Accidental Online Information Acquisition and the Digital Divide in the 2012 Presidential Election Campaign*

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Abstract

The political knowledge gap in America continues to persist. The wealthy and educated are more knowledgeable of public affairs than those of lower socioeconomic status (SES). As the age of the Internet developed, many hoped that Internet access could help close this gap. We look beyond the notion of Internet access and examine the tendency for individuals to accidentally encounter political information via the Internet even when they are not seeking news about politics. Our research question asks whether or not individuals who accidentally encounter political information on the Internet tend to be more knowledgeable about political issues and events. Our second research question asks if accidental exposure to political news online can serve to close the knowledge gap between low and high SES individuals. We address this question within the context of the 2012 general presidential election. Based on the theory of the incidental by-product model of political learning, we make the case that accidental online news exposure increases the chance that lower SES individuals acquire political information even though they may not be seeking out that information, thus closing the digital divide and perhaps the participation gap.

According to participatory democratic theorists an informed electorate is a necessary component of a sustainable democracy (Clawson and Oxley 2013; Dahl 1989; Macphereson 1970). In the context of American politics, it has been argued that informed citizens generally tend to provide input of higher quality into the political system than uninformed citizens (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Unfortunately, research has shown political knowledge is unevenly distributed across socioeconomic status (SES). The result has problematic implications, including higher political polarization, differences in political influence, and increasing the participation gap as well as the knowledge gap between high and low SES individuals (Bartels 2008; Gilens 2012; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012).

Political communication scholars have pointed to the current media environment as a major variable in the modern-day knowledge gap, particularly with regard to the Internet and television (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste, and Shafer 2004; Norris 2001; Putnam 2000). Some researchers have concluded increased media choice on television and the Internet has perpetuated this knowledge gap (Prior 2005, 2007; Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012; Stromback, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata 2013; Sunstien 2009). Others have argued that expanded media choice can enhance knowledge among those at the lower end of the SES spectrum, thus serving to close the political knowledge gap in America (Althaus 2003; Baum 2003; Morris and Morris 2013). Additionally, researchers have examined information technology usage along SES lines, including varying levels of technological access as well as skill and motivation, and determined that the knowledge gap is a function of these differences in information technology use—what has often been referred to as the "digital divide" (Hargittai 2002; Min 2010; Stanley 2003; Van Dijk 2005; Van Dijk and Hacker 2003; Warschauer 2003).

The level of Internet penetration among the mass public continues to increase in America, with 83 percent of adults reporting that they use the Internet at least occasionally (Pew Research Center 2012). As high as this number is, it is will likely continue to increase as differing levels of Internet access via mobile devices continues to expand. Less well-off individuals are now more likely than ever to have higher levels of Internet access, and the skill gap is closing when it comes to handheld devices and using social networking media (Xenos, Vromen and Loader 2014). This could, potentially, allow lower SES to access political information even when they do not seek it out. In other words, higher levels of Internet immersion could increase the potential of accidental information acquisition among the less politically-engaged portions of the population.

Research has investigated this notion of accidental information exposure. Tewksbury, Weaver, and Maddex (2001) used data from the latter half of the 1990s to show that accidental Internet exposure to news did correlate with higher levels of public affairs knowledge. However, given that less than one-third of the public went online at all in the late 1990s (Pew Research Center 1998), and given that cyberspace was in its infancy, the degree of accidental Internet exposure to political information has likely changed dramatically. Kim, Hsuan-Ting, and Gil de Zuniga (2013) reexamined accidental Internet exposure and linked it to greater levels of some types of political engagement, but did not link the exposure to political knowledge. Furthermore, neither of these studies examined accidental exposure in the context of a high-profile political event—a situation in which the phenomenon would likely be more prevalent since overall interest is higher and more information is transmitted. Finally, neither study focused on the degree to which accidental Internet exposure served to address the political knowledge gap between lower SES and higher SES individuals.

