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Media Preferences, Political Knowledge and Attentiveness in the 2016 US Presidential Campaign

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Abstract

Scholars have argued the transition from a broadcast environment to a cable and internet landscape has significantly altered our political sphere. While some scholars have argued expanded media choice has brought about fragmentation and increasing partisan news consumption, other scholars have focused on the potential for more media options to encourage individuals to opt out of consuming public affairs programming in favor of entertainment-based content, thus leading to political knowledge declines for those transitioning away from news. The following study applies both theoretical approaches to the 2016 US Presidential campaign. A media environment whereby individuals may be leaving news in favor of entertainment content encourages non-traditional candidates with the ability to exploit celebrity status (i.e., Donald Trump) in courting more politically disinterested, entertainment-centric voters. At the same time, the divisive campaign style of Trump coupled with his disdain for news media may encourage more fervent partisan news consumption. Analyses of 2016 ANES data reveal, consistent with expectations, significantly different news and entertainment preferences among supporters of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump . While supporters of both candidates engage in partisan news viewing, the entertainment preferences of Trump supporters are shown to be associated with decreased public affairs knowledge and political attentiveness. Study results and implications are discussed.

Keywords: Political communication; News; Entertainment; Selective exposure; Political knowledge

Introduction

From the Payne Fund Studies of the 1920s [1] and their focus on the effects of motion pictures on children to Marshall McLuhan's [2] famous admonition, "the medium is the message," scholars and pundits have long recognized the importance of understanding how advancements in media influence the mass communication process and ultimately alter discourse and society. The last three decades in particular have given rise to diverse perspectives of how increasing media options in the form of expanded television offerings and the internet influence media consumption and society [3-8].

Within the larger discussion of the effects of "newer" forms of media on the democratic process, multiple streams of research have emerged. A prominent stream of research steeped in cognitive dissonance theory and selective exposure [9,10] focuses on the potential for increased media options for news and public affairs content to permit consumers to select more ideologically congruent news sources [4,11,12]. Some scholars and pundits within this tradition argue the increased ability to self-select ideologically congruent news programming potentially fosters greater polarization and less informed decision making among other notable effects [8,13].

At the same time, some academics, though they may acknowledge partisan-based news consumption, alternatively focus on the ability of increased media options to permit consumers to effectively opt out of political programming, preferring instead to satisfy other media interests [6,14]. The present study draws on both theoretical perspectives through an examination of the recent 2016 presidential campaign and election.

In Post-Broadcast Democracy, Prior [6] argues the transition from a "low-choice" broadcast television environment to a "high-choice" cable and internet environment has significantly altered our political sphere, as many individuals have increasingly opted out of consuming

public affairs programming. This development, Prior argues, has been associated with a marked decline in public affairs knowledge, especially among lower-educated segments of society.

In such a diverse media environment where increasing numbers of individuals are tuning out politics in favor of entertainment content, political candidates and campaigns become incentivized to incorporate more stylistic messaging. Indeed, such an environment would seem to encourage non-traditional candidates with the ability to exploit their celebrity status, in essence a post-broadcast candidate. As a product in many ways of our modern media environment, the candidacy of Donald Trump thus provides a unique opportunity to examine whether a celebrity-based, post-broadcast candidate appeals to entertainment driven media consumers and, if so, whether consumers of entertainment programming are associated with declining political knowledge.

Simultaneously, the divisiveness with which Trump campaigned, especially his disdain for members of the news media and news outlets [15,16], offers an opportunity to explore the possible presence of ideological news consumption and its relationship with political knowledge. To that end, this study examines the media preferences of both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump supporters on dimensions of both entertainment and news consumption consistent with both research traditions.

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Literature Review

Expanded news options and selective exposure

New developments in media technology inevitably give rise to discussion of the potential consequences novel forms of media may have on society. Widespread adoption of newer forms of media over the last 30 years (e.g., cable television, internet) has fostered a spirited debate as to their effects on society, and in particular our political process. Some academics and pundits focus on newer media's capabilities in fostering a robust, deliberative democracy [3].

At the same time, others express growing concern over the potential for increased media options to promote greater ideological fragmentation and subsequent polarization [5,8,17,18]. Those advancing this perspective have fostered renewed interest in cognitive dissonance theory and selective exposure, the view that we tend to avoid disagreeable information, as it causes dissonance, and thus seek out congruent information sources that reaffirm our beliefs [9,10,19,20]. Indeed, a growing body of scholarship suggests news viewers in a high-choice media environment increasingly select ideologically consonant programming [4,21-23]. The tendency for news consumers to increasingly opt for ideologically consonant content (and perceive incongruent sources as biased) continues to be borne out over time through experimental research [11,13] as well as public opinion polling [24-26].

