

explored in the polls he uses, so the question of public rationality seems more complex than he implies. However, for this reader, the more interesting and valuable result of Simon's analysis is different: his evidence that a motley lot of poll questions, with much variation in question content (though perhaps not in format) could be shown to provide a kind of unidimensional scale similar in an important respect to scales developed many years ago by Emory Bogardus, and, more formally, by Louis Guttman. Further consideration and testing of this finding seems to me well worth pursuing.

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**Niche News: The Politics of News Choice** by Natalie Jomini Stroud.  
*New York, Oxford University Press, 2011. 272 pp. \$24.95.*

Discussions by politicians and cable pundits about the existence and impact of media bias are fleeting, fevered, and often fact-free. Natalie Stroud's *Niche News: The Politics of News Choice* offers something completely different—a carefully reasoned and documented analysis of the relationships among political preferences, media choices, and political actions and opinions. By examining what she terms partisan selective exposure, the tendency of people to choose news sources whose content matches their own political views, Stroud provides a reader with an excellent overview of what research in political science today suggests about the operation and impact of partisan media sources.

Stroud starts by going through the theoretical literature on why people might or might not prefer to get information that differs from their current set of beliefs. Honing in on information that deals with politics, she shows that many people view news about current affairs through the lens of partisanship. Using data from multiple sources, such as national election studies, television ratings, web-enabled consumer surveys, and lab experiments with media choices, she establishes that political predispositions are a ready predictor of the types of news outlets people seek out. Noting that this holds true across media, she finds that “Conservatives and Republicans are more likely to read newspapers endorsing a Republican presidential candidate, browse conservative-leaning magazines, listen to conservative talk radio, watch Fox News, and access conservative Web sites” (p. 169). The same pattern holds for liberals and Democrats, who seek out news sources that agree with their world views.

While the pattern of partisans seeking out niches that match their ideology is clear, the impacts of this phenomenon are less certain. Stroud points out that the “use of likeminded media” (p. 170) does not appear to generate more interest in politics by viewers or reduce their knowledge of presidential candidates. She shows through her work research and the results of others that partisan selective exposure does have a strong relationship with levels of political participation, the decision to commit to a given political candidate,

and the degree to which people's political views are polarized. Her analysis shows that in the case of each of these correlations, there is evidence that the direction of causation runs both ways. For example, while selective exposure to partisan outlets can lead to more political participation, more participation can also lead people to seek out media that match their politics.

In an era in which partisan outlets are frequently discussed but under-examined, Stroud's *Niche News* does a wonderful job of analyzing exactly what is known about the origins, operation, and impact of selective partisan exposure to media. Her footnotes and appendices provide a roadmap to both a broader understanding of the literature and a deeper understanding of her statistical results. In her final chapter, she offers helpful assessments of the implications of her results, including a discussion of the degree to which researchers could help citizens think about criteria other than partisanship in their judgments about the news. The criteria she posits (p. 179) include "completeness of coverage, clarity of coverage, density or depth of informational content." Stroud's own work excels on these and other dimensions, and offers a reader a comprehensive understanding of the mix of partisanship and politics that affects consumption of many news outlets today.

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**The Internet Generation: Engaged Citizens or Political Dropouts** by Henry Milner. Medford, MA, Tufts University Press, 2010. 304 pp. \$35.00.

Over the past half-century, Americans have withdrawn from numerous forms of civic participation, from voting, to voluntarism, and everything else in between. A standard explanation for this phenomenon is generational replacement; each generation since the World War II "Greatest Generation" has been less civically active. Henry Milner enters this dialogue by examining the coming-of-age "Internet Generation." Using data sources from different countries, Milner argues that this generation is woefully inactive in politics. He worries that this high frequency of "political dropouts" leaves the Internet Generation unprepared to battle the political challenges they will face over their lifetimes.

Milner's argument is divided into three parts. Part I depicts the Internet Generation as in a state of arrested development compared to past generations. Milner also shows that perhaps as a consequence of this delayed maturation, this cohort is less likely to turn out to vote, and less knowledgeable about politics. As seen in other studies, he also shows that turnout and knowledge are correlated (from a normative standpoint Milner's broader point is that ideally, votes should be cast by informed citizens). Interestingly, Milner finds that Europeans fare better on these scores than do North Americans, perhaps due to political institutions that are more-conducive to turnout and