What Moves the Millennials? The Effects of Different Forms of Media on International Political Knowledge and Interest

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Abstract

American Millennials (born between 1980-2000) are a generation born into media. At their disposal are nearly infinite sources on every topic and a multitude of ways to access information. Despite constant technological innovation that continues to increase these channels of information, statistics show that the Millennials are tuned out, consuming less substantive news and consuming more entertainment, especially in the area of politics. Much has been done to gauge the lack of attentiveness to political issues, especially domestically. Less attention has been given to the lack of international political attentiveness and its ramifications. This study employs an experimental design to discern the potential effects of three types of media coverage of one event (the democracy movement in Egypt) on individuals of the Millennial generation. College students were randomly assigned to one of three conditions, presented with a survey pre-test, exposed to the media stimulus (a traditional news source, an alternative news source, or a satirical news source), and administered a survey post-test. A second post-test was administered several weeks after exposure in order to gauge persistence of effects. The primary goal is to understand what engages and motivates Millennials to learn more about this particular issue; a secondary goal is to determine which sources inspire knowledge and interest persistence over time. The results from this study can be used to shed light on the phenomena of Millennial information apathy, as well as the types of media that can be utilized to combat it.

Introduction

At any given time, we cannot possibly know everything that is happening in the world. Thus, we rely on media to selectively tell us what to follow, who is important, and where the most controversial events are taking place. But are we really listening to the many channels of news available to us? Or have we been so oversaturated with media messages that we are no
longer interested? Evidence suggests that the Millennial generation (born between 1980-2000) is more “tuned out” than generations previous: They consume less news, know less about domestic and global politics, and are less interested in following social and political transformations abroad. Given these phenomena, what can be done to combat this decrease in political interest and knowledge? Although academic scholarship has addressed the fact that Millennials are tuned out, little has been provided on how to re-engage a disinterested generation. This study seeks to determine which type of media (traditional, alternative, or satirical) is most effective in creating interest, instigating emotional reaction, and affecting knowledge over a period of time, all in order to answer the question: What moves the Millennials?

Paradigm

The paradigm that forms the foundation of the hypotheses of this study is based on the uses and gratifications perspective on media effects. According to this paradigm, a medium or message is a source of influence within the context of other possible influences.\(^1\) Early perspectives of media effects focused on isolating elements of the communicator, channel, or message that explained the impact messages have on receivers. This process was seen from a mechanistic perspective that assumed direct influence on message recipients.\(^2\) As the study of media effects has evolved, however, it has become more standard to assume that many elements intercede between a message and a response. The mechanistic perspective underscores the role of social and psychological elements in mitigating media messages. Rosengren (1974) wrote that “uses and gratifications rests on a mediated view of communication influence, whereby

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2 Ibid., 165.
individual differences constrain direct media effects.”

Therefore, to understand media effects, we must understand the characteristics, motivation, selectivity, and involvement of individual communicators.

The principle elements of uses and gratifications include: “our psychological and social environment, our needs and motives to communicate, the media, our attitudes and expectations about the media, functional alternatives to using the media, our communication behavior, and the outcomes or consequences of our behavior.”

According to Rubin (2009), the contemporary view of uses and gratifications is grounded in five important assumptions. First, communication behavior is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated. This means that people are active participants who make choices on which media to consume. This is a functional behavior that has consequences for people and societies. Second, audience members are active participants who select and use media to satisfy needs or desires.

Third, social and psychological factors guide, filter, or mediate behavior. Personal environment affects the media decisions that audience members will make. Fourth, the media compete with other forms of communication (functional alternatives). How well the media satisfies needs, motives, or desires varies based on individuals’ circumstances. Media will compete with, for example, interpersonal interaction for selection. Fifth, more often than not, individuals are influential in mitigating the process of meeting needs and desires. Through choices, patterns, and consequences of media use, media “may affect individual characteristics or social, political, cultural, or economic structures of society, and how people may come to rely on certain communication channels.”

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Uses and gratifications researchers have relied on self-reporting as a methodological tool for their studies, as this study does. People are able to articulate their motives to communicate and their motives behind certain media choices. The assumptions of uses and gratifications underscore the role of audience initiative. People “typically choose to participate and select media or messages from an array of communication alternatives in response to their expectations and desires.” These expectations and desires are constrained by personal traits, social context, and interaction. The capacity of individuals for subjective choice initiates such behavior as media or message selection. This initiative affects the outcomes of media use.

Contemporary studies of uses and gratifications theory have led researchers to combine media effects and political science in the realm of political communication. The rapid diffusion of television in the 1950s saw a change in scholarly opinion about the effects of the media on individuals in a society. There was a shift from assuming minimal, short-term effects to engaging with more difficult questions about how the media interacts with and molds public opinion, especially regarding politics. Early studies of political opinion were focused on the wrong types of media effects and were too simplistic to gauge long-term, subtle effects of the media. In a study of media effects surrounding the 1948 American presidential election, only 3% of participants were found to have shifted parties between August and October. In the words of Bernard Berelson, these results offered the conclusion that mass communication “crystalizes and reinforces more than it converts.”

David H. Weaver, author of the article “What Voters Learn from Media” argues:

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7 Ibid., 167.
…where reinforcement means buttressing existing attitudes and opinions, crystallization refers to the learning, or sharpening, of such attitudes and opinions, implying a teaching role for mass communication. Attitudes and opinions are not constructed from thin air but rather from the information that people believe to be true and that is most salient or easily accessible to them.  

While Weaver’s article deals primarily with domestic political issues, his argument about mass communication is relevant to international politics as well. The media as a collective is a force that encourages learning and opinion forming over time. This is why the study of media effects is so important, for it is a tool to study how a particular society is being informed and how political attitudes are constructed. McCombs and Shaw (1977) demonstrated the agenda-setting function of the press with their graph entitled “Sequence of Learning from Media.”  

In this graph, awareness \(\rightarrow\) information \(\rightarrow\) attitudes \(\rightarrow\) behavior. The media plays an important role in a democratic society, making people aware of issues that then influence their attitudes and behavior. There is much scholarship related to Weaver and others’ work based on the role of the media in forming domestic (American) political knowledge. There is far less scholarship related to the forming of international political knowledge. This study seeks to partially fill that gap by taking an approach that combines the disciplines of media effects studies and international relations. This study also addresses the gap in scholarship of generational international political knowledge. If media is a powerful tool for shaping public knowledge, how is this knowledge changing in the advent of an interconnected world, where different generations pursue different means for knowledge? If the wide dispersion of the television in the 1950s had a grand effect on media studies, then certainly the rise of the Internet has also changed the lens through which we must view political knowledge. The Millennial generation is the first generation to be born into a world where vast amounts of knowledge are accessible via the Internet. And as this study will

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address, the Millennial generation is paradoxically more “tuned out” in regards to both domestic and international politics than generations previous. The main questions of this study are: What moves the Millennials? Which types of readily available media are best at engaging a tuned out generation, crystalizing political knowledge, and inspiring a lasting interest in global affairs? To answer these questions, one must first contextualize the Millennial generation.

Who are the Millennials?

For the purposes of this study, Millennials are individuals born between 1980 and 2000. In 1990, Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press published *The Age of Indifference*, a study that presented evidence revealing "a generation that knows less, cares less, and reads newspapers less. It is also a generation that votes less and is less critical of its leaders and institutions than young people in the past."\(^{12}\) Having conducted a series of surveys over half a century to chart news interest, Times Mirror Center saw an increasingly tuned out generation:

> It is clear that the news and information gap is a product of our own time. The results of 16 individual measures of public attentiveness from 1944 to 1968 demonstrate only small differences between age groups. Over those years, the interest of younger people was less than 5% below that of interest in the population at large. In the forties, political debates in Washington and election news had as large an audience among the under-30s as among older people. In the fifties, the Army-McCarthy hearings generated as much interest among the young as among older people. In the 60s, as many young people as older people said they were following the war in Vietnam very closely.
> In the 70s, Watergate was of equal interest to young and old. But soon thereafter, surveys by the Roper Organization began to show diminished interest in current affairs among younger people.\(^{13}\)
>
> The 1980s and 1990s marked a revolution in media options for all generations, but each generation reacted differently to changing processes. Attentiveness to news is influenced by any number of different variables such as income, gender, and race. However, there is a statistically weak correlation between these variables and the amount of political news consumed by


\(^{13}\) Ibid.
individuals. Mindick (2005) argues that today, the strongest correlation exists between age and news consumption. Analyzing this variable helps explain why young people have “tuned out” and pay far less attention to news as compared to previous generations. The phenomenon of tuning out has led to a generation that is less informed politically; with the downward trend in news attentiveness, there has also been a downward trend in voting participation.

The Higher Education Research Institute has performed a long-term study of collegiate American first-year students. In 1968, the first year of the poll, 60.3 percent of incoming first-year students reported an interest in political affairs. In 2000, only 28.1 percent reported such an interest. The Times Mirror Center corroborated this generational difference. Up until the 1970s, collegiate-aged individuals followed political news as much as their elders did. Voting participation has also (in general) fallen. In 1964, 50 percent of individuals aged 18-24 voted in the presidential election. In 2000, less than 1/3 did. It is worth noting, however, that the 2008 presidential elections did reverse this steady decline. It is possible that the “Obama-effect” is the cause behind this spike in youth voting.

In regards to midterm elections, 31 percent of individuals aged 18-24 voted in 1966. In 1998, 16.6 percent of individuals aged 18-24 voted, and in 2002 (despite the events of September 11, the war in Afghanistan, the looming war in Iraq, and a slight overall increase in voting in 2002), only 15 percent of individuals aged 18-24 voted. Since the 1960s, our voting base has witnessed a consistent decrease in the percentage of these individuals voting. Their political news consumption mirrors their voting participation: consistently trending downward.

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid. 22.
17 Ibid.
Other scholars have suggested a general decline in civic engagement since the 1960s, a decline of which the long-term effects are now being seen in the Millennial generation. Robert D. Putnam’s seminal work *Bowling Alone* (1995) details this decline in terms of voter turnout, political activity, trust in American government, and organizational membership. Starting in the 1950s, Americans began going to church less, organizing in labor unions less, attending PTA meetings less, and joining civic and fraternal organizations less.\(^\text{18}\) Putnam provides several hypotheses for why this is the case, but the most relevant for this study is his explanation of changing demographics and technological transformation. The 1960s saw a transformation in the American family: fewer marriages, more divorces, fewer children, and lower real wages. He argues:

> Each of these changes might account for some of the slackening of civic engagement, since married, middle-class parents are generally more socially involved than other people. Moreover, the changes in scale that have swept over the American economy in these years--illustrated by the replacement of the corner grocery by the supermarket and now perhaps of the supermarket by electronic shopping at home, or the replacement of community-based enterprises by outposts of distant multinational firms--may perhaps have undermined the material and even physical basis for civic engagement.\(^\text{19}\)

Further undermining the basis for civic engagement is the “privatizing” or “individualizing” use of leisure time, a technological transformation that also disrupts opportunities for social-capital formation.\(^\text{20}\) Writing in 1995, Putnam argues that the television has allowed for individual taste to take hierarchical precedent over collective taste. The Internet, and all of the accompanying technology of the 80s, 90s, and 00s, has further intensified this phenomenon. The Millennial generation is incentivized to place individual fulfillment over civic fulfillment, thus contributing to their “tuned out” nature and their propensity for entertainment over information. In regards to


\(^{19}\) Ibid., 73.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
the information that Millennials take in about international relations, a host of other problems exist that currently perpetuate global ignorance.

