

Understanding Partisan Selective Exposure in Election Campaigns: A Motivational Approach

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Partisan selective exposure

"The selection of media sharing one's political predispositions"

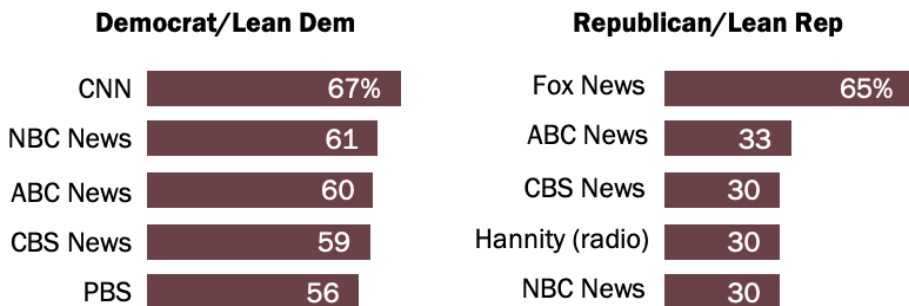
- Stroud (2008)



Partisan selective exposure in election campaigns

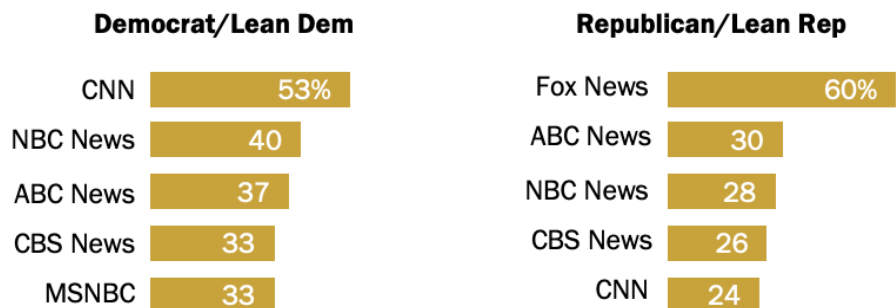
Republicans place trust in one source, Fox News, far more than any other ...

% who trust each source for political and election news (first 5 shown)



... and rely on Fox News far more for political news

% who got political and election news from each source in the past week (first 5 shown)



Note: Order of outlets does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

"U.S. Media Polarization and the 2020 Election: A Nation Divided"

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Partisan selective exposure

- The existence of Partisan selective exposure sources (Knobloch-Westernwick & Meng, 2009; Lawrence, Sides & Farrell, 2010; Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Stroud, 2008)
- The consequences of Partisan selective exposure
 - Issue positions (Gil de Zuniga et al., 2012)
 - Support for politicians (Johnson et al., 2020)
 - Affective polarization (Garrett et al., 2019; Iyengar et al., 2019)



Partisan selective exposure

- But studies on “why it happens”, searching for factors other than partisanship are rare (Dvir-Gvirsman, 2015)
- Theories (Stroud, 2011)
 - Cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957)
 - Motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990)



Partisan selective exposure

A Motivational Approach

- Accuracy goals
 - A desire to reach to an “accurate answer”
- **Directional goals**
 - A desire to reach a “preferred conclusion”
 - Confirmation bias

The directional goals would be a precursor of partisan media use (Stroud, 2011).



Partisan selective exposure

A Motivational Approach

- Operationalization of directional goals: Need to evaluate (Lodge & Taber, 2000; Nir, 2011)
- *"Individuals differ[ences] in the extent to which they chronically engage in evaluative responding"* (Jarvis & Petty, 1996)
- People with a high need to evaluate tend to have more opinions and standing decisions than people with a low need to evaluate



Hypothesis

H1: Need to evaluate will be positively related to partisan media use

H2: Need to evaluate will moderate a relationship between partisanship and partisan media use, in a way that amplify partisan selective exposure among strong partisans.



Methods

- ANES 2016
- Missing values: Multiple imputation using predictive mean matching
- Pooled regression