Debate exists, however, as to the potential consequences of news fragmentation and partisan news exposure. Left unchecked, Sunstein [8,18] argues increased fragmentation and consumption along ideological lines has marked ramifications for democracy. Sunstein notes fragmentation inherently results in exposure to less diverse political information, which limits informed decision-making, and ultimately compromises freedom, as freedom requires sufficient discrepant information to form one's beliefs and preferences. The work of Stroud [7], however, suggests the impact of ideological consonant news consumption isn't certain and may not be as dire as Sunstein [8,18] posits. Although Stroud [7] recognizes potential polarization associated with partisan news consumption [13], her research also suggests consuming consonant news appears to favorably influence political participation and solidify candidate preference.

As a whole, the literature on selective exposure to partisan news sources paints a mixed picture. While scholars [4,17] and pollsters [25,26] alike find consistent evidence of the phenomenon occurring, debate nonetheless exists as to its potential consequences. What seems clear given the divisive tenor of the 2016 US Presidential campaign, one would expect to observe the continued presence of partisan news sorting among supporters of the major parties, particularly as candidate Trump was openly hostile to some news organizations and reporters on multiple occasions, particularly those he deemed unfriendly to his candidacy. From referring to some reporters as "the lowest form of humanity" and opining he was running against the "crooked media" [27] to routinely labeling some media members as "dishonest" and "not good people" [15], it is reasonable to conclude such rhetoric may help foster continued partisan news consumption. Consistent with such rhetoric and in keeping with research suggesting the association between partisan news consumption and polarization, it is likewise reasonable to conclude partisan news consumption will be strongest among more fervent supporters of each candidate. Accordingly, the first two hypotheses for examination propose:

H1: News preferences of candidate supporters will reveal partisan selective exposure.

H2: Partisan news preferences will be more pronounced among stronger supporters of the candidates.

Beyond the divisive rhetoric aimed at media and others, however, the emergence of Trump as a viable candidate in the 2016 campaign gives rise to questions about the association between Trump and his supporters, particularly as he has long cultivated an image as a celebrity at a time scholars have argued media consumers have been increasingly turning away from political programming in favor of entertainment-oriented content.

High-choice offerings and the entertainment consumer

Indeed, just as scholars have voiced concern over the potential for expanded media choice to promote increased ideological fragmentation, others have posited the possibility of interest-based fragmentation along other dimensions [6,11,28,29]. Prior [6], for example, has argued increased media offerings permit viewers to opt out of political programming, preferring instead to satisfy other preferences, frequently entertainment interests.

Comparing the "low-choice" broadcast era with our modern "high-choice" media environment, Prior [6] finds that broadcast television via nightly news fostered learning, both directly and indirectly, among lower educated segments of society. With few media options, the captive nature of the broadcast era promoted political learning while simultaneously mitigating partisan aspects of elections. "Television made it easier to learn about politics for less educated Americans…. Television changed the composition of the voting public by increasing the proportion of less educated voters" [6]. This compositional change brought with it a notable decline in partisanship in elections, as greater numbers of less politically knowledgeable, and therefore less partisan, voters participated in the political process. In sum, broadcast television, through television news, produced profound political effects by informing and enfranchising less educated, less partisan voters [6].

The transition to an expanded media environment, however, reversed this effect. Prior [6] finds evidence of marked fragmentation based on consumer preferences between news and entertainment. While the transition away from broadcast to cable television provided the opportunity for many captive news viewers to switch to entertainment programming, expanded offerings simultaneously allowed news connoisseurs to watch far more news. As a result, Prior [6] argues the political knowledge gap, shrinking in the broadcast era, is expanding in the cable and internet era – a development that has significant implications for political behavior. "An avid news-seeker becomes almost twice as likely to go to the polls as a devoted entertainment fan when both have access to these two media".

Prior's [6] analyses demonstrate, however, that cable television and the internet do not affect everyone equally. "Though political information is abundant and more readily available than ever before, political knowledge has decreased for a substantial portion of the electorate….Those who prefer entertainment and have access to new media display the lowest levels of political knowledge and turnout".

"A widening knowledge gap brought about as news junkies consume more news while entertainment fans increasingly turn away from public affairs programming has marked ramifications for the democratic process. Such an environment, however, potentially incentivizes politicians and candidates with the ability to garner the interest and attention of entertainment-centric consumers. Put differently, a post-broadcast media environment encourages a candidate with the requisite skills to exploit such a media environment – enter

Donald Trump. With a background steeped in high-profile media coverage, salesmanship and reality television, Trump's skillset seems remarkably well-suited to appeal to relatively politically disinterested entertainment-focused media consumers – the very type of potential voter fleeing political affairs programming. As Trump himself argued throughout the campaign, he draws media coverage and ratings [30,31] – even going so far as to brag about his past ratings on The Apprentice at the National Prayer breakfast following his inauguration [32]."

Given his background, Trump provides a unique opportunity to explore the ability of a celebrity candidate to appeal to politically disinterested entertainment-centric media consumers. As Trump is an unorthodox presidential candidate with substantial name recognition cultivated, in part, through years as the star of reality television series (i.e., The Apprentice and The Celebrity Apprentice), one would expect Trump supporters to prefer entertainment programming, especially reality television and similar procedural content, as opposed to political-based entertainment content (e.g., political satire).