A recent study during the early stages of the 2012 Republican Presidential Primary campaign argued that greater Internet access increased the chances that lower SES individuals using the Internet for purposes other than gaining political information would nevertheless gain political knowledge accidentally—a process that would be less likely among high SES individuals (Morris and Morris 2013). This study, however, is limited in that the authors assume greater levels of Internet access through usage of email, text messaging, Facebook, and Twitter equates to a greater potential for accidental Internet exposure. The authors do not actually measure accidental exposure. Finally, the 2012 Republican Presidential Primary, while definitely a high-profile political event, only featured political candidates from one side of the spectrum, thus introducing possible partisan and ideological factors.

Our research project intends to contribute to the current understanding of accidental Internet exposure to political news coverage and political knowledge by examining the relationship in the context of the 2012 general presidential election—a high-profile political event in which both political parties were engaged and fighting for the presidency. Using survey data from the Pew Research Center's 2012 Biennial Media Consumption Study, we are able to directly measure whether or not an individual reported accidentally receiving political news even when not pursuing it. We are also able to assess the relationship between accidental news exposure and political knowledge. Furthermore, we examine the interaction effect between accidental news exposure and SES. Finally, we take into account that accidental political news exposure is not likely to happen only on a computer; therefore we incorporate the use of handheld Internet-capable devices to subdivide our interaction models, thereby creating three-way interactions. Overall, we find that accidental exposure to political news does associate with higher levels of political knowledge, and that accidental learning interacts with SES to shrink the

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knowledge gap in the context of a presidential election campaign. We also illustrate that this interaction is most evident when it comes to phone and/or tablet Internet use. The implications are discussed.

Learning from Accidental Political News Exposure

A significant segment of the American public is intent on tuning out political information (Bauerlein 2008; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Prior 2005, 2007; Shenkman 2008). Theories of information gathering suggest many individuals will not seek political information because the expected costs (e.g., time and effort) outweigh the expected benefit of acquiring knowledge on the topic (Downs 1957). In low information environments, it is easy for individuals to exercise this subconscious cost-benefit analysis. Only those who actively seek political news will acquire higher levels of knowledge (Jung, Kim and Gil de Zuniga 2011; Shah, Cho, Eveland and and Kwak 2005).

But most Americans no longer live in low information media environments. Zukin and Snyder (1984) conducted a natural experiment in which individuals who reported no interest in election news were compared across low and high information media environments. The authors found that individuals with no interest in the campaign who lived in high information media environments were 40 percent more likely to have knowledge of the candidates than their no-interest counterparts in low information media environments.

The mass media environment, however, has changed since Zukin and Snyder's study. The sheer volume of information available has grown almost exponentially over the last few decades, and the manner in which political news is made available to the mass public has also changed. Overall, news coverage of politics has softened, meaning that there is an increasing

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focus on entertainment, sensationalism, and drama (Bennett 2009; Farnsworth and Lichter 2011; Fenton 2005; Sabato, Stencel, and Lichter 2000). From an economic perspective, it is clear that news producers have worked to soften their political coverage with the intent of attracting the attention of individuals who would otherwise not have an interest (Hamilton 2004). Patterson (2000) argued that this process was bad for democracy, as the soft news platform drove away those who preferred hard news, and the intended low-interest audience could always steer clear by pursuing pure entertainment over any hybrid of entertainment and news. Likewise, Prior (2005, 2007) contended that individuals with no interest in politics have the technology skills sufficient enough to ignore political news all together.

Others have not been so critical of the expanded news environment and the softening of news, however. In the context of presidential election campaigns, for example, it has been found that potential voters exercise "low information rationality" to acquire political information based on very rudimentary cues provided by the media (Popkin 1991). Furthermore, while soft news has very little effect on engaging or disengaging those of higher SES standing, it does indeed positively influence the political knowledge of lower SES groups (Baum 2003). Baum (2002, 2003) developed an incidental by-product model of information acquisition to make the case that individuals who do not wish to incur the costs of following the news can still gain knowledge from entertainment-based programming that touches on matters of public affairs. This incidental by-product model of learning has been extended to several soft news formats, such as daytime talk shows (Baum and Jamison 2006), political humor (Cao and Brewer 2008; Baym 2005; Brewer and Cao 2006; Kim and Vishak 2008; Felman and Young 2008; Moy, Xenos and Hess 2005; Parkin 2010; Young and Tisinger 2006), fictional media (Holbrook and Hill 2005; Mutz and Nir 2010), and even personal health news (Tian and Robinson 2009).