**Media Coverage of International Affairs**

Bernard Cohen, premiere scholar on the topic of foreign policy and the media, wrote in his 1963 book *The Press and Foreign Policy* that the press “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about.”\(^{21}\) This quote demonstrates the agenda-setting nature of the media in our society. In calling our attention to certain issues and ignoring others, “the media influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged.”\(^{22}\) The media thereby mitigates a hierarchical agenda. There have been a number of studies that have shown strong priming effects for both domestic and international policy issues. The salience of particular issues affects public judgment. Krosnick and Kinder (1990) showed that assessments of President Ronald Reagan’s job performance were more clearly connected with U.S. intervention in Central America after the Iran-Contra affair.\(^{23}\) The same was true for George H.W. Bush after the Gulf War. Presidential evaluation is just one area where the media may have a significant effect on public opinion in the realm of foreign affairs. Considering that matters of foreign affairs are not usually experienced personally (and thus, we depend on news coverage to learn about them), it is crucial to build an understanding of how the media influences American democracy. Policymakers are often forced to respond to claims in the media; sometimes policy is even formed around or changed by public opinion. In regards to foreign affairs, where

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Americans know very little, there is a weakness in our democratic decisions of how to act abroad.

Moisy (1997) details a paradox we are currently seeing with foreign news consumption: “The amazing increase in the capacity to produce and distribute news from distant lands has been met by an obvious decrease in its consumption. This is certainly true for the United States, but it appears that the same phenomenon exists, to some degree, in most developed societies.” In addition to the lack of demand, there is a lack of accurate news reporting due to repressive regimes around the world that censor information going in and out of their countries. Moisy argues that the world is not as fully wired as we believe it to be. While the avenues with which to explore foreign affairs are more numerous than ever before, the average US citizen is still very unaware of the true nature of events happening abroad. The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations conducts surveys every four years on American public opinion and foreign policy. The 8-year gap between 1986 and 1994 showed a decline in the relevance of foreign policy to the American public. It showed that the percentage of respondents who perceived “foreign policy problems” to be a high U.S. government priority was 26 percent in 1986 compared to 11.5 percent in 1994. Moisy presents a hypothesis for a reason behind this decline:

Americans also seem to be feeling a weariness toward a world that is increasingly difficult to decipher. Twenty years ago it was easy to sympathize with peoples struggling to free themselves from dictatorial regimes, particularly if those regimes were communist. Today an endless litany of catastrophes and desperate situations in faraway countries, many of which seem to defy rational explanation, is all the more taxing on the Western world’s compassion. Whatever their government's position, people find it difficult to feel any sense of responsibility toward the starving refugees caught between fighting groups in the jungles of Zaire while the leader of that country basks in the comfort of a palatial home on the French Riviera. Similarly, indifference marks the West's response toward events in Albania, where insurgents reject their government and the opposition alike and appear to be playing into the hands of criminal Mafia.

25 Ibid., 83.
26 Ibid., 83-84.
Moisy obviously speaks to the foreign policy issues relevant to the year this article was written (1997), but the crux of this statement remains true. Americans have been and are experiencing “compassion fatigue” as Susan Moeller puts it. She argues:

Sometimes to Americans, international problems just seem too permanent to yield to resolution. Sometimes, even when problems flare out into crisis – by which point it is too late for the patch-em-up response – the public is justified in believing that outside intervention will do little good … so what's the use in caring?²⁷

There is a certain American psychology that pervades foreign affairs. People do not feel confident in their individual role in alleviating global issues. People also feel fatigued by the constant reiteration of suffering. A 1995 Pew Research study on the media’s coverage of international affairs stated, “foreign events and disasters usually must be more dramatic and violent to compete successfully against national news”²⁸ and that one-third of news stories are “essentially about the United States in the world, rather than about the world.”²⁹ The main conclusion of the study was that foreign news coverage is not necessarily biased in text, but is biased in selection of topics. The study provided this conclusion:

The parochial choice of topics is also understandable if more lamentable. Many charge that American journalism has become more focused on entertaining rather than educating audiences with deregulation of the electronic media and heightened competition throughout the media. At the same time, the attraction of an American angle and the avoidance of “far away places with strange sounding names” is obvious and considerable. Audiences identify with American players and interests and can often fit them easily within their own personal contexts. But the overemphasis on U.S.-related stories caters to the self-centered concerns of Americans during this period of rising isolationist sentiment. Such stories usually provide no new information on distant parts of the globe that would broaden and stimulate viewers and readers and perhaps prepare them for tomorrow’s story.³⁰

²⁸ Andrew Kohut and Robert C. Toth, “A Content Analysis: International News Coverage Fits Public’s Ameri-
Centric Mood,” PEW Research Center for the People and the Press, 2005, accessed May 8, 2014,
²⁹ Ibid., 6.
The study also questioned if Americans would even grasp onto extended foreign news coverage if it covered topics in a different manner. Tom Brokaw, then anchor of NBC’s Nightly News Show, lamented that when Bryant Gumbal took the Today Show to Africa for a week, the normally large audience dwindled day by day. Brokaw complained, “If one network scheduled a foreign-affairs documentary in prime time, the predators at Fox would swiftly counter in the same hour with sex and song.”

In the abstract, what we are seeing in our media today are Ameri-centric stories, sensationalist plot lines, and biased news selection. We see a paradox of more news yet less demand. We assume that in a democracy, “the people have a say in how their country's relations with the rest of the world are conducted and that an uninformed public is more likely to pressure its leaders into making inappropriate decisions,” but is that case in our society? An uninformed and uninterested generation is a liability to the process, and evidence suggests that the Millennials are certainly not as engaged as they could or should be.

**Media Sources: Traditional, Alternative, and Satire**

It is important to contextualize the different media sources used in this study, and to compare and contrast them to understand their main features and messages. Each source occupies a separate media sphere, chosen strategically to represent that sphere.

*Traditional Media Source: PBS NewsHour*

“Traditional” media encompasses a number of different mediums that are drawn together in the same category by their accessibility. Newspapers are one of the most important and hotly debated mediums in the traditional category. With the advent of newer forms of media, newspaper readership has been continuously on the decline, and even more so with the

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31 Ibid., 12.
Millennial generation. Included in the traditional category are cable news networks and local television affiliates. Even if an individual does not have cable, if he/she owns a television, he/she has access to these channels. Additionally, public broadcasting is part of the traditional category; this includes National Public Radio (NPR) and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), from which one of the stimuli in this study comes.

Traditional media regards a certain journalistic code of ethics. Although many sources are accused of bias, objectivity is usually the goal of journalists working in traditional mediums. Mindich lists several qualities of a good journalist: He/she does not hold extreme political positions, he/she guards against governmental and business pressures, and he/she balances the views of his or her news subjects fairly.\(^{33}\) Good journalism, however, comes at a cost. For every news story on CNN, there are dozens of staffers working behind the scenes. The television news team includes “anchors, reporters, PromTer operators, camera and sound operators, field producers, futures editors, assignment editors, writers, editors, font operators, directors, producers, production assistants, service technicians, and countless others.”\(^{34}\) Newspapers and magazines must deal with the costs of printing and transportation. To maintain profits while costs are high and news consumption is low, corporate executives must make decisions that sacrifice content. In 1981, an average 30-minute nightly newscast, minus commercials, was 23 minutes and 20 seconds. In 2000, it was down to 18 minutes and 20 seconds.\(^{35}\) The recent challenge for newspapers has been simply staying afloat while maintaining integrity. Max Frankel wrote:

> Unless they are specially educated and restrained, stockholders care most about a company’s customers – and readers are not a newspaper’s main customers; advertisers are…. When profit margins slip and stock prices stagnate, emergency measures are

\(^{33}\) Mindich, 98.
\(^{34}\) Ibid., 99.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
invoked. News bureaus are closed. The space allotted to news is reduced. Reporters and editors are “bought out,” and hiring is “frozen.” Since most American newspapers no longer face any other paper’s direct competition, this dilution risks no immediate reader revolt, only a slow erosion to which bonus-seeking managements and transient stockholders are usually indifferent.\(^{36}\)

The pressures to pander to advertisers and cut down on content have been a stress on the integrity of traditional media. Pippa Norris, in her book *A Virtuous Circle* (2000), questioned, “Have sagging sales in the print sector fuelled down-market pressures towards tabloid sensationalism in the pursuit of readers and a decline of traditional journalistic standards?\(^{37}\) Mindich argues that this is the case for both the newspaper and television spheres, “especially when many corporate parents are seeking to maintain and even increase their profit margins. And as the FCC allows further deregulation, corporate parents are increasingly likely to care more and more about the bottom line.”\(^{38}\) Of further consequence in cutting costs, international news reporting has taken a severe hit at many networks, for these are the most expensive stories to cover. According to the Tyndall Report, total foreign coverage on network nightly news programs has declined. ABC, the leader in foreign coverage according to the report, went from 3,733 minutes in 1989 to 1,838 minutes in 1996. NBC went from 3,351 minutes to 1,175 minutes.\(^{39}\)

Traditional media seems to occupy an awkward middle-ground: Journalists try to maintain their code of ethics in an increasingly sensationalized world. Corporate sponsors want the Millennial audience to tune in, but there are many barriers that exist preventing them from capturing this audience or making international news a priority.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the FCC loosened its requirements barring broadcasters from owning multiple stations within a single market. Corporations began to “gobble up ever-larger shares of the markets while arguing that the First Amendment protected them from any regulation whatsoever.”40 In June 2003, the FCC rolled back another set of regulations to make it easier to own media across platforms. This greatly accelerated the potential for consolidation. Media experts have been very critical of the actions of the FCC. Benjamin Bagdikian argues that corporate centralization of media limits messages, particularly messages with are not corporation friendly. No traditional medium is now immune to corporate influence.41 This convergence, again, is detrimental for foreign news. Halton (2001) writes:

These media conglomerates are much more focused than their predecessors were on generating profits and keeping costs as low as possible. A disproportionate percentage of news budgets is devoted to foreign news. The cost of maintaining a full foreign bureau averages approximately $150,000 per year for a newspaper and over $1 million for a major television bureau. Consequently, expensive foreign news operations are an obvious target of restructuring and cutbacks.42

Corporate influence dictates content, and even in the most recent decades this influence has intensified. The traditional source for this study is a clip from PBS NewsHour; public broadcasting has also been strongly criticized for the role corporate influence plays in dictating content.