Additionally, as Prior [6] argues preferences for entertainment to be associated with a decline in consumption of public affairs programming, thus leading to a concomitant decline in public affairs knowledge, to the extent Trump supporters demonstrate a preference for non-political entertainment, one would expect to recognize lower political knowledge stores and relative disinterest in politics compared to news consumers. Accordingly, the next two hypotheses proposed for examination are:

H3: Entertainment preferences will differ by supporters of each candidate with Trump supporters favoring reality-based, non-political content consistent with his entertainment background.

H4: Entertainment versus news preferences will yield significant political knowledge and political attentiveness differentials.

Methods

Proposed hypotheses were tested through exploration of 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES) Time Series Studies, which were conducted in pre- and post-election waves using both face-to-face (N=1,181) and web-based (N=3,090) survey methods. Pre-election interviews and internet surveys were conducted September 7 through November 7, 2016, with post-election follow-ups occurring November 9 through January 8, 2017. Face-to-face interviews were typically conducted in the subject's residence with the interviewer using computer assisted personal interviewing software. Response rate for pre-election interviews was 50% (using AAPOR's RR1 method) with a 90% re-interview rate on the post-election component. Web-based surveys could be completed anywhere respondent had internet access via computer or mobile device. The pre-election internet response rate was 44% with an 84% post-election follow-up rate. Prior to analyses, data were weighted consistent with guidelines for including both pre- and post-election variables.

Measures

Entertainment and news preferences: Entertainment and news preferences were examined using a battery of pre-election questions asking respondents which television programs they regularly watch from an extensive list of entertainment and news programs. The question was posed as a follow-up to a qualifying question that asked respondents, "From which of the following sources have you heard anything about the Presidential campaign?" If subjects responded they had heard anything about the campaign from response options

including a) "television news programs (morning or evening)" or b) "television talk shows, public affairs, or news analysis programs," they were then presented the follow-up question probing which shows they watched regularly. Specifically, the question asked, "Which of the following television programs do you watch regularly? Please check any that you watch at least once a month." Analysis focuses on all 47 English response options spanning broadcast and cable entertainment and news programs (see **Appendix 1** for a complete list of programs). For each program, subjects were offered a simple dichotomous yes or no response option. The number of valid responses for any one program ranged from N=2,149 to N=2,151.

Focus was placed on responses to the television probe to analyze news and entertainment preferences as the television question was the only medium offering a diverse mix of both news and entertainment content. Questions probing radio and internet usage offered response options drawn from news providers almost exclusively, thus television offered the only platform to examine news and entertainment preferences.

Based on initial analysis of media preferences for supporters of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump across all 47 television programs (results presented below), significant differences emerged between supporters of the two candidates on 21 of 25 entertainment-oriented programs and 19 of 22 news-based programs. Programs yielding significant differences among supporters of either candidate were folded into two index news variables, Trump news (α=.66) and Clinton news (α=.74), or two entertainment index variables, Trump-Tainment (α=.56) and Clinton-Tainment (α=.61), depending on content of the program. All Clinton and Trump index variables were scaled to 1.

Additionally, three index news variables were created to differentiate partisan and mainstream news providers. A conservative news index variable was created by combining three commonly perceived conservative news-oriented programs on FOX News: The O'Reilly Factor, Hannity and The Kelly File (α=.80). A liberal news index variable was created by summing three commonly perceived liberal news-oriented programs on MSNBC: The Rachel Maddow Show, Hardball with Chris Matthews and All in with Chris Hayes (α=.53). Finally, a mainstream news index variable was created by summing the traditional three nightly broadcast news programs: NBC Nightly News, ABC World News and CBS News (α=.41). All three index variables were normed to 1.

Candidate support: Supporters of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were identified by a single post-election question asking who the respondent voted for: Clinton=1,252; Trump=1,159.

Strong support: A single post-election survey question tapped strength of candidate support, "Would you say your preference for this candidate was strong or not strong?". Responses were recoded with positive values indicating greater support and normed to 1 (M=.71, SD=.45).

Political knowledge: Political knowledge was ascertained with a battery of five open-recall post-election questions asking respondents "What job or political office does _____ now hold?" The five questions probed knowledge of: Joe Biden, Paul Ryan, Angela Merkel, Vladimir Putin and John Roberts. Only question versions coded by ANES as dichotomous options (correct or incorrect) were included in the five-question battery. Responses were summed (α =.74) and normed to 1 to create a political knowledge index variable (M=.58, SD=.30).

