26	20	7
Independent	5	7	7	64	17
Independent lean Democrat	4	1	3	87	5
Weak Democrat	4	4	9	64	20
Democrat	3	1	5	82	8
Strong Democrat	0	0	3	96	1

Due to the knowledge gaps between the different parties on the other side's position and the alignment between partisanship and agreement with respective party positions, the rest of the analysis will concern the impact of the experimental treatments and how they relate to these two (partisanship and knowledge) variables. If the central hypothesis is correct, I should find those exposed to like-minded media (Democrats exposed to MSNBC or Republicans exposed to FoxNews) will decrease the willingness to compromise with the opposing party on healthcare. Further, I should see Republicans who are exposed to FoxNews (or Democrats exposed to MSNBC) should have more extreme positions compared to those exposed to the neutral USA Today treatment.

First, before turning to a direct test of my hypothesis expectations concerning partisans, I first look at the main effects across all respondents. Figure 5.3 shows the change in attitudes

toward compromise (pre-test and post-test) for subjects assigned to the control, liberal and conservative conditions. This graph shows how much more extreme (not compromising and that is a good thing) or more moderate (increases in trying to compromise and that is a good thing) became after reading the treatment. To know if partisan media or neutral media have significant effects, I compare the changes to the control condition – neutral media condition – of the USA Today article. Looking at the entire sample, the neutral news condition showed very small and insignificant changes in unwillingness to compromise after reading the article. But, respondents assigned to the partisan media (both extremes combined) became more unwilling to compromise (see Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3). Those exposed to the liberal (MSNBC) condition were more affected when asking about Obama and compromise than those who read the FoxNews piece. Similarly, those who were exposed to the conservative (FoxNews) condition were more impacted when you ask in reference to the Republican party's leaders than those who read the MSNBC piece. The Obama question change under the MSNBC treatment ($z= 1.879$, $p=.0603$) and the FoxNews ($z= 1.951$, $p=.051$) change in the Republican leader question are each significant pre-post changes. However, neither are significant when compared to the change the neutral scenario (USA Today). In short, the six percentage point increase is significant increase but not significantly greater than the 3 percentage point increase saw with USA Today. This lack of overall effects is not unexpected as my hypothesis assumes that partisan media consistent with party predispositions should lead to less willing to compromise. Therefore, partisan media inconsistent with predispositions might make more willing to compromise. Theoretically, this would produce potentially offsetting effects and why we would not see an overall impact.

Figure 5.2: Percent who felt "Obama is not compromising and that is a good thing/Obama is compromising and that is a bad thing." before and after treatment categories

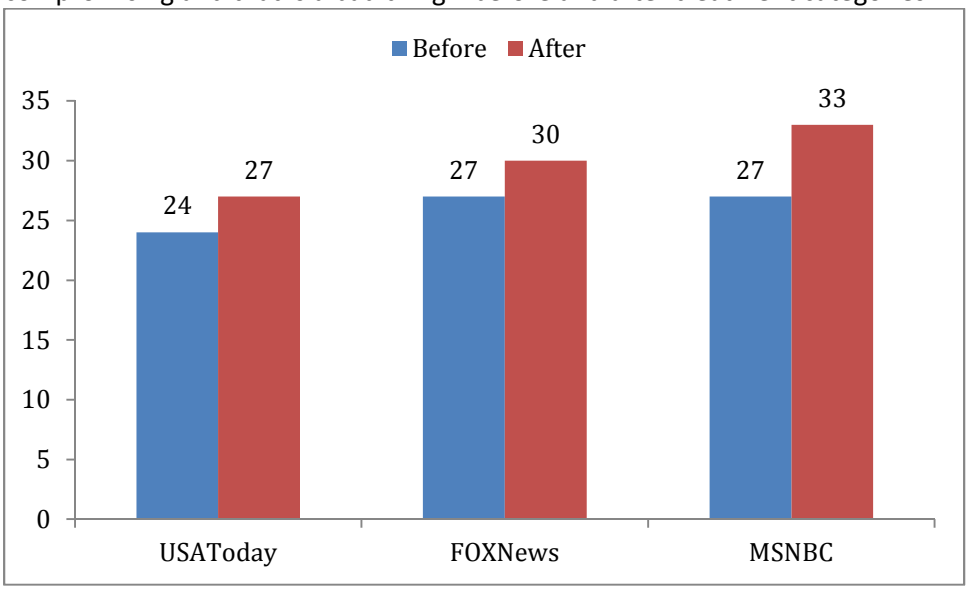
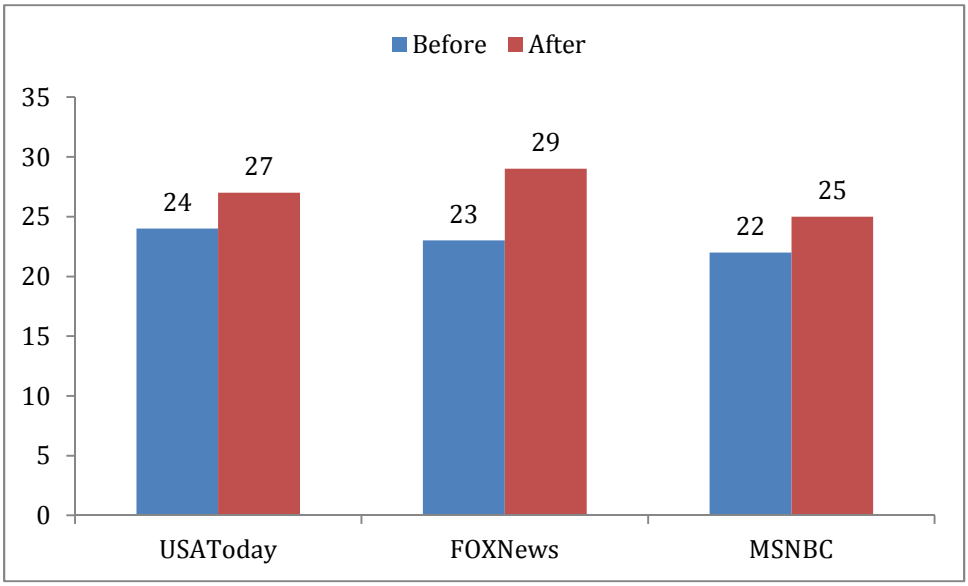