Public broadcasting in the United States was established in 1967 under the Johnson Administration with The Public Broadcasting Act, which called for an alternative system that would express diversity and involve creative risks. It was supposed to be “a forum for debate and controversy” and “provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be

40 Mindich, 116.
41 Ibid.
unheard.”\(^{43}\) The Carnegie Commission Report, written by establishment luminaries, served as the foundation for what are now the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR). The Carnegie Report proposed that funding for these new entities be free from political influence. Congress at the time would not allow this, seeking to keep this new endeavor on a tight leash. Many argue that constant political interference, highly centralized and conservative organization structures at PBS and NPR, and an over-reliance on corporate money have undermined the original goals of public broadcasting.\(^{44}\) Public broadcasting in the United States began with a very limited budget, and thus, is a system that has been “held hostage to Congress and the White House”\(^{45}\) since its inception.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was set up by Congress to be a nongovernmental agency that provided funds for public television and radio stations. CPB members are appointed by the president of the CPB, insuring political influence. Strong on political attacks (often accused of left-wing bias) and short on financial means, PBS and NPR have relied heavily on corporate underwriters, commercializing an institution that was supposed to be free from commercial influence. According to recent data, 40% of funding for PBS comes from allocation support (local and state governments, as well as universities) and the rest comes from personal contributions and corporate under-writing.\(^{46}\) Corporations pay to have exposure with PBS’s audience, an audience which is considered to be upscale. The WTTW-11 (Chicago affiliate of PBS) advertisement kit promises access to “a high concentration of hard-to-reach professionals,” and “Chicago’s best-educated, most affluent households.”\(^{47}\) These individuals are


\(^{45}\) Ibid., 25.


“23% more likely to have liquid assets of 250K or more, 15% more likely to have an advanced college degree, and 75% more likely to own a home with a market value of $500,000 or more.”

It is all about marketing to a rich audience; it is all about profit.

The evolution of Public Broadcasting does not seem to fit with its original intentions: “To serve unserved audiences, to elevate the democratic discourse, and to provide an outlet for cultural expression.” PBS’s audience is always considerably older than other networks and forms of media, which have had an effect of rendering its programs un-attractive to the Millennial generation. There has been discourse on how to change this, but it presents PBS with a dilemma. PBS recognizes that to provide a significant public service, it must reach an audience. PBS must attract an audience that is loyal in its funding (not Millennials), and also sufficiently upscale to attract underwriters. Striking this balance while remaining true to the goals has been difficult, especially with multi-channel, multi-media competition. If PBS wanted to appear attractive to the Millennial generation at all, it would have to change its marketing strategies and its program content. Arguably, other networks have begun to do this while facing similar challenges, and thus traditional media remains in flux, especially in regards to its Millennial appeal.

**Alternative Media Source: Vice**

Vice Media was founded in 1994 in Montreal, Canada. What it looked like then is very different what it looks like today. It began as a government-funded magazine – part of a community-building welfare program – called “Voice of Montreal.” It was run by three friends

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48 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
including Shane Smith, the current CEO. It became “The Voice” and finally evolved to “Vice.”

Vice used to cover subjects such as sex, drugs, music, and conflicts from a self-aware viewpoint of outside the mainstream. Today, Vice describes itself as “a global media brand producing and distributing premium digital media across platforms for 18-34 year olds.” What began as a small counter-culture magazine has evolved into an alternative media empire that has been heralded as the future of journalism. Before digging into exactly what Vice does and how, it is important to establish its relationship to “alternative” media, and how it is different from traditional forms of media. The development of alternative media has its roots in “radical” media, according to Chris Atton, author of _Alternative Media_ (2002). Radical media is the media of social movements, produced by activists for social or political change. These sources explicitly shape political consciousness and are important for not only what they say but also for how they are organized. Radical media, and what John Downing (1984) calls “rebellious communication,” challenge the political status quo and the ways that the status quo is produced. “Alternative” media is perhaps more broad than “radical” media. Alternative is not limited to size, scope, or type. Alternative boils down to the intention of the production or publication. Essentially, it can be defined as a wish to present other interpretations of stories that challenge the prevailing hierarchy of access normally found in media. Atton elaborates:

An elite of experts and pundits tend to have easier and more substantial access to a platform for their ideas than do dissidents, protesters, minority groups and even “ordinary people”: powerful groups and individuals have privileged and routine entry into the news itself and to the manner and the means of its production.

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52 Ibid.
Alternative media attempts to present perspectives that differ from the elitist news of traditional media, which is exactly what Vice promises its readers and viewers: “To tell stories that others don't tell, often with a personal perspective, and to serve the under served.”

Vice has not always been a credible source for news reporting. But with the evolution Vice and its multiple forums covering music, fashion, and technology, a strong news contingent has developed. This is what is appealing to readers and viewers of Vice’s content. In the past year, Vice has made substantial Internet traffic gains. Monthly visitors to Vice has tripled to about 7.5 million, according to measurement firm ComScore. Vice counts 4.8 million subscribers across its various YouTube channels. Shane Smith is quoted as saying, "Our audience is actually saying make more news. We tell stories that a lot of other people don't tell, and we tell them in a different way. That's what's really been resonating with our audience. So we're going to double down." With a recent injection of $70 million from 21st Century Fox, Vice is now worth $1.4 billion. Vice has added dozens of new correspondents, hosts, producers, and editors to build a new Vice.com news section and a Vice News YouTube Channel. Vice has partnered with HBO to create a news series, the first episode covering political violence in the Philippines and child suicide-bombings in Afghanistan.

Vice’s prime viewership is the untapped 18-34 year old base, and 64% of its viewers are male. The scholarship on Vice is nonexistent, but there is an abundance of scholarship on the tactics that Vice employs to present its news material. These studies provide explanation for why Vice is capturing so many viewers in this demographic. Vice’s media kit proclaims that its

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57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
audience is “more influential, affluent & active than Millennials as a whole.”59 How does Vice capture the Millennials, particularly the ones who are “tuned in?”

First, Vice is incredibly diverse. Vice states, “In order to engage this desirable, hard to reach demographic, Vice has built a family of channels targeting the interests and topics that they are most passionate about.”60 Already established are channels for music, technology, art, electronic culture and fashion. 2014 has seen the launch of Vice News, Vice Food, and Vice Sports. Upcoming launches include travel, gaming, photography, and comedy. Vice has an expansive reach over multiple facets of culture, all of which establish its credibility with a generation that watches less TV, is more consistently on the move, and more consistently seeking out new technology. Exposure to any one of these channels means that this demographic might expose themselves to the news reporting of Vice. Vice is visible. Vice is building a following, which means they employ tactics that grab an individual upon first view and keeps him or her coming back for more.

Second, as CEO Smith consistently claims, Vice provides the news the Millennials want in the ways they want it. Vice does not play by the rules of traditional journalism. Vice is not objective, and it is not the static, un-biased perspective of the nightly news reporter. Vice champions a Gonzo-style, or as Smith terms it, “immersive” style of journalism.61 This type of journalism has no borders; it has journalists diving into the fray of whichever topic they are covering. The journalist is part of the narrative. Mark Deuze, journalism and advertising expert, argues that this type of journalism is appealing in today’s digital age, where traditional tactics of

60 Ibid.
engaging viewers are no longer working. Scholars like Pavlik (2001)\(^\text{62}\) and Gillmor (2004)\(^\text{63}\) “herald new roles for journalists as bottom-up facilitators and moderators of community-level conversations held among citizens rather than functioning as top-down storytellers for an increasingly disinterested public.”\(^\text{64}\) Deuze follows this conclusion by arguing, “Journalism must re-engage with their audience as fellow citizens rather than potential customers. Lasica describes this as the emergence of a participatory journalism, stressing the symbiotic nature of the evolving relationships between mainstream and ‘grassroots’ news media.”\(^\text{65}\) Scholarship points to the fact that traditional media has served in the past to inform, persuade, entertain and enlighten an anonymous “mass” audience. Deuze argues:

To some extent this accounts for the top-down, (informally) hierarchical, routinized and bureaucratized organization of news companies and advertising agencies – a physical and social organization that by its sheer culture of doing things seems to exclude multiple-way communication or any kind of meaningful dialogue between media users and producers.\(^\text{66}\)

Traditional media ignores the lines that are blurring in today’s media atmosphere that delineate producer and consumer. What Vice does is channel its audience as both. It provides stories from the bottom-up instead of the top-down. The notion of an invisible mass audience is anachronistic. Thus, scholarship suggests, a participatory component of journalism is necessary to reach an audience, especially a disinterested audience such as that of the Millennials. The Millennial generation may not be directly searching for “news” and information, but rather for inspiration and a sense of belonging.

\(^{63}\) Dan Gillmore, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, For the People* (O’Reilly Media, Inc., 2006).
\(^{65}\) Ibid., 3.
\(^{66}\) Ibid.
Satirical Media Source: The Daily Show

*The Daily Show* began in 1996 on Comedy Central with host Craig Kilborn, and was taken over by Jon Stewart in 1999, who re-focused the show away from entertainment and pop culture to politics and the national media. Describing itself as “a fake news program,” *The Daily Show* employs a powerful vehicle for relaying its “news”: satire. According to Gray, Jones, and Thompson (2009), authors of *Satire TV: Politics and Comedy in the Post-Network Era*, in today’s media atmosphere, satire forms a key part of televised political culture. It is a thriving genre, one that utilizes humor to form a social critique. The literary definition of satire, according to Morner and Rausch (1991), states that satire “blends ironic humor and wit with criticism for the purpose of ridiculing folly, vice, stupidity – the whole range of human foibles and frailties – in individuals and institutions. Satire … seeks to correct, improve, or reform through ridicule.”

This definition hints at a somewhat malicious quality of satire, malice that host Jon Stewart has been criticized for presenting the public. Writing of Stewart in the *Boston Globe*, Michael Kalin challenged:

> Stewart’s daily dose of political parody… leads to a “holier than art thou” attitude toward our national leaders. People who possess the wit, intelligence, and self-awareness of viewers of The Daily Show would never choose to enter the political fray full of “buffoons and idiots.” Content to remain perched atop their Olympian ivory towers, these bright leaders head straight for the private sector.

Gray, Jones, and Thompson point to further criticism of popular satire in general:

> Fox News irascible Bill O’Reilly infamously posed that Stewart’s audiences were “stoned slackers,” and even Stewart, albeit rhetorically, for years fondly clung to the mantra that his show followed a program in which puppets make prank phone calls and hence hardly positions itself as heavy politics. *The Simpsons*, for its part, has also been charged with being “cold,” “based less on a shared sense of humanity than on a sense of world-weary cleverer-than-thou-ness” that as a result “does not promote anything.