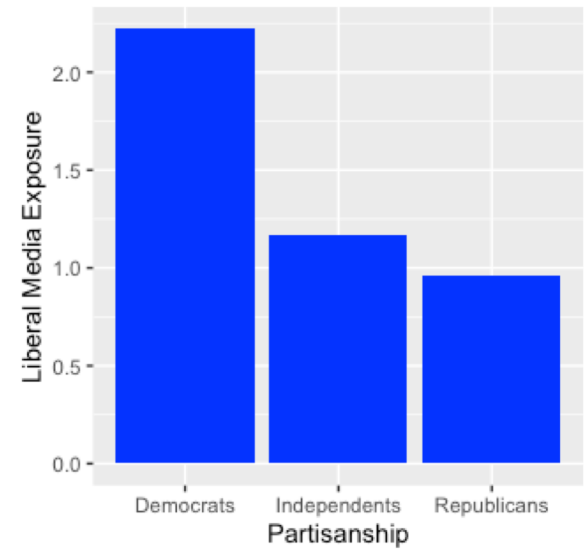
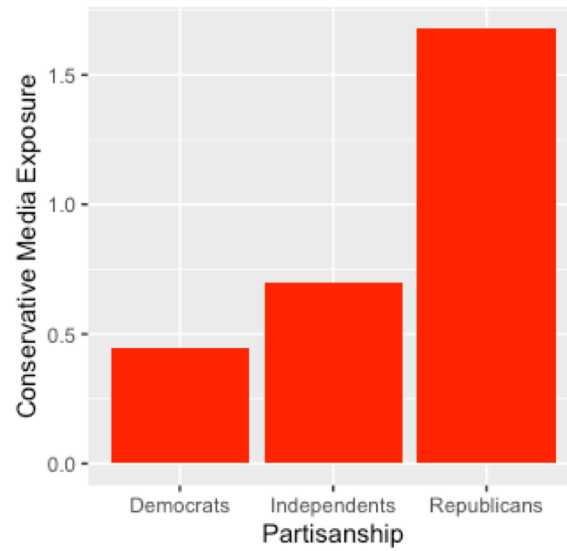


Methods

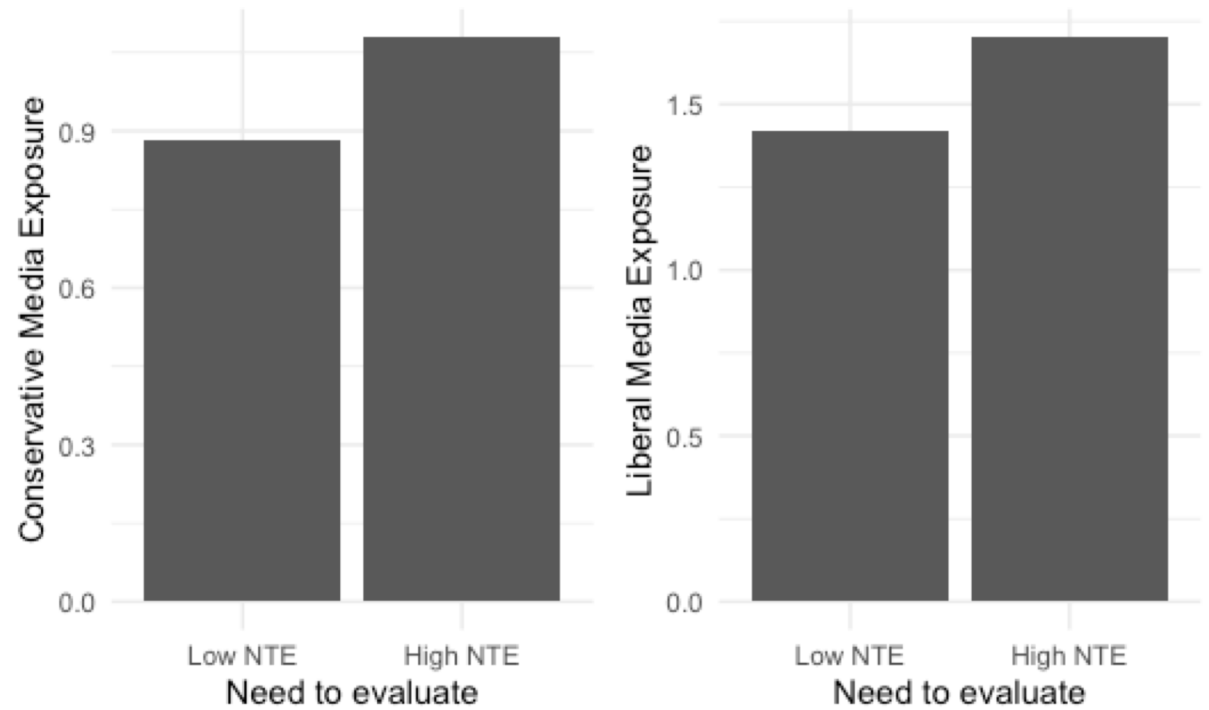
- Independent variables
 - Need to Evaluate (the mean index of 6 items; Cronbach alpha = .77)
 - Partisanship
- Dependent variables: Partisan media use for election campaigns (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2011; Song, 2017).
 - Liberal media use
 - Conservative media use
- Controls
 - Demographics, Interests in Campaigns, and Attention to news.