Political attentiveness: Two pre-election questions formed the basis for calculating political attentiveness. The first asked respondents, "How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics?" with five response options including: "Always; most of the time; about half the time; some of the time; never." The second question asked respondents "How much attention do you pay to news about national politics on TV, radio, printed newspapers, or the Internet?" with five response options including: "A great deal; a lot; a moderate amount; a little; or none at all." Responses were recoded for larger values to indicate positive responses, then summed (r=.73) and scaled to 1 (M=.61, SD=.25) to create a political attentiveness index variable.

Education: As the study examines aspects of political knowledge, education was included as a control variable to more effectively isolate the potential relationship between media consumption and political knowledge. Education was tapped with a single pre-test question asking respondents to identify the highest level of schooling they had completed or highest degree received. The 16 response options ranging from first grade to doctorate degree were folded into seven intuitive hierarchical categories: 8th grade and under; 9th-12th grade without a diploma; high school graduate or GED; some college or associate's degree; bachelor's degree; master's degree; and professional/doctorate degree. The education variable was then normed to 1 (M=.57, SD=.18).

Results

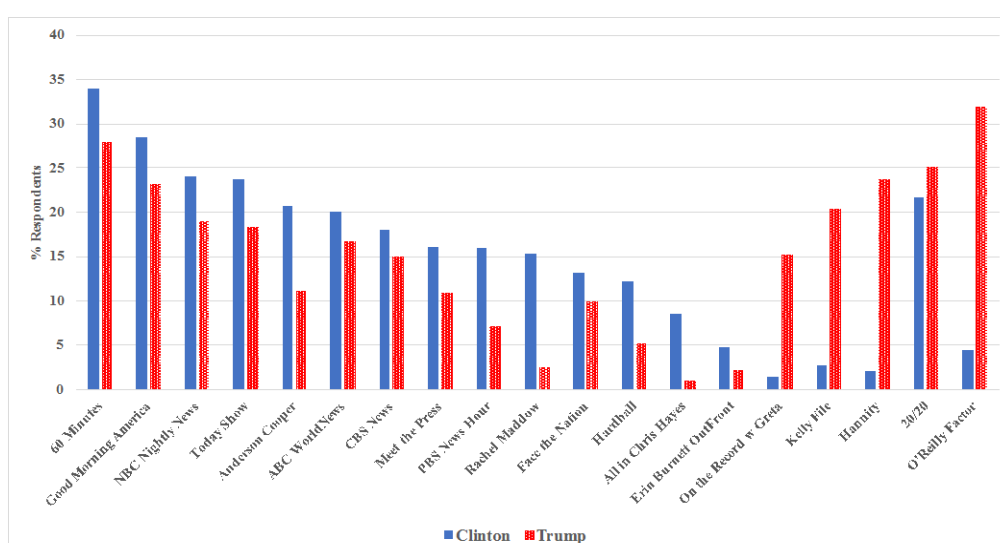### Differentiating news preferences

To examine the extent to which supporters of Clinton or Trump demonstrate partisan news consumption consistent with the first proposed hypothesis (H1), a Crosstabs was conducted across candidate support for all 22 televised news-oriented programs among the 47 English programs probed on the ANES. Significant differences emerged for 19 programs between Clinton and Trump supporters. Programs yielding significant results are presented graphically in Figure 1. Figure 1 depicts the percentage of respondents for each candidate responding they had regularly watched the news program in the last month. Programs preferred by Clinton supporters are

depicted by solid bars and ordered left to right from largest percentage of respondents (60 minutes) to lowest percentage of respondents (Out Front with Erin Burnett) while still maintaining a statistically significant difference relative to Trump supporters. As noted in the caption below Figure 1, most differences between Clinton and Trump supporters are highly statistically significant (i.e., p<.001) (Figure 1). Only three news-oriented programs of the 22 surveyed did not yield statistically significant differences between supporters of Clinton and Trump – CBS This Morning, Nancy Grace and Dateline.

While the news preferences of Clinton supporters are depicted in solid bars, the news preferences of Trump supporters are illustrated in patterned bars ordered right to left based on percentage of respondents reporting they watch the program. As is evident, with the exception of 20/20, the televised news programs where Trump supporters demonstrate a significantly stronger preference constitute the former FOX News prime-time lineup. Approximately seven times as many Trump supporters preferred The O'Reilly Factor when compared to Clinton supporters and nearly 10 times as many Trump supporters responded watching Hannity.

At the same time, although the percentage of viewers is smaller, Clinton supporters demonstrated pronounced preferences for liberal-oriented news programming relative to Trump supporters. Nearly seven times as many Clinton supporters reported watching All in with Chris Hayes and six times as many reported watching The Rachel Maddow Show when compared to Trump supporters. Such stark differences between supporters of the two candidates in terms of partisan news viewing offers persuasive support for H1, namely supporters of both candidates demonstrate partisan news preferences.