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because its humor works by putting forward positions only in order to undercut them.”69 Sometimes even compliments of contemporary satire amount to criticisms, as The Simpsons and South Park in particular are frequently noted to be willing to attack “everything,” thereby not amounting to any form of “meaningful” political discourse.70

While criticism is heeded, the authors of Satire TV maintain that satire has inherent political value. While television’s discourse on public life often posits that politics is something to learn, satire “not only offers meaningful political critique but also encourages viewers to play with politics, to examine it, test it, and question it rather than simply consume it as information or ‘truth’ from authoritative sources.”71 Mikhail Bakhtin, author of The Dialogic Imagination (1981), suggests that by comically playing with the political, one can gain a greater sense of ownership over it, and thus feel more engaged within it.72 Satire is rarely a form of discourse with easily digestible meanings. Satire requires a level of sophistication that network television infrequently demands of audiences. Charles E. Schultz, author of Political Humor: From Aristophanes to Sam Ervin (1977), argued, “The best humor is always something of a puzzle in its camouflaged criticism, implicit standards, and negativism. Its appreciation requires mental participation by the audience, and its lessons are not hortatory, but self-learned.”73

The exact type of news that satire programs like The Daily Show and The Colbert Report offer is disputed. Patterson (2000) argues that The Daily Show exists in the “soft news” category, included in a diverse group that includes Entertainment Tonight, The Late Show with David Letterman, and 60 Minutes.74 Patterson argues that these shows can be distinguished from “hard news” programs by their emphasis on human-interest and dramatic subject matter rather than

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71 Ibid., 11.
policy issues. Their use of a sensationalized presentation style also distinguishes these shows from “hard news” programs. Recently, however, scholars have argued that The Daily Show and The Colbert Report play a unique role on the political media spectrum. Baym (2007) argues that The Colbert Report, in its “Better Know a District” segment, pays more attention to members of Congress than hard news programs do. Both Baym (2005) and Holbert (2005) contend that The Daily Show has more in common with traditional news satires like Saturday Night Live’s “Weekend Update,” as opposed to entertainment talk shows and tabloid programs. Arguably, The Daily Show has a strong focus on providing factual information about politics, which goes against its mantra as a “fake news” program. Pelika (2009) argues that The Daily Show does not offer news that is fake, but rather it forms a “mock news” program. It parodies conventions of traditional news outlets while still serving as a strong source for political information. Some of the definitional ambiguity of where The Daily Show falls on the political news spectrum comes from changes to the program itself. It was not until a few years after Jon Stewart began hosting that The Daily Show rose to a notable level of public and political prominence. The Daily Show’s audience doubled between 2001 and 2005, and by 2003, presidential hopefuls began to appear on the show and use it as a platform for candidacy. Both politicians and the public began to take The Daily Show more seriously; because of this, The Daily Show had a stronger incentive to cover politics and a greater ability to do so effectively.

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
In the recent years of *The Daily Show*, a sophisticated and young audience has taken hold, a fact that goes against the argument that all Millennials are tuned out. In a 2007 survey, The Pew Research Center for People & the Press showed that those who watched *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* were more politically knowledgeable than any other audience. Fifty-four percent of respondents answered at least 15 out of 23 questions about politics and world affairs correctly. In comparison, 43% of local newspaper readers, 38% of network news viewers, and 35% of local television news viewers were in the high-knowledge category. This suggests that *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are not effectively categorized as “soft news” programs, and that they cater to a relatively well-informed audience. Research shows that viewers of these programs tend to be much younger than the general public. A 2008 Pew Survey confirms that over 40% of *The Daily Show* viewers fall into the 18-29 age group, and a small percentage of viewers are over the age of 65. This presents a very different age distribution as compared to other forms of media.

**Stimuli Rationale**

Students were randomly placed into three conditions. These three conditions presented traditional, alternative, and satirical media sources. The subject matter was the same; the clips covered a particular incident that occurred in the African country of Egypt in July, 2013. This study could have been conducted with an almost infinite combination of media stimuli. The topic of Egypt was chosen for very strategic reasons. First, Egypt fits into the broader narrative of the Arab Spring, a globally significant phenomenon that began in Tunisia in December of 2011 when Mohammed Bouazizi, a Tunisian national, set himself on fire outside a local municipal office in an act of protest after being humiliated by local police officers for not having a permit.

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to run a produce stall. This act set protests in motion all over the northern part of Africa and into the Middle East. These protests called for the resignation of longstanding dictators and for improved human rights and transparent democracy. Egypt’s Arab Spring story began in January, 2011, where protests began in Cairo calling for the resignation of Hosni Mubarak, a brutal dictator who had controlled Egypt for nearly 30 years. Within an incredibly short span of time (two months), protests spread from Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen to Sudan to Bahrain to Libya to Morocco to Syria. It was an unprecedented event, the first of its kind to be witnessed in the lifetimes of Millennials. Outside of the context of the Arab Spring, Egypt is a country to which most students have been exposed in one way or another. Within the context of the Arab Spring, coverage from Egypt has been ubiquitous for the past couple of years. It is a topic that is easy to follow if one is interested, but easy to ignore if one is not. Egypt saw its second regime change post-Arab Spring in July, 2013, with the ousting of Mohamed Morsi. While this was an important global event (a military coup against a democratically elected Egyptian president), many Millennials were tuned out. This presented a great opportunity to choose different types of media coverage of the same event – coverage that Millennials most likely would not have been exposed to at the time of its occurrence. The assumption is that most students surveyed had little knowledge on the details surrounding this event, so the lag between when the event occurred (July, 2013) and when students would view the clip (November-January, 2014) should not pose a significant problem. Students in one condition viewed a 10-minute clip of The Daily Show with John Stewart entitled “Everybody Coups.” Students in a second condition viewed a 16-minute clip from Vice Media, part 1 of 3 in a series entitled “Egypt after Morsi.” Students in a final

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
condition viewed a 9-minute clip from PBS *Newshour* entitled “Violent Unrest in Egypt Leaves More Dead and Injured.”

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses and research questions are not meant to be exhaustive for all of the results to be gathered by this study, but they are derived from the extant literature.

H1. Millennials who self-report watching *The Daily Show* (DS) and/or *The Colbert Report* “sometimes” or “regularly” in the Pre-Test are more likely to be interested in Egypt prior to exposure to the stimulus.

Participants who watch these programs on a regular basis are likely to have general interest in politics, and therefore should show a higher pre-test interest in Egypt’s social and political climate.

H2. DS is more likely to spur and sustain political interest in Millennials over traditional sources.

Whether or not a participant is interested in politics, this study expects to see the population at large respond more positively to the satirical source over the traditional source in terms of political interest.

H3. Exposure to DS will lead to a stronger effect on the personal preference of participants in regards to the question “How likely are you to consult this particular media source in the future?”

In terms of personal preference, the entertainment style of *The Daily Show* will be more appealing than traditional sources, causing participants to preference DS.

H4. Vice will have the strongest effect on participants in regards to motivation to learn more about Egypt and international affairs in general.

Considering that Vice news has come about from the demand of its audience, this source should have a strong effect on participants’ motivation. The journalistic approach will be appealing to Millennials.
H5. Exposure to Vice will lead to a stronger effect on the personal preference of participants in regards to the question, “How likely are you to consult this particular media source in the future?”

Similar to H3, this study expects Vice to have a strong effect on personal preference. Exposure to this source once will inspire participants to consult Vice in the future.

H6. Vice will have a stronger emotional impact upon participants than the other two sources.

Vice’s participant journalism is meant to connect to the Millennial audience in a way that objective reporting and comedy cannot. This should lead to a stronger emotional reaction from Vice.

H7. PBS will have weaker effects on participants in regards to political interest and motivation to know more about Egypt.

This study hypothesizes that PBS will have weaker effects on the Millennial generation in both of these aspects, for traditional sources are still not marketing to the changing generational tastes of Millennials.

H8. PBS will have a weaker emotional impact on participants than DS or Vice.

The objective reporting style of the traditional source will not leave an emotional imprint.

With the hypotheses presented, two research questions remain:

Q1. How will the effects of political satire compare to the effects of alternative and traditional news reporting in regards to motivation to learn more and emotional reaction?

Though there is evidence to suggest that DS will have stronger effects in certain areas (like political interest and personal preference), there is still much ambiguity in other areas on how participants will respond in comparison to other sources.

Q2. Will PBS have similar effects on the knowledge of Egypt and retention of it, as compared to the other sources?
Despite the hypothesis that PBS will have weaker effects on political interest, this study questions whether or not interest is mutually exclusive with knowledge and the retention of it.

Methods

Subjects

Data were collected from a total of 68 individuals at a small, Midwestern private college between November, 2013, and January, 2014. Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes, a Facebook.com group dedicated to finding volunteers, and by word-of-mouth. Several classes were offered extra credit for their participation in the study. The entire process included reading and signing a document of informed consent, completing a pre-test survey, enduring a media stimulus, completing an immediate post-test survey, and finally, completing an electronic post-test 2-3 weeks after media exposure. Eighteen individuals did not complete the second post-test, leading to a mortality rate of 26%. Fifty individuals completed every step of the process. The goal was to garner 52 participants between the ages of 18-24 (based on Cohen’s significance for sample size\(^{85}\)), preferably with minimal knowledge of international politics.

Individuals were assigned to a condition based on what time they signed up to attend a session. In subsequent weeks of data collection, participants were assigned to a condition based on the even dispersion of conditionality over number of participants. Mortality rate taken into account, 17 individuals completed the process for Condition 1 (DS), 14 individuals completed for Condition 2 (Vice), and 19 completed for Condition 3 (PBS).

Instruments

Before media exposure, participants were administered a pre-test. This survey included items for measuring three types of traditional media exposure (television, print, and radio sources). It included four items for measuring exposure to online alternative media sources, and a

measurement for online exposure in general. To round out the index of exposure, a measurement for exposure to Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* was included. All of the elements of exposure were based on a four-point scale where participants could choose “never” exposed, “hardly ever,” “sometimes,” or “regularly.” To establish an index of international political interest, the pre-test included three questions to gauge a participant’s interest in both current Egyptian politics and international affairs in general. Participants were asked to state how closely they follow events in Egypt and internationally, as well as their interest level. The final index established by the pre-test was pre-stimulus knowledge of Egypt. The participant was asked to write down Egypt’s former leaders who were deposed in February, 2011 (Hosni Mubarak), and July, 2013 (Mohamed Morsi, the subject of the media stimuli). They were also asked describe anything else they knew about the current social/political situation in Egypt. These knowledge measurements were asked in each subsequent survey in order to determine whether participants could discern this information from the stimulus, and if this information persisted over time.

The immediate post-test (Post-Test 1 or PT1) began with two open-ended questions, the first asking participants to provide a summary of what they learned from the media stimulus, and the second asking them to state the main political parties in Egypt and their values. They were then asked to self-identify and justify whether they felt the media stimulus helped them to better understand the Arab Spring. PT1 included measurements for interest in Egyptian politics and motivation for participants to learn more about the situation and/or international affairs in general. It included the same knowledge elements of the pre-test, and the likelihood of the participant consulting this particular source in the future (“not likely at all,” “hardly likely,” “somewhat likely,” and “very likely”). It also included five measurements for self-reported
emotional reaction to the stimulus: anger, sadness, sympathy, excitement, and confusion.

Participants reported on a four-point scale with the options “definitely do not feel,” “slightly feel,” “somewhat feel,” and “definitely feel.” Participants also had the option of listing any other emotions that they felt. Finally, participants were asked to provide demographic information: gender, age, year in school, major, and number of Political Science Courses taken.

