National Media Systems, Affective Polarization, and Loyalty in Vote Choice: Contextualizing the Relationship Between News Media and Partisanship

Thesis

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, partisanship has become an increasingly salient social identity for Americans, resulting in an electorate that is affectively polarized. An electorate characterized by affective polarization cuts against normative models of democracy, as party loyalists tend to dislike members of other parties, prefer confrontation to compromise, and distrust government when their preferred party is out of power. The commercial US media environment has been a frequent culprit in theories of the origins of affective polarization. Cross-national comparisons find that the United States may have experienced the most rapid gains in affective polarization but Americans' fixation on party identity is far from unique. This comparative analysis categorizes 14 countries' national media systems and tests whether news media consumption in commercial media systems, such as the United States, predicts higher levels of partisan animus and party loyalty in vote choice than media consumption in other types of media systems. The results indicate that television consumption in commercial media systems is associated with higher levels of partisan affect than in public-service or hybrid media systems.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the foreword to a 2016 special edition of *Public Opinion Quarterly* focused on party polarization, Shanto Iyengar declared that "American politics is hyperpolarized." Hostility between Democrats and Republicans, termed "affective polarization" in the political science and communication literature, has surged over the last three decades (see Figure 1). Scholars of US political behavior have produced extensive theoretical and empirical analyses of the causes and consequences of this discord within the US electorate. However, the literature addressing affective polarization in a cross-national context is nascent and has only begun to probe whether US polarization is unique in its origins, degree, and manifestations.

As the picture of affective polarization in US politics has come into focus, scholars have identified the need for—and begun to produce—comparative research examining whether partisanship has become a divisive social front in other Western democracies. In their overview of the extant research on affective polarization, Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, and Westwood (2019) call for efforts to bridge the gap between comparative studies of political behavior and the thriving research into affective polarization by Americanists. The early returns from this research suggest that a social identity approach—the predominant theoretical explanation for affective polarization in the United States—to studying affective polarization offers a productive framework for

the analysis of partisanship in democratic countries with differing electoral systems and political norms. For instance, Westwood, Iyengar, Walgrave, Leonisio, Miller, and Strijbis (2017) find what they call "partyism," characterized by social cleavages on the basis of partisanship, is apparent across Western democracies: In Belgium, Great Britain, Spain, and the United States, citizens are more strongly attached to parties than the social groups which the parties represent, and partisans consistently discriminate against members of their political out-groups in economic games. Despite evidence that the scaffolding for affective polarization—partisanship as a powerful social identity—is in place across Western democracies, the extent to which the United States's "hyperpolarized" electorate is unique is as murky as its causes.

Early comparative research on the relative intensity of partisan polarization and its causes has arrived at mixed conclusions. Boxwell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro (2020) compare nine OECD countries and find that the United States has both the highest levels of affective polarization (although not by a large margin) and the steepest gain in affective polarization over time. Conversely, Gidron, Adams, and Horne (2019) find that the United States is not particularly polarized compared to other Western democracies. These discrepancies are due to varying methodologies and data sources, but it's clear from research to date that affective polarization has not swept across all Western democracies equally. Why some citizenries have been more susceptible than others remains an open question. The ascent of affective polarization has paralleled sweeping social, technological, and cultural changes, so its potential causes are myriad. Boxwell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro (2020) test several plausible macroeconomic and demographic

explanations. They determine that explanations which are easily quantified across nations, such as rises in income inequality, broadband and internet penetration, share of foreign-born population, and national trade policy, do not explain trends in affective polarization. Instead, Boxwell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro suggest nation-specific factors play a bigger role; for the United States, they suggest changing party composition and the rise of partisan cable news.

The fragmented news media environment is a usual suspect among structural causes of affective polarization—especially, in a US context, news media that is outwardly partisan. Yet partisan media does not exist in a vacuum. Its prominence within national media environments reflects an array of political and economic characteristics: in particular, the extent to which the state invests in journalism through public-service broadcasting and subsidies for journalists. Indeed, Boxwell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro note that their evidence points towards a role for media that's more complex than polarizing partisan news: "Interestingly, the five countries with a negative linear slope for affective polarization all devote more public funds per capita to public service broadcast media than three of the countries with a positive slope."

This explanation—the extent to which the state supports public-service media—imports an intriguing body of research from the political communication literature. A wealth of both empirical and qualitative research indicates that a nation's media environment can have broad implications for how citizens engage with politics (i.e., Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009; Curran, 2011; Aalberg, van Aelst, & Curran, 2010). The bulk of studies on media systems have documented public-

service media environments' superior informative power compared with commercial media systems. Differing effects of news media between national media systems stem from important differences in the news coverage itself. On traditional platforms such as television, news content in public-service media systems skews toward sober presentations of hard news, whereas commercial media systems skew toward entertaining presentations of soft news, with an emphasis on human interest stories and sensationalism (Aalberg, van Aelst, & Curran, 2010). If these differing news media environments have differential effects on partisanship—as they do on political knowledge—then it follows that media systems may offer insight into the structural factors that facilitate social polarization.

This study examines the role of the national media environment in the relationship between news media consumption and partisan attitudes and behaviors. To do so, I first describe how social identity theory can be applied to explain social polarization on the basis of partisanship. Then, I discuss potential direct and indirect mechanisms through which the news media environment could influence the salience of partisan identity in a mass public. Next, I survey how national media systems have been categorized in past literature and identify relevant nation-level attributes upon which to compare them. I derive hypotheses about how different media systems influence the relationship between news media consumption and two key outcomes of salient partisan identities: partisan affect and party loyalty in vote choice. I then test these hypotheses using cross-national survey data, comprising 19 surveys from 15 countries. I discuss limitations that hinder

this study from making stronger claims and conclude by briefly addressing the significance of these questions in the context of media's role in democracy.

Chapter 2. Partisan Identities and Polarization

Social identity theory, as originally formulated by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner, posits that social groups "create and define an individual's place in society" (1986). The universal desire to maintain self-esteem is the cornerstone of social identity theory, and individuals' self-esteem hinges on how they perceive their groups relative to competitors. Since the publication of Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes's *The American Voter* and Converse's *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*, partisanship has been treated as a—if not *the*—central organizing force in American voters' political behavior. Decades of empirical studies have contributed robust support to party identification's dominant power over the policies and attitudes that voters endorse and how they vote (e.g., Bartels, 2000; Baldassarri & Gelman, 2008). Over the past decade, scholars of American politics have productively integrated social identity theory with extant party-focused frameworks to explain the emerging trend of partisan polarization in the US electorate.

The path from social identity to affective polarization follows the social identity tenant that group membership brings forth conflict. Tajfel and Turner theorize that "positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and out-group" (1979). To improve their own self-esteem, individuals are motivated to find dimensions on which their in-group compares favorably

to competing out-groups. Such comparisons comprise "intergroup competition." Intergroup competition motivates group members to engage in parallel tasks: to favor their group and derogate outgroups.

Competition is, indeed, the engine of representative democracy, so it's intuitive that opposing parties and their rank-and-file are in conflict. However, the social identity framework suggests that the conflict between opposing group members is not merely a byproduct of the competition to institutionalize competing ideologies or control resources. While competition over objective stakes and power does produce intergroup animosity, Tajfel and Turner argue for the more "basic and highly generalizable finding" that group categorization, even when trivial, leads to in-group favoritism and out-group derogation (1979). The group classification itself, irrespective of a struggle for mutually exclusive outcomes, motivates intergroup competition. From this vantage, political scientists have argued that the intensification of inter-group conflict does not necessarily rely on or reflect parallel bifurcation in policy attitudes or ideologies (Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, & Westwood, 2018; Mason, 2018b). Instead, the act of belonging to a highly visible social group is sufficient motivation for partisans to begrudge members of competing groups.

Individuals belong to numerous groups, and not all become focal points for intergroup hostility. Tajfel and Turner establish three criteria for social groups to engage in inter-group competition: (a) group members must "internalize their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept"; (b) the social situation must permit the comparison between groups; and, (c) out-groups must be perceived as a relevant comparison group.

Parties in electoral politics thoroughly satisfy all three criteria. The corpus of political psychology literature offers compelling evidence in support of Tajfel and Turner's first criteria: Partisanship's centrality to individuals' sense of identity and political behavior is a foundational and robustly supported finding, which Green, Palmquist, and Shickler (2002) argue is best understood as analogous to religious or ethnic identity. The second and third criteria are satisfied by the cultural centrality of politics, which has reached new heights through the growing prominence of horse-race coverage of elections (Iyengar, Norpoth, & Hahn, 2004) and an unprecedented volume of political advertising, nearly $10 billion in the 2016 US election cycle (Kaye, 2017). Elections represent a direct threat to and opportunity for each party's social standing (Huddy & Bankert, 2017), pitting partisans in direct competition with their out-group for standing and esteem. The high profile of national US elections ensures that, even though Americans tend to know little about politics (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996), the vast majority of them know the teams and trophies for which they're competing.

Group members favor their in-group and derogate out-groups

The foundational outcome of salient political identities and the ensuing inter-party competition is partisans' social preference for co-partisans and dislike of members of competing parties. Following the conventions of Iyengar and his collaborators (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Sood & Iyengar, 2016; Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), this study focuses on "partisan affect" as the individual-level measurement of affective polarization, which is calculated for a mass public by aggregating individual members' partisan affect. To operationalize partisan affect at the individual level, empirical studies of affective

polarization have employed data from feeling thermometers: Survey respondents rate how warmly they feel toward political parties or the members of political parties on a scale of 0 to 100, and partisan affect is calculated as the difference between how a partisan rates in-party versus out-party members (Lelkes, 2016). Alternative measures of social distance, such as whether partisans would be comfortable living among members of opposing parties or having their child marry a member of an out-party, contribute convergent validity to the feeling-thermometer approach (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012; Lelkes, 2018). While US partisans' ratings of their in-party have remained relatively stable over the past three decades (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), out-party ratings have steadily declined, with a recent rapid gain in intense negativity (see Figure 1). A small share of the electorate held intensely negative feelings toward the opposition until the 2000s; however, this share of partisans increased from 8% in 2000 to a plurality of 21% in 2016 (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018).

It is important to note that affective polarization reflects a social definition of polarization. Social polarization is distinct from other conceptualizations of polarization, such as those based on issue preferences or ideologies, the existence of which has been hotly contested in the political behavior literature (e.g., Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2008). As argued by Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, and Westwood (2019), competing perspectives on polarization can coexist: US partisans can agree on relatively centrist positions on most major policy items while also bearing distrust and hostility toward one another.

Loyalty in vote choice as a prototypical partisan behavior

Beyond an attitudinal preference for co-partisans, social identity theory also describes how identity can motivate group members to take action. Group members are incentivized to conform to the behaviors, attitudes and values that define their group—the sum of which is described in the social psychology literature as the group "prototype." By adhering to the prototype, group members can positively differentiate from the out-group and maintain their standing within the in-group in a process referred to as "social attraction" (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Such prototypes constitute normative group behavior, which define a group and distinguish it from other groups by accentuating intragroup similarities and intergroup differences (Hogg & Reid, 2006). The power of group-level norms to constrain the thoughts, feelings, and actions of group members is thoroughly documented in the psychology and communication literature (e.g., Hogg, 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2006). Leaders, or central members, embody the group prototype (Hogg & Terry, 2000) and can influence others to adopt group-aligned values, attitudes, goals, and behaviors (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

In the context of partisans and parties, one central activity looms over the study of political behavior: voting. Huddy and Bankert (2017) argue from a social identity perspective that "electoral involvement is one way in which partisans can defend their party against such potential losses or ensure gains" both in the group's social standing and hold over political power. The status of voting as a central prototypical behavior is fueled by party leaders who tirelessly exhort group-members to vote loyally. Campaigns'

investments in modeling the prototypicality of party-loyal voting have grown with dramatic increases in spending on political advertising and voter mobilization efforts.

The influence of partisanship on voting behavior is two-fold: on one hand, partisanship pulls group-members towards party-loyal voting as a prototypical group behavior rewarded by social attraction; on the other, attachment to a party as a social identity incentivizes partisans to derogate the opposition, inspiring "negative partisanship" or a strong dislike for the opposing party (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018). Foundational studies in US political behavior have found that the strength of partisanship is predictive of likeliness to vote (Bartels, 2000), and recent empirical findings affirm that the influence of partisanship on voting behavior has continued to grow over the past decade. Straight-ticket voting has dramatically increased among American voters (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016; Abramowitz & Webster, 2018), in which a citizen votes for a single party for both the presidency and at the congressional level. Abramowitz and Webster (2018) find a strong relationship between how negatively a voter evaluates the opposing political party and straight-ticket voting, and past analyses of survey data have found that negative partisanship have a unique influence on vote choice, empirically distinct from the effect of positive evaluations of one's preferred party (Medeiros & Noël, 2014). While it was common for partisans in the past to vote for an out-party candidate with a platform they found appealing, cross-party voting has become increasingly rare in the affectively polarized era of American politics (Abramowitz & Webster, 2016).

Whether a social identity has the power to shape group members' attitudes and behaviors pivots on the psychological salience of the identity (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Intuitively, group identities that are salient for members will carry proportionately greater influence over members' self-esteem and investment in adhering to the prototype. Americans' attitudes and political behavior indicate that partisanship is a highly salient identity: Partisan affect has climbed to the highest levels in available data, and in-party vote loyalty is at the highest levels since the 1950s (Abramowitz & Webster, 2018). What has caused the salience of partisanship to increase? Among the most frequent explanations is the evolving American news media environment (e.g., Abramowitz & Webster, 2018), which has become increasingly partisan and commercial, with audiences fracturing as entertainment choices proliferate in the digital era. However, the focus of past studies on particular genres or outlets limits the generalizability of their findings, given that media consumption is a highly individualized process.

Chapter 3. Contextualizing the Effects of News Media on Partisan Identities

Lab, survey, and natural experiments offer compelling evidence that the news can influence political attitudes and behaviors. However, most experimental studies have focused on specific platforms and genres of news media. Together, they offer a patchwork case for news media content's causal influence on partisan attitudes and behaviors. For instance, Levendusky demonstrated that watching pro-attitudinal partisan cable news segments both reinforces viewers' political attitudes with effects persisting over time (2013a) and decreases trust in the opposition and support for bipartisanship (2013b). Feldman (2011) found that opinion-based news media content is effective at persuading viewers across the partisan spectrum to change their political attitudes. Coppock, Ekins, and Kirby (2018) observed that persuasive op-eds can inspire long-lasting change in readers' policy attitudes. The political communication literature offers many strong cases for the effects of news media; however, by focusing on particular vectors for news media content, experimental studies sacrifice generalizability to make stronger causal claims. The conditions that facilitate these effects must be thoroughly explicated in order to know when, why, and how they will occur.

Lab-based findings have at times produced contradictory results, which illuminate both the limitations of experimental designs and the value of methodological pluralism in the study of political communication. To take a well-known example, Mutz and Reeves

(2005) exposed participants to video news segments in a lab and found that uncivil political news media reduced viewers' trust in politics. However, Arceneaux and Johnson (2012) tweaked Mutz and Reeves's design, arguing that Mutz and Reeves's apparent strong effects were an artifact of forcing participants who would typically not watch political news to consume it. After introducing a condition in which participants could select which media they watched, Arceneaux and Johnson found that the effects of uncivil media dissipated. Still, a subsequent laboratory study by Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain (2017) resurrected the argument for strong effects of uncivil partisan media, albeit with a new angle: Although those who choose to watch this programming may be effectively asymptomatic, they can spread its effects to non-viewers through interpersonal communication. Discordant lab findings can invoke whiplash through vastly different answers to a similar question. Contradictory findings are not problematic; they are the engine of scientific progress, and experimental designs are the strongest tool for testing causal claims in social science research. However, the sensitivity of experimental research to narrow sets of conditions illustrates the need for methodological diversity to better explicate the context under which effects will occur. Although it is essential that researchers employ precise designs to bolster their control over the treatment, media consumption outside of the lab is inherently messy: Messages are numerous and fleeting; selection, both by the viewer and other curating forces, shapes a distinct constellation of media messages for each news consumer; and the supply of news media varies vastly between national media environments. By focusing on individual channels or messages, as media scholar Jesper Strömbäck argues, media effects theories

"largely fail to appreciate the interactions, interdependencies, and transactions at a system level" (2008).

An alternative way to test the effects of news media is by exploiting discontinuities within media environments or key differences between them. For instance, scholars have utilized variation between news media environments within the United States in observational studies and natural experiments to test the effects of partisan media and campaign advertising. Hmielowski, Beam and Hutchens (2016) compared the relationship between media consumption and attitudinal polarization in the US electorate before and after the Telecommunications Act of 1996, finding that TV consumption became a stronger predictor of affective polarization following structural changes in the US media environment. Della Vigna and Kaplan (2007) tracked the roll-out of Fox News across the United States and found an accompanying increase in Republican turnout and vote share after the station became available in a media market. Similarly, Lelkes, Sood, & Iyengar (2017) found that the expansion of broadband internet increased both consumption of partisan media and partisan hostility in geographic areas as it became available to consumers. In their seminal study of affective polarization, Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) find that the number of political ads run in one's state significantly predicts partisan affect. Such studies provide much-needed evidence that the causal evidence furnished by experimental studies about news media's influence are apparent in the attitudes and behavior of citizens outside of the lab. Variation between media environments permits scholars to test theories about the effects of news media at scale; however, there is limited variation within the United States for scholars to tap, especially

in the digital era in which the production of media content is increasingly spatially untethered from its consumption (Hopkins, 2018). The US media industry, for instance, essentially competes at the national level, with the supply of local news diminishing (Hopkins, 2018) and radio, internet, and cable television outlets offering more or less the same supply of news media across the country.