We believe the incidental by-product model of information acquisition fits well when it comes to Internet use during the 2012 presidential election campaign. Throughout the primaries, and into the general election campaign, coverage of the race for the presidency dominated traditional political news, but it also permeated less-traditional media environments, especially on the Internet. Eighty three percent of Americans use the Internet, and 70 percent of all American households have broadband Internet access (Pew Research Center 2014). Also, as of July, 2013, Americans spent an average of 23 hours per week online (Mielach 2013). In this regard, access and usage of the Internet has largely breeched the SES divide that existed early on in the Internet age, as was predicted by multiple scholars (Compaine 2001; Thierer 2000). The chance of accidental political information acquisition online increases as the amount of information available increases and individuals make use of technology (Iyengar, Hahn, Bonfadelli and Marr 2009; Morris and Morris 2013). Indeed, this appears be the case. In 2012, seventy-five percent of Internet users reported accidentally being exposed to political news, a major increase from the 49 percent of Internet users in 1998 (Pew Research Center 2012, 1998).

Based on the discussion above, we hypothesize that those individuals who report accidental exposure to political information on the Internet will have greater levels of political knowledge than those who do not report accidental exposure. Additionally, we hypothesize that accidental exposure to the Internet will serve to increase knowledge for low SES individuals more than for high SES individuals.

We are also interested in examining how different computing devices may correspond with accidental news exposure and subsequent changes in political knowledge. Specifically, we are interested in whether or not mobile Internet technology plays a role. Fifty eight percent of the population has either a smartphone and/or a mobile device such as a tablet computer (Pew

Research Center 2012), and although those in the top half of the SES scale use mobile devices with Internet access at a higher rate than the bottom half, the difference is not overwhelming (66 percent to 50 percent). While it has been argued that lower SES individuals lack the skills necessary to access political information through these devices (Campbell and Kwak 2010), we argue that the primary Internet tools used through handheld devices (e.g., email, text messaging, social networking, automatic alerts and updates) all allow users the opportunities for accidental exposure, even more so than a traditional personal computer. Therefore, we hypothesize that those mobile Internet device users that report accidental news exposure will have higher levels of political knowledge than mobile device users who do not report accidental news exposure. We also expect this relationship to be stronger for lower SES individuals than for higher SES individuals, therefore serving to shrink the SES knowledge gap. We now turn to a discussion of our data and analysis techniques.

Data and Methods

Data

We used data from the 2012 Pew Research Center for the People and the Press Biennial Media Consumption Survey. The Biennial Media Consumption Survey is a nationally representative sample based on landline and cell phone interviews conducted between May 9 and June 3 of 2012. A total of 3,003 adults living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia were surveyed. However, the Biennial Media Consumption Survey used a split-form survey design and not all respondents were asked about incidental news exposure, and only those respondents who provided a valid response to this survey item were retained for our analysis. This resulted in an overall sample size of 1,278 adults for our study.

Methods

Negative binomial regression was used to analyze the relationship between incidental news exposure and political knowledge since the dependent variable is a count variable indicating the number of questions about the current American political landscape each respondent answered correctly. Negative binomial regression was selected rather than Poisson regression since goodness-of-fit post-estimation tests indicated that a Poisson model was inappropriate for our analysis. Weights were used in our analysis since older and white respondents were overrepresented in the sample, and multiple imputation using the MI command in Stata was used to handle missing data.

Dependent Variable

Political knowledge is a composite measure of each respondent's awareness of issues on the 2012 political landscape. It is comprised of four multiple choice questions: (1) Do you happen to know which political party has a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives a) Democrats b) Republicans? (2) Do you happen to know if the national unemployment rate as reported is currently closer to a) 5% b) 8% c) 15% d) 21%? (3) Is Angela Merkel the leader of a) Germany b) France c) The International Monetary Fund d) NATO (4) Which person—Mitt Romney or Barack Obama—is more supportive of increasing taxes on higher income people a)Barack Obama b) Mitt Romney. If respondents answered a question correctly they were coded 1 and if they answered incorrectly they were coded 0 and correct answers were totaled to measure political knowledge ranging from 0 (no questions correct) to 4 (all questions correct).