The second post-test (Post-Test 2 or PT2) was given electronically via the website SurveyGizmo.com. Participants were e-mailed a link to take the test approximately two weeks from the date of their session. The goal PT2 was to see whether the effects of the stimulus persisted over time: political interest, motivation to learn more, knowledge, and emotional reaction. Participants were asked to identify how closely they had followed news on Egypt and/or international affairs in general since their session. They were given the same knowledge elements as the pre-test and immediate post-test. They were asked to identify to what extent they still felt the five emotions. They were asked to provide their interest level and also their motivation level for learning more in the future about Egypt and/or international affair. Finally, they were asked the likelihood of viewing more clips from the particular media source they were exposed to.

*Detailed Description of Stimuli*

Condition 1 is a clip from *The Daily Show with John Stewart* dated July 18, 2013. There are two sections of this clip, the first entitled “Everybody Coups”, and the second entitled “Egypt & Semantics,” both hosted by John Oliver, who took over for Stewart for a period of time during the Summer of 2013. The clip opens with Oliver in front of a world map in usual *Daily Show* form, narrating from slide to slide of comical pictures which supplement his reports. He states, “We begin tonight in Egypt, best known for its supporting role in Brendan Frasier’s The Mummy
and The Mummy Returns. How did Egypt not get nominated for that role?” The role of pictures quickly turns from the Egyptian pyramids to the film poster for *The Mummy*. Oliver then recalls the 2011 Revolution that took down longstanding dictator Hosni Mubarak. He states that this subsequently led to “Egypt’s first free elections in 5000 years, where of course ‘bird’ beat ‘eye with line under it’ by a margin of 54% to 46%, a comfortable eight points.” This is obviously a joke. Oliver follows by discussing Mohamed Morsi, and how Egypt can now enjoy the fruits of democracy. News clips from Egyptian media follow and Oliver quips, “Just one problem. Egypt does have a warm climate and you know what can happen to fruit. Just hours ago, Egypt’s experiment with democracy appeared to go up in flames.” The military has removed the president, suspended the constitution, and installed an interim president, “or as it is increasingly being known, the only kind of president Egypt has.” Oliver says, “Well, we have an old-fashioned military coup on our hands. The military has subverted the democratic will of the people, the Egyptian people must be devastated.” The clip, ironically, shows just the opposite. The crowds are cheering, army helicopters overhead are tracing hearts, prompting roars of approval from the protesters in Tahrir Square. “Oh, Egyptian Airforce, are you trying to seduce the entire population of Cairo?” Oliver questions comically. Morsi was in power for less than a year. The clip moves to a series of American media clips, condemning Morsi for putting political opponents in jail, sidelining liberal voices, and bringing the economy to the brink of collapse. Oliver quips, “Wow, that is an impressive amount of stuff in just 12 months. He really lived up to his campaign slogan of ‘Morsi 2012, same tyranny, now with beards!’” So everyone is happy now that he is gone? Oliver says no, the people who elected him are “pretty pissed off. First they are mad at the army, and second they are mad at – guess who? – The United States.” Protesters on the ground are quoted as saying the United States did nothing to keep Morsi in power. Oliver
makes fun of the fact that everyone is always angry with the United States, and an Egyptian poster with a bearded Barack Obama plays into the existing (and false) stereotype that Obama is a Muslim and should’ve protected Morsi.

The second part of the clip deals with the semantics of the word “coup.” Oliver states, “The United States doesn’t especially care who is running Egypt, as long as we have influence with them. That is why we send Egypt 1.6 billion dollars in aid each year, and we do not want to stop doing that. In fact, I actually have a check for next year’s money right here.” He holds up a comically large check, a “loyalty retainer” signed by Uncle Sam. “Who should I make this comically oversized novelty check out to?” he asks. The clip tells the audience, “The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 explicitly says that the administration cannot financially support an army that is involved in a military coup.” John Oliver exclaims “What? So now we can’t even give Egypt money? Throwing money at the problem has long been the backbone of America’s foreign policy!” He follows:

So that’s the strategy? We think we can get around our own coup rule if can just manage to not use the word coup? This is like a game show, your challenge is: to describe the events in Egypt, but, if you say the word coup, you will lose everything. It’s like The $100,000 Pyramid, except it’s 1.6 billion dollars and the pyramid is an actual pyramid.

The clip subsequently pokes fun at State Department Spokesperson (and “first contestant”) Jen Psaki, who, in tough questioning coming from the Associated Press, refuses to “analyze the legal options” of calling this event a coup or non-coup. After showing more clips of Psaki refusing to take a stance, Oliver says, “She is going Kama Sutra on the English language, bending words into all kinds of exciting, exotic positions, before reaching a climax of meaninglessness.”

“Second contestant” is White House press secretary Jay Carney, “who somehow tries to be unequivocal in his equivocation.” He appears on the screen in a series of clips:
In answer to your question in regards to what we call what happened, I'll be blunt, this is an incredibly complex and difficult situation. [Camera shift] I’m trying to be very candid, in that this is a complex situation. [Camera shift] And you’ll get no argument from me that this is a difficult situation.

Oliver says, “That poor man. I honestly can’t tell he’s doing a terrible job or just has a terrible job. I think it might be 100% of both.” The audience laughs. He says:

It’s like if Kate Middleton gave birth but English law prevented her from calling the thing she was holding a baby. “Yes, this tiny human emerged from my womb after 9 months of gestation; it may be a baby, but I don’t think we should get bogged down in calling it that yet.”

He ends the clip by saying:

The problem is, we can try to pars words on this all we want. We can call this a Morsiectomy, a surgical removal of a man from the body of the country he was hurting. But everyone is going know what we’re saying. Let’s be clear, we can describe what happened in Egypt as a complicated and multifaceted situation, but everyone knows that it is just a fancy legal way to avoid calling it what it is: a complete clusterfuck!

Condition 2 contained a 16 minute on-line clip from Vice News entitled “Egypt after Morsi – (Part 1/3).” It begins with a brief overview of the last two years in Egypt, set to ominous music and images of Egyptians protesting in the streets of Cairo. After the election of Mohamed Morsi, the clip declares, “Everything looked so hopeful. But on June 30 this year, millions of protesters flooded back into Tahrir Square, begging the army to come back and over throw Morsi. The protesters accused the Muslim Brotherhood of trying to grab too much power, of stoking sectarian tensions, and destroying Egypt’s economy.” After showing images of bloody clashes between pro-Morsi and anti-Morsi protesters, the narrator of the clip asks, “So what was going on? Was it a coup [pause], a revolution [pause], or the beginning of a civil war?” The defense minister General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi gave Morsi a 48-hour time frame to respond to the demands of the military and its supporters. Vice reporter Aris Roussinos was placed in the action during this tense period of time, exploring the protests and interviewing people on the ground for
their opinions on the matter. He explores a pro-Morsi demonstration first, a crowd that appears to be of mixed socio-economic class but with a decisive Islamic support system. Over the loudspeaker resonates, “We are protecting President Morsi who is the elected president, and we are protecting the legitimacy and the people’s will.” These demonstrators represented the fight for democracy, but also the fight for Shari’a law, or strict Islamic law.

Only a kilometer away was an anti-Morsi demonstration, which Aris decides to check out: “Who were these people? And why did they want a coup?” He talks to a man who explains, “Morsi is discriminating the people. He is separating, ‘that is our people, that is not our people,’ ‘that’s the real Muslim, that’s not the real Muslim,’ … He is not governing the people. He just would like to make a religious country. We are rescuing the world from another Hitler!” Aris comments, “It was all very strange. This was meant to be the secular, liberal crowd, but it seemed more irrational than the Islamists. While the Brotherhood was talking about democracy and the Constitution, these guys were ranting crazy anti-Western conspiracy theories.” This crowd was closely monitored by the Egyptian military. Aris, looking directly into the camera, states, “When you look at the crowds here, in their pressed polo shirts and glossy blonde highlights, you can’t help but sense this is the secular middle class elite who ruled Egypt for 60 years, taking their country back from the urban poor.” As the army deadline approaches, the crowds are even more anxious. The military is blocking off roads, claiming to protect the anti-Morsi crowds from Islamist retaliation. The coup appears imminent in the midst of chaos, with the army closing in on the pro-Morsi demonstrations, looking ready for a fight. All of the sudden, shots are fired – presumably the military trying to break up the pro-Morsi demonstrations. Armed guards begin lining the rooftops, overlooking the protesters. This image is followed by a shocking image of Muslim Brotherhood members saying their last prayers.
before martyrdom, with what appear to be bombs strapped to their chests. Aris interviews a pro-
Morsi protester who says:

It’s two options we have here: one option is that [the military is] trying to scare us, and
the other option is that they are trying to push us, to go away, which is not going to
happen… I’m going to stay here, and all of those people [who are protesting] have
written their own will and if it’s death, so be it… I’m not going to live without my
liberty, without my freedom, and my freedom, it’s my religion to me.

The sun sets, and the military is about to read its statement at any moment. Massive
crowds have gathered to listen. Morsi had been taken by the army, and the army was now in
control. Aris narrates:

Instantly the mood changed. An angry protester threatened us with his club, accusing us
of being anti-Morsi spies (Caption: Come on! Go out! Out! Out!). As we tried to leave
the protest, unseen snipers started shooting into the crowd, from the rooftops above us.
We ran for cover and tried to work out how to escape.

The camera goes unsteady; Aris and the cameraman are clearly looking for cover from the
gunfire. Aris says into the camera, “This is looking very very bad for Cairo.” Aris continues his
narration:

Casualties were taken away from the square bleeding; one protester was killed – shot in
the head (pause). Literally a few meters away on the other side of the barricades, the
army supporters were celebrating, waving flags and handing out sweets as fellow
Egyptians lay bleeding in the streets nearby. The army is back in charge for now, but
there’s no way the Brotherhood will take this coup lying down. Everyone is talking about
civil war now. And this is just the beginning.

Throughout the clip, Aris is clearly not reporting objectively. He is participating. He is making
judgments. He is exploring both sides of this issue. This is the type of reporting that Vice is
known for.

Condition 3 contained an online clip from PBS NewsHour, detailing the immediate
aftermath of Morsi’s ousting. The first 3 minutes of the 8-minute and 50-second clip is
NewsHour news anchor Ray Suarez discussing violent nighttime protests. The night of July 15,
2013, saw 7 protesters killed, 260 others hurt, and 400 arrested from the 6 October Bridge, a bridge and highway that run through central Cairo. He reports Pro-Morsi supporters “marched onto one of Egypt’s busiest bridges, and that’s where tensions boiled over. Crew from PBS’s Frontline captured footage from the scene, as police fired tear gas and demonstrators threw rocks, burned tires, and blocked the roadway. Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood claimed police fired live ammunition and bird shot.” None of the protesters are ever directly interviewed, it is simply brief moments of footage that show the violence occurring in the crowd. After showing this footage, the coverage shifts to the political situation and Ray Suarez reports that General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the military general behind Morsi’s ousting, has been named deputy Prime Minister of the interim government. The program has an interview with Essam al-Erian, a prominent Muslim Brotherhood leader, who blames the United States for supporting the military coup that resulted in Morsi’s ousting. He argues that the United States loses legitimacy when it opposes a legitimate democratic process. In a press conference, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns responds to this criticism and insists that the United States is not taking sides in this matter.