Figure 5.3: Percent who felt "Republican leaders are compromising and that is a bad thing/Republican leaders are not compromising and that is a good thing" before and after treatment categories



To know if liberal media or conservative media have significant effects on the probability of being unwilling to compromise, I performed a logistic regression on the post treatment answer to the willingness to compromise question. A willingness to compromise was (Obama IS compromising and that is a GOOD thing OR Obama IS NOT compromising and that this a BAD

thing) coded as zero and unwillingness to compromise (Obama IS NOT compromising and that is a GOOD thing OR Obama IS compromising and that is a BAD thing) was coded as one for both the Obama and Republican leaders questions. The first model included dummy variables for the treatment category exposed to and the relationship party ID has with willingness to compromise. Each independent variable removed "dk/refused/other" responses and these respondents were excluded from the analysis. Those who did not have any opinion on compromise were eliminated from the model. The final regression included 1035 cases for analysis where the Obama compromise question is the dependent variable and 1046 in the Republican leaders model.

First, I will review the Obama dependent variable model. The model shows if we knew nothing about the viewers and guessed their position on compromise, we would be correct 65.3% of the time. Of the three variables included in the model, only the MSNBC exposure and the party identification variables had a significant contribution to the predictive value of the model at the $p<0.05$ level. Though not entirely analogous to the r^2 prediction in linear regression, the Cox and Snell R^2 =0.128 indicating that 13% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model. Nagelkerke R^2=.176 indicates a moderate relationship of 18% between the predictors and the prediction. Overall, 84.2% were correctly identified as wanting compromise and 42.6% were correctly identified as not wanting compromise, with an average of 69.8% correctly classified. This, however, is only a small improvement from the 65.3% correctly classified where only the constant is included in the model overall but a sizeable increase in understanding for not compromising (constant model gas 0% correctly identified and the post model correctly identifies 42.6%. The regression coefficients show that as someone increases toward becoming a Democrat (political party is coded as 1-Republican 2-Independent 3-Democrat), their chances of them not wanting to compromise increases. In fact, this means

that the probability that they do not want compromise is 1.3 times as likely as someone increases one point toward Democrat on the party identification scale. This is nearly the same effect as the MSNBC treatment. If someone is exposed to the MSNBC article they are 1.46 times as likely to not want compromise as compared to USA Today exposure.

In the case of the Republican leader dependent variable, the constant model started out with 69.4% correct identification and grew to 74.1%. A small change in understanding effects but still significant with a Nagelkerke R^2=.286 for the model. Unlike the Obama question and exposure to MSNBC treatment, we do not see any significant effects for the Fox treatment nor the MSNBC treatment. All variation is explained by party identification which has an expected negative relationship with willingness to compromise. Table 5.3 details the coefficients and significance for both models.

Table 5.3: Logistic regression results on post treatment unwillingness to compromise response

	Obama					Republican leaders				
				95% C.I.for EXP(B)					95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
FOXNews Treatment	.107	.541	1.112	.791	1.565	.062	.737	1.064	.740	1.529
MSNBC Treatment	.380	.028	1.462	1.041	2.054	-.005	.977	.995	.686	1.443
Party ID	.286	.000	1.331	1.263	1.403	-.394	.000	.674	.637	.714
Constant	-2.341	.000	.096			.934	.000	2.544		

Though the above showed that MSNBC exposure has significant effect on unwillingness to compromise relative to USA Today exposure with Obama as the dependent variable, that pattern is not replicated with Fox News and Republican leaders. Further, since party ID had significant effects and my hypothesis the effect of slanted exposure is dependent upon partisan predisposition; I next modeled the treatment effects within each political party. Unlike the rest of the models where party ID is treated as an ordinal nine point scale, in order to preserve larger

sample sizes, the below models collapse all Democrats (including leaners), all Republicans and leave Independents as pure.

Each treatment is regarded as a dummy variable and USAToday, the neutral treatment, was left out of the model as the comparison category and "1" meant the respondent was unwillingness to compromise. Further, the political parties each included "leaners" as well as strong and weaker Republicans. None of the models produced any significant treatment effects at the $p<.05$ level. It is not surprising, therefore, that the treatment explained very little variation. The largest cox and snell $r^2=.003$ (Republicans and the Obama compromise as the dependent variable).

In Table 5.4 the results of unwillingness for Obama to compromise are on the left and on the right are the results for unwillingness for Republican leaders to compromise. In all cases the dependent variable is coded such that higher values mean greater support for unwillingness to compromise. As you can see below, the results force me to accept the null hypothesis of no partisan treatment effects. I do not find the expected increase in unwillingness to compromise among Democrats exposed to MSNBC nor among Republicans exposed to Fox News for the Republican leaders dependent variable.