Contextualizing media's effects on political attitudes and behavior, requires holistic arguments that consider how news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. At the national level, this super-structure is the media system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Media systems are shaped by macro factors such as competition within the media and entertainment industries, regulation and government oversight, and the role of public-service broadcasters. Relatively little empirical work thus far has attempted to compare the effects of media consumption on political attitudes and behaviors between media systems, in large part due to the impossibility of random assignment and limited data available for observational studies. However, comparative research on media and political behavior offers an opportunity to test pervasive theories that have thus far been primarily discussed within the US context: specifically, that the commercial and partisan US media system has influenced rising levels of affective polarization and party loyalty.

The comparative approach to studying media systems, to paraphrase Hallin and Mancini (2004), gives a sensitivity to what makes media environments in different countries distinct from one another. The analysis of media systems focuses on the "structure and political role of news media" and the relationship between media systems and political systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In order to establish the dimensions on

which to compare national media systems in a cross-national study of partisanship, it's necessary to first identify the attributes of national media systems that should influence the development of partisan affect in a given nation's electorate. To do so, I describe three mechanisms by which the media environment can either foster or diminish the development of partisan affect: (a) the ease with which citizens can avoid news about public affairs; (b) the extent to which news media content tends to sensationalize politics and emphasize conflict; and, (c) whether partisans are likely to see earnest portrayals of the beliefs and values of the opposition. While these mechanisms can and do build upon one another, I describe how each could have a unique causal effect on the salience of partisan identities in a mass publics. Importantly for a comparative analysis, each of these three mechanisms has roots in the policy and economic structures that shape a nation's media system and thus offers the opportunity for comparison on the basis of relatively stable nation-level characteristics.

High-choice media environments grow the divide between high- and low-interest citizens

Markus Prior (2007, 2013) has argued that the media environment can polarize electorates without partisans adopting more polarized attitudes; instead, the central mechanism is attrition. When consumers have few media options for entertainment and those media options all include news content, at least intermittently, consumers of all stripes are likely to encounter the news. In the "broadcast era" of American media, before the introduction of cable television, the main broadcast television networks claimed enormous market share, and their programming included a mix of scripted programming,

live events, and news. Media consumers with little interest in politics would be incidentally, or unintentionally, exposed to public affairs programming by simply watching the most interesting entertainment available to them and opting not to switch the channel when a news broadcast started. This incidental exposure to public affairs motivated some low-interest voters to go to the polls in the broadcast era (Prior, 2007), but the rise of cable television (and, eventually, the internet) dramatically expanded choice in entertainment, enabling those with little interest in politics to avoid news with ease. As the number of entertainment options increased, so did the turnout gap between the politically interested and disinterested (Prior, 2007; Prior, 2013a). Prior has applied the logic of the high-choice media environment to increases in polarization (2013a): Growth in the number of entertainment options reshaped the composition of the electorate by allowing the disengaged to opt out entirely, shifting the composition of the electorate in favor of partisan activists.

The main effect of the high-choice media environment is to depress political engagement among low-interest voters. This trend has clear implications for voting behavior: As fewer low-interest, low-information voters turn out to vote, the share of strong partisans in the electorate will increase, resulting in elections characterized by loyal partisan voting. The consequences of the high-choice media environment for affective polarization is less straightforward. That partisanship is a sticky, often life-long trait is robustly supported in the political behavior literature (e.g., Green, Palmquist, & Shickler, 2002). While Prior does not explicitly test the stickiness of partisanship within cohorts over periods of media-choice expansion, it follows that low-interest partisans

who lived through the rise of the high-choice media environment are unlikely to abandon their parties, even if the attention they pay to politics declines. However, it follows from Prior's arguments that the steady process of generational replacement, in which new cohorts of voters enter the electorate, would result in the older bloc of low-interest voters with weaker party ties being replaced by a bloc of young, low-interest voters who simply opt out of politics altogether. Thus, one explanation of how the high-choice media environment contributes to affective polarization is that low-interest partisans are increasingly scarce, along with their moderating influence on parties.

The universally high penetration rates of broadband internet and cable or satellite television across post-industrial democracies dampen the potential for utilizing media choice—which resulted from the diffusion and adoption of new technology in Prior's (2003) formulation—as an instrument for comparative analyses. However, cross-national studies of news exposure find significant variation in self-reported news consumption that cannot be explained simply by socioeconomic correlates (Papathanassopoulos, Coen, Curran, Aalberg, Rowe, Jones, Rojas, & Tiffen, 2013). One potential source of variance is whether or not a nation supports public-service broadcasting. Well-funded public service broadcasters reach large swathes of the public in many Western European nations, including majorities of the overall television market in Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Iceland (Rövekamp, 2014). Critically, well-funded public-service broadcasters aren't exclusively news outlets: Denmark's DR produces the nation's most popular and critically acclaimed entertainment (Majbritt Jensen & Chauhan Jacobsen, 2017), and in the UK, BBC occupies a central role in British popular culture and

produces revered documentaries such as Planet Earth as well as immensely popular scripted programs such as *Doctor Who*. The ubiquity of public-service broadcasters within their national media environments suggests that citizens without interest in politics are likely to be incidentally exposed to news simply by watching the most popular television networks, effectively carrying out the broadcast-era formula that drove low-interest voters to the polls before cable (Prior, 2007).

Conflict-based news media primes partisan identities

News content that reduces politics to a team sport in which conflict becomes spectacle and polls act as scoreboards can stimulate partisan identities in viewers. The relative frequency of sensational news to sober news represents a second mechanism through which national media environments can trigger partisan identities in viewers, contributing to affective polarization and party-loyal voting behavior.

Political communication scholars have long studied the implications of "infotainment"—the hybridization of news content with storytelling techniques and values associated with commercial television—on outcomes such as political knowledge and political participation (e.g., Blumler, 1992; Hallin, 1996; Brokaw et al., 1997; Brants & Neijens, 1998). This research area is unified by an interest in how voters are affected when the news content available to them gravitates away from the substance of public affairs in favor of content that is more likely to secure viewership, often characterized by focus on drama and spectacle (Otto, Glogger, & Boukes, 2017). These concerns dovetail with arguments that partisan news media can stimulate affective polarization (e.g.,

Levendusky, 2013a). Specifically, both argue that news content which dramatizes politics as a partisan clash will activate partisan identities.

Sensational news coverage follows from an economic motivation: As choice expanded and audiences became harder to come by, news publishers competed for viewers by emphasizing storytelling techniques and stories that make it hard for viewers to look away, especially by focusing on celebrities, gossip, and scandal (Jurkowitz, 2000). In *After Broadcast News,* Williams and Delli Carpini explicitly draw a link from "the usual fare of sensationalistic crime and disaster coverage that dominates local news programs" to cable political talk shows that "often position their audiences as sports fans rather than citizens" (2011, p. 124). The body of literature on infotainment treats the Clinton impeachment saga as the archetypal sensational news story for its tabloid fixation on the salacious details of the Clinton and Lewinski affair and news outlets' eagerness to pander to what they perceived as viewers' preferences (Thussu, 2007, p. 4). In the case of television, cable networks adopted a "high conflict" style in the 2000s as a strategy to capture the attention of channel surfers (Forgette & Morris, 2006). High-conflict programming features emotive, adversarial talking heads that infuse politics with urgency, invective, and competition. Sensational news content is superficial; it focuses on story elements that are easily dramatized in brief segments and soundbites, especially those featuring interpersonal conflict between political figures, close votes that represent a victory for one side and defeat for the other, and elections, with their associated horse-race coverage focused on polling and strategy. By focalizing governance as a series of

wins and losses for partisan teams, sensational news coverage emphasizes the competition between parties, stimulating partisan identities in viewers.

Partisan media now comprise the most popular genre of news on television, which remains the foremost platform for news among the US public (Pew Research Center, 2018b), with Fox News drawing more viewers than any other cable news network from 2002 to 2018 (Flood, 2020). Partisan news programs rarely include nuance on partisan disagreement or any debate at all. Conflict is a central feature of partisan media but, instead of crossfire between guests with opposing viewpoints, the animosity is one-sided. As Levendusky says, "the arguing is done, and one side has clearly won" (2013a). As with the broader genre of infotainment, partisan news programs feature well-known hosts who "present the day's news as a partisan struggle" (Levendusky, 2013a). By interpreting public affairs through a partisan lens, partisan news primes viewers' partisan identities (Levendusky, 2013a; Goren, Federico, & Kittleson, 2009). As an identity becomes more salient, group members' in-group bias increases proportionately (Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992). By modeling anger and outrage at political opponents (Berry & Sobieraj, 2014), partisan media figureheads instill intergroup competition as a prototypical group behavior and incite hostility toward out-groups in viewers. Together, partisan media has the effect of triggering partisan identity and encouraging animosity toward partisan competitors.

Cross-cutting news media induces ambivalence

Exposure to "cross-cutting perspectives", or good-faith presentations of the values and attitudes of out-groups, can induce ambivalence in partisans by challenging their

views and making them more sensitive to the needs of and effects of policy on competing constituencies (Mutz, 2002a). The quality of cross-cutting exposures is key: Partisan media often reference the values of out-groups but portray them as worthy of disgust (Berry & Sobieraj, 2014); on the contrary, news media content that inspires a member of a partisan group to feel empathy for an opponent should diminish the salience of their partisan identity. It follows that the ease and frequency of exposure to cross-cutting messages, which varies across media environments, is a third mechanism by which a media system can influence the strength of partisanship as a social identity in citizens.

Political communication scholars have primarily situated cross-cutting exposures as a social and interpersonal process, rather than an outcome of media exposure. However, Mutz and Martin (2001) as well as others have extended some aspects of the logic of cross-cutting exposures to mass media. Mutz's research into interpersonal cross-cutting networks argues that exposure to the viewpoints of political opponents increases political tolerance (2002a) and discourages political participation (2002b). The mechanisms by which cross-cutting exposures can influence partisans' political attitudes and behaviors are both psychological and affective. Cognitively, cross-cutting exposure can induce ambivalence by prompting a partisan to balance multiple attitudes and values or to doubt the viewpoints they hold (Mutz, 2002a). By presenting a partisan with a rationale and evidence for opposing views, they may recognize that the opposition is legitimate (Mutz, 2002b; Mutz & Martin, 2001). Affectively, cross-cutting exposures may build understanding and empathy for those who support opposing policies (Mutz, 2002b) and the constituents who will ultimately be affected by those policies. The

cognitive mechanism in particular aligns with decades of research by communication scholars and psychologists into intergroup contact which posits that interaction between members of opposing groups reduces prejudice (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011) and can change perceptions of the group by invalidating stereotypes (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Bachelor, 2003).

Cross-cutting exposure to earnest presentations of the ideas of opponents, however, may be becoming less frequent: US political parties have become far more socially homogeneous along racial and religious lines over the past several decades (Mason, 2016) and Americans increasingly live in geographic areas that include more like-minded residents than not (Martin & Webster, 2018). Cross-cutting social networks can cause partisans to self-censor their political attitudes and behavior to avoid disturbing relationships (Mutz, 2002a), but in their absence the opposite is true: Prototypical behavior is rewarded among social groups (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Sorting begets sorting: Empirical evidence from randomized experiments indicates that Americans select politically like-minded social partners over political opponents (Huber & Malhotra, 2017).

Americans report that they are exposed to cross-cutting ideas far more frequently through media than in person (Goldman & Mutz, 2001), as is likely to be the case in any post-industrial society in which politics is mediated. Indeed, despite concerns that high-choice media like the internet and cable television would segment news consumers into echo chambers, empirical social scientists such as Gentzkow and Shapiro (2011) have found that actual work, social, neighborhood, and family networks are far more

ideologically segregated than most news sources, both new and traditional. However, whether cross-cutting exposures induce ambivalence and tolerance depends on the quality of the cross-cutting messages. Media environments in which the most popular news sources deliver high-conflict and/or partisan programming are unlikely to effectively convey the values and humanity of their opposition to partisans. Furthermore, partisan selectivity in news choice (Stroud, 2010) suggests that the news consumers with the most extreme attitudes would also be the most likely to avoid earnest presentations of their opponents' views. A media environment that effectively diffuses cross-cutting exposures to partisans should feature non-partisan and substantive coverage of public affairs that reaches large shares of the public across the political spectrum. The higher incidence of cross-cutting messages in a media system should dampen the potential for news media consumption to stimulate partisan identities in viewers and thus weaken the relationship between news and party-aligned political attitudes and behavior.

Chapter 4. Classifying Media Systems: Public-Service and Commercial

Media studies scholar Jesper Strömbäck (2008) offers a model to categorize and compare national media systems based on the relationship between the political and media systems. Strömbäck describes a bipolar spectrum: On one side is "political logic", describing a normative model in which elite political discourse and its representation in media are substantive and focused on policy outcomes for affected constituents; on the other is "media logic", in which competition for attention incentivizes attention-grabbing behavior by political elites and competition for revenue leads to simplified and dramatized presentation of the "strategic game" of politics in media. Strömbäck's poles neatly integrate with a social identity perspective on media effects and partisanship: Under "political logic" media consumption will emphasize substance rather than conflict and build legitimacy and trust among viewers in the process; under commercial logic, the emphasis on conflict will trigger partisan identify and provoke party-loyal attitudes and behaviors.

The "institutional setting," reflecting political institutions, policy, and market conditions, Strömbäck argues, is a key determinant (although not wholly deterministic) of where a national media system falls on the scale. An emphasis on the structural factors that shape national media systems is common to empirical cross-national analyses, many of which similarly distinguish public-service national media systems from media systems

with less state involvement and primarily commercial news outlets (e.g., Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009). Most prominently, Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini's 2004 *Comparing Media Systems* offers a foundational typology of media systems based on the "structure and political role of news media," (p. 1) and subsequent analyses such as Brüggemann, Engesser, Büchel, Humprecht, and Castro (2014) build upon and reassess Hallin and Mancini's work with updated data. This analysis draws from literature on media systems to identify attributes upon which to compare national media environments and offers an original contribution to the literature by testing whether the relationship between news consumption and partisan attitudes differs cross-nationally.

I categorize national media systems on the basis of national policy and economic indicators on a spectrum ranging from a "commercial" pole, corresponding with Strömbäck's commercial logic, to "public-service" pole, corresponding with Strömbäck's political logic. The central dimensions on which I categorize media systems are: (a) the level of state involvement in news production and broadcasting; (b) the regulation of media ownership; and (c) the per capita employment of journalists. These three measures are highly interdependent and often reflect the same underlying policies and economic context. In combination, they offer a blunt proxy for a much more complex latent characteristic of national media systems: the extent to which a nation takes an active hand in nourishing substantive journalism and a robust press.

What distinguishes commercial from public-service media systems?

The clearest point of distinction between commercial and public-service media system is the extent to which the state directly finances journalism through public-service broadcasting or by subsidizing private news outlets. In nations with public-service media systems, government broadcasters are dominant sources of both public affairs content and popular programming, reeling in citizens who would not patronize dedicated news outlets. As public-service broadcasters do not need to compete with private commercial stations for ad revenue, they have far less incentive to produce sensationalist news content than commercial firms. Although minority parties have often accused state broadcasters of bias, Hallin and Mancini note that "internal pluralism" is a common characteristic of public-service broadcasters in Western Europe, manifest through oversight boards that avoid one-party dominance by including representatives of various political and community organizations, which serve to check one another's power and produce a neutral, professional editorial tone (2004, p. 170). Pluralities of citizens rank a public-service news outlet as their main news source across many Western European nations, including the UK (48%), Sweden (39%), the Netherlands (37%), Germany (32%), and Denmark (31%) (Pew Research Center, 2018a).

Public-service outlets act as an anchor for trust in the media. In nations with well-funded public-service media, vast majorities of the citizenry indicate that they trust the primary public-service broadcaster, including more than three quarters of citizens in Denmark, Germany, the UK, and Sweden (Pew Research Center, 2018a). Hallin and Mancini, among others, suggest that citizens have confidence in their public-service

broadcasters in part because they fund them, often through direct license fees that make the public ownership and civic purpose of the outlets more salient for citizens. In contrast, commercial media systems are marked by disagreement among the citizenry over which news sources should be trusted. In the United States, which offers the least support for public media of its Western democratic peers, fewer than one in two Americans say they can think of a news source that reports the news objectively. Additionally, Republicans who say they can identify an objective news source overwhelmingly list Fox News (Knight Foundation, 2017), an outlet that a strong majority of Democrats distrust (Pew Research Center, 2020).