Independent Variables

Two measures of online activity were used in our study. *Incidental exposure* measures if respondents come across news even when they are online for purposes other than getting news

(1=yes, 0=no). *Internet access* is a composite variable measuring a respondent's capability of getting online and using the Internet through a variety of methods and platforms. Four measures of access were used: (1) Uses the Internet or uses email (2) Accesses the Internet on a cell phone, tablet, or other handled device (3) Uses Twitter or reads Twitter messages (4) Uses social networking sites. Respondents were coded 1 if they used the technology and a 0 if they did not. The four indicators of usage were then totaled ranging from 0 (no Internet access) to 4 (full Internet access).

Socioeconomic Status (SES) is a composite measure combining respondent education and income. Respondent education includes eight categories: (1) Less than high school (2) High school incomplete (3) High school graduate (4) Some college, no degree (5) Two year associate degree (6) Four year college degree (7) Some postgraduate or professional schooling, no postgraduate degree (8) Postgraduate or professional degree. Respondent income includes nine categories: (1) Less than 10k (2) 10 to under 20k (3) 20 to under 30k (4) 30 to under 40k (5) 40 to under 50k (6) 50 to under 75k (7) 75 to under 100k (8) 100 to 150k (9) 150k or more. Both variables were standardized (mean=0, sd=1) in order to provide equal weight to the composite, summed, and then standardized again to create an index of SES.

Interest in politics is a composite measure consisting of three variables indicating how closely respondents follow: stories on the current situation and events in Afghanistan, stories about candidates for the 2012 presidential election, and reports about conditions of the U.S. economy, with answer options (1) not at all closely (2) not too closely (3) fairly closely (4) very closely. The three variables were summed to create a composite measure and rescaled to range from 0 (no interest in politics) to 12 (high interest in politics). *Gets news regularly* measures whether a person (1) gets news at regular times, or (0) gets news from time to time or does not

follow news. *Liberal political ideology* is measured on a 5-point scale: (1) very conservative (2) conservative (3) moderate (4) liberal (5) very liberal. A continuous measure of age and dummy variables for gender, race, urbanicity, and region of the country were also included in our analysis as controls.

Missing Data

To address the presence of missing data, multiple imputation using the MI command in Stata was used. Of the variables containing missing values, only two variables had more than 3 percent missingness: income (13 percent missing values) and liberal political ideology (6 percent missing values). Following recommendations from past research, all variables in our analysis, including the dependent variable, were used to create an imputation model (Royston 2005; von Hippel 2007). Five imputations and corresponding datasets were created. Results were averaged across the five datasets to produce more precise coefficients and standard errors than what is provided from single imputation or listwise deletion (Royston 2005).

Results

Table 1 presents weighted means and standard deviations for all variables in our analysis. Means and standard deviations are presented for the full sample and are also broken down by incidental online news exposure. The two groups are similar in many ways. However, compared to respondents experiencing no incidental news exposure, those with incidental exposure are more politically knowledgeable, have more access to the Internet, and are more interested in politics. They are also higher on the SES scale and are more likely to be older and are slightly more likely to be female. The descriptive analysis presented in Table 1 suggests that incidental exposure is related to political knowledge. However, this analysis does not consider possible

confounding variables making it necessary to examine the relationship between incidental exposure and political knowledge while holding constant other factors.

[Table 1 About Here]

Table 2 presents results from the negative binomial regression analyzing the relationship between incidental news exposure and political knowledge. Model 1 includes online activity variables only—Internet access and incidental exposure. Controlling for incidental exposure, increased Internet access appears to be negatively related to political knowledge. Conversely, incidental exposure appears to be positively associated with political knowledge. However, Model 1 does not contain measures for socioeconomic status, political attentiveness, or other demographic characteristics.

Model 2 adds these measures for socioeconomic status, political attentiveness, and other demographic characteristics to the analysis. Once these controls are added, Internet access is no longer statistically related to political knowledge. However, Incidental exposure remains statistically and positively related to political knowledge, although the coefficient is reduced by roughly one-third. These results suggest that incidental exposure to news online is indeed related to increased political knowledge, net of access to the Internet, SES, and other demographic factors.