Table 5.4: Logistic regression results on post treatment unwillingness to compromise response with party ID filters

	Republicans: Obama (n=344)					**Republicans: Republican leaders (n=441)**				
				95% C.I.for EXP(B)					95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
FOXNews	.209	.665	1.233	.478	3.182	-.040	.886	.960	.554	1.665
MSNBC	.314	.526	1.368	.519	3.611	.025	.932	1.026	.572	1.838
Constant	-2.565	.000	.077			.817	.000	2.265		
	Democrats: Obama (n=497)					**Democrats: Republican leaders (n=516)**				
				95% C.I.for EXP(B)					95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
FOXNews	.146	.514	1.158	.746	1.796	.143	.758	1.153	.465	2.862
MSNBC	.410	.065	1.507	.975	2.327	.152	.739	1.164	.477	2.838
Constant	.038	.811	1.039			-2.820	.000	.060		
	Independents: Obama (n=96)					**Independents: Republican leaders (n=92)**				
				95% C.I.for EXP(B)					95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
FOXNews	-.254	.654	.776	.256	2.354	.192	.750	1.212	.371	3.952
MSNBC	-.273	.649	.761	.234	2.472	-.134	.837	.875	.245	3.129
Constant	-.916	.028	.400			-1.253	.007	.286		

While the above regression results are interesting, the question remains, if the Fox News treatment didn't have any overall effects in both cases, why was there a significant change on the Republican leaders question overall (Figure 5.3)? This may be due to the already strong points of view held by partisans. The prior knowledge effects that Zaller (1992) discussed – where those with the least amount of knowledge are the most impacted by media - may be impacting the results. As a result, I next looked only at people's admitted prior knowledge of the "Republican position" and "Democrat position" and interacted that with the treatment effects. The knowledge variable was coded as one equaling "a great deal" or "a good amount" of knowledge about the party's position, two means "only some knowledge" and three equaling little or no knowledge. Therefore, as the level of knowledge decreases the values increase. I continued to include party ID in the model since we see in the earlier analysis that Democrats tend know more about Democratic position and Republicans their respective position. The knowledge variable is important for three reasons. First, we would expect to see those with the

least amount of the party's position knowledge to be more tempered by that party's media treatment. For instance, someone with little knowledge about the Democratic position will now know and understand more about that position and therefore be more willing to compromise. On the other end of the spectrum, those who know a lot about the Democratic position and are exposed to MSNBC will have the effect of reinforcing their partisan point of view and decreasing their willingness to compromise.

I would expect there would be a negative relationship between the Fox News and Democratic knowledge interaction variable when the Obama question is the dependent. This negative relationship would signify that the weaker the amount of knowledge of the Democratic position, the greater the unwillingness to compromise when exposed to Fox News. Similarly, I would also expect a negative relationship between the MSNBC and Republican knowledge interaction variable when the Republican leaders question is the dependent. This negative relationship would signify that the weaker the amount of knowledge of the Republican position, the greater the unwillingness to compromise when exposed to liberal media. However, this was not the case.

The Republican leader model has a Cox and Snell r^2 of .205 with a sample size of 1030. The constant only model correctly predicted the result 69.5% of the time, and that increased to 73.8% with the independent variables. The Obama willingness to compromise model was less successful with 13.7% of the variance explained on the final sample of 1017 adults. Table 5.4 details these regression results.

In both cases the party ID variable is significantly related to the dependent compromise variable. In the case of the Obama question, every one point increase closer to Democrat, results in the respondent being 1.3 times as likely to be unwilling to compromise. Similarly, in the Republican leaders model, the closer to Republican the more likely they will support non-

compromise. In neither case do we see any significant treatment effects. It is only in the case of the Republican leaders dependent variable do we see a significant relationship outside of party identification. In this case knowledge about the Republican position is significant at the $p<.10$ level. Prior knowledge of the Republican point of view has negative effects on unwillingness to compromise. Meaning, as knowledge about the Republican position increases, willingness to compromise decreases compared to the USA Today condition. The lack of treatment effects finding is further reinforced in the appendix, detailing similar findings using ANOVA modeling (Tables A3-A5).

Table 5.4: Logistic regression results on post treatment question with interaction effects

	Obama					Republican Leaders				
				95% C.I.for EXP(B)					95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	Lower	Upper
Party ID	**.286**	**.000**	**1.331**	**1.260**	**1.405**	**-.381**	**.000**	**.684**	**.645**	**.724**
FOXNews x Democrat knowledge	-.334	.363	.716	.349	1.470	-.223	.521	.800	.405	1.581
FOXNews x Republican knowledge	-.024	.929	.976	.579	1.646	.281	.400	1.324	.688	2.548
MSNBC x Democrat knowledge	-.165	.659	.848	.407	1.765	.167	.675	1.182	.540	2.585
MSNBC x Republican knowledge	-.040	.881	.961	.571	1.618	.040	.910	1.041	.519	2.087
Democrat knowledge	-.113	.672	.893	.528	1.509	.252	.356	1.287	.753	2.198
Republican knowledge	.061	.736	1.063	.746	1.514	**-.427**	**.088**	**.652**	**.400**	**1.065**
FOX treatment	.575	.237	1.777	.685	4.613	-.021	.967	.980	.372	2.577
MSNBC treatment	.597	.211	1.816	.713	4.622	-.288	.567	.749	.279	2.011
Constant	-2.280	.000	.102			1.145	.003	3.141		

Though the coefficients and their strength are informative, the true value of the logistic regression is in modeling the outcome of different scenarios. Since the knowledge variable was only significant in the Republican leaders model, the predictions in Table 5.5 below are limited to that dependent variable. It is here we can see the impact of knowledge and partisanship.

Table 5.5 details the probability of not wanting Republican leaders to compromise. The variability in the table resides solely with party ID and knowledge of Democratic and Republican positions. Fixed within the chart is exposure to the MSNBC treatment. Since Party ID is significant, you can see below that Republicans have a consistently higher probability of not wanting to compromise compared to Independents and Democrats. The scenarios which produce the highest unwillingness to compromise for both Republicans and Independents occurred where there was “a great deal” or “a good amount” of knowledge about the Republican position but little to no knowledge about the Democratic position. In fact, there is a 79.4% chance Republicans would say either “Republican leaders are not compromising and that is a good thing” or “Republican leaders are compromising and that is a bad thing.” The opposite

occurred among Democrats. In this case, this same educational gap was the most likely to produce a desire for compromise (17.0%).

On the other end of the spectrum, Democrats with a great deal of knowledge about the Democratic position on healthcare and little to no knowledge of the Republican position are more likely to favor compromise from Republican Party leaders (26.4%). Partisans with the most knowledge of their respective party's position and the least knowledge of the opposing party's position are the less willing to compromise.