The quality of public-service news media content and its ability to inform citizens has been a robust finding throughout comparative studies of political communication. Aalberg and Curran, as editors of the six-country study *How Media Inform Democracy* (2012, p. 12), write: "The central conclusion of this book is that public service television sustains a higher level of public affairs knowledge than market-based television." Public-service news programming tends to be substantive in coverage of public affairs, devoting much more attention to international news and producing little sensationalist, conflict-oriented news (Iyengar, 2007). Scholars attribute divergent outcomes from commercial and public-service media to the content of news broadcasts. Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, and Salovaara-Moring (2009) conducted simultaneous content analyses and surveys in Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, and the United States, and they found public-service television devotes more attention to hard news, both foreign and domestic, and public-service media systems foster better-informed electorates than market-led media systems.

Kolmer and Semetko (2010) similarly find that public-service television with high viewership and government support in Western Europe provides news audiences with a significantly higher share of foreign affairs news in comparison to privately-owned broadcasters in the United States. Additionally, content analyses find that news content from public-service broadcasting outlets tends to be more substantive than news content from commercial outlets (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013). In contrast, privately operated news media broadcasters and outlets tend to focus less on politics in general, but when they do the coverage is distinguished by a domestic focus on horserace coverage of elections with little focus on policy and affected constituents (Iyengar, 2007).

As public-service news programs tend not to produce partisan programming or favor a particular party, regular viewers of public-service news programming will be exposed to substantive, cross-cutting profiles of the views of their opposition by merit of watching programs that feature earnest portrayals of multiple perspectives. Theories of inter-media agenda setting suggest that the topics addressed by public-service media outlets may be malleable to commercial peers; however, content analyses in the UK have found public-service media to be notably independent of influence by the editorial decisions of the UK's partisan newspapers (Cushion, Kilby, Thomas, Morani, & Sambrook, 2016), suggesting that public-service news can provide a bulwark of substantive, cross-cutting news even in a market featuring commercial partisan outlets.

A related form of state intervention in the production of news content comes in subsidies. It's common for nations, especially those with public-service media systems, to subsidize both outlets and individual journalists, either through direct sponsorship or

indirect benefits, such as reduced taxation and rates for government services (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 58). Economists Matthew Gentzkow, Jesse Shapiro, and Michael Sinkinson (2014) draw on decades of historical data to model the effects of policy interventions on newspaper markets and find government subsidies to be the most successful intervention in fostering economic welfare of news outlets and ideological diversity in media markets, while also increasing readership. Press subsidies help to insulate the companies and journalists who produce news content from market forces. In Sweden, the initiative to subsidize newspapers was guided by the slogan "diversity, competition, and choice" and helped to prolong the production of local news through the 2000s, despite strong market pressures (Ots, 2009).

A second distinguishing attribute between public-service and commercial media systems is the degree to which restrictions are placed upon media ownership—in particular, the consolidation of media ownership through mergers and acquisitions. In their models of newspaper ownership, Gentzkow, Shapiro, and Sinkinson (2014) present evidence that competition in news media markets fosters ideological diversity; however, significantly relaxed ownership restrictions reduce the welfare, ideological diversity, and number of media outlets. Media conglomerates are able to create economies of scale by centralizing the production of news content—be it a single video production studio that supplies dozens of local affiliates with newscasts, a centralized newsroom that produces content for many newspapers and/or websites, or a single broadcast station that allows radio transmission to be carried on many stations. Loose media ownership regulations in the United States have resulted in the rapid consolidation of local television news stations

within growing national conglomerates. As of 2016, five companies owned 37% of local TV stations, with the total number of stations controlled by these five companies more than doubling since 2004 (Pew Research Center, 2018a). Corporate-friendly anti-trust laws in media ownership place news media companies into dire competition with ever-larger rivals that operate on smaller margins through economies of scale by the centralization of content production. With thinner margins and an audience with proliferating choices in entertainment, commercial media outlets are incentivized to publish content that reels in viewers and do so by infusing news coverage with drama, conflict, and an emphasis on personal interest stories. It stands to reason that the companies which successfully grow in such an environment are able to both maximize efficiencies of scale and produce news content that keeps viewers watching. Historically, the shift toward consolidation has brought with it cost-cutting in the newsroom, especially of bureaus away from headquarters and investigative reporting, and a preference for content that attracts viewership among viewer segments most attractive to marketers (Champlin & Knoedler, 2002). As veteran ABC News reporter David Wright quipped bluntly while being unknowingly recorded, “Commercial imperative is incompatible with news” (Farhi, 2020).

The organizational realignments inherent in consolidation influence the sort of news on which outlets focus. The centralization of news production greatly reduces the emphasis on local news coverage as a result of the spatial concentration of news resources, as well as the need to produce news content that appeals to a broader audience. Local news channels that once operated entirely out of in-town studios now often air

segments recorded hundreds or thousands of miles away and that are aired in multiple media markets. The geographic disconnect between the production and consumption of news content reduces the ability and motivation of news outlets to focus on stories that are unique to any subset of their viewers at risk of boring the majority. Martin & McCrain (2018) found that this dramatic shift away from local news coverage as a result of conglomeration is guided by corporate motives, rather than demand-side preferences, and results in reduced viewership. By permitting corporate consolidation that incentivizes economies of scale and makes local news production a precarious venture, commercial media systems reduce voters' information and attention to local politics. Reductions in the availability of local news cause declines in political interest and political participation (Hayes & Lawless, 2015). Additionally, a national focus in the coverage of politics reiterates the centrality of federal elections, diminishing the potential for voters to incorporate local nuance into their partisan identities. Instead, a consistent national focus in news media offers voters a short roster of politicians and debates that are of universal interest, helping to rally partisan teams against one another on the common playing field of national politics.

The third metric discussed in this analysis is the number of journalists employed per capita. Employment of journalists serves as a convergent measure of market competition and media ownership regulations, while also offering a complementary indicator for the production of professional news content in a media system. Journalist employment tells the story of the declining US newspaper industry, which has occurred as readers transition to free online sources of news (Curran, 2011). As substantive

reporting is peripheral to conglomerate media companies' focus on short-term profits, the net number of professionals producing news content falls as media systems become increasingly commercialized (Camplin & Knoedler, 2002). While digital transition has had a global impact on media company revenue, media ownership regulations have shaped how national media industries weather this transition. In media systems with loose ownership regulations, economies of scale reward companies that produce news content efficiently, with smaller staffs and lower labor costs. This trend has been most evident in the US media system, in which local television stations and newspapers have been acquired by conglomerates and private equity firms at an accelerating rate (Shephard, 2018). In Western Europe, the effects on the media industry have been far less dramatic (Curran, 2011), where consolidation is more heavily regulated and smaller commercial firms often receive government subsidies.

Journalist employment bears on the likelihood of cross-cutting exposure, as whether citizens will encounter such cross-cutting content depends on there being journalists, editors, and outlets to publish it. A principal outcome of the reduction of the journalistic news force is an inability to devote the necessary resources to substantive coverage of public affairs. Critical media economist Victor Pickard describes the US news media industry as in a state of "market failure" due to the elimination of journalism jobs, resulting in the US media becoming unable to fulfill its democratic role of informing citizens and holding government accountable (2019). With media companies unwilling or unable to hire high-quality labor, the remaining journalists have adapted to an expectation that they will publish more frequently, with less editorial oversight, on

SEO-friendly and trending topics that follow the news of the day (Klinenberg, 2005). To reduce costs and increase financial flexibility, many media firms have embraced part-time and contract workers, journalists who are ill-positioned to pursue detailed, substantive political journalism. News firms have also incorporated measures of audience behavior and audience interest into their editorial decision-making (Anderson, 2011), rendering news sources less likely to expose viewers to new perspectives and information. The nascent trend of AI-generated news content reflects the fundamental mismatch of media companies' profit motive and the labor-intensive act of producing journalism (Lindén, 2017).

Partisanship and media consumption across media systems

On the basis of the three mechanisms identified in this study, news consumption in commercial media systems should stimulate partisanship as a social identity to a greater degree than in public-service media systems. In public-service media systems, flagship public broadcasters will incidentally expose low-interest citizens to high quality news content that features cross-cutting perspectives and a substantive, relatively neutral perspective on public affairs. Indeed, empirical studies have found that citizens in public-service media systems are much more likely to be exposed to cross-cutting perspectives (Castro-Herrero, Nir, & Skovsgaard, 2018). Commercial media systems, however, do not have highly viewed public-service broadcasters and do not offer significant subsidies to private news media firms. Instead, minimal oversight of media ownership contributes to fierce competition for the pool of interested viewers, incentivizing the adoption of commercial tactics, such as sensationalism and appealing to niche audiences through

partisan news. The financial precariousness of the news media industry curbs outlets' investment in journalistic talent and detailed reporting, reducing the supply of good-faith explanations of policy plans and values that could diminish partisan affect in news consumers. Thus, I predict:

H1: Consumption of news media content will predict larger increases in partisan affect in commercial media systems than in public-service media systems.

H2: Consumption of news media content will predict larger increases in party loyalty in vote choice in commercial media systems than in public-service media systems.

Chapter 5. Quantitative Methods

This analysis employs two survey data sets, one equipped to test H1 and the other better suited for H2. To test H1, I use data from the Comparative National Elections Project (CNEP), which has fielded post-election surveys since 1990 in 28 countries. I analyze survey data from five countries that offer a range of national media systems: Germany, Great Britain, France, Portugal, and the United States. To test H2, I use data collected in 14 countries in the 2019 European Election Studies' (EES) Voter Studies: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the UK (Schmitt, Hobolt, van der Brug, & Popa, 2019) (see Table 2). The selection of countries for both analyses was based on theoretical and practical considerations. Only countries that have both a robust media infrastructure and democratic political system were considered for inclusion to allow for a consistent theoretical approach grounded in social identity theory and salient electoral competition. Countries were then selected if data were available at both the individual level through EES or CNEP and the national level (i.e., media environment indicators).

All analyses in this study are restricted to the subset of respondents who identify with a political party.[1] This decision follows from the arguments outlined above: Both H1

[1] Party identification was measured in CNEP using the survey item "Many people feel close to a particular political party over a long period of time, although they may occasionally vote for a different party. What about you? Is there a particular political party that you feel closer to than all the other parties?" and in EES as "Do you consider yourself to be close to any particular party? If so, which party do you feel close to?"

and H2 operate from the initial assumption that a voter's identification with their preferred party is a powerful social identity that can be made more or less salient by consumption of news media. Party attachment has been shown to be a stable trait, capable of powerfully shaping attitudes and behavior for citizens in nations with varying party structures (Westwood et al., 2018). Past research indicates that partisan leaners adopt their party as a social identity (Greene, 2002) and hold attitudes similar to strong identifiers about out-group partisans (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). There is a strong basis for the assumption that partisans in any Western democracy have in common a partisan identity that can be influenced by media, and it follows that comparing partisans between nations can reasonably be considered an apples-to-apples comparison. Accordingly, respondents who indicate a partisan preference of any strength are included in this analysis.

Many nonpartisans, too, carry strong stable party attachments, but there is cross-national heterogeneity in the incidence and rationale of partisans that opt to not openly identify with their party. Such voters, deemed "undercover partisans" by Klar and Krupnikov (2016), should be similarly susceptible to ebbs and flows in the salience of their covert partisan identities. However, while partisans all identify with parties for more or less the same reasons (i.e., an affinity for the party), the reasons that nonpartisans may choose to not identify with a party, especially when they are effectively partisans in behavior, are myriad and cannot be generalized between countries. Klar and Krupnikov detail a wealth of evidence that social disdain rooted in cultural stereotypes of partisan behavior motivates many US "independents in name only" to reject a partisan label, and

the share of Americans identifying as independent has been variable over time and responsive to elite political behavior (2016).

It is reasonable to assume, on the basis of Klar and Krupnikov's research into undercover partisans in the United States, that the share of such covert partisans in an electorate is a function of a complex blend of cultural and political factors. Thus, testing the relationship between news media consumption and polarized attitudes among nonpartisans would suffer from omitted variable bias without accounting for heterogeneity in the share of undercover partisans, for which data is not readily available. For instance, if 20% of US nonpartisans are "undercover partisans" whereas 5% are in Germany, then analyses would likely find more evidence of partisan-polarized attitudes among US nonpartisans than German nonpartisans. If the relationship between media consumption and polarized attitudes for US nonpartisans were to be stronger than for German nonpartisans, then attributing this finding to a ubiquitously polarizing US media would be to miss the underlying compositional difference between the two electorates and exaggerate the importance of news media in shaping political attitudes for nonpartisans. Thus, I exclude nonpartisans from this study, keeping with the approach common to Iyengar, Lelkes, and Sood (2012), Iyengar and Krupenkin (2018) and other US-focused analyses of partisan affect as well as cross-national analyses of affective polarization such as Boxell, Gentzkow & Shapiro (2020). As a result of subsetting, the samples included in this study skew more educated and more interested in politics than the populations overall (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Categorization of national media systems

In this analysis, I categorize media systems on the basis of three key indicators: (a) state support for public-service broadcasting and private news outlets; (b) state regulation of media ownership; and (c) journalists as a share of total national employment. For the first and second indicators, I draw from Brüggemann et al.'s (2014) empirical validation of the Hallin and Mancini (2004) typology for categorizing media systems. Brüggemann et al. offer a wealth of standardized indicators for attributes of national media environments that facilitate cross-national comparison. Three of these standardized indicators have particular relevance for this study. First, national public broadcasting is measured as a combination of public TV market share and public TV revenue (which is primarily raised through taxes) as a percentage of GDP.[2] Second, press subsidies are measured as a combination of direct financial subsidies to news outlets as a percentage of GDP and indirect subsidies through tax reduction.[3] I average the national public broadcasting and press subsidies indicators from Brüggemann et al. to calculate a measure of state support for news media. The third indicator I adapt from Brüggemann et al. measures the regulation of media companies, which is determined through three binary items: whether the state imposes ownership regulations on (a) television stations;

[2] Brüggemann et al. source this data from the European Audiovisual Observatory report from 2011 for European countries and from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the United States, which published this data in 2009. While these data are dated, Brüggemann et al. in 2014 found relatively little change in media system attributes since Hallin and Mancini's original analysis in 2004. Thus, it can be safely assumed that media system attributes are slow to change and these data are adequate, although not ideal.
[3] Brüggemann et al. source this data from the World Press Trends 2010 report.

(b) newspapers/publishers; and (c) media companies across platforms.[4] These three items are combined and standardized, forming the metric for media ownership regulations. Lastly, journalist employment is calculated by taking the total number of journalists employed in the country as a percentage of the total number of people employed in the country, which is then standardized to match the other indicators.[5]

For each nation, I average the three standardized indicators to produce a measure of overall public-service/commercial disposition. On the basis of this overall average score, I categorize nations with a score of 0.25 or higher as "public-service" national media systems, nations with a score of less than -0.25 as "commercial" national media systems, and nations in between as "hybrid" national media systems (see Table 3).

Measures

Dependent variables

Differences in party system structure between countries pose critical theoretical and methodological questions for the cross-national analysis of political behavior. Accordingly, comparative scholars have probed whether partisanship is comparable across democracies (e.g., Thommassen & Rosema, 2009). Contemporary comparative research suggests that partisanship is a stable and salient identity, regardless of party system. In *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (2002), Green, Palmquist, and Shickler analyze the

[4] Brüggemann et al. source this data from the European Audiovisual Observatory report from 2011 for European countries and from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the United States, which published this data in 2009.

[5] Data from Eurostat (2018) was used for European nations and from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) for the United States. For Portugal, an estimate for the number of working journalists from Novais and Henriques (2016) was used, due to a coverage gap in Eurostat data.

stability of partisan identity in three countries with three or more strong parties—Great Britain, Canada, and Germany—using panel data collected over time periods in which each country experienced dramatic changes in the parties' electoral fortunes (p. 182). They found that partisanship at the individual level remained remarkably stable, having R-squared values mostly exceeding .90 (and exceeding .97 for the UK) over multi-year periods. Green et al. conclude that the stability of partisan identity under multiparty systems closely resembles that in the United States. Similarly, Brader and Tucker (2012) find that "self-reported identification seems to signal a qualitatively similar form of partisanship in new and old democracies," as evidenced by partisans' willingness to follow their party's lead on policy items. Westwood, Iyengar, Walgrave, Leonisio, Miller and Strijbis (2018) find that partisanship "consistently divides citizens to an extent that exceeds other salient social divides" in both multi-party European nations and the United States. Thus, there is strong empirical grounding to assume partisanship is a similar social identity across western democratic nations with varying political and party structures.

The dependent variable for H1 is partisan affect.[6] In studies of American political behavior, partisan affect is traditionally measured as the net difference in how a partisan rates their in-party and out-parties using feeling thermometer survey items (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). Individuals' partisan affect scores are then averaged to estimate affective polarization. CNEP surveys are used to test H1, as they include party feeling

[6] Following Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) and Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro (2020), I refer to an individual's net favorability for their in-group compared with out-group parties as the individual's partisan affect. Affective polarization is measured by aggregating partisan affect. This semantic distinction follows the definitions laid out by Fiorina and Abrams (2008) that explicitly identify polarization as an attribute of groups, not individuals.

thermometer measures: “We would like to know your feelings toward some political parties and leaders on a scale from 0-10. For example, if you feel very favorable toward one of the individuals or parties listed, you can give it a high score up to 10; if you feel very unfavorable toward this person or party you can give a low score down to 0; if you feel neutral toward it, you should give it a 5.” Calculating the partisan affect of a US voter is straightforward as a result of the two-party system, but there is not a consensus approach for adapting this methodology to multiparty systems. In this analysis, I follow the methodology employed by economists Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro in their analysis of cross-national affective polarization (2020).