Does the relationship between incidental exposure and political knowledge differ by socioeconomic status? Model 3 examines this possibility by adding an interaction between incidental exposure and SES. The main effect for incidental exposure remains statistically significant (.17), and the interaction term (-.13) is statistically significant and negative. The coefficient for the interaction between incidental exposure and SES indicates that for respondents one standard deviation above the mean on SES there is nearly no benefit from incidental news

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exposure (.17-.13). Those lower on the SES scale see more benefit from incidental exposure, while those highest on the SES scale actually begin to see a negative association between incidental exposure and political knowledge. Put another way, our results indicate that for those individuals experiencing incidental exposure to news the relationship between SES and political knowledge is less salient.

Figure 1 depicts this relationship graphically. For those individuals at the bottom of the SES scale, incidental online news exposure equates to roughly a half of a point increase in predicted political knowledge. Alternatively, for those individuals at the very top of the SES scale, incidental online news exposure equates to slightly less predicted political knowledge. Furthermore, the slope for socioeconomic status is somewhat flatter for those people who experience incidental exposure. These results suggest that incidental online news exposure somewhat mitigates the effects of SES on the political knowledge gap.

We next examine whether the relationship between incidental online news exposure and political knowledge is moderated by Internet use via handheld device. Table 3 presents our results. Model 1 includes the main effects model from Table 2 for individuals who do not access the Internet through a cell phone, tablet, or other handheld device. For these individuals, incidental exposure is positively related to political knowledge. However, when the interaction between incidental exposure and SES is added in Model 2 the interaction term is not significant. This indicates that for individuals who do not access the Internet through handheld devices, incidental exposure positively associates with political knowledge regardless of SES.

Models 3 and 4 examine the relationship between incidental online news exposure and political knowledge for handheld device users only. Model 3, the main effects model, indicates that for handheld device users, incidental exposure is not statistically related to political

knowledge. However, in Model 4—the interaction model—the interaction term between incidental exposure and SES is negative and statistically significant. This three-way interaction indicates that for handheld Internet users, incidental exposure is linked with increased knowledge for low SES individuals only. For those high on the SES scale incidental exposure is actually related to decreased knowledge.

Figure 2 depicts graphically the three-way interactions in Models 2 and 4. In Figure 2a—which only includes people who do not access the Internet via handhelds—the slopes for SES are nearly identical for those who experience incidental online news exposure and for those who do not. However, in Figure 2b—which only includes people who do access the Internet via handhelds—the slope for SES is much flatter for those who experience incidental exposure. However, higher SES individuals with no incidental exposure are noticeably more knowledgeable than their incidentally exposed high SES counterparts, while lower SES individuals who are incidentally exposed appear more knowledgeable than their unexposed low SES counterparts. Figure 2b suggests that incidental online news exposure might reduce the SES political knowledge gap. However, this is not the result of simply boosting the knowledge of lower SES people. Rather, it is due to elevating knowledge for individuals at the lower end of the SES scale while decreasing knowledge for individuals at the higher end of the SES scale. This evidence supports our hypothesis that accidental exposure to political news through a handheld device can serve to mitigate the SES knowledge gap by simultaneously helping the disadvantaged and hindering the advantaged.

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Conclusion

This study operated off the assumption that Americans get their news in many different ways. Most politically-engaged Americans pursue news actively because they have an interest and a perceived stake in the political game. This attentive public, however, only constitutes a portion of the mass public. The inattentive public, on the other hand, constitutes the majority (Converse 1964). These individuals have little-to-no knowledge of politics or interest in processes and outcomes, and they tend not to pursue news actively.

With the dawn of the Internet age, however, political information has become more abundant. Resultantly, political news is more difficult to avoid. Although it has been argued that a fragmented news environment allows the disinterested public to avoid political news on television (Prior 2005, 2007), we would suggest otherwise when it comes to the Internet. Our data indicates that 74 percent of our sample reported accidentally encountering political information even though they were not looking for it. More importantly, the proliferation of mobile Internet devices that allow users virtually 24/7 access to a variety of online messaging platforms further increases the potential for accidental news exposure.