Table 5.5: Logistic probabilities where Republican leaders is the dependent variable.

MSNBC Treatment Example			
Probability of being unwilling to compromise	Republican	Independent	Democrat
A great deal/good amount of Dem position knowledge			
A great deal/good amount of knowledge of Rep	62.4%	53.2%	43.7%
Only some knowledge of Rep	53.0%	43.5%	34.5%
Little/no knowledge of Rep	43.4%	34.4%	26.4%
Some Dem position knowledge			
A great deal/good amount of knowledge of Rep	71.7%	63.3%	54.1%
Only some knowledge of Rep	63.2%	54.0%	44.5%
Little/no knowledge of Rep	53.8%	44.3%	35.3%
Little/no Dem position knowledge			
A great deal/good amount of knowledge of Rep	79.4%	72.4%	17.0%
Only some knowledge of Rep	72.3%	64.1%	21.4%
Little/no knowledge of Rep	63.9%	54.8%	26.0%

In looking at the impact of skewed knowledge by party ID, I find interesting effects on compromise. More extreme attitudes are likely to occur when there is unequal distribution between the knowledge of both parties, scenarios where there is a high level of knowledge of one party's position but a low level of knowledge in the other. It is in fact when the distribution of knowledge between the parties is equal, there is more moderate positions taken in encouraging compromise. The percent likelihood to support non compromise among these equally distributed groups is almost exactly the same regardless of the level of information.

Table 5.6: Average compromise prediction across treatments with Republican leaders as DV

Average Prediction	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT	DEMOCRAT
Unequal Knowledge:			
Hi D, Low R	43.4%	34.4%	26.4%
Low D, Hi R	**79.4%**	**72.4%**	**17.0%**
Equal Knowledge:			
Hi D, Hi R	62.4%	53.2%	43.7%
Low D, Low R	63.9%	54.8%	26.0%
Some D, Some R	63.2%	54.0%	44.5%

The degree to which this compromise extremism is something to worry about depends on the distribution of this knowledge level. Looking at the percent of the sample who have equal distribution of knowledge versus unequal distribution, we see 9.1% percent of the respondent population falling into the unequal grouping. This signifies that the extreme inequality between knowledge is still fringe. When you add in the other combinations of unequal distribution, it increases to 23%. But the other combination of unequal were still more moderate in their compromise predispositions (ranging from a low of 21.4% - Democrats with low Democratic knowledge and some Republican position knowledge – to a high of 72.3% - Republicans with low Democratic but some Republican knowledge) they still have the makings for more extreme attitudes. The vast majority of respondents reside in the equal knowledge and more moderate point of view categories.

Table 5.7: Percent of respondents within these knowledge categories

Percent of total sample	REPUBLICAN	INDEPENDENT	DEMOCRAT
Unequal Knowledge:			
Hi D, Low R	0.3%	2.1%	4.7%
Low D, Hi R	1.4%	0.4%	0.1%
Equal Knowledge:			
Hi D, Hi R	**13.2%**	**26.0%**	**21.4%**
Low D, Low R	1.2%	2.4%	2.3%
Some D, Some R	2.4%	4.1%	4.0%
All other combinations:	3.5%	6.0%	4.6%

5.4 Conclusion

I tested the specific hypothesis: *Exposure to congruent partisan media will lead to less willingness to compromise with the opposing party. Exposure to neutral media or to partisan media from the other side will not affect willingness to compromise* but found no support for previous work that like-minded media polarizes attitudes (Levendusky, 2013). Though it was true that neutral media and exposure to partisan charged media in the opposing direction had no effect on willingness to compromise with the opposing party on healthcare, none of the media had any significant affect when it came to partisans.

This chapter sought to explore under what conditions partisan media can affect people's willingness to compromise with the other party. Previous chapters noted that partisans are more likely to opt-into like-minded media exposure and while I hypothesized that partisans would be the most affected by like-minded and biased media exposure, I did not see any post treatment affects with this population. This lack of a change may be because the healthcare subject is so politically charged to begin with. As the descriptive statistics noted, partisans already had strong beliefs when it came to the value of compromise. Having been exposed to one additional article, or one contrary article, was unlikely to change these established beliefs. A better experiment may have been to address a less exposed topic or something more newly debated.

What I did find, however, was that people without a lot of prior knowledge on the opposing party's position (but a great amount knowledge about their own) are particularly likely to support non-compromise between the parties. It is among both parties that we see high likelihood to choose not to compromise with the opposing side under these conditions. When there is more equal knowledge of the opposing position we see far more moderating effects. For instance, having some knowledge of the Republican's position and some knowledge

of the Democrats position results in a 54% probability of supporting Republican leaders not to compromise. Similarly, there is the same level of likelihood if they have “a great deal” or “a good amount” of knowledge of both parties’ positions. It would seem that having knowledge of both sides of an argument produces more moderate tones on compromise. It is not necessarily a fringe occurrence: nine percent of the sample had extreme unequal distribution and another 14% had some other combination of unequal knowledge.

One must next question how single party position knowledge occurs. Under what scenarios do partisans know a lot about their party’s point of view but very little about the oppositional point of view? While it could be unrelated to news media exposure, the larger percentages make that assumption seem unlikely. Therefore, while I may not have found any direct effects to partisan media exposure, I may have uncovered indirect effects, which is the level of knowledge between the different parties’ positions. Where there is parity of knowledge between both party positions, perhaps resulting from neutral or cross cutting exposure, there is moderation in temperament towards compromise. When the level of knowledge between one party is greater than the other, attitudes toward compromise become more extreme. That said, as the analysis has proven out, most are initially unaffected by a single exposure to partisan media.