As noted above, the results of the initial Crosstabs examining differences in news preferences were used to construct index news variables for each candidate. News programs yielding statistically significant preferences by supporters of each candidate were combined and scaled to 1 for each candidate. Trump News includes programs his supporters demonstrated a significant preference for versus Clinton supporters, including: The O'Reilly Factor; 20/20; Hannity; The Kelly

Note: N=2,149 to 2,151. Differences between Clinton and Trump viewers of CBS News and 20/20, p <.10; ABC World News and Face the Nation, p<.05. All other programs statistically significant at p <.001.

Figure 1: Televised News preferences by candidate support.

File and On the Record with Greta Van Susteren (M=.13, SD=.21). Among Clinton supporters, preferred Clinton News programs include: 60 Minutes, Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, Today Show, Anderson Cooper, ABC World News, CBS News, Meet the Press, PBS News Hour, Rachel Maddow, Face the Nation, Hardball and All in with Chris Hayes (M=.14, SD=.16).

Partisan news viewing and level of candidate support

Consistent with literature suggesting partisan news consumption to be associated with polarization [13], a stronger relationship between ideological news consumption and support for either candidate should emerge. Put differently, fervent supporters of the candidates should demonstrate a greater affinity for partisan/ideological news sources relative to weaker supporters of the candidates.

To examine the extent to which more fervent supporters of Clinton or Trump engage in partisan selective exposure relative to weaker supporters, a comparison of means was drawn on strong and weak supporters for each candidate across three distinct partisan index news variables: conservative news, liberal news and mainstream news. The results of these analyses are presented visually in Figures 2 and 3. Figure 2 presents mean values for strong and weak Trump supporters, while Figure 3 presents the same for strong and weak Clinton supporters.

As is evident, the level of support for each candidate is associated with greater partisan news consumption. Among Trump supporters,
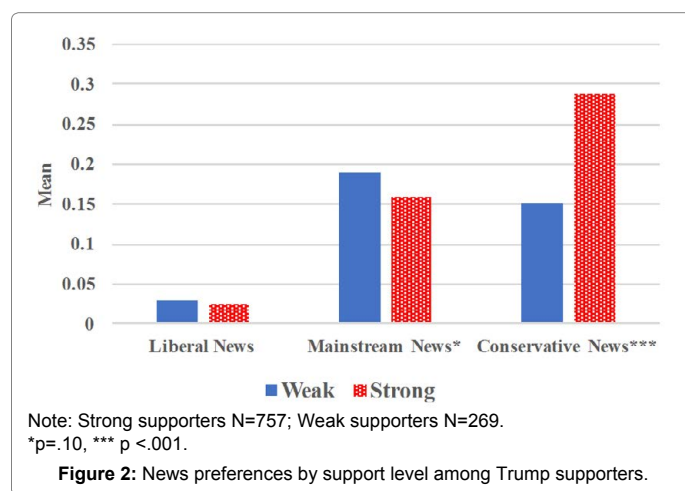

Note: Strong supporters N=757; Weak supporters N=269.
*p=.10, *** p <.001.
Figure 2: News preferences by support level among Trump supporters.

Note: Strong Supporters N=820; Weak Supporters N=298.
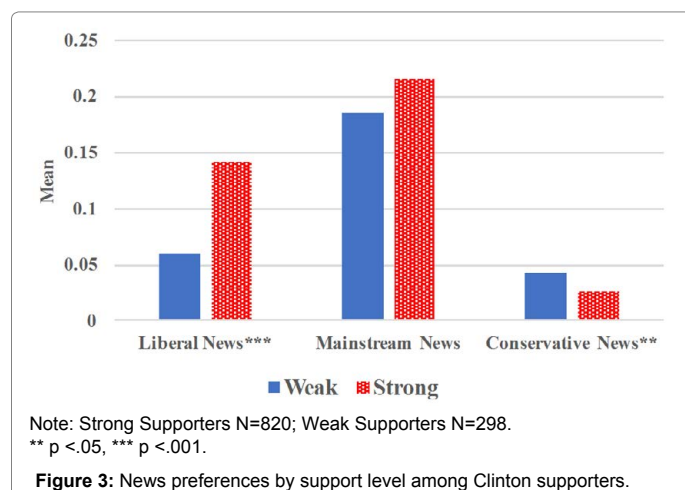** p <.05, *** p <.001.
Figure 3: News preferences by support level among Clinton supporters.

stronger support for the candidate is associated with a significant increase in consumption of conservative news (i.e., watching FOX News programs). Although statistically significant $F(1, 1,024)=28.46, p<.001$, the effect size of the increase is relatively modest, $\eta^2=.03$. Nonetheless, there is clear indication among Trump supporters that more fervent support is associated with more partisan news consumption. At the same time, there is a marginally significant, $F(1, 1,024)=2.69, p=.10$, decline for mainstream news consumption associated with stronger Trump supporters. Overall, it appears more fervent support for Trump is associated with significantly greater partisan news consumption coupled with diminished mainstream news viewing (Figures 2 and 3). A caveat here, the conservative news index produced a far more reliable variable relative to the mainstream news index, thus results for the mainstream decline should be interpreted accordingly.