The aforementioned coverage takes up approximately 3-minutes and 10-seconds of the clip. The rest of the clip is an interview with Charles Sennott, Global Post Editor-at-Large who worked with Frontline to cover this matter. Ray Suarez begins this interview by asking, “What are the main factions?” Sennott first discusses the Muslim Brotherhood, the political group that views what happened to Morsi as an illegal military coup, “They say that the elected president, Morsi, was detained by the military, is kept in an undisclosed location and that he is the legitimate president, and that they are going to keep up the street demonstrations until his presidency is restored and he is released.” Sennott then discusses the other side, which he argues
is much broader and harder to define. Millions of people were calling for Morsi to hold early elections or resign; these groups consist of liberals of more secular beliefs who believe that it was a good thing that Morsi was ousted, but not necessarily a good thing that the military intervened to accomplish this.

Ray Suarez then inquires about about Ramadan, and whether the context of this holiday is intensifying night clashes. Charles Sennott confirms this notion; things are relatively quiet during the day when it is hot and people are fasting, as Ramadan calls for them to do. Once the sun sets, people break their fast. After this occurs you see more people out at night, especially youths. Society appears divided, even within families, “What was the right thing to do here? Should Morsi have been put down as the president, ousted by the military or not? Did the military do the right thing? Is it upholding the greater democracy here, that sort of public sentiment on the street?” Despite the public uncertainty (or perhaps in light of), the clashes become more violent at night.

The last minutes of this clip focuses primarily on American foreign policy and how both factions in this matter are united in their condemnation of United States action. Obama has been criticized of both taking a hands-off approach and being too involved in the situation at the same time. Sennott offers:

You know this is a deeply divided country. Muslim Brotherhood on one side, opposition to Morsi on the other. The one thing you find unity on here is that the United States is at fault… it’s one of those very very difficult foreign policy questions for what is the most effective and productive way for the United States to play a role here?

Results

Sample

As Table 1 indicates, 66 students participated in at least two of three parts of the process of the study. Gender was nearly equal with 31 males participating (47%), 34 females (51.5%),
and one student identifying as genderqueer (1.5%). The mean age of the participants was 20.985 years old, suggesting a sample more heavily weighted towards upper-class students. The percentages of “Year in School” confirm this. 72.7% of the participants self-identified as “Junior” or “Senior” status. Only 27.3% of participants self-identified as “First-Year” or “Sophomore.” The majority of participants have taken at least one Political Science course (81.8%).

Table 1. Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Number of People Identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34 (51.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>1 (1.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year</td>
<td>14 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>4 (6.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>20 (30.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>23 (34.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5 (7.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>20.985 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media Exposure</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to gauge news media exposure, the participants were administered a pre-test survey questions listing types of “traditional” and “alternative” news media. On a four-point
scale, they were to choose whether they were “never” (coded 1), “hardly ever” (coded 2), “sometimes” (coded 3), or “regularly” (coded 4) exposed to a certain type of media. The traditional sources listed were cable news networks, local television news affiliates, C-SPAN, National Public Radio, newspapers, and news or political magazines. The mean answer for all six traditional sources was 2.52, suggesting that participants usually chose between “hardly ever” or “sometimes.” Alternative sources were gauged with the following media choices: Vice Media, Democracy Now, Al-Jazeera, and Young Turks. The mean answer for alternative sources was 1.41, suggesting that participants usually chose between “never” and “hardly ever.” To round out an overall gauge of media exposure, participants were also asked to indicate their exposure to online news (in general) and Comedy Central’s The Daily Show and/or The Colbert Report. The mean average for on-line news was 3.460, suggesting frequent usage of the internet for news. This is consistent with the news consumption trends of Millennials. The sample tested presented a mean of 2.167 for National Public Radio exposure, a mean of 2.780 for print source exposure (newspapers and political magazines), and a mean of 2.862 for television source exposure (cable news or network news). The internet is by far the source of choice for Millennials to consume news. The mean for The Daily Show/The Colbert Report was 2.808.

Political Interest

All three tests asked participants about their interest level in recent Egyptian social/political events. They were provided a four-point scale with the options of “not interested at all” (1), “hardly interested” (2), “somewhat interested” (3), and “very interested” (4). Table 2 shows pre-test interest in Egypt broken down by category and a recoded variable to capture whether or not the participant was “Tuned In” or “Tuned Out.” In order to be “Tuned In,” a participant must have had a categorical mean of 3 or greater. In order to be “Tuned Out,” a
participant had a categorical mean of 2 or less. Before any exposure to a stimulus, it was important to know who was more predisposed to coming into the experiment interested by this particular issue. A t-test for the equality of means was used to compare the means between those who were tuned in and those who were tuned out for each category. In the traditional category, the t-test for equality of means was not statistically significant. In the alternative category, the t-test for equality of means resulted in a statistically significant relationship between interest in Egypt and being tuned in or out to alternative media. The 12 participants who were tuned in to alternative media had a mean interest of 3.250, much greater than the tuned out (n=54) mean of 2.556. In the In the DS/CR category, those who were tuned in had a mean of 2.800, and those who were tuned out had a mean of 2.440. While not statistically significant, the difference is greater than that of the traditional category. There still exists a correlation of interest between the tuned in and tuned out participants; thus, H1 is partially supported.

Table 2. Pre-Test Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How interested are you in recent social/political events in Egypt?</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
<th>DS/CR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T tuned Out of Media Type (&quot;Never&quot; or &quot;Hardly ever&quot; consume)</td>
<td>6 2.667 54 2.556 25 2.440</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T tuned In to Media Type (&quot;Sometimes&quot; or &quot;Regularly&quot; consume)</td>
<td>58 2.672 12 3.250 40 2.800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-test for Equality of Means (Equal variances not assumed)</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 compares the overall means across all tests. As shown, the overall pre-test mean was 2.780. In the immediate post-test, the mean was 2.980. In the time-lapsed post-test, the mean was 2.660. So initially, before media exposure, participants were likely to be in between “hardly
interested” and “somewhat interested.” Immediately after media exposure, participants’ interests peaked, coming very close to an average of “somewhat interested.” After a period of time of at least 2 weeks, however, participants’ overall interest in Egypt declined, with a lower mean than the pre-test mean.

Table 3. Interest over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Test</th>
<th>Post-Test 1</th>
<th>Post-Test 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How interested are you in recent social/political events in Egypt?</td>
<td>2.780</td>
<td>2.980</td>
<td>(Since the session) 2.660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 takes a more in depth look at the phenomenon of declining interest. It indicates that among all participants, there was a significant decline in interest from Post-Test 1 to Post-Test 2. While participants in all three conditions experienced a decrease, those in Condition 3 (PBS) experienced the most significant decrease in the persistence of interest. The means were also much lower than the other two conditions. Whereas post-test means for DS and Vice hovered around 3.0-3.1 (PT1) and 2.8-2.9 (PT2), PBS had a PT1 mean of 2.842 and a PT2 mean that dropped to 2.316. PBS was significantly less likely than the other sources to inspire an interest in Egypt within participants (thus lending support to H7), and the persistence of that interest fell even more significantly.

H2 is thus partially supported and partially unsupported. While DS did have a stronger effect on immediate interest, that interest was not sustained.
Table 4. Interest over Time by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Daily Show</th>
<th>Vice</th>
<th>PBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 1</strong>: How interested are you in recent social/political events in Egypt?</td>
<td>2.980 N=50</td>
<td>3.000 N=17</td>
<td>3.143 N=14</td>
<td>2.842 N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 2</strong>: How interested are you in continuing to follow social/political updates on Egypt?</td>
<td>2.680 N=50</td>
<td>2.824 N=17</td>
<td>2.929 N=14</td>
<td>2.316 N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paired Samples</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (2-Tailed)</td>
<td>Mean:  .3200</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>Mean: .1765</td>
<td>.269</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Motivation

Participants were asked in both PT1 and PT2 about their motivation to learn more about both the Egyptian political/social climate and international affairs in general. They were given a four point scale of “Not motivated at all” (1), “Hardly motivated” (2), “Somewhat motivated” (3), and “Very motivated” (4). As Table 5 indicates, when it comes to Egypt’s social/political climate, immediately after the stimulus the mean motivation for participants was 2.875. Two weeks later, the mean dropped to 2.563. When broken down by condition, both the DS and PBS conditions experienced significant declines in motivation from PT1 to PT2. When analyzing the means in general, both Conditions 1 and 2 had a PT1 mean of 3.000 or greater, indicating that immediately after the stimulus, participants were likely to be “Somewhat motivated” to learn more. It is clear that Condition 3 (PBS) had the weakest effect on motivation in PT1. This is also true for PT2; while Conditions 1 (DS) and 2 (Vice) experienced a decline to approximately 2.750, those in Condition 3 experienced a decline to 2.263, the lowest mean in the table (again,
lending support for H7). H4 is not supported; Vice did not have the most significant effect on motivation to learn more about Egypt, but Vice did experience the least decline in this motivation.

Table 5. Motivation over Time – Egypt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Daily Show</th>
<th>Vice</th>
<th>PBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 1</strong>: How motivated are you to learn more about Egypt’s social/political climate?</td>
<td>2.875</td>
<td>3.067</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=48</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 2</strong>: How motivated are you to learn more about Egypt’s social/political climate in the future?</td>
<td>2.563</td>
<td>2.733</td>
<td>2.786</td>
<td>2.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=48</td>
<td>N=15</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Paired Samples**
| **Significance (2-Tailed)** | Mean: .3125 | Mean: .3333 | Mean: .2143 | Mean: .3684 | .004 | .019 | .272 | .090 |

Table 6 reveals the results for motivation to learn more about international affairs in general. None of the conditions experienced a significant increase or decline in means for this question. In general, participants’ motivation remained the same from PT1 to PT2, and remained relatively high compared to the responses of motivation to know more about Egypt in particular. Participants were likely to be somewhere between “Somewhat motivated” and “Very motivated,” regardless of which condition they were in, and regardless of time passing. H4 is again not supported.
Table 6. Motivation over Time – International Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Daily Show</th>
<th>Vice</th>
<th>PBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 1: How motivated are you to learn more about international affairs in general?</strong></td>
<td>3.240</td>
<td>3.353</td>
<td>3.429</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=17</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 2: How motivated are you to learn more about international affairs in general?</strong></td>
<td>3.220</td>
<td>3.353</td>
<td>3.286</td>
<td>3.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=17</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paired Samples Significance (2-Tailed)</strong></td>
<td>Mean: .0200</td>
<td>.811</td>
<td>Mean: .0000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Emotional Reaction*

Participants’ emotional reaction to the stimulus was measured in both PT1 and PT2 via five indicators: anger, sadness, excitement, sympathy, and confusion. Confusion was isolated as a fundamentally different indicator and was tested alone. Anger, sadness, excitement, and sympathy tested for reliability of correlation with Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test. For PT1, Cronbach’s Alpha was .508, and for PT2, Cronbach’s Alpha was .742. These numbers indicate a reliable correlation between the four emotions.