Further, as previous chapters have pointed out, partisans are the most likely to selectively choose partisan only media. Since these are smaller parts of the population, many have argued that media polarization effects are confined to extremists and of less concern normatively (LaCour, 2013; Arceneaux and Johnston, 2012) than many others have suggested (Levendusky, 2013; Druckman, Peterson and Slothus, 2013). Since partisans are also more likely to be politically active (Lawrence, Sides and Farrell, 2010), this small population may still have larger consequences. If the proverbial squeaky wheel does get greased, and this wheel seems

to be influenced by unequal partisan knowledge levels, media effects may have far greater impact than those examined here.

5.5 Appendix

Detailed summary of the experiment:

Respondents were recruited to take part in a survey via SurveyMonkey's online panel. This survey was conducted from Feb 3-6, 2014. Though the full sample included 1500 adults, a typo in one of the dependent variables required me to discard the responses from 308 adults, making the final sample n=1192). Previous chapters found that that MSNBC was universally seen as liberal, FoxNews was universally seen as conservative and USAToday achieved neutral status by both parties. The neutral treatment contained arguments for both sides while the partisan treatment exposed only the corresponding argument relayed through actual media coverage. No addition information was exposed in the neutral treatment and each treatment posed positions on the same - referred only to economic impact. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of these three treatments. Registered voter status and demographics were taken from the panel recruitment and not asked as part of this survey.

Treatments:

Obamacare's Rollout Provokes Debate about Jobs

by Eric Lawrence, December 18, 2013

WASHINGTON—With the rollout of the Affordable Care Act underway, an increasingly important question is how much this legislation, also commonly called Obamacare, will impact not only health care but the economy. The unemployment rate remains well above its historical average, and millions of Americans have been out of work for months. Will the Affordable Care Act improve this situation, make it worse, or have little effect either way?

Economists' views on this issue are mixed. In a recent poll, just over half of economists said that businesses are putting off hiring in light of health care reform, which stipulates that employers with 50 or more full-time workers must provide affordable health insurance to their employees starting in 2015. And there have been news stories of small business owners cutting employee hours back to part time because of health care reform.

Opponents of the bill also point to a report by the Congressional Budget Office. This report estimated the law would "reduce the amount of labor used in the economy" by about 800,000 jobs. Some low-wage jobs would be eliminated, and the rest of the decrease would come from workers who choose to retire earlier or work part time because they have alternative means for healthcare. These jobs may or may not be replaced.

But there is reason to believe that health care reform has not limited hiring. As of 2010, the vast majority of small businesses (97%) had fewer than 50 full-time employees, according to the U.S. Census. This could potentially mean that Obamacare's employer mandate applies only to 3% of America's small businesses. Of companies with more than 50 workers, 96% already offer health plans, government data shows. One of the largest surveys of private employers also shows that small businesses are still hiring.

Supporters of the bill also claim it will slow the growth of health care costs. They point to work by two economists, David Cutler of Harvard and Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund, have calculated that over the first ten years total spending on health care will be half a trillion dollars lower than under the status quo. This will save employers money that they can then invest in their businesses, possibly leading to more hiring.

Obamacare's Rollout Threatening Jobs
by Eric Lawrence, December 18, 2013

WASHINGTON—The rollout of Obamacare has been a disaster, but the biggest disaster may be yet to come. An increasingly important question is how much Obamacare will impact not only health care but the economy. The unemployment rate remains well above its historical average, and millions of Americans have been out of work for months. Obamacare is likely to make this situation even worse.

Economists are already concerned about Obamacare's effect on hiring. In a recent poll, a solid majority said that businesses are putting off hiring in light of health care reform, which stipulates that employers with 50 or more full-time workers must provide affordable health insurance to their employees starting in 2015. And there have been news stories of small business owners cutting employee hours back to part time because of health care reform. One of the largest surveys of private employers shows that small businesses are still hiring, but that won't last for long.

Obamacare's supporters like to claim that the vast majority of small businesses (97%) had fewer than 50 full-time employees. But even 3% of America's small businesses is far too many to pay the cost of Obamacare.

Obamacare's supporters also like to claim most companies with more than 50 workers already offer health plans. They even cite a study by two economists, David Cutler of Harvard and Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund, who claim that over the first ten years total spending on health care will be half a trillion dollars lower and therefore employers will save money that they can then invest in their businesses, leading to more hiring.

This is wishful thinking at its best. We'll see how many employers can afford to offer those plans after Obamacare's true costs are known. Employers will end up with less money that they can invest in their businesses and less money to hire more workers.

Don't believe this? Congress's own research agrees. A report from the Congressional Budget Office that estimated the law would "reduce the amount of labor used in the economy" by about 800,000 jobs. Some low-wage jobs would be eliminated, and the rest of the decrease would come from workers who choose to retire earlier or work part time because they have alternative means for healthcare. These jobs won't be replaced.

And America can't afford that.

Obamacare's Rollout Creating Jobs

by Eric Lawrence, December 18, 2013

WASHINGTON—The rollout of Obamcare is picking up steam, and its biggest benefits are yet to come. An increasingly important question is how much Obamacare will impact not only health care the economy. The unemployment rate remains well above its historical average, and millions of Americans have been out of work for months. Fortunately, Obamacare is likely to make this situation far better.

Economists are becoming more and more optimistic. In a recent poll, nearly half of economists said that businesses were not putting off hiring in light of health care reform, which stipulates that employers with 50 or more full-time workers must provide affordable health insurance to their employees starting in 2015. There have been only a few news stories of small business owners cutting employee hours back to part time because of health care reform, although opponents routinely exaggerate the number of these stories.

In fact, vast majority of small businesses (97%) had fewer than 50 full-time employees, according to the U.S. Census. That means Obamacare's employer mandate applies only to 3% of America's small businesses—a fact that opponents routinely ignore. Of companies with more than 50 workers, 96% already offer health plans, government data shows.

Opponents of the bill like to point to a report by the Congressional Budget Office. This report estimated the law would "reduce the amount of labor used in the economy" by about 800,000 jobs. But opponents are being deliberately misleading. The jobs that would be eliminated are low-wage jobs that few workers even want. And most of the decrease would come from workers who simply choose to retire earlier or work part time because they have alternative means for healthcare. These jobs will be replaced. Indeed, one of the largest surveys of private employers also shows that small businesses are still hiring.