Ultimately, there is a significant connection between accidental political news exposure and political knowledge, even when controlling for demographics, political interest, ideology, and regular news exposure. Most significantly, our study shows that this relationship works to lower the knowledge gap between low and high SES individuals, but this is not an example of a rising tide lifting all boats. Rather, accidental exposure to online news appears to both boost the political knowledge of the disadvantaged and hinder the knowledge of the advantaged.

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Table 1: Weighted Means and Standard Deviations

	Full Sample				No Incidental Exposure				Incidental Exposure			
Dependent Variable	Mean	SD	min	max	Mean	SD	min	max	Mean	SD	min	max
Political knowledge	2.00	1.34	0	4	1.67	1.35	0	4	2.11	1.32	0	4
Online Activity												
Internet access	2.39	.91	1	4	2.01	.90	1	4	2.52	.88	1	4
Incidental exposure	.75	.43	0	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Controls												
Interest in politics	6.32	2.47	1	10	6.12	2.57	1	10	6.39	2.43	1	10
Gets news regularly	.35	.48	0	1	.37	.48	0	1	.35	.48	0	1
Liberal political ideology	2.85	1.02	1	5	2.81	1.06	1	5	2.86	1.01	1	5
Socioeconomic status (SES)	-.06	.99	-2.87	2.68	-.43	1.02	-2.77	1.99	.06	.95	-2.24	2.68
Age	43.45	16.81	18	94	48.80	17.79	18	89.44	41.69	16.10	18	94
Female	.50	.50	0	1	.48	.50	0	1	.51	.50	0	1
White (referent)	.70	.46	0	1	.69	.47	0	1	.70	.46	0	1
Black	.11	.31	0	1	.09	.28	0	1	.11	.32	0	1
Hispanic	.13	.34	0	1	.17	.38	0	1	.12	.32	0	1
Other race/ethnicity	.07	.25	0	1	.06	.23	0	1	.07	.25	0	1
Urban (referent)	.36	.48	0	1	.33	.47	0	1	.36	.48	0	1
Rural	.16	.37	0	1	.16	.37	0	1	.16	.37	0	1
Suburban	.48	.50	0	1	.51	.50	0	1	.47	.50	0	1
South (referent)	.36	.48	0	1	.36	.48	0	1	.36	.48	0	1
Northeast	.18	.39	0	1	.19	.39	0	1	.18	.38	0	1
Midwest	.22	.42	0	1	.22	.41	0	1	.23	.42	0	1
West	.24	.42	0	1	.23	.42	0	1	.24	.43	0	1
N	1,278				328				950			

Table 2: Negative Binomial Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Political Knowledge and Incidental Exposure

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Online Activity	b	se	b	se	b	se
Internet access	-.07**	(.02)	-.01	(.02)	-.01	(.02)
Incidental exposure	.27***	(.06)	.16***	(.05)	.17***	(.05)
Controls						
Interest in politics			.08***	(.01)	.07***	(.01)
Gets news regularly			.11**	(.04)	.10**	(.04)
Liberal political ideology			.02	(.02)	.02	(.02)
Socioeconomic status (SES)			.23***	(.02)	.33***	(.04)
Age			.01***	(.00)	.01***	(.00)
Female			-.12***	(.04)	-.12***	(.04)
Black			-.09	(.06)	-.09	(.06)
Hispanic			-.13	(.08)	-.13	(.08)
Other race/ethnicity			.00	(.08)	.01	(.08)
Rural			-.18**	(.06)	-.19**	(.06)
Suburban			-.06	(.04)	-.06	(.04)
Northeast			-.04	(.05)	-.04	(.05)
Midwest			-.02	(.05)	-.02	(.05)
West			.01	(.05)	.00	(.05)
Interaction						
Incidental exposure*SES					-.13**	(.05)
Intercept	.65***	(.07)	-.12	(.15)	-.11	(.15)
lnalpha	-84.54		-84.54		-84.54	
N	1,278		1,278		1,278	