As with supporters for Trump, strong support for Clinton was associated with a notable increase in partisan news viewing. As strength of support for Clinton increased, so too did self-reported viewing of liberal news sources (i.e., MSNBC programming). As above, although the increase for partisan news viewing is highly significant, $F(1, 1,116)=20.05, p<.001$, the effect size is once again relatively modest, $\eta^2=.02$. Nonetheless, the results for Clinton supporters lend credence to the contention that more fervent support appears to be associated with greater partisan-based news consumption. In contrast to Trump supporters, however, there is no concomitant drop off in mainstream news consumption among strong Clinton supporters. If anything, strong Clinton backers appear to consume more mainstream news, not less. However, there is a significant, albeit small, decline among conservative news viewership among stronger Clinton supporters.

Differences in mainstream viewership among Clinton and Trump supporters aside, there does appear to be support for H2. That is, stronger support for both candidates is associated with increased partisan news viewing. Such results speak to the potential for increased polarization, especially among more fervent supporters of liberal and conservative candidates. Having established the presence of partisan news viewing among supporters of both candidates coupled with evidence of increased ideological news selectivity as a function candidate support levels, the analysis shifted to more entertaining fare.

Entertainment preferences, political knowledge and attentiveness

Similar to the news analysis above, examination of entertainment preferences focused on establishing the degree to which supporters of the candidates differ in terms of entertainment consumption, and if so, to what extent these viewing patterns may be associated with levels of political knowledge and interest in politics. As above, a Crosstabs analysis was conducted across supporters of each candidate for the 25 entertainment shows probed by ANES. Distinct viewing patterns emerged for 21 of the 25 entertainment-based shows. Programs yielding significant differences between supporters of the candidates are presented visually in Figure 4. Clinton supporters are depicted in solid bars ordered left to right based on percentage of respondents affirming they viewed the program, while Trump supporters are represented by the patterned bars ordered right to left.

As anticipated, Clinton and Trump supporters demonstrated significantly different entertainment preferences across a host of shows. In general, Clinton supporters demonstrated a significant preference for late-night entertainment programming relative to Trump supporters, particularly shows frequently incorporating political-based humor (e.g., Late Show, Larry Wilmore Show). Alternatively, Trump supporters preferred more reality-centric content (e.g.,
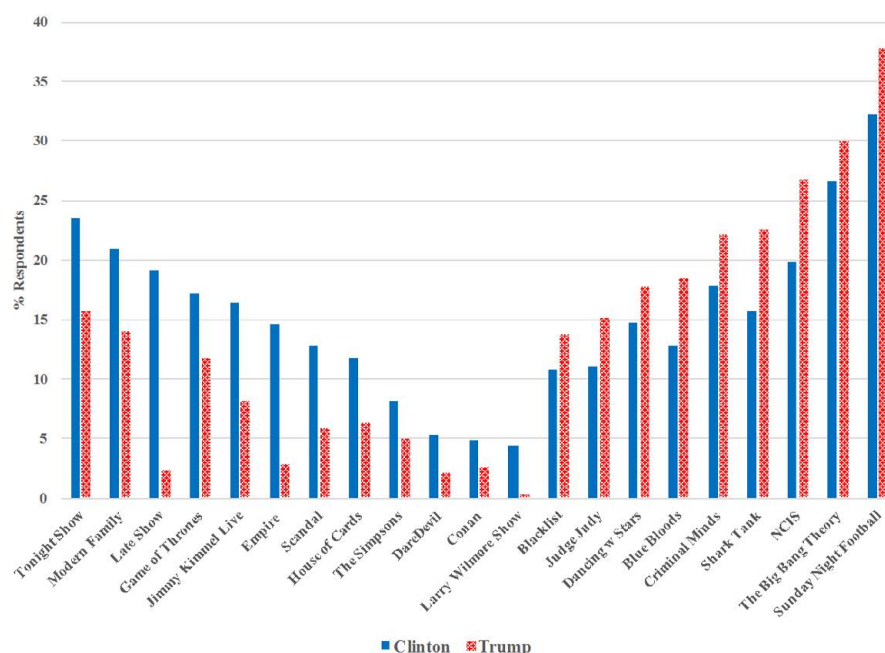
Note: N=2,149 to 2,151. Differences between Clinton and Trump viewers of Big Bang Theory and Dancing with the Stars, p<.10; Blacklist and Criminal Minds, p<.05. All other programs statistically significant at p <.001.

Figure 4: Televised entertainment preferences by candidate support.

Shark Tank, Judge Judy, Dancing with the Stars) and crime-oriented procedurals (e.g., NCIS, Blue Bloods) relative to Clinton supporters. Such significant difference across a diverse mix of shows lends support for H3. Supporters of each candidate demonstrated distinct televised entertainment viewing tendencies with Trump supporters favoring more reality-based content as compared to Clinton supporters, who opted for late-night entertainment programming.