There's even more reason for optimism. Obamacare is already slowing the growth of health care costs. Two economists, David Cutler of Harvard and Karen Davis, president of the Commonwealth Fund, have calculated that over the first ten years total spending on health care will be half a trillion dollars lower than under the status quo. This will save employers money that they can then invest in their businesses, leading to more hiring.

And that's exactly what America needs.

Table A.1: Demographic breakdown of each treatment group

	All	USA Today	Fox News	MSNBC
Sample size	*1192*	*375*	*406*	*411*
Gender				
Male	52	52	53	51
Female	48	48	47	49
Age				
18-29	14	15	13	13
30-44	22	24	20	24
45-60	28	26	30	28
> 60	36	35	37	36
Income				
$0 - $24,999	11	10	14	9
$25,000 - $49,999	15	16	13	16
$50,000 - $99,999	32	34	34	26
$100,000 - $149,999	17	18	16	17
$150,000+	26	22	23	32
Education				
Less than high school degree	1	1	0	0
High school degree	8	8	9	7
Some college	26	29	25	25
Associate or bachelor degree	36	36	37	36
Graduate degree	29	26	29	31
Ethnicity/Race				
Hispanic	5	6	4	4
White	86	88	85	87
Black	3	3	3	2
Asian/Other	2	2	3	2
Party ID				
Strong Republican	4	4	4	4
Republican	12	12	13	10
Weak Republican	3	2	3	3
Independent lean Republican	11	13	12	10
Independent	10	10	11	10
Independent lean Democrat	15	15	14	15
Weak Democrat	5	5	5	5
Democrat	14	15	10	16
Strong Democrat	14	11	17	13
Other	13	13	11	13

Table A.2: Number of activities by party ID.

	Mean
Strong Republican	2.71
Republican	2.86
Weak Republican	3.15
Independent lean Republican	3.79
Independent	3.26
Independent lean Democrat	3.82
Weak Democrat	2.71
Democrat	3.52
Strong Democrat	4.37
Other	2.52

I subtract the pre-test results from the post-test results to get a gauge in attitude extremity under the different treatments. I then run an ANOVA against this change to determine if treatment was a significant factor in the change in compromise opinions. The dependent variable is a three value variable (-1,0,1). Negative one means there was a switch to a less willingness to compromise. Zero means no change and positive one means they are more likely to compromise. More specifically, in the case of Obama, negative one signifies that in the pretest response was either "President Obama is not compromising and that is a good thing" or "President Obama is compromising and that is a bad thing" and in the post test they felt that "Obama is compromising and that is a good thing" or "Obama is not compromising and that is a bad thing." This posttest and pretest subtraction was replicated with the Republican leaders question. Overall, the change was small. Only 3% switched toward compromise for the Obama question and 3% for the Republican leader question. On the reverse, 7% in both cases switched toward an unwillingness to compromise. The rest saw no change.

As Table 5.3 notes, there are no significant treatment effects when looking at the overall audience for both the Obama question and the Republican leader question. Specifically, there is no statistically significant difference between the group means of USAToday, MSNBC or FoxNews exposure. We can see that the significance level for the Obama change is $p = .372$, which is well above $p<0.05$ level. Therefore, there is no a statistically significant difference in the mean change in willingness to compromise between the different exposures.

Table A.3: Change in willingness to compromise as DV between treatment groups

		df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ObamaChange	Between Groups	2	.103	.988	.372
	Within Groups	1189	.104		
	Total	1191			
RepubChange	Between Groups	2	.154	1.654	.192
	Within Groups	1189	.093		
	Total	1191			

While this overall finding is interesting from the broad effects, as we know from previous chapters, the preconditions of the audience affect what they are likely exposed to

overall. Therefore, the following analysis looks at the effects of like-minded, opposite party and neutral conditions have on Democrats versus Republicans. To know if like-minded media or oppositional media have significant effects, I, again using ANOVA, compare them to the neutral (or control) condition results within the different parties. The hypothesis would predict a significant difference in the Obama change among Democrats and a significant difference in the Republican change in the compromise variable. As Table 5.4 shows there was no significant difference in the impact the different treatment categories have on the change among Democrats only or Republicans only in either question. I, therefore, have to reject the hypothesis that exposure to partisan charged media in the same direction will lead to less willingness to compromise with the opposing party on healthcare. We see no significant difference with either party, with either dependent variable, between the different groups based on the treatment they received.

Table A.4: Democrats and change in willingness to compromise.

Democrats only	**n**	**F**	**Sig.**
ObamaChange	383	.125	.882
RepubChange	383	1.225	.295
Republicans only			
ObamaChange	227	.256	.774
RepubChange	227	1.998	.138

Table A.5: Obama compromising Tukey analysis

		Mean Difference	Sig.
USA Today Article	FOX News Article	-.12143	.089
	MSNBC Article	-.09286	.204
FOX News Article	USA Today Article	.12143	.089
	MSNBC Article	.02857	.864

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This dissertation began with the assertion that people seek out and engage with partisan media more so than neutral media and because of this slanted media usage, people will be less supportive of compromise between the opposing parties. To explore this theory, I set out to discover whether the three underlying premises of this argument were true. First, do people self-select into media which match their political point of view? Second, when the bias of information is clearly set forth, does engagement increase (thereby giving media businesses the incentive to provide more of it)? And, lastly, does exposure to biased information have a negative impact on the desire for compromise among oppositional party leaders? Each of the preceding chapters focused on at least one of these questions.

Chapter Three sought to answer the first question by reviewing patterns of news media consumption. I found that not only do partisans tend to gravitate toward the same media but people perceive a bias in these media and it doesn't curtail their usage. Regression analysis showed that the hostile media phenomenon exists less at the extremes – those media seen as "very liberal" or "very conservative" - but, instead in the designations of simply conservative or liberal. Both partisans tend to see the extremes the same way. The phenomena, I find, only exists in the differing designation of what is a neutral source, where one party saw it as neutral and the other party saw it as favoring the opposition. Interestingly, Republicans were far more likely to see a liberal bias than Democrats were to see a conservative one.