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.01

Table 3: Negative Binomial Regression Analysis of the Relationship between Political Knowledge and Incidental Exposure Subdivided by Phone/Tablet Internet Use

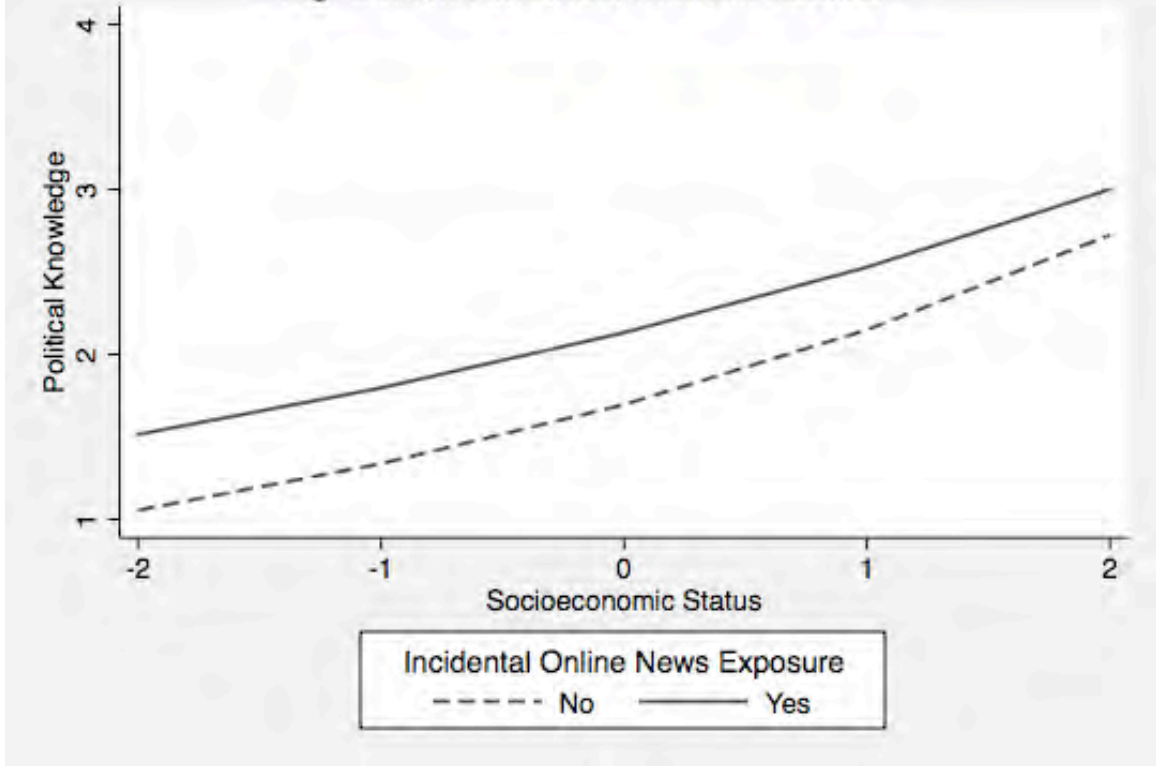| | *No Phone or Tablet Internet Use* | | | | *Phone or Tablet Internet Use* | | | |
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Online Activity	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
Internet access	-.02	(.05)	-.02	(.05)	.00	(.04)	-.00	(.04)
Incidental exposure	.23***	(.06)	.23***	(.06)	.08	(.07)	.09	(.07)
Controls								
Interest in politics	.08***	(.01)	.08***	(.01)	.07***	(.01)	.07***	(.01)
Gets news regularly	.14**	(.05)	.14**	(.05)	.07	(.05)	.07	(.05)
Liberal political ideology	.02	(.03)	.02	(.03)	.01	(.03)	.01	(.03)
Socioeconomic status (SES)	.19***	(.03)	.24***	(.06)	.26***	(.03)	.40***	(.07)
Age	.01**	(.00)	.01**	(.00)	.00**	(.00)	.00**	(.00)
Female	-.19***	(.05)	-.19***	(.05)	-.09	(.05)	-.08	(.05)
Black	-.10	(.12)	-.09	(.12)	-.07	(.08)	-.08	(.08)
Hispanic	-.00	(.12)	-.00	(.11)	-.16	(.10)	-.16	(.10)
Other race/ethnicity	-.13	(.18)	-.13	(.18)	.03	(.08)	.03	(.08)
Rural	-.06	(.08)	-.07	(.08)	-.28**	(.09)	-.28**	(.09)
Suburban	.09	(.06)	.08	(.06)	-.15**	(.05)	-.15**	(.05)
Northeast	-.11	(.08)	-.11	(.08)	.00	(.07)	-.00	(.07)
Midwest	-.04	(.06)	-.04	(.06)	-.02	(.06)	-.02	(.06)
West	.01	(.07)	.01	(.07)	.00	(.06)	-.00	(.06)
Interactions								
Incidental exposure*SES			-.07	(.07)			-.18*	(.07)
Intercept	-.29	(.19)	-.27	(.19)	.05	(.22)	.07	(.21)
lnalpha	-23.67		-23.67		-21.18		-21.18	
N			545				731	