At the individual level, each partisan is assigned a partisan affect score, which is the average difference in how the partisan rates their in-party and each out-party on a feeling thermometer scale. To calculate this average net difference score, each difference is weighted to correct for variation in the size of parties. The weight applied to each difference (i.e., the difference between how a partisan rates their in-party and a particular out-party) is proportional to the share of survey respondents who identify with that particular out-party. Thus, a partisan’s feeling toward a large out-party is weighted more heavily than a partisan’s feelings toward a fringe party. For instance, if survey respondent *i* rates their in-party *a* as a 10 and out-party *b* as a 4 on the feeling thermometer scale and party *b*’s supporters comprise 40% of all non-party *a* national survey respondents (effectively, 40% of respondent *i*’s aggregate out-group), then the net difference score of $a - b$ would be multiplied by 0.4 and summed with the other weighted net difference scores to calculate respondent *i*’s partisan affect. The general formula, adopted directly

from Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro (2020), for the partisan affect, π, of individual respondent *i* is:

$$\pi_i = \sum_{p' \in P_i \setminus p(i)} \frac{W(p')}{W(P_i) - W\big(p(i)\big)} \left(A_i^{p(i)} - A_i^{p'}\right)$$

In which *p(i)* is the party the respondent *i* identifies with, of parties $P_i \subseteq P$ for which respondent *i* completes a feeling thermometer. $W(P_i)$ refers to the weighted number of *N* respondents to the survey in which respondent *i* participated, *W(p')* refers to the subset of respondents that identify with a particular out-party, and *W(p(i))* refers to the number of respondents that identify with respondent *i*'s in-party. Thus, the net difference score between respondent *i*'s in-party and each out-party ($A_i^{p(i)} - A_i^{p'}$) is weighted by the relative size of the respective out-party. These individual-level scores can then be aggregated within each country to calculate a national estimate for affective polarization, Π, by multiplying each respondent's partisan affect by their weight, w_i, as a share of the sum of weights for all respondents to their survey $W(P_i)$:

$$\Pi = \sum_{i \subseteq N} \frac{w_i}{W(P_i)} \pi_i$$

The dependent variable for H2 is party loyalty in vote choice. I adapt Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro's (2020) method for calculating affective polarization to voter loyalty by simply switching the key variable from feeling thermometer ratings, *A*, to a measure of likelihood of support, *V*. Likelihood of support was measured through a survey item: "How probable is it that you will ever vote for the following parties? Please

answer on a scale where 0 means ‘not at all probable’ and 10 means ‘very probable’.” As such, each respondent’s party loyalty, ϕ, is calculated as:

$$\phi_i = \sum_{p\prime \in P_i \setminus p(i)} \frac{W(p')}{W(P_i) - W\big(p(i)\big)} \left(V_i^{p(i)} - V_i^{p'}\right)$$

National estimates for in-party vote loyalty, Φ, would then be calculated as:

$$\Phi = \sum_{i \subseteq N} \frac{w_i}{W(P_i)} \phi_i$$

Both feeling thermometers and party loyalty are measured for all major parties in each represented nation. The relevant survey items ask about parties rather than individual politicians with one exception: Feeling thermometer ratings for Emmanuel Macron are substituted for feeling thermometer ratings of Macron’s party, En Marche!, due to the recency of the party’s creation. Additionally, Germany’s CDU and CSU parties are treated as one unified party in this analysis to reflect their status as a “sister parties” which occupy separate geographic territory but form a coalition at the national level. In the CNEP data, the feeling thermometer items for the CDU and the CSU are averaged to create a unified measure. In the EES data, vote choice probability is measured together for the CDU and the CSU in the original survey item.

One consequence of this method of calculating partisan affect and voter loyalty is the necessity of including only respondents who have indicated they identify with a particular party. While the decision to include only partisans (at any level of strength of identification) in these analyses is theoretically grounded and aligns with the literature, it is noteworthy that the Boxell, Gentzkow, and Shapiro (2020) method requires included respondents explicitly identify with a party. An alternative method would be to assign the

party that the respondent feels warmest toward as their preferred party. However, this approach would assume that respondents always indicate they feel most favorably toward their in-party. This assumption would be especially hard to defend in the case of multiparty systems in which a respondent may feel warmly toward a minority party but strategically votes for and identifies with a more mainstream party. Alternately, a voter may feel temporarily frustrated or disillusioned with the party with which they continue to identify, given the stickiness of partisanship. Such a situation is not uncommon: Of the 9,273 respondents that identify as partisans in the analysis of 2019 EES data used in this analysis, 17.2% indicated at least one other party that they were more likely to vote for than their in-party.

Media measures. In conjunction with media system, media habits are the primary independent variables of interest in this study. Media habits are measured differently in the two data sources used in this analysis.

CNEP surveys are conducted following national elections, and respondents are asked to indicate if they followed their country's election through various news media platforms. Each participant was asked, "How many days per week did you follow information, such as news or opinion, about the election through…" and answered separately for television (M = 4.38, SD = 2.73), newspapers (M = 2.87, SD = 2.84), radio (M = 2.54, SD = 2.75), and online news outlets (M = 2.84, SD = 2.91). I also combine these measures into an index for news media exposure which is platform-agnostic: For the "any medium" index (M = 5.19, SD = 2.44), each respondent's score is simply the number of days per week they patronized their most-used news platform. For example, a

respondent who answered three days per week to television and one day per week for every other medium would receive a three. I follow this top-platform methodology, rather than creating a summative measure, to emphasize the distinction between infrequent and frequent media consumers. A summative measure would significantly up-weight the media consumption of respondents who have diverse media intake in terms of the platforms. For instance, a summative measure would assign a score of 14 to a respondent who reads a newspaper and internet news for a combined hour daily and a score of 7 to a respondent who watches hours of television news per day but reports no additional news sources. As this study focuses on general frequency of news consumption, rather than diversity in platforms for news consumption, this top-platform method is better suited for the subsequent analyses than a summative measure. Both the any-media measure and the channel-specific measures are used to test H1.

The lone media survey item in EES does not distinguish between platforms. Instead, respondents are asked how closely they followed the "campaign ahead of the European Parliament elections in the media or on social media" on a 0 to 10 scale (M = 5.23, SD = 3.02). This measure is blunt and has several noteworthy weaknesses: It leaves the definition and scale of "closely" up to the respondent, does not differentiate between news platforms, and does not specify whether the respondent should think only of professional journalists and news outlets or include exposure to information from non-journalists on social media. Nonetheless, system-level media analysis focuses on attributes that permeate the production and dissemination of journalism across all media

platforms and should thereby have a wide-reaching effect on civic discourse. Thus, such a survey item is sufficient, if not ideal, to test H2.

Covariates

I include several covariates in the following ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models: age (measured in years), gender (dummy variable with female coded as 1), and education. The measures for education are different in CNEP—in which I calculate it as a dummy variable indicating whether or not the respondent's educational attainment is above the mean for their country[7]—and in EES, in which it is measured as the age at which the respondent finished their full-time education. These demographic covariates are included in each analysis as they are known to be correlated with both political attitudes and media consumption habits and are each stable traits that are not influenced by media consumption. Thus, their omission may lead to omitted variable bias and their inclusion helps to remove bias from the estimation of media's effects on political attitudes and behavior.

Political interest (on a scale of 0 to 3) is also included in all models. Although it can be influenced by media consumption, political interest has been shown to be quite stable over individuals' lives (Prior, 2010), indicating a stronger causal effect from interest on media consumption than vice versa. Although its inclusion introduces downward bias in the estimated effects of media, it is more conservative to include it as a

[7] While this measure is regrettably vague, it is necessary to harmonize the data across the varying scales which were used in data collection. As the five country-specific education scales are categorical and responses tend to be highly clustered around the mean, the respondents are not divided evenly across the binary education variables. For surveys with just four categorical levels, such as Germany, fewer than 35% of respondents are scored as 1.

covariate than exclude it. Not controlling for political interest would most likely inflate the estimates of media's influence, as measures of media consumption would also act as a proxy for political interest. Further, the correlation between political interest and the platform-agnostic media-consumption CNEP measure (r = .43) and the EES media measure (r = .57) are strong but suggest that there are meaningful differences in the latent concepts they tap.

Several additional measures of political engagement are used in robustness checks but are omitted in primary models due to concerns with endogeneity. First, measures of strength of party identification have been useful in predicting partisans' willingness to adopt party-aligned policy positions (Brader & Tucker, 2012) and should be similarly effective at predicting other party-aligned attitudes and behaviors. However, the cross-sectional data sets used in this study are not equipped to distinguish between loyal partisans whose party attachment leads to increases in their media consumption and frequent news consumers whose media exposure leads to more salient and stronger party identification. Strength of party identification is highly related to the two dependent variables and thus its inclusion is akin to conditioning on the dependent variable (Montgomery, Nyhan, & Torres, 2018). As a result, strength of partisanship is not included in most models in this study, but it is employed in robustness checks. Second, both CNEP and EES include a measure for whether the respondent voted in the most recent election, which can be incorporated as a covariate to increase control for political

interest and engagement.[8] As with strength of party identification, the direction of causality cannot be assumed in the relationship between media consumption and turnout, as the politically engaged are more likely to be interested in news and news consumption can also motivate low-interest citizens to vote (Prior, 2007). As with political interest, including whether a respondent voted will also introduce downward bias for media effects; however, its selective inclusion permits for conservative tests of media's effects. Third, the CNEP data set also allows for political knowledge to be included as a covariate. The political knowledge measure is based on survey items that test the respondent's knowledge of unambiguous facts about national and international politics. These measures are unique to each country, and they are scaled for this analysis such that the maximum score is 4 for an individual respondent. Political knowledge is highly correlated with news consumption (Curran, Iyengar, Brink Lund, & Salovaara-Moring, 2009) and, as media accounts for the bulk of citizens' exposure to public affairs, is largely subsequent to media exposure. As political knowledge should thus be considered a post-treatment variable (Montgomery, Nyhan, & Torres, 2018), it is excluded from the primary models so as not to introduce downward bias in the estimate of the effects of news media on partisan affect. However, it is an alternate measure of political engagement that does not suffer from social desirability bias to the same extent as self-reported political interest. Thus, it is included in conservative models to test for robustness.

[8] In CNEP, respondents are asked whether they voted in the most recent national election for head of state. In EES, respondents are asked whether they voted in the European Parliament elections in 2019.

Tests of significance, weighting, and statistical software

I use OLS multiple linear regression models to test both hypotheses in two ways: first, pooled models to test the joint significance of interaction terms between media system and media consumption; second, models specific to countries and media systems, which are used to plot predicted values of the dependent variables for visual comparison. To estimate the pooled models, I follow the fixed effects approach to analyzing cross-national survey data described by Bryan and Jenkins (2013) and Möhring (2012) by including dummy variables for media system group and specifying interactions between these dummies and independent variables of interest. I then test the joint significance of the interaction terms between the media system dummies and media consumption. By estimating restricted models that include media consumption and media system then testing whether the addition of interaction terms significantly improves model fit, I can test whether the effect of media consumption differs between media systems without relying on *t* statistics for individual coefficients. I use media system and country-specific models as complementary tests which allow the slopes of all covariates to differ between models.

For all cross-national pooled models, I first harmonize the cross-national data by standardizing all indicators within each country. For instance, if the mean days per week of television news consumption in country *j* is 5 with a standard deviation of 1, then a respondent from country *j* who reported they watch television news 7 days per week would have a standardized television news score of 2 in the pooled data set. This step is necessary as the comparisons of interest are between citizens within the same national

media system, so media consumption and political attitudes should be considered in the context of each respondent's political and media system. More specifically, this analysis does not seek to estimate the absolute impact of consuming news on partisan affect or vote loyalty; instead, this analysis seeks to measure whether a citizen who consumes more political news than their neighbor is also likely to have more partisan attitudes and party loyalty in vote choice, all else equal.

In pooled models, cross-national weights are used, which weight the observations from each country to be nationally representative and adjust the weighted *N* across surveys so that surveys with more respondents are not up-weighted. In country-specific models, survey responses are also weighted to be nationally representative. All standard errors are robust to heteroskedasticity. Models are estimated using the *survey* package in *R* (Lumley, 2019) to incorporate weights, and tests of joint significance are performed using the *car* package in *R* (Fox & Weisberg, 2019).

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis states that media consumption will predict greater increases in partisan affect for citizens in nations with commercial media systems compared to nations with public-service media systems. The theoretical justification for this prediction encompasses both direct media effects—that sensationalist coverage of public affairs will stimulate partisan identity and that cross-cutting coverage will mitigate it—and indirect, as commercial media environments accelerate the bifurcation of citizenries into news-viewers who are interested in politics and non-news viewers who tend to be apathetic. I test this hypothesis with CNEP survey data from 5 countries representing the three media

system categorizations: commercial (Portugal and the United States), hybrid (Great Britain), and public-service (Germany and France).

The relationship hypothesized by H1 is an interaction, predicting that the marginal effect of media consumption on partisan affect will differ for respondents in different media systems. To test this hypothesis, I first test whether the inclusion of interaction terms between media consumption and a categorical variable for media system significantly explains variance in partisan affect. I estimate a pooled restricted model, which does not include any interaction terms, and a pooled unrestricted model, which includes the interaction between media consumption and media system type, then conduct an *F* test for the joint significance of the interaction terms. I specify two pairs of models: first using the platform-agnostic media measures, then using separate indicators for all four media measures. As this method does not account for the survey sampling design and instead treats all observations as belonging to a single simple random sample, the standard errors of coefficients will be underestimated.[9] Thus, I conduct complementary tests with nation-specific models and compare findings.

To test whether the effects of media consumption differ between media systems, I first estimate a restricted model in which partisan affect is regressed onto platform-agnostic media consumption, age, gender, a binary measure of education, political interest, and a categorical variable for media system (which includes three values:

[9] Social scientists most often account for this additional source of variance from pooling surveys by calculating clustered standard errors. However, past analyses have found that the number of clusters should typically exceed 40 at a minimum and will otherwise likely produce a more biased result than ignoring survey design elements (Esarey & Menger, 2017).

commercial, hybrid, and public-service).[10] The unrestricted model is estimated by regressing partisan affect onto the same variables but including interaction terms between the categorical media system variable and the platform-agnostic media consumption variable. All measures (aside from the categorical variable for media system) are standardized within each country before being pooled.

The results of this first test do not support H1 (full results in Table 4), as the interaction terms are not jointly significant, $F(2, 5248) = 1.23$, p = NS. While the interactions terms for public-service and hybrid media-system dummy variables with media consumption are negative, they are not discernible from 0.

Next, I test H1 with pooled models including the full set of media indicators. First, a restricted model is estimated in which partisan affect is regressed onto the four platform-specific media measures (television, newspaper, internet, and radio), age, gender, education, and political interest, as well as a categorical variable for media system. Then, an unrestricted model is estimated including the same coefficients along with interaction terms between the media-system categorical variable and each media consumption measure.

The results of this second analyses do offer support for H1 (full results in Table 5). The interaction terms are jointly significant, $F(8, 5205) = 2.25$, $p < .05$. Further, the coefficients of the interaction terms' slopes fit the predicted relationships. The main effect of television is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.12,\ SE = 0.04,\ t = 4.57,\ p <$

[10] The media system variable will be indistinguishable from 0 given the mean-centering standardizing process, yet is included for consistency and to not artificially deflate the *F* test by unnecessarily withholding additional variables from the restricted model.

.001), which is the only statistically significant main effect for a media platform at a confidence level of 95%. The reference category for the media system categorical variable is "commercial," so the main effect of television news consumption is effectively the slope for commercial media systems. Thus, the pooled model indicates that in a commercial media system a one standard deviation increase in television news consumption per week (relative to the national mean level of television news consumption) increases partisan affect by 0.12 standard deviations (relative to the national mean), with all else held equal. The interaction term between television news consumption and public-service media system is significant and negative ($\beta = -0.15,\ SE = 0.05,\ t = -3.20,\ p < .01$), effectively canceling out the main effect of television news for respondents in public-service media systems. The interaction term for hybrid media system and television news consumption is similarly significant and negative ($\beta = -0.10,\ SE = 0.05,\ t = -2.49,\ p < .05$). The interaction terms remain jointly significant, $F(8, 5205) = 2.64$, $p < .001$, and the patterns of marginal effects do not change when election turnout, political knowledge, and strength of party identification are included as covariates (full results in Table 6).

To further examine the relationship between media consumption and partisan affect in these three media systems, I specify a linear regression model for each country, regressing partisan affect on media consumption and demographic covariates. This alternate method of estimation allows me to avoid assumptions about consistent effects of demographic covariates between nations and instead allows the coefficients for demographic traits to vary between countries. Observations in these models are weighted

to be nationally representative, and all variables are included as level, rather than standardized, for ease of interpretation.

Table 7 shows the results of partisan affect regressed on the unified media measure along with demographics. These results offer partial support for H1, as platform-agnostic media usage in commercial media systems (Portugal and the United States) has a larger marginal effect on partisan affect than in hybrid (Great Britain) and public-service (France and Germany) media systems. The point estimate for the United States results is relatively large and positive but a large standard error renders it indistinguishable from zero.