Regardless of the perception of bias, it doesn't mitigate usage. I found in this chapter that biased media actually get the benefit of usage among its partisans, with Democrats more likely to use liberal media and Republicans more likely to use conservative media than the opposing side. I showed that partisanship is a contributing factor to biased media usage. Further, partisanship is a bigger predictor of program usage than channel or source usage, as it

is significantly associated with usage of the 17 of the 19 (90%) programs compared to only eight of the 16 (50%) sources measured. This reinforces the need for studies to focus not only on the channel and source level but on programs and, likely, the new personalities people follow.

Overall, self-selection is limited to strong partisans, with most people following a neutral to somewhat slanted media consumption pattern. I found that that 24% of respondents consume only liberal media and 3% consume only conservative sources but none consume only neutral on a weekly basis. The vast majority use a combination of sources. The greater prevalence of exclusively liberal media consumption is likely a function of the sheer number of sources seen as liberal (22) as compared to conservative (8) or neutral (5) outlets, and not a function of any marked preference for biased information among Democrats as opposed to Republicans. That said, this pattern of liberal only media consumption was positively associated with Democratic partisanship, even when controlling for respondent demographics.

These results were based on a survey, which may not be the most accurate mode for measuring media usage. For example, partisans may over-report exposure to partisan news, thereby exacerbating the patterns I find. More research is needed in the area of selective news exposure, its impact on political discourse and voting, and whether it has grown over time. Even if media companies have changed paths, users may not have altered their media consumption habits at the same pace. The question is whether self-selection will become more prevalent as people adapt to media proliferation and explore new (and potentially partisan) information sources.

Building off this evidence of self-selection, Chapter Four explored whether overt bias can intensify self-selection. In other words, do people knowingly opt-in to biased media? Further, Chapter Four explored how overt bias affected user engagement. If engagement

increases then it stands to reason there are business and economic incentives (as discussed in Chapter One) for media companies to deliver biased information.

I investigated a natural experiment that occurred on a major news site. In this experiment, opinion authors, who previously had no ideology attached to their writing, were given either a "left-leaning" or "right-leaning" label, and like-minded authors were placed onto the same page. The analysis focused on the impact of this labeling and navigation change.

First, overall engagement was positively impacted. People engaged with more authors per visit when the bias was obvious than when it was not. There were fewer single author visits over in the six months after the change, a significant reduction. Second, engagement went up within single ideology readership patterns. Both "left then left" readership went up and "right then right" readership went up when the content was labeled. That said, some cross cutting behavior increased as well. Taken together, in the post-labeling environment there was a decrease in right only readership, an increase in left only and an increase in both left and right. Overall, there was evidence that reporting from a political point of view is a valid and effective means of engaging people to read more.

What this chapter lacked was information about the political predispositions of readers. I could only assume that Democrats were reading left-leaning authors and Republicans were reading right-leaning authors. In fact, this may not be the case. In my conclusion to that chapter I posit that the increase in cross cutting and decrease in right only behavior may be due to partisan predispositions. Future work should marry user knowledge with behavior. Now that many newspapers have gone to paid models on their sites and require log-ins for viewing, behavior isn't anonymized and theoretically one can now capture both pieces of data at once.

That said, and even with this limitation, this work significantly contributes to our current understanding by tracking actual behaviorial impacts from a change in partisan labeling. I can

conclude and add to previous work that engagement goes up overall when news is overt in its political point of view. This means there are, in fact, benefits to presenting news with clear a point of view. For any organization trying to get an edge against their competition and grow a loyal audience, presenting news from a single point of view is one way of doing so. There is evidence here, especially combined with the partisan effects in media choice seen in Chapter Three, that such a path will lead to higher audience engagement.

The third part of this dissertation, Chapter Five, focused on the impact and effect of the partisan media consumption. It specifically sought to answer: does exposure to biased information have a negative impact on the desire for party leaders to compromise? This chapter built on the previous by utilizing the bias perceptions uncovered in Chapter Three to expose people randomly to one sided, partisan media versus neutral media. I utilized an online, survey-based, experiment and measured the pre-post impact of conservatively slanted media, liberally slanted news and neutral information's effect on compromise. Much work has been done on partisan media effects on trust, tolerance, voter turnout, and even political activism but there remains limited understanding on its impact on support for compromise or, more importantly, support for intransigence by party leaders.

Previous chapters found that partisans are more likely to opt-into like-minded media exposure and while I hypothesized that partisans would be the most affected by like-minded and biased media exposure, I did not see any post treatment effects. While partisanship did matter to one's willingness to support compromise, exposure to partisan media did not exacerbate partisanship's apparent effect. Though I did not find evidence that exposure to the congruent news treatments on health care reform had any impact on willingness to compromise, what I did discover was if a knowledge gap between the two party's positions exists, it will have an impact.

Respondents who knew a lot about the one party's position on healthcare reform but little to none about the other side's position are more likely to oppose compromise between the parties. In cases of equal distribution of knowledge between the two parties, and regardless of the amount of information (whether they knew a lot about both or a little about both), the result is more moderate positions on compromise (nearly a 50/50 split on unwilling and willing to compromise). Again, the vast majority fell into the equal distributed scenarios.

While all chapters found selective behavior, extreme attitudes and knowledge gaps to be more prevalent among a smaller population – approximately occurring in one in ten adults – its occurrence can be seen is as much as one in four adults. The question remains whether this minority behavior is growing, stagnant or reversing. How these numbers change over time given the diversity of choice ever increasing is an important next step in the study of media effects.