Based on results of the entertainment Crosstabs analysis, index variables were created for each candidate. Specifically, preferred programs associated with the supporters of each candidate were summed and scaled to 1 to be used in subsequent analyses. Clinton-Tainment includes those programs where her supporters demonstrated a significant viewing preference: Tonight Show, Modern Family, Late Show, Game of Thrones, Jimmy Kimmel Live, Empire, Scandal, House of Cards, The Simpsons, Daredevil, Conan and The Larry Wilmore Show (M=.10, SD=.13). Trump-Tainment includes programs preferred by Trump supporters: Sunday Night Football, Big Bang Theory, NCIS, Shark Tank, Criminal Minds, Blue Bloods, Dancing with the Stars, Judge Judy and the Blacklist (M=.20, SD=.18).

Once created, the entertainment index variables were included in a regression model to determine how entertainment preferences of each candidate's supporters were associated with political knowledge. H4 hypothesized significant knowledge differentials would emerge between supporters of the candidates to the extent Trump supporters demonstrated a preference for more non-political, reality-centric content, which was borne out by the aforementioned analysis. To test H4, political knowledge was regressed on Clinton-Tainment and Trump-Tainment. Clinton News and Trump News were also included in the model to additionally explore the potential knowledge levels associated with the news preferences of each candidate. Finally, education was included as a control variable to help isolate the associations of media preferences with political knowledge.

The results of the OLS regression model including both unstandardized and standardized coefficients are presented in Table 1. Of particular interest are the results for the entertainment variables of each candidate. Significant differences emerged in terms of political knowledge associated with the entertainment preferences of the supporters of each candidate. Based on coding of the political knowledge variable, positive coefficients and t values indicate corresponding media preferences to be associated with an increase in political knowledge, while negative values signify an associated decline in political knowledge. Thus, the negative coefficients and t value present for Trump-Tainment reflects a decline in political knowledge associated with the consumption of entertainment preferred of Trump supporters (Table 1). At the same time, the entertainment preferences of Clinton supporters (i.e., Clinton-Tainment) are associated with a modest, yet significant increase in political knowledge.

Review of the standardized beta β reveals the negative effect size for the entertainment preferences of Trump supporters to be approximately twice the size of the positive effect associated with the preferences of Clinton supporters. For context, however, the effect size for the entertainment viewing habits of supporters of either candidate is substantively small when compared to the size of the positive effect for education, which is approximately five times that of Trump-Tainment. Nonetheless, results demonstrate a non-trivial influence of entertainment consumption habits on resulting political knowledge.

Moreover, of interest beyond the differential effects observed of the entertainment viewing habits for supporters of either candidate, are the positive effects noted for viewing news, which speak to the ability of televised news to promote political learning, especially among consumers who may be less likely to consume public affairs content in an arena of increased media options [6].

As results point to marked differences in terms of political knowledge associated with televised viewing practices, the potential exists for similar effects to be observed on dimensions of political interest and attentiveness. If as some scholars argue [6,11], individuals uninterested in politics may opt to change the channel from news and into entertainment, then the results of the previous analysis suggest the possibility of a similar association between the viewing preferences of Trump supporters and disinterest in politics. Hence, the final analysis examines the relationship between media viewing habits and political attentiveness.

Similar to the approach examining political knowledge and media preferences, a second regression model was undertaken whereby political attentiveness was regressed on the two entertainment index variables (Clinton-Tainment and Trump-Tainment) as well as the two news variables (Clinton News and Trump News). Once again, education was included as a control. The OLS estimates of this model including unstandardized and standardized coefficients are presented in Table 2.

Not surprisingly, the two news variables revealed a positive association with political attentiveness. News consumption for both Clinton and Trump supporters positively predicted interest and attention one gives politics. Of particular interest in the current analysis, however, is the relationship of entertainment viewing preferences on political attentiveness, which takes the form of the two entertainment index variables, Clinton-Tainment and Trump-Tainment. As indicated in Table 2, no significant effect emerged for the entertainment preferences of Clinton supporters.

In contrast, however, a significant, negative effect emerged for the entertainment viewing choices of Trump supporters. The entertainment viewing preferences among Trump supporters was associated with a significant decrease in political attentiveness. Thus, not only were the televised entertainment choices of Trump supporters

| Variables | Political Knowledge | | | | |
	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Clinton-Tainment	0.084	0.040	0.036	2.091	0.037
Trump-Tainment	-0.115	0.029	-0.070	-3.991	0.000
Clinton-News	0.162	0.032	0.089	5.098	0.000
Trump-News	0.183	0.024	0.131	7.665	0.000
Education	0.541	0.027	0.327	19.736	0.000
Constant	0.252	0.018		14.260	0.000
N			3,198		
R²			0.148		

Note: Cell entries provide OLS coefficients.