Next, I estimate a second set of five nation-specific models with an independent variable for each media platform, rather than a single media measure. These results (see Table 8) strengthen the support for H1, as the only significant, positive coefficients for the marginal effects of news media consumption on partisan affect are found for countries with commercial media systems. As with the pooled model, television is the sole news medium of the four tested that had a significant positive effect on partisan affect; however, reading newspapers had a comparable negative effect in France and radio had a marginal negative effect in Germany, both of which have public-service media systems. OLS coefficients for media measures are shown with 95% confidence intervals in Figure 2.

These results indicate that each additional day of television news consumption per week increases partisan affect for a US partisan by 0.15 points on average on a 10-point scale and by 0.18 for a partisan in Portugal, with the effects of other sources of news

media and covariates held constant. The predicted effects of television on partisan affect are plotted in Figure 3, along with bands indicating 95% confidence intervals. As this figure holds all values constant other than television news consumption, it should not be taken as a comparison of average levels of affective polarization in each country.

To check the robustness of these results, I specify an additional set of country-specific models including the full suite of media measures with political knowledge, strength of party identification, and whether the respondent voted in the most recent election. The results (see Table 9) show that the findings do not change with these additional measures of political engagement included. Thus, these data offer support for H1, with the caveat that the patterns are only strongly supported when media consumption is specified using platform-specific indicators rather than the "top platform" measure.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis runs parallel to the first: The effects of news media consumption on party loyalty in vote choice will be greater than in commercial media systems than in public-service media systems. Again, this hypothesis follows from the theory that news content in commercial media environments will directly trigger partisanship as a salient identity to a greater extent than in public-service environment where news consumers are more likely to be exposed to cross-cutting messages, as well as the indirect effects of commercial media environments that facilitate low-interest voters avoiding politics entirely. Voters for whom partisanship is a salient identity are

motivated by social attraction and negative partisanship to adhere to the group prototype and vote loyally.

I test this hypothesis with EES survey data from 14 countries. I group countries into three bins according to their media-system classification: commercial (the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain), public-service (Austria, France, Germany, and Sweden), and hybrid (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and the UK).

As with H1, I first test the joint significance of interactions terms between the media system categorical variable and the continuous variable for news media consumption. To do so, I first standardize all variables within each country. This step is necessary because the comparison of interest is whether media habits are predictive of party-loyal vote choice within an electorate, rather than estimating the general effect of media consumption on in-party vote loyalty across Western democracies. This procedure also reduces the effects of cross-national differences in media consumption or in-party vote loyalty.

To test the joint significance of interaction terms, I estimate a restricted and an unrestricted model. In the restricted model, in-party vote loyalty is regressed onto the single indicator for attention to elections through traditional and social media, a categorical variable for media system, age, gender, education, and political interest. The unrestricted model includes the same terms with the addition of interaction terms between attention to elections and the media system categorical variable. Full results are shown in Table 10. The interaction terms do not significantly improve model fit, $F(2, 8822) = 0.66$, p = NS. Further, the only media-related predictor to reach any level of statistical

significance is the main effect of attention to news about elections, which is marginal and negative ($\beta = -0.08,\ SE = 0.05,\ t = -1.70,\ p < .10$). These results indicate that the effect of media consumption cannot be assumed to differ from 0 and the effect of media consumption does not significantly differ between levels of the categorical media system variable. I specify an alternative model which includes two additional measures of political engagement—election turnout and strength of party identification—to test whether the results change with stronger controls for engagement with politics. This model (full results in Table 11) provides no evidence that the effect of media consumption on in-party loyalty in vote choice varies by media system, as the interaction terms are not jointly significant, $F(2, 8360) = 0.51$, p = NS.

To further investigate whether the relationship between media consumption and in-party vote loyalty differs between media systems, separate models are specified for each of the three media systems. All indicators are standardized within each country and observations are weighted to be both nationally representative and balanced across surveys. The results (see Table 12) do not support H2: None of the three coefficients for news media exposure are distinguishable from 0. Of the covariates included, only age was a reliably significant predictor of party loyalty in vote choice across all three models. Additionally, the directions of the slopes for media's marginal effects do not match the predicted relationships, as shown in Figure 4; in both commercial and public-service media systems, increased attention to elections through media is associated with declining vote loyalty, although media's effect is nonsignificant.

To further investigate this finding, 14 country-specific models were estimated, and the coefficients for attention to elections through media are plotted in Figure 5. Attention to news media only has a significant marginal effect in three cases and is negative in each. Fittingly, these three cases represent a commercial, hybrid, and public-service media system. Thus, I fail to reject the null hypothesis that the effect of media consumption on in-party vote loyalty does not differ by media system.

The heterogeneous effects of political interest

A noteworthy pattern not predicted by the hypotheses emerges from the analyses of both CNEP and EES data: Political interest is a significant positive predictor of partisan affect and party loyalty in vote choice in public-service media systems; however, for the commercial media systems, political interest is not a significant predictor of either.

To further explore this relationship, I first specify country-specific models using CNEP data that include interaction terms between political interest and platform-agnostic news consumption, then specify another set of models with all four platform-specific media indicators and the interaction term between with political interest and television news consumption, the platform which demonstrated the strongest marginal effects (see Table 13). In the platform-agnostic model, no interacted media variable has a coefficient that is discernible from 0, and the main effect of political interest is only marginal for Germany, $\beta = 0.62,\ SE = 0.35,\ t = 1.80,\ p < .10$. The suppression of media's effects can be attributed to political interest and media consumption's collinearity. When political interest is interacted with television news consumption in country-specific

models including the full set of media measures, neither any main nor interacted effect for television is significant. However, political interest remains a significant positive predictor of partisan affect for the public-service nations and a marginal positive predictor for the hybrid media system included in the analysis.

Statistical significance of individual coefficients becomes an unreliable method of interpreting results as interaction terms are added to a model (Braumoeller, 2004). To better interpret the results, I plot predicted values of partisan affect as a function of platform-agnostic news consumption (see Figure 6) and television news consumption (see Figure 7) faceted by political interest. These figures demonstrate a stark difference between public-service and commercial media systems: In public-service media systems, increases in political interest are associated with increases in partisan affect, while media consumption tends to have little impact within levels of political interest. For citizens in commercial media systems, the opposite is true: moving across levels of political interest has little impact on predicted partisan affect but increasing news consumption predicts increases in partisan affect within every level of political interest.

Evidence of the differential effects of political interest between media systems is apparent in the EES data, too. The marginal effect of political interest on in-party vote loyalty is consistently positive and significant for models using data from public-service media systems. In the hybrid and commercial models, on the other hand, political interest is not a significant predictor of in-party vote loyalty. To explore the role of political interest, I estimated an additional model for each media system that includes an interaction term between media consumption and political interest (see Table 14). The

results are not conclusive, as the interaction has a similar marginal effect for each media system, which is positive and marginally significant. The main effect of political interest is negative in the commercial media system model and positive in the public-service model, suggesting a potential gap in in-party loyalty in vote choice related to the relationship between political interest and media system, although neither is discernible from 0. As these interactions again should not be interpreted by the significance of individual coefficients, predicted values of in-party loyalty in vote choice are plotted in Figure 8 for respondents at -2, -1, 0, 1, and 2 deviations away from the mean for political interest.

Chapter 6. Discussion

This analysis contributes to growing bodies of research into the origins of social polarization on the basis of partisanship and the relationship between media environments and political behavior. While the relationship between news media and affective polarization has rarely been tested from a comparative perspective (see Garrett, Dvir Gvirsman, Johnson, Tsfati, Neo, & Dal, 2014 for an important exception), this analysis offers evidence that television news consumption is associated with increases in partisan affect in commercial media environments but not hybrid or public-service media environments. While distinguishing media consumption from political interest presents a methodological challenge in survey research, these findings are robust to the inclusion of political interest, political knowledge, strength of party identification, and election turnout as covariates. Although the cross-sectional data used in this study is not equipped to test whether any attitudes changed as a result of media consumption, the support for H1 aligns with experimental results that indicate news media content—especially partisan news media, which is partly characterized by its emphasis on conflict—can strengthen partisan attitudes (e.g., Levendusky, 2013a; Mutz, 2015; Druckman, Levendusky, & McLain, 2018).

The cross-national patterns in the relationship between political interest and media consumption found in this analysis offer a potential direction for future comparative

research in political communication. When news consumption is held constant, increases in political interest still predict stronger partisan attitudes and in-party vote loyalty for partisans in public-service media systems. However, political interest has little predictive utility for commercial media systems when media consumption is held constant. The simplest interpretation of this pattern follows the logic of Prior's high-choice media environment: In commercial media systems where politics is easy to ignore, political interest is closely intertwined with media consumption. So much so that, when tested with survey data, interest is effectively manifest through media consumption measures. In public-service media systems, however, incidental exposure is more frequent, so political interest still has utility even when media exposure is controlled. Scholars including Prior (2019) have focused on political interest in recent years, and its relationship with media habits remains a topic to explore in a comparative context.

An open question pervading this analysis is for how long these arguments and conclusions will be relevant. The pace of change in the production and delivery of news media has only accelerated since the transformation from the broadcast era to cable news described by Prior in *Post-Broadcast Democracy* (2007). While the spatial constraints on the production of news content have loosened over time (Hopkins, 2018), distinctive characteristics of national media systems continue to shape how their citizens learn about public affairs, as evidenced by cross-national variance in frequency of news media consumption and trust in the press (Pew Research Center, 2018a). However, technological change may erode the structural benefits of public-service media. For instance, the increasing prevalence of on-demand video allows viewers more control over

what they watch, shrinking the potential for unintentional and cross-cutting exposure. Even as BBC continues to produce acclaimed and popular programming, whether those programs air adjacent to news will matter less and less in the future. Thus, these analyses reflect the time and places in which the data were collected. Scholars of political communication must continue to reckon with the evolving structure of news media consumption and reassess the characteristics upon which news media systems have been categorized in the literature to date.

The null finding of the second hypothesis suggests that the relationship between media-system attributes and party loyalty in vote choice is different from that predicted in this analysis or too subtle to be detected with the data at hand. Abramowitz (2018), among others, has tied growing affective polarization to the growing incidence of straight-ticket voting in the United States. Should commercial media systems trigger partisan identity to a greater degree than public-service media systems, it follows that partisans in commercial media systems would not only bear stronger partisan affect but also vote more loyally for their party. This null finding may reflect variance in how citizens approach voting across nations. Although partisanship is a powerful identity in Europe (Westwood, et al., 2018), the utility of a vote differs depending on electoral and party-system structures. Multi-party systems can require voters to choose between parties with similar platforms, which may function to leave a partisan willing (or even eager) to vote for an ideologically adjacent out-party if they doubt their preferred party's chances of winning. Thus, strong party identification may not preclude a strategic partisan from considering voting for another party.

This null finding, however, should also be contextualized within the limitations of the data. The ability to test for the effects of media consumption using EES data is significantly hindered by the lone survey item about news media habits. By simply asking how closely the respondent has followed the news, the survey item likely spurred responses that were biased by respondents' judgements of what constitutes staying informed about the parliamentary elections (e.g., whether they consider posts from amateur sources or peers on social media to be news). It's possible that a hypothesized relationship between media consumption and in-party vote loyalty does exist and this measure is simply too noisy to detect it, as with the "top-platform" measure of media consumption used to test H1. Future cross-national studies should collect data on platform-specific news media habits to better analyze the relationship between media consumption and in-party vote loyalty.

More generally, this study's reliance on measures of self-reported media consumption constitutes a major limitation. The marquee weaknesses of these media measures include survey respondents' inability to recall time spent doing specific tasks, reliance on respondents' judgement in what constitutes news, and social desirability bias (Prior, 2013b). Although Prior goes so far as to suggest that self-report media measures should simply not be used, I rely on them in this analysis because the hypothesized patterns should be evident in general patterns of media consumption. As long as respondents who consume little to no news answered accordingly and those who consume news with regularity answered affirmatively, bias in self-report is not a crippling issue. The intention with this analysis is to compare the effects of consumption

between nations, so if respondents are reasonably consistent in their bias cross-nationally then the data can be taken as a reasonable, if noisy, representation of media exposure.

Discrepancies between the CNEP and EES survey instruments pose another significant limitation for this study. The two sets of surveys measure critical variables differently and give contradictory estimates of specific parameters for the same countries, such as the proportion of partisans (see Table 1 and Table 2). This is likely in part a consequence of question wording, as the EES survey item asks if the respondent feels closer to one party compared to others, whereas the CNEP survey item references asks about a "persistent attachment" to one party over time as well as consistent voting for that party. This gap is particularly dramatic for Portugal, as only 39% of Portugal respondents in CNEP indicated they identified with a party, compared with 62% in the EES survey. As a result, the explanatory power of models specific to Portugal may have suffered. With a smaller share of the sample included, the respondents who did identify as partisan are likely to share comparable political interest and engagement, reducing the utility of the covariates in predicting partisan affect.[11] Apart from question wording, the surveys focus on distinct contexts, which may also contribute to discrepancies between them. While CNEP focuses primarily on national elections, EES focuses on both national politics and elections for European Parliament. Although the EES party-specific survey items used in this analysis are all asked in the context of national parties, it's possible that the EES's international focus prompts differing responses. For instance, Levendusky

[11] Historical factors, too, may have contributed to the notably low coefficients of determination for models that were specific to Portugal, such as its relatively young parties following the 1970s Carnation Revolution.

(2017) found that priming American national identity reduces affective polarization in survey responses. Similarly, the EES may effectively prime respondents' national identities through survey items that require respondents to dwell on their status as citizens of a nation rather than just members of one party or another.

Future analyses should expand upon the narrow range of criteria used in this study to categorize media systems. The three indicators used in this analysis to classify and compare national media systems—state support for journalism and news outlets, state regulation of media ownership, and journalists as a share of employed workers—are not exhaustive. Although these three indicators together approximate the degree to which the media environment is nourished by the state, there are important unaddressed factors that operate at the national level and have bearing on the dependent variables in this study. Ideally, this analysis would employ richer scales to categorize national media systems including measures for audience behavior (i.e., cross-platform audience data comparing private sector to public-service news media), direct measures of the prominence of partisan news sources, the legal status of misleading and slanted news coverage, and more. However, such measures are not readily available.

Similarly, media platforms also expose users to political messages other than news that likely contribute to partisanship as a social identity. Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes (2012) describe negative political advertising as one facet of polarizing elite rhetoric. Increased exposure to hostile campaign communications, they reason, increases the salience of partisan identity, triggering partisan affect. This hypothesis is borne out by an empirical analysis in which the authors find that the number of political ads run in a state

is an effective predictor of partisan affect for residents of that state. Despite the creation and strategic deployment of political ads being outside of the economic and regulatory constraints that govern news media content, national media systems—broadly defined as the structure and political role of news media—are inclusive of the channels through which campaigns reach voters. Campaign advertisements offer a route for political messages to circumvent the maze of selective exposure, reaching viewers who may otherwise avoid it. Critically, campaigns and political organizations can employ microtargeting to connect potential voters with the ads that are most likely to influence their attitudes and behaviors. Barocas (2012) identifies the potential for microtargeted ads to contribute to a trend of single-issue politics that leads to increased partisanship, and empirical research has offered support to the idea that political campaigns can polarize citizens (Iyengar & Sood, 2016).

The clearest point of comparison between national media systems is whether political advertising is permitted and, if so, how frequent and negative the ads tend to be. Many nations prohibit campaign advertising and, instead, offer campaigns free blocks of airtime in the form of party broadcasts that feature straightforward delivery of campaign pitches from party leaders (Iyengar, 2007). Some Western European nations, such as the UK, mandate that commercial channels, in addition to public outlets, air the party broadcasts (Iyengar, 2007). By offering parties equivalent platforms and restricting the use of attack ads, national media systems can significantly increase the possibility that potential voters see multiple candidates' views represented in their own words, without having election communications overrun by campaign ads. However, campaigning and

elections were not considered in this analysis due to a paucity of adequate cross-national data and their indirect relationship with the news media environment.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

As the principal source of information about public affairs, the press plays an essential role in what voters know and how they think about politics. Iyengar (2007) identifies informing the public and acting as a watchdog on government actions as essential functions of the press. Normatively, the press motivates politicians to act in the best interests of the public through the threat of scrutiny and helps inform citizens so that they can knowledgably voice their preferences through voting. In all, news media should contribute to democratic governance that is accountable and responsive. The findings of this analysis, however, suggest that commercial media systems may fall short.

The consequences of an affectively polarized electorate are anathema to normative models of democracy. Affectively polarized citizens prefer their representatives confront rather than cooperate with the opposition (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015), and when representing polarized constituents, lawmakers are rationally motivated to adopt extreme policy positions and resist compromise (Ahler & Broockman, 2018). Further, when their preferred party is out of power, affectively polarized voters' trust in government declines (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015). This dissipation of bipartisanship has contributed to legislative gridlock and fears voiced by pundits and political scientists that government institutions which are intended to serve the public interest are becoming coopted into partisan conflict—a slide that threatens to ultimately undermine the tools necessary for effective governance (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2019).