Table 7 reveals the strength of emotional reaction across PT1 and PT2. For questions of emotion, participants were given a four-point scale of “Definitely do not feel” (1), “Slightly feel” (2), “Somewhat feel” (3), and “Definitely feel.” PT1 results indicate the strongest emotional reaction from the Vice stimulus, lending support for H6, with a mean of 2.4205, compared to DS (2.2078) and PBS (1.9891). An ANOVA test between groups for PT1 yielded a statistically significant difference between condition and emotional reaction. PT2 results are similar, showing the highest persistent emotional reaction from the Vice stimulus (2.4231). Interestingly, the DS
mean increased to 2.4667, and the PBS mean increased to 2.0526. H8 is thus not supported. All means increased in the PT2 measurement, indicating a persistence of emotional reaction across time. An ANOVA test between groups for PT2 similarly yielded a statistically significant relationship between condition and emotional reaction.

Table 7. Emotional Reaction over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Post-Test One</th>
<th>Post-Test Two</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Show</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.0278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2.4205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.9891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANOVA Significance (Between Groups)</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired Samples</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.1087</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Knowledge

Knowledge was measured with two questions: 1) What is the name of Egypt’s former leader, who lost power in July, 2013? and 2) What is the political affiliation of this leader? All clips dealt with the military coup of Mohamed Morsi, and all stated his political affiliation (Muslim Brotherhood). Table 8 indicates the results for question 1. Immediately after the stimulus, 82% of all participants correctly identified Morsi by name, compared to 19.7% of participants in the pre-test. Two week later, PT2 results indicated that only 60% could identify Morsi by name. The paired samples test indicated a significant drop for all participants. When broken down by condition, this significance clearly comes from Condition 3 (PBS). While all conditions experience a decline in percentage over time, those exposed to PBS experienced the largest decline, from 84% to 47%, with a paired samples test indicating a significance of .005.
Condition 3 had the weakest persistence effect over time compared with the other conditions. To answer Q2, in this study, PBS did not have similar effects on knowledge and the retention of it as compared to the other sources.

Table 8. Identification of Morsi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Daily Show</th>
<th>Vice</th>
<th>PBS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 1</strong>:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of Egypt’s former leader, who lost power in July, 2013?</td>
<td>.820</td>
<td>.706</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=17</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 2</strong>:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of Egypt’s former leader, who lost power in July, 2013?</td>
<td>.600</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.786</td>
<td>.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=50</td>
<td>N=17</td>
<td>N=14</td>
<td>N=19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paired Samples</strong></td>
<td>Mean:</td>
<td>Mean:</td>
<td>Mean:</td>
<td>Mean:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance (2-Tailed)</td>
<td>.2200</td>
<td>.1176</td>
<td>.1429</td>
<td>.3684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.010*</td>
<td>.496</td>
<td>.336</td>
<td>.005*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding Morsi’s affiliation, none of the statistical tests supported significance, but the percentages tell an interesting story. In the pre-test, 25.8% of participants accurately identified Morsi’s political affiliation. PT1, 43.9% accurately identified the affiliation. PT2, 48% accurately identified the affiliation. The N value changes from PT1 to PT2, which may account for the increase in individuals who could correctly identify in PT2. But regardless, these percentages show that participants were able to make associations with Morsi and his political affiliation. When broken down by condition, DS had a PT1 percentage of 27% and a PT2 percentage of 41%. Vice had a PT1 percentage of 58% and a PT2 percentage of 64%. PBS had a PT1 percentage of 41% and a PT2 percentage of 42%. Interestingly, Vice clearly had the highest
percentage of participants who could identify Morsi’s political affiliation. This helps answer Q2 as well, in that knowledge retention differs with condition.

*Personal Preference*

PT1 and PT2 included questions about consulting the particular media source in the future. These were designed to test self-reported personal preference and whether or not participants would come back to their particular source for other information. Participants chose answers on a four point scale: “Not likely at all” (1), “Hardly likely” (2), “Somewhat likely” (3), or “Very likely” (4). PT1 results were relatively high compared to PT2 results, as shown in Table 9. A paired samples test between the overall PT1 mean (3.191) and PT2 mean (2.681) resulted in a statistically significant relationship. The condition that experienced the largest decline, and had lower means in general across PT1 and PT2 was Condition 3 (PBS). Participants were much less likely to consult PBS in the future, especially after a period of time lapsed as compared to the other two conditions. H3 and H5 are supported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9. Personal Preference over Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 1:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of viewing more clips from this source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Test 2:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of consulting particular media source in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paired Samples Significance (2-Tailed)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Analysis of Knowledge

There are limits that exist for every researcher when performing an experiment where one relies on participants for self-reported results. In order to supplement the quantitative findings in this study, certain open-ended questions were included on the survey instruments – to which the answers can be interpreted to find main themes for each of the sources. These questions were also included as a way to evaluate knowledge retention from Post-Test 1 to Post-Test 2. Every individual learns differently; some retain names, places, and dates with ease, while others struggle to retain these details but can recall overarching themes. When evaluating media effects, it is important to keep this in mind. One source will not necessarily have the same effects on one individual as on another. The quantitative section is useful for aggregate analysis of effects, but it cannot capture the nuances of effects on individuals.

In addition to answering the questions “What is the name of Egypt’s former leader, who lost power in July, 2013?” and “What is the political affiliation of this leader?” on all three tests, participants were asked on the pre-test to list anything they knew currently about Egypt. PT1 asked participants to summarize what they had learned immediately after the stimulus. On both post-tests, they were also asked to identify the “main players” in the events unfolding in Egypt. Across the board, there was very little pre-test knowledge of the events occurring in Egypt. Some made educated guesses that there was some kind of political turmoil in the after-effects of the Arab Spring. Individuals who knew who Mohamed Morsi was going into the pre-test were more likely to know more about the political and social atmosphere in Egypt. There were some individuals who expressed lamentation about their ignorance of Egypt on the pre-test. One of the themes that emerged from the quantitative findings was that interest and motivation to know more about international affairs usually outweighs an individual’s actual following of a certain
event. There were several individuals who recognized that they should know more, but they did not. Some individuals are blissful in their ignorance, but the qualitative findings in this study suggest that many college students lament not knowing more about the world and that they confirm stereotypes that Americans are happily isolated from global problems.

One open-ended asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that the clip gave them a better understanding of the Arab Spring. Most participants agreed, although the clips were not holistically about the Arab Spring, but rather how one participating country was dealing with the aftermath of revolution. There were a number of participants who did not actually know what the Arab Spring was or how Egypt’s story fit into the broader narrative. The Arab Spring began in 2009, when most participants were either in high school or already in college. It was revolution unlike anything Millennials had seen before in their lifetimes. It is alarming that perhaps around a quarter of participants knew little to nothing about the Arab Spring, a series of political events that have received much coverage domestically, especially considering America’s stake in democracy abroad. If nothing else, one would hope that exposing tuned out students to information about this part of the world would have the effect of at least inspiring curiosity of what is occurring abroad. A participant might not typically choose to watch a clip like this for a number of reasons. But the hope is that one of these types of media might engage this type of viewer to ask questions.

In regards to the other open-ended questions included on the surveys, certain patterns and themes did emerge for each of the unique stimuli. Two main themes emerged from *The Daily Show*: skepticism of Washington and the semantics of the “coup.” When analyzing the content of the clip and the nature of satire, it is not surprising that these themes are present. *The Daily Show* is known to make fun of politics and political figures; no one is immune from the scrutiny, which
is part of its appeal. It plays into existing skepticism of the government and makes a farce out of political missteps. Much of this clip is about America’s reluctance to call what happened in Egypt a “coup,” which many participants saw as utterly ridiculous. One participant remarked, “I have learned that the US is afraid of calling the Egyptian coup a ‘coup.’ Even though it very clearly was, no one in Washington wanted to call it that because we still wanted to give aid to Egypt.” Implicit in this statement is a critique of Washington, but also an indirect understanding of American foreign policy. The participant has identified that the United States gives a large amount of money to Egypt, and that the United States wants to continue to give this aid. The participant has gained knowledge in the form of American financial flows to an ally. Another participant remarked:

I learned that the Egyptian government was previously headed by Barick [Mubarak] and in 2011 he was booted out and a democratic election occurred (first in 5000 years). Morsi was elected but 12 months later the Egyptian military removed him. Though this apparently was the perfect description of a ‘coup,’ American politicians, per usual, are raging idiots who won’t define it as that. (PT1)

There is much to dissect in this statement. First, the participant has misconstrued one of the jokes as fact – stating that this was Egypt’s first democratic election in 5,000 years. The participant must not have known that Egypt held democratic elections in the period between its independence from the United Kingdom in 1922 through 1950. Instead, the participant took for fact one of Oliver’s jokes. This is perhaps the danger of satire. It is not always possible to distinguish between fact and fiction. The second thing to note in this statement is the theme of the coup. The word “apparently” signifies that the participant has given authority to The Daily Show’s implicit argument that this was in fact a military coup, despite knowing the exact legal language behind this semantic description. The third aspect to note is the participant’s description of Washington politicians as “raging idiots.” As Berelson noted in 1948, media
reinforces previously held notions. This participant’s statement is indicative of the Millennial generation’s distrust in politicians, which is often reinforced when watching content such as *The Daily Show*.

Two more statements by participants further confirm the patterns:

I learned that Morsi acted, very briefly, as interim president in Egypt. Also I hadn’t known how much money the US was giving Egypt, and how little they actually did to keep Morsi in power. (PT1)

I have now learned that we send 1.6 billion in aid each year to Egypt, as well as the changes of political figures in Egypt, they seem to be reliant to our annual aid, but it also seems that the White House doesn’t seem to want to speak on the issue, or don’t know much about it. (PT1)

Within the first statement, the participant has again identified American foreign policy. Clearly, the United States supports democracy, but there is a critique leveled at the U.S. that there was not enough action taken to support the legitimacy of Egypt’s democratic elections. In the second statement, the participant has recognized just how important United States aid is to Egyptian stability and how reluctant the Obama administration is to cut this aid.

In regards to overall knowledge retention with *The Daily Show*, the qualitative analysis supplements the quantitative analysis in that this source is not the strongest in this area. I catalogued each participant’s ability to identify Morsi and his political affiliation. If the participant could identify both, it can be deducted that the participant has not only identified the name of the main “character,” but he/she has also made an association with his political affiliation. Of the students made these associations after Post-test 1, only about half retained this information two weeks later. However, many participants were able to remember one or multiple “players” in the Egyptian situation, even if they could not identify Morsi and his affiliation. This suggests that even with one exposure, certain themes may remain in the minds of the participants
– such as the Muslim Brotherhood’s affinity for Shari’a law or the Egyptian military’s aggression towards the Muslim Brotherhood.