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.01

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Fig. 1: Full Sample
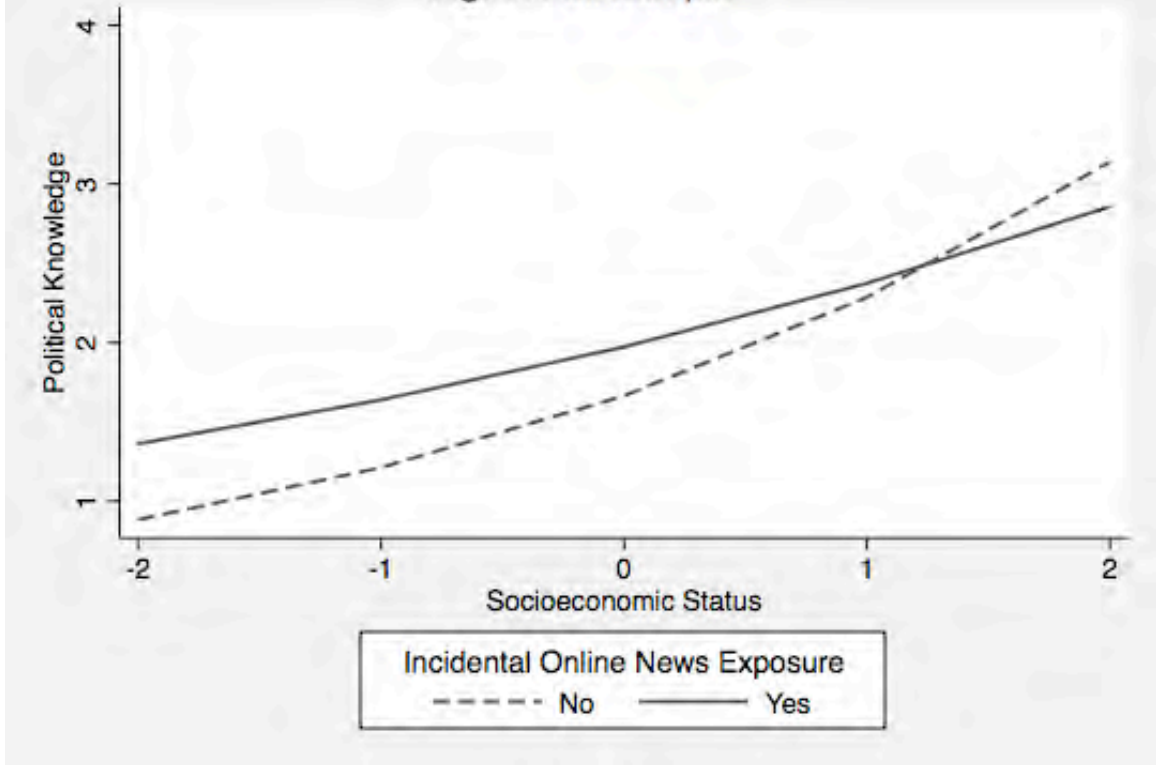
Fig. 2a: No Handheld Internet Access

Fig. 2b: Handheld Internet Access