More broadly, the utility of elections as a tool for accountability diminishes when the electorate is affectively polarized. If partisans will support their parties irrespective of

policy outcomes and the behavior of party elites, candidates need not fear the prospect of their voters defecting to the opposition. Wlezien's (1995) thermostatic model of public preferences theorizes that the public acts as a thermostat by adjusting in response to policy; when government spending on a particular priority is low, public opinion favors increased spending and vice versa. This model has been robustly supported (e.g., Ellis & Stimson, 2011); however, accountability through dynamic, responsive public opinion diminishes when the voting public includes a smaller share of uncommitted voters and a larger share of entrenched partisans. Partisan affect motivates partisans to get more involved in politics (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), so the share of voters least likely to change their minds are the most likely to vote. Contemporary research also indicates that partisans' interpretations of seemingly objective economic conditions differ (Iyengar, Lelkes, Levendusky, Malhotra, & Westwood, 2018), which suggests that partisans may not even agree on the existence of problems, much less policies to address them.

The ability of the press to accomplish its democratic functions hinges on the feelings and attitudes that media consumption fosters. A deep well of political communication research, especially studies by James Curran and his collaborators, demonstrates that the broader media environment shapes the effects of news media consumption at the individual level. Research recent has provided evidence for a causal relationship between news consumption in the commercial US media environment and partisan affect. This study provides convergent evidence that the relationship between media consumption and polarized attitudes is present in a nationally representative survey of the United States, although this relationship is only apparent for television news

consumption. Further, this study finds the relationship between media habits and polarized attitudes is similarly strong in a second commercial media system, Portugal, but nonexistent in hybrid and public-service media systems. These findings support the conclusion that the United States' polarizing media environment may a consequence of systemic policy and economic attributes, rather than idiosyncratic norms and values.

Media systems that repel low-interest voters from politics and intensify the salience of partisanship as a social identity in voters likely contribute to affective polarization. However, media systems are not immutable. National media environments change with the markets, technologies, and policies that give them structure. Analyses of the political economy of the media (e.g., Hardy, 2014), detail the many ways in which media production is inextricably bound to other levers of power in society. This study suggests that the attributes of national media systems can influence the development affective polarization. While media systems comprise only one factor among many that may influence the development of polarization, they are at least one lever that government can influence through policy. The potential effects of state interventions, such as those proposed by Victor Pickard (2009) to treat media as an essential public good, prompt important questions for empirical social scientists about how citizens respond to changing media environments. Scholars of political communication are uniquely well positioned to inform media policy by drawing on the rich lineages of research on the production of news media and news media's effects on political behavior. As the production, distribution, and consumption of news media rapidly evolve in the

digital age, it is imperative that scholars of media and politics continue to probe these policy-relevant and democratically significant questions.

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Appendix

Tables

Table 1

Sample characteristics: CNEP

	France		Germany		Great Britain		Portugal		United States	
	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan
Unweighted count	1033	966	1744	1470	1289	711	556	863	1223	727
Unweighted share of country sample	0.52	0.48	0.54	0.46	0.64	0.36	0.39	0.61	0.63	0.37
Television news (days/week)	4.99	4.66	4.45	3.36	4.40	3.15	5.71	4.72	4.82	3.72
	(0.12)	*(0.13)*	*(0.06)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.13)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.15)*
Internet news (days/week)	3.86	3.10	2.71	2.05	3.98	2.83	1.29	0.86	3.71	2.69
	(0.14)	*(0.14)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.13)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.15)*
Newspaper (days/week)	3.67	3.22	3.02	2.05	3.48	2.18	2.37	1.89	3.41	2.55
	(0.14)	*(0.14)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.12)*	*(0.12)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.14)*
Radio (days/week)	3.40	3.10	2.94	2.30	2.73	1.82	2.24	1.24	2.70	2.20
	(0.14)	*(0.14)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.10)*	*(0.14)*
Age (years)	49.82	48.05	52.01	47.17	49.45	45.11	55.22	52.44	48.45	43.51
	(0.75)	*(0.79)*	*(0.37)*	*(0.43)*	*(0.62)*	*(0.72)*	*(0.72)*	*(0.61)*	*(0.72)*	*(0.88)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.49	0.56	0.46	0.57	0.50	0.53	0.53	0.60	0.52	0.51
	(0.02)	*(0.02)*	*(0.01)*	*(0.01)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.03)*
Political interest (4-point scale with max of 3)	2.26	1.71	1.80	1.26	2.05	1.37	1.58	1.02	2.22	1.58
	(0.03)	*(0.05)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.06)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	0.30	0.31	0.35	0.28	0.52	0.43	0.35	0.37	0.62	0.50
	(0.02)	*(0.02)*	*(0.01)*	*(0.01)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*
Partisan affect	5.60	-	4.46	-	5.64	-	6.03	-	5.85	-
	(0.14)	-	*(0.06)*	-	*(0.10)*	-	*(0.12)*	-	*(0.16)*	-

Table 2

Sample characteristics: EES

	Austria		Belgium		Denmark		Finland		France	
	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan
Unweighted count	533	467	671	329	794	206	659	341	667	333
Unweighted share of country sample	0.53	0.47	0.67	0.33	0.79	0.21	0.66	0.34	0.67	0.33
Attention paid to elections on media/social media (scale 0-10)	6.15	5.15	5.76	3.94	5.15	2.57	5.11	3.09	6.01	2.85
	(0.13)	*(0.14)*	*(0.21)*	*(0.45)*	*(0.17)*	*(0.25)*	*(0.18)*	*(0.27)*	*(0.22)*	*(0.43)*
Age (years)	49.74	45.17	49.18	47.53	49.62	46.92	49.90	48.21	48.30	49.89
	(0.78)	*(0.88)*	*(1.38)*	*(1.55)*	*(1.03)*	*(2.2)*	*(1.34)*	*(1.46)*	*(1.45)*	*(2.83)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.49	0.54	0.48	0.57	0.49	0.56	0.49	0.56	0.45	0.68
	(0.02)	*(0.02)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.06)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.06)*
Political interest (4-point scale with max of 3)	2.05	1.76	1.59	0.92	1.87	1.18	1.53	0.96	1.80	0.87
	(0.04)	*(0.04)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.08)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.14)*
Age when full-time education complete	22.23	21.52	22.06	21.23	22.87	20.93	20.88	23.18	24.70	20.52
	(0.51)	*(0.5)*	*(1.04)*	*(2.12)*	*(0.76)*	*(0.86)*	*(0.78)*	*(1.52)*	*(1.58)*	*(1.55)*
In-party loyalty in vote choice	5.95	-	5.27	-	4.92	-	5.26	-	5.59	-
	(0.14)	-	*(0.21)*	-	*(0.23)*	-	*(0.24)*	-	*(0.25)*	-

Continued

Table 2 continued

Sample characteristics: EES

	Germany		Greece		Ireland		Italy		The Netherlands	
	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan
Unweighted count	663	337	636	369	503	497	765	235	703	297
Unweighted share of country sample	0.66	0.34	0.67	0.33	0.50	0.50	0.76	0.24	0.70	0.30
Attention paid to elections on media/social media (scale 0-10)	6.60	4.74	5.45	3.95	6.15	4.33	6.63	4.46	5.30	3.15
	(0.19)	*(0.32)*	*(0.21)*	*(0.25)*	*(0.13)*	*(0.14)*	*(0.18)*	*(0.4)*	*(0.16)*	*(0.39)*
Age (years)	50.46	48.35	50.71	43.91	45.96	45.78	50.57	47.97	47.99	48.52
	(0.96)	*(1.37)*	*(1.53)*	*(1.51)*	*(0.8)*	*(0.78)*	*(0.97)*	*(1.74)*	*(1.16)*	*(1.62)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.43	0.66	0.52	0.53	0.48	0.54	0.47	0.70	0.47	0.59
	(0.03)	*(0.04)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.02)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.06)*
Political interest (4-point scale with max of 3)	1.97	1.53	1.87	1.52	1.86	1.37	1.90	1.17	1.40	0.67
	(0.04)	*(0.08)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.11)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.07)*
Age when full-time education complete	21.04	19.76	25.83	24.39	21.94	21.64	22.79	22.41	22.56	19.81
	(0.84)	*(0.71)*	*(0.95)*	*(0.78)*	*(0.43)*	*(0.5)*	*(1.1)*	*(1.56)*	*(1.3)*	*(1.38)*
In-party loyalty in vote choice	4.45	-	5.74	-	3.41	-	5.15	-	4.39	-
	(0.37)	-	*(0.32)*	-	*(0.19)*	-	*(0.20)*	-	*(0.20)*	-

Continued

Table 2 continued

Sample characteristics: EES

	Portugal		Spain		Sweden		United Kingdom	
	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan
Unweighted count	623	377	702	298	725	275	629	371
Unweighted share of sample	0.62	0.38	0.70	0.30	0.72	0.28	0.63	0.37
Attention paid to elections on media/social media (scale 0-10)	5.22	4.02	6.48	4.86	4.94	3.91	6.57	4.27
	(0.23)	*(0.34)*	*(0.21)*	*(0.37)*	*(0.27)*	*(0.33)*	*(0.13)*	*(0.22)*
Age (years)	50.08	48.50	48.64	48.07	48.91	48.34	47.58	48.56
	(1.24)	*(1.96)*	*(1.21)*	*(1.84)*	*(1.41)*	*(2.38)*	*(0.91)*	*(1.18)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.48	0.62	0.52	0.49	0.46	0.61	0.48	0.57
	(0.04)	*(0.04)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.03)*	*(0.03)*
Political interest (4-point scale with max of 3)	1.62	1.14	1.74	1.16	1.83	1.21	1.88	1.34
	(0.05)	*(0.08)*	*(0.07)*	*(0.13)*	*(0.05)*	*(0.09)*	*(0.04)*	*(0.06)*
Age when full-time education complete	23.84	23.79	19.82	19.73	21.31	23.01	20.27	20.31
	(0.96)	*(1.61)*	*(0.62)*	*(0.9)*	*(0.56)*	*(1.24)*	*(0.33)*	*(0.52)*
In-party loyalty in vote choice	4.95	-	5.24	-	6.31	-	5.30	-
	(0.22)	-	*(0.27)*	-	*(0.23)*	-	*(0.18)*	-

Table 3

Categorization of national media systems

Country	State support for news media	Media ownership regulations	Journalist employment	Average of three indicators	Media system categorization
Austria	0.01	1.11	1.65	0.92	Public service
Belgium	0.05	0.06	-0.61	-0.17	Hybrid
Denmark	1.11	-0.99	0.25	0.12	Hybrid
Finland	0.02	-2.04	1.81	-0.07	Hybrid
France	0.22	1.11	0.27	0.53	Public service
Germany	0.36	1.11	0.05	0.51	Public service
Greece	-0.77	1.11	-0.73	-0.13	Hybrid
Ireland	-0.78	-0.99	1.28	-0.16	Hybrid
Italy	0.29	0.06	0.21	0.19	Hybrid
The Netherlands	-0.43	-0.99	0	-0.47	Commercial
Portugal	-0.46	0.06	-0.66	-0.35	Commercial
Spain	-0.24	-0.99	-1.23	-0.82	Commercial
Sweden	1.14	-0.46	0.17	0.28	Public service
United Kingdom	0.44	1.11	-0.86	0.23	Hybrid
United States	-1.73	0.06	-1.59	-1.09	Commercial

Table 4

Partisan affect regressed on a platform-agnostic media consumption measure and controls, pooled models

	Dependent variable:	
	Partisan affect	
	Restricted	Unrestricted
Platform-agnostic news media consumption	0.031	0.076*
	(0.022)	*(0.040)*
Media system: Hybrid	-0.009	-0.009
	(0.050)	*(0.050)*
Media system: Public service	0.018	0.018
	(0.044)	*(0.043)*
Age	0.047**	0.046*
	(0.020)	*(0.021)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.029	0.029
	(0.019)	*(0.019)*
Political interest	0.117***	0.118***
	(0.022)	*(0.022)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	-0.043***	-0.044***
	(0.020)	*(0.020)*
News consumption * Media system: Hybrid		-0.077
		(0.059)
News consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.071
		(0.049)
Constant	-0.025	-0.025
	(0.033)	*(0.033)*
Observations	5,258	5,258
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.02

**p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Note: All variables were standardized within-country prior to pooling.

Table 5

Partisan affect regressed on full media consumption measures and controls, pooled models

	Dependent variable:	
	Partisan affect	
	Restricted	Unrestricted
Television news consumption	0.045**	0.123***
	(0.021)	*(0.035)*
Radio news consumption	-0.043**	-0.023
	(0.019)	*(0.032)*
Newspaper news consumption	-0.051**	-0.042
	(0.020)	*(0.033)*
Internet news consumption	0.006	-0.033
	(0.020)	*(0.036)*
Media system: Hybrid	-0.009	-0.005
	(0.050)	*(0.050)*
Media system: Public service	0.024	0.023
	(0.044)	*(0.043)*
Age	0.050**	0.055**
	(0.022)	*(0.022)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.025	0.027
	(0.019)	*(0.019)*
Political interest	0.137***	0.135***
	(0.023)	*(0.022)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	-0.030	-0.029
	(0.021)	*(0.021)*
Television news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		-0.102**
		(0.053)
Television news consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.153***
		(0.048)

Table 5 continued

Partisan affect regressed on full media consumption measures and controls, pooled models

Radio news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		-0.040 *(0.050)*
Radio news consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.015 *(0.043)*
Newspaper news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		0.048 *(0.050)*
Newspaper news consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.042 *(0.043)*
Internet news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		0.043 *(0.051)*
Internet news consumption * Media system: Public service		0.082** *(0.046)*
Constant	-0.029 *(0.034)*	-0.029 *(0.0354)*
Observations	5,224	5,224
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.03

**p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Note: All variables were standardized within-country prior to pooling.

Table 6

Pooled restricted and unrestricted models regressing partisan affect onto platform-agnostic media consumption and controls including additional political engagement measures

	Dependent variable:	
	Partisan affect	
	Restricted	Unrestricted
Television news consumption	0.050***	0.133***
	(0.019)	(0.033)
Radio news consumption	-0.046***	-0.038
	(0.017)	(0.030)
Newspaper news consumption	-0.066***	-0.081***
	(0.018)	(0.031)
Internet news consumption	-0.009	-0.035
	(0.018)	(0.033)
Media system: Hybrid	0.001	0.004
	(0.045)	(0.045)
Media system: Public service	0.037	0.038
	(0.039)	(0.039)
Age	0.057***	0.057***
	(0.019)	(0.019)
Gender (female = 1)	0.015	0.017
	(0.018)	(0.017)
Political interest	0.052**	0.050**
	(0.022)	(0.022)
Education (1 = above country mean)	-0.010	-0.010
	(0.020)	(0.020)
Political information (0-4 scale)	0.004	0.008
	(0.020)	(0.020)
Strength of party identification (0-3 scale)	0.396***	0.396***
	(0.020)	(0.020)

Continued

Table 6 continued

Pooled restricted and unrestricted models regressing partisan affect onto platform-agnostic media consumption and controls including additional political engagement measures

Election turnout (1 = voted in most recent election)	0.042*	0.041*
	(0.022)	(0.022)
Television news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		-0.126***
		(0.049)
Television news consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.151***
		(0.044)
Radio news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		-0.010
		(0.045)
Radio news consumption * Media system: Public service		-0.005
		(0.039)
Newspaper news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		0.068
		(0.046)
Newspaper news consumption * Media system: Public service		0.006
		(0.039)
Internet news consumption * Media system: Hybrid		0.003
		(0.047)
Internet news consumption * Media system: Public service		0.073*
		(0.041)
Constant	-0.026	-0.027
	(0.031)	(0.030)
Observations	5,215	5,215
Adjusted R^2	0.17	0.17

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Note: All variables were standardized within-country prior to pooling.