As I posit in Chapter Five, given the fact that a partisan echo chamber and selective behavior exists to some degree, as evidenced in Chapters Three and Four, it is unlikely that this knowledge gap isn't at least somewhat related to partisan media consumption. Therefore, while I was not able to uncover any direct effects through my experiment, the knowledge gap and its impact on inflexible behavior does suggest some indirect effects. Where there is parity of knowledge between both party positions, perhaps resulting from neutral or cross cutting exposure, there is more support of compromise. Future research should explore this phenomenon in more detail, aiming at the roots of equal versus disparate information levels.

6.1. Impact:

This study helps illuminate the consumption of partisan media and its potential effects on the desire for compromise between parties. It illustrates that perceptions of bias exist and that their existence encourages engagement with partisan media compared to cross-cutting media exposure. This research demonstrated that by exposing individuals to the political leaning

of the content it inspired the user to read more. Potentially, the overtness of the label acts as an heuristic, which sends ideological signals to the reader that they are likely to enjoy this content more because they agree with its partisan perspective.

While my research presents evidence that echo-chamber behavior exists, it certainly does not solve the debate about its impact. This research reinforced that individuals who hold similar partisan beliefs flock toward the same news options. It also found that there is general agreement on the ideological slant of different programs. I found no evidence of conservatives thinking an outlet is liberal and liberals thinking the same outlet is conservative. There was agreement in the direction of the bias, when one was perceived. Partisan differences only arose when one party believe an outlet was neutral while the other believed it was slanted in the opposing party's ideological direction. This, however, largely occurred among Republicans. While this work did advance our understanding of whether these media are actually ideologically biased or not, the distinctiveness of the audience – particularly at the program level –certainly reinforces the notion that the general public may perceive an ideological bias and choose programs accordingly. Though previous work has identified this gap in neutral sources being perceived as oppositional as the hostile media phenomenon, I find in this that this only occurs in the more mainstream media, sources which have followed the more traditional news model –such as NBC, CBS, and their online counterparts. Both Democrats and Republicans actually agree that quite a few sources are biased and biased in the same direction. Forty percent demonstrated agreement from both parties on the ideological nature of the news source.

It remains uncertain whether partisan news media causes ideological polarization or if polarization existed and media simply reinforces it. The impact of that reinforcement is also unclear. I found no evidence of that partisan news stories about the Affordable Care Act

affected people's willingness to compromise. However, I did uncover a knowledge gap and its impact on desire for compromise across party lines. What remains uncertain is where that knowledge gap is rooted and if it is a growing or shrinking phenomena.

Future work should look at the roots of information dissemination, specifically the longitudinal nature of information gathering and opinion formation and the role this new media environment is playing within it. Though I certainly to do not posit that media is the only outlet by which people receive political information, selective news consumption may be impacting this knowledge gap which could further impact the desire for compromise. Furthermore, the presentation of news may also matter, although I did not explore it in this research. For example, it may matter how much partisan sources admonish the opposing side versus advocate for their own.

It should be noted; Mutz and Martin (2001) found that personal networks were less likely to be cross-cutting and that media actually served as a conduit for differing viewpoints. These cross-cutting views may have increased information about both sides but it also had the negative impact of increasing ambivalence and weakening political participation. What may be worth exploring are the benefits of neutral media versus cross-cutting consumption from both sides. My research did show that some partisans are willing to consume media from both sides of the ideological spectrum. How this tendency versus neutral media consumption impacts participation and compromise needs further exploration, particularly if more media pursue partisan reporting. Furthermore, I did not explore the role social media plays. While it can be argued that serendipity and discovery of interesting content has never been easier, the influence of your personal network on news consumption may be stronger. Future work should determine if social networks contribute to stronger partisan polarization and increase the prevalence of selective consumption or not.

As Bennet and Iyengar (2008) point out, fifty years ago Americans depended primarily on evening network broadcasts by ABC, CBS, and NBC for information regarding politics and public affairs. “The norms of journalism meant that no matter which network voters tuned in to, they encountered the same set of news reports, according balanced attention to parties, candidates, or points of view…. accordingly, it made little difference where voters got their news” (2008: 11). The development of cable news and the Internet has led to a proliferation of news choices and an endless information supply from all over the world for any interested consumer. Individuals now have an unparalleled ability to consume news that matches their political preferences and interests. This could be seen as a positive development for society, but it can also result in a lack of a shared understanding of issues. While this dissertation explored how this lack of understanding can impact willingness to compromise, future work should explore how this gap in understanding impacts deliberation and agenda setting.

What does waning neutral source dominance have on accountability? From a Democratic point of view, this selective exposure can have unfortunate implications on both media and government accountability. If politicians can continually dismiss opposing points of view or alternative news reports as biased and misleading, accountability is deterred. How does one know what to believe? This used to be the role of media and the “fourth estate” mandate it chose to uphold. If the media spin information to suit the consumer then the likelihood of that individual receiving the full story is also undermined. How does this impact journalism and their fact-finding accountability? How does it impact the promulgation of misinformation? Without a shared understanding of unbiased facts – the bedrock of debate and deliberation – understanding and compromise become more difficult to achieve.

6.2 Contribution:

To summarize, I add to past research and understanding of the relationship of media bias and selective behavior and their impact in the following ways. First, independent of the actual news content, news outlets have ideological reputations but this does not limit their audience. I first showed that there is a perception that sources are biased- looking at it at the program, website and channel level-and that ideologues tend to consume national politics news sources that share their own political point of view. I also determined that overt partisan labeling of articles impacts people's readership and engagement with that news for the better. This was shown in both a survey and a natural experiment. I found that people not only accept bias but engagement with the source increases in cases where there is a bias. Last, I sought to prove that exposure to ideologically slanted media would result in an unsympathetic audience to oppositional points of view and would result in a decrease in the desire for compromise across party leadership. Though this was not directly proven, I uncovered the relationship between unequal partisan knowledge distribution and political intransigence. This finding reinforces the normative concerns of a lack of neutral or cross cutting media exposure may lead to decreased shared understanding and an unwillingness to compromise.

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