Table 1: Televised media preferences and political knowledge.

| Variables | Political Attentiveness | | | | |
	B	SE	β	t	Sig
Clinton-Tainment	0.022	0.033	0.011	0.649	0.516
Trump-Tainment	-0.120	0.024	-0.087	-5.028	0.000
Clinton-News	0.384	0.026	0.251	14.595	0.000
Trump-News	0.262	0.020	0.225	13.338	0.000
Education	0.261	0.023	0.188	11.479	0.000
Constant	0.403	0.015		27.373	0.000
N			3,153		
R²			0.177		

Note: Cell entries provide OLS coefficients.

Table 2: Televised media preferences and political attentiveness.

associated with reduced political knowledge as demonstrated above, but so too diminished interest in politics. Although the negative effect size of entertainment viewing among Trump supporters was relatively modest when compared to the substantively larger positive effect for viewing news, the televised entertainment preferences among Trump supporters were nonetheless consequential in determining the level of attention one pays to politics.

Taken together, the significant negative effects for entertainment preferences among Trump supporters on measures of political knowledge and political interest lend persuasive support to H4. Multiple analyses revealed distinct differences between supporters of both candidates in terms of entertainment preferences as well as the consequential nature of those preferences on levels of political knowledge and degree of political attentiveness.

Discussion

The present study sought to examine the news and entertainment preferences of individuals in a high-choice media environment in the context of the 2016 US Presidential contest. Drawing from two prominent theoretical perspectives on the nature of news and entertainment consumption in an increasingly diverse media landscape, the current study confirmed the presence of partisan news consumption among supporters of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Consistent with a growing body of scholarship and polling on news exposure in our modern media environment [4,7,13,25], supporters of both candidates demonstrated significant preferences for like-minded political news. Moreover, selective partisan news viewing intensified when strength of candidate support was factored into news preferences. Partisan news consumption significantly increased on both the left and right among more fervent supporters of the candidates.

Although not the focus of the present study, it is additionally worth noting that differences existed between supporters of each candidate in terms of diversity of news consumption. While televised news consumption among Trump supporters tended to be more tightly wed to partisan news sources, news consumption among Clinton supporters was more diversified across both mainstream and partisan news outlets. Consider, three of the top seven news-oriented programs watched by Trump supporters were FOX News shows, with all three partisan programs viewed by more than 20% of respondents. Only one of the top 10 news programs favored by Clinton supporters was a cable news offering, Anderson Cooper 360. Such findings reflecting greater diversity of news preferences among Clinton supporters and greater concentration of partisan news viewing among Trump supporters, especially for FOX News content, is consistent with recent polling research on news preferences of both candidates' supporters [33].

Just as supporters of both candidates differed in terms of news preferences, so too did they differ in terms of entertainment preferences. Consistent with hypothesized expectations, distinct viewing patterns emerged between supporters of each candidate with Clinton backers favoring late-night entertainment fare and Trump supporters opting for more reality-centric and crime-based content. Further analyses revealed distinct entertainment preferences of Clinton and Trump supporters to be associated with significant changes in political knowledge and political attentiveness. While Clinton-Tainment was shown to be associated with a small, but significant increase in political knowledge, consuming Trump-Tainment programming resulted in a significant decrease in political knowledge. Moreover, entertainment preferences of Trump supporters were shown to be associated with diminished attention paid to politics.

Such results speak to the thrust of Prior's [6] observation that some forms of entertainment consumption may be associated with declines in political knowledge and interest in politics, especially among lower educated segments of society. To that end, additional research into the nature of Trump supporters and their relationship to both education and interest in politics would be beneficial. Likewise, comparisons of Trump supporters and their media consumption habits relative to the supporters of previous presidential candidates, particularly Republican candidates, would be helpful to glean a better understanding if Trump was successful in galvanizing some of the politically disinterested entertainment consumers Prior [6] proposes. While the current study suggests a "celebrity" candidate in the vein of Trump would seemingly be better positioned to capitalize on an increasingly apolitical, entertainment-viewing segment of society, additional exploration is warranted. From a normative standpoint, bringing politically disaffected individuals into the political process would be a potential positive, yet, in spite of the results presented above, it is unclear if the individuals depicted in the entertainment analyses associated with diminished political knowledge and political attentiveness are those same individuals Prior [6] and others [11] acknowledge in their observation of our high-choice media landscape.

Beyond calls for further research into the connection between media preferences and political behaviors, it is important to note the present study only explores media preferences from the vantage of televised content. Thus, a clear limitation of the current research in terms of its focus on only one medium also gives rise to areas of future exploration, namely examination of more diverse media consumption and resulting influences on the political process.

Additionally, the limited focus of the current study on televised consumption further refined by a single qualifying question coupled with simple dichotomous response options likely limited the ability to capture the full effects of media consumption on examined political behaviors. Moreover, and as noted above, on occasion index variables demonstrated relatively modest reliability. However, in spite of less than ideal reliability levels with some index variables, the fact that study findings are consistent with other scholarship and results of national polling firms [33] provides confidence in study findings.

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