Table 7

Country-specific models regressing partisan affect onto platform-agnostic media consumption and controls

	Dependent variable:				
	Partisan affect				
	France	Germany	Great Britain	Portugal	United States
Platform-agnostic news media consumption (days per week)	0.006	0.007	-0.060	0.143**	0.136
	(0.068)	*(0.032)*	*(0.054)*	*(0.067)*	*(0.101)*
Age (years)	-0.008	0.001	0.005	-0.003	0.031***
	(0.009)	*(0.004)*	*(0.005)*	*(0.009)*	*(0.010)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.265	0.080	0.533***	-0.487**	0.195
	(0.280)	*(0.117)*	*(0.189)*	*(0.240)*	*(0.292)*
Political interest (4-point scale)	0.519***	0.428***	0.745***	-0.276	0.306
	(0.179)	*(0.089)*	*(0.137)*	*(0.175)*	*(0.210)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	0.039	-0.359***	-0.295	-0.299	-0.250
	(0.295)	*(0.113)*	*(0.191)*	*(0.293)*	*(0.352)*
Constant	4.668***	3.700***	4.090***	6.146***	2.895***
	(0.687)	*(0.297)*	*(0.491)*	*(0.674)*	*(0.989)*
Observations	733	1,683	1,185	550	1,107
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.01	0.05

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 8

Country-specific models regressing partisan affect onto full media consumption measures and controls

	Dependent variable:				
	Partisan affect				
	France	Germany	Great Britain	Portugal	United States
Television news (days per week)	-0.059	-0.009	0.007	0.176***	0.152**
	(0.058)	*(0.028)*	*(0.037)*	*(0.066)*	*(0.062)*
Internet news (days per week)	0.024	0.038	-0.017	-0.047	0.001
	(0.051)	*(0.023)*	*(0.036)*	*(0.070)*	*(0.047)*
Newspaper (days per week)	-0.125**	-0.035	-0.013	-0.073	-0.022
	(0.057)	*(0.024)*	*(0.035)*	*(0.052)*	*(0.049)*
Radio (days per week)	-0.024	-0.042*	-0.049	0.013	-0.040
	(0.051)	*(0.023)*	*(0.033)*	*(0.057)*	*(0.049)*
Age (years)	-0.001	0.004	0.005	-0.003	0.028***
	(0.008)	*(0.005)*	*(0.006)*	*(0.009)*	*(0.010)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.283	0.070	0.524***	-0.514**	0.183
	(0.266)	*(0.116)*	*(0.186)*	*(0.243)*	*(0.292)*
Political interest (0-3 scale)	0.647***	0.458***	0.741***	-0.216	0.361*
	(0.185)	*(0.091)*	*(0.140)*	*(0.177)*	*(0.219)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	0.154	-0.357***	-0.233	-0.114	-0.166
	(0.295)	*(0.115)*	*(0.195)*	*(0.315)*	*(0.372)*
Constant	4.731***	3.713***	3.940***	6.061***	3.113***
	(0.673)	*(0.297)*	*(0.482)*	*(0.672)*	*(0.917)*
Observations	733	1,660	1,182	544	1,105
Adjusted R^2	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.05

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 9

Country-specific models regressing partisan affect onto full media consumption measures and controls, including full set of political engagement measures

	Dependent variable:				
	Partisan affect				
	France	Germany	Great Britain	Portugal	United States
Television news (days per week)	-0.029	-0.001	-0.013	0.175***	0.158***
	(0.050)	*(0.026)*	*(0.034)*	*(0.065)*	*(0.053)*
Internet news (days per week)	-0.011	0.038*	-0.032	-0.048	-0.035
	(0.043)	*(0.021)*	*(0.032)*	*(0.071)*	*(0.040)*
Newspaper (days per week)	-0.083*	-0.034	-0.017	-0.080	-0.081*
	(0.045)	*(0.022)*	*(0.031)*	*(0.053)*	*(0.043)*
Radio (days per week)	-0.033	-0.037*	-0.033	0.008	-0.045
	(0.042)	*(0.022)*	*(0.029)*	*(0.057)*	*(0.040)*
Age (years)	0.007	0.0003	0.012**	-0.004	0.025***
	(0.007)	*(0.004)*	*(0.006)*	*(0.009)*	*(0.008)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.291	0.102	0.266	-0.533**	0.239
	(0.234)	*(0.109)*	*(0.166)*	*(0.244)*	*(0.273)*
Political interest (0-3 scale)	0.466***	0.176**	0.287*	-0.225	-0.018
	(0.177)	*(0.089)*	*(0.148)*	*(0.179)*	*(0.194)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	0.164	-0.212*	-0.086	-0.104	-0.116
	(0.251)	*(0.110)*	*(0.175)*	*(0.319)*	*(0.323)*
Political information (0-4 scale)	0.008	-0.009	-0.142	-0.017	0.273**
	(0.095)	*(0.054)*	*(0.120)*	*(0.127)*	*(0.108)*
Strength of party identification (0-3 scale)	1.652***	1.343***	1.756***	0.118	2.293***
	(0.168)	*(0.086)*	*(0.143)*	*(0.198)*	*(0.224)*
Election turnout (1 = voted in most recent election)	-0.940**	-0.285	0.825*	0.261	0.663
	(0.452)	*(0.337)*	*(0.456)*	*(0.408)*	*(0.471)*
Constant	2.267***	2.285***	0.392	5.760***	-1.856*
	(0.689)	*(0.419)*	*(0.629)*	*(0.896)*	*(1.028)*
Observations	733	1,652	1,182	544	1,104
Adjusted R^2	0.25	0.18	0.25	0.01	0.28

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 10

Pooled restricted and unrestricted models regressing party loyalty in vote choice onto attention to elections through media, and controls

	Dependent variable:	
	In-party loyalty in vote choice (standardized within-country)	
	Restricted	Unrestricted
Attention paid to elections on media or social media (scale 0-10)	-0.037*	-0.081*
	(0.022)	*(0.047)*
Media system: Hybrid	-0.014	-0.024
	(0.049)	*(0.050)*
Media system: Public Service	-0.002	-0.009
	(0.056)	*(0.058)*
Political interest (4-point scale)	0.070***	0.070***
	(0.023)	*(0.023)*
Age	0.211***	0.210***
	(0.017)	*(0.017)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.037***	0.037***
	(0.018)	*(0.018)*
Age at completion of full-time education	-0.009	-0.009
	(0.018)	*(0.017)*
Attention paid to news * hybrid media system		0.061
		(0.053)
Attention paid to news * public service media system		0.047
		(0.060)
Constant	-0.021	-0.015
	(0.045)	*(0.045)*
Observations	8,832	8,832
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.05

**p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Note: All variables were standardized within-country prior to pooling.

Table 11

Pooled restricted and unrestricted models regressing in-party vote loyalty onto attention to elections through media, and controls, controls including full set of engagement measures

	Dependent variable:	
	In-party loyalty in vote choice	
	Restricted	Unrestricted
Attention paid to elections on media or social media (scale 0-10)	-0.072***	-0.107**
	(0.023)	*(0.047)*
Media system: Hybrid	0.006	-0.003
	(0.048)	*(0.049)*
Media system: Public Service	0.016	0.010
	(0.056)	*(0.058)*
Political interest (4-point scale)	0.041*	0.040*
	(0.024)	*(0.024)*
Age	0.214***	0.214***
	(0.017)	*(0.017)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.045**	0.044**
	(0.018)	*(0.018)*
Age at completion of full-time education	-0.011	-0.012
	(0.017)	*(0.017)*
Election turnout	0.084***	0.085***
	(0.023)	*(0.023)*
Strength of party identification	-0.094***	-0.093***
	(0.018)	*(0.018)*
Attention paid to news * hybrid media system		0.052
		(0.052)
Attention paid to news * public service media system		0.035
		(0.061)

Continued

Table 11 continued

Pooled restricted and unrestricted models regressing in-party loyalty in vote choice onto attention to elections through media, and controls, controls including full set of engagement measures

Constant	0.012	0.018
	(0.043)	(0.043)
Observations	8,642	8,642
Adjusted R^2	0.07	0.07

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Note: All variables were standardized within-country prior to pooling.

Table 12

Media system-specific models regressing in-party loyalty in vote choice onto attention paid to political news and controls

	Dependent variable:		
	In-party loyalty in vote choice		
	Commercial	Hybrid	Public service
Attention paid to elections on media or social media (scale 0-10)	-0.064	-0.009	-0.064
	(0.048)	*(0.027)*	*(0.048)*
Age in years	0.219***	0.208***	0.206***
	(0.037)	*(0.022)*	*(0.036)*
Gender (female = 1)	-0.031	0.066***	0.041
	(0.042)	*(0.023)*	*(0.037)*
Political interest (4-point scale)	0.024	0.055**	0.133***
	(0.052)	*(0.028)*	*(0.050)*
Age at completion of full-time education	0.030	-0.032	0.0005
	(0.037)	*(0.020)*	*(0.037)*
Constant	0.027	-0.001	0.011
	(0.042)	*(0.023)*	*(0.039)*
Observations	1,940	4,406	2,486
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.06	0.06

**p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Table 13

Country-specific models regressing partisan affect regressed on media consumption, the interaction of media consumption and political interest, and controls, shown for both the platform-agnostic media variable and full media measures

	Dependent variable:									
	Partisan affect									
	France		Great Britain		Germany		Portugal		United States	
Platform-agnostic news media consumption (days per week)	-0.041		-0.105		-0.093		0.121		0.217	
	(0.148)		*(0.067)*		*(0.090)*		*(0.123)*		*(0.206)*	
Television news (days per week)		0.065		-0.073		-0.123		0.101		0.240
		(0.152)		*(0.065)*		*(0.089)*		*(0.123)*		*(0.196)*
Internet news (days per week)		0.023		0.037		-0.015		-0.047		0.002
		(0.050)		*(0.023)*		*(0.036)*		*(0.070)*		*(0.047)*
Newspaper (days per week)		-0.126**		-0.036		-0.011		-0.076		-0.024
		(0.057)		*(0.024)*		*(0.035)*		*(0.052)*		*(0.049)*
Newspaper (days per week)		-0.025		-0.040*		-0.051		0.014		-0.041
		(0.051)		*(0.023)*		*(0.033)*		*(0.057)*		*(0.048)*
Political interest (0-3 scale)	0.370	0.921**	0.041	0.307*	0.620*	0.478**	-0.388	-0.572	0.587	0.531
	(0.407)	*(0.386)*	*(0.227)*	*(0.180)*	*(0.345)*	*(0.216)*	*(0.589)*	*(0.532)*	*(0.579)*	*(0.403)*
Age (years)	-0.008	-0.0005	-0.0001	0.003	0.005	0.004	-0.003	-0.003	0.032***	0.029***
	(0.009)	*(0.008)*	*(0.004)*	*(0.005)*	*(0.005)*	*(0.006)*	*(0.008)*	*(0.009)*	*(0.010)*	*(0.010)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.266	0.281	0.077	0.072	0.535***	0.524***	-0.488**	-0.523**	0.176	0.180
	(0.280)	*(0.266)*	*(0.116)*	*(0.116)*	*(0.189)*	*(0.185)*	*(0.240)*	*(0.244)*	*(0.290)*	*(0.290)*
Education (1 = above country mean)	0.030	0.155	-0.362***	-0.357***	-0.293	-0.220	-0.301	-0.104	-0.247	-0.172
	(0.296)	*(0.291)*	*(0.113)*	*(0.115)*	*(0.190)*	*(0.194)*	*(0.293)*	*(0.314)*	*(0.350)*	*(0.370)*

Continued

Table 13 continued

Country-specific models regressing partisan affect regressed on media consumption, the interaction of media consumption and political interest, and controls, shown for both the platform-agnostic media variable and full media measures

Political interest * Platform-agnostic news	0.026		0.075*		0.023		0.019		-0.051	
	(0.067)		*(0.038)*		*(0.055)*		*(0.093)*		*(0.094)*	
Political interest * Television news		-0.057		0.037		0.067*		0.061		-0.042
		(0.067)		*(0.034)*		*(0.040)*		*(0.085)*		*(0.076)*
Constant	4.930***	4.168***	4.265***	3.961***	4.247***	4.410***	6.271***	6.479***	2.483*	2.759**
	(0.990)	(0.962)	(0.443)	(0.400)	(0.585)	(0.561)	(0.878)	(0.864)	(1.393)	(1.243)
Observations	733	733	1,683	1,660	1,185	1,182	550	544	1,107	1,105
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.05

$^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Table 14

Media system-specific models regressing in-party loyalty in vote choice onto attention paid to elections, the interaction of political interest and news paid to elections, and controls

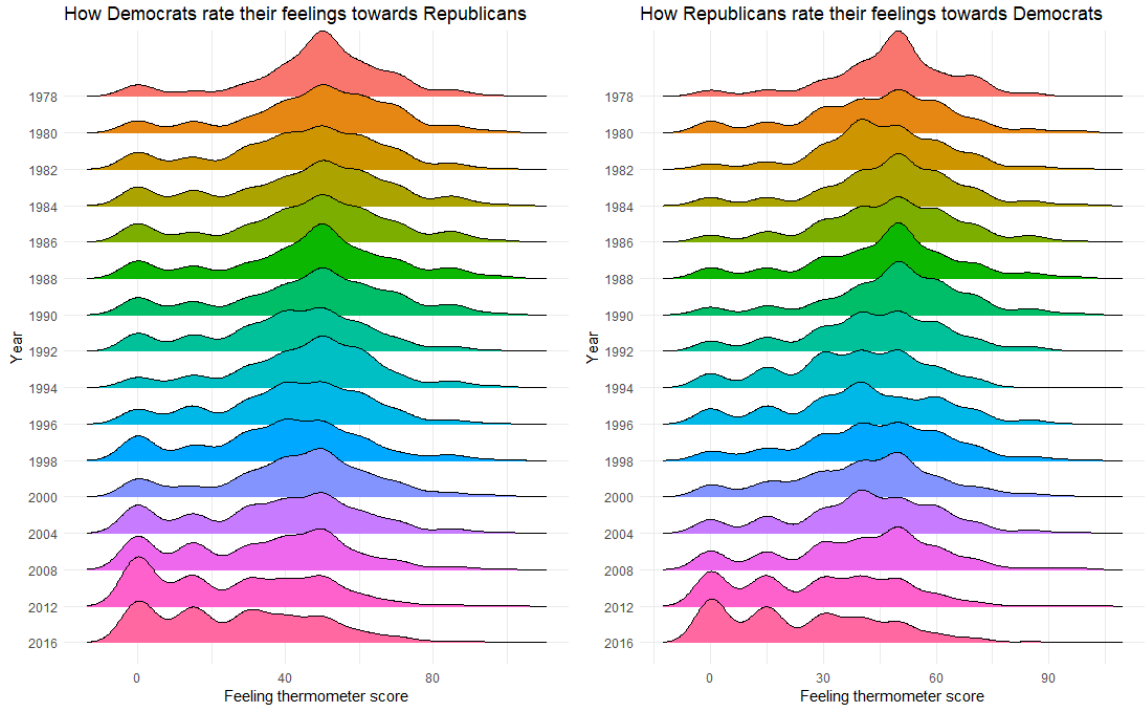
	Dependent variable:		
	In-party loyalty in vote choice		
	Commercial	Hybrid	Public service
Attention paid to elections on media or social media (scale 0-10)	-0.063 *(0.048)*	-0.010 *(0.027)*	-0.069 *(0.048)*
Age in years	0.017 *(0.052)*	0.049* *(0.028)*	0.135*** *(0.050)*
Gender (female = 1)	0.215*** *(0.037)*	0.208*** *(0.022)*	0.202*** *(0.036)*
Political interest (4-point scale)	-0.060 *(0.083)*	0.135*** *(0.045)*	0.081 *(0.073)*
Age at completion of full-time education	0.030 *(0.036)*	-0.031 *(0.020)*	-0.002 *(0.035)*
Attention paid to media * political interest	0.058 *(0.041)*	0.052** *(0.026)*	0.072* *(0.038)*
Constant	0.034 *(0.051)*	-0.094*** *(0.034)*	-0.063 *(0.070)*
Observations	1,940	4,406	2,486
Adjusted R^2	0.06	0.06	0.06

**p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01*

Figures

Figure 1

How American partisans feel toward the opposition, 1978-2016



Source: The American National Election Study (2016)

Figure 2

Marginal effects of news media consumption on partisan affect

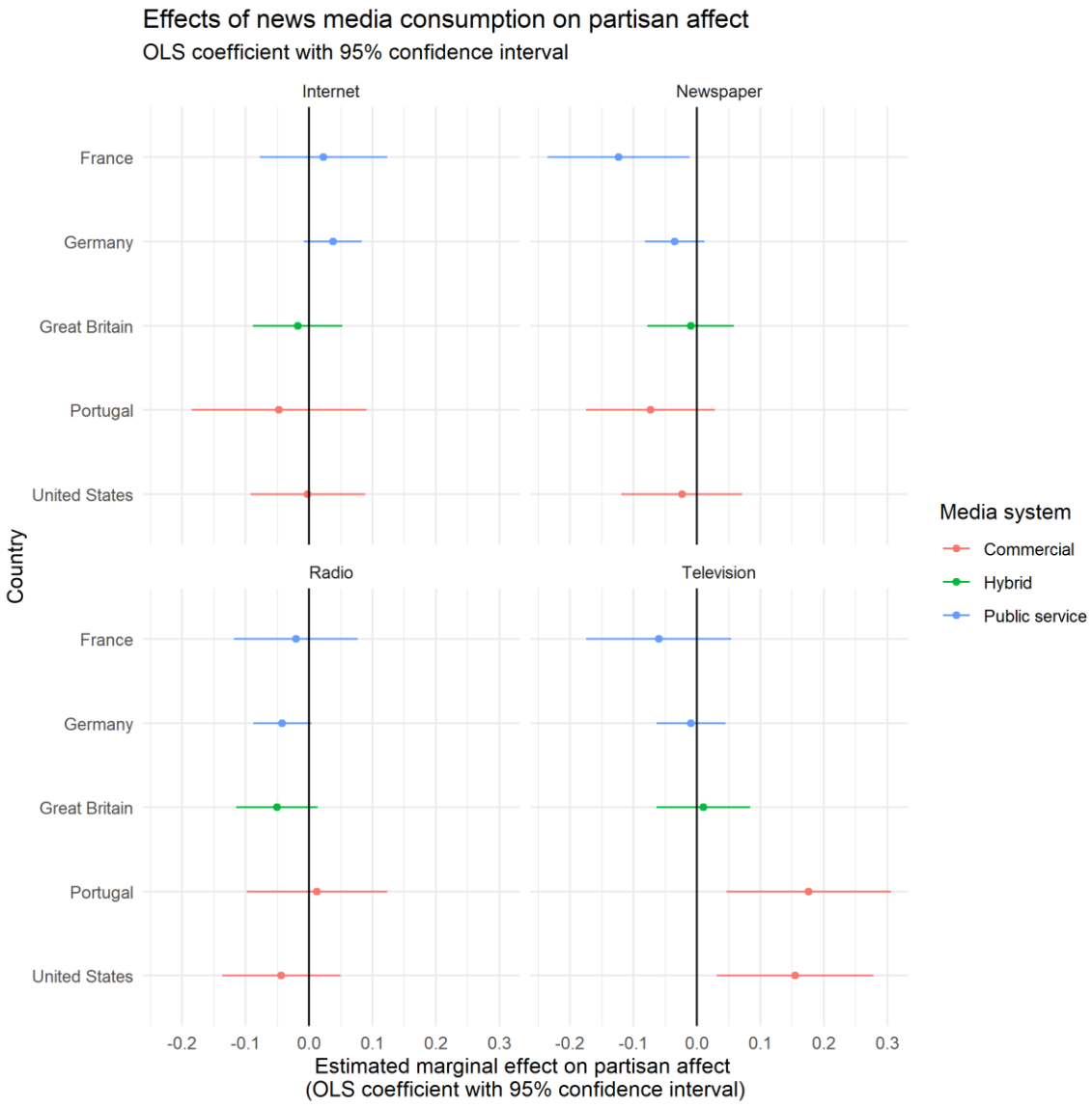


Figure 3

Predicted level of affective polarization as a function of television news media consumption