Results



Results



Results

H1: Need to evaluate is positively related to partisan media use

- Partially supported
 - NTE is positively related to Conservative media use ($\beta = .09, p < .001$)
 - NTE is not positively related to Liberal media use ($\beta = .05, p > .05$)



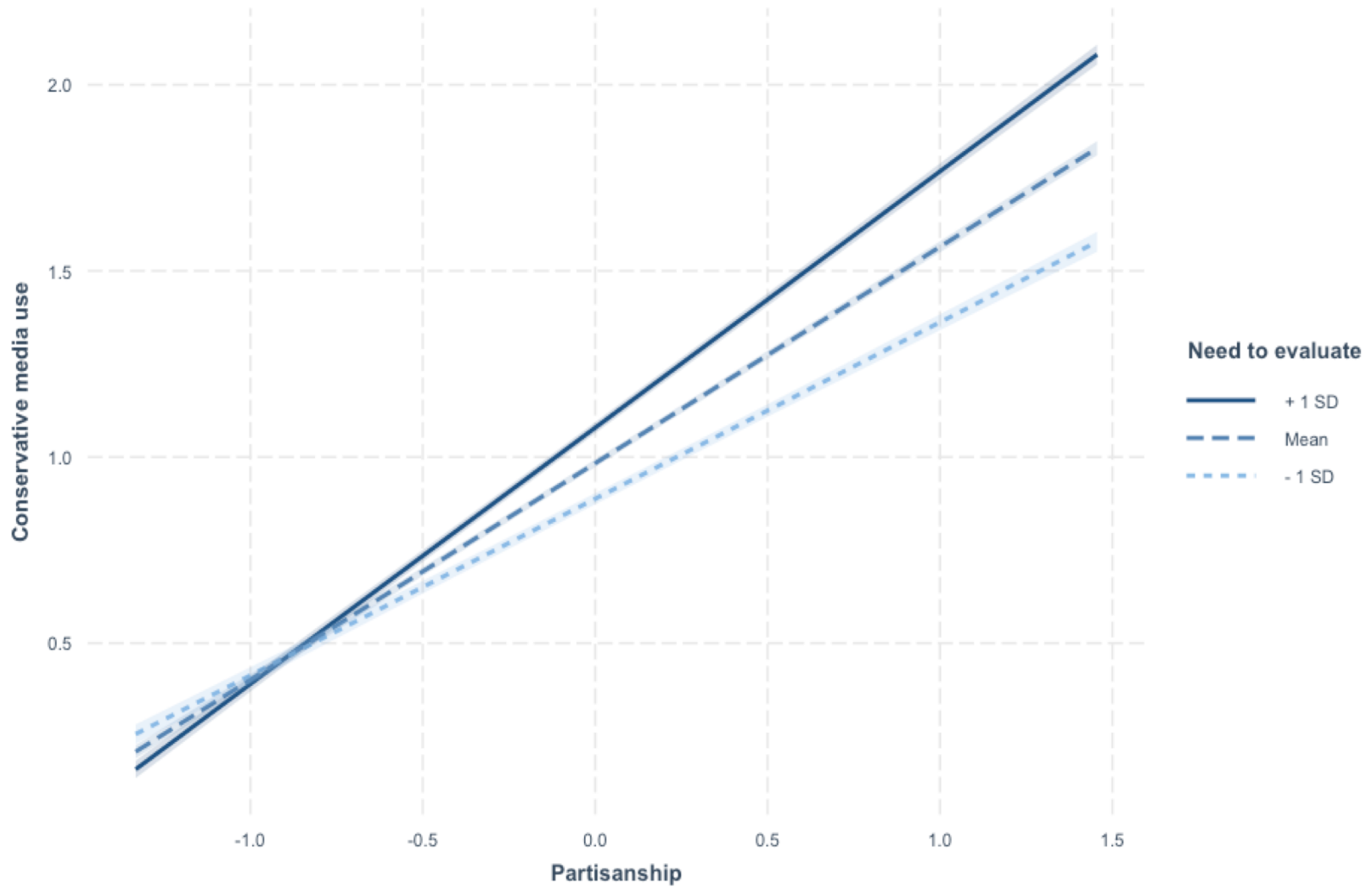
Results

H2: Moderating effects of NTE on partisan media use

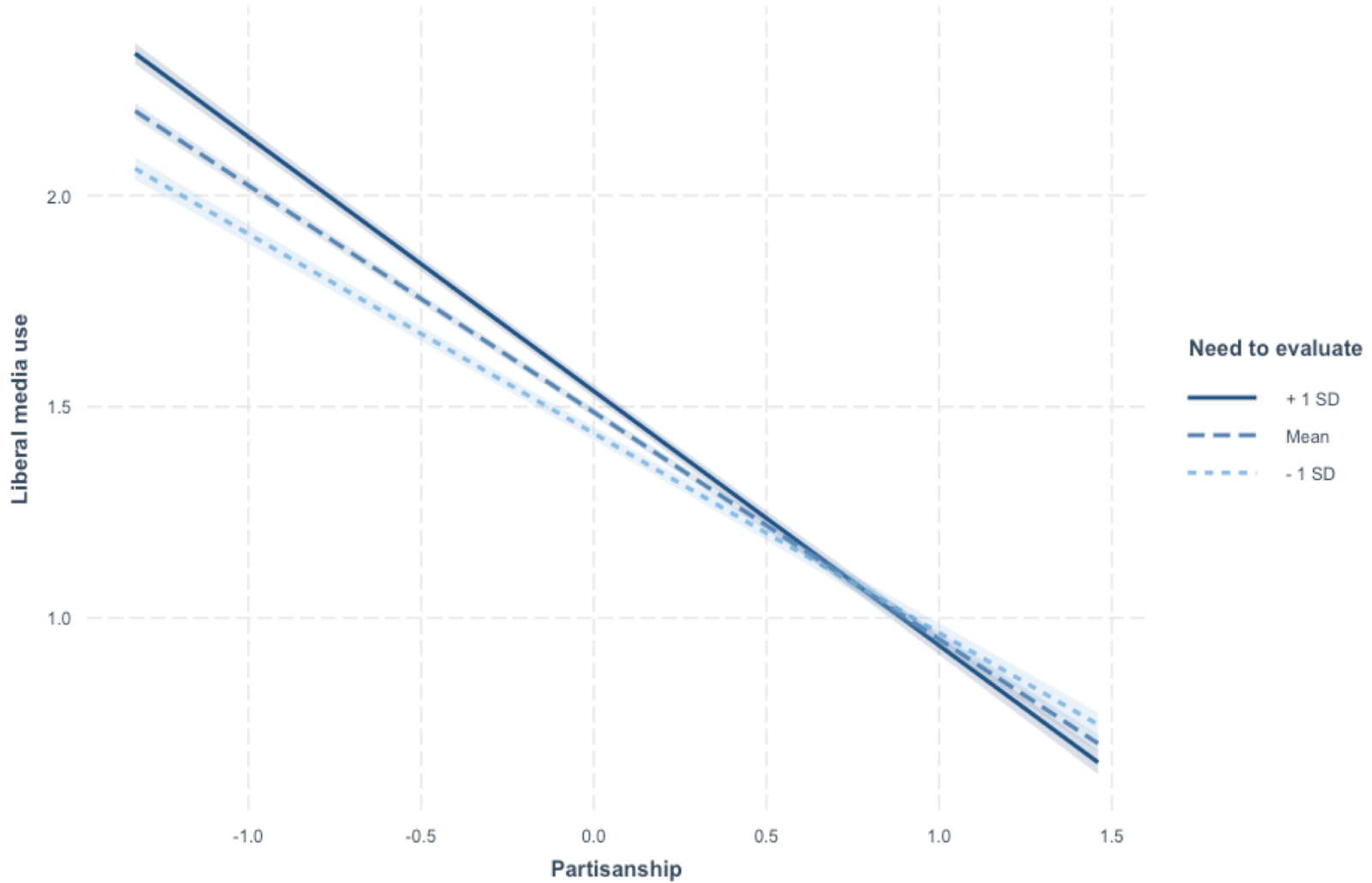
- Supported
 - NTE X Partisanship is positively related to Conservative media use ($\beta = .11, p < .001$)
 - NTE X Partisanship is negatively related to Liberal media use ($\beta = -.06, p < .05$)



Interaction plots



Interaction plots



Discussion

- Evaluative Motivation predicts a person's likeminded media exposure.
- Need to evaluate amplifies partisan selective exposure among strong partisans.



THANKYOU

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Table 1. A List of liberal and conservative news media

APPENDIX

Liberal leaning media

Anderson Cooper 360
Chris Matthews Show
Colbert Report
Erin Burnett OutFront
The Rachel Maddow Show
All Things Considered
The Tom Hartmann Program
CNN.com
Huffingtonpost.com
New York Times
Nytimes.com
Washington Post
Washingtonpost.com

Conservative leaning media

Fox News Van Susteren
All in with Chris Hayes
O'Reilly Factor
Glenn Beck
Mark Levin Show
Rush Limbaugh Show
The Savage Nation
The Sean Hannity Show
The Hugh Hewitt Show
The Mike Gallagher Show
The Schnitt Show
Hannity
Fox.com