Major themes that emerged from the open-ended answers of participants exposed to Vice were a recognition of risk, a binary of secular vs. religious, and a preference for Vice’s style of in-depth exploration of people and protest. Certain responses that illustrate the first two themes include:

Mohammed Morsi was elected president by a close margin, and some Egyptians are willing to risk their lives to keep him in power, while others will risk their lives to get the army back in power. (PT1)

I think that a military coup should not happen because what we see in the clip after the military coup is …chaos, protests, casualties. But it is interesting to see how people are determined to defend their opinion and fight back the army. (PT1)

The main players are: “Poor Egyptian majority: value freedom not to be overruled by religion and the Elite/upperclass Egyptians: value traditional more realist approaches.” (PT1)

Implicit in these three statements are a more sophisticated understanding of what is at stake for the Egyptian people than is visible in The Daily Show statements. The phrases “risk their lives,” “defend their opinion,” and “value freedom” are telling. These participants recognize that the fight for freedom is complex in Egypt; some are fighting for religious freedom, some are fighting for political freedom, and for some there is a complicated intersection that exists between those two concepts.

One participant, who knew nearly nothing about the situation in Egypt, was able to recognize the binary between faith and secularism: “The Islam faith that believes Islamic practice should be law, and the secular population that feel religion should be a freedom of choice.” Many others were able to draw this distinction. In the United States, freedom of religion is to a large extent protected. Freedom of religion means something very different in the
Egyptian context, and many participants recognized this. For supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic law is what they were and are fighting for. The people who are defending democracy are also defending a strengthening of religious law, two things that are not synonymous in the United States. An effect that Vice appears to have is recognition of this complex relationship.

A final theme that emerged from Vice was a preference for Vice’s stylistic approach. This theme was gleaned from the question about the Arab Spring. Participants “agreed” that they knew more about the Arab Spring because:

…It documented what was happening and gave an inside look at WHY it is happening.

…Because this clip goes deep into the protests [to] collect information from the two [sides]: the pro-Morsi and the con.

…I think this clip presented a view not seen on the mainstream media. It is rare to see so many interviews with the people protesting. Usually it is just a talking head preaching about the situation.

…I found it interesting and want to be better informed about world events.

These statements show a respect for Vice’s approach of participant journalism. While The Daily Show was described several times as “entertaining,” participants exposed to Vice were much more likely to find this source credible for its “on-the ground” nature. In terms of overall knowledge retention, both qualitative and quantitative analysis have Vice coming out on top. While Vice participants represent the smallest N (11), participants were much more likely to retain the association of Morsi with his political affiliation. Even if participants were not able to remember Morsi’s name, they were more likely to be able to identify some of the main “players.” The clip does a very good job of distinguishing the viewpoints within Egypt, and participants seemed to pick up on these distinctions.
The main theme that emerges from participants who viewed the PBS NewsHour clip is a distinct blame on the United States. Some statements that illustrate this theme are:

Egypt has split into 2 factions: one pro-Morsi (Muslim Brotherhood) and one anti-Morsi. In order to oust Morsi from power, “militants” had taken to the streets in Cairo through protests. These had turned violent pretty quickly with 7 dead and many more injured. Some people in Egypt blamed the USA for starting the military coup – giving the “green light” to the militants. (PT1)

Mostly the youth supporters of Muslim Brotherhood are rioting in the streets at night (has to be at night because of Ramadan) Muslim Brotherhood believes US govt is behind military coup. The other political factions do not think the US is as involved as it should be to provide more stability and progress. (PT1)

Another military coup in Egypt, the results of which further deepen a difference in the peoples’ viewpoints. The US seems to be at fault in either viewpoint, leaving the US in a sticky situation. How does one step out of a conflict one is involved in upon realizing that maybe it is not ones place to be there in the first place. (PT1)

I don’t know the main players, but both parties are upset with the US involvement or lack of involvement. (PT1)

Basically that tension is building in Egypt in regards to what they should do about the current president – should he be left in power or should they appoint someone new? There was also the question of how involved the US should be in that decision.

These statements, which reiterate America’s roles over and over again, demonstrate a very Ameri-centric view of the situation in Egypt. As stated in the literature review, traditional media sources tend to be more focused on the United States’ role in international affairs. The open-ended responses had quite a bit of range with the other two sources, but with this source, the narrative was significantly more uniform across the answers. This source most clearly details the anti-Western sentiment that exists currently within Egypt surrounding Morsi’s ousting.

Overall, participants seemed to think that the PBS clip was insightful and not overly complicated. There was only one very negative sentiment expressed about the nature of the PBS clip. When asked if the participant felt like he/she had a better understanding of the Arab Spring, he or she circled “strongly disagree” and stated:
Disagree because PBS isn’t a very good source on current events in my opinion because in the name of being “balanced” or “unbiased,” it and similar sources (NPR) filter out the message of the actors involved and neglect the conflict in ideas, choosing only to cover people and protests and deaths, not what really matters.

This is a very sophisticated critique of PBS. It is interesting that in many of the responses, participants had retained the knowledge that 7 people died during the clashes covered in the clip. PBS does, in fact, present a very outside, clinical view of the situation – not relying on personal interviews with Egyptians, utilizing an American “authority” (Charles Sennott) to discuss Egypt, and focusing on the unique American element in the conflict. The critique of this particular participant must be heeded; compared to other sources, PBS filters out the message of the people on the ground. One must consider the question: is something lost when this approach is taken to cover international news?

In regards to knowledge persistence, the PBS clip is certainly the weakest of the three sources. Two weeks later, participants who were exposed to this clip were much less likely to remember Morsi and his affiliation and were more likely to leave the Post-Test 2 question of “Who are the main players?” blank. While some participants expressed that they believed they learned something from this source in the first Post-Test, much of that knowledge had faded by the second Post-Test.

**Discussion**


Perhaps a terse description for a very complex concept, it accurately captures the essence of this study. Every American, to some degree, participates in the democratic system. Freedom of speech and freedom of press are protected very seriously in our democracy, a fact which is often taken for granted. The American media presents all types of perspectives: biased

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86 Quoted in Mindich, “Tuned Out,” 98.
perspectives, inaccurate perspectives, and hyperbolic perspectives alongside informative perspectives, emotional perspectives, and enlightening perspectives. The Millennial generation has arguably lost a sense of media literacy in their tuned out nature, for they do not “pay attention.” Our democracy suffers when we do not ask questions of the people who are making the decisions abroad. This study sought to at least expose Millennials to international news, and to decipher which sources would move the Millennials – not necessarily to action, but at least to a curiosity in what they were viewing.

Across the board, the PBS clip had the weakest effects on participants. The implications of this finding are numerous. First, the “objective” style of reporting is not appealing to Millennials. While they may self-report feeling more informed after watching the clip, they are much less likely to feel interested, to experience an emotional response, or to be motivated to learn more about the subject. These factors culminate in less retention of knowledge. An exposure to PBS is likely not to leave a lasting impression on a Millennial. Second, PBS (like many traditional sources) presents a view of the world that is Ameri-centric. It is less about the people protesting in Egypt and more about what the United States should or should not be doing. Arguably, it is the job of a reporter to place a world event within the context of one’s country. But this does not necessarily mean that a Millennial will be interested or learn anything from the clip. It may even distort the Millennial’s image of the United States and its foreign policy.

Traditional media is in a state of crisis. News programs and networks are constantly accused of presenting biased reporting, and yet journalists attempt to maintain their integrity amid financial and political pressure. It is not a system that is working for the Millennial generation. Some traditional outlets are attempting to reach the younger generation (unlike PBS) and are having some success. The Chicago Tribune newspaper, for example, publishes The Red
Eye in print and online, which features shorter news stories and more entertainment content. These are the types of endeavors that traditional media must pursue if they want to compete among the Millennial generation.

In answering the question of why these endeavors are necessary, one can look to the media effects of the other two sources in this study. The Daily Show proves that laughter is powerful, if not always unbiased or discernible in its jokes vs. facts. This source feeds into the skepticism that Millennials feel towards the government, especially in today’s political atmosphere of deadlock between Republicans and Democrats, incredible expenditure on political campaigns, and constant mudslinging on the part of political competitors. The Daily Show combines entertainment and information in a way that many other sources do not. Those who are consistently exposed to The Daily Show are among the most knowledgeable when it comes to domestic and international affairs. One exposure, for those who do not regularly watch programs like this, appears to have a lasting effect on interest and motivation. The Daily Show is certainly the best option of all three sources if a Millennial is looking to be entertained. What are the implications of this appeal, however? Is the Millennial interest in The Daily Show representative of a generation that does not choose to sit through presentation of facts that is not entertaining? Does it represent a culture of political mistrust? Does it encourage a generation to laugh at politicians while not actually taking the time to learn their platforms and make educated decisions? These are all questions that should be explored in the future.

Vice, on the other hand, is the best source for establishing an emotional connection between viewers and those being viewed. Vice champions a bottom-up approach to journalism, and it is working. This is evidenced not only by the growth of the company in recent years, but also by the results of this study. Participants mentioned the appeal of the on-the-ground nature of
the reporting, and this seemed to influence their knowledge retention a great deal. Vice informs while being suspenseful and compelling. One critical question to ask of Vice, however, is whether it sensationalizes global events for the sake of gaining an audience? Vice comes from a culture of shock appeal. Are Millennials literate enough to question whether what they are seeing is unbiased? Vice reporters are part of the narrative, which is one of its most appealing elements, but is something lost when reporters are not unbiased, when reporters are making value judgments based on their own perceptions? These are also questions that should be explored in the future, especially as Vice grows in terms of its audience and perhaps its corporate influence.

No matter what source participants were exposed to, learning was involved. This study shows that for some participants, one exposure to a source may be enough to inspire lasting interest. One exposure may be enough inspire sympathy for political protesters. One exposure may plant certain facts in the memories of participants. This study is limited in that it cannot measure the long-term effects of exposure to information. But it can be surmised that, like any exposure to media, the effects can be subtle and long-lasting, helping to form or re-form how that individual views international politics. Continuing to analyze media effects (both short- and long-term) of particular sources will shed light on how to re-engage the Millennial generation. This is a task that should be undertaken for the sake of American democracy and international political literacy.

In *Tuned Out*, Mindich provides four solutions to address the tuned out generation: 1. Take back the airwaves, desktops, and newspaper offices: create news for kids, diversify broadcast and newspaper ownership, and encourage desktop and e-mail news; 2. Change our expectations: college admissions and civic knowledge: change honors society requirements and create a civics portion of college aptitude tests; 3. Make politics meaningful again: elucidate
differences between candidates that are not based on party line, and intervene on political
advertisements; and 4. Create, consume, and teach quality journalism: do quality journalism that
is also accessible, recognize quality journalism and demand it, and follow the ideas, attitudes,
and topics of young people. This study has shown why solutions like Mindich’s must be given
credence. A societal discourse on how to re-engage a tuned out generation is necessary, for the
consequences are detrimental to American democracy. Both stylistic aspects of reporting and
structural changes must be considered. Future research in this arena has the potential to be
solution-oriented. The tuned out nature of Millennials does not have to be passed on to further
generations if we are thoughtful and critical of our media and the messages that are presented to
us.

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