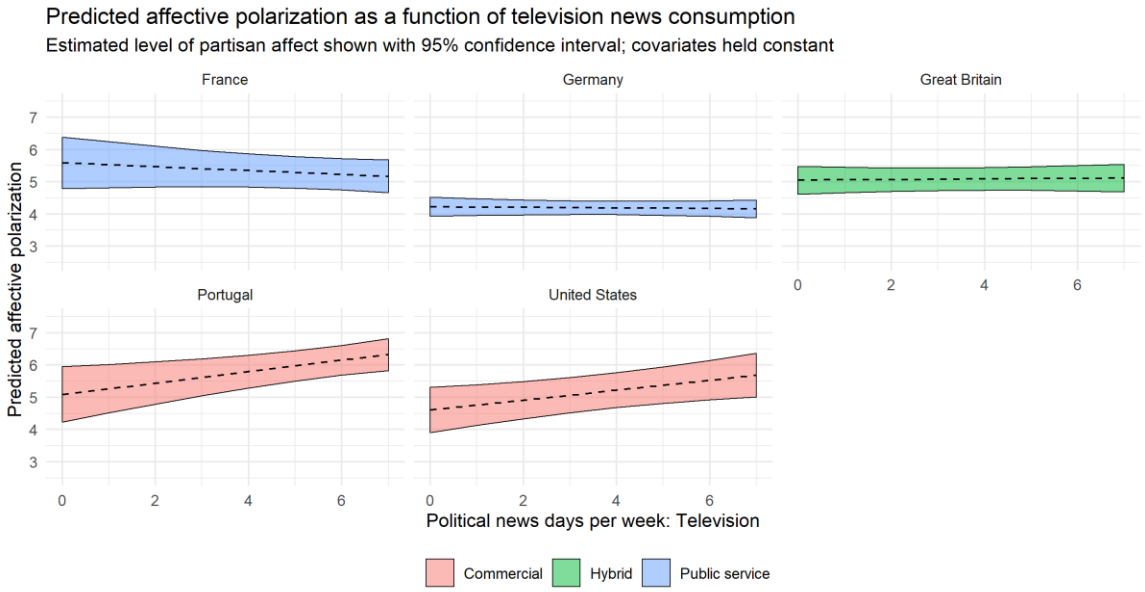


Figure 4

Predicted level of in-party vote loyalty as a function of attention paid to elections through media

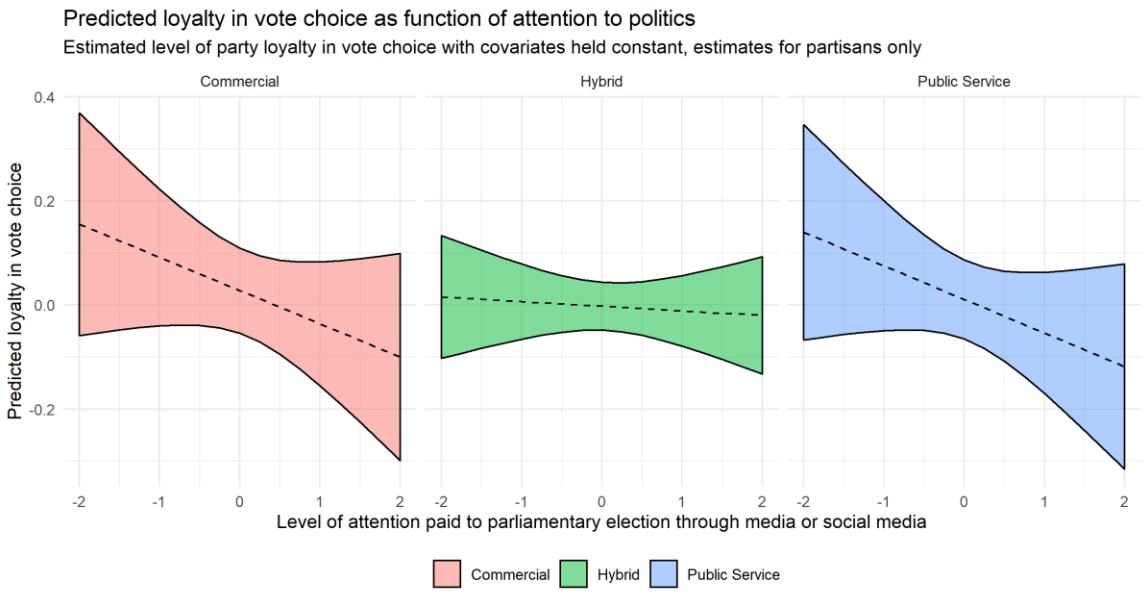


Figure 5

Marginal effects of attention to news about elections on in-party vote loyalty

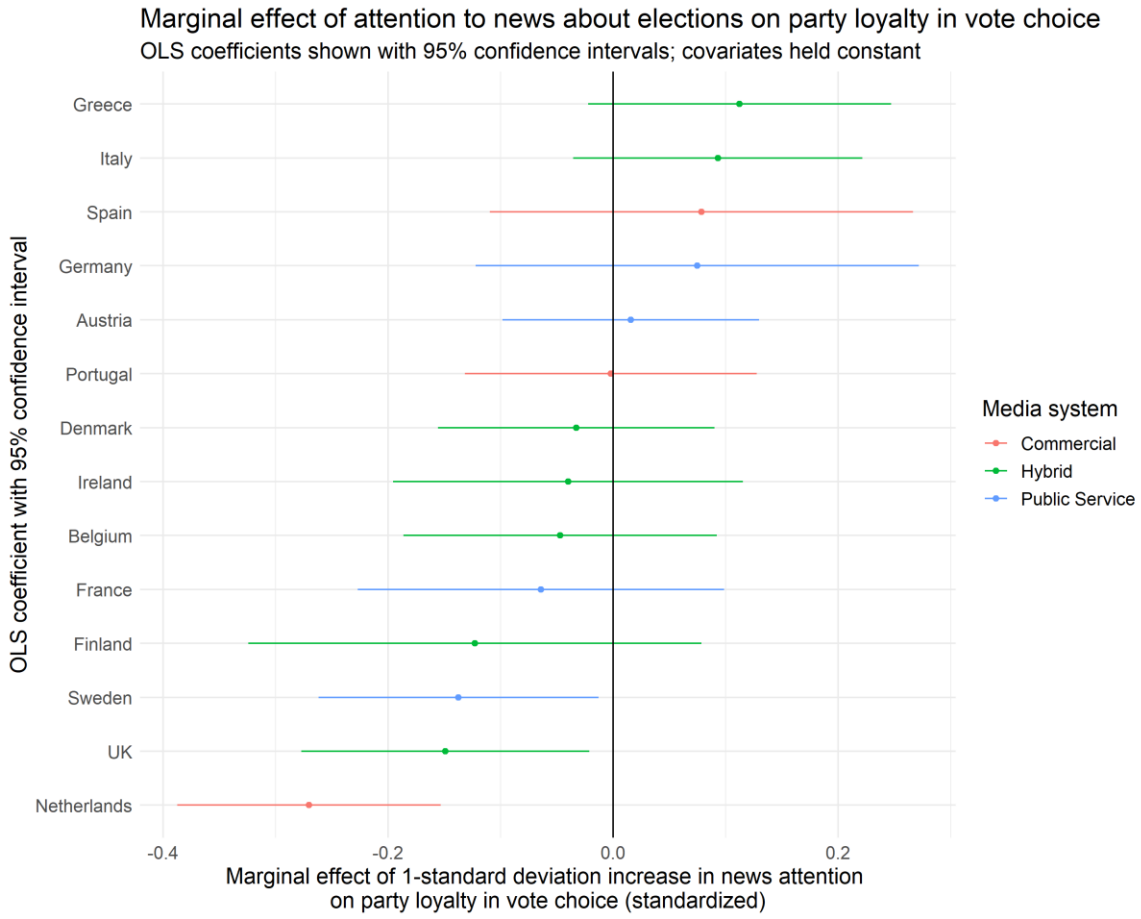


Figure 6

Predicted levels of partisan affect as a function of political interest and platform-agnostic news media consumption

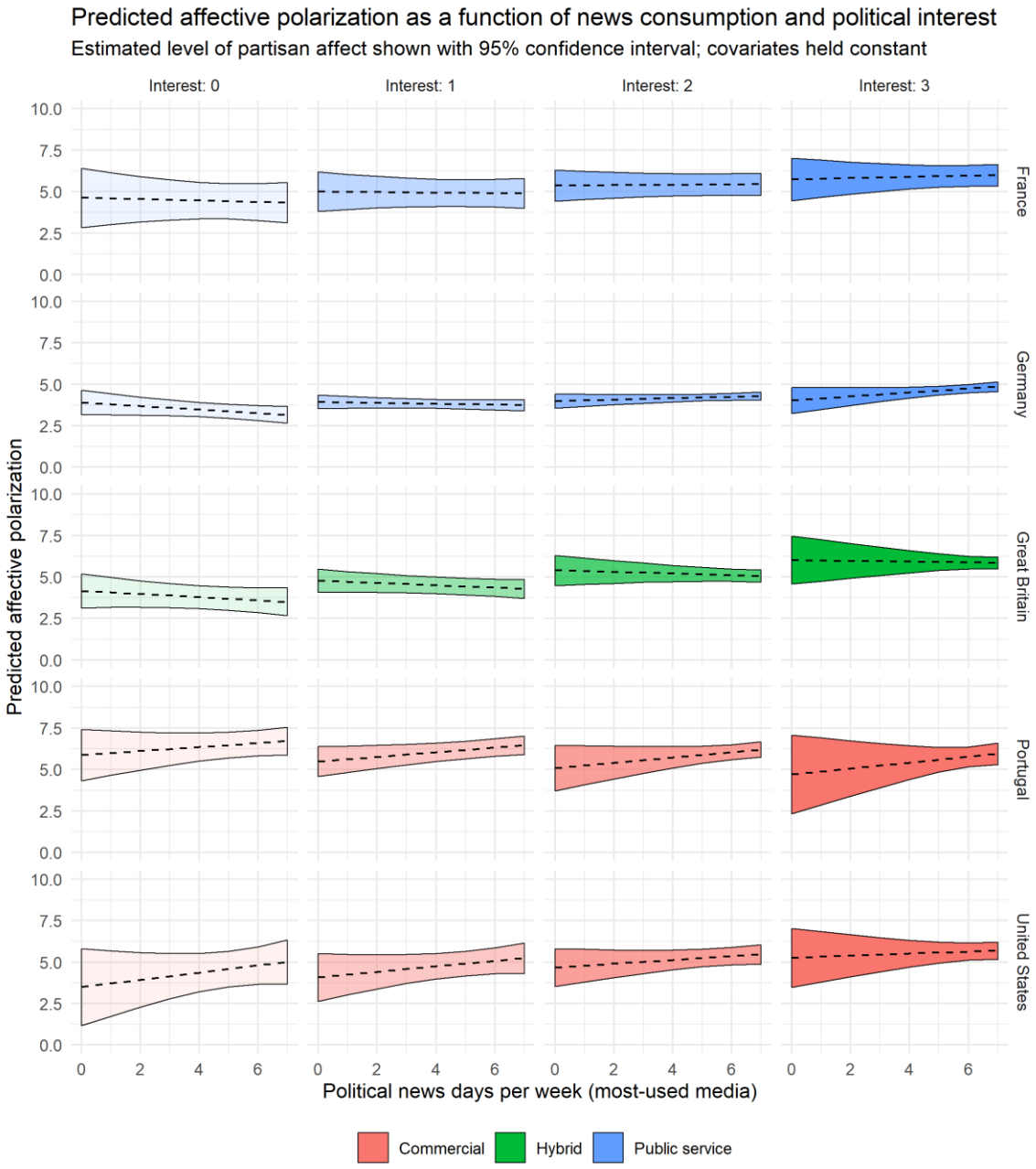


Figure 7

Predicted levels of partisan affect as a function of political interest and television news consumption

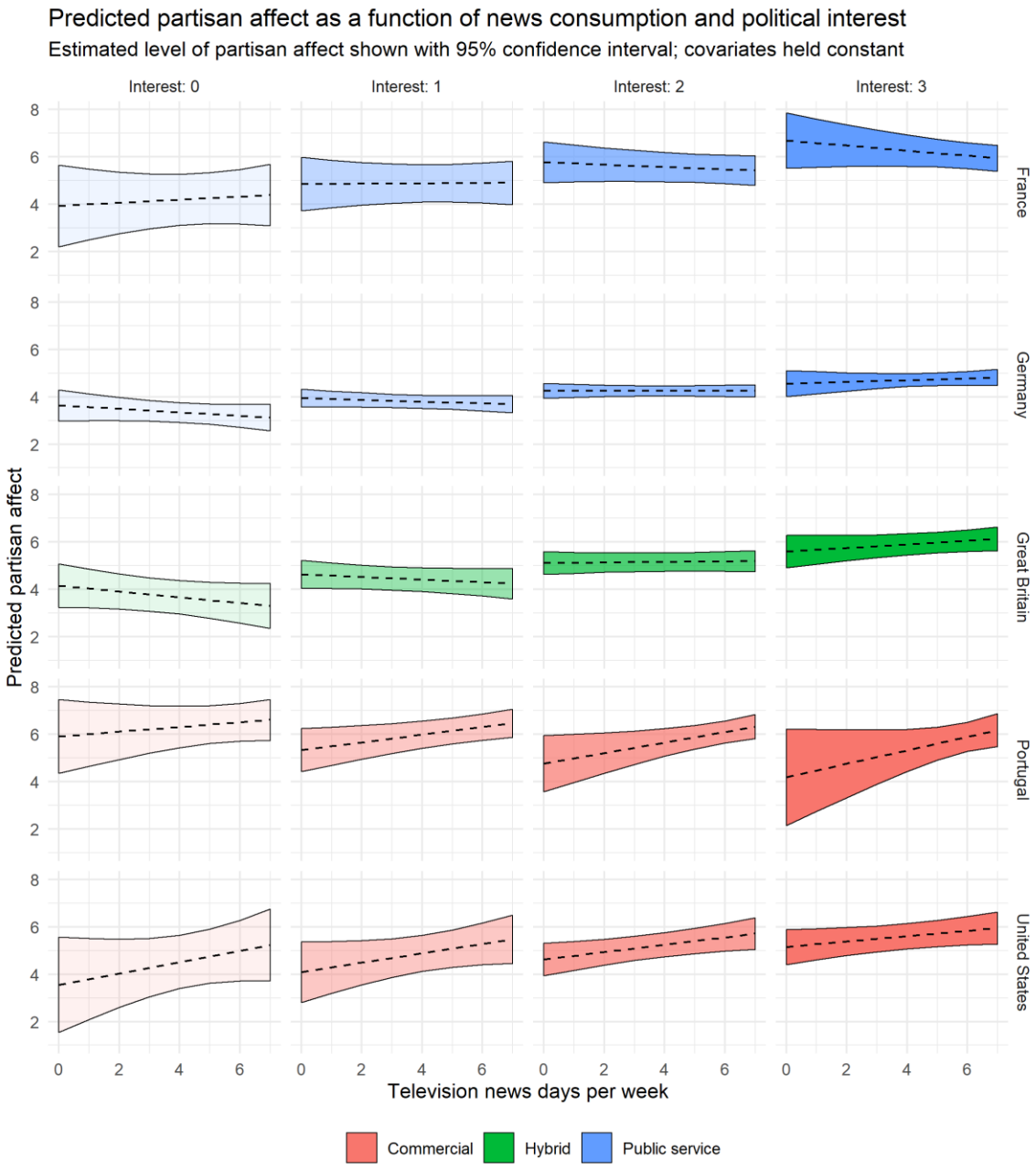


Figure 8

Predicted levels of in-party vote loyalty as a function of political interest and attention to elections